AN OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

INTRODUCTION

Although small numbers of black ethnics have been coming to the United States since the late nineteenth century, significant migrations only began in the early twentieth century. The first major wave of black ethnic migrations to the United States began around 1900 and continued to the era of the Great Depression. In 1900, 714 black immigrants were allowed entry into the United States, but in 1924 more than 12,000 black immigrants moved to American cities. By 1925, however, the results of immigration restrictions under the 1924 immigration law were evident and a much smaller number of black and Latin immigrants entered the country. For example, only 791 black immigrants moved to America in 1925 and only eighty-four in 1933.[1] The restrictions on black and Latin immigration continued during the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s. During the World War II era, a modest increase occurred due to employment demands, but the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act resulted in another decline in the minority immigrant population.[2]

After ratification of the 1965 Hart-Celler Act, greater numbers of black, Latin, and Asian immigrants moved to the United States. This new law eliminated the quotas (originally established in a 1921 federal law) that limited the numbers of immigrants from some countries while favoring those from other countries. Before this law, 70 percent of immigrants hailed from the countries of the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Germany.[3] An obvious preference was given to immigrants from these and other European countries while immigrants from Asian, African, and Latin American countries found it very difficult to receive visas, even if their family members already lived and worked in the United States. The 1965 legislation amended the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (McCarran-Walter Act) by emphasizing family reunification and the admission of professionals and skilled workers.[4] For the first time in the nation's history, more immigrants of color entered the

United States than white European immigrants. For example, immigration from the English-speaking West Indies increased from 4,700 in 1965 to 27,300 in 1970.[5] Moreover, the numbers of immigrants from Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, and Trinidad-Tobago almost equaled those from Mexico and Canada by the late 1970s.[6]

The Caribbeanization of Black Politics: *Race, Group Consciousness, and Political Participation in America* examines the impact of the ethnic diversification of African American communities on the prospects for black political empowerment in four "gateway" cities of entry for black ethnic citizens—Boston, Chicago, Miami, and New York City.[7] For the last several years, these cities have experienced an influx of black immigrants from the Cape Verdean Islands, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and the West Indies. As a result of the arrivals of immigrants of color, minorities now make up 51 percent of the city of Boston's population. The city of Chicago also has a growing population of Haitian citizens. The city of Miami has several distinctive Haitian neighborhoods while the city of New York has the largest West Indian population in the nation.[8]

Many studies conclude that African American group consciousness causes them to participate in politics at higher rates when socioeconomic status is controlled for. In this research, I will determine whether group consciousness impacts the political participation for other black groups in the same manner. I also wish to assess the current political incorporation of these groups as indicated by African American and black ethnic office holding. Finally, I will examine the political coalitions and conflicts among African Americans and black ethnics and then predict the future of black political development in these cities.

I will examine the following research questions. First, which racial identification(s) do black ethnics use when defining themselves in America? Second, do African Americans and black ethnics have a shared racial group consciousness in these cities? Third, which factors contribute to these groups either possessing or lacking a racial group consciousness? Fourth, what political activities do these groups participate in and to what extent are they influenced by their group consciousness? Finally, will the growing populations of black ethnics enhance black political incorporation in these four cities? Political incorporation has been measured according to the number of city council, and mayoral positions held by people of African descent as well as the percentage of black city governmental employees and the presence of civilian police review boards.[9] I define the term according to the number of African American and black ethnic aldermanic, city

commission, city council, and mayoral positions held in the four cities as well as the presence of civilian police review boards.

WHY THESE CITIES WERE CHOSEN

I select the cities of Boston, Chicago, Miami, and New York City because of their large populations of African Americans and black ethnics. Also, Boston, Chicago, Miami, and New York City have similar political contexts. With the exception of Miami, each has been dominated by white ethnic–controlled political machines for most of their histories. In addition, all four have racially segregated neighborhoods and polarized relationships among whites and people of color. The electoral successes of black political candidates have been mixed and African Americans lack proportional political representation in each city. Because of the growth of the black ethnic populations in these cities, I question whether there now exists a possibility for an increased level of black political power that will benefit African Americans and black ethnics. This analysis has profound implications for the study of black group identities, group solidarities, and political coalitions.

I use the term *black ethnics* to refer to people of African descent who also have a Caribbean lineage. In this research, Cape Verdeans, Haitians, and West Indians are categorized as black ethnics, but other analyses have referred to black ethnics as Afro-Caribbeans. I also use the term *black ethnics* because the word *ethnic* has been frequently used to describe the identity of immigrant populations. It remains unclear whether black immigrants should be called "black" because of their skin color or "ethnic" because of their cultural background.[10] Therefore, I use the term *black ethnics* to denote that they are members of both racial and ethnic groups.

THE SURVEY

The few existing studies of African American and black ethnic coalition politics have used surveys with small sample sizes and/or a few in-depth interviews. For example, a study of group consciousness among Africans, African Americans, and African Caribbeans only interviewed thirty-two persons of African descent.[11] Another author only interviewed fifteen political officials in an analysis of African American and black ethnic coalition politics in New York City.[12] In another analysis of African American and

black ethnic group consciousness and political incorporation, only twenty-four respondents were interviewed.[13]

In addition, the few existing studies of the racial group identification, racial group consciousness, and political participation of people of African descent consist of qualitative case studies of one or two groups.[14] Although each of these provides important information about these groups, they do not allow us to compare and contrast the beliefs and activities of several black ethnic groups. They also do not reveal whether their views and political activities differ based on their countries of origin or on the political context of the cities in which they live.

For this research, I distributed 2,359 surveys to African American and black ethnic citizens and registered voters. I questioned them in the form of phone and in-person interviews in neighborhoods and at organizational meetings. The entire sample includes 867 African Americans, 176 Cape Verdeans, 704 Haitians, and 612 West Indians (see table I.1). In Boston, I interviewed 201 African Americans, 176 Cape Verdeans, 191 Haitians, and 131 West Indians. In Chicago, I interviewed 206 African Americans, 105 Haitians, and 138 West Indians. The Miami sample consists of 241 African Americans, 246 Haitians, and 90 West Indians. Finally in New York City, I examined the responses of 219 African Americans, 162 Haitians, and 253 West Indians.

THE RACIAL GROUP IDENTIFICATION AND CONSCIOUSNESS VARIABLES

In each chapter, I will first ascertain what the members of each group identify as their racial group identification. As shown in Appendix 1.1, respondents were asked to state the racial group to which they belong in order to determine their group identification. African Americans, Cape Verdeans, Haitians, and West Indians who classify themselves as "black" have a similar group identification.

Second, I will examine the group consciousness the respondents share with the members of their own specific ethnic group and with African Americans. Third, the analysis assesses the factors that contribute to the existence of a common racial group consciousness. For African Americans and black ethnics, the correlation between the following variables and the group consciousness variable is examined—age, education, gender, income, racial makeup of neighborhood, and politicized church

attendance. I also examine the correlation between the generation and home country variables and the group consciousness variables for black ethnics. A linkage has been found between an individual's group consciousness and his generation of citizenship. Some studies have found that first generation black ethnics harbor negative stereotypical images about African Americans.[15] However, second and third generation citizens are more likely to have a common consciousness with them.[16] Because of these findings, I use a "generation" variable in each city to assess whether second or third generation black ethnics are more likely to have a racial identification and consciousness with the members of their own ethnic group, with the members of other black ethnic groups, and with African Americans.

TABLE 1.1 Profile of Those Interviewed (Shown in Percentages)

RACE/ETHNICITY		GENDER		REGISTERED VOTER		POLITICAL PARTY		POLITICAL IDEOLOGY	
African-Americans	36.9	Male	49	Yes	81	Democrat	95	Liberal	78
Cape Verdas	7.4	Female	51	No	19	Republican	3	Moderate	19
Haitians	29.8					Other	2	Conservative	3
West Indians	25.9								

EDUCATION LEVEL		INCOME LEVEL		RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION	
Attended high school	0	Less than $15,000 a year	2	Anglican	3
High school graduate	63	$16,000–37,000 a year	25	Baptist	65
Attended college	10	$38,000–60,000 a year	55	Catholic	19
College graduate	18	$61,000–80,000 a year	6	Episcopalian	0
Attended a graduate/ professional school	2	Above $80,000 a year	12	Protestant	2
Graduate of a graduate/ professional school	7			Presbyterian	1
				Jehovah's Witness	8
				Other	2

CITIZENSHIP					
American citizen	100	First generation	32	Retained citizenship privileges in home country	17
Not an American citizen	0	Second generation	34	Plans to return to home country	15
Native born	32	Third generation	2		
		Other	0		

LINKAGE BETWEEN GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

I will then assess the impact of the group consciousness variable on various forms of political participation. The political participation questions are listed in Appendix 1.2. I examine traditional political activities such as voting, donating funds, interacting with elected officials, volunteering for political efforts, and attending rallies.[17] The importance of voting is obvious because it results in the election of officeholders who can cater to their constituents' needs. The contribution of funds to political candidates enables them to publicize their campaigns while the contribution of funds to political causes has resulted in their enactment or rejection.[18] Community residents can also influence public policy by interacting with elected officials either by attending meetings with them or writing them letters. This is one way in which they can make their voices heard without engaging in an electoral activity.[19] When I refer to the term, "volunteering for political efforts," I am referring to the respondent's civic voluntarism. It can be defined as the practice of voluntarily participating in a civic activity.[20] Finally, rallies allow individuals to express their support for candidates when they lack the funds to contribute to political causes or are uncomfortable participating in other political activities.[21]

I also wish to determine the involvement of respondents in non-traditional activities. Examples of these are: attending politicized church services, participating in community empowerment/political organizations and protests, and signing petitions.[22] The participants in organizations and protest activities often take part in political discussions and hear political messages at these venues.[23] The signing of petitions is also an important aspect of political participation. It allows citizens to petition for questions to be placed on local and state ballots and to petition against injustices.[24]

An individual's home country affiliation might also affect his or her racial group consciousness. Cape Verdeans, Haitians, and West Indians hail from countries where "blackness" (especially a dark-skinned complexion) is oftentimes perceived in a derogatory light. Many are not classified in the "black" category in their home countries simply because of their skin pigmentation and therefore object to this categorization in America. This is not to say that race and skin color are insignificant issues in Caribbean countries. Race matters, but is not stigmatized to the same degree that it is in America.[25] In other words, it is not "a barrier to upward mobility or to social acceptance 'at the top.' "[26] Moreover, individuals from the higher classes are "often thought of 'as if' they were white."[27]

Some studies suggest that racial group identification, but not racial group consciousness, varies by socioeconomic status—i.e., an individual's educational and income level.[28] I define educational attainment according to the number of years of education completed and income according to an individual's yearly earnings. A large body of political science research finds that socioeconomic status variables substantially affect an individual's political participation.[29]

Concerning the age variables, older black ethnics and African Americans have less of a sense of group consciousness than younger individuals. One study discovers that older black ethnics are more likely to reject the African American racial label than younger black ethnics. Also, older African Americans identify with the African American label rather than as blacks.[30] These findings may be interpreted to mean that older African Americans have a closer racial identification with the members of their respective group and are less likely to identify with black ethnics. Older black ethnics may have the same views.

Residential segregation has also been cited by scholars as a variable that results in higher levels of racial group consciousness. African Americans, regardless of their socioeconomic status, are less likely than the members of any other racial or ethnic group to reside in white or racially mixed neighborhoods.[31] For example, in New York, African Americans and black ethnics are the two most residentially segregated groups in the city.[32] In addition, African American residents of predominantly black neighborhoods are more likely to have a common racial group identification with other blacks and desire political collaborations with them.[33]

Lastly, I include a "race of neighborhood" variable. The findings about the impact of the racial makeup of an individual's neighborhood have been mixed with some studies finding no relationship between the race of an individual's neighborhood and his racial group consciousness level.[34] Others find that African American and black ethnic residents of predominantly black neighborhoods have a higher level of solidarity with other blacks because of their more frequent interactions with them.[35]

When examining the impact of racial group consciousness on political participation, I control for other variables that possibly may influence an individual's decision to engage in political participation such as education, gender, generation, home country, income, the racial makeup of the person's neighborhood, and politicized church attendance. The gender variable is included because black women often have a stronger racial identity

than black men and also participate in political activities at higher rates than black men.[36]

In addition, I have included a "political church attendance" variable because African American members of "politicized" churches, which openly address political issues and encourage political involvement, are more likely to engage in various political activities, including voting.[37] Mobilization through religious organizations and the appearance of African American candidates for elective offices have been particularly effective in increasing political participation among blacks.[38] African Americans enhance their civic skills in churches and hear either "explicit political messages or requests to become politically active."[39] The religious practices of black ethnics also have a major impact in their lives. Many Haitians and West Indians belong to Anglican (Episcopalian in the United States), Catholic, or Pentecostal religious denominations.[40] Immigrants have become involved in protests or supported/opposed politician candidate because of their religious beliefs.[41]

I primarily utilize multivariate multiple regression analysis to assess the impact of group consciousness, the other variables, and the control variables on various forms of political participation. I also examine the factors that contribute to group consciousness perceptions among African Americans and black ethnics. To do this, I assess the impact of the age, education, gender, income, race of neighborhood, and politicized church variables on the group consciousness variable. I assess the significance of these variables and the generation and home country variables on the black ethnic group consciousness variable. This methodology provides a simple and straightforward way to examine the influence of several independent variables on dependent variables.[42] Regression analysis is also commonly used to examine survey data in research on group consciousness and political participation.[43]

THE CHALLENGES BLACK ETHNICS POSE FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN POLITICS

Over the years, a well-defined degree of political solidarity has existed among African Americans. This group consciousness has been evident because of cohesive African American voting blocs in favor of particular candidates. Usually, African American candidates have garnered at least 80 percent of the "black vote" in local elections. African Americans also have similar views on several political and public policy issues that affect their communities.[44] This group solidarity results from their common

experiences with racial discrimination and desire to use the political system to address their plight.

African Americans and black ethnics have experienced various forms of political discrimination. For several decades, native-born African Americans sought to eliminate the barriers that inhibited their abilities to elect the representatives of their choice. Political machines stymied black political efforts in Boston, Chicago, and New York City. Either one machine boss dominated during different periods or Democratic Party organizations controlled the machine apparatus. In Boston, political bosses dominated during different time periods. In Chicago, the infamous Daley machine dictated local political affairs for several years, and Democratic organizations controlled the New York City machine. Although machine politics was never evident in Miami, black political development was hindered by an Anglo, and later an Anglo-Cuban, political establishment. Moreover, at-large election systems, as well as other institutional and governmental structures, diluted the black vote to such a degree that few African Americans held elective offices—even after their population increased.[45]

After challenging facially neutral (prima facie) practices and experiencing limited political success, native-born African Americans are now faced with a growing cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity within their communities. These changes require that they collaborate with individuals from Caribbean countries whose views on race and politics may differ from their own. The presence of black immigrants could be a mixed blessing in the sense that it might either benefit or hinder African American political development in the four cities under review. The presence of black Caribbean first and second generation immigrants and citizens may have a positive impact on the evolution of African American politics if they share the same group identification and consciousness with African Americans and therefore are willing to join coalitions with them. Their large population, combined with a mobilized African American constituency, may result in stronger levels of black political incorporation in these four cities.

On the negative side, however, the presence of a large and mobilized black ethnic constituency may make it difficult for African Americans to increase their political power. Although many immigrants from the Cape Verdean Islands, Haiti, and the West Indies have brown skin, they do not perceive themselves as black. As a result, their beliefs about race and politics—namely, the need for racial solidarity—may differ from

those of native-born African Americans. Candis Watts-Smith in *Black Mosaic*: *The Politics of Black Pan-Ethnic Diversity* refers to the dilemma that black ethnics encounter when balancing their racial, ethnic, and political identities as diasporic consciousness. It is "the (mental) tightrope that people of African descent who live in the United States walk as they try to balance their superordinate racial identity (and the political interests associated with it) with their subgroup or ethnic identity and its closely associated political interests."[46]

My research adds to the few studies of black group consciousness in the United States by assessing its presence among African Americans and other groups of black African descent. This study extends the body of knowledge of black ethnic racial identity in two major ways. First, it examines the racial identities of black immigrants who trace their lineage to several different countries, rather than one or two. Second, I examine whether black ethnics and African Americans are more or less likely to have a common racial group identification and consciousness depending on the political context of the cities in which they live. This study seeks to answer these questions by examining the political behavior and racial identities of black immigrants from four urban cities.

THE BLACK ETHNIC GROUPS IN THIS RESEARCH

Cape Verdeans

This study will reveal informative findings about the identities, consciousness, and political behavior of Cape Verdeans. All of the Cape Verdean respondents reside in the Boston metropolitan area, but most trace their lineage to the Cape Verdean islands—twenty contiguous islands that are approximately 283 to 448 miles from the coast of Senegal, West Africa.[47] Beginning in the fifteenth century, Cape Verde was a colony of Portugal, but gained its independence on July 5, 1975.[48] Because of this connection to Portugal, many Cape Verdeans classify themselves as white and as mulatto (mixed race) in addition to black. Some Americans also mistakenly identify Cape Verdeans as Hispanic/Latino.[49] Because some white Portuguese Americans do not consider Cape Verdeans to be Portuguese, a considerable amount of friction has existed between Portuguese whites and Cape Verdeans historically.[50]

Although many Cape Verdean Americans have not classified themselves in the same racial category with African Americans, the larger society

has considered them to be African American because of their African heritage. Influenced by the black power movement, some Cape Verdean émigrés of the 1960s adopted a closer affinity with other individuals of African descent. This movement and their experiences with American racism forced them to acknowledge their common heritage with African Americans.[51] However, many still emphasize their Portuguese heritage, their language (Kriolu), religion (Catholicism), and other cultural practices as a way to distinguish themselves from African Americans.[52] As a result of these actions, relations between African Americans and Cape Verdeans are believed to be somewhat strained.[53] Like the other black ethnic groups in this research, most Cape Verdeans in Boston reside in predominantly black neighborhoods, which extend from the South End, southward through Dorchester and Roxbury, and into Mattapan and Hyde Park.[54] This study will ascertain the manner in which they currently identify themselves, the group consciousness they share within their own group, their group consciousness with African Americans and other black ethnics, and their political behavior.

Haitians

In America, Haitians have been stereotyped and unfairly stigmatized. Many left Haiti because of both economic and political strife, but are nevertheless classified as economic refugees.[55] Haitians have also been referred to as poor, disease ridden, uneducated, unskilled persons who burden American communities but contribute little to them.[56] From 1977–1990, Haitians were banned from giving blood because of the belief that their group had a high rate of AIDS transmissions, but in reality Haitians had fewer AIDS infections than many other groups.[57] An erroneous belief also surfaced during this time that Haitians were spreading tuberculosis throughout South Florida, which caused hotels, restaurants, and other businesses to refuse to hire them.[58]

As a result of these prejudices and restrictive immigration policies, Haitian immigrants once found it almost impossible to emigrate to the United States legally and eventually become citizens. The first detected boat of refugees from Haiti seeking political asylum arrived in September 1963. Like Vietnamese immigrants, Haitian immigrants have been called "boat people" because of their use of boats to flee political oppression and poverty.[59] Like Cubans, to whom their group is often compared, Haitians have witnessed significant political upheavals in their home country. Beginning in 1957 after Francois Duvalier (Papa Doc)

assumed power, Haitians, mostly from the upper classes, were forced out of the country if they challenged his regime.[60] After the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) rejected their claims for political asylum, they were deported.

After Duvalier's regime became more oppressive and economic opportunities dwindled even further, more Haitians left. Between 1977 and 1981, approximately fifty to seventy thousand Haitians arrived in South Florida. Since then, thousands more have made the 720-mile voyage from the Haitian to the Florida coastline. Others have entered the United States from Canada, Puerto Rico, the Bahamas, and Mexico.[61] An estimated 38,000 Haitians fled the island during an eight-month period (1990–91) after a coup d'état occurred in protest of the Jean-Bertrand Aristide regime.[62]

It is impossible to pinpoint the exact number of Haitian residents in America today because many are undocumented. However, the 2010 census estimates that 535,000 Haitians now reside in American cities.[63] Visible Haitian communities exist in Miami, such as Le Petit Haiti or Little Haiti, but Haitians have also established distinct residential enclaves in predominantly black neighborhoods in Boston, Chicago, and New York City. Haitians have also been elected to many political offices in Miami and are now seriously competing for office in the Boston, Chicago, and New York City metropolitan areas.

West Indians

West Indian immigrants have been entering the United States since the turn of the twentieth century. They have come mainly from former or current British colonies, especially Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad/ Tobago, and Barbados, but also from Dutch and French-speaking countries such as Martinique, Aruba, and Curacao.[64] In 1930, 60 percent of the nation's population of foreign-born blacks settled in New York City.[65] By 1980, more than fifty thousand West Indians of diverse origin were entering the United States annually, with over half of them establishing residence in New York City. By 1990, nearly half of all West Indians in the United States lived in New York State and another 7 percent in New Jersey, with the population in each state heavily concentrated in the cities of New York and Newark.[66] New York was the city of choice for West Indians because of its traditional role as the destination of choice for immigrants, the availability of convenient travel options in and out of the city, and its image as a city of upward mobility for new arrivals.[67]

West Indians have had a long history of political activism in New York City, but have only recently won elections for a number of reasons that will be discussed in chapter 5. In New York City, they have mobilized a separate West Indian constituency, supported African American candidates, and organized West Indian political organizations. Although their electoral successes have been less evident in Boston, Chicago, and Miami, they nevertheless possess the potential to elect West Indians because of their growing populations in these cities.

THE CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 discusses theories examining race and group consciousness and provides the reasons for their applicability to this study. In addition, the chapter summarizes the literature's findings about black and white participation rates as well as the participation of black ethnics. The group identification and consciousness theories explain the implications we can infer from the existence or absence of a common racial group identification and group consciousness among the respondents. In chapter 1, I also define the minority group model. These theories explain whether we should expect black ethnics to collaborate with African Americans.

In chapters 2 through 5, I discuss race relations and politics in the four cities. Chapter 2 addresses race, group consciousness, and political participation in the city of Boston. It has been characterized by machine politics, racial polarization, Irish political domination, and an influx of Cape Verdean and Haitian immigrants in recent decades. In addition, it discusses the political activities of African Americans and black ethnics in the past and present as well as the challenges they still confront when attempting to secure political power in the city.

Chapter 3 assesses the remnants of machine politics and the political relationship between African Americans and black ethnics in Chicago. This city is also one of the most racially polarized and residentially segregated in the nation and has a sizable African American population. The most significant political accomplishment of the African American electorate was the election of the late Mayor Harold Washington during the 1980s. During this time, African Americans improved their incorporation from weak to moderate. However, they failed to retain this political power after Washington's death. Richard M. Daley served as mayor for twenty years and created a different kind of political machine. African Americans

made significant political gains during this time, but only two Haitian and no West Indian candidates have won elective office. Under Rahm Emmanuel, African Americans are continuing to expand their political power by electing aldermen and other political officials. Emmanuel also won almost 60 percent of the black vote in 2011.

The cities of Miami and New York are more ethnically diverse than Boston and Chicago. In chapter 4, I focus on African American and black ethnic politics in Miami. These groups are disadvantaged in several ways politically. First, the metropolitan system of government places majority black neighborhoods at a disadvantage. Before the early 1990s, at-large elections also prevented African Americans, and Latinos to a lesser extent, from electing black and Latino candidates. Despite its diversity, the city of Miami is racially and residentially polarized. Most African Americans live in unincorporated neighborhoods outside of the city, which makes it difficult for them to gain political power. Haitians have elected a Haitian mayor and Haitian majorities on city councils in the North Miami municipality, but few elected officials in the city of Miami.

Chapter 5 points out that New York City is similar to Boston and Chicago because of its machine political history. It is also a racially and residentially polarized city with large populations of African Americans, Haitians, and West Indians. The most significant political accomplishments for African Americans involved the 1989 election of David Dinkins as the city's first black mayor. Dinkins won the support of African Americans and black ethnics, but only served for one term. African American and black ethnic candidates have also been disadvantaged by the refusal of the Democratic Party to provide them with enough support to win elections and internal divisions that fracture potential coalitions. As in the other cities, African Americans and black ethnics endure obstacles that inhibit their ability to mobilize and elect members of their groups. In the concluding chapter, I summarize the major findings of the research and the significance of this research for black political empowerment and for minority political coalitions.

Chapter One

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS, AND THE MINORITY GROUP MODEL

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 provides an overview of theories examining black political participation, group consciousness, and political incorporation. Each will provide a context so that we can understand the complex dilemmas faced by African Americans and black ethnics as they seek political power in the cities of Boston, Chicago, Miami, and New York City. I begin with an examination of African American political participation. In each of the four cities under analysis, African Americans have struggled to enhance their political representation in cities with governing regimes that were often hostile to their interests. Over the years, academic literature has tried to ascertain the factors that stimulate higher African American participatory rates, and has attributed group consciousness as a major contributor. Therefore, after the analysis of African American political participation, I will discuss the concepts of group consciousness and linked fate.

One key question that I wish to answer in this analysis is: To what extent does group consciousness stimulate black ethnic political participation? When examining African American and black ethnic interactions, the validity of the minority group model will be assessed. This model predicts that black ethnics will work collaboratively with African Americans because they have the same skin color. I end the chapter with a definition of political incorporation and a discussion of the literature's observations about the African American and black ethnic quest for it. These latter theories will help us understand whether African Americans and black ethnics will take a united or separate road to political incorporation.

AFRICAN AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Political participatory acts are those "that aim at influencing the government, either by affecting the choice of government personnel or by affecting

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the choices made by government personnel."[1] They include voting (the most frequently practiced form of political participation), contacting elected representatives, participating in campaigns, etc.[2] Electoral (traditional) participation can be distinguished from nonelectoral (nontraditional) participation. Electoral participatory activities are designed to bring about the elections of candidates. These include voting, donating funds, and campaign volunteering.[3] When individuals engage in nonelectoral activities, they express their political and policy preferences by attending rallies, participating in demonstrations, signing petitions, contacting elected officials, or meeting with elected officials.

Through their political participation, American citizens gain the potential to benefit themselves and their communities. First, individuals can make their needs and preferences known to governmental actors.[4] Second, they address the interests that affect them and the larger society.[5] Third, they influence governmental outcomes by electing representatives who promote the interests of their constituents. The ultimate result of this participation is an improved quality of life for both the citizen and his/her community.

African Americans, in particular, understand the importance of political participation because of their experience in America. For many years, they were either completely or partially disfranchised. After the 1960s, black voter registration and turnout rates increased steadily and their preferred candidates won elective offices.

Because of the importance of political participation, scholars began examining the factors that led to higher participation rates, especially in voting. According to previously conducted studies, citizens with higher socioeconomic status, as measured mostly by their incomes, tend to be more involved in various forms of political participation such as campaign volunteering or voting.[6] Moreover, the political participation rates of blacks and whites are equal when "social position" (defined as a combination of social class and other demographic characteristics such as age, gender, religion, and place of residence) is controlled for.[7]

According to the black empowerment thesis developed by professors Bobo and Gilliam, African Americans are also more likely to participate in the political arena in cities where they have elected black representatives for several years. Although white citizens typically have higher participation rates than black citizens, the black participation rate in "high empowerment areas"—those where they have political power— surpasses that of whites.[8] The residents of these "empowered" cities have

more positive attitudes about government, especially when the cities have African American mayors.[9] In addition, black voters have more of an interest in political affairs and exhibit a higher turnout on election day when black candidates have a strong chance of winning elections.[10]

Education has also been found to be a major impetus for political participation. Almost universally, the scholarly literature finds that education is the strongest contributor to voter turnout because of the higher prevalence of voting among more educated persons.[11] When comparing black and white voting participation, most studies have found that white voters usually have equal or higher turnouts than black voters.[12] As early as the 1960s, it was discovered that the differences in white and black turnout rates resulted mostly from the latter's lower educational levels, employment rates, and incomes.[13] Black participation, it was argued, would equal or surpass that of whites once their educational levels, employment statuses, incomes, and political resources paralleled those of whites.

As previously mentioned, African Americans frequently vote at higher rates than whites when socioeconomic variables were controlled for. Scholars attributed the higher black participation rates to their strong feelings of group consciousness.[14] Sidney Verba and Norman Nie (1972) attribute these differences to the awareness by African Americans of their disadvantaged status as a group.[15] They find that individuals with higher socioeconomic status engage in political activities at far higher rates than those with lower socioeconomic status. They refer to individuals with a lower socioeconomic status as having "lower levels of education, lower status occupations, and inadequate income."[16] They reason that these citizens must participate in politics at a higher than expected rate considering their education, income, and occupation status.[17] Verba and Nie conclude, "If blacks participate more than one would expect of a group with a similar socioeconomic status (SES), the explanation may lie in the fact that they have, over time, developed an awareness of their own status as a deprived group, and this self-consciousness has led them to be more politically active than members of the society who have similar socioeconomic levels but do not share the group identity."[18]

In addition, African Americans engage in political participation as a way to address the racial inequities in American society.[19] When asked about various political issues, African Americans who mentioned race more frequently when asked about "the problems they faced in personal life, in the community, and in the nation" were also found to have higher participatory rates than those who failed to mention race.[20] Verba and Nie

find, "The consciousness of race as a problem or a basis of conflict appears to bring those blacks who are conscious up to a level of participation equivalent to that of whites."[21]

According to the authors, group consciousness has a direct linkage with campaign and cooperative activities. While campaign activities are those that are geared toward the elections of candidates, cooperative activities are designed to address specific problems through citizen mobilization.[22] Blacks who exhibit higher levels of race consciousness are more likely to participate in campaign activities or cooperative activities than whites. Those who mention race when answering survey questions vote at rates that are equal to whites.[23] However, even when controlling for social class, African Americans are less likely to contact a government official than are whites.[24] More recent research discovers that group consciousness has less of an influence on black participation at present than in the past.[25]

In "Black Consciousness and Political Participation: The Missing Link," Richard D. Shingles sought to ascertain the reasons why group consciousness has such a significantly positive impact on African American participation. His critique of the Verba and Nie study asked three questions. First, why do African Americans have higher participatory rates in some activities, but not others? Second, why does group consciousness impact black participation, but not that of poor whites? Third, what motivates poor whites to become politically active?[26] Shingles finds that African Americans are cynical about the ability or willingness of government to respond to them, but nevertheless are confident of their ability to bring about change by working in the political process.[27] Both native and foreign-born blacks continue to have a lack of trust in the government because of the racism they experience.[28] In addition, because of their group consciousness, African Americans (both poor and middle-class) take more actions to influence public policy than poor whites.[29]

Other scholarly research clarified the linkage between group consciousness and political participation. Miller et al. find that a common racial identification alone is not enough to impel political participation. This identification must be combined with "feelings of power deprivation, relative dislike for the outgroup, or with the belief that social barriers explain the disadvantaged positons of the poor, blacks, and women" in order to influence participation.[30]

Thus, the group consciousness concept, also referred to as the ethnic community model, argues that African Americans who have a strong belief in racial solidarity are more likely to participate in politics. Their

membership in disadvantaged minority communities results in their having strong feelings of group attachment and group consciousness.[31] This group consciousness, belief in racial solidarity, and acknowledgment of their racial group as a disadvantaged one encourages them to use politics as a means to uplift themselves.[32]

THE CONCEPTS OF GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS AND LINKED FATE

Before determining whether black ethnics have a group identification and group consciousness with African Americans, we must first see if they have ethnic attachments, networks, and solidarity within their own distinctive subgroups. In the chapters that follow, I will ascertain whether the members of black ethnic groups have a common racial group identification and consciousness with each other and with native-born African Americans. Individuals have an ethnic attachment when they feel connected because of their shared culture.[33] If they have an ethnic solidarity, they believe that they not only have a connection with each other, but also that they should work together to actively promote their common interests.[34] This solidarity can be based on shared experiences ("bounded solidarity") or reactions to discrimination ("reactive solidarity").[35] For example, Cuban immigrants who arrived in Miami during the 1960s possessed ethnic attachments and solidarities because of their common experiences in Cuba and similar challenges in America.[36] In New York City, reactive solidarities among Haitians, West Indians, and African Americans have been apparent because of police abuse and discrimination. Scholars studying racial and ethnic communities should not assume that members of these groups have ethnic solidarities, however.[37]

In this research, I define the term *group consciousness* according to three elements: (1) identification with a black racial identity; (2) acknowledgment that the racial/ethnic group is disadvantaged; and (3) support for coalitions among people of African descent. Although it has been defined in different ways by scholars, group consciousness usually consists of one or more of the following four components: group identification (the individual identifies as a member of a racial minority group); polar affect (prefers interactions with the members of his/her racial group); polar power (compares the group's status and resources to that of other racial groups); and systemic blame (primarily blames a discriminatory system for his/her racial group's position).[38] Consistently, this consciousness influences

African Americans to engage in political activities that are beneficial to the group as a whole and to them as individuals.[39] African Americans with lower levels of racial group consciousness have participated in political activities to a lesser extent than those with higher levels.[40] Also, African Americans with significant group consciousness levels (regardless of their socioeconomic status) utilize the political process as a way to address discrimination and at times have higher participatory rates than whites.[41]

The concept of linked fate is a component of racial group consciousness that explains African American support for various public policies. In *Behind the Mule*: *Race and Class in African-American Politic*s (1994), Professor Michael C. Dawson examines the effect of group consciousness among African Americans from lower, middle, and upper-class backgrounds and finds a sense of consciousness and "politically homogenous" beliefs among them.[42] According to the theory of the "black utility heuristic," individual African American citizens support certain political and economic policies out of the belief that they benefit from policies that advantage African Americans as a group.[43] Dawson characterizes this solidarity among African Americans as "linked fate" which implies that "one's fate is linked to that of the race."[44] This theory has been used to explain African American class divisions, gender relationships, racial attitudes, and support for Black Nationalism.[45] It has also been used to determine whether African Americans have a linked fate with other racial and ethnic groups.[46] For instance, many Latinos perceive a sense of linked fate because of their disadvantaged economic status, common experiences as immigrants, and other factors.[47] Moreover, Southern Latino immigrants lack a heightened level of group consciousness with African Americans in urban cities, but nevertheless believe that their fate is linked to that of other Latinos.[48] Perceptions of a linked fate have also resulted in the political mobilization of Asian Americans and women.[49]

THE MINORITY GROUP MODEL

Although research on group consciousness has mostly explained its impact on the political preferences of African Americans, one might also expect that black ethnics also possess a group consciousness and linked fate with the members of their respective groups as well as with African Americans. The minority group thesis argues that people of African descent will have a common racial group identification and consciousness because of their