

Chapter 7

Race and the Rewards of Voting

Our nettlesome task is to discover how to organize our strength into compelling power.

- Dr. Martin Luther King

Does the Democrat party take African American voters for granted? It's a fair question. I know plenty of politicians assume they have your vote. But do they earn it and do they deserve it? Is it a good thing for the African American community to be represented mainly by one political party? That's a legitimate question. How is it possible to gain political leverage if the party is never forced to compete? Have the traditional solutions of the Democrat party truly served the African American community?

- George W. Bush, in a July 23, 2004 address to Urban League

A third way that racial minorities may be able to improve their political influence compared to whites is by participating in elections. It is well known that African Americans and especially Latinos have historically been less likely than whites to participate in elections (e.g., Verba and Nie 1972; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). However, due in large measure to improvement in these groups' relative socioeconomic status and mobilization efforts by interest organizations such as the NAACP, the Urban League, NALEO and NCLR, African American and Latino turnout has shown substantial improvement.¹

These efforts to place African Americans and Latinos at the polls on election day are driven by the hope that boosting political participation among these groups will lead to greater

¹ For example, African American turnout increased from 10% of the national population in 2000 to 12% in 2004, and Latino turnout in 2004 was as much as 50% higher than in 2000 (Bositis 2005; see also Hamilton 1977; Vedlitz 1985). See, <http://www.lulac.org/advocacy/press/2004/2004results.html>.

political influence. As V. O. Key (1949, 527) once asserted, “the blunt truth is that politicians and officials are under no compulsion to pay much heed to classes and groups of citizens that do not vote.” Walter Dean Burnham (1987, 99) put the blunt truth even more bluntly, “if you don’t vote, you don’t count.” However, few political scientists have tested Key’s blunt truth (Campbell 2003; Martin 2003; Griffin and Newman 2005). We tend to assume that the politically active find their preferences better reflected in governmental action than do the inactive, but few have examined whether this is so.² As Larry Bartels (1998, 45) put it, differences in turnout among various groups, “are seldom explicitly related to any observed or potential impact they may have upon the strategic decisions of candidates or the policy outcomes produced by the electoral process.” Simply put, we are still learning about turnout’s political impacts.

One point upon which Key, along with many after him, was silent was the equality of voting’s rewards. *Those who don’t vote may not count, but do those who vote count equally?* Equal rewards for voting are important if boosting turnout is to promote the political equality of racial groups. Otherwise, relative representation gains made by mobilizing minorities will be offset by greater gains among whites. Certainly, as a result of court decisions establishing the legal principle of “one person, one vote,” votes have equal influence on electoral outcomes in a legal sense. However, Bartels (1998) argues that political conditions may render votes politically unequal, meaning different groups among the public have different “voting power.” If so, voting’s rewards may not be distributed evenly. More specifically, Bartels argues that current political conditions generally work to the disadvantage of African Americans compared

² This assumption extends beyond academic circles. For example, columnist Bob Herbert laments that “The inclination of many politicians to give short shrift to the interests of the young, the poor, the working classes, the black and the brown, has been encouraged by the consistently poor voting records of those groups” (qtd. in Highton and Wolfinger 2001, 189).

to whites, such that African Americans have less voting power in elections. Thus African Americans' votes may gain them less political influence than whites' votes do. President Bush argued as much in his speech to the Urban League – asserting that African Americans lack “political leverage” due to their affinity for Democratic candidates. Finally, some of the reasons that African Americans have less voting power may extend to Latinos, while this group may also face unique circumstances that affect its voting power.

In this chapter, we examine whether political participation promotes the equal political influence of African Americans and Latinos. Do racial minorities who vote exert greater influence than those who do not? Knowing the answer to this question will tell us whether, if racial minorities were to vote at higher rates, while whites continued to vote at the same rate, political inequality of influence would decrease. Second, are the rewards for voting equal across racial groups? Knowing this will tell us whether, if turnout increased uniformly among all racial groups minorities would enjoy greater relative influence. Finally, as minorities comprise a larger share of electoral districts do their rewards for voting improve? Knowing this will tell us whether minorities wield greater voting power when they comprise a larger share of an electoral district's population.

How Voting Rewards

Studies of political participation often argue that political activity is crucial to political influence because it is the chief means by which citizens make their preferences known to elected officials. Verba (1996, 1) summarized this position well, explaining that “participation is a mechanism for representation, a means by which governing officials are informed of the preferences and needs of the public and are induced to respond to those preferences and needs.”

If citizens do not communicate their preferences, they make the task of responding to their preferences much more difficult for representatives. Of course, of the many ways to participate in American politics, voting is among the least communicative (e.g., Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). However, those who vote communicate more than those who do not simply by virtue of “saying” something about their preferences over the candidates presented to them and their reaction to the state of the country and the state of their electoral district. Moreover, voters tend to politically participate in other ways that communicate more specific information about their preferences (Verba and Nie, 1972).

A second, important avenue for citizen views to be influential in government is through voters’ selection of relatively likeminded officials (e.g., Miller and Stokes 1963). Presumably voters support candidates who most closely match their preferences, so the candidate who is elected will typically share preferences with many in the electorate, a link that may not extend to nonvoters. Many studies have analyzed part of this claim, testing whether turnout patterns advantage the Republican Party (e.g., DeNardo 1980; Tucker et al. 1986; Nagel and McNulty 2000; Highton and Wolfinger 2001; Citrin, Schickler, and Sides 2003) or racial majorities (Hajnal and Trounstein 2005), but these studies typically stop at election outcomes, leaving unexplored the representational consequences of turnout.

Both of these mechanisms for voter influence require relatively little of elected officials. They do not need to know who voters are or voters’ preferences to represent them better than nonvoters. If officials respond to what they perceive to be their constituents’ preferences, voters’ preferences will be disproportionately represented since those perceptions will be skewed toward those who communicate their preferences either through voting or other avenues. Further, if voters select likeminded representatives who simply vote according to their own preferences,

these voting decisions will reflect voters' preferences to some degree, but that may not be true for nonvoters.

Of course, the more obvious reason voters exert greater influence than nonvoters over elected officials is simply because voters, not nonvoters, give elected officials their jobs and decide whether they will be retained. Consequently, re-election seeking officials will pay special attention to the preferences of likely voters (e.g., Key 1949; Arnold 1990; Bartels 1998). Rosenstone and Hansen (1993, 11) argue that in this way participation "is a source of policy benefits for citizens" because politicians have every incentive to keep the politically active relatively satisfied. As they put it, "the active contribute directly to [politicians'] goals: they pressure, they contribute, they vote. The inactive offer only potential, the *possibility* that they might someday rise up against rulers who neglect them. Only the rare politician would pass up the blandishments of the active to champion the cause of those who never take part" (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 247, emphasis in original). Thus, re-election oriented politicians have far greater incentives to represent voters than nonvoters when the two disagree.

The available evidence partly corroborates these claims. Elected officials are especially responsive to groups among their constituencies that are critical to their re-election: independents, state party elites, and their re-election constituency generally (Fenno 1978; Bullock and Brady 1983; Wright 1989).³ These findings are consistent with the notion that voters are more influential, but they do not directly address the issue because they examine governmental responsiveness not to voters generally, but to subsets of the geographical constituency or to subsets of voters. Others have shown that elected officials' policy priorities are more often consistent with the preferences of their active constituents (Verba and Nie 1972;

³ Other evidence points to greater ideological "shirking" by retiring legislators, just as we would expect to observe if voters exert special influence on legislators' behavior (Rothenberg and Sanders 2000).

but see Hill and Matsubayashi 2005), as we would expect to see if voters choose like-minded representatives. Finally, prior studies show that patterns of participation affect various public policies from Social Security (Campbell 2003) to redistributive policies (Hill and Leighley 1992) to the distribution of federal discretionary funds (Martin 2003).

Although they link voter preferences to policy, this final group of studies do not show how voter preferences are translated into voter-friendly policies. Bullock (1981) takes a step in that direction, showing that enfranchisement of Southern African Americans pushed Southern legislators in a liberal direction (see also Keech 1968). In earlier work (Griffin and Newman 2005), we continued down this path, showing that Senators' roll call behavior responded more to the preferences of voters than nonvoters in the 101st to 107th Congresses. We also showed that among the reasons voters are rewarded with greater influence is that voters select like-minded representatives, voters are more likely to communicate their preferences to public officials, and only voters can decide whether their representatives will remain in office. Here, we take a natural next step in this analysis, asking whether voting's rewards extend to public policies and to roll call voting in the House of Representatives, as well as whether the rewards of voting are equal among racial groups.

The Equality of Voting's Rewards

Although prior investigations suggest several reasons that voters might be more influential relative to nonvoters, not all voters may be rewarded equally. In particular, the factors that bring voters influence gains may play out in ways such that the benefits of voting are greater for white voters than African American or Latino voters. First, if white voters are more active in other participatory domains such as contacting public officials, working on political campaigns,

and contributing to candidates their rewards for voting will appear greater. African Americans are quite a bit less likely than whites to report contacting public officials (24% to 37%), which is one of the most clear and effective ways of communicating one's preferences (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995, 233). Latino citizens, meanwhile, report contacting officials at *much* lower rates than whites, with just 17% reporting such interaction (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995, 233). If this disparity between whites and racial minority "contacting" in general also extends to white and minority voters, it suggests that whites should be rewarded more for voting than minorities, and that Latinos should be especially disadvantaged.

Second, because African Americans and Latinos are a numerical minority in most electoral districts, they have less control over who gets elected, and consequently less ability to select likeminded officials. Simply by virtue of numbers, whites may tip the electoral scales so that African Americans and Latinos are often represented by officials who do not share their preferences. This will be particularly true for larger electoral districts, like states and congressional districts, where African Americans and Latinos are more likely to be numerical minorities. In addition, the distribution of minorities across electoral districts may also affect their influence. Even if the African American and Latino national populations were equal to that of whites, in other words, if one group is more dispersed across congressional districts than the other this may affect their influence in elections (Grofman, Griffin, and Glazer 1992; Cameron, Epstein, and O'Halloran 1996). This would be true, for instance, if the influence of minorities based on their proportion of the population is not strictly linear, but instead grows at an increasing rate above some threshold (Lublin 1997), or if the racial composition of districts is systematically related to the attitudes of whites (Key 1949).

Third, re-election seeking officials have greater incentive to appeal to some potential voters in their constituencies than others. In defining the concept of “voting power,” Bartels (1998, 43) argued that strategic election-oriented politicians will “[tailor] their appeals to those prospective voters who are both likely to turn out and susceptible to conversion.” Officials have little incentive to spend scarce resources like time, money, or even roll call votes, trying to win the approval of those who are unlikely to vote. Similarly, all else equal, politicians have more incentive to appeal to those whose minds are not yet made up than to those whose votes are already virtually cast no matter what the candidates do. Of course, officials must tend to their “base,” keeping core supporters satisfied and mobilized, but it is the “swing voters” or “marginal voters” (Kelley 1983) who receive disproportionate attention. If their votes are lost, the opponent likely gains them, while disaffected loyalists will more likely just stay home. This being the case, some citizens’ votes are more highly sought after than others and “disparities in the force of [candidates’ strategic imperative to compete for individuals’ votes] can produce disparities in electoral influence” (Bartels 1998, 48). We contend that a natural consequence of unequal electoral influence will be unequal rewards for voting. That is, since some voters are especially important, re-election seeking office holders will disproportionately represent their preferences.

The notion of voting power is important for our purposes because, as Bartels shows, African Americans have significantly less voting power than the population at large. Part of this stems from African Americans’ numerical minority status and somewhat lower turnout rates. As we have noted, African Americans report voting at only slightly lower levels than whites -- 65% to 73% (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995, 233; see also Bartels 1998), though African Americans’ greater propensity to overreport voting means that the real gap in turnout rates may

be larger (Abramson, Anderson, and Silver 1986). More significant, perhaps, is African Americans' overwhelming and virtually unwavering support for the Democratic Party and its candidates, which makes them "by far the least pivotal group in the American electorate" (Bartels 1998, 65; Burkett 2002). Given that, as Republican Jack Kemp describes African Americans' experience with the parties, "one party [takes] minorities for granted and our party blows them off,"⁴ the party system has pushed African Americans to the margins of party competition, decreasing their voting power (see also Frymer 1999). In fact, Bartels calculates that African Americans' *per capita* voting power in presidential elections is only two-thirds that of whites. As a result, office holders have less incentive to reward African American voters by casting roll call votes consistent with their preferences. If Bartels' notion of voting power is correct, one of its politically significant implications is that African American voters will reap fewer representational benefits than will white voters.

Importantly, however, this expectation may or may not extend to Latinos. On the one hand, Latino citizens are much less likely than whites to report voting – with just over half of Latinos (52%) reporting turning out (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995, 233). In addition, higher rates of noncitizenship among Latinos than among whites and African Americans, combined with the citizenship requirement to vote in national elections, means that the actual Latino turnout rate among all persons of voting age is even lower. For instance, data from the Census indicate that 56% of whites voted in 1996, compared to just 26% of Latinos overall. On the other hand, Latinos' affinity for the major political parties is much less uniform. Perhaps with the exception of Cuban Americans (Brischetto 1987), within Latino groups of different national origins, commitment to either the Democratic or Republican Parties is much weaker

⁴ See *New York Times*, July 22, 2004.

than among African Americans. For instance, in the 2004 presidential election, 62.9% of Latino Protestants reported voting for George Bush (Green 2005). Indeed, the Republican Party has gone to great lengths to court Latino voters with roots in other countries in recent years, relying on among other things, Latinos' social conservatism (Nicholson and Segura 2005). These patterns of affiliation suggest that Latinos much more often than African Americans are swing voters, and thus that this group may have greater relative voting power despite its lower turnout rate as a proportion of the voting age population.

Voting, Public Policy, and Egalitarianism

Having laid out some theoretical expectations, we now turn to the evidence. In this section, we ask whether the policy rewards of voting are equal across racial groups under an egalitarian standard of political equality. Are white, African American, and Latino voters more likely to be policy winners, compared to white, African American, and Latino nonvoters, respectively? Are the rewards of voting equal across racial groups? Finally, are racial minorities who vote as influential as whites who do not vote?

To assess the consequences of voting on citizens' policy influence, we first return to the measures of policy "winners" and "losers" that we introduced in Chapter 3. Recall that we coded 1973-1994 GSS respondents as policy winners or losers based on their preferences for federal government spending and how this relates to the change in actual federal expenditures the following fiscal year. For example, policy winners were those who desired an increase in spending in a policy area and a substantial increase in spending subsequently took place, while all those who preferred that spending not change or that it decrease were considered policy

losers.⁵ In these analyses, we determine whether voters are more likely to be policy winners and whether the effect of voting on the probability of being a policy winner varies by race.

We measure voter turnout using GSS respondents' self-reported participation in the most recent presidential election (coded 1 for voted in the last presidential election, otherwise 0). This raises a potential confounding factor in our analysis -- the tendency of survey respondents to overreport voting (i.e. "false voters"). This may not affect our results much since the error in independent variables induced by overreporting only leads to minor biases in models of turnout and candidate choice (e.g., Sigelman 1982). However, if false voters were attitudinally similar to actual voters, evidence that voters are better represented may be misleading -- the estimated relationship between nonvoters and the likelihood of being a policy winner would be attenuated, with the actual relationship more like that between voters and the probability of being a policy winner. Evidence that false voters tend to be highly educated and generally most likely to vote suggests that false voters may indeed be similar to voters in many respects (Silver, Anderson, and Abramson 1986). However, in previous analyses of NES validated voter data, we found no systematic evidence that voters' attitudes are carbon copies of false voters' attitudes (Griffin and Newman 2005).

Using this data, we estimated probit models of policy winning separately for whites and African Americans. Unfortunately, in most years the General Social Survey has not gone to great lengths to identify Latinos, and the Roper data we used to assess Latinos' policy influence in Chapter 3 did not inquire about respondents' voting history. We turn to a new data source for an assessment of the consequences of voting for Latinos' policy influence below. First, though, for whites and African Americans we estimate models of policy winning in the nine spending

⁵ We used a 15% increase or decrease in spending to determine whether respondents were policy winners or losers.

domains analyzed in Chapters 3 and 5 – health care, welfare, education, crime, space exploration, defense, cities, environment, and foreign aid. These models include just an indicator for reported turnout, because we are merely trying to describe whether voters of all racial groups are equally rewarded with policies they prefer, not why this is so. A parameter estimate greater than zero for the turnout indicator indicates that turnout is associated with a greater likelihood of being a policy winner. The results of these models are reported in Table 7.1.

Looking first at the effect of turnout on the probability of being a policy winner among all GSS respondents, in four of the nine domains voters are more likely than nonvoters to be policy winners – fighting crime, space exploration, aid to cities, and foreign aid. Generating predicted probabilities of winning for voters and nonvoters using the estimates from the first set of models, and holding all remaining considerations fixed, it appears that voting boosts an individual’s probability of being a policy winner in these four domains about five percentage points.

The results for the subsample of African Americans are dramatically different. In eight of the nine issue domains, African Americans do not increase their probability of being a policy winner by going to the ballot box. The sole domain in which voting African Americans may have more influence than African American nonvoters is defense spending. These results point strongly to the conclusion that while whites often exert greater influence by voting, there may be few if any policy rewards for voting by African Americans.

Table 7.1

Extending this analysis to Latinos is an important and interesting question. As we have emphasized, Latinos face a unique set of circumstances which may lead to different patterns of influence. We turn to the 2000 NAES to assess the policy rewards of voting for Latinos compared to those of whites and African Americans. Specifically, the NAES queried respondents about their desired level of federal spending or effort in three of the domains that we analyzed in Table 7.1 – education, defense, and the environment. We code respondents as policy winners in these three areas if they desired no change in spending or effort, since spending increased just 5.9%, 3.7% and 2.4% in these three domains, respectively, from fiscal year 2000 to fiscal year 2001. All remaining respondents – those who expressed a preference for increased or decreased spending – were coded policy losers. We code respondents as voters if they reported voting in the 1996 presidential election, to retain in our analyses the many respondents who were interviewed prior to the 2000 election.⁶ Once again, we estimate models of the probability of being a policy winner for each racial group as a function of reported turnout, but now can include Latinos in our analysis.

Table 7.2

The results of these models are reported in Table 7.2. We find that white voters are more influential than white nonvoters in two of the three issue domains, education and environmental

⁶ So, we are assuming that voting is “habitual” as others have shown (e.g. Gerber, Green, and Shachar 2003).

spending. The results for African Americans again point to little if any reward for voting. Indeed, these results even call into question African Americans' reward for voting in the area of defense spending that we observed in Table 7.1.

In contrast, in two of the three issue domains Latino voters are more influential than Latino nonvoters. The probability that the environmental spending estimate is not greater than zero is just .14, and once we control for income this probability falls to .06. These results diverge sharply from those for African Americans, and strongly suggest that some of the advantages that Latinos are presented with in the political system, most notably this group's relative willingness to vote for the candidates of both political parties, offset this group's comparative disadvantages.

Figure 7.1

To illustrate the substantive impact of voting on political influence, we simulated the effect of voting on the probability of being a policy winner among whites and Latinos using the results in Table 7.2. The results of these simulations, reported in Figure 7.1, show first that the rewards of voting for whites and Latinos are fairly equal. Both white and Latino voters are about four to seven percentage points more likely than nonvoting members of their racial group to be policy winners in the area of education and environmental spending.

In the same Figure, we can also assess how voting affects Latinos' political influence relative to that of whites. For instance, when we compare white and Latino nonvoters in the area

of education spending, whites are about 8 percentage points more likely to be a policy winner.⁷ When we compare Latino voters to white nonvoters in this domain, this gap narrows to about 2 percentage points. So, stimulating turnout *only* among Latinos would greatly improve the equality of influence among these groups. In the area of environmental protection, Latino voters also are less likely than white nonvoters to be policy winners, but turnout helps to diminish the influence gap.

In sum, to this point we have shown that white and Latino voters are more likely than the nonvoting members of these racial groups to wield political influence. In contrast, African American voters appear to be no more influential on policy outcomes than African American nonvoters.

Voting, Proximity, and Standards of Equality

By what channels does voting lead to greater policy influence among whites and Latinos? Specifically, does voting yield greater influence in Congress? In addition, what factors amplify or dampen the effect of voting on greater political influence? To investigate these questions, we return to the House of Representatives and our measures of ideological proximity. Specifically, we model the Wright (1978) ideological proximity measure we used in Chapters 4 and 5 using various specifications. First, for each racial group we model the ideological proximity of citizens from their Representatives as a function of reported turnout. As reported in Table 7.3, whites who vote are closer ideologically to their Representatives than whites who do not vote (column

⁷ At first glance, this appears to contrast with our earlier finding in Chapter 3 that Latinos are more influential in this domain, but this is just one year of data, and in this year Latinos might have been more likely to be policy losers even if over the course of many years they are generally more likely to be policy winners.

1). So, one reason that whites receive policy rewards for voting is that Representatives are more proximate to white voters than white nonvoters.

The effect of voting on proximity for African Americans and Latinos is somewhat weaker, both substantively, as reflected by the smaller magnitude of the estimates in columns 2 and 5, and statistically. The probability that the estimates for African Americans and Latinos are not less than zero is about .15. Voting may improve these groups' influence on these Representatives, but the rewards of voting pale compared to the reward whites receive, contrary to the requirements of egalitarianism.

Given our results above, these findings raise the possibility that both African Americans and Latinos are rewarded for voting with greater proximity to their Representatives, but that this is only translated into policy rewards for Latinos. This could occur if Latinos but not African Americans are rewarded for voting at various other stages of the policy process.

Next, we evaluate whether the racial composition of districts conditions the effect of voting for racial minorities. In doing so, we are testing whether the proportional standard of political equality is satisfied with respect to these racial groups' rewards for voting. Are minorities more likely to be rewarded for voting when they reside in a district with a larger proportion of their racial group? This seems likely, given that voting power depends not only on the proportion of the group that is politically active and the distribution of party support, but also on the size of the group (Fiorina 1974; Bartels 1998). Individuals who belong to large groups have more voting power. To test this, we determined whether the percentage of a congressional district that is African American or Latino amplifies the effect of turnout for minorities. The results, reported in columns 3 and 6 of Table 7.3, indicate that district racial composition matters

only for African Americans. When African Americans reside in districts with higher concentrations of African Americans, voting yields them greater political influence ($p=.06$).

We can only speculate about why Latinos are not similarly benefited when they vote and live in districts with many other Latinos. One possibility is that the manner in which the Latino population is distributed across the country lessens the effect of district racial composition. Another possibility is that districts that contain many Latinos may have higher rates of Latino noncitizenship, so larger Latino populations may not necessarily mean larger concentrations of potential Latino voters. Finally, if Latino citizens are less likely to vote when they reside in districts with large concentrations of Latinos (but see Baretto, Segura, and Woods 2004), this will work to offset the greater voting power we would expect Latinos to enjoy in these districts.

Table 7.3

To interpret the effect of district racial composition on African American voters' influence, we simulated the predicted probability that an African American nonvoters and voters will be policy winners when they reside in differently constituted districts. These predicted probabilities are reported in Figure 7.2. Based on these probabilities, African American voters do not enjoy an influence advantage over African American nonvoters unless they reside in a district that is at least 40% African American. Since virtually every congressional district that is at least 40% African American is represented by an African American MC, we add a MC race

indicator to Table 7.3 (column 4). Even after accounting for MC race, African Americans who live in districts with a large proportion of African Americans are rewarded for voting ($p=.05$).

Figure 7.2

Voting's Rewards and Pluralism

Even if African Americans generally do not improve their influence when they vote, voting may improve African Americans' influence in issue areas that this group cares about more than whites. Indeed, this seems likely given that citizens tend to pay greater attention to roll calls their legislators cast that are salient to them, and then make voting decisions in elections weighted heavily by their legislators' perceived performance on these important issues (Hutchings 1998, 2003).

Indeed, in our analyses of policy influence we already observed that voting Latinos are more influential than nonvoting Latinos in the area of education spending, and that voting Latinos' advantage is somewhat less in an issue domain that is less salient for Latinos, environmental spending. We also observed in unreported analyses that voting African Americans, while generally not more influential, are somewhat more influential in domains this group cares more about such as welfare spending, and health care spending.⁸

⁸ Among African Americans, voting increases an individual's probability of being a policy winner on welfare spending after controlling for income, educational attainment, age, gender, and ideology. Also among African Americans, if we adopt a 10% threshold for changes in spending to determine policy winners and losers, African Americans are more likely to be policy winners in the area of health care spending.

To test this further, we modeled African Americans' and Latinos' attitudinal proximity to their Representatives' LCCR and NHLA votes, respectively, first as a function of just reported turnout (see Table 7.4, columns 1, 4, and 5). We include one model for Representatives' NHLA votes in the area of economic security and another for their votes on education issues. According to these models, voting African Americans are more influential than nonvoting African Americans on LCCR votes, and voting Latinos are somewhat more influential than nonvoting Latinos on economic security NHLA votes, but not education NHLA votes.

Next, based on our results above we assessed whether minority voters are more influential than minority nonvoters on these salient issues when they reside in districts with larger concentrations of African Americans and Latinos (columns 2, 6, and 7). As we found with respect to Representatives' voting patterns in general, on these salient issues African American voters are more influential when they reside in districts with larger proportions of African Americans, but the same does not hold for Latinos. When we add an indicator for African American MCs, we continue to find that the racial composition of the district amplifies the rewards of voting among African Americans (column 3).

Table 7.4

To determine the magnitude of this effect for African Americans, we once again simulated nonvoting and voting African Americans' predicted distance from their Representatives (this time on LCCR votes), conditioned by the size of the African American

population in their congressional district. As shown in Figure 7.3, both nonvoting and voting African Americans are more influential on salient issues when they reside in districts with a larger percentage of African Americans, but the effect of district racial composition on proximity is greater for African American voters. For example, in a district that is 50% African American, the predicted distance of an African American nonvoter (.81) is 112.5% the predicted distance of an African American voter (.72). These results indicate that for African Americans, but not Latinos, the proportional standard of political equality is satisfied with respect to voting's rewards. As African Americans comprise a larger share of an electoral district's population, African Americans exert greater influence by voting.

Figure 7.3

Implications

We show that voters are more influential than nonvoters, but that this mainly applies to white citizens and Latinos. African American voters are not similarly advantaged, except when they reside in certain racial contexts or in special issue domains. Stated another way, we reveal a political consequence of African Americans' lower rates of voting and contacting public officials, of their minority status, and of their lesser voting power – asymmetric rewards for voting.

To be sure, there are some early signs that African Americans' strong support for Democratic candidates may be cracking. In 2002, the Joint Center for Political and Economic

Studies, a liberal think tank, asked black respondents in a national survey to identify themselves as either Democrats, Independents, or Republicans. Although 63 percent claimed to be Democrats, the number was down from 74 percent in 2000. The decrease occurred in nearly every age group. There was a significant increase in those calling themselves Independents, especially between the ages of 26 and 35. Respondents identifying themselves as Republicans also increased: Between ages 26 and 35, the number tripled, going from 5 percent in 2000 to 15 percent in 2002.⁹ Finally, among African American Protestants, 3.5 reported voting for George Bush in 2000, while 17.2 voted for Bush in 2004. If these trends continue, African Americans' voting power may look very different in coming elections.

At present, however, our results point to a violation of the one person, one vote principle, since white and Latino votes appear to have greater influence over the decisions of government. In other words, fulfillment of the one person, one vote principle is contingent not only on legal safeguards, but on a political environment in which strategic actors have incentives to weight votes equally.

In addition, our results suggest that stimulating African American turnout, taken alone, may do little to improve the relative representation of African Americans' interests in many policy areas (Bartels 1998). If turnout does not produce policy benefits in most domains, it cannot very well improve African Americans' representation. However, we do not go so far as to discourage voting by African Americans. As we have seen, the asymmetric rewards of turnout appear conditional on the size of an electoral district's African American population. This suggests that African Americans have greater incentives to vote for offices representing smaller geographical units where African Americans have a better chance of constituting a substantial portion of the population. Moreover, even in electoral districts with small African American

⁹ *Washington Post* 1/4/2004.

populations, African Americans' voting power would be even less if they turned out at lower rates. If African Americans dropped out of the political arena altogether, representatives would probably pay them even less attention. Finally, on issues they care about more than whites, voting by African Americans yields greater influence for this group. A drop in African American turnout therefore may not greatly affect African Americans' influence on many issues, but on issues that are important to African Americans, voting matters.

On the other hand, Latinos are rewarded for voting with greater influence on a wider range of policies. The many, ongoing efforts to naturalize, register, and mobilize Latinos contribute to advancing this group's influence in Washington.

Chapter 7

Figures and Tables

Figure 7.1: Predicted Probability of Being a Policy Winner, White and Latino Nonvoters and Voters, 2000

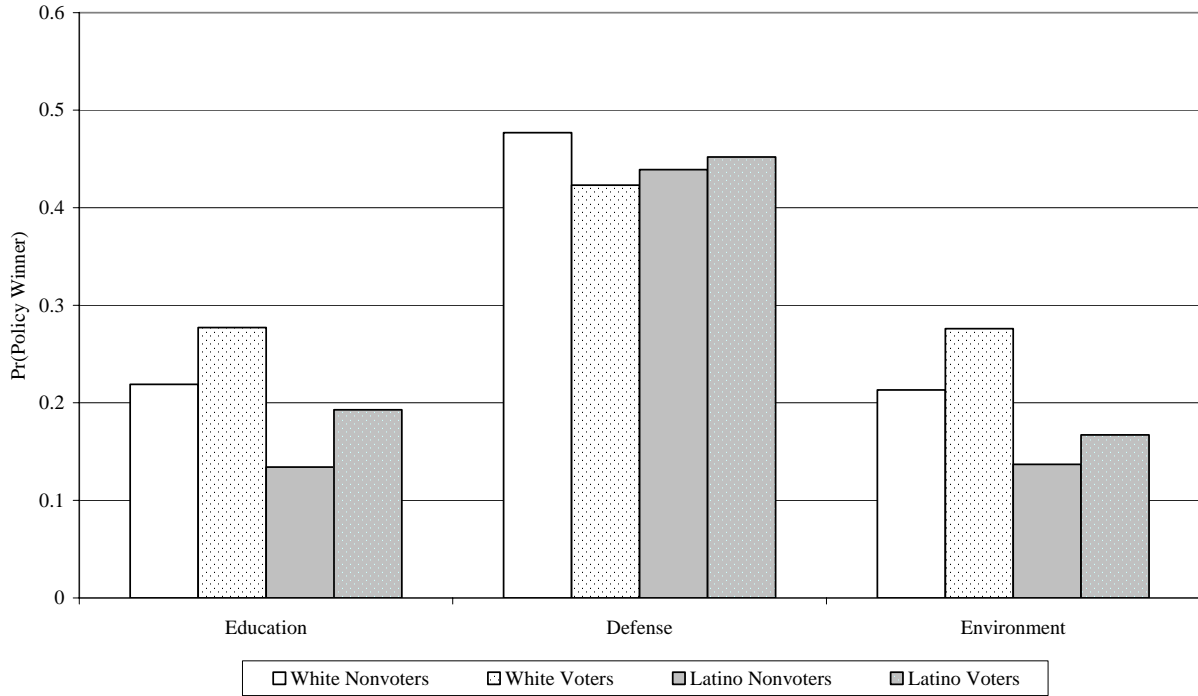


Figure 7.2: Predicted Ideological Proximity of African American Nonvoters and Voters, by District % African American

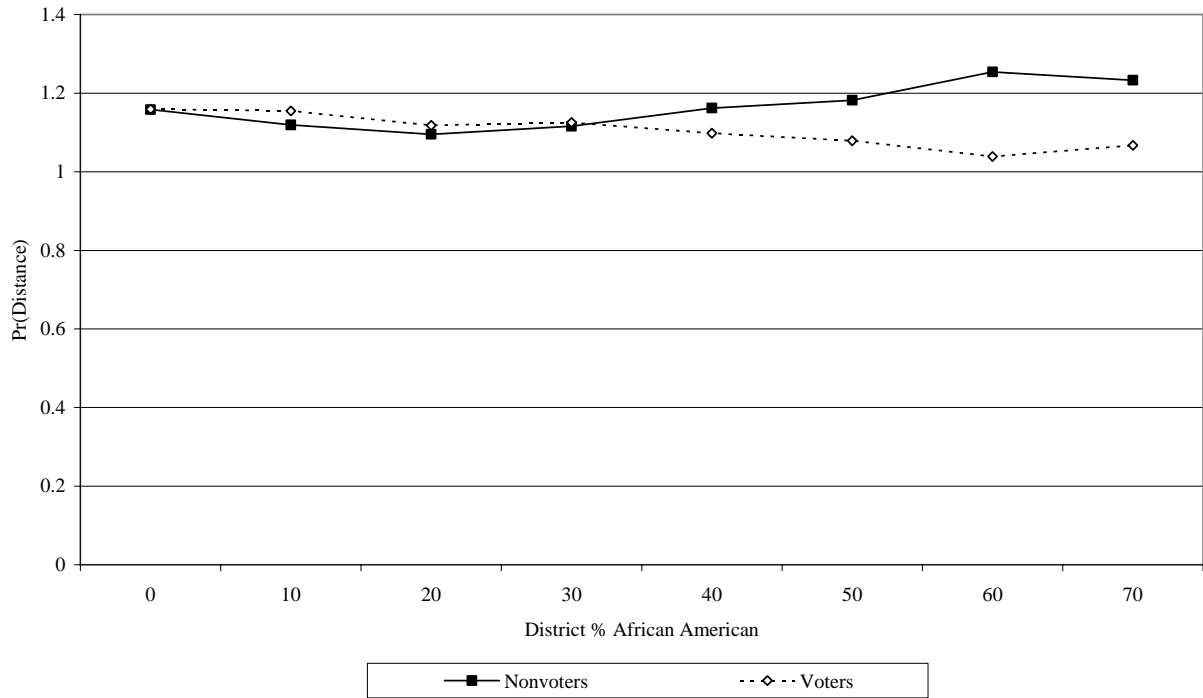


Figure 7.3: Predicted Distance of African American Nonvoters and Voters on LCCR Votes, by District % African American

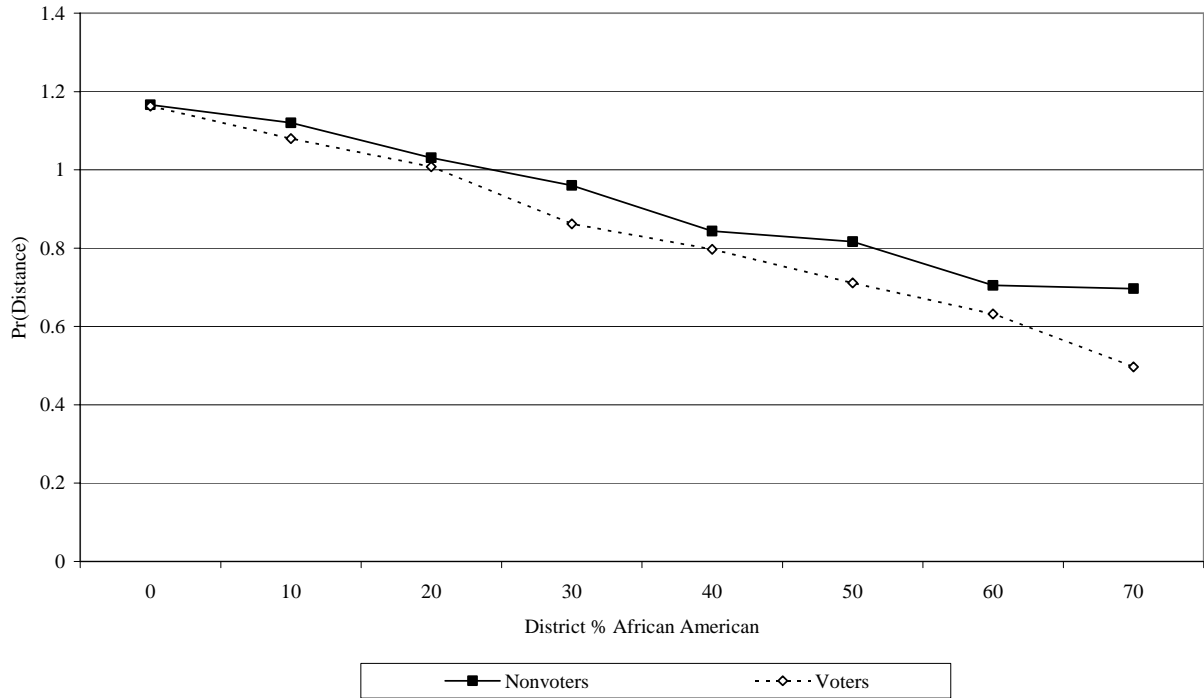


TABLE 7.1: RACE AND THE POLICY REWARDS OF VOTING, 1973-1995

(a) All GSS Respondents

	<i>Health Care</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Crime</i>	<i>Space Exploration</i>	<i>Defense</i>	<i>Aid to Cities</i>	<i>Environment</i>	<i>Foreign Aid</i>
Turnout	0.002 [0.018]	-0.046** [0.018]	-0.026 [0.019]	0.061** [0.018]	0.176** [0.018]	-0.022 [0.018]	0.031 [0.019]	0.029 [0.018]	0.052** [0.019]
Constant	-0.296** [0.015]	-0.255** [0.015]	-0.570** [0.015]	-0.305** [0.015]	-0.435** [0.015]	-0.148** [0.015]	-0.395** [0.016]	-0.421** [0.015]	-0.689** [0.016]
N	24,336	24,444	24,136	24,114	23,841	23,794	22,012	23,936	23,998

(b) African Americans

	<i>Health Care</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Crime</i>	<i>Space Exploration</i>	<i>Defense</i>	<i>Aid to Cities</i>	<i>Environment</i>	<i>Foreign Aid</i>
Turnout	-0.040 [0.047]	-0.054 [0.047]	0.045 [0.047]	0.075 [0.048]	-0.003 [0.053]	0.107* [0.048]	-0.112* [0.050]	0.038 [0.049]	0.013 [0.051]
Constant	-0.295** [0.037]	-0.368** [0.037]	-0.329** [0.037]	-0.471** [0.038]	-0.821** [0.042]	-0.369** [0.038]	-0.451** [0.039]	-0.553** [0.039]	-0.702** [0.041]
N	3,192	3,223	3,118	3,160	3,071	2,991	2,996	3,082	3,061

** denotes $p < .01$; * $p < .05$. Standard errors in brackets.

TABLE 7.2: RACE AND THE POLICY REWARDS OF VOTING, 2000

	<i>Whites</i>			<i>African Americans</i>			<i>Latinos</i>		
	Education	Defense	Environment	Education	Defense	Environment	Education	Defense	Environment
Turnout	0.185** [0.030]	-0.137** [0.017]	0.201** [0.030]	0.130 [0.105]	-0.016 [0.047]	0.031 [0.096]	0.237** [0.087]	0.032 [0.045]	0.128 [0.088]
Constant	-0.776** [0.026]	-0.057** [0.015]	-0.796** [0.026]	-1.372** [0.090]	-0.216** [0.039]	-1.176** [0.081]	-1.108** [0.062]	-0.151** [0.031]	-1.094** [0.062]
N	11,761	29,728	11,838	1,353	3,368	1,354	1,218	3,152	1,216

** denotes $p < .01$; * $p < .05$. Standard errors in brackets.

TABLE 7.3: RACE, VOTING, AND IDEOLOGICAL PROXIMITY

	<i>Whites</i>	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Latinos</i>	<i>Latinos</i>	<i>Latinos</i>
Turnout	-0.075** [0.011]	-0.045 [0.031]	0.055 [0.051]	0.058 [.051]	-0.040 [.032]	-0.016 [0.047]	-0.017
Turnout * Dist. % African American			-0.277 [0.147]	-0.286 [0.147]			
District % African American			0.126 [0.123]	-0.071 [0.163]			
African American MC				0.113 [0.061]			
Turnout * District % Latino					0.042 [0.139]	0.048 [0.139]	
District % Latino					-0.039 [0.096]	0.194 [0.133]	
Latino MC							-0.180* [0.071]
Household Income			-0.028** [0.008]	-0.029** [0.008]	-0.018* [0.008]	-0.018* [0.008]	
Constant	1.121** [0.009]	1.169** [0.026]	1.234** [0.051]	1.259** [0.053]	1.161** [0.020]	1.229** [0.043]	1.203** [0.044]
N	29,219	3,296	3,019	3,019	3,102	2,761	2,761

** p < .01; * p < .05. Standard errors in brackets.

TABLE 7.4: VOTING'S REWARDS ON SALIENT ISSUES

	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>African Americans</i>	<i>Latinos</i>	<i>Latinos</i>	<i>Latinos</i>	<i>Latinos</i>
Roll Call Domain	LCCR	LCCR	LCCR	NHLA Poverty	NHLA Education	NHLA Poverty	NHLA Education
Turnout	-0.075** [0.028]	0.035 [0.045]	0.026 [0.045]	-0.059 [0.032]	0.083* [0.041]	-0.101 [0.052]	0.042 [0.067]
Household Income		-0.006 [0.007]	-0.003 [0.007]			-0.004 [0.009]	0.020 [0.012]
Turnout* District % African American		-0.306* [0.130]	-0.287* [0.130]				
District % African American		-0.729** [0.109]	-0.276 [0.145]				
African American MC			-0.261** [0.055]				
Turnout* District % Latino						0.218 [0.146]	0.074 [0.191]
District % Latino						-0.365** [0.100]	-0.302* [0.130]
Constant	1.005** [0.023]	1.212** [0.045]	1.154** [0.047]	1.178** [0.021]	0.885** [0.028]	1.288** [0.047]	0.896** [0.061]
N	3,326	3,018	3,018	2,863	1,078	2,539	956

** p < .01. Standard errors in brackets.