

Boons, Banes, and Neutrals: Context and Disparities in Political Participation

Matthew B. Platt[†]

September 29, 2012

Abstract

Racial disparities in political participation have been examined thoroughly by the literature. However, the previous research has not explored how these participation gaps change according to broader contextual factors. This paper provides some evidence that individuals' differing perceptions of social, political, and economic realities mediate the effects of context on participation. I argue that these differences are the roots of participation gaps. Political activity is explained by neither individual characteristics nor context; a true understanding requires both.

*I would like to thank Fredrick Harris, Valeria Sinclair-Chapman, Daniel Gillion, Dan Carpenter, and participants in the Malcolm Wiener Center's Inequality and Social Policy Seminar Series for their helpful comments on previous drafts of this paper. The normal caveat applies.

[†]Assistant Professor, Harvard University Department of Government, mplatt@gov.harvard.edu

Context is the frontier of participation research. The core contributions toward our understanding of why people participate generally focus on individuals' attributes – socioeconomic status, resources, political orientations, and personal recruitment (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995; Burns, Schlozman and Verba 2001). One of the greatest advantages of this approach is that it explains participation decisions within some generic democracy, a world devoid of context. Studies of context accept the fundamental nature of these contributions but seek to situate them within a world of urban sprawl (Oliver 1999; Humphries 2001), political party mobilizations (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Gershtenson 2002; Hill and Leighley 1993), descriptive representation (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Gay 2001, 2002; Griffin and Keane 2006; Lawless 2004), anti-terrorism policies (Cho, Gimpel and Wu 2006), and social networks (Huckfeldt 1979; Cho 2003). The thread that binds these works together is the idea that continually changing political, economic, and social environments structure how we make decisions about whether, when, and how to engage in political activity. At their core, studies of context conceive of individual participation as a response to political, economic, and social conditions.

Much of the previous research on context and participation has focused on cross-sectional variation across some geographic space (Cho and Gimpel 2010). This study departs from that tradition in two ways. First, I employ a longitudinal approach to gauge how non-voting participation responds to changes in political and economic circumstances on the national level. Second, I use racial gaps in participation to illustrate how the effects of context can vary across individuals.¹ The research question is simple, how do national conditions shape racial gaps in participation?

The existence of racial gaps fluctuates almost as much in the literature as in the data itself. Initially, racial disparities in rates of participation were puzzling because – after controlling for socioeconomic status – black Americans participated at higher rates than their white counterparts (Verba and Nie 1972; Shingles 1981; Guterbock and London 1983; Welch and Secret 1981). Critics argued that this finding was an anomaly of surveys at the height of the Black Power movement. Accordingly, most research after 1985 found that there were no differences between white and black

¹Earlier versions of this paper sought to address participation gaps in terms of race, gender, class, and education, but that proved unwieldy. The focus on racial gaps is admittedly arbitrary, but some focus was necessary. As a matter of personal preference, I have chosen to engage specifically with the literature on black participation and racial gaps. The conclusion will speak to how these findings can be translated to other types of groups and participation gaps.

participation rates once SES and/or resources were taken into account (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Verba et al. 1993; Lien 1998; Leighley and Vedlitz 1999). In contrast to both of these sets of findings, I show that black Americans are generally less likely than white Americans to engage in a variety of forms of participation. The aim of this paper is not to account for the causes of these disparities. Instead, I seek to demonstrate that the gaps themselves are unstable, and that this instability is driven in part by changes in context. I make a straightforward argument: if a change in some contextual factor – national rates of unemployment, for example – increases (or decreases) the difference between black and white rates of participation, then it cannot be the case that unemployment has the same effect on black and white peoples' decisions to participate. Therefore, scholars of context and participation must be cognizant of which sorts of contextual factors are important for participation and how those factors interact with individual-level characteristics.

In addition to these contributions to the study of context, this work is relevant in a larger sense. As stated by Verba and Nie (1972), one of the primary reasons for studying political participation is because, in a democracy, citizen participation should have some impact on policy. The problem is that we lack both the theoretical tools and empirical results to make such strong causal connections. If participation has some instrumental value, then people should take action when there is either a higher chance of – or some enhanced motivation for – influencing policy. The connection between participation and policy must necessarily include how individual decisions relate to context. This paper allows us to begin to address questions regarding the timing and tactics of civic participation. It should be viewed as the beginning of a long trek towards integrating non-voting participation with policymaking.

The paper proceeds in four sections. Section 1 reviews the literature to develop the main argument and derive hypotheses about how racial gaps should vary over time. Section 2 discusses the data and methods used to explore the dynamics of these participation gaps. Section 3 presents the key findings: racial gaps in participation exist, and these gaps vary according to national conditions. Finally, Section 4 concludes with a discussion of how these findings establish the importance of identity in understanding contextual effects, and I offer ideas on how this work can lead toward future research on policy-motivated participation.

1 Boons, Banes, and Neutrals

The core argument of this paper is straightforward: the same objective conditions will have different effects across individuals' participation decisions. Sociological studies of social movements make this argument most explicitly through their use of "political opportunities". Political opportunities should be broadly understood as changes in social, political, and economic conditions that affect the probability that a movement will emerge and/or that a movement's tactics will be successful (Meyer 2004). One of the most famous examples of a political opportunity is the ravenous hunger of the boll weevil. McAdam (1999) argues that the devastation of the cotton crop (caused by the aforementioned appetites of boll weevils) allowed black farm laborers to migrate to the urban south, and these swelling black urban populations provided the recruits for the civil rights movement. The crucial link between boll weevil infestation and civil rights activism is identification (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001, 44-47). Black political organizers who identified with the cause of fighting against Jim Crow viewed the influx of black migrants as a boon to their mobilization efforts. Black migrants' racial identification as part of a group that was victimized by Jim Crow made them amenable to being mobilized. Conversely, a boll weevil-inspired surge in black populations could hypothetically produce an entirely different reaction for white political organizers. It could be a participatory boon in the form of counter-mobilization to the perceived threat of civil rights activism. It could act as a participatory bane if white people simply withdrew from local politics in the face of growing opposition, or it could have no effect on white participation. The broader point is that social movements provide a key insight for the study of political participation: identity can shape the perception of events, and the perception of events can shape behavior.

In this paper I am interested in how contextual effects vary by racial identification. The role that racial identity plays in political behavior has been well established in the literature (Shingles 1981; Dawson 1994; Tate 1994; Kinder and Winter 2001). Racial disparities in participation can be partially explained by black and white people's distinct reactions to the same objective conditions. Rather than seeking an exhaustive examination of all of the contextual factors that might account for participation gaps, this paper offers a modest test of the idea by focusing on factors that have traditionally been used in the study of participation: economic conditions, elections, and political

empowerment. The same objective economic conditions can have vastly distinct effects on political activity, and that distinction is driven by how individuals identify their economic position relative to others. Poor economic conditions are a boon to those who externalize blame (Kinder and Kiewiet 1979; Feldman 1982; Arceneaux 2003) and a bane to those who internalize the blame for their economic circumstances (Scott and Acock 1979; Rosenstone 1982). Competitive elections provide participatory boons to the degree that individuals identify with political parties or policy issues (Hill and Leighley 1993, 1996; Gershtenson 2002; Corder and Wolbrecht 2006). Political empowerment works as a boon to participation if descriptive representation is translated into higher levels of trust, efficacy, and knowledge (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Hansen 1997; Barreto, Segura and Woods 2004; Banducci, Donovan and Karp 2004; Lawless 2004). However, descriptive representation can also work as a participatory bane for those who become disengaged or demobilized (Gay 2001; Griffin and Keane 2006). Harris, Sinclair-Chapman and McKenzie (2006) provide the most complete look at the effects of national conditions on black political activity. I build on those results in two ways: first, I am interested in the effects of national conditions on individual-level behavior; and second, I offer a direct comparison of these effects for black and white participation. This discussion gives rise to two hypotheses.

H1: Racial gaps in participation will exist even after controlling for socioeconomic status.

H2: Racial gaps in participation will vary according to changes in economic conditions, national election cycles, and political empowerment.

The next section lays out the data and methods that are used to test these hypotheses.

2 Data and Methods

The analysis requires individual-level measures of a variety of forms of political participation over regular intervals of time. Thankfully, the Roper Social and Political Trends Data provides such measures (Brady, Putnam et al. 2001). In almost monthly surveys from 1980 to 1994² respondents were asked if they had engaged in any of the following twelve activities: written a congressman or

²The actual data set extends back to 1973. However, limitations in the independent variables restricted our sample to 1980.

senator, attended a political rally or speech, attended a public meeting on local affairs, held or ran for political office, served on a committee for a local organization, become an officer for a club or organization, written a letter to the paper, signed a petition, worked for a political party, made a speech, written an article for a magazine or newspaper, or been a member of a good government organization. The longitudinal nature of the data allows researchers to employ variables that tap into the changing political, economic, and social climates³.

As stated above, the goal of this analysis is not to provide a comprehensive explanation for participation gaps. I am interested in whether such gaps exist and how they vary according to economic conditions, election cycles, and political empowerment. Economic conditions are measured by three variables: unemployment, consumer sentiment, and income inequality. Unemployment is measured as the monthly, seasonally adjusted black unemployment rate reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The idea is to see if the higher rates of unemployment that black people face lead to racial differences in participation. Consumer sentiment is measured using the consumer sentiment index developed by Thomson Reuters and the University of Michigan. A gini coefficient of income inequality was calculated based on monthly earnings data from the Merged Outgoing Rotations of the Current Population Survey (Feenberg and Roth 2005).⁴ I expect that poor economic conditions will decrease racial gaps in participation by disproportionately boosting black activism. Arceneaux (2003) shows that attributing blame to larger causes (such as government failure) creates a participatory boost from poor economic conditions. Black Americans' racialized view of events should make them more likely to engage in this sort of blame attribution, so they should participate at higher levels relative to their white counterparts (Walton 1985; Tate 1994).

Political empowerment is also represented by three variables: levels of black interest legislation, the number of allies in positions of power, and whether Ronald Reagan is in office. The empowerment literature's core argument is that black officeholders provide signals of responsiveness to their black constituents (Bobo and Gilliam 1990). Rather than focusing on the number of black

³The Roper Survey asks respondents "Now here is a list of things some people do about government or politics. Have you happened to have done any of those things in the past year?" As a result of this wording, the political opportunity variables are lagged by one year.

⁴I should note that the Census Bureau uses additional income information to calculate its Gini index. As such, this method does not yield identical results when aggregated to the yearly level.

officeholders, I include the number of black issue bills introduced in Congress for a given month. The hope is that this measure captures some of the actual responsiveness to black constituents, and it is measured as just the number of bills identified by Thomas with “black” as one of the congressional research service subject terms.⁵ Having allies in power is a measure of empowerment taken from the study of social movements (Jenkins, Jacobs and Agnone 2003). This variable is measured as the number of black members of Congress who serve as a subcommittee chair. Given the sharp racial divides over the merits of the Reagan administration (Tate 1994; Platt 2008), I include a dummy for Reagan’s term as a measure of non-responsiveness to black concerns. I expect that political empowerment (more bills introduced, more black subcommittee chairs, and no Reagan administration) will decrease racial gaps because black people will participate at disproportionately higher rates.

Lastly, election cycles are measured through a dummy for presidential election years. I do not have strong expectations for this relationship. My intuition is that elections serve as a generic wave that lifts all participatory boats. If that is the case, then national elections should not have any effect on racial gaps. Alternatively, elections could lead to greater mobilization of black voters as an easily identifiable voting bloc for the Democrats, so racial gaps would decrease. The individual level variables are chosen to approximate the insights offered by Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) and Burns, Schlozman and Verba (2001). I include measures of race, gender, age, education, job status, income, and whether or not the respondent has school-aged children. Although these are far from perfect proxies for civic skills or free time, they attempt to control for some of the major explanatory variables.

The data analysis consists of a random effects logit model using a two-step estimator developed by Borjas and Sueyoshi (1994). First, separate logit models are estimated for each month from 1980 to 1994. These models regress participation on age, education, income, job status, kids, race, and gender, yielding estimated coefficients for these variables and the intercept. Second, OLS is used to regress these coefficients on the contextual variables (economic conditions, election, and political empowerment), and that is done for all of the variables from the first stage (the intercept,

⁵I manually went through to weed out false positives, such as bills relating to black lung disease.

age, education, income, job status, kids, race, and gender). The basic idea is to estimate the macro- and micro-level effects in separate steps. That is, the first step of the estimation provides the average effects for each time unit, and the second step treats these average effects as linear functions of unit-varying factors.⁶ This creates a fully interactive model capable of teasing out variations in responses to changes in context.⁷

3 Results

To ease the discussion of the findings, I consign the actual tables of coefficients to the appendix. Instead, I graphically present changes in predicted probabilities.

[Figure 1 about here.]

[Figure 2 about here.]

Figures 1 and 2 present the gaps in participation between black and white respondents. In six of the twelve measures of political activity, on average, white people participate at significantly higher rates than black people. This result is not in accordance with the literature on racial gaps. The question in the literature has been whether or not black Americans – once socioeconomic status is controlled for – participate more than their white counterparts (Verba and Nie 1972; Shingles 1981; Guterbock and London 1983; Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Verba et al. 1993; Leighley and Vedlitz 1999). I find racial gaps in the opposite direction. Figures 1(e), 1(h), and 1(i) reveal that black Americans tend not to work for political parties, write articles, or write letters at all. In terms of individual acts, the largest racial gap occurs for petition signing (see Figure 2(c)), and the largest ratio for white-black participation involves contacting elected officials (see Figure 1(c)). Figures 1 and 2 show that racial gaps in participation exist. The next step is to see how they vary with changes in national conditions.⁸

⁶As with any multi-stage analysis, I make the requisite corrections to the covariance matrices highlighted by Huber, Kernell and Leoni (2005).

⁷The coefficients presented in what follows should be viewed in terms of a given baseline: an unemployed, high-school-educated, black, male between the ages of 25 and 29 with a household income of \$21056.28 and who does not have school-aged children living at home.

⁸There were not any results in which there was both a significant racial disparity and a discernible effect for presidential elections, so it will not be included in the discussion.

[Figure 3 about here.]

Figure 3 displays the relationships between unemployment and forms of political participation. With a few exceptions, these plots show that rising rates of black unemployment decrease racial gaps in political activity. This transition is perhaps most dramatically expressed by Figure 3(b). Contacting an elected official had the greatest white-black participation ratio; however, we cannot confidently claim the existence of a racial gap in contacting once black unemployment rises above 16%. We see a similar pattern for overall participation. The declines in racial gaps are far less pronounced for working for a political party and signing a petition. These results add support to the notion that black Americans are generally less mobilized than white Americans. Given the racial differences in socioeconomic status and overall levels of activism, a lack of black mobilization would fit within a story of rational recruitment strategies (Brady, Schlozman and Verba 1999). I singled out writing articles and letters as activities that black people are extremely unlikely to engage in. In line with that evidence, we see only very marginal declines in the racial gap in article-writing and an increase in the racial gap for writing letters. The interpretation is that black Americans are willing to at least minimally respond to high unemployment by writing an article, but they remain unwilling to write letters. Lastly, Figures 3(g)-3(i) add some caveats about the existence of racial gaps. These plots show that at the lowest rates of black unemployment (in this sample) racial disparities do exist, but the levels of activity become racially indistinguishable relatively quickly as unemployment rises.

[Figure 4 about here.]

Figure 4 shows the relationship between the consumer sentiment index and racial gaps in participation. Once again, contacting an official presents the most dramatic case. Higher consumer confidence is a boon to white participation and a bane to black participation. The results are more complicated for overall participation and signing petitions. Both white and black people sign fewer petitions and generally participate less as they feel better about the economy, but the drop for black participation appears to be slightly less steep. Taken together, the results for unemployment (Figure 3) and consumer confidence (Figure 4) lend support to the idea that poor economic condi-

tions are less harmful for rates of black participation relative to white participation. Whether this finding means that black Americans are more likely to externalize blame for economic difficulties is a question for future research. These results could be compatible with that argument.

[Figure 5 about here.]

The expectation was that political empowerment would decrease racial gaps in political activity as black people engaged with a more responsive national government. Figure 5 and Figure 6 provide a decidedly mixed picture. Congressional responsiveness to black issues has a neutral effect on both black and white rates of overall participation. There is possibly a slight decline for white participation in Figure 5a, but both lines are basically flat – preserving the large racial gap. Increasing black issue legislation has the opposite effects expected for contacting an elected official; it acts as a boon to white rates of contacting and a bane to black rates of activity. Only petition signing conforms to expectations, and even here the effects are not dramatic. Congressional responsiveness to black issue concerns seems to play a limited role in shaping participation decisions regardless of race. Turning attention to Figure 6, having allies in power is only a boon for black rates of contacting. Otherwise, more black subcommittee chairs depresses political activity across the board for white people and for black rates of overall participation and petition signing. Although my expectations were not met with these sets of findings, they highlight the central point of the paper. Changes in our political context can have vastly different results depending on both individual characteristics and the type of activity. Contextual factors can act as boons, banes, or neutrals.

[Figure 6 about here.]

4 Conclusion

The ultimate goal of participation research is to explain how individual citizens' choices can shape public policy. There are a number of necessary steps before this worthy goal can be achieved. I have argued that the timing of activism and the choice of tactics are two of the most basic steps on the path to a comprehensive, instrumental view of participation. This paper makes three contributions toward a better understanding of the timing and tactics of political participation. First,

I offer an empirical contribution by examining how individual-level activity is shaped by national conditions over an extended time period. Most studies of the relationship between context and non-voting political activity focus on how context varies spatially – across neighborhoods, towns, states, regions, etc. I focus on temporal variation because it allows for greater leverage in answering questions of how participation serves as a real-time reaction to political, social, and economic events. The findings here show that individuals’ decisions to become active are shaped by fluctuations in broad economic circumstances and their perceptions of how responsive the government is to their interests.

Second, I contribute to an understanding of the tactics of participation by examining the individual forms of activity rather than only an index of overall activism. These findings provide some nice intuitions about individual choices about how to participate. The unemployment rate was the biggest driver of changes in civic participation. This fits in with our conventional wisdom that unemployment is an indicator that citizens are able to clearly understand and incorporate into their political decisions. More collective forms of activity (rallies and various organization-based acts) were both more racially egalitarian and less responsive to changes in the broader environment. It is possible that these types of actions are driven far more by local rather than national considerations. Lastly, we saw that decisions to personally contact an official are both the most responsive to changes in context and those responses are more racially polarized than for other activities. That set of findings fits in with our understanding of racial differences in political orientations (Shingles 1981). Disaggregated participation allows us to see that people respond to changes in national conditions with the forms of participation that make the most intuitive sense. It appears that individuals are rational enough to not use participatory wrenches on policy screws.

The final contribution is conceptual. I have tried to meld insights from social movements with the insights from political participation to argue that identity is the key to understanding both the timing and tactics of non-voting political activity. Looking at racial gaps in participation provides the most basic look at this idea. We saw that racial identity was crucial for understanding whether high unemployment depressed or invigorated political action, and the effects of perceived government responsiveness were vastly different depending on the identity of the respondent. The next

step is to move towards more complicated political identities, with the ultimate goal of understanding how policy-based identities shape participation. Without being able to tie individuals' policy preferences and identities to their political actions, we will never be able to establish individual participation decisions as an integral part of the policy process. That ambitious research agenda remains a subject for future research. However, this paper makes a modest step in that direction by showing how racial identity shapes whether context acts as a boon, a bane, or a neutral.

References

- Arceneaux, Kevin. 2003. "The Conditional Impact of Blame Attribution on the Relationship Between Economic Adversity and Turnout." *Political Research Quarterly* 56:67–75.
- Banducci, Susan, Todd Donovan and Jeffrey A. Karp. 2004. "Minority Representation, Empowerment, and Participation." *Journal of Politics* 66:534–556.
- Barreto, Matt A., Gary M. Segura and Nathan D. Woods. 2004. "The Mobilizing Effect of Majority-Minority Districts on Latino Turnout." *American Political Science Review* 98:65–75.
- Bobo, Lawrence and Franklin Gilliam. 1990. "Race, Sociopolitical Participation, and Black Political Empowerment." *American Political Science Review* 84:377–397.
- Borjas, George J. and Glenn T. Sueyoshi. 1994. "A Two-Stage Estimator for Probit Models with Structural Group Effects." *Journal of Econometrics* 64:165–182.
- Brady, Henry E., Kay Lehman Schlozman and Sidney Verba. 1999. "Prospecting for Participants: Rational Expectations and the Recruitment of Political Activists." *American Political Science Review* 93:153–168.
- Brady, Henry E., Robert Putnam et al. 2001. Roper Social and Political Trends Data, 1973-1994. Data set from Roper Starch Worldwide.
- Burns, Nancy, Kay Lehman Schlozman and Sidney Verba. 2001. *The Private Roots of Public Action: Gender, Equality, and Political Participation*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Cho, Wendy K. Tam. 2003. "Contagion Effects and Ethnic Contribution Networks." *American Journal of Political Science* 47:368–387.
- Cho, Wendy K. Tam and James G. Gimpel. 2010. "Rough Terrain: Spatial Variation in Campaign Contributing and Volunteerism." *American Journal of Political Science* 54(1):74–89.
- Cho, Wendy K. Tam, James G. Gimpel and Tony Wu. 2006. "Clarifying the Role of SES in Political Participation: Policy Threat and Arab American Mobilization." *Journal of Politics* 68:977–991.

- Corder, J. Kevin and Christina Wolbrecht. 2006. "Political Context and the Turnout of New Women Voters after Suffrage." *Journal of Politics* 68:38–49.
- Dawson, Michael C. 1994. *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Feenberg, Daniel and Jean Roth. 2005. Current Population Survey Labor Extracts, 1979-2004. Data set from National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Feldman, Stanley. 1982. "Economic Self-Interest and Political Behavior." *American Journal of Political Science* 26:446–466.
- Gay, Claudine. 2001. "The Effect of Black Congressional Representation on Political Participation." *American Political Science Review* 95:589–617.
- Gay, Claudine. 2002. "Spirals of Trust? The Effect of Descriptive Representation on the Relationship between Citizens and Their Government." *American Journal of Political Science* 46:717–732.
- Gershtenson, Joseph. 2002. "Partisanship and Participation in Political Campaign Activities, 1952-1996." *Political Research Quarterly* 55:687–714.
- Griffin, John D. and Michael Keane. 2006. "Descriptive Representation and the Composition of African American Turnout." *American Journal of Political Science* 50:998–1012.
- Guterbock, Thomas M. and Bruce London. 1983. "Race, Political Orientation, and Participation: An Empirical Test of Four Competing Theories." *American Sociological Review* 48:439–453.
- Hansen, Susan B. 1997. "Talking About Politics: Gender and Contextual Effects on Political Proselytizing." *Journal of Politics* 59:73–103.
- Harris, Fredrick C., Valeria Sinclair-Chapman and Brian McKenzie. 2006. *Countervailing Forces in African-American Civic Activism, 1973 - 1994*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hill, Kim Quaile and Jan E. Leighley. 1993. "Party Ideology, Organization, and Competitiveness as Mobilizing Forces in Gubernatorial Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 37:1158–1178.

- Hill, Kim Quaile and Jan E. Leighley. 1996. "Political Parties and Class Mobilization in Contemporary United States Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 40:787–804.
- Huber, John D., Georgia Kernell and Eduardo L. Leoni. 2005. "Institutional Context, Cognitive Resources and Party Attachments Across Democracies." *Political Analysis* 13:365–386.
- Huckfeldt, R. Robert. 1979. "Political Participation and the Neighborhood Social Context." *American Journal of Political Science* 23:579–592.
- Humphries, Stan. 2001. "Who's Afraid of the Big, Bad Firm: The Impact of Economic Scale on Political Participation." *American Journal of Political Science* 45:678–699.
- Jenkins, J. Craig, David Jacobs and Jon Agnone. 2003. "Political Opportunities and African-American Protest, 1948-1997." *American Journal of Sociology* 109:277–303.
- Kinder, Donald R. and D. Roderick Kiewiet. 1979. "Economic Discontent and Political Behavior: The Role of Personal Grievances and Collective Economic Judgments in Congressional Voting." *American Journal of Political Science* 23:495–527.
- Kinder, Donald R. and Nicholas Winter. 2001. "Exploring the Racial Divide: Blacks, Whites, and Opinion on National Policy." *American Journal of Political Science* 45:439–456.
- Lawless, Jennifer L. 2004. "Politics of Presence? Congresswomen and Symbolic Representation." *Political Research Quarterly* 57:81–99.
- Leighley, Jan E. and Arnold Vedlitz. 1999. "Race, Ethnicity, and Political Participation: Competing Models and Contrasting Explanations." *Journal of Politics* 61:1092–1114.
- Lien, Pei-Te. 1998. "Does the Gender Gap in Political Attitudes and Behavior Vary across Racial Groups." *Political Research Quarterly* 51:869–894.
- McAdam, Doug. 1999. *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*. Second ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- McAdam, Doug, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly. 2001. *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Meyer, David S. 2004. "Protest and Political Opportunities." *Annual Review of Sociology* 30:125–145.
- Oliver, J. Eric. 1999. "The Effects of Metropolitan Economic Segregation on Local Civic Participation." *American Journal of Political Science* 43:186–212.
- Platt, Matthew B. 2008. "Participation for What? A Policy-motivated Approach to Political Activism." *Political Behavior* 30:391–413.
- Rosenstone, Steven J. 1982. "Economic Adversity and Voter Turnout." *American Journal of Political Science* 26:25–46.
- Rosenstone, Steven and John Mark Hansen. 1993. *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy*. New York: Macmillan.
- Scott, Wilbur J. and Alan C. Acock. 1979. "Socioeconomic Status, Unemployment Experience, and Political Participation: A Disentangling of Main and Interaction Effects." *Political Behavior* 1:361–381.
- Shingles, Richard D. 1981. "Black Consciousness and Political Participation: The Missing Link." *The American Political Science Review* 75:76–91.
- Tate, Katherine. 1994. *From Protest to Politics: The New Black Voters in American Elections*. Enlarged ed. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, Henry Brady and Norman H. Nie. 1993. "Race, Ethnicity and Political Resources: Participation in the United States." *British Journal of Political Science* 23:453–497.
- Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman and Henry E. Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Verba, Sidney and Norman Nie. 1972. *Participation in America*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Walton, Hanes, Jr. 1985. *Invisible Politics: Black Political Behavior*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Welch, Susan and Philip Secret. 1981. "Sex, Race and Political Participation." *Western Political Quarterly* 34:5-16.

List of Figures

1	Racial gaps exist: These plots show the predicted probabilities for black and white men. Each plot is shown on the same scale. Solid lines with triangles indicate that the differences between black and white participation are statistically significant. Dotted lines with circles are insignificant. . . .	19
2	Racial gaps exist (Continued): These plots show the predicted probabilities for black and white men. The scale for these plots is not the same as those in Figure 1. Solid lines with triangles indicate that the differences between black and white participation are statistically significant. Dotted lines with circles are insignificant.	20
3	Higher unemployment is a boon to black participation: These plots show how the racial gaps in participation shift as black unemployment increases. The solid red lines are the predicted probabilities of participating for white men, and dashed blue lines are the predicted probabilities of participating for black men. The dotted lines are the 95% confidence intervals.	21
4	Black participation is better suited for weathering tough economic times: These plots show how the racial gaps in participation shift as consumer sentiment increases. The solid red lines are the predicted probabilities of participating for white men, and dashed blue lines are the predicted probabilities of participating for black men. The dotted lines are the 95% confidence intervals. . . .	22
5	Responsiveness to black issue concerns is not necessarily a boon to participation: These plots show how the racial gaps in participation shift as the number of black issue bills introduced in Congress increases. The solid red lines are the predicted probabilities of participating for white men, and dashed blue lines are the predicted probabilities of participating for black men. The dotted lines are the 95% confidence intervals.	23
6	More black people in positions of power is devastating for white participation: These plots show how the racial gaps in participation shift as the number of black subcommittee chairs increases. The solid red lines are the predicted probabilities of participating for white men, and dashed blue lines are the predicted probabilities of participating for black men. The dotted lines are the 95% confidence intervals.	24

Figure 1: Racial gaps exist: These plots show the predicted probabilities for black and white men. Each plot is shown on the same scale. Solid lines with triangles indicate that the differences between black and white participation are statistically significant. Dotted lines with circles are insignificant.

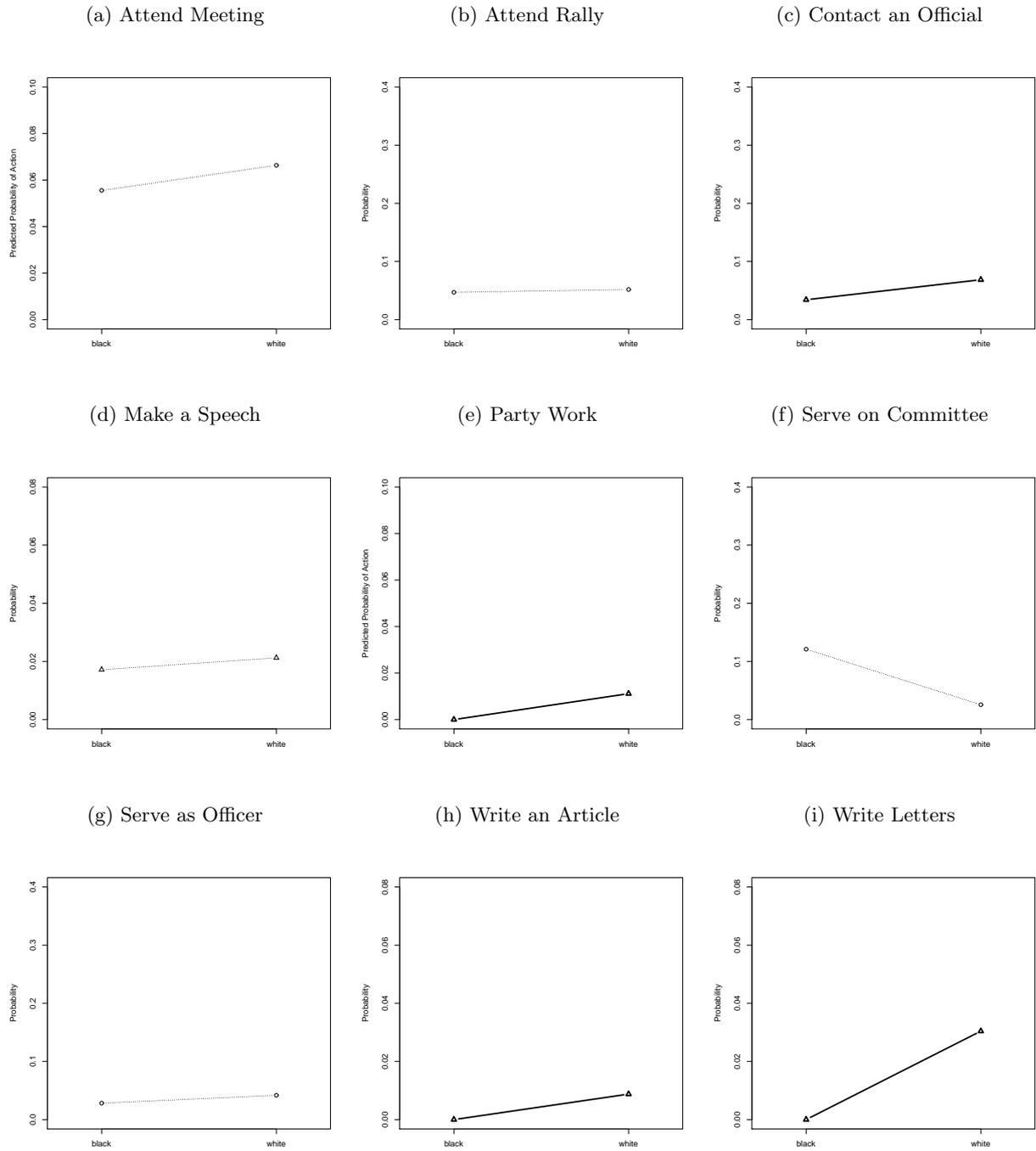
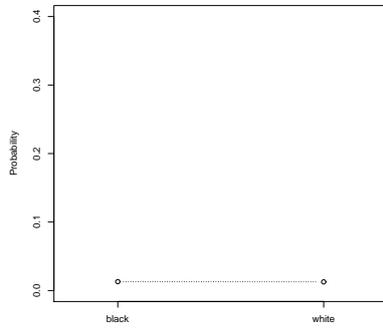
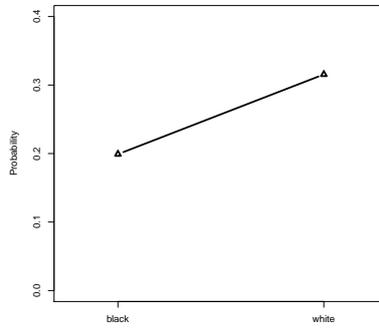


Figure 2: Racial gaps exist (Continued): These plots show the predicted probabilities for black and white men. The scale for these plots is not the same as those in Figure 1. Solid lines with triangles indicate that the differences between black and white participation are statistically significant. Dotted lines with circles are insignificant.

(a) Join an Organization



(b) Overall Participation



(c) Sign a Petition

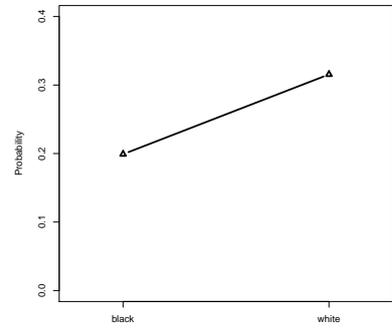


Figure 3: Higher unemployment is a boon to black participation: These plots show how the racial gaps in participation shift as black unemployment increases. The solid red lines are the predicted probabilities of participating for white men, and dashed blue lines are the predicted probabilities of participating for black men. The dotted lines are the 95% confidence intervals.

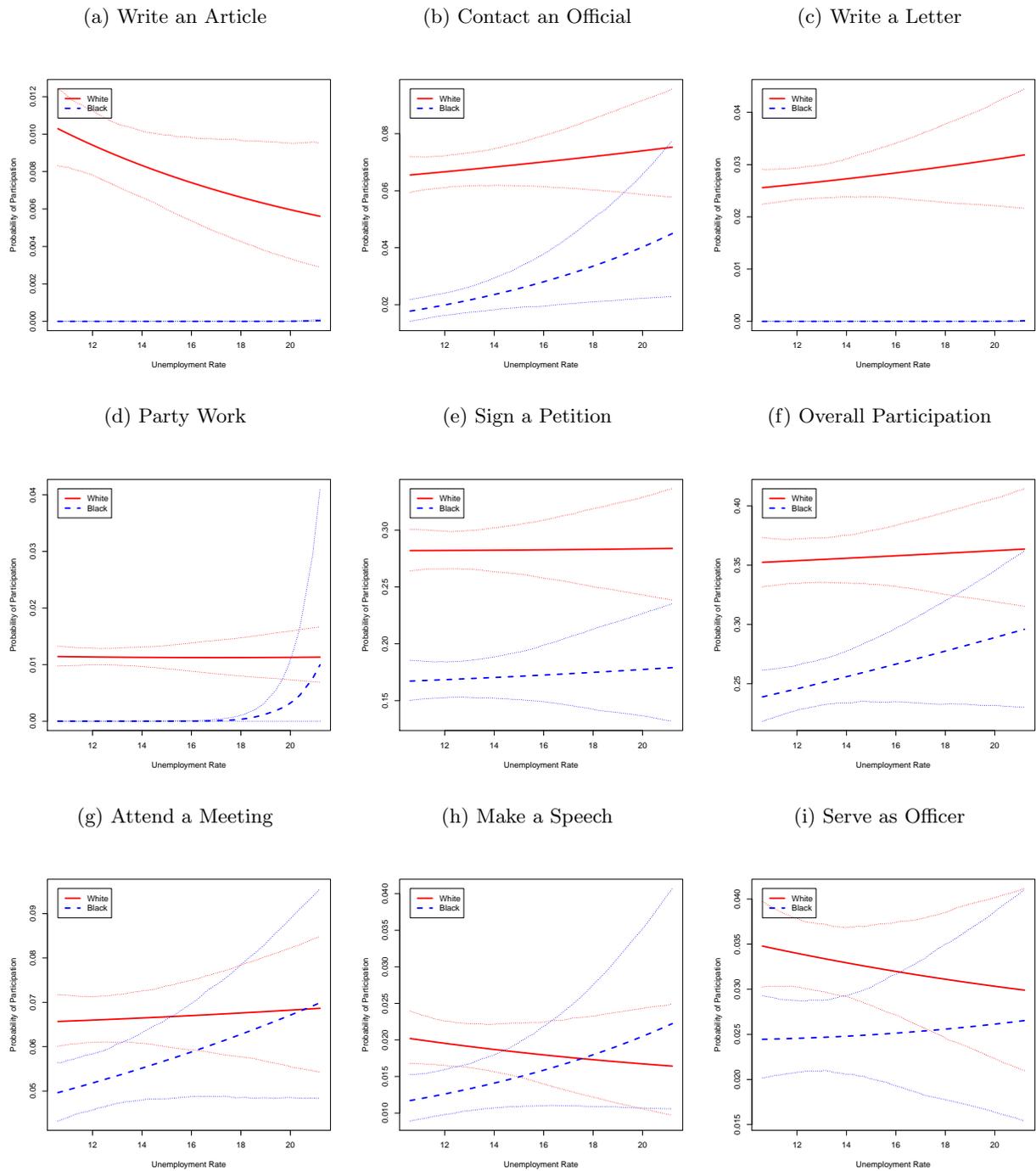


Figure 4: Black participation is better suited for weathering tough economic times: These plots show how the racial gaps in participation shift as consumer sentiment increases. The solid red lines are the predicted probabilities of participating for white men, and dashed blue lines are the predicted probabilities of participating for black men. The dotted lines are the 95% confidence intervals.

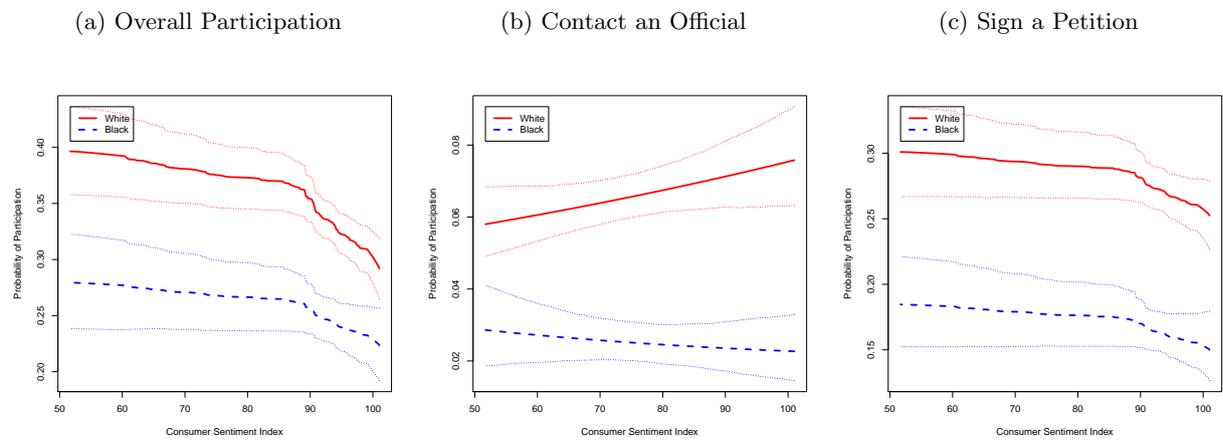


Figure 5: Responsiveness to black issue concerns is not necessarily a boon to participation: These plots show how the racial gaps in participation shift as the number of black issue bills introduced in Congress increases. The solid red lines are the predicted probabilities of participating for white men, and dashed blue lines are the predicted probabilities of participating for black men. The dotted lines are the 95% confidence intervals.

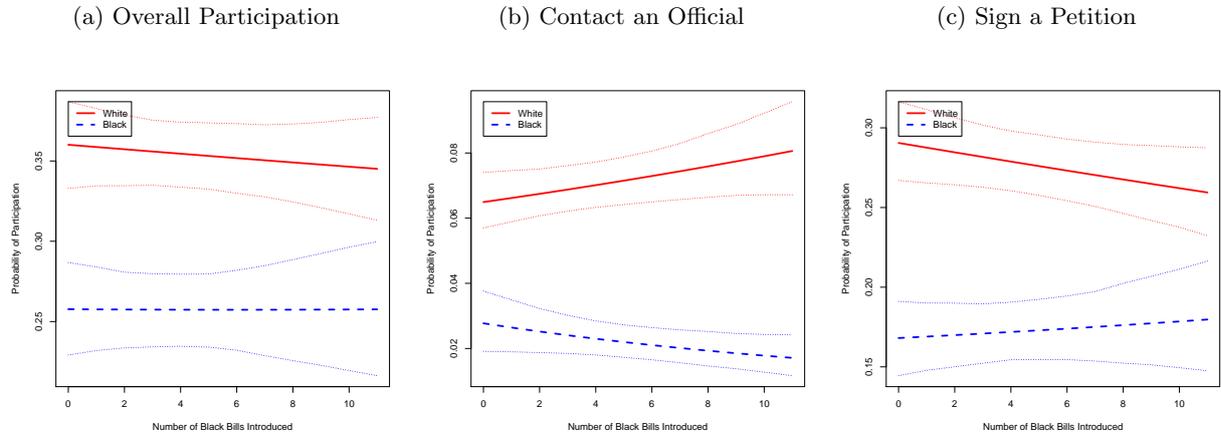


Figure 6: More black people in positions of power is devastating for white participation: These plots show how the racial gaps in participation shift as the number of black subcommittee chairs increases. The solid red lines are the predicted probabilities of participating for white men, and dashed blue lines are the predicted probabilities of participating for black men. The dotted lines are the 95% confidence intervals.

