

# **Broadening the Contours in the Study of Black Politics**

# **THE NATIONAL POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW**

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# **Broadening the Contours in the Study of Black Politics**

**Political Development and Black Women**

National Political Science Review, Volume 17:1

*Michael Mitchell*  
*David Covin, editors*



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## Editors' Note

The content of volume 17 of *The National Political Science Review* (NPSR) reflects the sweep of research questions, themes, and patterns of power relations that underpin the study of Black politics. Contributions examine the legislative trajectory of anti-lynching proposals in the United States Congress prior to the better-known civil rights legislative record of the 1960s and public opinion regarding President Barack Obama's domestic policies, particularly with respect to the element of racial resentment in the adoption or rejection of Obama's policies. Another contribution in the area of public opinion examines the link between spirituality and inducement to political action. These contributions appear in our research articles section alongside close textual examinations of popular culture and theories of state and citizen.

Volume 17 continues to build on the contributions carried in the previous NPSR special issue on Black women in politics. In its Symposium section, the current volume provides an exchange among leading Black feminist scholars, which focuses on the timely and vital question of the obstacles that Black women face in publishing work centered on the concept of intersectionality. This conversation mindfully takes note of the ways in which these obstacles can be overcome.

A long tradition in political science involves the systematic accumulation and transmission of practical advice regarding the ways the state can achieve its ends. The study of Black politics is no less aware of efforts to offer genuine and timely recommendations and supporting evidence regarding the ways that political institutions and their leaders might accomplish particular goals. This volume provides a discussion of political praxis with an extended article on strategies which expert witnesses might employ in their testimony in favor of the implementation of the Voting Rights Act (even in its post-*Shelby v. Holder* reiteration).

The broad sweep of the theoretical terrain covered in volume 17 also speaks to methodological pluralism that is a vital part of the study of Black politics. Research in this area is enriched by the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as methods specific and appropriate methods for a selected focus of study.

The volume includes a lively book review section. One of its features is a critical focus of the much-discussed work of Aenzele Isoke entitled *Urban Black Women and the Politics of Resistance*. The Book Review Forum in this issue, which carries an exchange on this work, lends credence to the supposition that young scholars can make deep and influential impacts on a scholarly community.

The Editors wish to extend special recognition to Tiffany Willoughby-Herard, the NPSR's Book Review Editor. She has devoted an extraordinary amount of time and thoughtfulness to assembling the current volume. Our special thanks go out to her.





## **Research Articles: Political Development**



# **Innovation, Inevitability, and Credibility: Tracking the Origins of Black Civil Rights Issues**

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Black issues are often cast as the somewhat inevitable products of American political development (Klinkner and Smith 1999; King and Smith 2005). Such a conception of Black issues fails to consider the origins of Black policy ideas and ignores the purposive efforts of political entrepreneurs. In this article, I seek to pierce the aura of inevitability by asking: what accounts for shifts in the issue content of the congressional Black agenda? I answer the question by using Proquest's Historical Black Newspaper database to place Black civil rights issues within their proper historical contexts. When informed by literatures on social movements and agenda setting, the contexts suggest that the credibility of problem definitions and policy solutions—in terms of both policymakers' and citizens' perspectives—is essential to the introduction of policy innovations onto the agenda (Kingdon 1995; Mintrom 1997; King, Bentele and Soule 2007; Wood and Vedlitz 2007).

The remainder of the article proceeds in five sections: Section 1 provides a brief review of the relevant literature. Section 2 explains the basic data that are used to construct the narrative. Section 3 tells two distinct narratives about lynching and poll taxes. Section 4 synthesizes insights based on both cases. Finally, Section 5 concludes with a discussion of how the case of Black civil rights issues in Congress is helpful to a larger understanding about the role of credibility in policy innovation and policy changes over time.

## **1. The Argument**

The central concept of agenda setting is that items reach the agenda because political actors are able to define problems such that they introduce new participants into the political fray, thus disrupting established gatekeepers' control (Cobb and Elder 1972; Schattschneider 1975; Cobb, Ross, and Ross 1976; Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Kingdon 1995; Jones and Baumgartner 2005). Mintrom (1997) refines this argument by stressing that policy innovations must be labelled "credible" in order to be adopted onto the agenda, and this credibility can result from either a diffusion process from other branches of government or through entrepreneurial skill. Wood and Vedlitz (2007) argue that individuals'

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evaluations of problems can be disrupted by exogenous shocks, such as authoritative new sources of information.

These insights suggest that shifts in Black civil rights issues should be driven by how political actors are able to offer new, credible definitions of problems and/or policy solutions for these problems. The contribution of this work is to determine how competing interests—political parties, branches of government, and Black advocacy organizations—make the claim that their civil rights programs are the most credible. This exploration of shifts in congressional recognition of Black civil rights issues sheds light on the specific questions about the origins of the policy issues that culminated in the 1964 Civil Rights Act, but it also addresses a more general interest in the interplay between government institutions and outsider interest groups in setting the policy agenda.

## **2. The Data**

This article is the beginning of a much larger quantitative study of Black agenda setting in Congress. That project examines every Black issue bill introduced in Congress from 1947 to 2002. Here, we focus on the origins of two of those issues: anti-lynching bills and bills abolishing poll taxes. I conducted searches for these two issues using the database of Historical Black Newspapers provided by ProQuest. This database allows one to search and retrieve full text articles from *The Chicago Defender*, *Los Angeles Sentinel*, *New York Amsterdam News*, *Pittsburgh Courier*, and *The Atlanta Daily World*. It should be noted that the aim in these searches was not to compile an exhaustive collection of all articles that discuss particular Black civil rights issues. Instead, the articles are used to place the bills in context. They serve as the building blocks for the narrative of Black issue change.

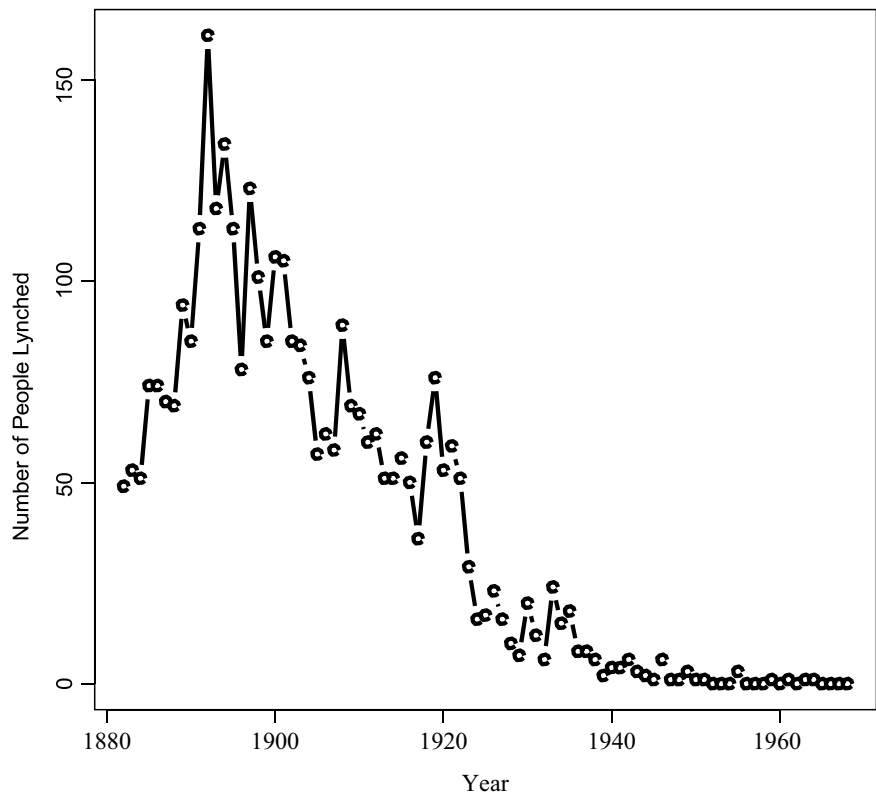
Black newspapers during this period were not impartial bystanders reporting on the who, what, when, and how. Instead, they took strong positions of advocacy in terms of the editorial page and in the types of stories they covered (O’Kelly 1982). This lack of impartiality is what makes the Black newspaper database an attractive source of data. Using Black newspapers to construct a narrative not only provides more in-depth coverage of Black issues across a broad time span but also places that coverage solidly within the context of what Black protest movements were trying to accomplish (O’Kelly 1982). In that sense, some of the coverage in the Black press acts as a crude proxy for the political priorities of Black elites.

## **3. The Origins of Four Issues**

The issues of mob violence and voting rights are understood as important problems facing Black Americans prior to 1965.

Figure 1 shows the occurrences of Black lynchings from 1882 to 1968. As we will see in the narrative, Congress finally put lynching onto the agenda during a resurgence of lynchings between 1917 and 1920. After that small surge, the number of recorded lynchings declined steadily until there were only a handful of incidents in 1940. The narrative will demonstrate that the prioritization of anti-lynching bills declines in accordance with the decline illustrated by Figure 1. The complete lack of Black voting power in the south at the time is an established fact. The oft-stated (though elusively cited) number is that only three percent of eligible Black southerners were registered to

**Figure 1.**  
**The steady decline in the number of Black lynching victims:** This plot shows the number of Black people who were lynched from 1882 to 1968. The numbers are based on the data collected by the Tuskegee Institute.



vote in 1940. Perhaps not coincidentally, that is the same year that Congress recognized the abolition of poll taxes as an important issue. The remainder of this section explores each of these issues in greater depth.

3.1 Anti-Lynching

Congress recognized the problem of lynching in 1918 when Leonidas Dyer (R-MO) introduced the first bill that made lynching a national offense (*Chicago Defender* 1918). The core idea of anti-lynching as a policy solution was to punish the mob’s violence and to punish the local law enforcement’s complicity in the mob violence (*Pittsburgh Courier* 1934a). Although no meaningful actions were taken on the anti-lynching bill in 1918, grassroots activism, institutional structure, and party politics contributed to progress in the 66th Congress (1919–1920). Republicans needed Black votes to win the White House in 1920, so the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) listed Dyer’s federal anti-lynching bill as the most pressing issue on a questionnaire distributed to the potential candidates for president (*Chicago Defender* 1920b). Dyer used his institutional position as the chair of the House Judiciary Committee to ensure that

the anti-lynching bill reached the floor of the House (*Chicago Defender* 1920a). This progress was enough for Republicans to continue to brand themselves as “the party of Lincoln” for its Black constituents.

Conservative Republicans denounced the Dyer bill as unconstitutional, so they offered a civil rights committee as an alternative (*Chicago Defender* 1921b). Black organizations mobilized to combat these efforts. William Monroe Trotter, secretary of the National Equal Rights League (NERL), cautioned President Harding not to substitute a civil rights committee for action on either segregation or lynching (*Chicago Defender* 1921c). James Weldon Johnson, executive secretary of the NAACP, called on Black people to send telegrams in support of anti-lynching legislation, arguing that a vote against the Dyer bill was tantamount to a vote in favor of lynching:

The Department of Justice has gone on record in an opinion delivered by Judge Goff, saying that the Dyer anti-lynching bill was constitutional. There is no longer any excuse why any Representative of the American people should oppose a measure designed to end such a monstrous evil as mob murder. Every vote against the Dyer bill in the House of Representatives or in the Senate is a vote for lynching. Every Representative and every Senator who dares to oppose this bill ought to be listed by our voters throughout the United States and placed on record. (*Chicago Defender* 1921a)

Johnson’s warnings of electoral retribution could not prevent the Dyer bill from being buried by the Senate Judiciary Committee after passing the House (*Chicago Defender* 1922b,a). The next eight years simply repeated this story for lynching. Black organizations, such as the NAACP, mobilized people to pressure Congress (*Chicago Defender* 1923); the Republican Party supported the passage of anti-lynching legislation through its inclusion on the party platform and pronouncements from President Calvin Coolidge (*Chicago Defender* 1925a; Lautier 1927, 1928); inevitably the bill was killed by the threat (or use) of a filibuster in the Senate (*Chicago Defender* 1925b; Brown 1925).

By 1934, the cast of characters had changed in important ways.<sup>1</sup> Walter White was the new executive secretary of the NAACP, and Black people had realigned with Democrats to elect Franklin Roosevelt as president. Black Americans’ switch to the Democratic Party changed the mechanics of passing any sort of civil rights legislation. As Republican voters in the Republican-controlled Congresses of the 1920s, Black organizations had an institutional ally in Dyer. Black Democratic voters in the 1930s had an institutional enemy in Hatton Sumners (D-TX), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee.

Senators Edward Costigan (D-CO) and Robert Wagner (D-NY) were the names attached to the anti-lynching legislation drafted by the NAACP (*Pittsburgh Courier* 1934b). At the start of 1934, the NAACP made plans to spend \$15,000 on the lobbying effort for passage of Costigan-Wagner, and the Young People’s Forum was engaged in daily mailings of 200 form letters asking members to support the anti-lynching effort (*Atlanta Daily World* 1934b). There was a surge of support for Costigan-Wagner in response to the rise in reported lynchings over the summer. Nonetheless, President Roosevelt was unresponsive to White’s pleadings to have Costigan-Wagner listed as “must” legislation, so the 73<sup>rd</sup> Congress ended without passage of a federal anti-lynching law (*Pittsburgh Courier* 1934c; *Atlanta Daily World* 1934a; *Pittsburgh Courier* 1934b).

The 74<sup>th</sup> Congress (1935–1936) saw the same pattern of successful discharge petition in the House (*Chicago Defender* 1935; *New York Amsterdam News* 1936) and death by filibuster in the Senate (*Pittsburgh Courier* 1935b). In the 75th Congress (1937–1938), a

demonstration by 2500 students (*Los Angeles Sentinel* 1937*b*) and the mailing of 100,000 telegrams by the NAACP' (*Chicago Defender* 1937*a,b*) yielded the same results: the anti-lynching bill was discharged and passed in the House then filibustered in the Senate (*Los Angeles Sentinel* 1937*a*; *Pittsburgh Courier* 1937; *Atlanta Daily World* 1938*b*). In response to street protests by the Youth Councils for the NAACP and National Negro Congress (NNC), a proposal was launched to use the FBI to investigate incidents of lynching (*Atlanta Daily World* 1938*a*).

The NAACP launched a petition drive in response to a sluggish start for the anti-lynching effort in the 76<sup>th</sup> Congress, but the 110,000 signatures they received were insufficient to spur action before Congress's summer adjournment (*Chicago Defender* 1939*a*). World War II marked the end of anti-lynching legislation as a "top civil rights priority." Initial efforts to link lynching to the allied cause helped the Gavagan bill get through the House in 1940 (*Chicago Defender* 1939*d*; *Chicago Defender* 1940*c*). However, Senate Majority Leader Alben Barkley said that he would not fight against a filibuster of anti-lynching legislation because that would delay war preparation efforts (*Chicago Defender* 1940*e,a*).

The Republican-controlled 80<sup>th</sup> Congress (1947–1948) used lynching as a political tool to garner southern votes for initiatives like the Taft-Hartley Act:

Rep. Gerald Landis (R-IN) told reporters: "Since some of the Southerners opposed us on taxes, the idea is to put 'em on the spot. And if the Senate had not overridden the labor veto," he added "we probably would have got out an anti-lynching bill." (*Chicago Defender* 1947)

An anti-lynching bill was revived to combat President Truman's characterization of the "do-nothing Congress" (Graves 1948*a*; *Atlanta Daily World* 1948*a*). Despite the obvious cynicism (*Los Angeles Sentinel* 1948*b*; *Atlanta Daily World* 1948*d*; Wilkins 1948), the House moved quickly to report a tough anti-lynching bill out of committee (*Pittsburgh Courier* 1948; *Atlanta Daily World* 1948*a*). The bill was stalled in the Senate Judiciary Committee due to constitutional concerns (*Chicago Defender* 1948*b*), just as it had been during the time of Leonidas Dyer. In 2005, the United States Senate officially apologized for never passing an anti-lynching bill.

### 3.2 Poll Taxes

As alluded to by the discussion of anti-lynching bills, the onset of World War II was instrumental in congressional recognition of poll taxes as a problem. The fight for democracy abroad could not be separated from the fight for democracy at home. Denying Black southerners the right to vote through poll taxes aligned perfectly with the "double V" campaign. In response, Congressman Lee Geyer (D-CA) introduced legislation to ban poll taxes as a requirement for voting in federal elections (*Chicago Defender* 1940*d*). The Geyer anti-poll tax bill was able to garner support from advocacy organizations, including a protest demonstration in Birmingham, Alabama, led by the Southern Negro Youth Congress (*Chicago Defender* 1940*b*; *Atlanta Daily World* 1940*a*; *New York Amsterdam News* 1940). However, that grass roots support was not translated into meaningful action by members of Congress. By September of 1940, only forty signatures had been gathered for a discharge petition (*Atlanta Daily World* 1940*a*).

In 1941, abolishing the poll tax began to look eerily similar to anti-lynching. Black advocacy groups – National Negro Council, National Negro Congress, and the National

Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax – mobilized citizens to put pressure on lawmakers (*Atlanta Daily World* 1942; *Chicago Defender* 1942c,b; *Pittsburgh Courier* 1942b; *Chicago Defender* 1942d). The Geyer bill was discharged and passed in the House (*Pittsburgh Courier* 1942a; *New York Amsterdam News* 1942a), but it was promptly killed by another southern filibuster (*Chicago Defender* 1942a; *New York Amsterdam News* 1942c). The Marcantonio poll tax bill was discharged and passed in the House (*New York Amsterdam News* 1943a,b) by May 1943. Frederick Van Nuys (D-IN), chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee delayed hearings until the fall, prompting critics to denounce Congress for its “anti-Negro posture”:

Perhaps more than in any other session of Congress since the days of reconstruction, the 78th Congress has talked about the Negro. Most of this talk has been done by the Southern bloc, aided and abetted by some equally reactionary Republicans. Most of it has been attacks against the Negro, maligning him, accusing him, disparaging him . . . The anti-poll tax bill is stymied in the Senate Judiciary committee after passage by the House . . . This is the record of the Congress, which, as the *Defender* has previously reported, killed or crippled as much liberal, progressive legislation from which the Negro was benefitting as it could without disrupting the home front. (McAlpin 1943)

The National Negro Congress pressured senators to break the southern filibuster (*Atlanta Daily World* 1943b), but the cloture motion attracted only thirty-six yeas votes (*Chicago Defender* 1944d). Like the anti-lynching effort, the poll tax ban also lacked unequivocal support from party leadership. President Roosevelt offered a vague campaign affirmation that all citizens should have the right to vote regardless of race (Atwater 1944), and the Republican platform called for a constitutional amendment to abolish poll taxes—a plan that was solidly opposed by White and the NAACP (*Chicago Defender* 1944c,b). Without strong party support, there was no reason to believe that anti-poll tax legislation would succeed where anti-lynching bills had failed. The filibuster still seemed insurmountable.

The discharge-filibuster dance was repeated in the 79th Congress (1945–1946). Just as in previous years, anti-poll tax legislation was discharged from committee in May (McAlpin 1945) and passed by the House in June (*Pittsburgh Courier* 1945). The legislation was met once again by the filibuster. The NAACP urged its members to pressure senators to defeat the constitutional amendment alternative, and the National Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax designated March 24–30 as a special week for delegations to demand action on the poll tax ban in the Senate (*Atlanta Daily World* 1945; *Chicago Defender* 1946b). Nonetheless, in June 1946, Alben Barkley (D-KY), Senate Majority Leader, announced that poll tax legislation would not be considered for the remainder of the Congress due to the specter of a prolonged filibuster (*Chicago Defender* 1946a).

The ban on poll taxes gained new life as a consequence of the Republican majority in the 80th Congress (1947–1948). From the GOP’s perspective, banning poll taxes was a win-win. Either the Democrats would look bad when yet another piece of civil rights legislation was killed by a filibuster, or the Republicans would regain Black voters’ loyalty by enfranchising Black southerners just in time for the 1948 presidential election (*New York Amsterdam News* 1947; *Chicago Defender* 1947). Speaker Joseph Martin (R-MA) labeled the poll tax bill as “must legislation,” and within a month, the House passed a bill to abolish poll taxes (Graves 1947; *Atlanta Daily World* 1947). Despite Speaker Martin’s statements and the early passage of a bill in the House, Republicans did not test



the filibuster (*Atlanta Daily World* 1948b) and were unable to even attempt passage of a single item on the Black civil rights agenda in the Senate (Graves 1948b).

Party politics returned to the fore when President Truman convened a special session of Congress to strictly deal with Black civil rights issues in 1948 (*Atlanta Daily World* 1948h; *Chicago Defender* 1948a; *Atlanta Daily World* 1948i). During this special session of Congress, the poll tax ban that was passed by the House in July 1947 was finally brought to the Senate floor, where it was greeted by a southern filibuster (*Atlanta Daily World* 1948e). The Conference on Civil Rights Legislation, an umbrella group of nineteen separate civil rights organizations, urged Republicans to invoke cloture (*Atlanta Daily World* 1948g), but President Pro-Tempore Vandenberg (R-MI) ruled that cloture was out of order because the filibuster was against the motion to consider poll tax legislation rather than the legislation itself (*Los Angeles Sentinel* 1948a). After this final blow to Black civil rights issues, the 80th Congress ended much in the way it began—with promises to amend the rules governing cloture in the next Congress (*Atlanta Daily World* 1948c).

#### 4. Discussion

The stories of anti-lynching and abolishing poll taxes were about Black Americans' search for reliable allies within the two-party system. Editorials in Black newspapers consistently emphasized how Black voters needed to reward/punish one party or the other at the next election (*Atlanta Daily World* 1948f). That perception of Black people as a movable bloc of votes incentivized both parties to offer at least rhetorical support for Black civil rights initiatives. Both parties also had significant conservative factions that were opposed to civil rights. These factions exploited the bicameral structure of Congress to thwart Black policy enactment. Thus, the above narratives create a pattern: 1) majoritarian procedures, like the discharge petition, allowed a bipartisan majority to pass civil rights in the House; and 2) the minority faction used obstructionist procedures, like filibusters, to block passage in the Senate.

Black people did not passively accept this pattern of failure. There was constant mobilization, activism, and lobbying. Black advocacy groups fulfilled a variety of roles: drafting anti-lynching legislation, mobilizing constituents to put pressure on their elected members of Congress, and lobbying presidents to take stronger stances of support. However, these efforts were rarely sufficient to move beyond the agenda-setting stage. When the NAACP was able to take advantage of changes in the context—such as a rise in lynching over the summer—then the organization was able to increase support for discharging anti-lynching bills (*Atlanta Daily World* 1934a). Black advocacy organizations are also important in altering the focus of debate. This is illustrated most clearly by the NAACP's reaction to the failed Gavagan bill in the 75th Congress. Rather than asking members of Congress to support passage of anti-lynching legislation, the NAACP shifted focus to gaining pledges of support for votes on cloture (*Chicago Defender* 1938c,b). McBeth et al. (2007) argue that such tactical shifts seek to define the opposition as constraining benefits for a few while distributing costs widely. The NAACP argued that southern aristocrats used the filibuster to consolidate their own political and economic power at the expense of majority rule and progressive policies that would benefit the masses.

During the time period of this study, that argument was not enough to expand the scope of conflict, so, in the absence of consistently reliable allies in the party leadership, Black advocacy groups relied on Black members of Congress. At several points in the story, Arthur Mitchell, William Dawson, or Adam Clayton Powell served as vehicles to introduce these policies into discussion over the objection of their respective parties' leadership. These narratives of Black representatives' efforts match with the prevailing notion in the race and representation literature that Black members of Congress are motivated (at least in part) by a racial consciousness that surpasses concerns of party, institution, and constituency (Baker and Cook 2005; Minta 2009). Taken together, these three factors—party politics, Black activism, and Black representation—say something fundamental about Black agenda setting. Black agenda setting necessarily requires the support of non-Black people; Black activism and Black representation are the primary tools for gaining that support. That explains the shifts on these Black civil rights issues.

### **5. Conclusion**

This article began with a discussion about the importance of establishing the credibility of an issue. Taking a closer look at the legislative efforts behind lynching, segregated travel, poll taxes, and a permanent FEPC allows us to flesh out the concept. Mintrom (1997) thought of credibility as a way to reduce the uncertainty between policies and outcomes. In that sense, it is similar to the role of information in Krehbiel (1991). The issues in this article do not neatly fit into that concept of credibility. First, the type of uncertainty policymakers have to confront is qualitatively different for these Black issues. There was a seemingly innocuous uncertainty in terms of the constitutionality of anti-lynching policy or banning poll taxes. However, the fundamental uncertainty about policy and outcomes for these issues was: how will the south function once the state-sanctioned tools of racial oppression are removed? This is the question that antebellum Congresses organized out of public discourse for as long as possible. It is the question that Congress decided was not worth answering after Reconstruction. As the narratives reveal, it was the question that Congress was not yet prepared to answer again.

Second, William Monroe Trotter, James Weldon Johnson, Walter White, and the other Black political entrepreneurs were never afforded the role of trusted insider, so their credibility could not have been based on establishing that kind of reputation. Instead, the contentious relationships between party leaders and the leaders of Black advocacy groups mark them as marginal outsiders. These two factors mean that the understanding of credibility offered by Mintrom (1997) is not completely applicable here. The credibility that mattered for lynching and poll taxes was the credibility of the threat posed by Black political activism. From 1918 to 1948, the threat was credible enough for both parties to attempt policy change but not credible enough to overcome southern intransigence. The content of the Black agenda is often assumed to have been the inevitable product of its times. This study shows that Black issues are not examples of inevitability; they are the product of Black activism and Black representation attempting to establish credibility.

### **Note**

1. Records appear to be missing in the Historical Black Newspaper database from 1931 to 1934.

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# **Racialized Political Anger: Affective Reactions to Barack Obama and Federal Government**

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## **Introduction**

In early 2009, after Barack Obama's election as the first self-described African American president, there was a great deal of discussion about the state of racial progress in the United States and less speculation about the levels of political anger in the public. By the 2010 midway point of the president's first year, these debates had seemingly reversed with less discussion of racial progress and a great deal of discussion about how angry the public had become. While many media outlets speculated about the sources of the anger, including frustration at gridlock, a weak economy, and a perceived bias toward corporations over average citizens, there were few empirical statements to support many of the claims; subsequently, it was assumed, by way of the Tea Party movement, that the public was angry at either (or both) the federal government and/or the Commander-in-Chief and the associated attempts of each to reform the healthcare system and aid the economy through increases in federal spending. While explanations for the perceived anger were valid, the challenges associated with examining it are muddled by the idea that both institutions—the presidency and the federal government—are perhaps one and the same, and that opinions toward both could be shaped by race.

Recent research offers evidence that racial attitudes are top-of-mind for many Americans when they think about both Obama and the federal government. Tesler and Sears (2010) find that racial attitudes like symbolic prejudice, or racial resentment, are tied to Obama because of his racial biography. Since Obama is phenotypically Black, self-describes himself as African American, and is consistently described as the “first African American” president, he is heavily racialized in the minds of the public. Tesler and Sears (2010) point out that the process of racialization is specifically designed to promote racial predispositions. Since Obama's race is “chronically accessible”—always present and schematically activated—it is very likely that individuals use racial predispositions to evaluate him; thus, emotional reactions to Obama should be affected by racial resentment (Tesler and Sears 2010). Subsequent research by Tesler (2012) found that racial attitudes significantly affected public opinion regarding nonracial policies like health care. Kinder and Sanders (1996) also find robust evidence that racial attitudes affect other racially benign political opinions related to social security, education, and federal spending.

It is reasonable to expect that not all anger toward Obama is racially motivated. Persons in identity out-groups relative to Obama—Republicans, Conservatives, and even White Americans—could easily be angry at him, and the federal government he oversees, because of different political values and disagreements on policy. Research suggests that anger is characterized by an attack response aimed at achieving a different and more positive outcome than is currently experienced, including changing one's immediate disposition (Fischer and Roseman 2007). This would include wanting a different president or set of policy prescriptions. Thus, for example, any Republican may be angry at Obama because of his policies rather than racial beliefs.

In this analysis, I will focus on a specific form of anger called *resentment*. Resentment connotes anger toward or a feeling of indignant displeasure at some perceived wrong, including targeting entities (e.g., groups, institutions, and organizations) that have a hand in the perceived wrong. The wrong tied to Obama and perhaps the federal government is that they are out of line with traditional norms; especially those of the American racial hierarchy and laissez faire governing approaches. Generally, resentment results from beliefs about how much status one deserves and values related to fairness and moral justice. Thus, while citizens tend to exhibit strong emotional reactions to both presidents and the federal government, there are questions about the extent to which Obama's racial identification has affected how people negatively view and react to him and the federal government. Thus, I investigate the extent to which racial attitudes help shape anger toward the president and whether these sentiments spill over into feelings about the federal government.<sup>1</sup>

I address this question by employing a split-sample experiment embedded in a national survey in which one random half of respondents were asked about anger toward President Obama and the other half about anger toward the federal government; thus, any differences in the levels and sources of anger would be attributable to the target primed in the question. Also, rather than simply asking the public whether they were angry at the target, respondents were also asked about anger at the actions of the target. Personal anger focuses on one's own emotions *about* the target, and action-oriented anger focuses on what the target *does*. I expect that racial resentment should be associated with greater anger toward Obama *and* his actions, but it should also affect anger toward the federal government's actions, since Obama is the elected leader of the government.

In the following sections, I examine the anger and racial resentment relationship and propose a number of hypotheses related to theories of anger and racial resentment.

### **Emotions and Anger**

Emotions are positive and negative states of arousal involving one's neurophysiology (e.g., elevated blood pressure, tightening of muscles, loss of appetite, dehydration). According to Brader (2006) positive emotions stem from a self-oriented view that our interests are being met, while negative emotions arise from threats in the environment. Negative emotions direct attention, promote defensiveness, and lead to action much more than positive emotions (Brader 2006; Huddy, Feldman, and Cassese 2007; Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000).

A chief negative emotion is anger. Anger is primed by superficially negative events that stall progress toward a relevant goal, including the achievement of

some act (e.g., arriving at work on time) or the desire to hold a psychological state (e.g., desiring peace and quiet). Anger intensifies when the negative event is caused by a specific agent and viewed as unjust or illegitimate (Clore and Centerbar 2004; Smith and Ellsworth 1985).

Appraisal theories suggest that perceptions about the state of one's well-being are tied to emotional responses (see Lazarus 2001). Individuals have a need to understand and explain their feelings, and this is made easier by connecting feelings to social traits and situations. If individuals are in a positive disposition, they attribute it to something they find favorable; conversely, if individuals are in a negative disposition, they attribute it to something they find negative. The appraisal process serves as a surveillance system designed to monitor fears and threats in the environment (Brader 2006), and anger arises when the negative event is explicit and actions against the responsible agent are seen as likely to succeed (Lazarus 2001).

### Personal Anger and Anger at Actions

While studies have examined the role that anger played in Obama's election, they have primarily focused on how much a political target made them feel angry and whether this anger leads to candidate preferences (e.g., Finn and Glaser 2010; Ragsdale 1991). The American National Election Study (ANES) traditionally asks respondents, "Now we would like to know something about the feelings you have toward {political candidate}. Has {political candidate}—because of the kind of person he is, *or* because of something he has done—made you feel angry?" This standard measure confounds anger at the individual with anger toward what the individual has done, leaving it unclear whether any reported anger is about *who* the individual is or *what* the individual has done. Anger at actions may include evaluative judgments about a target's political decisions and policy choices, political rhetoric, and the perceived outcomes associated with any actions. By contrast, personal anger may suggest a dislike (i.e., prejudice) for the target as an individual, which includes evaluations of one's leadership style, self-presentation, and personal attributes.

When one considers anger toward the President as head of the federal government, the important distinction between anger at actions and personal anger becomes clearer. The actions of the president and the federal government may be inseparable when examining the actions of either target; thus, any factor that affects anger at the actions of Obama should also affect anger at the actions of the federal government. However, factors affecting personal anger at either target are likely related to more ideological or partisan differences and may be inconsistent when considering the federal government versus President Obama.

During the 2010 mid-term election, there were at least two dominant factors that may have affected one's well-being and thus raised anger at both individual targets and their actions. During the first two years of the Obama administration, the economy was a chief concern, and it is likely the public was angry about the state of economic conditions; thus, the more negative one perceived the economy, the angrier they might have been at both the president and the federal government. This is consistent with research on economic retrospective voting (e.g., Kinder and Kiewiet 1981). Also, the increased media attention from the 2010 election year may have motivated individuals to seek more information about the candidates and other political matters. This consumption

of information may have led individuals to experience more divisive political rhetoric about politics or the federal government and therefore led to more frustration about political leaders, processes, or policies. Thus, increased media consumption may have also affected expressed anger toward the federal government and Obama.

There is another factor that could be undergirding to anger in 2010: racial resentment.

### **Resentment and Anger**

Wilson and Davis (2011) define resentment as “an explicit feeling of animosity or antipathy toward a person or group of people who are perceived to be unfair or unjust recipients of some outcome” (120). This definition is in line with research from the fields of psychology and sociology (Feather 2002; Feather and Sherman 2008; Thamm 2004; Turner and Stets 2005). The feeling of resentment denotes anger, indignant displeasure, or at least an irritation directed at individuals or groups perceived to be undeserving of receiving or possessing a benefit or some other prerogative.

While these definitions cast resentment as having varying degrees of “anger,” some researchers have made some conceptual distinctions between anger and resentment. First, anger and resentment are distinguished by both duration and substance (Barbalet 2001). Anger is described as an instantaneous strong feeling of displeasure and, usually, of antagonism, whereas resentment is a more persistent ill will. Second, anger is the sudden feeling occurring when something goes wrong, or one thinks something has gone wrong, whereas resentment is a more enduring set of reactions targeting *why* something has gone wrong. Third, some research has proposed that resentment is a preferred description over anger when the target being evaluated has more power, exerts more intimidation, or is more offensive (Roberts 2003) or when the anger is seemingly connected to feelings of injustice and morality (Roberts 2003). Finally, research also offers that resentment is a secondary emotion to the primary emotion of anger (Turner and Stets 2005). Anger usually occurs first and then turns into resentment when it is allowed to persist. Primary emotions like anger are more automatic; one cannot usually control getting angry, although one can ostensibly control the behavior prompted by anger (Barbalet 2001). Since resentment is a more enduring feeling, one developed through repeated experiences, some might argue it is more like a decision to stay angry.

### **Racial Resentment**

Most of the political research on resentment focuses on anger related to race. Scholars have sought to determine the place and influence of resentment, as well as its effects on political attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Kinder and Sanders 1996; Sears, Sidanius, and Bobo 2000; Tesler and Sears 2010; Wilson and Davis 2011). Central to the scholarship on racial resentment is the work by Kinder and Sanders (1996), which posits that contemporary racial resentment among Whites developed during the civil rights movement as a response to political compromises on racial policies that benefitted mostly Black Americans and were deemed hurtful and unfair to White interests (e.g., busing, residential segregation, and affirmative action).

According to Kinder and Sanders (1996), racial resentment emerged from a racialized ideological view that the socioeconomic challenges of Blacks in American society were

neither the fault of individual Whites nor the public and private institutions controlled by them. Rather, Blacks themselves were to blame for their lack of progress. This form of racial thinking was related to, but different from, “old-fashioned,” which centered on the alleged biological and cultural inferiority of Blacks. In contrast, this *new* racial “prejudice” was based on negative affect toward Blacks—including the stereotype that Blacks lack initiative to overcome their problems—and their receipt of unearned benefits which violate norms related to individualism (Kinder and Sears 1981; Kinder & Mendelberg 2000; Sears and Henry 2003).

Theories of resentment suggest the sentiment could be triggered by a belief that African Americans unfairly, even immorally, use race to justify their position and prerogatives in society, creating a reverse racial privilege where African Americans possess an unfair advantage over others (Wilson and Davis 2011). In practice, Whites may believe that Blacks make unfair arguments based on race to gain unearned privileges that make Whites worse off. The use of race-specific arguments tied to “special considerations” on the basis of race (e.g., deservingness due to racial discrimination or historical white supremacy) rather than universal race-neutral arguments that everyone may use “violates norms of fairness and values of related to deservingness” (Wilson and Davis 2011, 121). This belief ostensibly frustrates and angers Whites because they cannot use race as a rationale for their social, political, and economic demands. Whites may even feel subjugated and powerless in the face of the race-based arguments of Blacks and other minorities. Ultimately, Whites with higher levels of resentment dismiss any race-based claims, and race itself, as inherently unfair and in some cases unethical, and they also feel resentments toward the claimants and perceived beneficiaries.

### **Racial Resentment and Political Ideology**

While racial resentment might play a strong role in anger toward Obama and potentially the federal government, responses to both targets could also be politically driven. Obama is a Democrat, and is often cast as a liberal, even if his policies tend to be more moderate. As a result, Republicans and conservatives should be angrier than Democrats and liberals with both President Obama and the federal government because they are political “out-groups” (see Tajfel and Turner 1986). Conservatives and Republicans might especially be angrier at the federal government than liberals and Democrats because of principled beliefs about the role of the federal government (Sniderman and Carmines 1997). Having a strong belief in a smaller and less active government may particularly raise heightened threat during tougher economic times because government may actually be required to do more to improve economic well-being. Thus, I expect a positive relationship between conservatism and anger at anger at both Obama and the federal government.

Ideology and racial resentment overlap because attempts to equalize society—socially, politically, or economically—violate norms of individualism; they excuse the lack of self-discipline or immoral behavior and ignore moral justice (e.g., “people get what they deserve”). These violations of values strike a sensitive nerve among mostly self-described conservatives. Thus, conservatives find more difficulty

supporting ameliorative policies targeted at Blacks, or racial minorities in general, than when those policies are targeted at women or the poor (Sniderman and Piazza 1993). For conservatives, race is an especially salient source of anxiety, as Blacks are perceived to violate their ideas of individualism, self-sacrifice, and discipline more than any other group in society.

Liberals are not free from the influence of racial resentment either, and if the evidence is correct, racial resentment should more powerfully shape their reactions to political targets. While liberals and conservatives may share similar beliefs about Blacks, albeit at different levels (Feldman and Huddy 2005; Tesler and Sears 2010), liberals do not have a plausible or principled reason for rejecting racial policies or politicians other than their perceptions of Blacks (Sniderman and Carmines 1997; Gilens, Sniderman and Kuklinski 1998; Gilens 1996, 1999). Opposing ameliorative policies, people, or programs that explicitly benefit Blacks is not an easy decision for liberals as it goes against their beliefs about equality and opportunity. In a somewhat counter-intuitive fashion, the influence of racial resentment should be greater for them than conservatives. Sniderman and Carmines (1997) identify this irony in their finding that while prejudice is less prevalent on the political left, its political impact may be stronger than among those on the right. Thus, I test whether the effects of racial resentment are driven more by the left than the right, or whether the effects are equally strong for the two.

### **Racial Resentment and Anger toward Obama: Hypotheses**

Given Obama's self-described identity as African American, and thus the first African American president, negative sentiments toward his group may have led to negative sentiments toward him and his actions. One way to test whether these attitudes are present is to experimentally contrast anger toward President Obama versus anger toward the federal government. While political ideology should affect opinions toward the federal government, there is no reason to suspect racial resentment will lead to significantly more personal anger at the government, especially after controlling for political factors like ideology and partisanship. In essence, simply thinking about and appraising the federal government as an institution is not enough to promote racialized thinking. However, I expect that racial resentment should be significantly related to the *actions* of the federal government because racial attitudes are nonseparable from Obama who is in charge of the federal government (Tesler and Sears 2010). This is perhaps because the temperaments corresponding to the emotions (e.g., frustration, anger, hostility) become associated with one's dispositional idea (e.g., race and unfairness) of the object (e.g., Obama). Henceforth anything that arouses the dispositional idea of the object—perceiving it, thinking of it, or perceiving or thinking of any word or phrase or symbol connected with it—will tend to arouse all these emotional dispositions (see Stets 2003).

Summarily, I argue that racial sentiments are tied to Obama and that beliefs about race serve as a stronger predictor of anger toward Obama than one's subjective evaluation of the economy, media exposure, or other situational factors. While the state and direction of the economy is a viable foundation for angry political reactions, it is not a sustainable one; changes in the economy ostensibly produce changes in opinions about the leader of

the economy. However, beliefs about race are more enduring and more strongly tied to emotions because racial predispositions rarely change. These more enduring sentiments become a more consistent part of the appraisal system, and individuals tend to look at race as a relevant feature of one's social position even when it is not. This reasoning leads to the expectations that anger toward Obama and anything he does, and by extension anything the federal government does, is largely driven by racial attitudes.

### **Data, Methodology, and Variables**

*Data.* To address these questions about affective reactions to the president and federal government, I examine data from the 2010 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES). The CCES is an online panel survey project conducted by YouGov/Polimetrix in cooperation with principal investigators at Harvard University (see Ansolabehere and Schaffner 2012). The survey provides respondents with ten minutes of “common content”—standard items asked of all respondents—and then ten minutes of specialized “team content.” There data were collected before and after the 2010 mid-term elections, and this research relies on measures from both the common and team content collected in the pre-election survey. The original data included 2,366 respondents, including 1,809 Whites, 252 African Americans, 139 Hispanics, and 166 “Other” and race unknown respondents; however, the measure of racial resentment was only asked of non-African American respondents, bringing the working sample for analyses containing resentment scores to 2,114 individuals.

*Methodology.* The CCES team module contained a split-sample experiment asking respondents about their feelings toward “President Barack Obama” or “the Federal Government.” Respondents were asked about their personal anger toward a target (i.e., Personal Anger), and about their anger at what the target has done over the past two years (Anger at Actions). The exact wording of the items can be found in the Appendix section. The targets of the anger were randomized such that respondents were asked about either “President Barack Obama” (Obama) (51%,  $N = 1,083$ ) or “the US Federal Government” (Government) (49%,  $N = 1,031$ ); thus, any differences in the level of self-reported anger can be attributed to differences in attitudes, opinions, and beliefs about the target.<sup>2</sup> The experimental treatments were successfully randomized ( $\chi^2(df = 1) = .33$ ,  $p = .565$ ),<sup>3</sup> allowing for a high level of confidence in the similarities between the two groups; accordingly, the primary independent variable is the treatment, which is Obama or the Government as targets, and the primary dependent variables are anger at the targets and the targets' actions.

*Media Consumption.* Respondents were asked, “In the past 24 hours have you” used any of the following forms of media: Internet blog, television, newspaper, and radio; they were told to check all that apply. A media consumption score ranging from 0 (no use) to 4 (high use) was calculated for each respondent ( $M = 2.20$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ).

*Economic Perceptions.* Perceptions of the economy were measured with a single question: “Would you say that over the past year the nation's economy has gotten much better, gotten better, stayed about the same, gotten worse, or gotten much worse?” The measure ranges from 1 (much worse) to 5 (much better) with higher scores indicating more positive views of the economy ( $M = 2.41$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ).

*Racial Resentment.* The racial resentment scale is comprised of five items that account for the presence of resentful sentiments targeted toward African Americans (Wilson and Davis 2011). The exact wording of the items can be found in the Appendix section. The battery of items was not presented to African American respondents because pretesting revealed the items to be offensive or unclear; they are excluded from analyses using racial resentment.<sup>4</sup> A racial resentment score was calculated for each respondent by summing the numerical codes for the response categories and then scaling the values to range from zero to one, with higher values indicating greater levels of racial resentment ( $M = .73$ ,  $SD = .21$ ). The Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha$ ) statistic for the scale is .910. The principal components factor analyses (PCA) reveals a single factor, and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) shows excellent fit between the data and the underlying content of the items (RMSEA = .069, CFI = .991, NFI = .990, RFI = .969).<sup>5</sup>

*Control Variables.* The analyses include several demographic variables from the CCES, which are mainly used as statistical controls. *Age* is measured in years. *Education* is a six-point ordinal measure (1 = less than high school, 2 = high school graduate, 3 = some college, 4 = two-year college graduate, 5 = four-year college graduate, and 6 = postgraduate education). *Family income* is a fourteen-point ordinal measure. It ranges from less than \$15,000 (coded 1) to \$100,000 or more (coded 14).<sup>6</sup> *Gender* is a dummy variable with males as the reference category and females coded 1. *Conservatism* (i.e., political ideology) is measured on a five-point scale ranging from very liberal (coded 1) to very conservative (coded 5). *Party Identification* is measured by two dummy coded variables, one contrasting Democrats (coded 1) versus Independents and Republicans, and another contrasting Independents versus Democrats and Republicans.<sup>7</sup> Finally, I consider the region in which the respondent lives as a dummy variable contrasting the South (coded 1) versus all other regions (coded 0).<sup>8</sup>

### Analytic Approach

I first analyzed the differences in reported anger toward Obama and the Federal Government for the entire sample by race: Blacks and Whites. Again, African Americans are excluded from the remaining analyses, since the racial resentment measure was only presented to non-African American respondents. The subsequent analyses examine the relationship between self-reported anger and racial resentment, and I consider whether this relationship is spurious by controlling for the plethora of demographic and political variables.

### Results

#### *Racial Resentment and the Experimental Conditions*

Prior to the analysis, a check was performed to ensure there were no differences in racial resentment across the experimental conditions. This allows us to be sure that the treatment groups are similar on the resentment variable. Results confirm a successful randomization; respondents have equal levels of racial resentment in the Obama condition ( $M = .73$ ,  $SD = .20$ ) as those in the federal government condition ( $M = .72$ ,  $SD = .21$ ) ( $t(1,964) = 2.24$ , *n.s.*). In addition, the variability—standard deviations—in racial resentment are equal across experimental conditions ( $F(1, 1, 964) = 2.24$ , *n.s.*).



*Anger towards Obama and the Federal Government*

Across the board, individuals have more anger toward the federal government than toward President Barack Obama. This anger is driven primarily by White respondents. Tabular results are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1 shows (in bold shading) respondents are significantly more personally angry at the federal government (65%) than President Obama (50%) ( $\chi^2(1) = 175.5, p < .001$ ). This pattern holds for both White ( $\chi^2(1) = 50.8, p < .001$ ) and Black respondents ( $\chi^2(1) = 14.5, p < .001$ ). Whites express more personal anger (63%) than Blacks (19%) overall ( $\chi^2(1) = 175.5, p < .001$ ), and across each of the treatment conditions: Obama ( $\chi^2(1) = 87.7, p < .001$ ) and federal government ( $\chi^2(1) = 100.4, p < .001$ ).

Anger at the actions of President Obama and the federal government were assessed by calculating the mean for the 5-point scale, with higher values indicating more anger. These results are shown in Table 2. Similar to personal anger results (Table 1), respondents are angrier at the actions of the federal government ( $M = 3.20$ ) than those of President Obama ( $M = 2.87$ ) ( $t(df = 2,360) = 5.24, p < .001$ ). Once again, this pattern of more anger—at the actions—at the federal government holds for both Whites ( $t(df = 1,178) = 4.75, p < .001$ ) and Blacks ( $t(df = 219) = 7.04, p < .001$ ). Similar to the previous findings, Whites ( $M = 3.25$ ) also continue to express more overall anger at each target's actions than Blacks ( $M = 1.62$ ) ( $t(df = 437) = 22.6, p < .001$ ). Notably, Whites express more anger at the actions of both President Obama ( $t(df = 369) = 24.1, p < .001$ ) and the federal government ( $t(df = 210) = 13.7, p < .001$ ) than Blacks.

**Table 1.**  
**PERSONAL Anger by Race**

		Total		President Barack Obama		The US Federal Government	
		<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
All Respondents	Yes, Angry	1,356	<b>57%</b>	600	<b>50%</b>	756	<b>65%</b>
	No, Not Angry	1,007	43%	597	50%	410	35%
	Total	2,363	100%	1,197	100%	1,166	100%
Whites	Yes, Angry	1,142	<b>63%</b>	509	<b>55%</b>	633	<b>71%</b>
	No, Not Angry	665	37%	412	45%	253	29%
	Total	1,807	100%	921	100%	886	100%
Blacks	Yes, Angry	48	<b>19%</b>	10	<b>9%</b>	38	<b>23%</b>
	No, Not Angry	203	81%	104	91%	99	72%
	Total	251	100%	114	100%	137	100%

*Note.* The effects of the treatment on response were assessed using  $\chi^2$  test of independent. Results for: All Respondents  $\chi^2(1) = 52.3$ , *Cramer's V* = .149,  $p < .001$ ; Whites  $\chi^2(1) = 50.8$ , *Cramer's V* = .168,  $p < .001$ ; Blacks  $\chi^2(1) = 14.5$ , *Cramer's V* = .240,  $p < .001$ .

**Table 2.**  
**ANGER AT ACTIONS by Race**

	NCB13. When you think about what _____ has done during the last two years, how angry does that make you feel? EXTREMELY angry, VERY angry, MODERATELY angry, SLIGHTLY angry, or NOT angry AT ALL?		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
All Respondents			
The US Federal Government	3.20	1.46	1,167
President Barack Obama	2.87	1.64	1,195
Total	3.03	1.56	2,362
Whites			
The US Federal Government	3.43	1.39	886
President Barack Obama	3.09	1.63	919
Total	3.25	1.53	1,805
Blacks			
The US Federal Government	1.97	1.11	138
President Barack Obama	1.19	0.61	114
Total	1.62	1.00	252

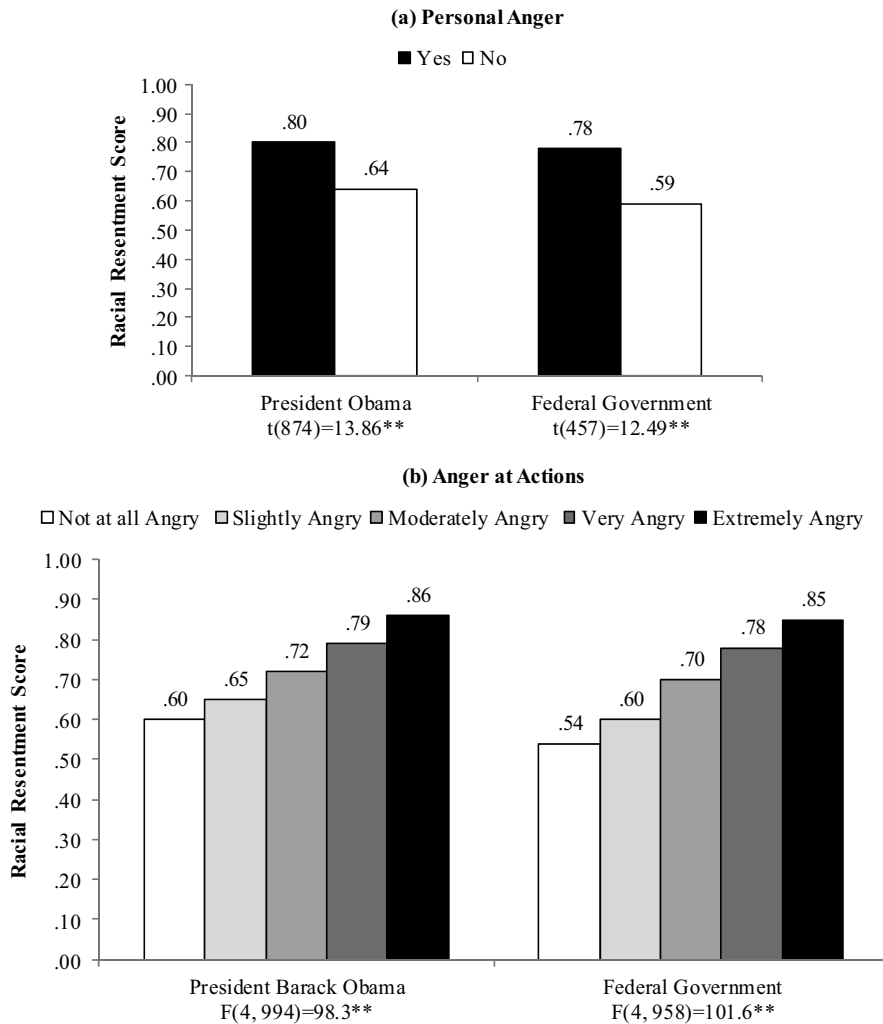
*Note.* The effects of the treatment on response were assessed using independent samples t-tests. Results for: All Respondents  $t(df = 2,360) = 5.24, p < .001, \eta^2 = .011$ ; Whites  $t(1,778) = 4.75, \eta = .109, p < .001$ ; Blacks  $t(219) = 7.04, \eta = .389, p < .001$ .

### *Racial Resentment and Anger towards Obama and the Federal Government*

Results show a strong and statistically significant relationship between self-reported anger and racial resentment. These bivariate relationships are identical regardless of whether the target is Obama or the federal government.

Examining only respondents who are non-African American reveals that anger toward both Obama and the federal government is associated with higher levels of racial resentment. The left side of Figure 1a shows that those who are angry at President Obama have significantly higher racial resentment scores ( $M = .80$ ) than those who are not angry ( $M = .64$ ), and the right side shows those who are angry at the federal government have higher racial resentment scores ( $M = .78$ ) than those who are not angry ( $M = .59$ ). Nearly the same pattern is identified when examining anger at the actions of the two targets. Examining the left side of Figure 1b, the graph shows increasing levels of racial resentment are associated with increasing levels of anger at the actions of President Obama ( $\eta = .532, p < .01$ ). Similarly, the right side of Figure 1b shows that as anger at the actions of the federal government increase, there is a corresponding increase in racial resentment scores ( $\eta = .546, p < .01$ ).

**Figure 1.**  
**Racial Resentment Levels of Anger (a) and Anger at Actions (b) at President Barack Obama/Federal Government.**



### Multivariate Results: Personal Anger

The relationship between personal anger and resentment changes when demographics and political factors are considered. Logistic regression analyses were used to predict self-reported personal anger (coded 1)—using “not angry” as the reference category (coded 0)—at Obama and the federal government. Regression coefficients (*b*) and standard errors (*SE*) for these analyses are shown in Table 3.

The most interesting result from the analysis is that racial resentment is a statistically significant predictor of anger toward Obama but not toward the federal government.

**Table 3.**  
**Logistic Regression Coefficients and Standard Errors Predicting PERSONAL**  
**ANGER at Obama/Federal Government**

	<i>President Obama as Target</i>	<i>Federal Government as Target</i>
	<i>(N = 916)</i>	<i>(N = 885)</i>
	<i>b(SE)</i>	<i>b(SE)</i>
<i>Main Effects: Background</i>		
Intercept	-.37 (.73)	-.31 (.88)
Age	.02 (.01)**	.00 (.01)
Sex (Male = 1)	-.10 (.17)	.62 (.21)**
Education Level	-.02 (.07)	.03 (.08)
Family Income	.01 (.03)	-.04 (.03)
Race-Ethnicity (White = 1)	-.38 (.24)	.67 (.28)*
Conservatism (Ideology)	-.12 (.11)	.61 (.12)**
Democrat (= 1)	-1.70 (.26)**	-1.11 (.20)**
Independent (= 1)	-.73 (.31)*	-.57 (.37)
Region (South = 1)	.04 (.18)	-.04 (.21)
<i>Main Effects: Political Attitudes</i>		
Media Use (MEDIA)	.19 (.08)*	.45 (.10)**
Economic Conditions (ECON)	-.51 (.10)**	-.80 (.11)**
Racial Resentment (RR)	2.38 (.54)**	.87 (.58)
<i>Fit Statistics</i>		
Nagelkerke Pseudo $R^2$	.420	.511
-2LL	912.06	672.67
Chi-square ( <i>df</i> )	345.02 (12)**	392.02 (12)**

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

Source. 2010 Cooperative Congressional Election Study.

Alternatively, political ideology is a significant predictor of anger toward the federal government but not toward Obama.

Focusing on the model of anger toward the president ( $R^2 = .42$ ), results show Democrats and Independents are less likely to be angry, while older respondents and those with higher media use and more negative perceptions of the economy are more likely to be angry. Turning to anger at the federal government ( $R^2 = .42$ ), men are more likely than women to be angry, Whites are more likely than non-Whites to be angry, and those who consume more media and have more negative perceptions of the economy are each more likely to be angry at the federal government. The only variable predicting less anger at the federal government is being a self-identified Democrat versus being a Republican or an Independent.

The analysis also examined whether racial resentment's effects on anger occur equally among liberals or conservatives. Table 4 presents separate logistic regression analyses for liberals and conservatives.

The main focus of these results is on the effects of racial resentment. The results show that racial resentment is significantly related to personal anger at Obama among conservatives but not liberals. In addition, while racial resentment does not predict anger toward the federal government among liberals, it is significant among conservatives. These results provide evidence in support of the earlier stated hypotheses that racial attitudes affect feelings

**Table 4.**  
**Logistic Regression Coefficients and Standard Errors Predicting PERSONAL ANGER**  
**at Obama/Federal Government among Liberals and Conservatives**

	<i>Liberals</i>		<i>Conservatives</i>	
	<i>President Obama as Target</i>	<i>Federal Government as Target</i>	<i>President Obama as Target</i>	<i>Federal Government as Target</i>
	( <i>N</i> = 204)	( <i>N</i> = 212)	( <i>N</i> = 480)	( <i>N</i> = 401)
	<i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> )
<i>Background</i>				
Intercept	-.36 (1.43)	-.29 (1.45)	-2.57 (1.12)*	-.589 (2.84)*
Age	.00 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	.04 (.01)**	.03 (.02)
Sex (Male = 1)	-.24 (.37)	.89 (.34)**	-.47 (.26)	-2.33 (.92)**
Education Level	-.20 (.15)	-.03 (.13)	-.05 (.10)	-.06 (.25)
Family Income	-.03 (.06)	-.00 (.05)	.05 (.04)	.29 (.14)*
Race-Ethnicity (White = 1)	-.27 (.46)	1.11 (.53)*	.05 (.40)	1.55 (.85)
Democrat (= 1)	-.84 (1.00)	-.83 (.93)	-1.06 (.58)	-.79 (1.04)
Independent (= 1)	1.88 (1.16)	.48 (1.20)	-2.15 (.45)**	-1.02 (1.18)
Region (South = 1)	-.57 (.48)	.12 (.36)	.30 (.26)	-.36 (.69)
<i>Political Attitudes &amp; Behavior</i>				
Media Use (MEDIA)	.19 (.19)	.26 (.15)	.12 (.12)	1.21 (.41)**
Economic Conditions (ECON)	-.09 (.21)	-.51 (.19)**	-.54 (.14)**	-1.92 (.43)**
Racial Resentment (RR)	1.74 (.96)	1.02 (.88)	2.84 (.91)**	10.69 (3.05)**
<i>Fit Statistics</i>				
Nagelkerke Pseudo <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.231	.185	.267	.600
-2LL	192.74	251.05	434.47	77.12
Chi-square ( <i>df</i> )	34.47 (11)**	30.94 (11)**	94.10 (11)**	93.37 (11)**

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

Source. 2010 Cooperative Congressional Election Study.

about Obama and also support the prior research (e.g., Gilens 1996, 1999) notion that racial attitudes can affect ostensibly nonracial targets like the federal government.

Multivariate Results: Anger at Actions

Results from a multivariate analysis of anger at actions lead respondents to a different set of considerations than personal anger. Ordinal Least Square (OLS) regression models shown in Table 5 reveal that racial resentment is strongly predictive of anger toward both the President and the federal government. This finding mirrors the results from the bivariate analysis (Figure 1).

It appears that when it comes to *what* the federal government does—its actions—individuals transfer their racial attitudes about Obama to the broader institution. All things being equal, as racial resentment increases, anger towards the actions of both Obama and the federal government increase as well. Anger at actions of Obama and the federal

Table 5.  
OLS Regression Coefficients and Standard Errors Predicting Level of ANGER  
AT ACTIONS of Obama/Federal Government

	President Obama as Target (N = 914) <i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	Federal Government as Target (N = 843) <i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> )
<i>Background</i>		
Intercept	2.95 (.31)**	2.26 (.31)**
Age	.01 (.01)	.01 (.00)*
Sex (Male = 1)	.05 (.07)	.16 (.07)*
Education Level	−.01 (.03)	.04 (.03)
Family Income	.04 (.01)**	−.01 (.01)
Race-Ethnicity (White = 1)	−.08 (.10)	.31 (.09)**
Conservatism (Ideology)	.02 (.05)	.16 (.04)**
Democrat (= 1)	−1.59 (.11)**	−.64 (.10)**
Independent (= 1)	−.55 (.14)**	−.12 (.11)
Region (South = 1)	.11 (.07)	.09 (.07)
<i>Political Attitudes&amp; Behavior</i>		
Media Use (MEDIA)	.08 (.03)*	.06 (.02)
Economic Conditions (ECON)	−.40 (.04)**	−.42 (.04)**
Racial Resentment (RR)	1.34 (.22)**	1.43 (.21)**
<i>Fit Statistics</i>		
Adjusted R2	.601	.540
SEE	1.02	.964

Note. \**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01.  
Source. 2010 Cooperative Congressional Election Study.

government are also both positively affected by lower perceptions of the economy. Interestingly, conservatism is unrelated to anger at the President's actions but significantly related to anger at the actions of the federal government. This final result suggests that ideological judgments of President Obama's actions are minor compared to racialized judgments. A similar pattern exists when the regression is run separately for liberals and conservatives. These results are shown in Table 6.

Both ideological groups exhibit the same pattern of racial resentment; as racial resentment scores increase, levels of anger at both President Obama and the federal government increase. The magnitudes of the effects are greater for conservatives, but liberals still show a statistically significant effect.

**Table 6.**  
**OLS Regression Coefficients and Standard Errors Predicting Anger at Actions of Obama/Federal Government among Liberals and Conservatives**

	<i>Liberals</i>		<i>Conservatives</i>	
	President Obama as Target ( <i>N</i> = 204) <i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	Federal Government as Target ( <i>N</i> = 210) <i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	President Obama as Target ( <i>N</i> = 478) <i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	Federal Government as Target ( <i>N</i> = 401) <i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> )
<i>Background</i>				
Intercept	3.88 (.47)**	2.83 (.69)**	1.71 (.48)**	1.59 (.38)**
Age	-.01 (.00)	-.01 (.01)*	.01 (.00)**	.02 (.00)**
Sex (Male = 1)	.24 (.11)*	.63 (.17)**	-.19 (.11)	-.01 (.08)
Education Level	-.05 (.04)	.00 (.06)	-.0 (.04)	.01 (.03)
Family Income	.00 (.02)	-.01 (.03)	.06 (.02)**	.03 (.01)*
Race-Ethnicity (White = 1)	-.31 (.14)*	.99 (.23)**	.29 (.17)	.17 (.12)
Democrat (= 1)	-1.44 (.36)**	-.76 (.45)	-1.53 (.27)**	-.17 (.18)
Independent (= 1)	-.13 (.40)	.07 (.55)	-.69 (.22)**	-.06 (.13)
Region (South = 1)	-.05 (.13)	-.09 (.18)	.23 (.10)*	.08 (.08)
<i>Political Attitudes &amp; Behavior</i>				
Media Use (MEDIA)	.04 (.06)	.01 (.07)	.06 (.05)	.08 (.04)
Economic Conditions (ECON)	-.21 (.07)**	-.27 (.09)**	-.35 (.06)**	-.36 (.05)**
Racial Resentment (RR)	.63 (.29)*	1.18 (.42)**	2.01 (.38)**	2.12 (.31)**
<i>Fit Statistics</i>				
Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.377	.258	.537	.629
<i>SEE</i>	.776	1.07	1.10	.785

Note. \**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01.

Source. 2010 Cooperative Congressional Election Study.

Another interesting finding from these regressions across ideological groups is that party identification significantly predicts anger toward Obama but not anger toward the federal government. Among liberals and conservatives, Democrats show lower levels of anger at the federal government than Republicans, while Independents are either similar to Democrats or in between the two major parties. This is somewhat surprising given that a fundamental difference between the parties exists because of what the federal government does, and finding that Republican conservatives are especially not any angrier at the federal government than Democratic conservatives raises questions about why.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

This research sought to answer the basic question of whether racial attitudes were motivating anger during the mid-way point of President Obama's first term in office. The study focused on anger toward the president and the federal government and attempted to separate personal anger from anger at actions.

The results show the public holds significantly more anger toward the federal government than President Obama. The findings also show a mixed array of effects on anger related to background, behavioral, and attitudinal factors. After controlling for a number of demographics, media consumption, and perceptions of the economy, results show that racial resentment is the most prominent predictor of *personal anger* toward President Obama, but it is not a robust predictor of personal anger toward the federal government. Yet when anger at the *actions* of the President and federal government are examined, racial resentment stands as a significant predictor. I argue that this is because the actions of Obama and the federal government become one and the same, and any evaluations of Obama spill over into evaluations of the federal government.

In terms of differences in the effects of racial attitudes on anger across the political spectrum, the results show weak support for the idea that conservatives are less likely than liberals to employ racial attitudes in their political evaluations (cf. Sniderman and Carmines 1997; Feldman and Huddy 2005). Racial resentment had a significant effect on conservatives' personal anger at Obama, as well as anger at his actions. The racial resentment scores of conservatives also predicted personal anger and action anger at the federal government. Among liberals, racial resentment did not have an effect on their personal anger at Obama (or the federal government), but it did significantly predict anger at the actions of Obama as well as the actions of the federal government. This leads to the conclusion that the actions of the federal government are likely evaluated in terms of a racialized view of its presidential leadership across the spectrum of political ideology. More specifically, both liberals and conservatives are perhaps unconsciously appraising actions by way of Obama's personal traits (his race) rather than the situational traits (economic recession).

The results have many implications. First, the ANES might revisit their current wording of the questions on emotional reactions to candidates to better tease out the potential spillover effects. Currently, the ANES measures confound personal anger with anger at actions. The results show that there could be different factors affecting the two. Second, the results show the strength of Wilson and Davis's (2010) new measure of racial resentment. Unlike the traditional measures of racial resentment (see Feldman and Huddy 2005; Kinder and Sanders 1996), the scale employed herein show effects across the ideological spectrum. Racial resentment among conservatives and liberals produces increased anger at



the actions of Obama and the federal government. Third, the finding that racial resentment affects feelings about Obama and the federal government may help to explain why policies considered punitive to African Americans, such as restrictive voting laws, cuts to federal employment and labor unions, and the elimination (or decreased funding) of programs that provide aid to low income families, have been shown to have strong support among the public (see Wilson and Brewer 2013). Individuals might be bypassing principled positions on these matters in favor of racial predispositions. Finally, the results suggest that so long as Obama is in office, if there are any dissatisfactions with what the federal government is doing, they might be undergirded by racialized considerations.

It is encouraged that further investigation take place into the different sources of anger as well as the different political targets that induce it through emotion-laden symbols like race and other identities (Sears 2001). The current state of American politics suggests that race is perhaps undergirding many aspects of political discourse, but few elites explicitly acknowledge its importance. These results suggest that the effects of race on emotion-based evaluations of the president are quite strong and will continue to color judgments about him and his actions. More importantly, the results suggest that many actions and policies of the federal government which are ostensibly nonracial will be influenced by negative racial attitudes as well.

### **Appendix: Organization and Wording of Variables**

#### **Question Wording for the Anger at President Obama/Federal Government Experiment**

NCB12 (Personal Anger). Are you, personally, more angry at \_\_\_\_\_ than you used to be? (Yes, No)

NCB13 (Anger at Actions). When you think about what \_\_\_\_\_ has done during the last two years, how angry does that make you feel? EXTREMELY angry, VERY angry, MODERATELY angry, SLIGHTLY angry, or NOT angry AT ALL?

Treatment Group A: the US federal government

Treatment Group B: President Barack Obama

#### **Explicit Racial Resentment Scale (Wilson and Davis 2010)**

NCB19. I don't understand why race is any different from what other people have to deal with.

NCB20. I resent any special considerations that Africans Americans receive because it's unfair to other Americans.

NCB21. For African Americans to succeed they need to stop using racism and slavery as excuses.

NCB22. Special considerations for African Americans place me at an unfair disadvantage because I have done nothing to harm them.

NCB23. African Americans bring up race only when they need to make an excuse for their failure.

### Notes

1. Here, I make a distinction between emotions and affect, with the latter term being more inclusive of a broad range of preferences, evaluations, feelings, and behaviors. Studies have examined affective reactions through feelings thermometers and other attitudinal measures, but few, if any, have explicitly tied self-reported emotional responses to racial attitudes.
2. While there is confidence in the ability to detect differences in anger toward Obama versus the Government, it is conceded in advance that these data cannot detect differences in “general anger”—free of a political target—relative to the targets in the study. Ideally, this control group should be included, yet it is arguable the Obama and Government targets provide enough contrast to address the research question.
3. Overall, chi-square tests show that respondents were equally likely to receive either treatment; however, there are some minor but significant differences in the distributions of the treatments across political party identification and ideology. Democrats (46%) and Independents (43%) were less likely than Republicans (56%) to receive the Obama treatment, and vice versa for the Federal Government treatment ( $\chi^2(df=2) = 23.7, p < .01$ ). Similarly, Moderates (45%) were less likely than Conservatives (54%) to receive the Obama treatment, and vice versa for the Federal Government treatment ( $\chi^2(df=2) = 13.0, p < .01$ ). Liberals were equally likely to receive the treatments. After an extensive analysis of the data, I find that partisanship and ideology are the only variables that vary across treatment group (see Table 4), and suspect that the systematic bias is tied mainly to partisanship results from some pattern of response in the common content section of the CCES.
4. Tesler and Sears (2010) also found that racial resentment items are sometimes perceived as offensive and tend to show lower quality psychometric properties.
5. Statistically, good scale measures will form a single factor (via Principle Components Analysis (PCA)) and explain a large amount (e.g., 50% or more) of variance in the items, have high reliability ( $\alpha > .600$ ), and exhibit a good “fit” with the data: confirmatory (CFI), normed (NFI), relative (RFI) fit indices of  $>.95$ ,  $>.90$ , and  $>.90$ , respectively; and, a root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)  $< .08$  (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2006).
6. A relatively large number of respondents ( $N = 288$ , 12.2%) indicated they “prefer not to say” their income level. For these individuals, I imputed their income levels using education ( $Beta = .337, p < .01$ ) and sex ( $.147, p < .01$ ). The model proved a good predictor of income ( $R^2 = .154, SSE = 3.24$ ), thereby, maintaining a larger sample size and greater statistical power.
7. In forthcoming regression models, the reference category for party identification is Republican.
8. Southern states include TX, OK, LA, FL, GA, AL, MS, AR, TN, KY, SC, NC, VA, and WV.

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# **Disasters, Public Policy, and Urban Black Communities: Urban Planning and Recovery during Hurricanes Andrew and Katrina**

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*“Mus tek cyear a de root fa heal de tree.” - Gullah proverb  
(You need to take care of the root in order to heal the tree.)*

## **Introduction**

Urban Black or African-American neighborhoods are an integral dimension of modern American cities. However, when disasters occur in these cities, the social effects are not racially equal. The geophysical force released by a natural disaster leaves the same imprint on an area's built structures and land surfaces regardless of the racial, ethnic, or gender identity of its population. Nevertheless, the social structural or secondary effects of disasters in cities run, with varying degrees of destruction, along the same predisaster color and class inequalities as those that separate residential communities. How is this explained? In this study, we pursue answers. We describe the nature of mass, region-wide natural and technological disasters and the core Black social networks and cultural economy affected. This investigation argues that the predisaster urban policies and technical modernization marginalized Black city sections and businesses and, in turn, heightened their vulnerability to and delayed recovery from natural and technological disasters. We then provide case histories of the urban Black community and two of the most costly disasters in modern American history: Hurricanes Andrew and Katrina.

The second part of this investigation extends the argument by showing that social and entrepreneurial networks of Black communities—with extensive roles for family, neighborhood, culture, and women's participation—provided viable resources for effective disaster impact and recovery policies in major cities such as Miami and New Orleans. However, in both cities, these Black community resources were largely excluded by policy-making authorities involved in the cities' development and disaster recovery programs. Our analysis of these case histories is presented as groundwork for future research in urban policy and planning.

### **Disasters and Social Networks**

According to disaster experts, the losses and recovery process a city or region experiences during a disaster are complex and contradictory, depending on the social measures and level of analysis (Morrow and Peacock 1997; Ayala-Carcedo 2004; Barnshaw and Trainor 2007). Natural disasters are classified into those that are climatic in origin, such as floods, droughts, and tropical storms, and those that are geological in origin, such as earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, and landslides. Depending on the city and nation's level and complexity of development, weather and geologic disasters produce wide variations in loss of life and property (Mitchell 1999). Hurricane Katrina (2005) caused dramatic losses in American living standards, dislocating several hundred thousand people and causing an estimated 1,400 deaths. By contrast, the Haiti earthquake of 2010 caused some 230,000 fatalities: more than twice the fatalities of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear bombings of World War II.

Urbanization produces dense populations and multilayered infrastructures that amount to a human-made, more vulnerable context for disasters. In theory, technological advances, when designed and functioning safely, greatly improve disaster survival and recovery in cities and regions hit by natural disasters (Mitchell 1999). As engineering experts have written, a "technological system . . . be it a thermostat, an automobile, a telecommunications satellite, or a large-scale technological system such as an electric utility or nuclear reactor—exhibit various components functioning in a complex and integrated way as designed by human beings for a particular purpose" (Evan and Manion 2002, 82).

However, technology is far from infallible in preventing disasters, both as side- or after- effects or when accidental breakdowns occur. In modern cities, as disaster scholar Ritsuo Akimoto observed, "disasters have more destructibility than ever before." The city is an area with "a high density space structure filled with facilities and buildings [that] forms a big functionally interrelated system." When damage occurs to one function, this "is bound to have an extremely wide scope of impact, charged with a danger of causing more complex damage" (Akimoto 1987, 154–55). Furthermore, like natural disasters, technological or industrial disasters that occur in cities when a technical system fails can trigger secondary industrial accidents that cause additional threats, or mass damage to life and built environment (Wisner 1999; Evan and Manion 2002).

The vast differences in fatalities and property damage caused by disasters are not due simply to their physical dynamics; they are also due to the quality and stratification of the human organizational structures in place where a physical disaster occurs. Neighborhoods are comprised of social networks based on family, friendship, religion, civic involvement, and entrepreneurial ties. These social networks produce the community's daily flow of social capital or cultural economy. Social capital has been defined as resources generated by a "durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu 1986, 248; Joshi et al. 2000; Barnshaw and Trainor 2007).

Throughout the history of Black urbanization, the entrepreneurial sector has been a key component of local social networks and social capital and not strictly a financial activity. As sociologist Andrew Billingsley has stated, "Historically, business ownership has played a major role in the stabilization and achievement of African-American family and community life." Black churches, recreation centers, and other social organizations

in the same communities as the enterprises once served as a primary market segment for the neighboring Black businesses (Billingsley 1992, 289). In this study, we broaden the classification of the Black entrepreneurial segment to include community-based professionals, church leaders, journalists, cultural performers, and leaders in community philanthropy and education. The cultural economy exchanged within this segment and the larger Black community was shaped from common historical and social experiences during the generations of slavery and Civil War struggles and community-building in the Jim Crow segregation and interwar migration eras through the Civil Rights and post-Civil Rights periods (Berry and Blassingame 1982; Woods 1998).

Natural and technological disasters strain or break down social networks and social capital. However, some degree of the historic social capital and cultural economy of the Black entrepreneurial segment can be sustained even when this strata is physically dispersed or depopulated by catastrophes like hurricanes or floods. Social networking and cultural adaptations are especially important for low-income, racial, or ethnic minority neighborhoods. Lacking influence on urban technical systems, poorer Black and minority communities are particularly dependent on social networks, social capital, and culturally-inspired activity to survive and recover from disasters (Woods 2005; Barnshaw and Trainor 2007; Chamlee-Wright 2010; Carpenter and Montoya 2011).

### **Urban Renewal and Technology of Marginalization**

Urban policies to modernize housing and economic development have fundamentally strained traditional socio-economic networks in urban Black communities. Decades before hurricanes like Andrew (1992) and Katrina (2005), Black city sections experienced urban renewal policies. This development process had the overall impact of a slow-moving technological disaster. International urban planner Peter Hall surveyed U. S. urban renewal and surmised, "In city after city—Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Hartford, Boston, San Francisco—the areas that were cleared were the low-income black sections next to the central business district" (Hall 1988, 229; cited in Campanella 2006, 144). In Pittsburgh, some 5,400 families were displaced with the demolition of the Golden Triangle district. In downtown Kansas City, the city's redevelopment authority razed the mostly Black neighborhoods near the city's downtown (Gotham 2001; cited in Campanella 2006, 144).

In St. Louis, the Black section known as Mill Creek Valley was cleared and reduced to 465 acres of rubble popularly named "Hiroshima Flats." This renewal project, planned and implemented from the mid-1950s through the 1960s, uprooted an estimated 20,000 persons (95 percent Black). Moreover, some 6,400 homes and 40 churches were demolished (Campanella 2006). In Stockton, California, thirty-two Black churches were destroyed along with the Black neighborhoods surrounding them. By 1966, housing experts estimated that sixty to seventy percent of the displaced urban populations due to urban renewal were Black (Abrams 1966; Anderson 1964; cited in Campanella 2006, 144).

In the new "modernity" cities, development authorities routinely carried on with massive construction projects, reforming the city to accommodate emerging suburbs. The city's urban renewal plans entailed razing older city sections and erecting buildings, streets, and highways with the core purpose of accommodating greater volumes of automobile traffic (Goodman 1971; Wilson 1991; Buzbee 2002; Bartling 2008). According to Beck, in postindustrial cities, nonchalant risk management sets in. With each new built structure

or technical system, a “corresponding political action is opened up: accidents on the job, for instance, are not blamed on those whose health they have already ruined anyway, but are stripped of their individual origin and related instead to the plant organization, the lack of precautions, and so on” (Beck 1999, 51). Moreover, urban renewal prioritized building transportation routes for middle-class automobile commuters.

Urban renewal combined with other destructive trends emerging throughout the nation’s post-1950s cities with growing populations to create grim circumstances. High rates of housing abandonment and fires, as well as crime, spread throughout the cities. In Detroit, beginning in 1967, many inner-city stores and workplace buildings were destroyed by criminal arson. Each year, dozens of local structures were burnt down. Gradually a once viable commercial and residential urban Black enclave became a crime-ridden, largely elderly, low-income “inner city” (Abrahamson, 1996).

At the same time, Detroit’s traditional Black sections were declining economically and whites were moving outside the city into adjacent, newly incorporated polities (for example, Dearborn). Between 1950 and 1980, some fifty such communities entered into Detroit’s metropolitan zone. These separately governed communities—townships, villages, and the like—had about one million white residents but just 5,000 (less than 1 percent) Black residents. From the late 1960s through the 1980s, in Detroit and the nation’s other large cities, economically-depressed stretches of city blocks emerged. These zones of concentrated poverty were populated almost exclusively by Blacks and Latinos and often included large public housing complexes. These were the city sections that had been abandoned by the middle class in the suburbanization process (Abrahamson 1996; Thomas 1997).

### **Urban Renewal and Miami’s Traditional Black Communities**

By the 1960s, Blacks in Miami and the rest of south Florida’s Dade County were concentrated in ten disparate pockets within the city and southern suburbs. The two largest Black communities were Miami’s Overtown and Liberty City. Previously known as Colored Town, Overtown in the 1960s was, according to sociologists, “a vibrant center of small businesses and professionals serving the local Black population and culture.” However, “urban renewal virtually destroyed Overtown.” (Grenier and Morrow 1997, 44) Overtown is located close to downtown Miami. Through the post-World War II decade, it was the city’s hub of Black-owned stores, hotels, nightclubs, restaurants, and other enterprises. As the railroads expanded through Dade County, other Black communities developed. Black workers bought or built homes along the land adjacent to the railroad lines. Liberty City also became a center for Black residential and social network concentration. Overtown in the 1940s and 1950s contained some 70 churches as well as civic organizations, sports teams, and social clubs. Since middle-class Black vacationers and entertainers traveling to Miami were barred from local white-owned hotels, Blacks stayed in Overtown and attended its clubs for entertainment by world-known Black performing artists (U. S. Commission On Civil Rights 1982, 4–7, hereafter USCCR; Dunn 1997, 143–158)

By the mid-1960s, urban renewal and highway construction resulted in the physical demolition of much of Overtown. With its neighborhoods and churches disappearing, the area’s Black businesses failed. As one Florida historian wrote, the “new expressway



ripped through the center of Overtown, wiping out massive amounts of housing as well as Overtown's main business district—the business and cultural heart of black Miami” (Mohl 1989, 75; quoted in Dunn 1997, 156–157). In one twenty-square block section that was razed, some 10,000 residents were forced to relocate. The Overtown population dropped from 40,000 before the new expressway construction to 10,000 afterwards (Dunn 1997, 157). In 1982, the U. S. Civil Rights Commission investigated persistent racial problems in the Miami. On Overtown, it reported:

In contrast to the bustling community of less than a generation ago, Overtown today sits grimly beneath elevated highways. A few small businesses struggle among the abandoned and boarded up buildings. Vacant lots, regiments of unemployed workers, and overcrowded, rundown housing are all that remain in Overtown. (USCCR 1982, 8)

Thousands of Black families disrupted by urban renewal in Overtown moved to Liberty City and its outskirts, known as Model Cities. The new residents of Liberty City found stable neighborhoods, highly respected public schools and teachers, and rich recreation and civic life. Many middle-class Blacks moved to suburban developments, while the enclave Black communities emerged in several cities and towns developing south of Miami (Grenier and Morrow 1997). Regardless of the changing spatial patterns of urban Black residential sections, the Black social networks that centered on extended families, religious life, shared school experiences, and common cultural interests emerged in and across these Black communities. Community residents were routinely exposed to “black counterpublic” discourse on Black celebrity life and civil rights issues through Black media. Black-run radio shows, newspapers, bookstores, neighborhood libraries, and national magazines provided political and cultural news among the Black residential sections throughout the Miami region. This was the case with Black communities in the nation's other large cities as well (Dunn 1997; Dawson 2001).

### **The Miami Black Struggle for Political and Economic Equality**

The vulnerability of urban Black communities to disasters in cities like Miami was linked to each city's specific racial, ethnic, political, and economic formations. Before Hurricane Andrew struck south Florida in 1992, Miami had a long history of racial subjugation of Black residential areas traceable to the period of Jim Crow segregation. Moreover, the spread of geographically separate Black communities throughout Miami-Dade County made grassroots organizing against racial discriminatory practices difficult. Consequently, local civil rights movements in Miami had to rely heavily on individual church leaders, attorneys, medical professionals, local elected Black officials, and neighborhood civic leaders. Lacking structured influence within the political system, this leadership frequently had to use a tactful agitation backed by committed whites to bring attention to civil rights grievances (Dunn 1997; Taylor 2002).

The civil rights movement in greater Miami focused on desegregating public schools and housing as well as expanding voting rights in order to wedge Blacks into political office and judgeships. Once civil rights measures were legally in place for Miami and south Florida, court orders and support from national rights organizations were necessary to assure vigilant local enforcement. The NAACP and CORE as well as federal courts and agencies had to closely monitor Miami-area civil rights measures

and policies. In the meantime, the growing population of poor, working-class Blacks and Haitian immigrant Blacks in Miami-area Black communities experienced few improvements in their living conditions (Dunn 1997). Violent flare-ups of racial unrest were consistent during the 1970s, although these events attracted little national publicity (Harris 1999, 84).

Black Miami communities faced intense competition for political representation and public resources due not only to southern segregationist attitudes but also from two successive waves of Cuban immigrants. The first influx of Cuban transplants to Miami and south Florida were political refugees fleeing the 1960 Cuban Revolution. Largely upper- and middle-class Cubans, these new Miami-area residents developed a solid base of economic assets, businesses, real estate, and local political clout. A second wave of Cuban immigrants arrived in the early 1980s. This time, the Cuban newcomers were mostly working-class, poorly skilled, and prisoner populations—the so-called “Mariel” boatlift population (Dunn 1997; Aguirre Jr. and Turner 2009). By 1982, an estimated 18,000 Cuban-American businesses had been established in Miami, and about two-thirds of the city’s construction workers were Cubans. Also, some 3,500 doctors and other health care professionals from Cuba had been re-credentialed and employed throughout Miami. Between 1980 and 1990, Hispanics grew from 41 percent of the Dade County population to 49.2 percent, and Blacks from 16 percent to 21 percent (USCCR 1982, 10–12; Morrow 1997b).

In the decade before Hurricane Andrew, the Black business sector experienced intransigent banking and political marginalization. Black-owned businesses and professionals throughout greater Miami were hemmed into narrow enterprises and occupational avenues. Black businesses had miniscule business from local public agencies and the public school systems—in stark contrast to white, Hispanic, and international business interests that were prospering from Miami’s growth into a global mega-city. The U. S. Commission on Civil Rights attributed the major impediment to Black business growth in Miami to a lack of bank loans and other forms of venture capital. Such investment capital was necessary for new businesses to clear their initial phases of start-up and operations (USCCR 1982, 81–123). Between 1982 and 1987, Black businesses were concentrated in small retail firms or low-end services. In 1987, only 0.38 percent of the Miami businesses with employees in the financial, insurance, and real estate sectors were Black-owned, as was just 0.58 of the city’s manufacturing firms (Harris 1999, 67). Although small in terms of overall financial value, the Black businesses and their owners remained an essential component of the Black urban communities’ cultural economy and social networks. But for its discriminatory exclusion from the commercial growth in Miami and south Florida in the years before the Hurricane Andrew disaster, the Black entrepreneur sector could have been a valuable resource for the area’s disaster management and long-term recovery plans.

### **Gentrification and Growth to Mega-City**

Other urban development dynamics influenced the exclusion of Black communities from disaster management policies and plans in cities like Miami and New Orleans. These included rapid population growth, gentrification, and urban sprawl. Between 1970 and 1990, the population of metropolitan Miami nearly doubled from 1.8 to 3.2 million

residents. This radical population expansion placed great strain on the area's environment and city infrastructures. In the early 1970s, most residents lived in low-rise, land intensive single-family houses. However, with its population exploding, pressure for building new urban infrastructure and roadways was especially intense from the 1970s through the 1990s (Solecki 1999, 439). During Miami's growth into an international mega-city, the city's conservative whites and Hispanics consistently formed alliances to thwart local Black political and business aspirations. Consequently, in the 1970–1990 timespan of urban growth, inferior neighborhoods, housing shortages, and second-rate school facilities were widespread in the Black enclaves throughout Miami and the rest of Dade County. Police abuse remained an ongoing problem as well. During the 1980s, three major race riots occurred in Miami. Each riot was a culmination of rebellion by Black residents frustrated by police abuse and lingering poverty, as well as political and social marginalization (Dunn 1997; Harris 1999).

With decades of urban renewal projects and suburban expansion occurring in the background, gentrification became widespread in the 1980s and 1990s. Municipal agencies encouraged large real estate interests to buy and upgrade neighborhood housing and catered to higher-income and professional sectors as well as high-end businesses to relocate to the central city. Although gentrification revitalized the high-level job sector, revenue base, and physical attractiveness of city sections, the process had a negative by-product: the newly-converted high-priced housing and businesses forced the city's racial minority and needy segments to relocate or, for the very poor, into homelessness. Due to the chronic, city-wide shortage of low-cost housing, the low-income residents of large cities—the disabled, fixed-income elderly and the working-poor—became concentrated in congested, poverty-ridden neighborhoods (Frumkin 2006; Bates 2013).

Furthermore, gentrification negatively affects neighborhood public health. The CDC's Center for Environmental Health has found gentrification accelerates illnesses in those already in poor health living in urban minority neighborhoods. If dislocated, these vulnerable residents “have shorter life expectancy; higher cancer rates; more birth defects; greater infant mortality; and higher incidence of asthma, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.” Moreover, according to the Center, “gentrification is a housing, economic, and health issue that affects a community's history and culture and reduces social capital” (U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2009).

Western technologies inherently modernize, in turn creating risks that require constant management and insurance. Whether building and operating a power grid, a skyscraper, or a medical facility handling complex biological hazards, the technologies grow automatically and self-generate further risks. Constraining these risks within large-scale cities requires high skills management (especially engineering, biomedical, and genetic-science expertise) as well as financial insurance to ensure foolproof profits for its owners and investors. Ulrich Beck refers to this process as reflexive modernization (1999). This concept explains the contradictions inherent in the urban renewal policies of the 1950s through the 1970s. On one hand, cities during these decades modernized their commercial buildings, apartments, public works, and highways. On the other hand, many working-class and Black neighborhoods were either razed or physically dissected to make way for this modernization. Gentrification was largely a private-sector modernization of older-housing districts. Risks piled up in the low-income neighborhoods and abandoned

industrial areas but were deterred in higher-income sections and transportation routes to and from suburban rings (Frumkin 2006).

In urban Black neighborhoods in the 1980s and 1990s, with each natural disaster, urban renewal project, or gentrification wave, social cohesion and entrepreneurial resources of Black communities were dispersed if not destroyed. Geographical and public health studies have documented that with the physical decline of Black residential sections throughout America's major cities, there was a rise in drug trafficking, public health problems such as infectious diseases like HIV and tuberculosis, and neighborhood crime (Wallace and Wallace 1998; Frumkin 2006). In modernizing cities like Miami and New Orleans, what remained in the shadows were city sections that were physically deteriorating and concentrated with Black and Latino residential neighborhoods. These neighborhood areas were comprised of large concentrations of lower-income and ecologically vulnerable populations. With large stretches of unsafe housing, older buildings, and vacant lots, these Black community neighborhood and business areas—both the buildings *and* the residents—were typically stigmatized in the general public as ghettos.

### **Miami during Hurricane Andrew (1992)**

Hurricane Andrew caused an estimated \$30 billion dollars in damage and became the most costly natural disaster in US history. Like Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Andrew's destruction overwhelmed the nation's emergency management and recovery programs (Schneider 1995). Andrew destroyed the housing and infrastructure for more than 375,000 south Florida residents. Almost all of the area's governmental buildings, 31 schools, 59 health facilities, and most fire and police stations were destroyed or seriously damaged. Of the 108,000 private homes damaged, 49,000 were left uninhabitable, and 180,000 of the South Florida population were homeless at some period during the storm's aftermath. Of the 6,600 trailer homes in the region, only nine survived total destruction (Morrow 1997a). Close to one-third of the population in the two counties hit hardest by the hurricane (that is, Broward and Dade Counties) were Blacks. Therefore, Black businesses anticipated significant financing to rebuild and to do business providing services, construction contract work, and supplies in reconstruction projects. This was not to be the case.

The Black-owned business sector in Dade County and larger south Florida never grew beyond a tiny quantitative proportion of the region's general business sector. Although small, Black business institutions had deep social roots in the region's Black communities. In 1991, only about 1.4 percent of the Black population throughout Dade County owned their own businesses. Still, there were some 5,400 Black-owned businesses in the county. Typically small and owner-operated, the average value per business was \$248,000. The careers of prominent Miami Black business persons such as Garth Reeves, Sr., and Mary Athalie Range (1915–2006) are examples of the strong bond between community-based entrepreneurship and local Black community leadership. Black-owned businesses employed 6,208 persons, or four percent of the Dade County Black population (Dunn and Stepick 1992). When Andrew struck Miami, Black communities and their entrepreneurial segments had only faint input into municipal and state public decision-making and finances (Grenier and Morrow 1997).

The federal government, through FEMA and the SBA, allocated \$100 million dollars toward the recovery effort. Florida state agencies estimated that the damage caused

by Andrew opened some 7,000 construction jobs (Scott, Nov. 1, 1992). However, as both federal and state funds for loans and contracts flowed into south Florida for reconstruction, Black contractors and construction workers were largely shut out. Many Black businesses were not eligible for SBA loans to assist rebuilding due to poor credit histories prior to the hurricane (Scott, Nov. 1, 1992). Of the 6,400 Black-owned firms in Dade County (out of 25,000 in Florida overall), less than 200 were eligible to apply to obtain the government certification necessary to receive business in the reconstruction. Only a handful actually received certification and contracts. Just seven Black contractor businesses managed to persuade banks to provide performance bonds required for multimillion dollar hurricane-repair and debris removal projects (Warren, Nov. 26, 1992; Associated Press, Nov. 23, 1992).

A few months after Andrew, the local and national press publicized the economic desperation of Miami's Black communities. "Building up a black economic base has been a goal of civic leaders in the aftermath of the four race riots in the 1980s," journalists reported three months after Andrew, "but progress has been slow." (Warren 1992). Miami-area Black community and business leaders publicly criticized the isolation of Black businesses from the rebuilding revenues. One organization representing 200 Black businesses in Miami reported their members were still shut out of the industrial and housing recovery. A widespread sentiment in Black communities was that the government at all levels had favored the growing Hispanic business and political interests at the cost of marginalizing Black businesses and communities. In a meeting of Black contractors and Black community leaders, Betty Ferguson remarked, "There is all this money coming in as part of the relief effort and there is no attempt to include the black community in the rebuilding." Like prior rebuilding situations in Miami's recent history, "[h]ere we are again sitting on the sidelines" (Warren, Nov. 26, 1992; Associated Press, Nov. 23, 1992, includes quotes).

Several studies have documented the overriding role of "disaster capitalism" or the "shock doctrine" in which elite corporations profit from providing services to hapless cities and communities devastated by wars, natural disasters, or political turmoil (Klein 2006). This frenetic market capitalism enlists government complicity via private contracts—as both private and public sectors collude for wealth and political power in the stages leading up to and following mass disasters (Klein 2006; Adams 2013). These studies pinpoint the political economic factors operating at the macro-level in U S and international disasters. However, even in social contexts far more exploitative than urban disaster capitalism—for example, slavery or in Nazi concentration labor camps—humans build on altruistic drives, common cultural identity, and religion, spiritualism, and or humanism. They shape means and institutions that further their survival and even prosperity in the context of exploitation and chaos. In the two cities and disasters this investigation is exploring, despite identifiable features of global disaster capitalism, the local, ground-level Black communities did what they have done since the slavery days: they attempted to shape their own fates.

Black businesses were, in the first place, largely choked out of the onrush of disaster capitalism that emerged during the Hurricanes Andrew and Katrina. Secondly, Black social networks stepped up to provide social relief and re-anchor the Black community despite its physical and financial disarray. Disaster experts analyzing Hurricane Andrew

found that Black familial networks and households ranked highest compared to Latino and Whites in giving aid to relatives before Andrew landed as well as after the storm (Morrow 1997b, 147, 150). This research has also indicated that across Miami, “women were critical to the survival and recovery of individual households after Hurricane Andrew. They dominated as community service providers, [although they] were rarely in positions with sufficient power to effectively influence the direction of community response” (Grenier and Morrow 1997, 50).

During the recovery phase following Hurricane Andrew, although the local Black business sector had little political clout, Black community leaders in Miami could rely on local and national civil rights organizations to advocate for their communities. The NAACP, the Rainbow-Push Coalition, and others implored agencies like the Red Cross and FEMA to distribute more recovery resources in the heavily storm-damaged Black city neighborhoods and town sections (McBride 2009). Still, relocation to safe temporary or permanent housing was far more difficult for the region’s Blacks. Moreover, given the strong anti-Black prejudice in White and upper-class Hispanic residential areas, many Blacks, no matter how damaged materially by the storm, chose to stay among family, friends, and their familiar neighborhood places. One research team assessed relocation patterns in South Dade four months post-Andrew, one year post-Andrew, and three years post-Andrew. Blacks living in predominantly Black residential sections were found to have relocated at far lower levels (from 27 to 58 percent lower) compared to Hispanic or Anglo residents, depending on the income and insurance status of the household. In addition to racial identity, the more poor the household (especially if uninsured) the lesser odds of relocation (Girard and Peacock 1997, 198).

Throughout south Dade County following Hurricane Andrew, the Black poor were constrained to racially segregated neighborhoods and public housing. As this residential segregation persisted, it reinforced what housing experts termed the “concentration effect.” In metropolitan Miami, “residential segregation [is] a cause, and not simply a consequence, of racial disparities in opportunities.” Indeed, “segregation multiplies the effects of deprivation—poverty, crime, family dissolution, welfare dependency, and so on—by focusing them in Black, underclass neighborhoods” (Girard and Peacock 1997, 201). Sociologists surveying Black neighborhoods originally damaged by Andrew in 1992 found sections, even five years later, that still had “no functioning businesses” or fully operating power, water, and other public services (Girard and Peacock 1997, 203). Discriminatory housing practices—such as real estate discrimination or so-called “racial steering”—reinforced Blacks remaining in segregated neighborhoods and heavily dependent on public transportation (Girard and Peacock 1997).

Although Black Miamians lived in structurally segregated residential areas, social networks were vibrant and facilitated survival once Hurricane Andrew completed its damage. Family studies show that Blacks who remained among their household and neighborhoods during Andrew and immediately afterwards had extended families and received high levels of relief from these networks—levels that were even higher than comparable white and Hispanic families (Morrow 1997b). In one of the nation’s most extensive studies of families that survived Hurricane Andrew, the researchers concluded, “Our results are consistent in that both Black and Hispanic households had lower probabilities of stress [than whites]” (Morrow 1997b, 160). Finally, one mental health study

of post-Andrew children suggested Black children from Hurricane Andrew areas evinced less lasting psychological stress than other ethnic/racial groups in the periods following the Andrew event (Jones et al. 2001).

### **New Orleans and Hurricane Katrina (2005)**

Urban policies implemented in New Orleans decades before Hurricane Katrina set the stage for the city's Black communities not only to suffer the greatest damage from the storm but also to fail to recover at levels similar to those of other ethnic sections of the city. Similar to Miami and south Florida in the late 1980s and early 1990s, New Orleans in the few years before Hurricane Katrina was a convergence point of poverty and reflexive modernization. The poverty widespread throughout New Orleans before Katrina greatly hindered the growth and use of community social capital as a city-wide resource. In fact, urban planning and disaster management policies—whether for natural disasters like hurricanes, or technological ones such as levee failures or oil refinery accidents—had systematically overlooked Black communities and concentrations of Black women populations throughout greater New Orleans.

Similar to Miami in the early 1990s, just before Katrina, both residential segregation and concentration-effect poverty were expanding in New Orleans. Between 1970 and 2000, the number of census tracts classified as “extreme poverty” tracts throughout the city increased from 28 to 40, with an estimated 28 percent of the city's population in poverty in 2000 (Rose 2011). The same transportation problems that impeded the low-income groups' ability to evacuate during Hurricane Andrew were found to be identical for the low-income segment in New Orleans that confronted Hurricane Katrina (Masozera et al. 2007).

Hurricane Katrina damaged 134,000 housing units in New Orleans, over two-thirds of the city's total housing supply. The destruction of housing was at the heart of the city's drastic decline in population. Prior to Katrina, New Orleans had 455,000 residents. However, this number dropped to 209,000 a year later. As of 2010, the New Orleans population had rebounded to 344,000; but this still was only 75 percent of the pre-Katrina level. Among those who had not returned, 118,000 were Black, and the city's overall Black population fell from 66.7 percent to 59.6 percent in the five years following Katrina (Rose 2011).

### **Women, Gender Minorities, and Failed Disaster Response Policy**

Most analysis of the local, state, and federal governments' failure to safely evacuate, shelter, and return New Orleans residents in the Katrina crisis has focused on class and race dimensions. However, the disaster was even more devastating for populations in which class and race as well as gender entwine—namely Black female and minority gender populations. Historically, women-centered policy and planning in emergency management by the city, state, and federal authorities have lacked women-centered policy models and planning. This deeply rooted policy omission has resulted in higher disaster dangers for women, their children, and their other dependents, as well as for members of LGBT communities. Women have pregnancy and childbirth-related physical limitations as well as the larger scope of responsibility for childcare. Feminist research on disasters has explained that this is why women express more intense perceptions of risks and protection requirements than men in mass disasters (Tierney et al. 2001; Fothergill 2004). Therefore, throughout

the hurricane, women and their children were faced with a far wider range of health and psychological dangers compared to the male population. Medical experts estimated that Hurricane Katrina affected approximately 56,000 pregnant women and 75,000 infants. For many among these populations, especially those abandoned in the Superdome and nonevacuated areas, water and food supplies were largely contaminated, shelter conditions unsafe, and clinical and medical care for women and infants on the whole dysfunctional (Callaghan et al. 2007).

As in other major US cities, women in pre-Katrina New Orleans had higher rates of poverty. In New Orleans, approximately 26 percent of women compared to 20 percent of men were living below the poverty line when Katrina struck. In addition, poor women, especially those living in public housing, were concentrated in carless households. Consequently, when evacuation buses sat paralyzed by the storm, many of these low-income women were stranded with children and other dependents in the city under flood conditions. Throughout the entire cycle of the disaster—warning, evacuation, shelter, and recovery—women and gender minorities faced increased threats to their personal security. One women’s health organizer in New Orleans describes the perilous days following Hurricane Katrina:

Issues of safety and shelter are intricately tied to gender. This has hit women particularly hard. It’s the collapse of community. We’ve lost neighbors and systems within our communities that helped keep us safe. (Flaherty 2007, 106)

Fear, abandonment, physical and psychological hardship, and forced relocation also struck the significant LGBT segment throughout greater New Orleans especially hard. Many in this population group also had special medical care and housing needs, such as those living with AIDS/HIV (Carter 2007; TransGrio Aug. 29, 2011).

Finally, gender-based violence (physical, psychological, and emotional violence) due to the gender of the victim tend to rise as disaster conditions and recovery phases are drawn out (Institute for Women’s Policy Research 2010b; hereafter IWPR). As was the case in Miami and the Hurricane Andrew crisis, family strains and divorce rates increased in the months following the hurricanes. The neglect of these widely-recognized disadvantaged female and gender minority populations by government authorities locally and nationally was an acute social injustice. This breach of public trust also confirms those policy scholars who have argued for the application of the international human rights model to the negligent government response to this disaster (Travis 2007; Harden et al. 2009). In their human rights assessment, they criticize the government’s failure to protect the New Orleans and other Gulf citizens harmed by the hurricane’s storm and floods and also single out the unjust role the government played in creating the preconditions for the storm’s devastation.

### **Black Entrepreneurial and Social Networks in Post-Katrina New Orleans**

Over the past nine years, the return and growth of the local Black entrepreneurial sector to its pre-Katrina level have remained far out of reach. Since Hurricane Katrina, the Black-owned business segment reflects the same limitations as those of 1992 Miami Black businesses. Prior to Katrina, Black-owned businesses in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast were concentrated in services, retail businesses, real estate, financial services, and



insurance. As with Black-owned businesses in Miami in the wake of Hurricane Andrew, the New Orleans Black businesses expected contracts from the reconstruction projects springing up throughout the area. However, in testimony before the Senate Committee on Small Business, Black business-owners gave many examples of being left high and dry. One Black owner of a construction firm remarked he had completed the appropriate registration on the FEMA web site as well as phoned companies seeking work to assist removing debris. However, he received no responses. “These guys,” he stated, “haven’t given me a single bite” (Aiello and Stein 2010, 139).

Furthermore, suspensions and breakdowns in government policies and programs to support minority businesses also hindered Black-owned businesses. The companies that could let contracts to small or specialty businesses did not have to adhere to federal policy protecting minority businesses. Only 1.5 percent of the \$1.6 billion in FEMA funds awarded to businesses went to minority businesses. Five percent was the amount normally required for minority businesses. Thus, the amount awarded was less than one third of normal funds expected (Aiello and Stein 2010, 139).

In August 2007, the Political and Economic Research Council (PERC), a nonprofit thinktank, surveyed businesses within the New Orleans and Biloxi-Gulf Port areas officially designated by FEMA as the Katrina disaster zone. It sampled 9,300 of these 800,000 businesses. At this time, Black-owned businesses in New Orleans and the Biloxi areas were concentrated in services, retail businesses, real estate, financial services, and insurance. About 81 percent of the business respondents were white, 6 percent Black, 3 percent Hispanic, 1.7 percent Asian, and 8.6 percent other ethnicities (Turner et al. 2007).

Over three quarters of the Black businesses reported their 2007 revenues were lower than those of the pre-Hurricane Katrina period. This contrasted with 56 percent of the White-owned businesses. Moreover, 60 percent of Hispanic-owned businesses had earnings that exceeded their revenues prior to the 2005 hurricanes. Operating capital for many Black businesses before Katrina had been drawn heavily from credit sources. However, after Katrina, even this source of business funds for Black businesses became reduced. About 40 percent of the Black business owners reported having difficulty obtaining credit, compared to 28 percent of the Hispanics and 25 percent of the whites. The inability of businesses to obtain credit was a major factor leading to business closures. The PERC survey estimated that Blacks who owned businesses had abandoned them at a rate 28 percent higher than Hispanic-owned businesses and 110 percent higher than white-owned businesses (Turner et al. 2007, 5, 10). Between 2003 and 2009, minority- or women-owned businesses in New Orleans certified to provide business at the city’s airport dropped from 2,003 to 164. One of the city’s oldest Black businesses, which had operated for over 120 years and typically employed 50 to 100 workers prior to Katrina, only recovered to 60 percent of its prestorm business level by 2009 (Liberto 2009).

Moreover, many of the city’s traditional Black middle-class professionals permanently relocated after Katrina. For example, as of late 2009, many Black professionals had yet to return to their homes in the East and Gentilly communities (White 2011; Vogt 2011). By then, the city had over 40,000 vacant properties and the highest murder rate in the nation. Over one-fourth of the blighted residential properties were unoccupied and surrounded by deteriorated blocks. In East, a traditional mainstay for the Black middle-class, about 70 percent of the residents had finally returned by 2011 but not many businesses. The returnees found a

community that had just one supermarket, many blocks of blight, depressed property values, and high numbers of transient criminals and squatters (Rose 2011; Vogt 2011).

The Black entrepreneurial sector in New Orleans was not recovering after Katrina because Black neighborhoods, their traditional social network and customer base, were not recovering. In housing, the government of New Orleans has made the demolition of public housing, the building of so-called mixed income housing, and the commercial growth to enhance the city's tourism industry high priorities. This development priority has come at the expense of rebuilding many of New Orleans' older, mostly Black neighborhoods, public housing, public education system, and cultural resources. Most telling has been the lack of sufficient low-rent housing and living-wage jobs. These conditions have made it impossible for thousands of New Orleans Black working-class to return to the city of their family and cultural heritage. Many thousands of poor, single Black mothers and work-ready Black men who had to flee New Orleans have become "permanent evacuees." In 2000, the city had an estimated 19,744 poor, single Black mothers. This dropped to 6,610 by 2008 (IWPR 2010a).

### **Conclusions and Discussion**

In recent studies of New Orleans in the years following Hurricane Katrina, researchers have chronicled neo-liberal nonprofit organizations that have used grassroots leaders in their initiatives to close public housing (Arena 2011; Adams 2013). These development trajectories reflect a new era of reflexive modernization and, more specifically, the nation's urban renewal policies of the late twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> Using public rhetoric of engineered modernization and "color-blind" politics, the actual impact of these initiatives has been the depopulation of the city's traditionally Black and working-class city sections as well as the elimination of these area's local public schools and public housing resources (Arena 2007; Flaherty 2008; Adams 2013).

Many New Orleans civic leaders, policy makers, and neighborhood groups intend to make future municipal governance structurally responsive to the widest range of neighborhoods. Until the formation of the Committee for a Better New Orleans (CBNO) in 2000, the city of New Orleans had made no systematic or sustained structure to incorporate community participation in the city's public governance. In recent years, the CBNO has advocated the community participation plan (or CPP) approach originated by Peter Dangerfield (Dangerfield et al. 2009). In 2008, the CPP model was taken up by strong neighborhood alliances in the city. In July of that year, some 150 citizens from the wide range of neighborhoods convened for a Citizen Participation Summit. The city passed a Master Plan in fall of 2008, and the CPP component was spelled out in one of the plan's sections (Chapter 15). In more recent years, the CPP approach has been moving further toward adoption by the city's formal planning agencies and into their official long-term plans (Citizen Participation Project 2014; CBNO 2014).

As for converting New Orleans, Miami, and similar large cities into sustainable urban centers, recently in New Orleans a number of expert groups have developed pilot projects and plans that can be adopted by the city.<sup>2</sup> The most comprehensive early plan for transforming post-Katrina New Orleans into a sustainable city has been the "GreeNOLA" plan developed by national experts convened by the Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation (LDRF). This plan laid out specific steps and goals for making New Orleans a world-class

sustainable city. The plan covers major functions of city life, including residential housing, energy systems, waste management, transportation, flood risk reduction, and environmental outreach and justice (LDRF 2008).

Yet the reality for New Orleans today is that its low-income and largely Black neighborhoods and cultural sites remain heavily damaged. Their public institutions such as schools, police services, health care, housing, small businesses, employment sectors, and recreation resources have not been adequately rebuilt or reorganized. Emergency preparedness and disaster recovery plans in cities like Miami and New Orleans still have fundamental deficiencies. These plans still have not significantly incorporated the social and entrepreneurial networks, women and mothers' interest groups, and social capital of Black and other poorer minority communities. Without the bridge that includes the human energy these minority subpopulations embody, the building of future disaster-prepared and sustainable New Orleans and Miami will remain a long way off.

What kinds of interventions will work in the near future? Our case histories suggest that demonstrations and other forms of protests, as well as long-term civil rights mobilization, can bring to public light disaster-related issues involving Black New Orleans and Black Miami neighborhoods and residents. Combined, these activities also expose unfair or unscrupulous decision-making processes, necessitating new, government-regulated policy changes. Neighborhood-level mobilization has resulted in tremendously important concessions for the poor and other marginalized victims of deficient housing and public services (Castells 1983). However, planning and obtaining goals in which public need, not strictly the marketplace, determine the way New Orleans and Miami more equitably allocate their public resources involves policy changes on a much broader city-wide and regional scale. The above case studies suggest that the CPP approach or similar models used by the widest range of unified, local-level racial, class, culture, and gender groups could serve as the vehicle or midwife for these urban policy changes. These neighborhood constellations, organized with conscientious and intelligent urban planning, can amplify efforts by both Black neighborhoods and social networks to bring lasting improvements in disaster preparedness as well as to create more equitable and sustainable city economies.

### Notes

1. On the limitations in Arena's interpretation of the neighborhood public housing issue, see Schuller (2013). Another noteworthy study pertains to the public housing movement for Blacks in post-World War II Chicago (Smith II 2012). Smith strongly criticizes Black middle-class civic, business, and political reformers for their actions to constrict public housing resources for poorer Blacks throughout their city. Smith characterizes these reformists as "class segregationists" in that they supported private market housing as their primary class ideal. However, contrary to Smith's interpretation, many distinguished Black social thinkers, from E. Franklin Frazier to Harold Cruse, have reasoned unified Black economic ownership (or what was once popularly called Black capitalism) in the Black urban and southern US is a pragmatic precondition for establishing any eventual socialist economic system for the national Black community. See, for example, Harold Cruse (1987) and Frazier (1957).
2. For example, the Sustainability Cities Collective (2013) has noted that New Orleans is the nation's third rainiest city, yet its current underground piping for draining runoff and floodwaters is wholly inadequate. It is estimated that the city would need \$4 billion to renovate and build some 200 miles of underground piping. Instead, planners with environmental expertise recommend the low-impact development approach for draining surface water (that is, bio-swales). They have demonstrated that sunken gardens would be one form of drainage that would be both functional and ecologically sustainable. Also, Global Green USA (2014) has implemented numerous sustainability projects in New Orleans and other cities that can serve as models for broad-scale sustainable building throughout New Orleans and other cities.

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**Symposium: Association for the Study of  
Black Women in Politics**



# **Introduction: Nobody Can Tell It All: Symposium on How Researching Black Women in Politics Changes Political Science: Methodologies, Epistemologies, and Publishing**

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This symposium emerges from two panels at the 2014 National Conference of Black Political Scientists: “Black Women and Politics: Issues, Challenges, Opportunities” as well as ongoing discussions about black women in politics at the Association for the Study of Black Women in Politics and other fora, such as the 2013 Women of Color in Political Science Pre-Conference at the American Political Science Association. These panels focused on issues of epistemology in conducting research on Black women and the particular challenges that Black women scholars writing about Black women in politics face in publishing their findings. We agreed at the outset that research on Black women’s lives shapes our methodological approaches and choices of methods and that bringing Black women’s studies into political science compels us to utilize a diverse array of postpositivist methods, some of which are more popular in other disciplines and may only now be gaining traction in political science. We sought to ask questions about the scope and range of these methodological shifts, how our epistemologies and concepts change, and how we publish research on Black women in politics. More specifically, roundtable participants were asked to respond to the following set of questions:

1. What are the different questions that are enabled when we center Black women in our research?
2. What are the different epistemological questions raised? How does a focus on Black women challenge and transform existing methodologies and methods within various subfields?
3. What are the challenges in publishing research on Black women and what are successful strategies to address them?

In further preparing this symposium, we also asked the contributors to reflect on things they had experienced while trying to publish research on Black women's political lives. We encouraged them to disclose in print stories about being threatened with "ambush" by faculty members who tried to dissuade them from writing about Black women. We asked contributors to discuss the psychic energy they have mustered and the survival strategies they have developed after being repeatedly told that research on Black women is "not credible research," is "anecdotal," and "lacks theoretical purchase." We asked contributors to reflect on the cultural work done to show the significance of our work through comparison with white women's political lives. Contributors explain which journals and presses publish research on Black women and how they go about translating their work to colleagues. Though none of the contributors could truly tell all of their experiences in this brief space, these reflections raise important questions about how scholarship on black women and politics continues, its scope and range, core principles, and research questions that animate the field.

Studying Black women's lives emerges from specific genealogies of scholarship that have not always been published or taken seriously in political science. As in-depth empirical research has demonstrated, other fields have created far more receptive intellectual homes for Black women in research, publishing, hiring, tenure, and promotion to full professorship. Academic journals and book publishers focused more on African American studies, African studies, sociology, history, and gender and women's studies have published more manuscripts in Black women's studies than all of the major political science journals and publishers in their century-long collective history. This is in the face of Black women's incredible level of political activity in the public sphere and scholarly contributions. In a context of the most extreme forms of institutionalized everyday violence, Black women's organizational and associational lives have played substantive and longstanding roles in political life in the Americas. The glaring gap between publication, scholarly recognition, hiring, tenure, and promotion to full on one hand and an extraordinary scholarly productivity on the other raises numerous questions. The most important concern is Black women's exclusion from being perceived as performing important cultural and ideological work in a society bent on reproducing the enslaved, indentured, and bonded status of black people. Such a society, by necessity, must render definitions of political activity that overlook black female mobilization, social capital, and legislative and nonlegislative attempts to influence public and private debates—across generations. In this *Symposium*, we reflect on these contradictions and examine how Black women in politics scholars deploy and defy disciplinary constraints of method, concept formation, and epistemology.

Centering Black women in our research in various political science subfields gives rise to new questions. In constitutional law research, we must consider the landmark cases brought by black women attentive to the intersectional forms of violence that shape our particular vulnerabilities in the workplace, which initiated legal change and policy reform on gender and sexual bias in the workplace. In public policy research, the cultural codes and mores that frame debates about the public good and common welfare are deeply shaped by a hidden curriculum of unstated assumptions about normal white lives and pathological black lives. Such a policy context leads to necropolitical social interventions that are rarely questioned by people trained in political science. When we examine Black

women's political work and associational lives, conventional methodologies have to be upended to make the range of political activities that Black women are involved in as legible as political. When survey data and definitions of the political have failed to ask Black women about their lives and what constitutes political action, such methodologies have to be discarded for ones more likely to identify what is happening with Black women.

In "Radical Black Feminism and The Fight for Social and Epistemic Justice," Nikol Alexander-Floyd underscores the need for a radical Black feminist frame of reference for research and scholarship on Black women and politics and Black gender politics. Alexander-Floyd advocates for attention not only to the imperative for work geared toward social justice but also to epistemic justice. She outlines several ways that epistemological challenges arise and, following philosopher Kristin Dotson, suggests a culture of praxis as a means of addressing them.

In her article, "The Secret Eye: Black Women in Politics and Publishing," Tiffany Willoughby-Herard addresses the central questions proposed for the roundtable and symposium by highlighting how they have manifested in her efforts to publish her work. She explains the often all-consuming efforts required to publish radical scholarship. She speaks to the particular struggle of publishing research that utilizes Black feminist theory in international contexts.

Brittany Lewis and Duchess Harris provide powerful case studies of how Black feminist approaches yield powerful outcomes in the classroom and in terms of activism, utilizing an intersectional analysis to examine pedagogy and the prison system, respectively. In "Yearning: Black Female Academics, Everyday Black Women/Girls, and a Social Justice Praxis," Lewis explains how radical, activist-minded Black women utilize political spaces in their quest for survival. In her work with Black girls, in particular, Lewis shows the importance of a dialogical, collaborative practice in pedagogy and activism. As she explains, "it is my role as a Black feminist politics scholar to disrupt what is accepted as the 'truth' about Black women's lives and allow the time and space for Black women/girls to speak for themselves and, in doing so, expose uneven landscapes of power."

Harris, in "Black Feminist Prison Politics," "considers the ways in which the gendered experience of incarceration, particularly when considered alongside other aspects of identity—such as race and class—present unique problems for women as they leave prison." Drawing on her work with the William Mitchell Reentry Clinic, Harris shows the importance of an intersectional analysis in meeting what clinic director Joanna Wooman explains are "'bio-psycho-social-legal' needs." Harris observes the ways in which Black women's parenting responsibilities and history of victimization, among other things, complicate Black women's experience of incarceration and process of reentry.

In the final contribution, "Black Women Political Scientists at Work: An Interview with Nadia Brown and Wendy Smooth," Nikol Alexander-Floyd talks with two political scientists noted for their work on Black women legislators about their entry into political science, as well as other matters relevant to their lives as Black feminist knowledge workers. Inspired by Claudia Tate's *Black Women Writers at Work* (1984), which highlighted interviews with Toni Morrison, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Sonia Sanchez, among others, about their inspiration for writing and their thoughts on their craft and the social and political milieu in which they produced their work, this conversation focuses on issues relevant to the recruitment of political scientists, their journey in the profession within

various institutional settings, and their thoughts on the practical aspects of producing research on Black political women and Black gender politics.

The *Symposium* does not exhaust all of the issues of concern regarding the politics of knowledge production, to be sure, but serves to expand our ongoing conversation surrounding the means by which and purposes for which we study Black gender politics and Black women as political actors.

## **Radical Black Feminism and the Fight for Social and Epistemic Justice**

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At the time of this journal's publication, it will be nearly 25 years since the late Dr. Jewell Limar Prestage (August 12, 1931–August 1, 2014) published her classic piece, "In Quest of African American Political Woman" (Prestage 1991). In this essay, Prestage points to the political life of Black women focused on resisting oppression along a number of fronts, most especially in terms of racism and sexism, emphasizing the need to examine "nontraditional" modes of political action. Accordingly, Prestage reviewed the literature on Black political women in the US during four periods: "pre-emancipation, Reconstruction, post-Reconstruction through World War II, and the Second Reconstruction" (89). The broadest historical analysis was in order because, as Prestage pointed out, ". . . throughout their existence on the American continent, African American women have been engaged in political activity, the nature of which has been determined by the legal and cultural circumstances they faced at the time" (89). Hence, although examination of Black women officeholders and Black women's voting behavior—political behavior we associate with the current era—are examples of participation that must be examined, Prestage called for robust analysis of Black women's resistance to slavery and their building of and participation in organizations and community-based institutions, among other modes of political activity. Today, scholars who remain "in quest" of Black women's politics continue to trace Black women's traditional as well as nontraditional politics and to utilize, as did Prestage, scholarly resources from other disciplines in that process.

Following the analytical tradition and charge issued by Prestage in her classic work, the Association for the Study of Black Women in Politics (ASBWP) and the National Conference of Black Political Scientists (NCOBPS) co-organized two roundtables for the 2014 NCOBPS annual meeting focused on questions of epistemology as it relates to studying Black political women, specifically within political science.<sup>1</sup> Participants were asked to address three questions: What are the different questions that are enabled when we center Black women in research? What are the different epistemological questions raised? What are the challenges to and successful strategies for publishing research on Black women? It is important to underscore that Black women and politics / Black gender politics as a subfield within political science is not something that can be clearly delineated with a specific framework that is intuitive or immediately knowable. Conducting research

on Black women and politics requires people to use different approaches, based on their ideological and intellectual priorities. As Hazel Carby (1987) suggests in the context of Black feminist criticism, Black feminist inquiry can be “regarded critically as a problem, not a solution, as a sign that should be interrogated, a locus of contradictions” (15). In this essay, I suggest that the study of Black women and politics and Black gender politics is best pursued from a radical Black feminist frame of reference (Alexander-Floyd 2007), utilizing concepts, methodological approaches, and methods drawn from Black feminist scholars, with a priority on social and epistemic justice.

As I have written elsewhere, a Black feminist frame of reference, drawn from interdisciplinary scholarship on race, gender, and inequality, provides the optimal basis for Black women’s and gender studies in political science. Drawing on the work of Mack H. Jones (2014), I contend that an explicitly Black feminist frame of reference should be used to guide research. Two key elements of this frame are an insistence on exploring the historically and contextually specific ways in which gender operates in the context of ideology, institutions, and social practices and a constitutive model of identity that examines race, gender, class, and other elements of identity as mutually constitutive and productive categories (McClintock 1995; Fernandes 1997; Harris 1999; Alexander-Floyd 2007; Gillman 2009). In what follows, I would like to elaborate further implications of a Black feminist frame of reference for the study of Black political women and Black gender politics.

First, a radical Black feminist frame of reference assumes or articulates a radical definition of identity politics. As I have argued elsewhere (along with Julia Jordan-Zachery) (Alexander-Floyd and Jordan-Zachery 2014), the term “identity politics” has been much maligned in women’s and gender studies and across the academy more generally. According to the caricature, identity politics and intersectional analyses of institutionalized power take as their overriding assumption a monolithic politics based on single aspects of identity. We can think here, for instance, of the longstanding debates concerning the category “woman.” But Duchess Harris (2001) has emphasized in her work on Black feminist political organizations that the origins of this term and the meanings assigned to it are fundamentally antagonistic to identity politics based on monolithic, essentialist understandings of race or gender. Harris underscores that the Combahee River Collective (CRC) coined the term “identity politics.” As conceived by this radical, Black feminist, socialist, lesbian group, identity politics was always meant to acknowledge and assess varied dimensions of the political forces that impact Black people’s lives, especially focusing on racism, sexism, social inequality, and sexuality. A focus on Black women grounded in this understanding of identity politics, therefore, challenges multiple dimensions of oppression.

Second, in addition to this radical definition of identity politics centered on communities, a radical Black feminist frame of reference sees politics as occurring and taking shape across multiple terrains of engagement, a point sometimes missed by those using intersectionality as a basis for social science research. Thus, intersectionality, a distinctive way of talking about identity politics developed in the work of Kimberle Crenshaw (Crenshaw 1989; Crenshaw 1990), should be seen as both an *idea*, or a specific concept outlined by Crenshaw, and an *ideograph*, or a concept that stands in for a more general ideological commitment to social justice oriented approach to scholarship on Black women



(Alexander-Floyd 2012). In this context, intersectionality functions ideographically, because it is paradoxically divorced from and yet caused to stand in for a broader commitment to elucidating the political dimensions of Black women's experiences that both predates and extends beyond Crenshaw's specific interventions. As a practical matter, many scholars, in an effort to better describe Black women's experiences and facilitate Black women's liberation, have criticized and built on earlier analytic formulations. As E. Frances White reminds us, intellectual criticism is essential to the development of Black feminist theory (White 2001). My own work has sought to understand identity and experience outside of dualistic frameworks, and I would certainly agree that the language of "intersecting" categories or the "simultaneity" of oppression implicitly evokes understandings of the operation of racism and sexism that do not capture the ways in which they are mutually constituted. But too often, scholars engage with intersectionality as an idea (and a severely truncated iteration of Crenshaw's concept at that), dismissing a concern for race and/or women of color's experiences and avoiding a deeper and sustained engagement with the work of Black and other women of color feminist scholars and their work. As a result, even though I utilize a constitutive model of identity, I do support intersectionality as an ideograph; I see my work building on Crenshaw's work, as well as the work of other scholars, such as Beale (1970), King (1988), and Prestage (1991), among others, engaged in a social justice-oriented approach to scholarship on Black women. As an ideograph, the project of intersectionality, as demonstrated by Prestage, has a much longer intellectual genealogy than is usually acknowledged or cited by critics of Crenshaw, whose preoccupation with the truncated version of her work reminds us of the longer history of subterfuge, erasure, and attack of Black women's intellectual interventions.

Fascinatingly, even those who invoke only Crenshaw in discussing attention to race, class, and other dynamics in research often neglect the finer details of her arguments—one such set of details is her discussion of structural, political, and representational dimensions (Alexander-Floyd 2012; Jordan-Zachery 2012). As Crenshaw (Crenshaw 1990) writes in her piece "Mapping the Margins," intersectionality operates structurally through the disparate impact of policies and material forces in the lives of Black women, politically in terms of Black and other women of color's issues being elided or marginalized within antiracist and antisexist politics, which do not grapple with "cross cutting" issues (Cohen 1999), and representationally in terms of how cultural symbols of Black womanhood impact and provide context for other social and political registers relevant to Black women's lives (see, e.g., Jewell 1993; Collins 1991; Jordan-Zachery 2008). She also emphasizes throughout that elites are often the implicit referents within women's organizations and Black organizations, a point that needs to be acknowledged and counteracted in order to develop a robust and effective progressive political theory and practice.

A Black feminist frame of reference incorporates radical Black feminists' priority on justice as a central political value and goal. The Combahee River Collective, for instance, was critical of the liberal feminist orientation of the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) from which it emerged. This commitment to justice informs questions of social change as well as epistemology. A key question for contemporary scholars of Black women and politics and Black gender politics is the extent to which our research questions are guided by a liberal feminist framework. Liberal feminism is marked by

a focus on formal measures of equality, such as numbers of elected officials and the removal of political and social barriers. Such a focus does not fundamentally advance the cause of social justice. Radical Black feminist thought requires a concomitant yet more radical framework for analysis, one that appreciates but goes beyond efforts to remove formal barriers to participation and issues of descriptive representation, seeking to transform institutional practices and material outcomes for Black women and their communities and society as a whole. Liberal feminism can yield a reform-oriented politics that focuses on getting a seat at the table as opposed to what it is that we do when we get there and how the actions of political actors impact the lives of people. Radical Black feminism defines the problems of institutional practices and material outcomes quite differently.

Liberal feminism, moreover, activates essentialist understandings of communities that undermine forthright analysis of in-group differences, particularly regarding class. The controversy surrounding former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice at Rutgers University-New Brunswick during spring 2014 provides a perfect example. Rice was slated to be the commencement speaker and to receive an honorary law degree. Students and faculty objected, indicating that the selection was made outside of the normal process, which involves a committee including faculty and students. Opponents further explained that Rice did not fit the criteria for the university's awarding of honorary degrees and that she facilitated war crimes during her service in the George W. Bush administrations. Some members of the Rutgers community, all opposed to Rice's politics, however, did not want her to suffer the disgrace of having an offer to speak at the graduation and receive an honorary degree revoked because she was a Black woman. Although they may have agreed with the political critiques and problems concerning the means of her selection, they were concerned, as well, that such claims were easier to make because of the negativity that is often all too easily attached to Black women. This occurred in environments where some of the same individuals who did not want to disinvite Rice were at work either not defending and/or actively undermining working-class and other Black women at this institution. Although all "sister citizens" (Harris-Perry 2011), even those of us who are scholars, may confront stereotypes and discrimination, our class or other types of privilege and ideological commitments mediate our experiences.<sup>2</sup>

Relatedly, it is not uncommon to hear commentators in academic and public discourse make note of historic "firsts," as if the achievement of a particular rank or title matters more than what people do with that rank or title. The breaking down of barriers of exclusion is deeply tied to institutional practices of inequality and domination. Yet the claims to historic "firsts" and arguments of exceptional achievement have got to be considered in a broad context that attends to ideological impact and other concerns. Arguing for support of a candidate or other political operative or leader primarily because the person would be the first and/or only one of a particular identity constitutes an essentialist model of identity primarily because of an assumed ideological congruence. Such arguments also function to displace serious interrogation of whether or not there is such an ideological congruence. As political scientists, we know that descriptive and substantive representation are not necessarily aligned, and we have become particularly more attuned to this as neoliberal definitions of identity as commodities fit for consumption and exchange inhibit more fully elaborated and complex debates about identity and political interests.

By way of example, the 2014 mid-term election season voters may elect the first black woman congressperson from the state of New Jersey as well as Utah, but we cannot equate the politics of Bonnie Watson-Coleman, a committed Democrat, with the conservatism of Mia Love, a Black conservative from Utah. To be sure, “[W]e must be historically specific and aware of the differently oriented social interests within one and the same sign community” (Carby 1987, 17). Our understanding of frameworks of identification, progress, and evaluation has to center on a very different algorithm, one attentive to in-group differences and focusing on social justice.

Discussion of President Obama’s administration bears similar scrutiny. How have his policy choices impacted Black communities in general and Black women in particular? Although some have begun to ask such questions and others have been critical of the Obama administration all along, there is relatively little commentary that is critical of the President from those politically left of center. To what extent have we, as scholars in particular, lost our critical edge by championing a president because he is Black and under attack? One glaring example of this has to do with the controversy surrounding the leaks regarding government surveillance by Edward Snowden. Writers such as William “Jelani” Cobb (2013) and political scientist and MSNBC show host Melissa Harris Perry (Harris-Perry 2013) actively defended the president in ways that failed to take seriously the critical issues concerning civil liberties and surveillance. Nevertheless, as Paul Street has stated, as it concerns assessing President Obama, it is necessary to “walk (criticize Obama from a left-democratic perspective) and chew gum (defend him against racial bigotry and outrageous rightist misrepresentation and abuse) at one and the same time” (Street 2009, xiii). It is possible to decry and resist the historic resistance that the president has received because of his race—the rise the Tea Party being one prominent example of such resistance—and, at the same time, ask critical questions about the impact of his policies on the Black communities, particularly Black women, upon which he has so heavily depended for support. “Black politics as if black women mattered,” as Black feminist political scientist Wendy Smooth so powerfully observes, necessitates showing Black female constituents a particular level of attention, respect, and accountability that has yet to be demonstrated by President Obama’s administration (Smooth 2013). This has been especially highlighted, of course, by the fact that the proposal he put forth with an explicitly racial framing is called “My Brother’s Keeper.” Although there has been resistance to this program by feminist activists and scholars, commentary has largely centered on including Black girls. There is a larger terrain of critique and resistance that entails delineating the ways President Obama’s prescriptions and initiatives such as My Brother’s Keeper support neoliberal agendas regarding devolution of responsibility for the social welfare of citizens from the federal government to state and local governments and, especially in this case, to the foundation community. It also affirms neoliberal notions of self-help, grounded in notions of Black cultural pathology that have been undermining Black politics and facilitating policies harmful to Black communities for decades. This focus on Black cultural pathology fixates attention on domesticity and appropriate gender norms in lieu of making demands on the State. Perhaps the clearest indications of the repressed context that shapes such policy is the inability of this administration to offer either meaningful economic strategies that might in some way improve Black people’s massive economic dispossession or enforceable antiviolence measures that would

implement policies largely advocated by Black communities that would stop the criminalization of survival strategies and address the gun manufacturing industries.

A radical Black feminist frame of reference to the study of Black women in politics and Black gender politics as a subfield must continue to take up the issue of epistemic justice. In recent years, feminist philosophers have paid special attention to issues of epistemic justice. In this light, Christie Dotson (Dotson 2011) usefully highlights “testimonial silencing” as one dimension of epistemic violence that undermines radical epistemic justice for oppressed groups. Testimonial silencing occurs in two manners: either through epistemic “quieting”—that is, a direct discrediting of particular subjects as knowers (242)—or through “testimonial smothering”—that is, the “self censoring” of knowledge producers according to the dictates, preferences, priorities, and abilities or awareness of their listeners (244). This “coerced silencing” occurs along three related fronts, namely: “1) the content of the testimony must be unsafe and risky; 2) the audience must demonstrate testimonial incompetence with respect to the content of the testimony to the speaker; and 3) testimonial incompetence must follow from or appear to follow from, pernicious ignorance” (244). Although most would argue that Black women today are not seen as lacking in intellectual abilities and, thus, do not experience testimonial silencing, the practical experiences of Black women in the academy, including Black women political scientists, suggest otherwise (Gutiérrez y Muhs et. al. 2012). Testimonial smothering, on the other hand, occurs, among other ways, when scholars are expected to place a priority on publishing in particular journals and with particular presses. Testimonial smothering is also evident when Black feminist knowledge workers in political science circumscribe their choice of methods, their topics for research, or the framing of their projects to disciplinary, as opposed to interdisciplinary, perspectives; this is especially problematic given that multidisciplinary engagement and interdisciplinarity in teaching and research have been seen as necessary to producing Black women’s and gender studies across the academy.

Testimonial smothering is tied, as well, to what Dotson refers to as “a culture of justification” (Dotson 2012). In “How is This Paper Philosophy,” Dotson (2012) argues that one of the reasons philosophy is inhospitable for under-represented groups is because of a culture of justification that only deems scholarship which follows standard approaches and canons as true “philosophy.” “Broadly privileging legitimation as an assessment tool for appropriate disciplinary conduct,” she writes, “creates a culture of justification within a given discipline. . . [where] a high value is placed on whether a given paper, for example, includes *prima facie* congruence with norms of disciplinary engagement, or justifying norms, and/or can inspire a narrative that indicates its congruence with those norms for the sake of positive status” (Dotson 2012, 7). Dotson suggests that the process of authorizing philosophical work according to particular prescriptions places a limit on what can be defined as philosophical. Similarly, in political science, we can see positivist and neo-positivist methodological assumptions as a limit to the study of Black women in politics. Scholars across disciplines emphasize the importance of postpositivist methodologies, even in the use of quantitative method. But Black feminist scholars in political science who operate from postpositivist perspectives, particularly if they ascribe to qualitative or interpretive methodologies, confront overt and subtle elements of this culture of justification in political science, from being told that they cannot study Black women and

politics and get a job, or that their work is not “real” political science, on the one hand to insisting that their work is not objective, that they demonstrate the replicability of their methods, or they provide “empirical” as opposed to “anecdotal” support when conducting qualitative research, pursuing narrative analysis, and/or producing theory, on the other. I have confronted and overcome all of these aforementioned viewpoints, and sadly, they are par for the course for Black feminist scholars in political science.<sup>3</sup> To the extent that our theorizing and research has to be consistent with disciplinary methodological priorities, a black feminist approach, which values interdisciplinary integration, is devalued. This becomes particularly relevant as Black feminist political scientists challenge or give a more nuanced view of longstanding concepts, such as the notion of “linked fate” (Dawson 1995) or measures of “racial consciousness” (McCormick and Franklin 2000) generated by quantitative approaches. Black feminist political scientists have raised questions about the nature of “crosscutting” issues that may not be taken up as “consensus” issues in Black politics (Cohen 1999) and the ways in which racial consciousness is inherently classed and gendered (e.g., Alexander-Floyd 2004; 2007).

The elevation of disciplinary stars as exemplars for others within particular fields is another means through which this culture of justification operates. Wilbur Rich (2007) assesses the racialized hierarchy within political science in particular and academia more generally, underscoring the special challenges that attend Black political scientists. He notes that academia has “super stars,” or scholars “whose reputation for scholarship extends beyond the bounds of his or her host institutions” (47). Black superstars do not have equity in relation to their white counterparts, but they do have influence. According to Rich, one finds “discipline stars” and “intellectual celebrities” among Black superstars (48–49). He suggests, “The best survival strategy for a black newcomer is to accumulate as much academic capital as soon as possible. Not every black newcomer will become a superstar, but he or she should work extremely hard until a judgment is made otherwise” (50). To the extent that what he lays out is merely descriptive, it is arguably accurate; as a prescription for advancement, it undermines intellectual creativity and a priority on social justice-oriented research. As Rich also points, out community activism and engagements are not necessarily regarded highly in mainstream frameworks (49). Scholars who are deemed to be disciplinary “superstars,” to the extent that their status is achieved by submitting to disciplinary modes of justification, can wittingly or at times unwittingly be used to limit the types of topics that are considered worthy for research and the methods by which they can be studied. Scholars are often “ranked” or compared with others during the tenure process (49). This, of course, has particularly deleterious effects for the study of black women in politics. It also becomes a mechanism for not engaging broadly with the works of scholars within particular fields. One commentator who read some of my work, for instance, stated that I did not use the work of Black political scientists, highlighting the work of two scholars in particular that they thought were not utilized sufficiently. The work of literally dozens of other Black political scientists I discussed were not visible, because these particular readers were not familiar with their work; still, they felt knowledgeable enough to comment based on their understanding of two “superstar” figures celebrated within mainstream political science. The superstar system exacerbates the problems endemic to the way that knowledge is produced in the academy through ideologies of “expertise” and “meritocracy,” as it does not compel decision-makers at

presses and journals and on academic personnel committees to wrestle with their own lack of familiarity with the genealogies that Black women in politics scholars are carefully excavating and deploying. In other words, the superstar system replicates the obsession with critiques of truncated knowledge, which is taken out of context, only half-read, and then claimed as a commodity.

The answer to this problem, as Dotson suggests, is a “culture of praxis”—that is, an emphasis on research that is directly relevant to people’s lives and that is open to methodological plurality and “multiple canons.” The culture of praxis that Dotson describes is consistent with Black radical feminist politics and the frame of reference I discuss and arguably describes much of the emphasis of contemporary work on Black women and politics and Black gender politics. Michele Berger’s *Workable Sisterhood* (2004), for instance, uses ethnography, integrating women’s studies and political science literatures, to produce a powerful study of the political innovations and social leadership by stigmatized and socially de-valued Black women with HIV/AIDS. She expands our understanding of the political by demarcating types of agency exercised by women who experience what she refers to as “stigmatized intersectionality.” Ruth Nicole Brown utilizes narrative analysis in her work and focuses on the politics surrounding Black girlhood and the use of art to study and engage issues relevant to Black girls, women, and communities (e.g., Brown 2007; 2013). Wendy Smooth (2006) examines the importance of intersectionality in assessing electoral politics and the gendered and raced norms of the institutions in which Black women officials operate. More recently, she has explored blogging as a context for understanding political perspectives on Michelle Obama as a political figure. Julia Jordan-Zachery (2008) uses critical discourse analysis to examine the impact of symbols of Black womanhood on social policy, and her current work examines scripts to expose the “silences” in Black political engagement as it concerns Black women. Tiffany Willoughby-Herard (2008) uses Third World Feminist scholarship to understand Black women, gender politics, and rape as a mechanism of war in “The case of the Obstinate Woman,” which examines a case study in Frantz Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth*. These are but a few examples of scholars whose work has continued the “quest” to understand Black political women in the way Prestage describes in her classic essay—and yet the preoccupation with truncated and superficial renderings of identity politics and intersectionality results in their work not being engaged in a thorough-going and serious fashion outside of the Black gender studies scholars who actually conduct research on Black women in politics.

Interdisciplinary spaces, such as Black, American, and women’s and gender studies, have been particularly important in forging this culture of praxis, including in political science. Whether through full or joint appointments in these other fields, or publishing in journals in these areas, Black feminists have used these interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary spaces to produce politically relevant work that, in many cases, pushes the boundaries of traditional disciplines and/or integrates knowledge from women’s and gender studies and other areas in transgressive ways. Patricia Hill Collins is a prime example of such a scholar. As she has stated publicly, she chose to work and be situated in Black studies units for over two decades. “Working in African American Studies gave Patricia [Hill Collins] the intellectual space to question the boxes that people generally use to frame issues within disciplinary fields”

(Higginbotham 2008). A prolific scholar, she has produced numerous influential books and articles, the most popular of which, *Black Feminist Thought* (Collins 1991), has been utilized across disciplines, including political science (e.g., Simien 2006). Although there can be a “lag time” (McCall 2005) in terms of the impact of interdisciplinary fields like women’s and gender studies in traditional disciplines such as political science, the work of interdisciplinary scholars, situated in interdisciplinary spaces, has been profound. Some scholars, such as philosopher Elizabeth Grosz or sociologist Terry Kershaw, see themselves as largely operating within new interdisciplinary spaces, such as women’s and gender studies and Africana Studies, respectively. Others, such as Linda Alcoff, take a “both/and” approach—that is, they stay connected to traditional disciplines in various ways but also operate within interdisciplinary spaces.<sup>4</sup> Notably, the work of feminist scholars such as Hill Collins and Alcoff have been groundbreaking not only within women’s and gender studies but also within the traditional disciplines in which they were educated, and both have served as presidents of their flagship associations within their respective, traditional disciplines. Interdisciplinary work produced within interdisciplinary spaces is both useful and necessary to cause inter(disciplinary) trouble in disciplines such as sociology and political science. In a similar vein, Smooth noted during her keynote address at a 2013 women of color preconference at the American Political Science Association’s Annual Meeting in Chicago that some suggested that her taking an appointment in women’s and gender studies indicated that she had “left the discipline.” Smooth usefully problematized this idea, indicating that, while she was very much still a political scientist, the discipline of political science was not “big enough to hold her” or her work. The import of her work, as that of other feminist political scientists, were relevant for, but exceeded, the boundaries of political science as traditionally conceived. These expansions, transgressions, and relocations of intellectual boundaries are often reflected in the different places in which our bodies and appointments are located, the places in which our scholarship and activism manifest, and the impact we seek to have for our work. This has been necessary to making interdisciplinary trouble. Although interdisciplinary work is also possible for those situated within traditional political science departments, it is enabled and made possible by the new political science, feminist, and other radical scholarship produced in other spaces within universities, conferences, journals, and other sites.

As we continue to develop intellectual space to study Black women and politics and Black gender politics, questions of epistemology—of what we can know and the means by which we can know it—remain of paramount importance. Most scholars studying Black political women and Black gender politics grapple with these questions of necessity as they map out their research agendas and work to get their scholarship published and perspectives heard within and without the academy. A commitment to a radical Black feminist frame of reference pursuing Black political women requires greater and more concerted attention to the politics of knowledge production, including the means of such production and the practices of reception by scholarly communities resolutely unwilling to examine nontraditional modes of political activity, marshal social justice approaches to research, and fully engage with the pragmatic, visionary scholarly work produced about Black women’s political lives over the past two centuries.

### Notes

1. Dr. Prestage is Honorary Founder of the Association for the Study of Black Women in Politics. When called to ask if she was willing to be designated in this role, she pointed out with great confidence, “Well, I did *found* the field.” Always instructive, Dr. Prestage’s statement was an example of how she was deliberate about not being professionally invisibilized.
2. Melissa Harris-Perry argues that Black women can be understood as a group whose experiences of race-gender oppression trump class. In this way, she articulates a form of standpoint theory that trades on essentialist ideas that cut against the grain of a constitutive model of identity.
3. The departmental brass in graduate school informed me that I would not be able to find employment by majoring in Women and Politics and minoring in Public Law and Africana Studies, my chosen subfields. When I graduated, I received three offers for postdocs and more job offers than anyone else in my department at the time.
4. Linda Alcoff relayed this perspective during a roundtable I chaired at the 2012 annual meeting of the National Women’s Studies Association in Atlanta. At a conference in 2007 at Rutgers University, Elizabeth Grosz noted that her work is not legible to members of traditional philosophy departments and indicated that she does not focus her attention on involvement with and/or in traditional intellectual or spatial philosophy locations. Terry Kershaw, similarly, has discussed, as has Molefi Asante, “disciplinary suicide” as a desired (if not always achievable) option for some Africana studies scholars.

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## **The Secret Eye: Black Women in Politics and Publishing**

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The question of how long it has taken me to get work into print that explicitly focuses on Black women is painful because I have struggled to publish some papers for over a decade. One example that readily comes to mind is an article, “Dark Prism,” which I wrote while conducting a larger research project on class, race, and gender in the making of social and political order in South African politics. “Dark Prism” has had a life of its own and a very long one, shaped in part by my political commitment to understanding the world through black feminism and the ways in which this political commitment is treated in the world of scholarly publishing.

To conduct my research in South Africa, I have honored a political responsibility to avoid some of the more naïve and blatantly colonial writings by African Americans in search of “home” in Africa. My work centered the complex political affinities developed through a century of anticolonialism, Pan-Africanism, Black internationalism, Black feminist internationalism, and third world leftism. Before I went to South Africa the first time, I worked very hard to learn the lessons from Alice Walker’s “Possessing the Voice of the Other” (Nako 2004), Richard Wright’s contradictory commitment to modernization and anti-imperialism (Gaines 2001), and Du Bois’s own “Loud Silencing of Black South Africa” (Chrisman 2004) so that I might engage with fellow activists, artists, and scholars through hard-won political solidarities. This political obligation extended to my understanding that I had to avoid displacing Black South African women of my generation, who were likely to finish graduate school right around the same time as me and break endemic institutional barriers in higher education and publishing there (Mabokela and Magubane 2004). I used the methodologies common to “White life” writing (African American creative fiction), “playing in the dark” (Black feminist literary criticism), and deploying “the secret eye” (Black feminist historical methods) to achieve these objectives. I made my objects of study White people, White nationalism, global Whiteness, scientific racism, and segregationist philanthropy (Roediger 1998; Fikes 1995; DuCille 1994; Morrison 1992; Painter 1990). Through operationalizing these political commitments and making these methodological choices, I intervened into the “politics of sisterhood” (Oyewumi 2004) that grants White US-trained Africa-scholars more credibility than everyone else and that gives limited access—but access just the same—to Black Americans to shape

knowledge production about South Africa (Vinson 2012; Brooks 2008; Robinson 2004; Culverson 1997; Bunche [1992] 2001).

In both the “Dark Prism” essay and in my larger research agenda, I have examined how Black feminist gender and sexuality scholars’ concepts, thinking, methods, and associational lives have been potent analytics for understanding: 1) particular vulnerabilities facing Black peoples that cross space and time, 2) how tropes about racialized and gendered poverty have been used to shore up failing projects of postapartheid/postslavery national rejuvenation, and 3) forces that structure Black life and death (Willoughby-Herard 2014; Perry 2013; Kihato 2013; Isoke, 2012; Gore 2012; Gqola 2010; Sharpe 2010; Brooks 2008; Davies 2008; Da Silva 2007; Gasa 2007; Caldwell 2006; Goldsby 2006; Hancock 2004; Abrahams 2004; Oyewumi 2003; Erasmus 2001; Bhattacharyya 1998; Hartman 1997; Sharpley-Whiting 1997; Twine 1997; Bobo 1995; Atkins 1993; Painter 1990; Morrison 1987; Bambara 1980). Black feminist, African feminist, and African gender studies scholars provided more adequate and ethical renderings of the postapartheid world of South African social theory, literature, and political writing. Additionally, their analyses prompted me to seek out struggle writing that drew on Black feminist treatments of domestic labor, Black feminist analyses of the permanence of the sexualization of Black women and girls, and Black feminist concepts about the process through which disappearing and repudiating Black women’s social value and role in the economy have been marked as development, progress, and political achievement (Marchetti 2014; Sharpless 2013; Nakano Glenn 2012; Boris and Klein 2012; Harris 2011 and 2011a; Ally 2009; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2007; Hong 2006; Romero 2002; Chang 2000; Twine 1997; Dill 1993; Cock 1990, Meer 1984). Such insights have implications for White people and how White worlds of knowing police and contain Black knowing. Indeed, some of these relations of power and violence have been taken up in militant White women’s writing and disavowed by postapartheid White women’s writing.

The feedback on this paper has been hard to stomach. It’s been rejected because its object of study is not Black women, though it foregrounds Black women’s concepts and epistemologies and thinking about violence, gender, and sexuality in the White domestic sphere. I use these epistemologies to categorize and index the politics of White womanhood posing militant antiapartheid White women and what they have contributed to culture against White women’s cultural analysis that insists on the achievement of a history-less/race-less present. My application of Black feminist politics, concepts, and ethical systems to explore how a matrix of race, class, and gender violence was being deployed and disrupted by modern day female “White writing” has been beyond the scope of what many people want to address (Coetzee 1988). “Dark Prism” has been rejected because journal editors were frightened to publish a criticism of the White women writers and social theorists it took issue with. It has been rejected by friends and by enemies. I have submitted it to critical theory and social thought journals, to disciplinary social science journals, three autonomous and independent Black journals—two diasporic and one US-based—but nobody really felt that it fit well enough. I have presented it at major Research I universities and at four unique conferences for different audiences, as well as at invited talks for undergraduate student classes. I have circulated it to literary critics and received feedback countless times. It’s been read by my women of color writing group in different incarnations now three times over the past eight years. Once, it served

as my job talk and won me a Research I tenure track job offer, but until Summer 2014, it never found a home for publication. It is under revision for a 2015 publication date having been invited for submission by a colleague. Not being able to find a home for it for such a long time made me very unhappy.

I wrote the original version of the paper and presented it at an invited postdoctoral fellowship event at a Research I university where two among the bevy of hopeful young presenters would eventually receive a postdoctoral job offer. I was not selected. This was not hard, as the campus was not in a very nice place and, though I would have had amazing colleagues, it was clear that Black women faculty on the campus were not in solidarity with each other or with any female applicants. One criticism that I have received from the dozens of people who have seriously engaged with it happened during that first incarnation of the paper—from a Black woman faculty member who I had known as a fellow poet during my first year of research in South Africa in 1999.

In addition to being a place where I conducted political historical research, South Africa was a place of concrete political conscientization for me having been raised during an era in which Black Detroit was aflame with the antiapartheid movement and internationalist politics. What I have now come to understand as a particularly successful form of diasporic and translocal political education is that I grew up in what Cynthia Young has called the “US third world left” (Young 2006). Though the feedback I received on that paper wasn’t wholly about my being a non-South African, ironically, my insistence on criticizing postracial discourse came out of deep familiarity with the ways in which racial Blackness articulates with how nation states seek to mis-remember and suppress the struggle to end racial domination. This is often times mediated through notions of domestic space and extensions of White reproductive futures. Though trained as a comparative politics scholar who is supposed to agree that the political institutions that shape South Africa are native to it alone and not global formations that undermine the very concept of the nation, I knew that the political institutionalization of anti-Blackness was a universal dimension of modernity. As a formally trained comparativist, I should have been able to believe in postapartheid South Africa and its transition to democracy. All of this believing would be possible, perhaps, if I knew nothing about the lives of Black women in the modern world. The most basic empirical attention to Black women’s lives and particular vulnerabilities shatter whatever we might begin to claim about the end of racial subordination and the coming of racial peace. As I am a formally trained scholar of political theory, it is clear to me that the concepts that undergird political life, its principles, and basic institutions rely fundamentally on disavowing Black suffering (Jordan [1980] 2005). Black women rear communities where the murder and incarceration of their loved ones has been naturalized (Jordan 1989). Black women are criminalized for violating segregation and immigration law to put their children in suburban public schools (Kihato 2013; Muhammad 2014). Black women pursue landmark legal cases to secure their rights to public water and electricity (Willoughby-Herard 2014). Black women hold transnational water company executives hostage (literally) in order to secure access to water and urban space, among so many other strategies of survival (Perry 2013).

My positionality as someone raised by proponents of Black internationalism, third world leftism, and at least three generations of civil rights activism in my community and inside my household meant that I considered myself an insider to the South African struggle,

albeit a respectful and distant insider. By the time I was presenting the paper on South Africa, I had been studying South African politics for two decades, since before I went to high school. Before I could recite the names of all the fifty US states, Soweto was part of my political geography, not by accident but by design. Not only did I understand myself as a “sister from another mother” but also as a sibling-in-struggle, what Oyèrónké Oyewumi refers to as “one of my mother’s children”—those who shared the womb experience of being born in a given historical time through a particular set of conditions that explains much about our shared social obligations (Oyewumi 2003, 4). Having been born in the US “household,” my elders took great pains to explain that my primary family members lived elsewhere and our relationships and affiliations were forged through deliberate ties, a set of conditions, and the mutual choice to prioritize each others’ political interests.

Black Detroit in the 1980s and 1990s, in addition to being a community wounded by a lack of adequate public health response to the crack epidemic, HIV/AIDS, and rampant gun violence, was also a city made whole by the legacy of the Black nationalism of Rev. Albert Cleage and the ideologies of Black working class self-defense and communalism among the stigmatized and abandoned that showed up in Black trade union organizing and Black credit unions coordinated by Rev. Charles A. Hill (Berger 2006; Dillard 2007, 13, 241). Black Detroit was also a place whose spatial geographies of Blackness were shaped by the Pan-African and militant sentiments of civil rights leaders like Rosa Parks (Theoharis 2009), by the insistence that Black people claim the public sphere and the actual streets in the city as by Prophet James Francis Jones (Retzliff 2002), and by the sometimes incomprehensible but necessary support and advocacy for an independent Africa by the Michigan governor, G. Mennen Williams (Noer 2009, 239–242). The South African dissident and liberation theology liturgist Rev. Mangedwa Nyathi and the civil rights theologian and pastor Dr. Charles G. Adams used the Hartford Memorial Baptist Church pulpit and community organizations to explain the practice of civil rights struggle and liberation militancy globally (LaRue 2002; Adams 2002). Their speeches and political ideas demonstrated that antiapartheid and antislavery consciousness were pieces of an elaborate tapestry of Black internationalist thinking. So while the South Africa of my mind was a place of reverie, the hoped for Lan Guinee-Eden, figured in the art in my home (Benson 1992), South Africa was also a place of deep reverence for the political commitments that animated enduring stories about Igbo-landing and people who could fly and people who knew how to fight back and win (Okorafor 2009; Dash, Hooks, and Bambara 1992; McDaniel 1990). My city was etched by independent Black community organizations and an associational life that constituted Black consciousness and Blackness itself around a dizzying array of possibilities, from the Shrine of the Black Madonna bookshop, to the Grace Lee and James Boggs Educational Center, to the Black militant academics and lawyers who landed in Oakland and Berkeley and San Francisco to use the Afro-American Society to help launch the Black Panther Party for Self Defense (Kelley 2000). Such actions as Wildcat Strikes and the 1943 and 1967 Rebellion cannot be understood outside the context of an associational life that took translocal, cross-generational organizing and political education of boys and girls seriously (Shaw 2009). More than the American South or the Northern city my family had migrated to, my church community and my parents in Detroit helped me understand that South Africa and its political life and the struggle against apartheid were central to my basic identity as a Black person.

When I went to South Africa the first time, I planned never to return to the United States. I had not said this to my family but my local kin ties were weak and disorganized. Crack, HIV/AIDS, and the relentless welfare queen news headline had taken too much from me and my family—I knew I wasn’t a person in America and I hoped that in South Africa I might be.

One of the first people I met while in South Africa that first year was also a poet and a graduate student. At that point, we had published roughly about the same amount of poetry in small, mostly ephemeral local venues. But as a budding political scientist, I was not someone who believed that poetry could be your main thing, the bread and butter as it were—without some recourse to political analysis. I was oh so very wrong. So I wrote poems and went to poetry readings, all the while attending classes, spending months in the archives, and working on research projects and working for an interdisciplinary journal published by sociologists with humanistic leanings and critical social science commitments. I read my own poetry in the home of the woman who was one of the Black faculty members at the above-mentioned Research I campus as an invited postdoctoral fellow applicant. She told me that my research on South African racial, class, and gender dynamics sought to return that country to the bad old days. She insisted that when I wrote about Black women and White women and the enduring racial politics of feminized Black labor, I hurt the dream of a newborn South Africa. By applying Black feminist precepts and analyzing a postapartheid literary culture that continually taught me that “political transition” was a polite way to say that not enough had or would change, my former poetry friend let me know I was talking too much about race, gender, class, and enduring violence for the present. Other friends had the same reaction to the essay that day. They implied that the essay had resulted from bitterness, or because I lacked White friends or because I was socially isolated in a cultural nationalist community. No one wanted to publish a Black woman political scientist examining White female raciality and the silencing of racial Blackness. No one wanted to publish research that began with a poem I had written about African philosopher Emmanuel Eze and ended with an index of White writing by White women in the postapartheid moment. And no one wanted to publish a paper that suggested that struggle writing should not be discarded in order to create the postapartheid present. Nobody knew really what to do with it. Though many people had heard it and read it, somehow it wasn’t accepted for publication. I ranged too widely across postcolonial feminism, transnational feminism, and Black feminisms and their attention to embedded and enduring violence.

I stand by the work, even still. It has been agonizing to see people come around over a decade later to these things which I saw in the institutionalization of postapartheid social theory and cultural discourse. It definitely did not fit as political science or history or cultural studies because the intellectual formations that it named were peopled by protected individuals whose livelihoods mattered. Unfortunately, at the time, my livelihood and the worlds that I perceived and knew how to navigate did not matter or deserve the dignity and protection that comes with scholarly publication. Publishing scholarship that deploys Black women’s concepts and methodologies about class, poverty, race, gender, and nation can face a particularly vexed journey, especially when the object of study is not Black women themselves. In the case that I examine here, a research article that took over a decade to find a refereed academic journal that would accept it for publication,

I wrestled with attempts to provincialize concepts developed in the context of Black women's scholarly traditions. Moreover, I discussed my own navigation of the "politics of sisterhood" and how Black women must navigate multiple scholarly communities when conducting international research that has policy implications for other Black women's lives beyond their own national borders. Finally, this essay reflected on the possibilities of correcting histories of the gendered and sexualized racialization of poverty by centering radical internationalist Black women's knowledge production and theory. Since the folding of Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, examining the dilemmas in scholarly publishing have become even more necessary and urgent. When Black women scholars take up Audre Lorde's wisdom about "bringing all of myself to the table" and Anna Julia Cooper's insistence that "when and where I enter my race enters with me," they do not all survive. I learned to speak (and eventually to publish) "remembering we were never meant to survive" (Lorde 1978) and our theories about White domination were certainly not to be presented as empirically valid. My path called me to bear poetry and politics as twin torrents of fire. In the places where my dignified politics was assassinated, my memory and the poetry of these political philosophies survived—especially when constrained to being published in secret and nowhere at all.

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# Yearning: Black Female Academics, Everyday Black Women/Girls, and the Search for a Social Justice Praxis

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*"To ensure human survival everywhere in the world, females and males organize themselves into communities. Communities sustain life—not nuclear families, or the 'couple,' and certainly not the rugged individualist. There is no better place to learn the art of loving than in community." (129)*

—bell hooks, *All About Love*

In "Defining Black Feminist Thought," Patricia Hill Collins (2000) contends that "one key role for Black women intellectuals is to ask the right questions and investigate all dimensions of a Black women's standpoint with and for African American women" (33). The production of Black feminist thought is predicated on this inter-relationship, where the taken-for-granted knowledge that is shared among Black women is questioned, analyzed, and interpreted to produce theoretical and practical knowledge that has the potential to transform our collective consciousness and the world. Hill Collins goes further to suggest that the potential dangers for Black feminist intellectuals working within the ivory towers are isolation from communities of Black women and pressure to separate their work from political activism. This set of objectives and potential dangers has become exacerbated for those who do not shy away from the importance of bridging scholarship and activism, who try to produce collaborative knowledge with communities outside academia.

However, despite this persistent tension between the production of academic knowledge and the everyday material realities of Black women's lives, I continue to believe that when Black women are depicted as objects of study rather than empowered community participants, it is my role as a Black feminist politics scholar to disrupt what is accepted as the "truth" about Black women's lives and allow the time and space for Black women/girls to speak for themselves and in doing so expose uneven landscapes of power. In doing so, I argue that research that centers on Black women enables different questions and unearths different answers to the state of the current conjuncture, in which the violences of inequity are both physical and epistemic. This simply means that dominant discursive formations have created inhospitable social and political environments for certain marginalized groups by disavowing voice, personhood, and claims to citizenship.

### **From Silence to Critical Consciousness: Black Girlhood and the Fear of Death**

In February 2014, I entered my third year as the Program Coordinator for the Hope Community Girls Empowerment Movement (GEMS) and announced the beginning of our first five-week Political Leadership Program, which aimed to encourage high school-age Black girls to consider the importance of political leadership, both grassroots and electoral. In the history of the state of Minnesota, we have only elected two Black women to the Minnesota House of Representatives. The first was South Minneapolis native Neva Walker in 2000 and the second was Saint Paul resident Rena Moran in 2010. I had a chance to intern with former representative Walker when I was a sophomore in college and distinctly remember the isolating feeling of the state office building as one of only three Black women working there at the time. I also recall the moments when former representative Walker would close her door and “get real.” In those collaborative exchanges, I began to question what motivated Walker to participate in such an isolating political space where it was all too common for rural white (mostly male) elected officials to spout racially-charged and homophobic rhetoric on the house session floor. She would always say that she decided to transition from community organizing to elected office to bring marginalized communities back to the capitol, because we were being left behind. However, now seven years later and a doctoral candidate in the Feminist Studies program at the University of Minnesota and Program Coordinator for the GEMS, I am still engaged in creating collaborative action partnerships with Black women/girls not only to probe what motivates Black women/girls to place themselves in vulnerable political spaces for the betterment of their communities but also to begin to understand how our collective experiences resisting the politics of inequality informs our activist identity formation and effects our emotional and physical health.

At the first GEMS group session on Saturday, February 8, ten high school-age Black girls from across the Twin Cities watched and discussed the film *Chisholm 72': Unbought and Unbossed*. During our discussion of the film, I asked the group, “What do you think of when you think of politics?” One girl immediately stated, “Power,” and after prolonged moments of silence, another girl stated, “I think of death.” This young lady was Cadaja Brown, a senior from Central High School in Saint Paul, Minnesota. After Cadaja’s statement, most of the girls looked perplexed. I asked Cadaja to say more, and she explained to the group that when she thought of politics, she thought of the death and assassination of Black leaders throughout the Civil Rights Movement. A powerful moment indeed, I stepped in to provide the group a brief history because it was clear that not all the girls understood Cadaja’s reference. However, they all expressed a subconscious fear of censorship and death that had been deeply engrained in their shared histories as Black women/girls.

In his book, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (1982), Orlando Patterson intervenes into the study of slavery by arguing that the distinguishing feature of American chattel slavery was the slaves’ “social death.” By this, Patterson meant that the slave was literally dehumanized and stripped of any forms of personhood to the point where his or her survival was based solely on the master’s discretion. According to Patterson, slave codes then came to represent the ways that the discursive logics of the law ensured the complete dependence and social isolation of the slave. In a similar fashion,

Black feminist geographer Ruthie Gilmore argues that any deliberate action, discursive or otherwise, that results in the premature death of marginalized groups can be defined as racism, particularly if it's sanctioned by the state through laws and institutions (Gilmore 2007). Lisa Cacho pushes these articulations a step further and suggests that social death is a *de facto* status crime, where:

. . . a person does not need to *do* anything to commit a status crime because the person's status is the offense in and of itself . . . that is, a *de facto status crime* does not refer to illegal activity; rather it refers to others' perception that a person of a certain status is certain to commit future crimes and may well have already committed crimes unwitnessed. (Cacho 2012, 43) (emphasis is original)

The fear of premature death as articulated by the young Black girls in my political leadership program falls in line with the ways that critical race and gender scholars have discussed the physical, psychological, and epistemic violence imposed onto marginalized bodies by the state as always already criminal and abject. However, the moment where these young Black girls broke their silence about that fear of censorship and institutional annihilation also became the moment where we could collectively begin to share our own political perspectives in a safe and supportive environment. As the group convener and resident Black feminist politics scholar, I also used this opportunity to expose the group to multiple understandings of the "political" as not just wrought with a history of pain and loss but also of spirited struggle for the collective good and humanity of Black people living in the shadows of American politics. During these exchanges, I would always find ways to reflect on my experiences building collaborative community action partnerships with local Black women leaders and activists to illustrate how I had embraced the challenge that organizing intellectuals such as Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, and Renato Rosado have proposed: becoming implicated in the exchange and the conflict and reinvention of personal and collective identities in a way that is locally responsible and globally engaged.

### **From Theory to Social Justice Praxis: Community Action Partnerships with Everyday Black Women**

When building collaborative community action partnerships with local Black women leaders and activists, I believe that it is imperative that I do not simply observe and interpret but also struggle in disagreement and build strategic alliances with women resisting the privatization of their communities knowing that they may very well encounter public censorship for their risky tactical maneuvers.

Disagreement conditions the possibility for those who would otherwise not be seen as endowed with the ability to make political enunciations to claim that endowment, and thus to articulate a radically different understanding of social reality than that which would characterize them as incapable in the first place. (Bouchard 2012, 11)

By creating a space where dialogic exchange and disagreement is expected, I invite a community of Black women whose situated knowledge has been categorized as illegitimate by dominant discourse to embrace their multiple ways of being in the world (Hill-Collins, 2000). First, we resist the essentialist notion that all Black women share the same political views. Second, we provide our alternative readings of specific events, actions, histories, and popular discourses to reclaim a sense of ourselves, to rearticulate our individual and collective politics, and to begin to identify sites for future action. This

aspect of my methodological approach aims to honor the grounded practices of empowered community participants who are struggling to better their daily lives amid a system of policing that marks their public assertion of a “politics” as a hindrance to the social order of things—*that very thing that my high school-age Black girls feared*. This is a transformative process of exchange where we are building community and developing intimate relationships because our collective survival necessitates that we do.

I will provide one example of this in my own scholarship. I built a collaborative community action partnership with North Minneapolis resident, activist and economic development advocate Kenya McKnight because I wanted to work with someone who was trying to change the conversation in her community. McKnight came onto the urban political scene in 2009 when she ran unsuccessfully for the Minneapolis City Council. She was the only candidate to run a community-centered campaign that moved beyond some of the rehearsed political jargon of her more mainstream opponents. I later became an “involved observer,” working in partnership with McKnight and her allies on the North Minneapolis Workforce Center Development project to try to ensure that the Minnesota state-endorsed citizens advisory council (CAC) was able to assert itself as an active arbitrator of community needs, which included the use of a community benefits agreement (CBA). This request on behalf of the community required that the private developer chosen for the project would not simply fiscally benefit from rejuvenating the infrastructure of a dilapidated urban space, but would also be held accountable for meeting the expressed needs and goals that the community had set out for itself. McKnight, who was at the time an unemployed user of the North Minneapolis Workforce Center, chaired this community-led council. The first cycle of the project (i.e., the search for a developer) failed and McKnight, as the chair, was “thrown under the bus” and used as the scapegoat for the state. In actuality, the state was not willing to decentralize power and publically support its own CAC’s recommendation for a CBA and be honest about the various ways that those developers that had sought the contract had failed to meet the state’s basic statutory requirements. This is a telling example of the ways that the unemployed labor of an urban Black woman aimed to challenge the state to stop paying lip service to the expressed needs of the community, particularly expressed by its own citizen’s advisory council. Despite the fact that McKnight’s efforts did not immediately produce a CBA, this model of relationship building between community and private developers has since grown like wildfire in North Minneapolis. This would not have been possible without our collective efforts and McKnight’s willingness to face the unfortunate political sacrificing imposed by the state.<sup>1</sup> Distressed inner city communities are too often forced into relationships with private developers without any form of social or political cover because, with the rise and proliferation of neoliberal politics, local governments have come to rely on private investors to deliver services that they themselves have been chartered to provide. This failure of the public sector results in contentious relationships between the Black urban poor and local city bureaucrats.

As I reflect on my collaborative action research experience with McKnight and the fear of censorship that young Black girls expressed during my political leadership program, I am reminded of the importance of a social justice praxis in Black feminist theory and practice. A social justice praxis necessitates that research be done in political solidarity with everyday Black women/girls who aim to change the conditions that subordinate them and their communities. As such, I end this piece by first sharing Cadaja Brown’s

reflection on her experience building coalitions with a Black feminist politics scholar and her peers on her personal blog, after her participation in my political leadership program on her personal blog. Then, I will directly respond to Ms. Brown in an epistolary dialogic manner as a loving way to build political community between and among Black women/girls—a social justice praxis that aims to bridge cross generational divides:

‘In the cause of silence, each of us draws the face of her own fear – fear of contempt, of censure, or some judgment, or recognition, of challenge, of annihilation’ (Lorde 42). These words really spoke to me. At a girls empowerment group I attend, run by PhD candidate Brittany Lewis who specializes in gender/womans sexuality, we spoke of this very thing. In a group of all black girls learning about the importance of politics, each of us shared the first thing that comes to mind when we think about political leadership, and I said death. Every time I see a radical, a true advocate for change, there is always people willing to do anything to put them to silence. John F. Kennedy, John Lennon, MLK, these are just a few of the American leaders that have been put to death because of their unorthodox mindset. Lorde wrote on page 41, ‘Your silence will not protect you’ these very words made me think long and hard about why it is I don’t speak when I should. A lot of people I know including myself do not speak out due to the fear of judgment, censure, and even death. Something that Audre mentions though is that this world will always judge us based on your race, sex, and class, so what difference would it make you spoke out? Audre grew up in a time period where racism was at its highest peak. All the odds of being a black female lesbian were against her, but she still managed to get by. It was until this poet became fatally sick, when she recapped on her life and asked her self what she most valued and what she most regretted. She said ‘What I most regretted was my silences.’ I can strongly relate to her because there have been moments in my life where I really wanted to stand up for something I believe, or an injustice going on but I was too fearful of what other people would think. (Brown, 2014)

Dear Sister Cadaja,

Thank you for being brave enough to share your reflections with the world, as I know that this act in itself can be wrought with lots of fear. However, you are actively adding to the legacy of Black women’s resistance politics by naming the social, political, and economic structures that have too often perpetuated your own silences while making a public commitment to resisting those dominating forces now and in the future. You make it possible for other Black women and girls struggling to assert themselves in unwelcoming spaces to not fear censorship but to fear what will happen if they do not speak up and mobilize toward action. During our group sessions, I talked a lot about my organizing relationship with Kenya McKnight, and I have come to the determination that politics for Black women is about survival in inhospitable environments. It was through the relationship that I built with McKnight that I was able to stay sane and she as well. After a contentious community meeting where local power brokers presented a development plan that highlighted what they were going to do “to us” rather than “with us” or after listening to self-entitled white homeowners denounce the importance of engaging with renters because “they were the problem,” it was Kenya that I called and vice versa. So, I say to you that it will be imperative that you build a community of Black women to help sustain you as you begin this journey through coming to and reengaging with critical consciousness, because, as Jacqui Alexander (2005) wrote, “We cannot afford to cease yearning for each other’s company (269),” because if we do, we will continue to allow the nation to define us, our politics, and our silences.

In Solidarity and Love,  
Brittany Lewis

### Note

1. Scholars such as Rhonda Williams, Nancy Naples and Zenzele Isoke similarly focus on the resistant political realities of inner city Black women as they face the benign neglect of the local city governance.

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# Black Feminist Prison Politics

*Duchess Harris  
Macalester College*

*Sometimes in the midst  
of here and now  
My there and then shows up.  
Generations appear in one body.  
I listen attentively –  
Wondering who will speak up first.  
—Bethany Nelson, Not Who I Planned To Be<sup>1</sup>*

Because women are a minority of inmates, they are often overlooked by and excluded from studies about the precursors to and results of incarceration (Urbina 2008). However, activists and scholars who have worked in prison settings are aware that the experience of incarceration for most women is qualitatively different than the experience of incarceration for men. In 1998, the Department of Justice released an issue brief in which they conceded that female offenders have needs different from those of male offenders, stemming in part from their disproportionate victimization from sexual or physical abuse and their tendency to maintain primary responsibility for children. Female inmates are also more likely to be addicted to drugs and to have mental illnesses (Morash, Bynum, and Koons 1998). These factors collude to make the experience of prison fundamentally different for women than for men; however, other aspects of identity intersect with gender to make the prison experience still more complex. Race and class oppression are additional barriers in the lives of incarcerated women, complicating the already formidable challenge of reentry for women who are confronting multiple oppressions (Bailey 2007).

In this paper, the author considers the ways in which the gendered experience of incarceration, particularly when considered alongside other aspects of identity—such as race and class—presents unique problems for women as they leave prison. The author draws from her experience working at the William Mitchell Reentry Clinic, where director Joanna Woolman references the intersectionality described above by explaining that female offenders have specific “bio-psycho-social-legal” needs. This holistic conceptualization underscores the extent to which discharge planning must take into account the offender’s total identity and unique, individual needs (Bailey 2007, 14). A history of victimization, the role and responsibilities of motherhood, and the inevitability of having experienced racism, as well as the likelihood that one will experience racism again, all serve as barriers to community reintegration, as do one’s class and social status.

In this article, I explore the ways in which theories about race, gender, and the law are applied pragmatically in the context of the William Mitchell Reentry Clinic. I discuss how policies affecting incarcerated women are defined and approached from a theoretical perspective before being applied in a practical context to arrive at a more nuanced set of policy recommendations for incarcerated women who are mothers.

## **Part I: Gendered Incarceration**

### *A. Statistics*

In the last 20 years, the number of incarcerated women in the United States has increased by more than 800% (Poehlman 2003; West and Sabol 2008). This disproportionate growth requires a closer look at the reasons why women are incarcerated. Examining social disparities between women and men in the contemporary context helps explain this dramatic increase. One of the reasons why a growing number of offenders are women is because the legal and justice systems' focus on prosecuting nonviolent drug cases—part of “quality of life” policing and arrest initiatives that have been underway in many jurisdictions since the 1980s—have affected women disproportionately. For this reason, the “war on drugs” has also been called the “war on women” (Golden 2005; Berman 2005). Women are more likely than men to be incarcerated for nonviolent drug possession or drug trafficking (Clarke 2006). The diversion of so many women from mainstream society to jails and prisons produces a number of ripple effects, particularly for women who are mothers and who leave children behind in the care of someone else as they go to serve their sentences.

Despite the staggering increase in the number of female inmates, states are often ill-equipped to meet their needs. Minnesota is among them. The state is home to only one women's correctional facility, which houses about 5% of the overall prison population, and few services have been designed and implemented to meet female inmates' unique needs (Woolman 2010, 2). This is true not only of the time that they serve in prison, but also—especially—of the preparations that are made for them as they approach discharge and reentry into society (Dalley 2000; Clay 2005).

### *B. History of Victimization*

Studies of incarcerated women have confirmed that a significant percentage of female inmates have a history of victimization; many also have mental health issues and chemical dependency problems (Urbina 2008, 29). As Barbara Bloom and colleagues (2003) noted, “Women's most common pathways to crime are based on survival of abuse, poverty and substance abuse” (qtd. in Berman 2005, 3). Most incarcerated women in the United States have been convicted of a nonviolent crime, yet the majority of these women have themselves been the victims of violent acts, most of which were never prosecuted. The irony that victims of violence are incarcerated while their perpetrators are not, presents unique challenges for female inmates, who often struggle with lingering memories of trauma. Often, an accompanying sense of hopelessness and despair present significant barriers for successful reentry into society once a sentence has been served.

The challenges inherent in release from prison and reintegration into society are numerous, and they are complicated by a variety of conditions and circumstances that prison staff have rarely anticipated, much less helped the offender plan for. For example, a significant number of offenders have a mental illness or persistent psychosocial effects related to past trauma; often, these illnesses and symptoms have not been treated. In some cases, it is possible that they have not even been diagnosed. Women who are returning to society without proper clinical diagnosis and treatment, which includes a plan for psychological and/or psychiatric services (which, in turn, might include medication prescription and management, as well as case management and psychotherapeutic intervention), are more likely to experience recidivism. Kubiak (2004), for instance, discovered that women who have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and who have been incarcerated have higher drug relapse rates than women with incarceration histories who do not have PTSD.

A history or pattern of abusive and unhealthy relationships, especially with an intimate partner, also complicates reentry into society for female offenders, and again, prison staff frequently tend to overlook addressing potential partner violence during the discharge planning process. A majority (79.6%) of women inmates in Wisconsin reported that they were in an abusive relationship with a partner prior to or at the time of their incarceration (Urbina 2008, 48). Many women will return to these partners upon release, often because they feel they have no other option. The woman reentering society may return to an abusive partner because he owns the home or holds the lease, and she may have no other housing alternatives. The partner may have been granted custody of children during the woman's incarceration, and she may return to him solely because she wants to be with her children. She may return to an abusive partner because he may have an income-producing job and it is likely she does not and will not, given her incarceration history. These are only three among many reasons—a number of which are legitimate and understandable—why women may return to an abusive partner upon their release and reentry. Women who are being released and who are likely to return to an abusive partner need legal, psychological, and pragmatic social support during the reentry planning process and beyond; however, few of them receive adequate assistance.

A history of trauma is highly correlated with two other factors connected to the risks of incarceration and recidivism, namely substance abuse and mental health problems (Berman 2005, 4). A history of trauma is also associated with higher rates of substance abuse. It is not surprising, then, that a majority of female offenders struggle with substance abuse (Allard 2002). Poverty often makes it difficult to access effective substance abuse treatment services. Many women who are incarcerated are addicts, because alcohol and drugs have been the only ways they have had of coping with painful memories and the anxiety these memories provoke. The relationship between substance use and mental illness is one that is intertwined, often creating a closed feedback loop. Untreated disorders such as depression, bipolar, anxiety, phobias, and delusional disorders often manifest in dysfunctional behavior, which can feed back into criminal behavior. Criminal behavior and its consequences, including incarceration, in turn exacerbate symptoms of illness, particularly when the illness is not treated or is under-treated. Providing mental health and/or social work services during the reentry to society and beyond, particularly in the early phase of the transition, can make a significant impact on recidivism.

*C. Motherhood*

A woman's isolation from society at large does not so easily dissolve her identity or her roles, specifically those related to motherhood (Fiorica 2007). In a comprehensive study of women prisoners in Wisconsin, Urbina (2008) found that "no single issue seems to be more important to [incarcerated] women than their children" (83).

Most mothers—at least 70% (Patillo, Weiman, and Western 2006)—assume primary caregiver roles in their children's lives, so when mothers are incarcerated, the effects on children are even more profound than those precipitated by a father's incarceration. Although variables such as the length of the woman's sentence have a significant impact on the eventual outcomes experienced by their children, as many as 40% of women who are incarcerated and who lived with and were the primary caregivers for their children prior to imprisonment do not reunite with their children upon their release (Christian 2009). Typically, this is because the children have entered the foster care system and their mothers are unable to regain custody. Parental rights are often terminated when the only parent is incarcerated (Conway and Hutson 2007). Children of incarcerated parents are often moved into foster care quickly, without a court determining whether they have an adult relative who could care for them and who is willing to do so. For many women, the experience of losing parental rights is a traumatic one (Urbina 2008.)

In addition to the obvious emotional and psychological effects a parent's incarceration has on the child, the mother herself is further traumatized and her ability to mother is significantly affected by incarceration. Even if numbers are not available to substantiate the claim, women's recidivism rates must be impacted by their inability to recover their children and rebuild their families and their lives once they have completed their sentences and are released from prison (Finzen 2005). Visitation and custody, then, are primary concerns for incarcerated women. Policies that affect incarcerated parents and their children, as well as the ability to maintain their relationships, have seen "little or no improvement" in recent decades, even as the number of men and women who are incarcerated has grown (Krisberg and Temin 2001).

Comprehensive and productive reentry services should include the facilitation of mother-child visitation during the woman's incarceration as well as reunification postrelease, even if reunification does not mean that full or primary custody is returned to the mother. Unfortunately, current policies and a lack of competent legal representation make these services difficult for women to access.

*1. Visitation and Custody*

Krisberg and Temin (2001) state that "the majority of children have never had a personal visit with their incarcerated parent after prison admission . . ." (185). The main reasons why children do not visit incarcerated parents are structural barriers, such as geographical distance (186) and a lack of reliable transportation to be able to travel to and from the prison. The failure to address these and a host of other needs have been substantiated by other researchers and public policy advocates.

Many mothers feel helpless when they are separated from their children due to incarceration. Most of the time, children are placed with a relative. However, women who

are incarcerated for a lengthy period of time risk permanently losing custody of their children. Berman (2005) explains:

Incarcerated women stand to lose their parental rights if they do not stay abreast of child welfare actions that require regular contact between a parent and a child placed in foster care. At the same time, very few correctional institutions maintain relationships with child welfare agencies that would facilitate the sharing of information with inmates, and inmate participation in relevant proceedings. (4–5)

The typical female inmate is a woman of color in her thirties with at least one child (Costa 2003). The history of racial discrimination in the criminal justice system has been well-documented. In addition, poverty plays a significant role in the lives of incarcerated women, which compounds the complications of facilitating a productive reentry experience. Costa (2003) writes, “Since incarceration commonly occurs in lower levels of society, the families with the fewest means are the ones forced to cope with such a difficult situation.” Because of the ongoing discrimination faced by women of color, particularly poor women, the likelihood of successful reintegration is lower.

### Notes

1. Excerpt from Bethany Nelson, *Not Who I Planned To Be*, TRANSITIONS (The Reentry Clinic, St. Paul, MN), Summer 2010, 4. Bethany is a former client of the Reentry Clinic.

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# **Praxis: Social Science Expert Testimony and the Voting Rights Act**





## **Social Science Expert Witness Testimony in Voting Rights Cases**

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Social scientists from multiple disciplines play a major role in developing evidence in court cases concerning minority voting rights in the United States. Most of these cases entail issues of minority vote dilution, an expression that applies to situations in which electoral competition is structured in a way that impedes the ability of minority voters to elect representatives of their choice, especially when they prefer to be represented by people from within their own group. These cases are typically tried under section 2 of the federal Voting Rights Act (VRA), which prohibits such arrangements when they discriminate against African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Alaskan Natives.<sup>1</sup>

The role of section 2 in protecting minority voting rights has taken on increased importance since the Supreme Court decision in 2013, in *Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder*, effectively nullified the preclearance requirement in section 5 of the VRA.<sup>2</sup> This provision precludes the implementation of retrogressive changes, or intentionally discriminatory changes, in election laws, policies, and practices by selected state and local governments, primarily southern, until either the Attorney General of the United States or a federal District Court in Washington, D.C., finds them to be free of such purpose or effect. The burden of proof in the preclearance process was previously on the governmental unit adopting

the change. While not invalidating the preclearance provision *per se*, the Court in *Shelby County* held that the formula used to identify these state and local governments, contained in Section 4, was unconstitutional, leaving the provision without application to any jurisdictions in the country.<sup>3</sup> Changes driven by a discriminatory intent or having a discriminatory effect may now be implemented upon adoption, and litigation opposing them must proceed under Section 2, with the burden of proof on the plaintiffs, not the jurisdictions.

Structural arrangements most often challenged as dilutive include at-large (jurisdiction-wide) elections to seats on legislative or judicial bodies, especially when each seat is contested separately and a majority of the votes is required for a candidate to win, and racially gerrymandered election districts for electing members of legislatures. Others include discriminatory municipal annexation or deannexation practices, city-county consolidations, and multimember districts. Recently, vote denial issues resulting from voter suppression measures that impact negatively on protected minorities, such as new voter identification requirements, eliminating or reducing the number of days and locations for early voting, eliminating specifically Sunday voting,<sup>4</sup> and reducing the hours during which voting locations will be open, are also being challenged under Section 2.

Courts are required to make decisions in these cases based on a “totality of circumstances” test,<sup>5</sup> a decisional standard so ambiguous that it provides little limitation on what “evidence” judges may consider and the weight they may give it. The legislative history of the VRA contains suggestions about factors courts might look at in making such decisions. Several are commonly referred to as the “Senate factors,” which are listed in the Senate Committee on the Judiciary’s Report on the 1982 Amendments to the VRA. Among them are whether voting in the jurisdiction at issue has been “racially polarized,” whether there has been a history of discrimination against the minority at issue, whether the socioeconomic conditions of a minority group impair its members’ ability to participate politically, and whether racial appeals have characterized campaigns.<sup>6</sup> But not all of these factors must be examined, and other factors may be considered by judges as well.<sup>7</sup>

The various factors examined result in lawyers in voting rights cases using social scientists from a variety of fields as expert witnesses—most prominently political scientists, but also sociologists, especially demographers, geographers, econometricians, and political historians.<sup>8</sup> Whereas fact witnesses may only testify about what they themselves have directly observed in some way, expert witnesses may express opinions about “facts” based on their examination of relevant circumstances. The matters about which experts testify are not mutually exclusive across fields, but typically each addresses different topics, and lawyers bundle their testimony when addressing the ultimate inquiry, that of the totality of circumstances. Each expert, however, almost invariably provides the results of his or her inquiries through solely-authored reports and testimony. Expert witness work in the cases, therefore, is probably better described as multidisciplinary rather than interdisciplinary. Not surprisingly, these experts use an extensive variety of methodological approaches drawn from both the quantitative and qualitative research tool kits.<sup>9</sup>

This paper is a collaborative product by four experienced expert witnesses in voting rights litigation. Two are political scientists—one who testifies primarily about the results of quantitative inquiries (Engstrom) and the other about qualitative inquiries (McCool). The others are a demographer (Chapa) and a geographer (Webster).

### Political Science Quantitative Testimony

Political scientists are used extensively in voting right cases, especially when they involve allegations of minority vote dilution. The United States Supreme Court, in a case in 1986 titled *Thornburg v. Gingles*, stated that in order to succeed in a dilution challenge under Section 2, the plaintiff or plaintiffs have to prove that voting in the jurisdiction or geographic area at issue has been “racially polarized.” This is a “necessary precondition,” the Supreme Court stated, that has to be established before a court will even address the totality of circumstances in a dilution case (*Gingles*, 51). Racially polarized voting (RPV) is operationalized as the absence of shared candidate preferences between the voters belonging to the protected minority and the other voters, who constitute a majority of the electorate in the jurisdiction or, in districting cases, an area or areas.

RPV is rightly viewed as a necessary condition for dilution to occur, for if the groups agree on candidates, then election structures cannot systematically impede the minority voters from electing the representatives of their choice. *Gingles* concerned a challenge by African Americans to majority white multimember state legislative districts (MMDs) in North Carolina. The MMDs in which voters’ candidate preferences were found to be racially divided and in which a change to single member districts could result in a district in which African Americans would constitute a majority in one of them were found, in the totality of circumstances, to violate Section 2 of the VRA.

*Gingles* made RPV one of the central evidentiary issues in dilution cases, regardless of the structural feature or features alleged to cause the dilution. This status made the factual determination of whether it is or is not present in a jurisdiction or an area a highly contested matter in court. The evidence of RPV in the North Carolina MMDs was based exclusively on elections in which voters had been presented with a choice between or among African American candidates and non-African American candidates. Elections in which voters had a choice between or among minority candidates and other candidates are widely considered to be the most probative for assessing the presence of RPV because these elections typically demonstrated what has been widely known through polling and election outcomes—the consistent preference of minority voters to be represented by people within their own group. If that preference is documented in a jurisdiction or area, the ability of minority groups to elect representatives of their choice must include the ability to elect fellow group members, or it would not be equal to that of the majority. White-on-white elections, or Anglo-on-Anglo elections, therefore are not as probative as inter-racial elections.<sup>10</sup>

When a concept like RPV becomes a central focus of litigation, and when proof of it is a necessary condition for plaintiffs to prevail, it can be expected that the definition and measurement of that concept will become a matter of dispute. This was true in vote dilution cases even before *Gingles*. In cases in which the evidence of racially-divided differences in candidate preferences in biracial elections provided by a plaintiff’s expert was unmistakable, lawyers for the other side, in conjunction with their experts, could be expected to attempt to alter the definition of RPV. Sometimes, experts for the defendants accepted the empirically-documented differences in candidate preferences but would assert that they were meaningless unless shown to have been driven by racial animus on the part of the majority voters, such as an increase in White turnout when minority candidates were on the ballot, or could not be “explained” by other variables, themselves related to

race, such as party preferences or White voters voting for White incumbents (even when they did not vote for minority incumbents), or voters voting for the candidates that lived in geographical areas closer to them. Sometimes, experts for the defendants would do no more than state that the plaintiffs' experts had not done any of these allegedly "necessary" inquiries. At other times, they would attempt such analyses but in crude and unpersuasive ways (see Engstrom 1985). *Gingles* held that evidence of cause was not necessary in assessing the RPV precondition but that "causal" analyses, along with so many other things, could be considered under the totality of circumstances.<sup>11</sup>

Challenges to the evidence of preference differences themselves, no matter how acute they might have been, also have been common.<sup>12</sup> The secret ballot, of course, makes it impossible to observe directly who voters cast their ballots for in any election, past or present. This necessitates that evidence of RPV in a jurisdiction or area must be based on estimates of that behavior. The results of exit polls for past elections are rarely available for local elections or state legislative and US House elections. And statewide exit polls typically do not contain adequate samples of voters in a particular jurisdiction or area of the state. In addition, the results of exit polls concerning racially-sensitive elections are themselves suspect, given concerns of respondent self-selection bias and voter mendacity.

RPV analyses, therefore, rely almost exclusively on the analysis of aggregate data. They employ observations of voter preferences at the lowest level at which votes are tabulated: the voting precinct. These are accessible through election officials. The relative presence of minorities in each of the precinct electorates is also identified. The basis for assessing this relative presence differs from setting to setting, however, depending on the data available. In a few states, turnout data by race by precinct are available. In Louisiana, for example, the state records the number of African Americans and other voters that received ballots in each precinct. (These ballots typically have multiple election contests listed on them, and the data, of course, do not record the race of those actually casting a vote for a particular office.) In some other states, the best available data are for voter registration by race by precinct. But in most states, the best data available for this purpose are the US Census of Population counts, or American Community Survey (ACS) estimates (see below), for the number of people of voting age and the number of such people belonging to a particular protected minority in each precinct. When the group at issue is Latinos, it may be necessary to base these observations on the estimated number of citizens of voting age, data now provided by the ACS. In some settings, the surnames of voters turning out to vote or registered to vote are available, allowing Spanish surname matching to identify the number of Latinos among those groups.<sup>13</sup>

The basis for assessing the presence of RPV is through a comparison of the votes cast in precincts with the relative presence of the minority group in those precincts. The methodology now used for this purpose is "Ecological Inference," commonly referred to as EI. This procedure was developed by a political scientist, Gary King, after his experience as an expert witness in voting rights cases. It employs both the method of bounds and maximum likelihood estimation (see King 1997). It is a great improvement over previous methods used to measure RPV (for the evolution of earlier the methodologies, see McCrary 1990), and can be used for other types of analyses as well.<sup>14</sup> User-friendly software for it is accessible through R. This software can be used to estimate divisions in the votes across multiple minority groups and multiple candidates. It provides point

estimates of these support levels and confidence intervals for those estimates. EI can also provide the same information for the percentage of the respective groups casting votes in a specific election on a ballot, which is also important in some cases.

A vote dilution case concerning the City of Farmers Branch in Dallas County, Texas, provides a recent illustration of EI being applied to an at-large election case.<sup>15</sup> Latinos constituted 45.4 percent of the city's total population but only 23.9 percent of the citizen voting age population. The city council was made up of six people—a mayor and five other council members—all of whom were elected at-large, or citywide. The election system was not a “pure” at-large system in which all the council seats were elected at one time with voters having as many votes as seats to be filled and with the number of candidates equal to the number of seats receiving the most votes declared elected. Instead, the seats were divided into distinct places and elected separately, with voters having one vote to cast among the candidates for each place. A majority vote rule was required for election, with a second election, or a runoff election, held between the top-two finishers for a particular place if no candidate for a place received a majority in the initial election. No Latino had ever been elected to the council.

Table 1 below contains the results of an EI analysis, conducted by and testified about by Engstrom, of the four most recent elections in which voters in Farmers Branch had a choice between or among Latino candidates and non-Latino candidates. The relative presence of Latinos in each precinct was based on a surname match that identified the people with a Spanish surname among those who received ballots in each of the precincts for these elections. When matched in turn to the election returns for each precinct, EI produced the estimates reported in the table. Given the absence of precincts in which Latinos constituted a high percentage of the voters, the point estimates for the Latino support for the Latino candidates are not as efficiently estimated as those for the non-Latino voters, as reflected in the values of the 95-percent confident intervals.

Engstrom's testimony focused on the fact that the point estimates of the Latino support for the Latino candidate or candidates in these elections was always above a majority—and in three of the four elections, well above it. The support for these candidates among the non-Latino voters was, in contrast, never estimated to be a majority, and not even the highest values on the confidence intervals around the point estimates of their support reached a majority in any election. Under the “preponderance of the evidence” standard for civil litigation, he testified that there was a pattern of racially polarized voting across these elections.

The defendants' expert also provided EI estimates for these elections, which the defendants acknowledged were “not significantly different” than those reported by Engstrom.<sup>16</sup> They offered a very different interpretation of them, however. They maintained that there was “only moderate cohesion” among Latino voters and that non-Latino voters provided Latino candidate with a “substantial crossover vote”<sup>17</sup> and, therefore, voting was not polarized. They had to stipulate, however, to the fact that no Latino candidate had won a seat on the city council.

The court held that the plaintiff's analysis of the four elections was “sufficient” because they were “the most recent involving a Hispanic candidate.”<sup>18</sup> It also relied upon the point estimates as the “best estimates” and held that they established “a pattern of Hispanic bloc voting.”<sup>19</sup> Indeed, it found that in three of the elections, there had been “overwhelming

**Table 1.**  
**Estimated Divisions in Vote for Latino Candidates in Farmers Branch, Texas**

Election	Point Estimate (Confidence Interval)	
	Percent of Latino Voters	Percent of Non-Latino Voters
Place 2, 2011		
Viveros	72.0 (13.7–98.5)	42.1 (37.4–48.6)
Place 3, 2009		
Villafranca	54.1 (9.3–90.5)	28.7 (20.6–33.5)
Place 2, 2008		
Rendon	67.7 (10.6–93.3)	30.0 (23.8–36.0)
Rendon + Villarreal	80.0 (27.4–97.6)	30.5 (26.2 – 36.6)
Place 1, 2007		
Galvez	88.1 (77.2–94.6)	2.0 (1.1–3.2)

support by Hispanics for the Hispanic candidates.”<sup>20</sup> The court also held that the evidence showed “a pattern of non-Hispanic bloc voting,” reciting Engstrom’s results that not only had the non-Hispanic point estimates never revealed a majority of non-Latino voters voting for a Latino candidate but also that not even the 95 percent confidence intervals reached that high.<sup>21</sup> Non-Latino voters, therefore, had vetoed the choices of the Latino voters in all four elections. Voting in these elections was therefore found to be polarized between the two groups.<sup>22</sup> Engstrom’s analysis of RPV was central to satisfy that precondition for a vote dilution case under section 2 of the VRA, but also to the court’s finding that Farmers Branch would have to change to a district election system.

### Political Science Qualitative Testimony

Evidence gathered through Qualitative Methods (QM) is used in conjunction with quantitative and demographic analyses by social science experts in VRA cases in an effort to cross-validate findings by using multiple research methods. This approach follows the advice of the Consortium on Qualitative Research Methods: “. . . to produce policy-relevant knowledge, the social sciences should employ the full range of available complementary qualitative, statistical and formal methods” (The Consortium for Qualitative Research Methods 2013).

QM is somewhat of a blanket term that embraces multiple research methods, including “qualitative-comparative analysis, concept-analysis as a branch of methodology, the case-study tradition, process tracing, pattern matching, typological theory, interpretivism,

constructivism, and various traditions of field research—including but not restricted to, ethnography” (Collier 2009, 94). And contrary to some claims, QM also uses numerical data. Indeed, analyses that utilize QM often reference raw data, averages, percentages, and sums but do not rely on regression analysis or other quantitative techniques. The use of QM is now well-established in the social sciences. The American Political Science Association, in particular, organized a section on Qualitative Methods in 2003.

QM is well-suited for expert analysis in VRA cases. It is used to analyze phenomena that are complex, multidimensional, and subject to rapid change. Lamont and White note that QM is “particularly useful for studying timely topics such as group identities and boundaries [and] race, class, gender . . .” (2009, 5). Expert witnesses who rely on QM use data and information gleaned from multiple and overlapping sources, such as in-person interviews, newspaper coverage of topics or events (including editorials and letters to the editor), findings in previous court cases, interest group publications, secondary published sources (e.g., books, articles), online sources (e.g., chat rooms, websites, blogs), business advertising and business policies, campaign flyers and publicity, and documents and studies created by tribal, local, state, and federal governments, including voting data and census data. In some cases, it is also useful to examine photographs, videos, and other visual “data.” Sources such as these are examined for evidence of significant long-term trends among multiple sources of information and data. Confidence in inferences and conclusions increase when consistent patterns of responses appear across multiple sources over a sustained period of time.

Sometimes, QM is employed when quantitative methods do not perform well. It is “well suited for domains for which large, standardized data sets are not available, or about which there is little prior knowledge, or in which change is so rapid that, in effect, prior knowledge is limited” (Collier 2009, 95). QM is used widely for “small-N analysis,” a reference to a sample size that is too small for conventional statistical methods. In many VRA cases, sample size may be small due to several reasons. These cases frequently concern limited geographic areas with small populations. The minority group at issue in VRA cases is often poor, which may make it difficult to contact an adequate sample of them. Also, cultural barriers may make it difficult to contact large, representative samples. People in minority communities could be hesitant to talk to “outsiders.” For example, Native Americans might be hesitant to speak to interviewers, either in-person or on the telephone, due to a long history of mistrust and animosity; a “sample” collected on an Indian reservation could be biased toward those willing to talk to total strangers. QM investigators can partially overcome that by developing, over time, a relationship with respondents, which enhances trust and openness.

Examples of appropriate QM application can be seen in efforts to investigate the *Gingles* preconditions and Senate factors referenced at the beginning of this paper. For example, while RPV can be measured quantitatively by analyzing the association between race and votes, other types of inquiries might reflect a perception, and a cultural sense, of how different racial groups get along and how that is expressed in political beliefs and participation. In interviews, respondents might indicate specific areas of racial cooperation and/or conflict between or among groups. Respondent might reply, “No one in my neighborhood votes for them,” or, “They don’t represent our values so we don’t support them,” or perhaps respond with a question: “What have those people ever done for us?”

One of the Senate factors is the history of official racial discrimination. Discrimination can take various forms and may be expressed in very subtle or indirect ways. Establishing a pattern of discrimination over time requires a careful reading of multiple forms of documents. State laws and regulations rarely state emphatically that they are intended to disadvantage one ethnic group in relation to others. However, the impact of discriminatory laws can be described in detail by its victims; they can describe how a specific law or policy has affected them differently from other racial or ethnic groups in the area. A well-designed analysis based on QM can discover these impacts.

The Senate factors also include the impact of socio-economic factors that affect voter registration and turnout. Quantitative analysis can reveal the association between income and voting, but it is QM that can delve into the particulars of that relationship. If it costs nothing to vote, why would low-income people not vote at the same level as medium- and high-income people? The answer to that question can be revealed through “intensive” and “elite” interviews; there are many ways in which income affects voting (see Guest, Namey, and Mitchell 2013, 113–171; Rubin and Rubin 2011). Some of them are material—e.g., they cannot afford transportation, cannot take off from work, the polling place is too far. Some of them are attitudinal—e.g., feelings of hopelessness and alienation, an inability to understand the value of voting, a hostility to “the system.” Or, it may be due to historical factors—e.g., in the past it was illegal to vote, no direct benefits have ever resulted from voting, cultural norms militate against it. All of these variables can be explored via QM.

An illustration of the utility of QM in voting rights cases is provided by McCool’s work in *Bone Shirt v. Hazeltine*.<sup>23</sup> This case involved the treatment of Native Americans in a new state legislative redistricting plan adopted by South Dakota following the 2000 census. One district in that plan was packed with Native Americans, to the point where they constituted 90 percent of the population in it. In an adjacent district, Native Americans constituted only 30 percent of the population. An alternative configuration of these districts could provide two majority-Native American districts. Native Americans challenged the state’s configuration for diluting the Native American vote in violation of Section 2 of the VRA.

The court in *Bone Shirt*, relying extensively on McCool’s written report and oral testimony, ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and required the split in the Native American vote be repaired. McCool’s report employed a standard mix of sources, including primary and secondary historical accounts, territorial and session laws of the state of South Dakota, the state constitution, relevant court cases, newspaper accounts, in-person and telephone interviews, South Dakota attorney general reports, government reports on civil rights in South Dakota, contemporary voting data, and census data. The court relied extensively on his analyses, with one interesting exception; it gave “little weight” to materials in the report that had been based on interviews on two Sioux reservations.<sup>24</sup> This is unusual, as interviews are a standard technique in QM and are usually considered a legitimate source of information in totality of circumstances inquiries. Additionally, expert testimony based on interviews has been relied upon in numerous cases. In a recent case, *Large v. Fremont County*, a VRA case concerning Native Americans in Wyoming, the court found that an expert witness “under took the invaluable project of conducting interviews and gathering firsthand information from tribal members in order to gain an understanding of the



Native experience in Fremont County in the past and present.”<sup>25</sup> But of course, judges may exercise their discretion in weighting different kinds of evidence.<sup>26</sup>

The court credited McCool’s testimony that there was “a strong sense of cohesion and loyalty” within the Indian community;<sup>27</sup> “a racially hostile and polarized atmosphere” based on “negative stereotypes” of Native Americans;<sup>28</sup> an “us versus them” attitude on the part of both Native Americans and whites;<sup>29</sup> a continuous “resistance and opposition to their [Native Americans] efforts to vote;”<sup>30</sup> “feelings that they [Native Americans candidates] cannot win”<sup>31</sup> in majority-white districts, which reduced the number of Native American candidacies and in turn political participation by Native Americans; and a belief that state and local governments were not responsive to their needs.<sup>32</sup> McCool’s testimony bolstered the evidence of RPV and contributed heavily to the court’s view of the totality of circumstances.

QM can play an important role in voting rights cases, as McCool’s testimony in *Bone Shirt* demonstrates. When there is a paucity of probative election data, especially data on elections that feature candidates of different racial or ethnic heritage, qualitative analyses can provide important contextual information about elections. Many factors relevant to the totality of circumstances, the ultimate decisional referent in VRA cases, can be examined through QM.

### Demographic Testimony

There are three aspects of vote dilution cases brought under section 2 of the VRA in which demographic analyses are particularly relevant. The first is in establishing the first of the preconditions in the *Gingles* case, which requires plaintiffs to show in a vote dilution case that a protected minority group is sufficiently large and sufficiently compact in population to constitute a majority in more single member districts than the election arrangement under challenge. This demonstrates that there is a remedy, based on the generally preferred election system for multiseat governing bodies in the United States: the geographically-based single member district system.<sup>33</sup> The second aspect is in establishing the relevance of various “Senate factors” to the case, such as “the extent to which members of the minority group in the state or political subdivision bear the effects of discrimination in such areas as education, employment and health, which hinder their ability to participate effectively in the political process.”<sup>34</sup> This section of the paper will outline the demographic analyses that have been used to address these areas in the past. The other topic to be addressed is the issues and complications that arise from the fact that the 2010 Census was the first to be conducted under a new procedure that relies upon statistical sampling and cumulating data over several years. These new data are not strictly comparable to the data mandated by earlier legal decisions.

#### *Subjects of Demographic Analysis*

Demographic Analysis (DA) in voting rights cases involves estimates of the size, characteristics, and geographic distribution of various population groups—or, to put it more simply, how many people with which characteristics live where. Population size and distribution are important to allocate similarly-sized populations among voting districts in order to satisfy the Supreme Court’s requirement that districts be close to

equi-populous. Chapa, for example, has analyzed and presented testimony in voting rights cases on a number of population characteristics for specified areas, including, among many others: the voting age population (VAP) by race and ethnicity; the citizen voting age population (CVAP) by race and ethnicity; the number of registered voters by race and ethnicity; socioeconomic characteristics that may influence voter registration rates; demographic evidence showing the effects of past discrimination; levels of education and income by race and ethnicity; national origins and racial identifications, especially the number of Latinos identified using Spanish surnames; rates and sources of population growth and change; population age distributions by race and ethnicity; age; presence of a home telephone; and physical and social neighborhood characteristics.<sup>35</sup>

There are many sources for the data used in DA, including public records of election results, voter registration records, newspaper articles, reports of state and federal agencies, academic publications, etc. However, the most useful and prevalent source of information is the Census.<sup>36</sup> Much of the Census data analysis that previously required sophisticated computer data processing, programming, and data analyses has been greatly facilitated by the pervasive availability of personal computers to analyze demographic data and Internet resources to access data.

Many aspects of DA can now be completed by the nonexpert. However, there have been recent changes in the procedures that the US Census uses to collect information. These changes pose technical difficulties and legal challenges. These changes may be seen as undermining the established precedents and procedures for DA that have been established in the forty-plus years of legislation and litigation following the passage of the VRA. The changes in the Census and their implications must be considered by anyone contemplating DA. Therefore, they will be discussed in detail below.

### **The American Community Survey as the New “Long-Form” Census**

The US Constitution mandates a decennial enumeration of the population. Several of the Censuses conducted in the twentieth century, including the 2000 Census, consisted of a “short form” that included basic questions about age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, and household relationships, and a “long form” that included the basic “short-form” questions but also detailed questions about population and housing characteristics, such as citizenship, educational attainment, income, and the availability of vehicles for households. The short form information was intended to be collected from every household in the nation and to be the basis for official population counts; it provides this information for every block in the United States. The long form was intended to collect detailed social and economic information from a sample of about one-sixth of the nation’s households. Starting in 2010 a new nationwide, continuous survey called the American Community Survey (ACS) replaced the long form. The ACS is designed to provide up-to-date and reliable demographic, housing, social, and economic data every year by continuously collecting long-form-type information throughout the decade, rather than only once every 10 years. The ACS is administered to 250,000 households each month for a total of three million a year. The survey sample is drawn in a manner to represent the entire country. The ACS sample is designed to permit the responses to be cumulated over different geographic areas and different time intervals for different purposes. It is conducted by mail, by telephone, and by personal visits.

The ACS has several advantages over the data that were previously collected on the decennial Census long forms. The main benefit is that the ACS will provide information about areas with population larger than 65,000 updated every year, instead of every 10 years. Population size and characteristics can change significantly over a decade, so the ACS provides information that is much more current and, thus, much better able to reflect existing conditions.

There are two types of error associated with surveys like the ACS: sampling error and nonsampling error. Regarding nonsampling error, the advantages of the ACS discussed in the previous paragraph will reduce the ACS's nonsampling error compared to data collected from the decennial Census short form and long form. The lower nonsampling error of the ACS makes it more accurate than both parts of the decennial Census, because low error reduces the difference between the survey estimate and the true population count. By minimizing nonsampling error, the ACS provides more accurate estimates of the true population characteristics as compared to the Census short and long forms.

An example of Census nonsampling error that has been a major concern of DA in VRA cases is differential undercounts. All Censuses have failed to count every single individual in a population. These people are said to be undercounted. The fact that the members of minority groups protected by the VRA have substantially higher undercounts than the majority population makes this nonsampling error an important consideration in DA. It appears that data from the ACS is subject to high levels of minority undercounting as were the data in the decennial censuses (see DeWeaver 2010).

Regarding sampling error, it is important to note that all sample surveys are subject to sampling error. Sampling error is simply the probability that any chosen sample could be different from the total population from which the sample was drawn. However, increasing the size of random samples decreases the probability of sampling error and thus makes the survey more reliable. One way to increase the ACS sample size for small areas is to pool surveys over a longer period of time. The ACS is designed to do just that.

#### *Multiyear Estimates from the American Community Survey*

The ACS sampling procedures are designed to collect annual population estimates for counties, cities, and other areas with populations of 65,000 or more. Many towns and places have populations smaller than this annual estimate sampling threshold. For these areas, the ACS sample is designed to permit several years of data to be pooled together to create reliable multiyear estimates. The ACS sampling procedure was designed so that data cumulated over three successive years would be sufficiently large to reliably estimate the characteristics of places with populations between 20,000 and 65,000 (US Census Bureau 2008). The ACS can provide estimates of population characteristics for geographic areas with populations less than 20,000 including block groups. Like any sample survey, ACS data are better suited to calculating the proportion of the population with a given characteristics rather than the actual population size. It is the Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program that produces and disseminates the official annual estimates of the population for the nation, states, counties, cities and towns (US Bureau of the Census 2008, 4)

*Technical Challenges to Using American Community Survey Data*

There are several challenges that a data user must confront when using ACS data for a VRA DA. First, ACS data are not publicly available at the smallest units of geography that line drawers usually use in redistricting. Redistricting often entails putting small units such as census tracts, block groups, or blocks together to form districts. Census data are available and reliable at all these levels, including the Census block (the smallest unit of Census geography). However, ACS data are never reported at the Census block level and are reported at the block group and tract levels only by aggregating five years of ACS responses. Because of the very small sample and perhaps for privacy concerns, the Census Bureau does not release ACS data at the block level.

Second, ACS data are often less reliable for smaller geographical units than they are for larger units of geography. This is because the samples drawn from smaller units of geography are generally smaller than those of larger units, and as a general rule of thumb in statistics, smaller random samples tend to generate larger margins of error than larger ones. Even with data aggregated over several years, block group estimates sometimes contain large margins of error. In addition, in some cases where the population samples are very small, the Census Bureau may suppress the data and not release it at all in order to protect individual privacy concerns. This makes block groups look like they have no population when they may in fact contain population but at small numbers.

Third, since the ACS estimates available at smaller geographic units are based on data collected over a 5-year period, they are likely to underestimate population characteristics that change over time. CVAP is a centrally important issue in many voting right cases and can clearly change over five years. To illustrate, most of the teenage citizens who were 13–17 years old when interviewed in the 2005 ACS would be older than 18 when counted by the 2010 Census. However, they would be reported at their interview age in the cumulated 2005–2009 ACS data. This has a particularly strong impact on racial/ethnic groups that have higher rates of citizenship among children than adults, such as Latinos and Asian Americans. Aggregated five-year ACS estimates are therefore a data source that may misreport some voting age citizens as either too young or as noncitizen who may have naturalized during this period. ACS estimates are best considered a conservative estimate of citizenship rates and CVAP; the actual rates are likely higher due to the natural aging of the population, the higher rate of citizenship among Latino and Asian children as opposed to adults, and the low mortality rate among teenagers versus older individuals. That is, large numbers of citizen children and teenagers are reaching voting age. There are many ways in which these technical problems with the ACS can be addressed (Chapa et al. 2011).

*Demographic Analysis in Voting Rights Cases*

As a demographer, Chapa's testimony in voting rights cases has involved estimates of population size, characteristics, and geographic distribution. Or to put it more clearly, how many people with which characteristics live where. But even a legal statement as apparently simple and straightforward as "one person, one vote" can apply to various legal definitions of a person, each of which requires distinct demographic estimates.

### **Aurora, Illinois**

Many redistricting cases are based on the citizen voting age population estimated by race and Latino ethnicity. This was the case in Aurora, Illinois. In 2004, the city was sued by plaintiffs contending that the new city council district map adopted after the 2000 Census impermissibly diluted the votes of the Latino electorate by fracturing and packing the Latino population across several single member districts.<sup>37</sup> Chapa wrote an expert witness report that analyzed the demographic, economic, educational, and occupational characteristics of the Latino and non-Latino populations of Aurora based on data from the 2000 Census. The analysis, he argued, showed that Aurora's Latino population was a "community of interest" to be respected by district boundaries, in that there were many similarities among Latinos in terms of these characteristics and the distributions of these characteristics were very different among Aurora's non-Latino residents. The report also showed that the City of Aurora could easily create at least three districts with solid Latino majorities, which would provide Latinos with more opportunities to elect representatives of their choice than the current election system. The court accepted Chapa's demographic analyses and conclusions but denied the plaintiffs' dilution claim based on other evidence and considerations.

### **Euclid, Ohio, City School Board**

Chapa's testimony in *United States of America v. Euclid City School Board* entailed updating the 2000 Census estimates of the growing African American population in the area served by the Board to 2006.<sup>38</sup> While the Board admitted that its at-large election system diluted the African American vote in the Board elections and therefore violated Section 2 of the VRA, the case still concerned what election system would be used in its place. The Board preferred a cumulative or limited voting system over single member districts, but the United States opposed that preference, insisting on single member districts.

The rapid growth in the African American voting age population documented by Chapa through ACS data helped establish that cumulative or limited voting could provide African American voters with a better chance, statistically, to elect representatives of their choice to the Board than single member districts. At the time of the trial in 2009, the only population data for small areas within the city necessary to draw represented electoral districts were from the 2000 Census.<sup>39</sup> School enrollments and other information showed that Euclid's African American population had grown by more than 40% by 2006. The size of the African American voting age population (VAP) was an important issue in this case and could be best estimated using ACS data. Chapa wrote a report that addressed the question of whether the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey was a more reliable and accurate source of data on the proportion of voting-age African Americans in the school district than the 2000 Census. The growth and the change in this population helped make the case that cumulative or limited voting might work better than single member districts drawn using old and inaccurate data.

Both plaintiffs and defendants stipulated that the ACS data provided the best estimate of "current city-wide population characteristics."<sup>40</sup> The population estimates he produced using ACS were used by the court in arriving at its decision, which allowed the Board to use limited voting (one vote in each subsequent election, first for three seats and then for two seats) in its elections.<sup>41</sup>

*Legal Challenges to Using ACS data*

The biggest challenges to the acceptance of ACS data as the equivalent of decennial Census counts might well be legal rather than technical. The main legal challenge to the use of ACS data for a VRA DA instead of the decennial Census long-form data is that the ACS is new, different, and not fully adjudicated or legislated as the successor to long-form Census data.

Two voting rights cases, one involving the City of Irving, Texas, and the other the almost coterminous Irving Independent School District, highlight the ACS' ambiguous status. These cases are *Benavidez v. City of Irving*<sup>42</sup> and *Benavidez v. Irving Independent School District*.<sup>43</sup> Both cases claimed the at-large elections for city council members and school trustees disenfranchised Latinos (O'Hare 2010). Demographic analysis of Latino voters was a central aspect of each case. The judge in the suit against the city found that the ACS data analysis could be used instead of the Census long-form data while the judge in the school district case found that it was not acceptable because the margin of error was too large. The judge in the school district case wrote:

In summary, the court finds that Benavidez has failed to present proved changed figures that meet the high standard that they be thoroughly documented, have a high degree of accuracy, and be clear, cogent, and convincing. Therefore, he cannot rely on 2007 ACS data in lieu of 2000 Census data. As noted, all parties agree that the 2000 Census data do not support the finding that the illustrative districts contain a majority Hispanic CVAP. Because Benavidez has failed to prove the first prong of the Gingles threshold test, the court need not consider the other elements of his § 2 claim.<sup>44</sup>

The judge was very critical of ACS data for 2007 in comparison to the long-form data collected in the 2000 Census. In fairness to the judge, he does say, "The court only finds ACS data unreliable as they were used in this case."<sup>45</sup> But since the long-form was not part of the 2010 Census and is not planned for any future Census, the ACS will be the only source of CVAP and other detailed social and economic data for redistricting cases following that Census.

Further challenges to the use of ACS data for a VRA DA come from legal scholars who argue that the collection of and use of these data are unconstitutional (e.g., Pixler 2009, 111). For many demographic analyses, there are no alternatives to ACS data. Every question in the ACS is mandated by federal law, vetted by the federal agencies that will use the data, reviewed and validated by the Office of Management and Budget, and approved by Congress. Apparently, this is too subtle for some. Congress may have to make general the explicit example in the most recent renewal of the VRA, known as the Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act (known as VRARA), which became law in 2006. In Section 203, the language minority provisions of the Voting Rights Act, coverage analysis is to be "based on the 2010 American Community Survey census data and subsequent American Community Survey data in 5-year increments, or comparable census data."<sup>46</sup> Until these issues are resolved, demographic analyses must be as attuned to the legal attitudes towards data as well as the technical details of the demographic analyses.

### **Geographic Testimony**

The two main criteria for the design and evaluation of election districts are the equal population and racial equity criteria. The Supreme Court has also recognized some other

criteria as “traditional redistricting principles” (National Council of State Legislatures 2009, 105). These principles include contiguity, geographic compactness, the preservation of political subdivisions, and the preservation of communities of interest. In addition, incumbent protection and the related notion of preserving the cores of prior districts are sometimes treated as important goals (Webster 2013). Other than the two main criteria, the legal necessity of satisfying such principles and goals is variable among the states (National Conference of State Legislatures 2009, 106–108).

Due to the United States’ reliance upon particular territorial representation as opposed to virtual representation (Archer and Shelley 1986, 8), all of the above redistricting criteria are implicitly geographic because district boundaries define the bounded geographic spaces of constituencies (Webster 1997). Thus, the equal population criterion may be evaluated by a demographer or population geographer, and the preservation of local government boundaries might be evaluated by a political scientist or political geographer. In spite of the implicit geographic character of almost all redistricting criteria, the two historically viewed as most explicitly geographic are the contiguity and compactness principles. The contiguity criterion that a person be able to go from any place in a district to any other place in that district without leaving the district rarely generates controversy, so the following focuses on the compactness criterion in general and then provides examples from some of Webster’s past written and oral testimony.

### Geographic Compactness Criterion

The geographic compactness criterion is among the oldest and most widely accepted and applied districting criteria. The development of a compactness criterion dates to the United States’ Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century experiences with the political manipulation of electoral space and the assumption that mandating the creation of geographically compact districts would provide a firewall against gerrymandering (Griffith 1907; Webster 2002). This view led Congress to pass a bill in 1911 requiring members of the House to be elected from “districts composed of a contiguous and compact territory” (O’Rourke 1997, 62). The bill, which provided no definition of what was meant by “compact territory,” was repealed in 1929, and no federal requirement has been adopted since. But in 2009, thirty-six states required their legislative districts to be compact, and seventeen required their US House districts be compact. These provisions, however, provide little if any guidance as to how geographic compactness is to be assessed in districting plans (National Conference of State Legislatures 2009, 108–109).

It is important to note that while the compactness criterion is more than a century old, comprehensive block level data and the wide availability of GIS software are outcomes of the past three decades, and both allow map makers enormous flexibility to fine tune districts to favor different interests.

The 1986 *Gingles* decision, referenced above, created renewed focus on the compactness criterion. It held that another “necessary precondition” that plaintiffs must demonstrate to prevail in a Section 2 vote dilution case, in addition to RPV, is that “the *minority group* must be able to demonstrate that it is sufficiently large and *geographically compact* to constitute a majority of a single-member district” (emphasis added).<sup>47</sup> While “compact” in this sentence refers to the minority group at issue,<sup>48</sup> the judiciary has treated it as if it applies to the illustrative district or districts that plaintiffs provide to satisfy this

requirement, and the Supreme Court has repeatedly stated that these illustrative districts themselves must be “reasonably compact” to satisfy this criterion.<sup>49</sup>

The Section 2 compactness criterion in vote dilution cases has become increasingly ambiguous due to some courts requiring that the illustrative districts also conform to one or more traditional districting principles other than compactness itself.<sup>50</sup> In this context, courts have considered whether illustrative districts respect “communities of interest” and traditional political and other boundaries and even whether they protect the reelection chances of incumbents, all of whom in some settings are white or Anglo, in the determination of whether the districts are “reasonably compact.” Districting criteria such as these of course are *not* measures of compactness but may now play an important role in these determinations. The following observation by the Supreme Court in *LULAC* remains accurate today: “no precise rule has emerged governing Section 2 compactness” (433)

In addition, the Court has identified district compactness as an important element in the evaluation of reverse “racial gerrymandering” claims under *Shaw v. Reno* in 1993.<sup>51</sup> These claims maintain that districts have been drawn to favor minorities rather than disfavor them, as had been the practice for so many years. This has further elevated the attention the concept of compactness receives in litigation.

There have been a number of publications on methods to quantitatively measure geographic compactness from a variety of fields, including law, political science, and geography (e.g., Niemi et al. 1990; Polsby and Popper 1991; 1993; Pildes and Niemi 1993; Webster 2002; 2004). The scores from these measures are frequently in conflict with each other, not only in their assessments of the absolute level of compactness of districts but also in the relative compactness across districts. The Court in *Gingles*, and later in *Shaw*, did not provide guidance on how the results of these methods should be interpreted. Thus, social scientists have several techniques to employ but little guidance on how to judge numerically acceptable levels of compactness. This has sometimes led to vague and subjective “I know it when I see it” evaluations of the compactness of a district or districting plan. Secondly, some interpretations have conflated compactness with contiguity, though they are separate geographic concepts and even with “communities of interest” (see Engstrom, 2001, 20–24).

Since the mid-1990s Webster has acted as a consultant or expert witness in many redistricting controversies involving the geographic compactness of proposed or challenged municipal, county, legislative and congressional districts using the same methods and protocols. While there is no method widely accepted by the courts, he has used the same approach throughout the time period with success (Webster 2004). His approach is in part adapted from a 1993 *Michigan Law Review* article by Richard Pildes and Richard Niemi that examined the geographic compactness criterion in the context of the *Shaw* decision. After reviewing the various methods for calculating compactness in light of the language used in *Shaw*, Pildes and Niemi (1993) argued that the Reock and Polsby-Popper measures best reflected the language in the Court’s decision. The Reock measure is a geographic dispersion test, while the Polsby-Popper measure is a perimeter test, with the two therefore emphasizing different aspects of geographic compactness. Webster used the two measures in tandem since they measure different aspects of district compactness (Webster 2004).



The Reock or geographic dispersion compactness measure focuses on the level of spatial concentration of a district's geographic area. To calculate this indicator, the smallest possible circle is circumscribed around a district. The reported coefficient is the proportion of the area in the circle that is also included in the district. The coefficient theoretically ranges from 0.0 (least compact) to 1.0 (most compact). The Polsby-Popper or perimeter compactness measure focuses on the length of a district's perimeter relative to the amount of area included in the district. The reported coefficient is the proportion of the area in the district relative to a circle with the same perimeter. The coefficient also theoretically ranges from 0.0 (least compact) to 1.0 (most compact). Redistricting software such as *Maptitude* now quickly calculates these measures for multiple plans with dozens of districts.

The above noted Pildes and Niemi article provides guidance for evaluating the two compactness measures; they also suggest cutoff levels for low compactness for both. With respect to the geographic dispersion measure, they suggest that low compactness is equal to or less than 0.15. On the perimeter measure, they suggest that low is equal to or less than 0.05. They further state, "In choosing the cutoff points used . . . [here] . . . we do not imply that all districts below these points, or only those districts, are vulnerable after *Shaw*" (Pildes and Niemi 1993, 564).

In his testimony, Webster commonly includes examples of the calculations for the geographic compactness of geometric shapes as well as real world geographic entities such as census tracts, municipalities, and counties. The purpose for including such examples is to provide context for the subsequent analysis of districts. For example, the geographic dispersion compactness coefficient for a square is 0.64, while the perimeter coefficient is 0.78. A rectangle has a geographic dispersion score of approximately 0.38 and a perimeter score of approximately 0.59.

The use of real world geographic entities is very effective to ensure that courts appreciate that in many cases the entities being subdivided or aggregated into districts are themselves of comparatively low compactness. For example, the state of Virginia has a dispersion coefficient of 0.23 and a perimeter coefficient of 0.16. Similarly, the City of Newport News in Virginia has a dispersion coefficient of 0.22 and a perimeter coefficient of 0.31. Likewise, the building blocks of districts, including census blocks or voting precincts, are frequently of low compactness. In the 2000s, voting precinct 10 in Hudspeth County, Texas, had a dispersion coefficient of 0.15 and a perimeter coefficient of 0.17. The important point for the court is that the creation of highly compact electoral districts from building blocks of comparatively low levels of compactness is difficult if not impossible (Webster 2004).

The analysis of the geographic compactness of electoral districts is not always straightforward due to the variability of real world landscapes. Thus, interpretations must consider the geographic setting since riverine or coastal environments may present complications not encountered on the Great Plains. The litigation over the districting in Cocoa, Florida, in the 1990s, a city at the time with a population of approximately 18,000, provides an example of the possible complications a social scientist might encounter. The city's population was nearly 29 percent African American, and prior to 1994, it used an at-large system to elect members of its city council. At-large voting systems often limit minority access to legislative bodies if polarized voting exists. As a result of litigation, the

**Table 2.**  
**Compactness Measures for Cocoa, Florida's City Council Districts as**  
**Delineated in the 1994 Consent Decree**

District Number	Compactness Measures	
	Dispersion (Reock)	Perimeter (Polsby-Popper)
1	.379	.388
2	.392	.209
3	.314 (.311) <sup>a</sup>	.159 (.142) <sup>a</sup>
4	.255	.060
Mean	.335 (.334) <sup>a</sup>	.204 (.200) <sup>a</sup>
Entire City	.369 (.350) <sup>a</sup>	.095 (.069) <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Numbers in parentheses represent alternative calculations of the compactness indicators which take into account the three nonmunicipal land islands encircled by Cocoa. The land island in District 3 reduces its area by .033 square miles and increases its perimeter by .889 miles. When all three land islands are used for the alternative calculation for the city as a whole, Cocoa's area is reduced by 387 square miles and its perimeter is increased by 4.510 miles.

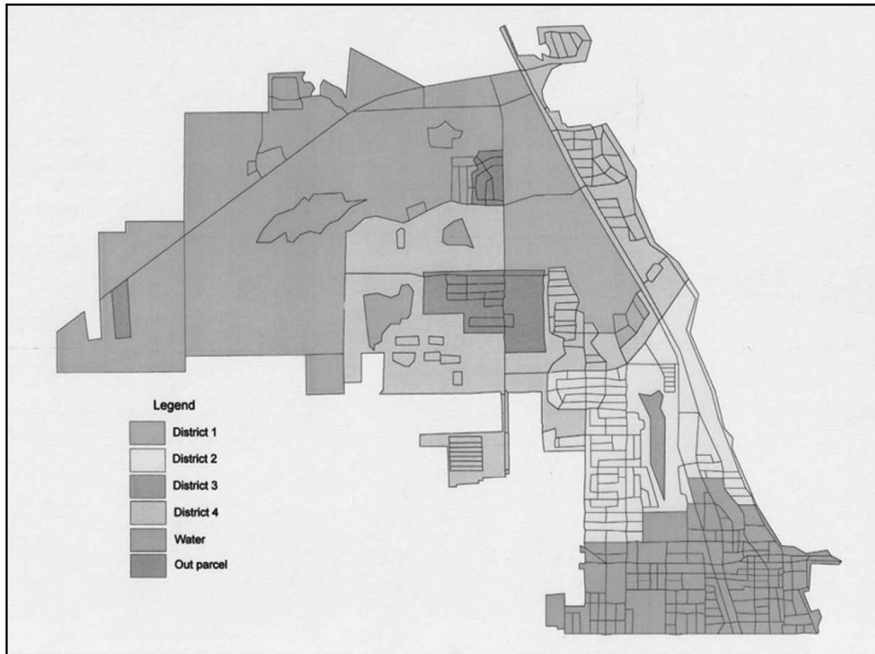
city agreed to move to a four-district plan to elect members of its city council (Figure 1). Later, the city attempted to withdraw from a consent decree in which one majority-African American district was created. Although Webster's written testimony included a focus on equal population, racial equity, contiguity, and the integrity of election precincts, a substantial portion of his efforts pertained to the geographic compactness of the four proposed districts.

Figure 1 confirms that the city of Cocoa itself is not particularly compact. Added to this limitation is the fact that there are three "out parcels" or unincorporated land islands entirely included within city's land area. This can occur when a city grows through annexation and encounters entities successful in resisting incorporation, resulting in perforations in the municipality's landscape. While two of these are on the boundaries between two different districts, one is entirely embedded within District 3. Since both the Reock and Polsby-Popper measures consider land area and boundary length, how should the land islands be treated in calculations of geographic compactness? For the city as a whole, arguably the area of the land islands should be subtracted from the total area decreasing its area but also increasing its aggregate municipal boundary, resulting in a decreased level of geographic compactness (Table 2).

All four of the districts had levels of geographic compactness above the suggested minimums discussed above. District 1, the majority-African American district in population, was arguably the most compact of the four districts (Table 2). The least compact district was District 4, a 91 percent white district. Multiple calculations were done for both the city as a whole and for District 3 due to the land island issue. Notably, the city as a whole was less compact than two districts on the geographic dispersion measure and less compact than three of the four districts on the perimeter compactness measure. Due to these findings, among others, the city was ultimately unsuccessful in its effort to withdraw from the consent decree.

In the case of the Cocoa, Florida, litigation, the city was districting for the first time, and there were no historical comparators available. But new redistricting plans are typically

**Figure 1.**  
**Cocoa, Florida**



compared to the last or benchmark plan. Thus, plans drafted in light of the 2010 census are compared to those adopted after the 2000 census. In 2011, Webster provided written testimony pertaining to the geographic compactness of the eventually implemented Illinois State Senate plan that included 59 electoral districts. He found that the 2001 Illinois Senate plan had a mean geographic dispersion compactness coefficient of 0.38 and a mean perimeter compactness coefficient of 0.28. The 2011 plan was highly similar with a mean geographic dispersion coefficient of 0.36 and a mean perimeter measure of 0.28. While the 2011 plan's mean level of perimeter compactness is identical to the level in the 2001 plan, its mean dispersion measure compactness fell by 0.02. Differences of 0.05 were considered largely irrelevant by Webster.

Evaluations of redistricting plans should also examine districts of comparatively low compactness to determine if there are explanatory circumstances that might include riverine settings, irregular coastlines, irregular census unit boundaries, or the creation of majority-minority districts, among other possible explanations. Such analyses should also consider the benchmark plan for comparison. For example, in the Illinois Senate plan adopted in 2001, one district had a dispersion score of 0.11, below the Pildes and Niemi suggested level (0.15) for low compactness. The perimeter score for this district was 0.11, above their suggested level (0.05) for low compactness on this indicator. In the adopted 2011 Senate plan, the same district had a dispersion compactness score of 0.11, but its perimeter compactness score rose to 0.15. Thus, the least compact Senate district in the 2011 plan was marginally more compact than the least compact district in 2001, an improvement. Notably, the district is majority African American and is geographically elongated to include the minority neighborhoods along the South Side of Chicago.

Generally, the courts are more receptive to a district of lesser compactness when it has been delineated to meet the racial equity criterion.

As should be clear, there are no “bright line” tests to evaluate the geographic compactness of districts as being acceptable or unacceptable or favorable or unfavorable. Compactness coefficients must also be interpreted in light of local circumstances, and what is deemed appropriate to evaluate compactness in Iowa or Nevada might be largely inappropriate for Mississippi or Louisiana. Quantitative measures, however, do provide an alternative to simplistic visual evaluations that can vary widely even among redistricting experts and can reflect the political preferences of those making the evaluations.

### Conclusion

Voting rights litigation in the United States often entails expert testimony by multiple social scientists. As noted above, these experts are from diverse disciplines and employ different methods of inquiry. Although they might opine on causal relationships at times, their testimony will primarily concern assisting the courts with many factual determinations. They testify to things as diverse as racially polarized voting, political cohesion among minorities, the number of Latino citizens of voting age within an area or jurisdiction, or the geographical compactness of election districts. Their collective testimony typically is central to the outcome of these cases.

The importance and relevance of expert testimony by social scientists may be expected to increase in the wake of the 2013 *Shelby County v. Holder* decision, which invalidated the coverage formula for Section 5 of the VRA. Section 2 of that Act will now be relied upon more than ever to counter minority vote dilution. The “totality of circumstances” test on which Section 2 decisions rely will increase the demand for social scientists from multiple fields, and the numerous factual issues addressed will call for both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The law provides few bright-line standards for the inferences and conclusions that experts reach in these cases, leaving federal courts to decide numerous factual issues based on the “preponderance of the evidence” standard for civil litigation. This places a premium on the quality of the analyses and testimony of expert witnesses.

### Notes

1. Section 2 of the VRA precludes electoral practices or arrangements that provide members of a protected group with “less opportunities than other members of the electorate to participate in the political process and to elect representatives of their choice” 42 USC. Sec. 1973(b) (2006).
2. 133 S. Ct. 2612 (2013). On the history of the preclearance requirement and the *Shelby County* decision that, in effect, nullifies it, see Engstrom (2014).
3. *Ibid.*, at 531. Section 3(c) of the VRA however authorizes federal courts to require federal preclearance for specified voting changes over a specified period of time in jurisdictions found to have intentionally discriminated based on race (see generally, Crum, 2010, 1992–2038). For current information on the few jurisdictions that are bailed-in, see Justin Levitt’s website, *All About Redistricting* (<http://redistricting.ils.edu>).
4. On the relevance of Sunday voting to African Americans, see Herron and Smith (2012).
5. *Supra.*, note 1.
6. The complete list can be found in S. Rep. No. 97–417, 97<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d Sess. 1982, 28–29.
7. One such additional factor identified in a recent federal court decision was the testimony of a white former member of the defendant school board that “there was deep-rooted racial prejudice in the community, and that such prejudice was reflected in school board elections.” *Benavidez v. Irving Independent School District*. (N.D. TX Civil Action No. 3:13-CV-0087-D, Memorandum Opinion and Orders. op. at 51 (August 15, 2014)) (hereinafter *Irving ISD*).
8. For the various activities expert witnesses engage in prior to testifying, such as writing reports and being deposed, and the adversarial context in which they work, see Engstrom and Mc Donald (2011).

9. There are standards, although somewhat vague, that their research must meet in order for experts to be allowed to testify (see Engstrom, 2005, 919–920).
10. In *Gingles*, the Court did contrast how the African American minority voted to how the “white majority” voted (at 51) rather than to how the “rest of the electorate” voted, which would be the appropriate comparison in a Section 2 inquiry given the language of Section 2 (see *supra*. n.1). This was due to the fact that registered voters in North Carolina at that time were recorded by the state as white or nonwhite. These data served as the measure of the racial composition of voting precincts in the RPV analysis (see below) referenced in that case. References to African American voting behavior in *Gingles* actually referred to that of nonwhites.
11. *Gingles*, 61–64, 100. For a recent unsuccessful effort by a defendant jurisdiction to redefine, through the testimony of an expert witness, the concepts of minority political cohesion, candidates of choice of minority voters, and racially polarized voting, in order to enhance their evidence and negate much of that of the plaintiffs, see *Large v. Fremont County, Wyoming*, (D.C. Wyo 1176, 1192–1206, 1210–1216, 2010).
12. For a rare instance of RPV being conceded by a defendant jurisdiction in a vote dilution case, see *Georgia State Conference of the NAACP, et al. v. Fayette County Board of Commissioners*, (ND Ga, 950 F Supp 2d 1294, 1312–1313, 2013).
13. Analyses of racially polarized voting in which Latino voters have been identified through Spanish surnames are typically relied upon by courts (see, e.g., *Febela v. City of Farmers Branch* 2012 US Dist. LEXIS 108086 (N.D. Tx August 2, 2012), at 37, and *Irving ISD, supra* n.7, at 24). For an overview of this technique, see Word and Perkins, 1996, and Word, Coleman, Nunziata, and Kaminsji, nd. Although Latinos are not a racial group, courts typically refer to divisions in the candidate preferences between Latino and non-Latinos voters as “racially” polarized voting. See, e.g., *Irving ISD, ibid.*, at 22–30.
14. EI is described in King (1997). Unlike the previous methodology that was relied upon most often, a variant of ecological regression called “double regression,” the method of bounds incorporated in EI precludes estimates of group support for a candidate or candidates exceeding 100 percent or being less than 0.0 percent. The use of maximum likelihood estimation further avoids the assumption of linearity that drives double regression estimates and therefore does not assume that members of a particular group vote the same regardless of the precinct in which they are located, the relative presence of their group in that precinct, the neighborhoods within the precinct, and other differences in precinct characteristics. Also unlike double regression, EI provides confidence intervals for the point estimates it produces. According to D. Stephen Voss, EI “is unparalleled when applied to the actual sort of data needed for analyzing important social issues such as racial voting patterns” (2004, 93).
15. *Febela v. City of Farmers Branch, supra.*, n.13.
16. *Ibid.*, at 41.
17. *Id.*, at 45.
18. *Id.*, at 49 n.28.
19. *Id.*, at 50. The court noted that “the confidence intervals for Hispanic voting patterns are broad. Dr. Engstrom persuasively testified that this was because there were no data on precincts with a heavy concentration of Hispanic voters. There does not appear to be a solution to this problem, however, and the defendants do not offer one. Moreover, it is undisputed that a point estimate is the ‘best estimate’ for the data, and the court will therefore rely on these point estimates,” at 52 n.33.
20. *Id.*, at 50.
21. *Id.*, at 53–54. In addition, the court referenced Engstrom’s testimony that the 2011 election in which the non-Latino vote for the Latino candidate was considerably higher than in all the other elections had occurred after the court case was filed. “Post-litigation” elections, he stated, provided defendant jurisdictions an “opportunity to try to hurt the lawsuit by getting people to vote differently than they have in the past.” *Id.*, at 45. The court noted that this was “a special circumstance [that] may explain the increased non-Hispanic crossover vote.” *Id.*, at 55. Indeed, one leading voting rights attorney, the late Frank Parker, would frequently state that the fastest way to get a Black candidate elected was to file a dilution challenge to an election system (personal observation of Richard L. Engstrom).
22. Engstrom further testified about how the place system and majority vote requirement in Farmers Branch precluded the Latino minority from using the “single shot” voting strategy in these elections. In a pure at-large election system, minority voters may cast a single vote for the candidate of their choice and withhold the remainder of their N votes from candidates competing with that candidate. This could result in the minority preference finishing among the top N candidates and winning a seat. The place system of course separates the election for each seat from the others, and the majority vote rule makes it more likely that the majority of voters will control the outcome in each place (see Engstrom 2014,

- 533; Engstrom and McDonald 1993). The court also references this testimony (*Id.*, at 59–60); see in addition *Montes v. City of Yakima*. (E.D. WA No. 12:13-CV-3108-TOR, Order on Cross-Motions for Summary Judgment, sl. op. at 55–61 (August 22, 2014)) (hereinafter *City of Yakima*).
23. 336 F. Supp. 2d 976 (DC SD 2004). For commentary on this case, see McCool, Olson, and Robinson 2007, 131–154, and McDonald 2010, 133–139.
  24. *Ibid.*, at 1005–1006. The only explanation the court provided for this was a statement that “the testimony of witnesses at trial is entitled to more weight than the personal history information acquired by Dr. McCool in unstructured interviews.”
  25. *Supra.* n. 11, at 1231. There are frequent references to this expert’s written and oral testimony in McDonald (2010, 197–252, 301–309).
  26. The defendant made numerous complaints about McCool’s methodology in an effort to exclude his evidence prior to trial, including arguing that QM was “not scientifically valid or reliable.” All of these complaints were rejected by the court [see *Bone Shirt v. Hazeltine* (DC SD January 25, 2004, sl. op. at 4)].
  27. *Supra.* n. 24, at 1005.
  28. *Ibid.*, at 1026.
  29. *Id.*, at 1035.
  30. *Id.*, at 1052.
  31. *Id.*, at 1050.
  32. *Id.*, at 1046.
  33. The ultimate remedy, however, may be an alternative to single member districts, such as cumulative or limited voting system, but this does not happen often (see Engstrom 2010).
  34. See *supra*, n. 6.
  35. While data collected and published by the United States Bureau of the Census are the major sources of information for demographic analyses, estimates of the Latino portion of certain populations, such as registered voters and those turning out to vote based on surname analyses, are a crucial part of some voting rights analyses (see *supra.*, n. 13).
  36. The Census Bureau has many other websites that produce downloadable data tables listed at the following (<http://www.census.gov/main/www/access.html>). One website makes it easy to extract micro data samples from large datasets ([dataferrett.census.gov](http://dataferrett.census.gov)).
  37. Aurora’s city council consisted of ten members: eight alderman elected from single-member wards and two at-large aldermen elected city-wide. *Gonzales v. City of Aurora*, 2006 US Dist. LEXIS 10677 (N.D. Ill., Mar. 13, 2006).
  38. 632 F. Supp. 2d 740 (N.D. Ohio 2009).
  39. ACS data for small areas such as block groups first became available in 2010.
  40. *Supra.*, n. 38, at 745 n. 3.
  41. For a discussion of the Euclid CSB litigation and first election held under the limited voting system, see Engstrom (2010: 111–114, 118–123, 130–134).
  42. *Benavidez v. City of Irving*, 638 F. Supp. 2d. 709 (N.D. Tx 2009).
  43. *Benavidez v. Irving Independent School District*, 690 F. Supp. 2d 451 (N.D. Tx 2010).
  44. *Ibid.*, at 461. The court did note, however, “The 2010 Census may confirm Benavidez’s contention that a majority Hispanic CVAP district can be drawn” (at 464). It did, and the court found in 2014 that the school districts’ new electoral arrangement, following that Census, a five single-member district and two at-large arrangement, without a majority Latino CVAP district, did violate section 2 of the VRA. See *Irving ISD, supra.*, n. 7, at 1, 53.
  45. *Id.*, at 464 n.18.
  46. 42 USC. Section 1973aa-1a(b)(2)(A) (2006).
  47. *Gingles*, at 50–51. If there are already one or more districts in which a minority group is a quantitative majority in the challenged arrangement, this criterion requires the plaintiff to demonstrate that more such districts can be created. *Johnson v. DeGrandy*, 512 US 997, 1009 (1994).
  48. See *League of United Latin American Citizens v. Perry*, 548 US 399, 433 (2006) (hereinafter LULAC) and *Shaw v. Hunt*, 517 US 899, 916 (1996).
  49. See, e.g., *De Grandy, supra.* n. 47, at 1008; *Bush v. Vera*, 517 US 952, 997 (1996); LULAC, *supra.* n. 48, at 430,496, and most recently *Bartlett v. Strickland*, 556 US 1, 30 (2009).
  50. For a recent, excellent overview of this development see *Georgia State Conference of the NAACP v. Fayette County Board of Commissioners*, 950 F. Supp. 2d 1294, 1304-1312 (N.D. GA 2013). See also the discussions *Irving ISD, supra.* n. 7, at 17–22 and *Montes v. City of Yakima*, at 27–33.
  51. 133 S. Ct. 2612.

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## **Book Reviews**



Heatherton, Christina, ed. *Downtown Blues: A Skid Row Reader* (Los Angeles, CA: Freedom Now Books and Los Angeles Community Action Network, 2011), \$15.00, 60 pp. ISBN: 978-0-984-91580-4.

Camp, Jordan T. and Christina Heatherton, eds. *Freedom Now! Struggles for the Human Right to Housing in LA and Beyond* (Los Angeles, CA: Freedom Now Books and Los Angeles Community Action Network, 2012), \$15.00. ISBN: 978-0-984-91581-1.

In his *Prison Notebooks*, Antonio Gramsci discusses the role of “organic intellectuals,” springing directly from a particular strata of society. While the ruling class has its own organic intellectuals, so too do the oppressed (Gramsci, a Marxist, used the term “working class”). When this group of organic intellectuals organizes critical reflection and inspired action, the domination by the ruling class can be subverted.

These two collections exemplify what Gramsci had envisioned. These analyses from noted scholars such as Robin D.G. Kelley, Ruth Gilmore, Clyde Woods, Cedric Robinson, Mike Davis, Don Mitchell, Rhonda Williams, and George Lipsitz are interwoven with trenchant critiques coming from activists from Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA-CAN), such as founder Pete White, organizer General Dogon, and dozens of others. The various authors discuss the racialized ways in which shifting capital interests displaced and criminalized thousands of residents of “Skid Row” adjacent to downtown Los Angeles.

The immediate public policy backdrop to this displacement is Los Angeles mayor Antonio Villaraigosa’s 2006 “Safer Cities” initiative, based on conservative James Q. Wilson’s “broken windows” theory of crime—namely, that minor physical blemishes to property left unchecked support a climate of lawlessness and thus an increase in crime. Numerous commentators have criticized this theory as a reiteration and new ideological cover for criminalizing the largely Black and Brown urban poor. A prime example graces the front cover of *Downtown Blues*, LA Municipal code section 41.18: “No person shall sit, lie or sleep in or upon any street, sidewalk or any other public way.” This code gives law enforcement carte blanche to arrest people for their being homeless. Individual landlords of single-room occupancy (SRO) hotels also make people homeless by what LA-CAN called the “28 day shuffle”—kicking people out of SRO units before 28 days, by which time the resident has some legal rights. The two volumes’ activist-scholars point out the capital interests invested in so-called “cleaning up” (i.e., removing poor people) the fifty-block area to facilitate gentrification as real estate developers seek to profit from a new “hipster” middle-class population’s renewed interest in the city center. Both volumes powerfully defend the right to housing, in Los Angeles and across the country as well as in the Global South, including South African activist S’bu Zikode and

the Landless Peoples Movement. These rights are supposedly guaranteed in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948 and periodically reviewed by the U.N. LA-CAN activists testified in Geneva for the Universal Periodic Review.

The first volume takes the title from Clyde Woods' analysis of the Blues, which he defines as "an encyclopedia of the multiple forms of traps experienced by African Americans over the course of generations and of how they challenged these practices" (51). *Downtown Blues* begins with an essay by Robin D.G. Kelley, who begins with a chilling quote from General Dogon: "Just the sight of Black folks walking down the street in handcuffs . . . just the sight of 50 people walking down the street in plastic handcuffs really brought back the image of how they used to load up the slave ships" (8). Kelley continues in this vein, weaving together an analysis of how African Americans were singularly impacted by advancing neoliberal capitalism with a cultural critique of the 2008 film *The Soloist*, which was presented as an autobiography of *LA Times* journalist Steve Lopez who befriended a down-on-his-luck musician living with untreated mental illness, Nathaniel Anthony Ayers. This film, which brought actress Lisa Gay Hamilton to a walking tour guided by General Dogon, is critiqued by Cedric Robinson and Damien Schnyder, who also discuss the film with LA-CAN members. Robinson deconstructs the film, placing it within a genre of apologist reconstructions of White supremacist fantasies. Following this is an interview with civil rights attorney Michael Blasi, who discusses the structural transformation in the city since the 1970s and the loss of unionized jobs. Don Mitchell offers an analysis of how this homelessness, "American style," is structural while maintaining powerful ideological constructions dividing the "deserving" and "undeserving" poor. In the final essay, one of his last published works, Woods, who also published a book on Hurricane Katrina, discusses the New Orleans Black diaspora in Los Angeles. Woods discusses how despite the multiple injustices faced by these migrants, places like Skid Row, "in addition to being places where people are forced into . . . became places where communities were built and where visions of social justice were imagined and brought into being" (51). Interspersed between these activist scholarship essays are interview excerpts, art, and poetry by LA-CAN members, including those who are forced to take their chances and sleep on the streets.

Following two introductory essays, the second volume, *Freedom Now!*, begins with a heartfelt homage to Woods, who passed away shortly after a discussion he participated in marking the first anniversary of Haiti's earthquake, which rendered 1.5 million people without shelter at its peak. The discussion is fitting, as a housing rights movement catalyzed across Haiti's 1200 internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and across Haiti's bitter political divide. FRAKKA (a Haitian Creole acronym for Reflection and Action Force for the Housing Cause) was created and soon formed the Housing Rights Collective with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). This is a powerful case study for the right to housing and the right to emergency shelter and assistance for IDPs and can also offer lessons about the politics of coalitions and the impact of foreign aid and even grassroots solidarity organizations.

Longer and more loosely organized than the first volume, *Freedom Now!* begins with an introductory essay by Ruth Wilson Gilmore and Christina Heatherton titled "Fixing Broken Windows without Batons," critiquing LA's police response of the Safer Cities

Initiative and its failed model, the “broken windows” theory discussed above. Heatherton and Jordan Camp cite Martin Luther King’s “time to break silence” speech to discuss the purpose of the volume: to break the silence. The volume’s title, “Freedom Now!,” also comes from King’s speech. In the first essay, Rhonda Y. Williams offers a history of how public housing stock was privatized and how this move in tandem with gentrification jeopardized the right to housing. She discusses Clinton’s signature “HOPE VI” initiative, to “make public housing invisible” and provide cover for demolition and gentrification, but ends on African American communities’ resistance. Gaye Theresa Johnson follows with an extensive interview documenting Latino families’ ties to downtown LA and how they struggle to survive as capital interests reclaimed and Disneyfied the urban center. George Lipsitz, beginning with a statistic that 75% of Skid Row residents suffer from mental or physical disabilities (for which the source is uncited), discusses the steep penalties imposed by the LAPD for being homeless. Following this essay is a series of interviews with Los Angeles historian Mike Davis, LA-CAN’s Pete White and General Dogon, and a range of housing rights activists from Miami, New Orleans, Chicago, and South Africa. The structure of first-hand analyses anchoring activist scholarship, as well as the narrative, is dispersed at this point. The international examples are those who came in a solidarity visit to LA-CAN and LA-CAN’s own travels to Geneva. The challenges to the right to housing, as well as the common threads of activism, are scattered throughout the text without a systematic analysis. Still, the stories themselves and the interviews by hardworking activists underscore the larger point that the struggles in LA, named the “meanest city” by the National Coalition for the Homeless, are national and even global. Sam L. Jackson argues that in New Orleans, the disaster capitalism following Hurricane Katrina underscored that “the city became ground zero for the struggle for the human right to housing.”

Taken together, the two volumes offer a timely set of on-the-ground analyses from organic intellectuals, rich in diversity in voices and form. The books and the overall organizing from which they spring offer not only important historical documents of the struggle for the right to housing but also encouragement. These solidarity conversations—as evidenced by the quotes in the final pages of the book—“inspires me to ball my fist tighter, to stand even stronger, and to fight longer and harder.” For the activists’ and Gramsci’s vision to become reality, this analytic needs to be integrated into coordinated and organized efforts for change. Chicago housing rights activist Willie J. R. Fleming reminds readers that “it was pressure of society on President Roosevelt that instituted these social protections . . . Less than 4 days ago, Rep. Conyers made that exact point about President Obama. People are going to have to protest in order for him to see that he has to do what Roosevelt did” (104).

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Brown, Nadia E. *Sisters in the Statehouse: Black Women and Legislative Decision Making* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), \$32.99, 250 pp. ISBN: 978-0-199-35243-2 (cloth).

In *Sisters in the Statehouse*, Nadia E. Brown examines how identity and lived experience influence the decision-making processes of African American women state legislators. This book is path-breaking insofar as it blazes a trail for future intersectionality-type research that focuses squarely upon the lives of African American women state legislators. Based on an intragroup analysis of African American women who held seats in the Maryland state legislature between 2009 and 2011, the book showcases a range of qualitative and interpretive methods (e.g., in-depth elite interviews and case studies as well as feminist life histories and participant observation) to advance our practical and theoretical understanding of the diversity that exists between and among African American women state legislators. In it, Brown makes the case that identity foregrounds experience and tells how African American women state legislators perceive the effects of their identities (read: plural) on their legislative work. More specifically, Brown examines how these state representatives use their identities to interpret legislation dealing with same-sex marriage, domestic violence, minority businesses, and elder care. This is a fascinating study, carefully researched and thoughtfully written. It centers on some of the most vexing and controversial issues today, which makes the project timely and ambitious. Such an understudied line of inquiry is bound to spark additional intersectionality-type research on African American women in state legislatures across time and region as well as policy domains. To date, little research has examined whether and how the intersection of race and gender influences legislative behavior. Edith Barrett's (1995) landmark study on state legislative behavior demonstrated that African American female legislators were unique in their cohesiveness on prioritizing particular issues, such as education, health care, and economic development. At the same time, and no less importantly, Barrett (1995) concluded that African American women were essentially united in their policy interests. In this way, previous research has taken a somewhat static approach, ignoring the political context in which legislators might prioritize elements of their identity differentially, as they cannot be expected to consistently take similar legislative positions. Brown's analysis offers us a more dynamic interpretation and comprehensive account of how and when African American women state legislators are more likely to behave as a cohesive voting bloc and when they are more likely to behave as individuals. As this study demonstrates, the legislative activity of African American women is a particularly interesting avenue through which to explore the intersections of race, gender, and political representation.

In *Sisters in the Statehouse*, Brown is squarely focused on understanding how African American women state legislators make key legislative decisions and the contexts under

which they behave similarly (or collectively) versus singularly (or individually). She gives voice to African American women state legislators who have routinely been reduced to numbers in linear equation models in past research. Much of the extant literature employs quantitative methods to measure roll call votes, determine bill passage success, and assess ideology along a liberal-conservative continuum comparatively, across various racial, ethnic, and gender groups. To establish a link between who these legislators are and what they do, Brown takes a giant step forward methodologically by investigating and contextualizing multiple group status in relationship to the processes and conditions that prime certain aspects of their identities in the legislative arena. Brown's theory of representational identity is all-inclusive and accounts for generational differences, sexual orientation, religion, motherhood status, and marital status in addition to the "holy trinity" of intersectional analysis: race, gender, and class. Such variables serve to explain policy preferences and legislative actions.

Most readers will wince at Brown's academic prose at the outset of the text, as it might strike them as rooted in a hodgepodge of literature and, for this reason, less than satisfying; nonetheless, readers will sink their teeth into subsequent chapters. The prose gets stronger as the reader moves onto the next chapters—specifically, those with a policy focus like domestic violence and marriage equality. Until then, Brown is justifying the topic and its importance in addition to choices made at the outset to a fault. In this way, the author plays it safe by restating theories, defining concepts, and listing points rather than building an argument. Despite these criticisms, however, the use of feminist life histories is exceptionally well-done. Readers will hear the personal testimonies of African American women state legislators and become captivated as Brown translates these narratives cleverly. Brown makes meaning or sense of their lives in such a thoughtful, imaginative, and interesting way that she reinvigorates the study of political representation and advances a new framework for legislative studies. Brown skillfully demonstrates how identity informs legislative decision making and policy preferences by connecting *who* a legislator is with *what* she does contextually.

Take, for example, the issue of domestic violence. Brown details how African American women state legislators draw from experience, culture, and identity to explain their positions either in favor of or in opposition to HB 1181—Denial or Dismissal of Domestic Violence Petitions. In this case, African American women state legislators differ along generational lines—more specifically, African American women state legislators born after 1960 exhibit traces of third-wave feminism. Having benefited from the civil rights and Black Power movements as well as the second-wave feminist movement from the 1960s through the 1980s, this younger-aged cohort defected from the Women's Caucus by opposing a bill that would allow a respondent in a domestic violence protection-order proceeding to request expungement of all court records relating to the proceeding if the petition was denied or dismissed at the interim, temporary, or final protective-order stage. They concluded that this legislation would help those falsely accused of abuse clear their records and framed their support in this way: unsubstantiated records should not be open to the public, especially when the bar is set very low for obtaining a temporary restraining order (TRO). This younger-aged cohort were more inclined to believe that standing up for victims' rights should not come at the expense of those who may have been falsely

accused—for example, African American men who could be denied employment opportunities due to false accusations permanently linked to their names.

*Sisters in the Statehouse* could easily be adopted in courses on African American politics, state and local politics, Maryland state politics, Women and politics, and Black feminist politics. Other courses would include those that are cross-listed with African American studies, Women Studies, and/or Political Science. Structurally, the book is well-organized and presented in a coherent and logical fashion that undergraduate and graduate student readers would follow with ease. The book is a nice compliment to Katherine Tate's *Black Faces in the Mirror* (Princeton University Press, 2004) and Richard Fenno's *Going Home* (University of Chicago Press, 2003) because it provides both a rich and nuanced explanation for how description representation enhances substantive representation in several important and meaningful ways. At the heart of this book are answers to two fundamental questions: When policies are both race and gender oriented, do African American women state legislators view this legislation in similar ways? What factors cause them to diverge in their policy interests? In short, Brown moves the research forward in this regard and addresses problematic gaps in the literature on political representation, which treats identity as static or one-dimensional for African American women state legislators. To date, they have been dubbed a uniform (or monolithic) group in terms of their policy preferences and legislative behavior. To be sure, this book will surely provoke scholarly debate and future research attentive to the simultaneous effects of multiple identities on legislative behavior. By rendering visible the complexities of group-based politics as well as the individual political objectives of African American women state legislators, Brown has complicated and enriched the way we think about conventional legislative studies.

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Smith, Preston H. *Racial Democracy and the Black Metropolis: Housing Policy in Post-war Chicago* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), \$27.50, 456 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8166-3703-4 (paper).

After World War II, many Black people migrated from the South to the North seeking employment and economic opportunities and to improve their social reality. American cities experienced a rapid influx of new residents; Chicago was no exception. The population increase resulted in a tightening of the housing market. Explicit and implicit policies impacted the existence and availability of quality housing. Preston Smith provides a well-researched and well-considered analysis of the roles and impact of members of the Black elite on shaping housing policy in postwar Chicago from the 1940s through the 1960s. He utilizes primary source material to uncover and fill gaps in the literature about the role and influence of Black stakeholders in shaping housing policy in Chicago in this period. Smith examines primary documents from the Chicago Urban League, the *Chicago Defender*, various agencies, and documents from members of the Black elite during that time to provide dimension to decision-making strategies used by the Black political and business elite to shape the housing landscape for Blacks in Chicago. Prior to Smith's investigation, the literature was conspicuously missing a narrative about Black political involvement in housing policy decisions; his investigation expands the literature by presenting Black stakeholders who exercise substantial political leverage as they act and react to constrained political choices. Smith provides detailed examples of how these stakeholders influenced and shaped the framing of issues like public housing, slum clearance, and class-based discussions about residential land use and valuation.

The book generally follows a chronological approach that is divided into three key parts. He first examines the struggle for public housing and the shift in federal policy that resulted in public housing being aligned with slum removal. The second part of the book provides a robust assessment of the Black middle-class housing markets and the real estate industry in the 1950s. It is here that Smith constructs a clear case for policy decisions that were endorsed by the Black middle-class that traded a class-based policy analysis for a type of racial solidarity that primarily benefited the business elite. The final section of the book chronicles the efforts of the Black elite to work with the business sector of Chicago to provide quality housing for Black residents.

Specific to his analysis is a discussion about the tensions that clearly existed between the working class goals of securing more quality, affordable housing, and the Black middle- and upper-middle classes who were concerned about the location of public housing sites. Smith explains the dynamics of in-group and factional tensions by highlighting the competing emphases of racial democratic aims—which place the focus on eliminating racial discrimination and housing segregation and ensuring equal access to housing markets

based on race—and social democratic aims—which targets class inequality. Smith makes the case that the Black social and political elites embraced a housing policy agenda that affirmed their class position while articulating a policy perspective that centered on racial democracy. The pivot point in the policy stance is rightly located with the 1949 federal housing legislation that coupled public housing with a slum clearance agenda. Smith's historical analysis contributes an insightful text that compliments a robust literature on housing policy in Chicago, making it a necessary addition to urban politics syllabi.

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Vincent W. Lloyd, ed. *Race and Political Theology* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), \$22.95, 264 pp. ISBN: 978-0-804-77315-7 (paper).

*Race and Political Theology* accelerates like a Gauss rifle at the nexus of Ancient Near Eastern and African diasporas. It is a delightful achievement (though a minor caveat is in order—midway through the introduction, this reviewer tore an eye muscle, a left medial rectus no less). The intent of this collection of provocative essays is to expand on the repertoire of political theologies, which previously have tended toward narrow homologues (e.g., Carl Schmitt), diluted miscellany, and myopic sectarian posturing (5, 17). Specifically, the authors “make vulnerable the political and the theological through engagement with text and context” (17). While the focus does not waver, these ivied scholars bring to bear expertise from diffuse disciplines, including ancient near eastern/middle eastern studies, law, religion, theology, political science, computer science, relativistic dynamics, British literature, German literature, political theory, American Studies, and Africana studies. Editor Vincent Lloyd frames this project ably, and the essays in this collection gleam.

Vincent Pecora (26ff.) uses Otto Brunner’s schema for situating household, kinship, local sovereignty, and self-help (feuding) in the disruptive context of the modern bureaucratic state and the exclusion of *Gäste* (guest workers) and *Jüdischheit* (Jewishness). Brunner, as genealogical anchor, offers a new origin for political theology rather than the standard, Carl Schmitt. The essay then leaps forward, using Brunner as a template for understanding, among other issues, Maoist repatriation, U.N. Advisory Resolution 181 (44), the kibbutz, Islamic nationalism (45), the antistate rhetoric of Sarah Palin and the Tea Party movement (48), and terrorism more generally as feud.

Christoph Smidt’s essay also displaces Schmitt via the corpus of journalist Wilhelm Stapel. Stapel synthesizes the trajectory of power from erotic desire, to family, household, city, principality, Reich, and Führer to the face of Christ (65–67). Stapel eschews love of neighbor as a Jewish complot (74) and reminds his audience that Jesus is a variation of *Jescha* (help/salvation) and *jascha* (help), which carries the etymological echo of *Selbsthilfe* (self-help, which has vastly differently dimensions in realist international law than in domestic politics, where it tends to be viewed as vigilantism) (80).

J. Kameron Carter and Jonathon Kahn take up interest in the notoriously secular W. E. B. Du Bois’ political theology. Carter’s essay dovetails Du Bois’ work with that of Karl Barth. For those who might insist on regarding Du Bois as a secularist, the Carter essay still reveals with jaw-dropping certainty that both Barth and Du Bois knew at the dawn of the League of Nations that Europe was still teetering at the brink of self-destruction (92, 99). Kahn’s essay regards Du Bois’ political theology as preserving elements of the liberal state, such as justice and rights, along with skepticism of American exceptionalism (118).

Corey Walker's political theology of freedom draws from Howard Thurman's analysis of Negro Spirituals. In addition to a beautiful interpretation of chord progression, Thurman's analysis allows us to regard the constant presence of death in the spirituals as the component of a positive ethic which embraces pilgrimage rather than a suicidal Sartrean dead end (149).

Gil Anidjar and Daniel Boyarin anchor their genealogies in Shakespeare's treatment of races, including but not limited to hominids. Anidjar sees in *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice* a declaration that politics and theology have been separated and that the political-theological enemies have long been figured as Judaism and Islam (168). Daniel Boyarin's reading of *Othello* details the caricature of enemy as other species, including horses, asses, dogs, and satyrs, the differences scripted surgically on their genitalia (184).

Bonnie Honig's account of Michael Walzer's reading of Exodus takes on the issues basic to Zionism. It may be the first evenhanded treatment I have seen on this subject. Walzer's reading of Exodus, Honig observes, notes there are moments of pedagogy but also violent purges. Honig solves the dilemma by way of contingency, arguing that while there are rules attempting to delineate merit carefully, there is contingency, chance—the promised land is distributed via census and lot (203). After the covenant, however, Israelites turn to a golden calf. Levites assume power, ending the covenant's radical equality in a "defeat for revolutionary aspiration," per Walzer (206). Honig and Walzer invite readers to engage them in dialogue about radical equality. Radical equality may not have been squelched by the Levites. One of the more enduring revelations of the Yahwist God is the penchant for enriching the underdog—younger brothers receiving an inheritance, a priestly child (Samuel) born to a previously barren Ephraimite (not a Levite), a boy with a sling slaying a giant and replacing a paranoid king. Levite power, which resorted to (I believe) unnecessary violence, is arguably part of the Yahwist tendency toward radical equality. If we back the story up to Jacob's death bed, Levi is one of three sons (Reuben and Simeon the others) Jacob disinherits. Thus, the rise of Levites to power may be a moment of radical equality. Honig's account ends with James Baldwin's critique of separatism (207), which insists that Black and White (and presumably Palestinians and Israelis) must share a common fate.

Martin Land and Jonathan Boyarin include a useful dialogue of the perils and benefits of defining ethnic Judaism, specifically: (1) "[Do] Jewish cultural repertoires deal justly with those who take their particular Jewishness to be noncontingent?" and (2) "[D]oes . . . inclusivity . . . undermine our attempt to distinguish Jewishness from anything else?" (221).

George Shulman writes the final chapter. He develops interesting typologies of prophecy and redemption, but perhaps his most important accomplishment is to refocus on the collective project of all his collaborators: "Our task it to . . . reveal the practices by which every justification is a form of power. De-idealization of language, especially of redemptive and democratic rhetoric, is the only way to expose how ideals, taken up in the logics and ruses of power, are practiced at human expense" (243).

*Race and Political Theology* is a powerful, luminary book which should prompt similar works to detail other traditions' political theologies, as the vantage point of dispersion may be a universal human experience. I recommend it for excellent undergraduates and the universal populations of graduate students and faculty. For many of the latter, it may be wise to update bifocal prescriptions before opening the book.

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Holmes, Robert A. *Maynard Jackson: A Biography* (Miami, FL: Barnhardt and Ashe Publishing, 2011), \$24.99, 367 pp. ISBN: 978-0-9801744-2-7 (paper).

In his recounting of the details of the late Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson's political career, Robert Holmes reaffirms the importance of political biography as a form of political science scholarship. Holmes uses his position as a friend of Jackson's and a former Atlanta politician himself to provide an exhaustive description of Jackson's political rise, governance, and overall political legacy.

This book is a must-read for anyone interested in understanding Atlanta politics or in understanding the challenges that the first black mayors of major cities face. Holmes leaves no stone unturned in his exegesis. He uses interviews with Jackson's friends, family, and colleagues (Holmes' interview list is a Who's Who of Atlanta politics in the last 40 years), along with secondary sources, to provide invaluable details about every aspect of Jackson's political ascendance, from the influence of his activist grandfather John Wesley Dobbs ("The Mayor of Auburn Avenue") to his untimely death of a heart attack in 2003.

Holmes' analysis proves useful to anyone interested in studying campaigns and elections, African American politics, and urban politics. Scholars of elections and race will learn how Jackson's 1968 US Senate challenge to Herman Talmadge helped to set the stage for Jackson's vice-mayoral election in 1969 and his mayoral election in 1973. Holmes provides extensive detail about the opposition Jackson faced from Blacks and whites over the course of his career, and he charts the evolution of racially polarized voting in Jackson's elections (Jackson evolved from being the racialized choice of Black voters in 1973 to winning a third term in 1989 with a coalition of business and African American support). Holmes also notes Jackson's commitment to try to use government to empower Blacks throughout the text, noting Jackson's successes in increasing both the number of high-level minority employees as well as minority firms winning contracts with the city.

Holmes spares no detail delving into the intricacies of Jackson's governance. He devotes considerable space to outlining the development of Jackson's policies on crime, contracting, and the arts, among other things. While he notes the highlights of Jackson's career, such as his role in helping Atlanta win the bid for the 1996 Olympics, he also devotes attention to more unflattering subjects, such as the Atlanta Child Abductions, the Sanitation Worker's Strike, and the failure of the Jackson Administration to provide sufficient affordable housing for the city's needy residents. Here is where I will offer a small critique of Holmes' analysis. While he does not shy away from exposing the failures and criticisms of the Jackson Administration, he could have been more reflective about the class implications of Jackson's record. Yes, Blacks did benefit from Jackson's

advocacy and service; but middle-class and affluent blacks benefitted disproportionately from Jackson's policies, particularly his affirmative action policy.

Holmes provides rich detail about almost every imaginable aspect of Jackson's political career. It is so rich, in fact, that I think that most undergraduate audiences would get overwhelmed by the details and not truly appreciate the work. However, this book is an invaluable resource for anyone doing advanced scholarship on urban politics, Black mayors, and/or Atlanta specifically. I especially think that anyone who teaches about early Black mayors such as Maynard Jackson needs to read this work as background and preparation for lectures. Holmes has certainly challenged me to rethink how I present Maynard Jackson to my students as a Black political figure, and I am grateful for his work.

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Hong, Grace Kyungwon and Roderick A. Ferguson, eds. *Strange Affinities: The Gender and Sexual Politics of Comparative Racialization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), \$19.06, 384 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8223-4985-3 (paper).

Martínez, Ernesto Javier. *On Making Sense: Queer Race Narratives of Intelligibility* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), \$20.55, 216 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8047-8340-8 (paper).

*Strange Affinities: The Gender and Sexual Politics of Comparative Racialization* is comprised of a wide range of critical essays on US and transnational cultures that problematize prevailing ideas of difference and their organization as separate and discrete categories in commonly-accepted knowledge structures. Organized by shared analytics and problematics of knowledge production about minoritized subjects rather than similar content or topics, the essays offer rigorous analyses of complex ways that categories of difference—particularly race, gender, and sexuality—intersect in shaping the relationships *among* disparate minoritized subjects that have been obscured by established or “normative” knowledge forms. This collection, thus, departs from one prevalent orientation of ethnic, feminist, and queer studies scholarship: the primary or exclusive focus on a particular minoritized group or their relationship to the dominant group based on one axis of difference and power—race (Whiteness), gender (patriarchy), *or* sexuality (heteronormativity).

In the introduction, editors Grace Kyungwon Hong and Roderick A. Ferguson usefully identify various commonly deployed logics of comparison as what naturalizes persistent occlusion of oppositional knowledges that emerge from intersections and relationality of various differences: the logics of normative comparison define the meaning and value of differences—commonly inform what constitutes “others”—by comparing them with the “ideal type,” which is presumed to be inherently homogeneous and authentic—be it the West; the unmarked Whiteness, normative gender, or queerness—or the primary reference of group identity in ethnic nationalisms (Black, Chicana/o, Asian). This collection argues that women of color feminism and queer of color critique, which foreground active negotiation of differences and heterogeneity *within* and across various historically marginalized peoples toward creating broad-based coalition, provide alternative and more politically effective responses to the exclusion, marginalization, and devaluation of minoritized subjects that normative comparisons perpetuate. Hong and Ferguson illustrate the crucial implications of such critical moves by marking the more recent formation of queer of color critique as part of the long critical genealogy of women of color feminism rather than narrating these two formations as subsets or extensions of mainstream white feminist and queer studies.

By deploying alternative comparisons across minoritized differences, the essays in this collection provide original analyses of racialization that unravel or unsettle existing categories of race and ethnicity (such as Black, Latina/o, and Asian)—or cut across them—to better articulate how racialized subjects and their relations are always already constituted by gender and sexual differences. Such knowledge is often rendered illegible or unintelligible by the language and structures of mainstream knowledge organized by what Hong and Ferguson identify as the logics of normative comparison, which produce privileged subjects at the expense of their various others. Therefore, problematizing and making visible how such logics devalue minoritized subjects by rendering their death necessary and inevitable becomes the vital means through which to reconceptualize the terms of difference in order to better comprehend and more productively re-imagine relationships among minoritized subjects for emancipatory and coalitional politics.

*On Making Sense: Queer Race Narratives of Intelligibility* also takes issue with the epistemic injustice and violence of normative knowledge structures that persistently devalue, delegitimize, and appropriate the ideas and experiences of people marked by racial, gender, and sexual differences. Like *Strange Affinities*, this single-authored book identifies culture—particularly literary and cultural texts authored by minoritized subjects—as a crucial site where alternative and oppositional knowledges emerge to allow us to better make sense of how oppression works to affect different racialized, gendered, and sexually stigmatized communities. *On Making Sense* places a greater emphasis on literary studies, taking up the tasks of rectifying Eurocentric literary theories (particularly poststructuralist theories of language and identity that the author calls “antirealist”) as well as offering fresh interpretations of works by well-known writers, such as Toni Morrison, James Baldwin, Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherrie Moraga, and María Lugones. Through nuanced, eloquent, and accessible close textual analyses that are thoughtfully situated in relation to key critics (particularly those in Latina/o literary studies), *On Making Sense* unearths new insights into literary narratives of queer people of color in the United States, from the ways that less obvious spatial logics organize knowledge to the political potential of community members’ and outsiders’ perspectives on queer subjects for creating solidarity across difference.

In these two projects that stake claims in comparative ethnic studies in the broadest sense, Black thinkers and writers provide vital inspirations in multiethnic critical terrains that encompass Latina/o, Chicana/o, Asian, and other interlocutors. In *Strange Affinities*, Black feminists Audre Lorde, Barbara Smith, and the Combahee River Collective serve as key theoretical inspirations along with Cherrie Moraga, Lisa Lowe, Foucault, among others. The critical essays address the works by major historical figures, such as W. E. B. Du Bois, as well as new players, such as Ethiopian-American artist Julie Mehretu. In *On Making Sense*, the critique of Judith Butler’s appropriation of Toni Morrison’s words and the recuperation of resultant lost oppositional knowledge serves as the methodological and theoretical springboard, marking the particular framework and intervention that the project as a whole seeks to make. Also, early on in the book, James Baldwin’s work serves as the point of departure for making sense of how race intersects with gender and sexuality in other stories about queer people of color, including literary accounts about Latina/o and Korean American standup comedians’ performance of solidarity with Blacks and queer people. Without a doubt, the interconnected webs of inspirations and affinities



delineated in both projects illustrate the important influences of Black writers and thinkers beyond Black communities. Perhaps more importantly, situating their works in such comparative contexts reminds us of the expansive political potentials of their works: they not only inspired but were also part of broad-based social movements and transnational anticolonial movements within and beyond the United States. Reframing the works of Black thinkers and writers this way is therefore fundamentally different from the kind of tokenistic inclusion that appropriates minoritized voices as examples to support the universality of Euro-centric theories or perspectives. Such reframing and the ensuing critical analyses of the workings of difference in various contexts of violence and oppression serve as timely reminders of the rich multiracial antiracist histories shared across gender and sexual differences, which have been largely flattened and “domesticated” by knowledge structures organized by the logics of normative comparison—from Euro-centrism and ethnic nationalisms to queer liberalism that naturalizes homonormativity.

While both projects foreground the critical task of unsettling and unpacking established knowledge systems that render minoritized subjects devalued and invisible, they differ in their stance on whether or not creating intelligibility of minoritized subjects ought to be the ultimate theoretical or political goal. *Strange Affinities* prioritizes expansive yet materially grounded theorization that seeks to generate new critical language to describe social and subject formations of intersectional relationality that, in Hong and Ferguson’s words, “escapes articulation” and “must traffic in the unknowable and the devalued” (16). In other words, there is implicit reservation and perhaps strategic skepticism about the desire to achieve intelligibility as the political or theoretical end. Rather, as an important gesture of resisting cooptation by power through incorporation in a Foucauldian sense, *Strange Affinities* underlines the difficult and often messy processes of creating new analytics to account for both the intelligibility and unintelligibility of minoritized subjects—not only in literary representation but also within broader networks of social, cultural, and political economic formations—as a theoretical and political problem of knowledge production. On the contrary, *On Making Sense* closely follows the realist project of reclaiming the use of identity and minority experience for oppositional knowledge. According to the author, Ernesto Martínez, this realist paradigm (in contrast to antirealist poststructuralism) insists that the struggles and experiences of minoritized subjects, albeit subjective in some sense, can in fact provide access to better knowledge about oppression and the social world that is objective in a specific sense: this is based on the understanding of objectivity as “a process of approximation necessarily tied to social and historical conditions” (6) rather than being something fixed, static, and detached from or outside of social and historical conditions.

Perhaps due to such different theoretical and disciplinary orientations (interdisciplinary vs. primarily literary), *On Making Sense* foregrounds what constitutes and emanates from racialized identities as they are commonly known, at times making them appear inherently given. Such identities also often revolve around individuals and their communities that are demarcated along more familiar lines (white, Black, Latina/o, Asian) and serve as primary premises for the interpretation of literary and cultural texts. On the other hand, *Strange Affinities* foregrounds analytics of broader political, economic, and discursive processes of subject formations that reference but also complicate familiar categories

of minoritized identities and seek to negotiate the tensions that arise from less obvious “internal” heterogeneities. For example, beyond unpacking the conditions that devalue queer of color subjects, the essays also address issues such as the epistemological and political challenges that transnational Africans present to African American Studies, the ways in which mixed-race Chinese were mobilized in the government’s political and religious discourses to police existing racial hierarchy in twentieth-century Mexico, and representation of antagonism between Blacks and the Chinese in nineteenth-century Black press in the United States. Taken together, the new comparative critical terrains marked by the two projects’ forceful theoretical thrust point toward new political potentials that expansive critical imagination of solidarity makes possible.

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