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Black participation in Georgia's senate district 35 democratic primary election of 1984: a study of its political implications

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Black Participation in Georgia's Senate District 35 Democratic Primary Election of 1984: A Study of Its Political Implications.

Advisor: Dr. Brenda J. D. Rowe

Degree Paper dated April 20, 1985

Black voter participation has received considerable scholarly attention. Indeed, an important relationship exists between rates of political activity for blacks and the development of public policy by legislative bodies, elected officials, and governmental administrators. That is, ethnic affinity has long been an important symbolic component of American politics, and ethnic identification has often provided an incentive for otherwise inactive voters to vote for a representative of their ethnic community. The presence of a minority member on the ballot might be expected to increase minority group participation particularly when the candidate is running for an office such as state senator that is considered important. This study begins to address this paucity by exploring factors which influence blacks to participate in the political process, specifically the voting patterns of black registered voters as exemplified in both the primary and the run-off elections in the 35th State Senate District Democratic Primary in South Fulton County, Georgia.
Data from interviews with 561 black voters as they left the polls on election day, September 4, 1984, is used to explore what influences black voters to participate in the political process. A tentative analysis of white racial bloc voting patterns in the district will be explored. White racial bloc voting means that whites will vote only for white candidates, and that no matter what the qualifications of black candidates, there will be one or more white candidates who will attract nearly all of the white votes. Additionally, this study suggests that evidence from a growing body of research clearly indicates that black electoral participation influences the distribution of public benefits at the state and local levels.

The major findings of the study are as follows:

1. The State Senate District 35 exhibited a pattern of racial bloc voting; and

2. A surprisingly high degree of political participation by black voters was exhibited during the election(s).
BLACK PARTICIPATION IN GEORGIA'S SENATE DISTRICT 35
DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY ELECTION OF 1984:
A STUDY OF ITS POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

A DEGREE PAPER SUBMITTED
TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

BY

Josephat Inambao Sinvula

ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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I. INTRODUCTION

Black Americans have pursued very few goals as vigorously or as persistently as they have that of winning the right to participate fully in the political life of the country. Blacks focus on the right to vote for at least three reasons. First, political participation is a fundamental tenet of the democratic process. The concept of democracy, as envisioned by the authors of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence, requires overt participation by all citizens. Second, because black subordination and exploitation were reflected and facilitated by their exclusion from the political process, blacks viewed political participation as an immensely important symbol of progress toward full equality. Third, and most important, blacks very early came to believe that by their political participation they could influence government to act so as to improve their social and economic status. Political participation is manifested in a number of activities including campaigning, running for office, contributing to political organizations, and voting. Since most of these activities require a substantial degree of effort, major focus is on voting as it appears to be the least time consuming and subsequently most often favored by voters.1

Thus, this study focuses on one of the several

modes of political participation, electoral participation by which we mean voting and holding public office.

The 35th State Senate District election was chosen for study because it involved a black candidate challenging a white incumbent in a district in which blacks had become the majority after the 1981 redistricting plan by the Georgia Legislature and where there is considerable racial and partisan competition. Black voter participation is a convenient focus because (1) it is easily observed and measured, (2) it is the most prominent type of routine political participation, and (3) in recent years it has become especially important to blacks because protest demonstrations and other group activities have subsided.

Political scientists have conducted extensive research on the rate of political participation among various groups. One of the most popularly held theories holds concludes that the rate of political participation can be tied directly to the socio-economic status of individuals. Socio-economic status (SES) is determined by such factors as income, occupation, and education. Studies of the correlation between SES and voting patterns have shown that those individuals at the higher SES level tend to vote more frequently than those at the lower SES level. The SES theory was felt to be the most valid explanation of voting behavior. Based upon this theory research on minority group behavior, it was felt, would continue to

\[^{2}\text{Ibid., p. 150.}\]
support the SES hypothesis. This proved not to be the case, however, as research on the voting behavior of blacks did not support the SES theory. In the South, in particular, where both median educational levels and median income are well below the national average, turnout has been high. In fact, the level of participation has continued to increase while for the rest of the nation, it is declining. Thus, the criteria of education and income are not adequate for predicting whether the black citizen is likely to register and vote.

The significance of this research cannot be understated. The supposedly political inactivity of blacks had been tied to their low socio-economic status. Little attention had been given to other external and systematic barriers that might provide alternative explanations. For example, an important relationship exists between academic research and the development of public policy by legislative bodies, elected officials, and governmental administrators. If the low rate of political activity for blacks is tied to their low economic status solely, rather than to those external and systematic factors such as election laws, the structuring of political


districts and blatant acts of discrimination, the policy emphasis (or lack of) will be directed accordingly.

Studies have found that organizational and political activities serve as buffers from the racism and lack of power groups excluded from the mainstream of American life experience. These studies suggest that while SES may be a valid determinant of voting behavior for the general public, feelings of ethnicity and group consciousness among blacks appear to overcome low economic status and in fact provide an incentive for political activity. Elected and appointed officials are clearly influenced by the degree of clout held by groups within their jurisdictions. Moreover, the availability and potential of a significant black voting bloc seems to offer a reliable explanation for increases in black municipal employment. Of course, the relationship between political participation and the distribution of benefits by government is not simple and direct and therefore extremely difficult to document or measure. One reason for this difficulty is that the most common form of political participation, voting, usually allows little more than the expression of support for or opposition to broad


policy positions or individual candidates. It does not usually permit the expression of specific interests. Another is that policy decisions by government are usually products of a variety of often competing demands or pressures, making it difficult to observe the impact of a specific demand on a final decision. However, the growing body of literature on the implications of black electoral participation, for convenience, can be reviewed in terms of three broad approaches to influence. The first explores the extent to which black electoral participation affects local decision-making generally. The second focuses on a single type of benefit—employment. The third type looks for change in policy priorities reflected in expenditure patterns. Together they yield some important common findings and raise a number of new questions that suggest the need for further investigation.
II. THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

A. Agency and Unit Description

The author served as a research intern at the Voter Education Project, Inc. (VEP), Atlanta, Georgia, from July to December 1984. Created in 1962 as a special project of the Southern Regional Council, VEP was designed to seek out the causes and find remedies for low political participation of southern blacks. VEP is a non-profit, tax-exempt, private corporation which conducts a non-partisan program directed toward assisting minority political participation in eleven southern states. These include: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisianna, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. In 1970, VEP became an independent incorporated organization with its primary objective as developing informed, responsible active voters. (See Appendix A.)

VEP provides grants and technical assistance to non-partisan organizations to support voter registration drives and voter education activities. Voter education activities include the publication of studies and reports on pertinent public policy issues, rallies, workshops, conferences and forums in all the eleven states. These activities are needed because many voters lack sufficient information to make skillful decisions relative to candidates and issues to be considered. Some are not aware of their rights and a great number fail to understand their potential impact on local
appointed positions and issues of referendum. Also, they are unable to relate political participation to an improved quality of living. Thus, grants and or technical assistance are provided to local groups and national organizations to assist in reaching VEP's goals.

**Internship Experience**

The author participated fully in the activities of the organization, interacted with black voters, and attended and participated in meetings. Assignments included compilation of statistics, tabulation of voter registration figures and the analysis of 1984 Presidential election returns for Georgia, Arkansas, and Louisiana. The internship provided some useful insights in organizational dynamics and the various levels of government in which blacks participate in large numbers. Indeed, the mandates set forth by the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the subsequent work of the Voter Education Project, are a necessary and vital link to ensuring that the fundamentals of participatory democracy are fully realized for blacks. The author also noticed the limitations and constraints that are placed on the organization. As a result of observing the diversity of organizational interactions, the sometimes seemingly conflict of purpose and the translation of power and authority, the internship experience has re-enforced the author's understanding of the dynamics of public administration.
B. Definition of the Problem: Full Access to the Electoral Process for Blacks

At the turn of the twentieth century 8.1 per cent of blacks in Georgia were registered to vote, and fewer than one per cent of Georgia's elected officials were black. In the 35th Senate District of Georgia, low voter registration among blacks was accompanied by low socio-economic status and serve as legal barriers to full electoral and political participation. Prior to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA), full access to the electoral process was limited for blacks. The district has a long and ugly history of denying blacks the right to vote. The tactics used to achieve this included blatant discrimination, threats, physical violence and the application of illegal electoral procedures. Government intervention via the Act put an end to these tactics, yet, other supposedly "legal" measures were then employed.

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The Voting Rights Act was enacted on August 7, 1965, and was amended in 1970 and 1975. The act contains general provisions which prohibit voting qualifications or procedures that would deny or abridge a person's right to vote because of race, color, or inclusion in a minority language group. Section 202 of the Act is another general provision, which abolishes durational residency requirements as a precondition to voting. Similarly, Section 3 permits private parties, such as the Attorney General of the United States, to file suit to enforce voting guarantees of the 14th and 15th amendments. Section 201 of the Act prohibits the use of tests or devices in voting.
These included gerrymandering, reapportionment, redistricting, and requiring candidates to run for at-large offices.

Passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was not easily accomplished. A long and impressive list of civil rights organizations, elected officials, educators, union officials, and governmental administrators provided unquestionable testimony to support passage of the Act.

During its twenty-three year history, VEP has assisted in the registration and electoral education of over four and one-half million black voters. VEP has provided direct assistance to approximately 2,900 voter registration drives throughout the South.\textsuperscript{10} These statistics, while encouraging, do not however reflect a true picture. Thus, VEP more recently has focused on the need to spotlight the alarming gap between registration rates and voter turnout. Indeed, while legal actions such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the 24th amendment\textsuperscript{11} removed most of the barriers to registration and voting, they did not lead to a dramatic rise in voter participation, especially among blacks. In fact, voter participation among blacks was lower in 1976 than it was in 1960. For example, in the 1960 Presidential election, one-third of the


\textsuperscript{11}The 24th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution was ratified in 1964. It eliminated the poll tax as a qualification for voting.
voting age population did not vote. This trend in voter participation was seen again in the 1980 Presidential election.

Several analysts have maintained that the most powerful political resource available to blacks is the voting strength of the group. As approximately eleven per cent of the national electorate and by far the most cohesive of the racial or ethnic groups in that electorate, blacks indeed have the potential for formidable political power. Moreover, their strategic location in several large states and in large metropolitan areas seems to further enhance this power in national elections as well as in the several major localities where they are concentrated in large numbers.

Although size, cohesiveness, and strategic location of the black vote confer the potential for considerable influence, the level and character of that vote and the conditions under which it occurs, determine the actual capacity for influencing the outcome of elections and the performance of government. Available evidence suggests that the black vote is seriously and persistently underused. Moreover, specific characteristics of black political behavior as well as structural and procedural features of the political system tend to undermine the effectiveness of that vote.12

12 The most striking fact about the level of black voting reported by the Census Bureau is that in 1980 it was 7 percentage points below the level of 1964. This decline had occurred even though the Voting Rights Act of 1965 paved the way for millions of Southern blacks to enter the electorate.
Black Political Power: Myth or Reality

Fulton County, Georgia, is a major southern jurisdiction that has always had a substantial black population. Blacks have been active in the formal institutional politics of the county in varying degrees since reconstruction. However, in 1908 the Georgia State Legislature passed a law which prevented blacks from participating in all elections except for "general and special elections". This in effect made black participation inconsequential since the real choices were made in the infamous "white primaries".13

Historically, there has been some political activity in the black community since as far back as 1868. Before the white primary was adopted in 1891 and after it was repealed before readoption in 1897, some black voters participated in municipal elections.

The level of education for blacks has been increasing, and there are signs of an increase in the size of the black middle class— all developments that should have produced a substantial increase in the level of black voting.

13White primaries were those primary elections in which only whites were allowed to vote. In essence, only whites could vote for a candidate into elective office, for example. In 1944 the Supreme Court ruled the white primary unconstitutional in the Texas case of Smith v. Allwright. In 1945, the Georgia poll tax was repealed. The most crucial event, however, was the Supreme Court decision in 1946 in the case of Chapman v. King which rendered the white primary in Georgia unconstitutional.
In recent years Fulton County, because of its black majority population, has been described as a potential mecca for black people. Such a description leads one to the conclusion that black Fulton County residents can achieve their goals in the political, social, and economic arena. This conclusion, however, is not necessarily accurate because, as Wilson points out, "the structure and style of Negro politics reflects the politics of the County as a whole." Indeed, much of the literature on black political power will simply list the number of black voters or office holders and suggest that they automatically demonstrate a certain level of political power.

Jones points out, however, that:

Voting, holding office, favorable population distribution, economic wealth and so on, may be bases or sources of power; but they are only that—potential sources of power. In themselves, they are passive and inert. They may be converted into real power to bear upon a party who must be persuaded to act in a given way.

Thus, voting in itself is not power; having a black majority in itself is not power; nor is having black elected and appointed officials power

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These sources become power only when appropriate means are available for harnessing and bringing them to bear upon the behavior of other actors—principally white individuals and groups.17

Dahl points out that this conception of power (which translates into black political participation) presents some methodological problems. The major difficulty lies in the fact that inasmuch as the parties to be influenced will likely differ from issue to issue, and as a consequence, so would the relevant bases of potential power, each issue would have an independent power calculus. However, such methodological purity may not be absolutely necessary at this point. We might assume with some degree of confidence that the over-arching socio-politico-economic problems of blacks in a given setting can be aggregated into fairly broad categories and that we can identify parties in the white community who must be influenced in a particular direction if specific policy alternatives are to be adopted. If we accept these assumptions, we can then inventory the available sources of potential power. The actual power exercised by the black community would be reflected in the extent to which the white target groups supported policy alternatives consistent with black goals.18

Despite its methodological impurities, this conception of power would raise the discussion above the level of

17Ibid., p. 24.

symbolism. Black political power would not be discussed in terms of "moderation, good race relations" and so on, but rather, in terms of the enactment of specific policy choices. Put another way, it would allow us to distinguish between the myth of black political power and the actual exercise of such power.¹⁹

Holding elective office is another major type of electoral activity upon which the study briefly focuses. In any hierarchy of participatory activities, it ranks at the very top. For blacks, winning elective office has been a deep and longstanding aspiration. It has had considerable symbolic value and, even more important, it offers an especially valuable opportunity to influence public policy, particularly the distribution of benefits.

To a great extent, the black elected official provides the principal link between the black vote and the distribution of benefits. Black elected officials are the products of black votes and in many respects are the focus of black expectations for a more responsive government. The increase in recent years of the number and variety of elective offices in the United States is directly linked to the growth and geographical distribution of the black electorate. The emergence of the big city black mayor in the mid-1960s, for example, was primarily the result of changes in the racial composition of the cities

¹⁹Ibid., p. 4.
involved. Whether as members of Congress, state senator, mayor, city council members, or law enforcement officials, with few exceptions black elected officials come from majority black constituencies.\textsuperscript{20}

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of literature on southern black politics advances various explanations which might account for the differential development of black political participation. Indeed, for black Americans, especially those in the south, involvement in the electoral (and or political) process was severely limited until the late 1960s.

According to Verba and Nie, political participation is "a means by which social and economic inequalities can be reduced."21 Thus, to these writers, black consciousness is an awareness among blacks of their shared status as an unjustly oppressed group. They also found that blacks with a high sense of group consciousness participate in politics at rates higher than their socio-economic status would predict.22

Noting, however, that the theoretical argument advanced by Verba and Nie was inadequate, Shingles identified several questions, which, when answered, would provide greater understanding of black political participation. According to Shingles, there are basically three unanswered questions in Verba and Nie's analysis of black consciousness and political participation: (1) Under what conditions does black consciousness contribute to collective political action?; (2) What are the participatory norms that have

21Sidney Verba and Norman Nie, pp. 160-164.
22Ibid., pp. 160-161.
Shingles advanced the hypothesis that black consciousness contributes to the combination of a sense of political efficacy and political mistrust which, in turn, induces political involvement. However, the combination of high internal efficacy and mistrust were found to contribute to policy-related involvement. He generally found that poor blacks' high cynicism and or internal efficacy encourage policy behavior rather than allegiant behavior.

Shingles found, however, that "the people most likely to vote are those who have a high sense of trust and little sense of internal efficacy". Yet, he does not resolve the question of under what conditions voting is allegiant rather than policy behavior, irrespective of the interactive effects among cynicism, mistrust, and efficacy. Specifying the condition under which voting is one or the other and or both seems crucial to understanding the class implication of black political participation.

Researchers are generally in agreement, however, that two factors can be utilized to predict voting behavior, educational and income levels. Utilizing both U.S. Bureau of Census data along with University of Michigan Election Studies, Wolfinger and Rosenstone determined that education

23Richard D. Shingles, p. 89.
24Ibid., p. 90.
appeared to be the key variable in determining voter turnout. Specifically, they reported that as one's educational level increases, so does the likelihood that an individual will participate in the electoral process. This relationship is depicted in Table 1.

TABLE 1
EDUCATION AND TURNOUT

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<th>EDUCATION</th>
<th>PER CENT</th>
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<tr>
<td>Less than 5 years of school</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Degree</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>91%</td>
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Similarly, utilizing occupation as an indication of income, Wolfinger and Rosenstone determined that persons in higher status occupations were more likely to vote than those at the lower end of the spectrum. Table 2 depicts this occupational breakdown.

As may be discerned from Table 2, the correlation between occupation and turnout is not as strong as was the case of education and turnout. It is evident, however, that whatever the nature of the occupation, professional managers/owners vote in substantially larger percentages than individuals in positions requiring significantly less formalized education. It is postulated, that blacks defy political participation norms. In the South in particular, where both median educational levels and median income are well below the national average, turnout has been high.26 In fact, the

level of participation has continued to increase, while for the rest of the nation, it is declining. Thus, the criteria of education and income are not adequate for predicting whether the black citizen is likely to register and vote.

In utilizing the criterion of age, the typical "American" voter (approximately 75 per cent) is likely to be over thirty. It is assumed, based on numerous research studies, that individuals in the younger age categories are likely to be more transient and, therefore refrain from participating in the political process. In fact, according to Pomper, citizens under age thirty "are relatively uninterested in electoral activities".

The appropriate question at this point is where does the young black voter fit on the electoral spectrum? The paucity of research in this area provides no conclusive findings. It might be assumed that young persons - black and white - exhibit similar electoral behavior. Because the black electorate has a disproportionate percentage of voters age 18-26, however, their potential impact on black electoral participation is great.

27 Samuel Patterson and Gregory A. Caldeira, p. 678.
28 Wolfinger and Rosenstone, p. 106.
29 Ibid., p. 105.
For the electoral participant, reasons are given, such as degree of interest in election, cost of voting, civic duty, sense of political efficacy, and personal perceptions. Interest in a given election is largely determined by whether both the candidates and issues are studied so that the voter is able to make an intelligent decision in the voting booth. The assumption is that those in the upper educational spectrum are most likely to engage in this activity.

The ability to cast one's vote with relative ease is considered an incentive to participate in the electoral process. In some states, the process is made easier through such means as election day registration, Saturday elections, registration by mail, and shortened residency requirements. There is evidence to support the generalization that, with the relaxation of election laws, turnout increases.

Wolfinger and Rosenstone point out that, "few people are brought to the polls by the belief that their vote will make the difference between a candidate's victory and defeat." Specifically, these scholars lament that the most important benefit from participating in the electoral and


33Wolfinger and Rosenstone, pp. 10-15.
political process is the "feeling that one has done one's duty to society, to a reference group (Democrats, Blacks, etc.) and to oneself; or that one has affirmed one's allegiance to or efficacy in the political system.34

Level of interest in the election as pointed out, is considered to be an important factor in electoral and or political participation. As one's interest heightens, the greater the probability that one will vote in a given election. Hamilton's research revealed that blacks did not vote in large numbers when incentives were lacking but when the issues mattered to them, the elections were competitive and ethnicity is symbolically important, black participation greatly increased.35

For blacks in the south, voting is said to be related to the "first important right, the security of life".36 In essence, by participating in the political process, there are likely to be positive changes toward equal justice as well as social equality. In this regard, it has been reported that as black voting has increased, reports of inequitable judicial treatment decreases.37

34Ibid., p. 18.


37Ibid., p. 290.
Possibly the best means of coming to grips with electoral and or political participation is to explore reasons why citizens fail to participate. Based on interviews with 2,006 persons (100 in-depth) on the day of the 1976 Presidential election, Hadley, in what is possibly the most definitive study on this subject, classified non-voters in the following categories:38

1. **Positive Apathetics** (35%). These people are happy, educated, and well-off. They are not miserable or dissatisfied, yet they do not vote.

2. **By passed** (13%). Those of low education and low income who have missed out on most of what America has to offer. They are hardcore refrainers, not likely to vote under most circumstances.

3. **Politically Impotent** (22%). People in this category feel that nothing they can do will affect their government. They are not necessarily hostile towards government, and they are not notably low in education and income.

4. **Physically Disenfranchised** (18%). These individuals could not vote for physical or legal reasons. Many said they were in bad health or could not meet the residency requirements.

5. **Naysayers** (6%). Refraining is a conscious choice for these non-voters— even an act of defiance. They are assertive and willing to explain their various reasons at length.

6. **Cross-Pressed** (5%). Persons in this category have political information and want to vote but cannot make up their minds.

Division of non-voters into these six categories provides greater insight into specific reasons why citizens in general

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38Arthur T. Hadley, p. 18.
fail to participate in the electoral (and or political) process. As noted, at least one-third of these individuals are well educated and above the poverty level. These findings provide support for the contention that non-voters are found in all educational/economic strata. At the other end of the spectrum, we find only slightly more than thirty-five per cent of the non-voters. These individuals are poverty stricken and uneducated and neither see any benefit from participating, nor feel that the whole process is useless. As expected, physical ailments prevent about twenty per cent from participating. Defiant as well as undecided citizens make up slightly more than ten per cent of the total group. Lastly, we find that only six per cent of non-voters use this as a means of protest whereas five per cent are confused as to who or what issues to support.

In general then, we expect positive attitudes toward voting among citizens who are both educated and uneducated, wealthy and poor. We should however, find that the better educated and the economically well-off vote in greater numbers. Key variables which must also be juxtaposed with those mentioned above are how well-informed are the prospective voters and what are their perceptions of the benefit to be accrued from voting? In the final analysis, we can expect positive attitudes toward voting among citizens who are educated, economically stable, relatively well-informed, and who perceive that the act of voting will result in some positive benefit.
All of the major studies of the relationship between black electoral participation and the distribution of public benefits suggest that electoral participation does indeed make a difference, but the difference is limited. The most extensive examination of this relationship was done by Keech more than a decade ago based on case studies of Tuskegee Alabama, and Durham, North Carolina. Keech found that black electoral participation brought about changes in the outcome of elections in the distribution of public services, including garbage collection, street paving, recreational facilities, and fire stations in the employment of blacks by the city governments and in eliminating some forms of discriminations. Keech reported of Tuskegee that "Negroes brought a radical change in the distribution of public services, including garbage collection, street paving and recreational facilities. Negroes were hired for the first time to municipal service positions and appointed to boards and commissions. .."\textsuperscript{39}

In a recent study of the distribution of benefits in Chicago, four broad areas of service delivery were examined to determine what forces influenced distributional decisions. Here, the focus was not on the impact of black electoral participation. It is noteworthy that the study reported evidence of the effects of blacks on some of these

distributional decisions, but in most areas examined political influence was not the primary influence on decisions about the distribution of benefits. It is stated that "the data strongly suggest that local officials respond to black demands and protests by providing black neighborhoods with a greater share of available resources. Black wards primarily gained swimming pools, athletic fields, and playgrounds." In general, the study concluded that the distribution of benefits was not generally the result of rational political calculation but was "largely a function of past decisions, population shifts, technological changes and reliance upon technological - rationale criteria, and professional values."

Several studies examine the impact of electoral participation on benefits to blacks in the area of public employment. Jobs are among the most obvious and measurable benefits at the disposal of governments control a rapidly growing share of the employment opportunities available in any locality. Therefore, jobs as political rewards remain a special concern for blacks.

In his classic study of blacks in Chicago politics, Gosnell's discussion of the effects of black politics centered mainly on the employment benefits that resulted from black

---


41 Ibid., p. 999.
support of the city's political machine. Concluding that "participation in politics has brought a certain number of more or less desirable jobs to the group," Gosnell suggested that jobs such as those in the postal service were "less the results of specific political pressures than the product of the general participation of Negroes in state and local politics".  

Source: Secretary of State's Election Division, Atlanta, Georgia.
IV. METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

Primary and secondary data collection techniques were utilized to gather relevant data for the study. These primary data collection techniques were:

(1) Interviews/Survey
(2) Participant Observation

The primary purpose of the interviews was to talk to black voters generally about the degree of voter participation and to ascertain their feelings about certain political participation variables. Participant observation involved a direct observation and notation of first-hand information obtained during the internship.

The secondary data for the study was obtained from VEP publications and documents as well as journals and books on the subject.

The hypotheses of this study are:

(1) Bloc voting patterns are a function of race in the State Senate District 35 election.

(2) The degree of voter participation by black voters (exhibited during the election(s)) determines the margin of victory for (the) black candidate.

To test the stated hypotheses, three (3) methodological considerations were utilized:

(1) Determination of black and white voters
(2) Establishment of a black bloc vote and white bloc vote
(3) Analysis of exit poll of black voters in the 35th District conducted on September 4, 1984. The survey addressed factors which foster black political participation. (See Figure 1.)
Voting precincts were utilized as the basic unit of analysis in determining black voters and white voters. An updated list of registered voters in the district was obtained from the Fulton County Board of Registration and Elections. All precincts in which 90 per cent or more of registered voters were black or white, were used. Such majority black and white precincts were identified by dividing the total number of black registered voters or white registered voters in a specific precinct by the total number of registered voters in that precinct. Majority is, therefore, defined as a precinct with 90 per cent or more black or white registered voters. Precincts selected using the 90 per cent criterion were used to: (1) compare registration and turnout of black and white voters; and (2) to determine what percentage of the vote candidates received in the election analyzed from the various population groups.

The existence of the political phenomenon commonly labelled "bloc voting" was tested based on the solidarity of voting returns in the black community and the white community. All candidates receiving 75 per cent or more of the black bloc vote were considered as having received the black bloc vote. The same criterion of 75 per cent was applied to the whites to determine if this segment of the community voted homogeneously. Seventy-five (75) per cent was selected as the crucial percentage because it leaves no ambiguity as to where support is directed.
A total of 561 black voters were interviewed as they left the polls on September 4, 1984 in the thirty-eight precincts which make up Senate District 35 as Figure 2 depicts below:

**FIGURE 2**

*PRECINCT MAP OF STATE
SENATE DISTRICT 35*

*Source Map designed and drawn by author from data supplied by Secretary of State's Election Division.

Table 3 presents a depiction of the sample population. Thirty-seven (37) per cent of the respondents were selected in Atlanta, 35 per cent in East Point, 14 per cent in College Park, 4 per cent in Hapeville, and 10 per cent in south county areas in Fulton County, Georgia.
### Table 3

#### Depiction of the Sample of Population

**N = 561**

**Educational Level of Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of Total Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 or less years of education</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-12 years of education</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college education</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Income Level of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Level</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of Total Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incomes less than $5,000.00</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomes in the $5,000-$10,000</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomes over $15,000.00</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Age Level of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Level</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of Total Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 - 25 years of age</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 - 34 years of age</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 54 years of age</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 - 70 years of age</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Marital Status of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of Total Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed or Divorced</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Number of Dependent Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Dependent Children</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of Total Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Dependent Children</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Dependent Child</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Dependent Children</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Dependent Children</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were interviewed in these areas located in South Fulton County. North Fulton localities were not part of this survey. Respondents were randomly selected using every third person exiting the voting sites in these four (4) cities.

Approximately 50.1 per cent of the respondents were women, whereas 49.9 per cent were men. Additionally, 96 per cent of the respondents were classified as Democrats and 4 per cent as Republicans.

Over half (59%) of the black respondents had some college education while 37 per cent had six to twelve years of education and 4 per cent had five years of education or less. The median education level of all respondents was 13.91 or at least one year of college.

Approximately 41 per cent of the respondents had incomes of less than $5,000.00 while 17 per cent received incomes in the $5,000.00-10,000.00 range. Twenty-eight (28) per cent of the respondents received incomes of over $15,000.00. The median income of survey respondents was $7,711.00.

The respondents were fairly distributed through the age categories with 29 per cent in the 26-34 and 35-54 years of age, respectively; 25 per cent were younger, 18-25 years and 17 per cent were in the 55-70 age category. Average age of respondents was 38 years while median age was 36.

Less than half (46%) of the respondents had no dependent children while 24 per cent had one child and 20 per cent and 11 per cent had two and three dependent children, respectively.
V. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

General Overview of Georgia's Senate District 35

Senate District 35 is one of seven black majority senatorial districts in the State of Georgia. It has the fifth largest percentage black population among the black majority senate districts. Blacks comprise nearly 56 per cent of the population. There are 74,696 registered voters in the district of whom 27,258 or 57.2 per cent are black.

In the primary election, an estimated 14,151 of the registrants in the district went to the polls. Approximately 32.6 per cent of the white registrants went to the polls whereas 27.2 per cent of the black registrants did so. Nearly 13,149 or 27.6 per cent of them actually voted for the three candidates, two of whom were black and one white. A total of 1,002 or 7.2 per cent of the registrants had their votes nullified either for not indicating their choices of candidates or choosing more than one candidate. (See Table 10.)

The General Election of August 14, 1984 in District 35.

In the first primary Arthur Langford, Jr., a civil rights activist, was the leading black candidate with 5,804 or 44.1 per cent of the popular votes; Frank E. Coggin - the white incumbent and former Mayor of Hapeville, who had represented the district for fourteen years - received 5,535 or 42.1 per cent of the popular votes. The third candidate, Holman Edmond, a black veteran of the United States Armed Forces, received
1,820 or 13.8 per cent of the votes. The two leading candidates received overwhelming support from their constituencies. Coggin received 87.3 per cent of the white vote and 8.2 per cent of the black vote. Langford, on the other hand, received 68.3 per cent of the black vote and 6.7 per cent of the white vote. These results are depicted in Table 4.

The Run-off Election of September 4, 1984 in District 35.

In the run-off election, nearly 22.3 per cent of the black registrants and 26.7 per cent of the white registrants actually voted. An estimated 10,961 or 23 percent of the registrants in the district went to the polls. About 10,729 or 22.5 per cent actually voted for the two candidates in the run-off election.

As indicated, racial bloc voting had a profound effect on the voting patterns in the district, and the extent to which bloc voting was practiced by the black community as well as the white community is exhibited in Table 4.

White voters casted their ballots solidly behind the white candidate, who amassed 93.3 per cent of the white vote. The black candidate received 90.2 per cent of the black vote.
TABLE 4

COMPARISON OF VOTES RECEIVED IN PREDOMINANTLY (90% OR MORE) BLACK AND WHITE PRECINCTS IN THE GENERAL & RUN-OFF ELECTIONS\(^a\)
(In Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRECINCTS</th>
<th>% BLACK</th>
<th>% WHITE</th>
<th>F. COGGIN</th>
<th>H. FEUD</th>
<th>A. LANSFORD JR.</th>
<th>TURNOVER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.I. Fickett School</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>90.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112-Ben Hill Comm. House</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>71.1</td>
<td>88.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11F-Fickett School Dual</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>95.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11F-Continental Colony Elem 95</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11H-Kimberly School</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>88.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11N-Therrell High School</td>
<td>93.</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>67.2</td>
<td>89.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Point: EP14</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>92.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>96.0</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>90.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Park: CP 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP 2</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>95.7</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Point: EP 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP 4</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>88.0</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP 8</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>91.8</td>
<td>95.6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hapeville: HP 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP 2</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>92.5</td>
<td>96.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP 3</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>84.5</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>96.5</td>
<td>87.3</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculated by the author from data supplied by the State Board of Elections.

\(^a\)Georgia is one of nine states that nominates candidates for public office on the basis of a majority rather than a plurality rule (Key, 1949, p. 417; 1964, p. 384). Under the majority system, a successful candidate must achieve an absolute majority in the first primary. If no one attracts at least 50% of the vote, the top two candidates face each other in a second or a run-off primary. Run-offs were instituted following the demise of two-party competition. With all serious candidates competing in the Democratic party primary, it became possible to win a plurality with a relatively small fraction of the vote.

\(^b\)The alphabetical letters identify Atlanta precincts by precinct names: CP=College Park, EP=East Point, HP=Hapeville.
Political Participation Variables: Factors that Influenced Registration and the Perception by Blacks of the Benefits from Voting

A surprisingly high degree of political participation by black voters was evident in the run-off election. There was nearly a 30 per cent net increase in black registered voters who cast their ballots in the election as compared to only 6 per cent of the white voters. This high degree of political participation is exhibited in Table 5 below:

TABLE 5

A RANKING OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN SELECTED ACTIVITIES BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Number Participating</th>
<th>% of Total Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attended Political Dinners</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributed Money to Candidates</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacted Public Officials about Problems</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joined Political Organizations</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked in Registration Campaign</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked in Political Campaign</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Political Activity</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Over forty-one per cent had attended political dinners and thirty-five per cent contributed to political campaigns. Almost a third (32%) indicated that they had contacted public affairs to obtain help when they had encountered problems and thirty per cent were members of political organizations.
An important purpose of this study was to identify factors which influence black voters to become registered voters. Table 6 contains these factors ranked according to the frequency mentioned by respondents as a factor in their becoming registered. The most frequently mentioned factor was local political activist/education groups at 28 per cent with church (17%), the Jesse Jackson Campaign (17%), school (15%), and family influences (14%).

Difficulty in becoming registered was mentioned by only 9 per cent of the respondents with lack of transportation to registration site being given as a problem by 4 per cent.

Approximately 17 per cent of the respondents were voting for the first time on September 4, 1984. When asked why they voted this particular time, the most frequent reason given by

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Number (N=561)</th>
<th>% Of Total Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Political Group</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Group</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesse Jackson Campaign</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Group</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Duty</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Decision of Register</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right as Citizen to Register</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

first time voters was to remove Coggin from office. Jesse Jackson's campaign had negligible influence.

Over three-fourths (79%) of the respondents in this survey reported that they vote everytime an election is held. Five per cent voted only in national elections and less than one per cent each voted only in local and state elections.

When asked to name the benefits they received from voting and ranked by frequency mentioned, "right to choose public officials," and "self worth/esteem," were still the most frequent choices given as benefits received from voting with 31 per cent and 30 per cent of the respondents, respectively. (See Table 7.)

### TABLE 7

TOTAL RANKING OF BENEFITS FROM VOTING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Number (N=561)</th>
<th>% Of Total Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Right to Choose Public Officials</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Worth/Self Esteem</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right to Speak Out on Issues</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice In Future</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing My Share</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Better Conditions</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expects Candidate to Deliver On</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign Promises</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks Have Equal Choice</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Almost three-fourths (74%) of the respondents believed that elected officials do listen to citizens and 32 per cent believed that writing letters or personally contacting public officials is the way to influence them. Another 27 per cent
believed that voting is the way officials are influenced. Other means of influencing public officials are shown in Table 8 below:

**TABLE 8**

WAYS OF INFLUENCING ELECTED OFFICIALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways</th>
<th>Number (N=561)</th>
<th>% Of Total Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write Letters/Personal Contact</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak Out/Make Voice Heard</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending Meetings</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forming Active Groups</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Not Re-elect</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**TABLE 9**

POLITICAL ACTIVITY SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Activities Participated in</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>33.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>17.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>13.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>13.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>8.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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As a measure of the degree of political activity of the respondents, the number of "yes" responses to items 16-22 were summed in a political activity scale (See Questionnaire,
Appendix B.) Positive responses to 0-2 items were deemed "low activity"; 3-5 items, "moderate activity"; and 6-7 items were considered "high activity". A frequency distribution of the political activity scale is shown in Table 9 above.

When grouped in low, moderate and high activity, 65 per cent, 28 per cent and 7 per cent were low, moderate, and high, respectively.

Of those respondents with high political activity, 73 per cent had been registered voters for more than 10 years and 27 per cent had been registered voters for 4-10 years. Of those with moderate political activity, 61 per cent were registered voters for more than 10 years and 28 per cent for 4-10 years. The degree of political activity increased in proportion to the number of years as a registered voter.

When political activity is analyzed by political party voted for, 56 per cent of those respondents voting Democrat were classed in the "low political activity" category and 28 per cent in the "moderate" category. Of the respondents who voted Republican, 43 per cent were "low" and 29 per cent each were "moderate" and "high" participants.

When the education of respondents is analyzed by political activity category, 61 per cent of the high activity respondents were college graduates or more, while 85 per cent of those respondents in the low activity category had no college degree or less. Political activity among respondents
increased directly with the educational level of the respondent.

Slightly less than half (49%) of the respondents in the high political activity category had incomes of less than $15,000.00 while 83 per cent of those in the low activity category were in that income category. Over half of 52 per cent of the moderate activity category respondents had incomes of less than $15,000.00. No clear relationship between income level and political activity could be discerned.

When employment patterns and political activity were examined, only 13 per cent of the professionals were classed as highly politically active while 45 per cent and 42 per cent were classed as low and moderate, respectively.

Eighty-two per cent (82%) of the students were classified as "low activity" along with 85 per cent of the unemployed. When the highly politically active group is analyzed by employment, 44 per cent are professionals, 19 per cent are retired and 15 per cent are unemployed.

Over half (51%) of the highly politically active group were in the 35 to 54 years of age category with 22 per cent in the 26-34 years group and 15 per cent in the 55-70 age group.
VI. CONCLUSIONS

The most obvious factor Langford had to contend with was the racial composition of his district. He was a black man running against a white incumbent in a substantially black district. The district is 56 per cent black. However, in politics it is the number of registered voters, not the total population, which constitutes the basic arithmetic of victory or defeat. Fortunately for Langford, the total number of registered voters, measured by this crucial factor, was even more heavily black. Final registration figures showed that there were 47,696 total registered voters in the district, of whom 27,258 were black. Thus, black voters constituted 57.2 per cent of those eligible to vote but only the high black voter turnout in the run-off election provided a margin of victory for Langford.

Securing the right to vote for all black citizens rested at the cornerstone of the Civil Rights Movement. The VEP has continued this effort for over a 20 year period. The danger of losing these hard fought gains is real. Increased voter apathy among blacks coupled with discriminatory election policies could result in a reversal of progress. Thus, blacks qualified to vote should view their franchise as possibly the most precious among the American's freedoms.

There is no doubt race is a factor in most elections in the south. Both the race of the candidate and the race of the electorate affect who gets elected. Results of the Senate District 35 race have significant political
issue in southern elections is the political ramification of white bloc voting. Rarely will whites give more than 10 percent of their votes to black candidates no matter what their qualifications.44

Blacks, on the other hand, are much less prone to racially based bloc voting. The much greater crossover by blacks in support of a white candidate than by whites in support of a black candidate is symptomatic of a fundamental fact of American society in 1984. Whites continue to make race an issue in the way they evaluate and make their decisions about election candidates.45

The surprisingly high degree of political participation by black voters as exhibited in Table 5 is symptomatic of the political power now exerted by blacks in the 35th district. Indeed, the district, because of its black majority population, has been viewed as a potential Mecca for black people. Such a description leads one to the conclusion that blacks in the district can achieve their objectives in the political arena. Thus, by participating in

44Consider the most recent example of Jesse Jackson's candidacy in the Southern Presidential primaries of 1984. According to data compiled by the Voter Education Project, for presidential primaries in four southern states, Jesse Jackson, the only black candidate, received less than 10% of the white vote in each (9.1% in Tennessee, 8.6% in North Carolina, 5.1% in Georgia, and only 1.8% in Alabama).

45Consider the vote for just one white candidate, Walter Mondale, in the same four primaries. He received 16.6% of the black vote in Tennessee, 13.5% in North Carolina, 31.7% in Georgia, and 33.3% in Alabama. In addition, smaller percentages of the black vote in these states went to other white candidates.
## Table 10

Proportion of Votes Received by Candidates in the Precincts of the State Senate District 35 in the General Primary & Run-Off Elections (In Percentages)

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Source: Calculated by the author from data supplied by the State Board of Election.

\[\text{See Table 4, p. 21}\]
the political process, there are likely to be progressive changes towards equal opportunity and justice as well as socioeconomic equality.

The district as a whole is generally reliably Democratic territory. A pocket of Republican strength in the district are parts of College Park and Hapeville. White collar, middle-level managers in these areas overwhelmingly voted for the white candidate as exhibited in Table 3. South of Atlanta, a significant portion of white lower middle class community, whose residents work in nearby manufacturing operations of East Point voted equally for the two candidates. The lower middle income Atlanta precincts voted overwhelmingly for the black candidate.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

The results of Georgia's Senate District 35 race suggest that the black electorate's guarded support of black and white candidates requires that political scientists ask different questions. Further research should be pursued to deduce explanations to the following questions:

1. In what way, if any, would the appurtenances of racism be inimical to black civic participation?

2. Why would black citizens who had been "represented" and or "misrepresented" by white males participate in large numbers?

3. Would conventional wisdom describing the American voter adequately profile black America as socialized in the segregated and racially hostile deep south?
(4) What explains why black citizens abstain from voting and or why are there more blacks who vote for white candidates than there are whites who vote for black candidates?

Recommendations

The tone of this study is one of sober optimism and a student of public administration should be concerned about the question this study attempts to address and raise for several reasons.

First, because of the greater involvement of a wider range of groups, most visibly blacks in urban politics in Georgia, political power is becoming increasingly pluralistic in character. Certainly, especially in the larger cities, policy making is no longer the sole prerogative of any one elite group of "establishment", as used to be the case, for example, in Atlanta. The rise of pluralism in urban politics has several implications. First, we can expect that in the future the membership of county boards and state legislative bodies will be more representative of the entire community, especially in terms of additional black members. In any case, greater pluralism in urban politics will make for a policy making process strongly marked by bargaining, negotiation, and compromise between relevant interest groups and political actors.

Second, black citizens in District 35 and throughout Georgia are insisting that government become more accountable to them. Indeed, "accountability" has become one of the watchwords of state and local governments. This development is
primarily due to increasing citizen resistance to any increase in local taxation and the demand of blacks that they be treated equitably and fairly in the provision of state and local services.

Third, black electoral participation affects the distribution of a number of basic community services and facilities as well as the distribution of government jobs. The effect on jobs is, to date, the clearest and perhaps the most consequential for two reasons: (1) local and state governments have been growing rapidly and are among the largest local and state employers in most areas while, (2) inadequate employment opportunities continue to be the greatest economic burden facing blacks. To the extent that black electoral participation opens substantial public service careers to blacks, it contributes to their economic advancement.

Fourth, employment by government opens new doors to blacks to influence behavior of government, especially with respect to the distribution of benefits.

Finally, this suggests that the registered blacks in black majority districts have both the potential incentive and the potential voting strength to either secure greater responsiveness from their current representatives or to replace them.

Additionally, the current level of black voting is the product of a complex array of factors. Some could be remedied in the short run by policy changes such as altered
registration requirements and other electoral reforms and by more vigorous educational and mobilization efforts by blacks and by the political parties. However, the socioeconomic and psychological bases of non-voting cannot be remedied in the short run. Overall improvement in the socioeconomic conditions of blacks and more positive experiences with or perceptions of government will gradually lay the foundation for increased voting levels.

With respect to the elective office, a large part of the problem is the result of discriminatory electoral arrangements. If black electoral power is to be increased substantially, it will be necessary to dismantle the discriminatory mechanisms that block the path to elective office for many blacks. Unfair and inequitable districting procedures are among the most costly of the obstacles to black electoral power that need to be removed.

Indeed, the 1980s represent an arduous challenge to the political power now exerted by blacks. Rarely has the collective political clout of blacks been more powerful. This is particularly true for blacks in the south. Similarly, the political strength of the black vote in the south for the 1980s' and beyond is a force to be reckoned with for those who seek political offices at the national, state and local levels.

Thus, combating voter apathy is the initial step necessary in increasing voter registration; enhancing voter
education and effecting policy making. To achieve these goals and objectives, the following recommendations are hereby cited:

(1) The Voter Education Project is urged to foster the creation and perpetuation of effective grass roots coalitions to advance local goals and priorities.

(2) Similarly, the creation of the State Action Coalitions, which should be non-partisan, liaison, advisory, and action-oriented bodies, by VEP, to aid in program planning development and implementations, is hereby recommended. These coalitions serve as mechanism for outreach into local communities. For example, one specific function of the coalition includes the monitoring of political activities and informing VEP of: election results, purges of voter registration rolls, blacks elected to office and candidates seeking office.

(3) Increased voter registration drives and increased turnout on election day.

(4) Expansion of voter education programmatic activities.

(5) The provision of technical assistance activities to local groups and national organizations to assist in voter registration drives and voter education activities.

(6) Increased and effective communications/public relations for sharing of information needed to "tell the story" of minority voter participation, the success and problems experienced by VEP and its constituents; and

(7) The establishment of self-sustaining local and state non-partisan coalitions. The coalitions would serve as the major vehicles through which registration and education occur. To accomplish this, plans should include: (1) the identification of new leadership in local communities and the improved use of established local leaders; (2) improved training in organization building and voter canvassing; (3) provision of up-to-date information regarding local demographics. This
will necessitate the use of new computerized resources; and (4) making technical and legal support services available for coordinators and local groups.
APPENDIX A
THE VOTER EDUCATION PROJECT'S ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE
THE VOTER EDUCATION PROJECTS'S ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The organizational structure of the VEP provides the basic vehicle through which the accomplishment of its goals and objectives can be met. It consists of the following four major components:

1. Administrative Staff
2. Board of Directors
3. National Advisory Board
4. State Action Coalitions

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF:

The administrative staff consists of the following positions and functional areas of responsibility. The staff is composed of three black females and seven black males.

1) Executive Director - is responsible for the overall management of VEP and the administrative implementation of eleven activities related to the accomplishment of program goals and objectives. VEP uses a team approach in achieving program objectives. The Executive Director heads the management team and provides direct supervision, leadership and policy guidance to team members. The management team is composed of the Directors of Research, Communications and Field Services. The Executive Director is responsible for fund-raising, making speeches at conferences and workshops, providing legislative testimony, program and policy analysis and conducting liaison activities with local, regional and national organizations and elected officials.

2) Research Department - provides the statistical information on the political participation of minorities throughout the south. It serves as a clearing house for information on all phases of minority political activity. The department maintains a small library consisting of in-house research and publications as well as other agency publications; census and electoral data, and books
and periodicals. Research conducted consists of that based upon data which is collected, compiled, and analyzed by VEP and that which is based upon an analysis and recomputation of existing data to support descriptive, analytical policy or legislative change. A variety of publications are developed by this unit which include a wide variety of subjects. These range from analysis of elections, instructions on conducting voter registration drives to historical analysis of election trends.

3) Communications Department - is responsible for the dissemination of information on VEP's activities, publicizing information on the problems and progress of minority political participation, and utilizing the media in an educational attempt to encourage the full range of participatory activities. It is responsible for the development and distribution of press releases, arranging for interviews with the media and periodic press conferences. The department also provides the written and audio visual materials needed to implement VEP's programs. The public relations functions is also carried out of this department. This includes the development and distribution of brochures, posters, speeches, paraphernalia, (buttons, T-shirts, etc.), pamphlets and annual reports. All are designed to accent and enhance the activities of VEP.

4) Field Services Department - is responsible for the primary implementation of VEP programs which include voter registration and education, voter turnout drives, technical assistance, and conferences and training workshops. This department consumed the largest portion of the VEP budget in 1984. A total of $120,000 was spent to accomplish the goals of the Field Services Department. Field Services activities provide the direct linkage between VEP and local grassroots organizations, elected officials, state officials, state coalitions, educational and youth organizations, local units of national organizations and individual citizens. The efforts of this department are identified and targeted through a comprehensive planning process. This enables VEP to target its programs and resources to those areas that are most conducive to voter registration/education activities as well as those that demonstrate the most need. The planning pro-
cess allows VEP to mesh program goals and objectives based upon geographic, programmatic and demographic initiatives. The Field Services Department works closely with organizations receiving financial support from VEP. A major component of its monitoring process is carried out through the development of detailed reports prepared by the Field Service staff. The reports serve a dual function. They not only enable VEP to keep close tabs on the participation activities of minorities in the south, but also serve as a method for identifying electoral procedures that inhibit the full participation by these groups. Field Service staff possess strong community organizational skills and technical expertise in the various aspects of achieving full political participation. These skills and knowledge are transferred to constituents through the training programs. An additional asset of the staff centers around the individual attention given to local grassroots organizations in facilitating their understanding of what are often rather complicated electoral procedures.

5) Support Staff - includes a cadre of clerical, professional and volunteer workers. These individuals, as in all organizations, ensure the smooth operation of VEP programs. A recent addition to the support staff includes a volunteer attorney. This addition has assisted VEP in monitoring the legal aspects of electoral activities throughout the eleven state area as well as in identifying violations of the Voting Rights Act.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

The Board of Directors is the policy making body of VEP. It provides directives for actions by the organization. The Executive Director is directly accountable to the Board. The Board has set its membership number at 27. It meets at least once during each calendar year and functions during the interim through the following committees which meet periodically throughout the year:
1. Executive Committee
2. Administrative Committee
3. Program Committee
4. Finance Committee
5. Ad hoc Committees, as deemed necessary

NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD (NAB):

The National Advisory Board is comprised of distinguished persons from throughout the United States who share VEP's interest and objectives and who are willing to give of their time, effort and expertise.

The NAB is appointed by the Board of Directors, and provides fund-raising assistance to VEP, makes recommendations to the Board on projects and programs where VEP should direct its attention, and advises VEP on national trends and developments which may impact its mission. Ideally, the NAB meets at least once a year, however, a lack of funds has prevented the NAB from meeting of late. Money will be set aside in 1985 to assist in convening the NAB.

STATE ACTION COALITIONS:

The State Action Coalitions are non-partisan, liasion, advisory and action-oriented bodies created by VEP to aid in program planning, development and implementation. These coalitions serve as a mechanism for outreach into local communities. Their activities are critical in the implementation of voter participation activities. The specific functions of the coalitions include:
1. Assisting VEP staff in selected areas for programs.

2. Making programmatic recommendations on the needs of particular areas within their states.

3. Assisting in implementing non-partisan voter participation programs through community based organizations.

4. Sponsoring state-wide and local conferences for community leaders, organizations and elected officials.
THE VOTER EDUCATION PROJECT, INC.
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

FIELD SERVICES DIRECTOR

DEPUTY DIRECTOR

WOMEN'S VOTE DIRECTOR

RESEARCH DIRECTOR

NATIONAL AD. BOARD (NAB)

STATE ACTION COALITIONS

AL. ARK. FLA. GA. LA. MS. N.C. S.C. TN. TX. VA.

Source: Voter Education Project, Inc.
Atlanta, Georgia, 1984.
APPENDIX B

GEORGIA SENATE DISTRICT 35

ELECTION EXIT INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

SEPTEMBER 4, 1984
ID ____________________________ Time of Interview ________________

COUNTY _______________________

CITY, STATE_____________________

POLL SITE _______________________

ADDRESS _______________________

1. How long have you been a registered voter? ___________
   (WRITE RESPONSE IN BLANK)

2. What influenced you to register to vote?
   (CIRCLE LETTER OF ALL RESPONSES THAT APPLY)
   a. local political activist/education group(s)
   b. person(s) at church
   c. persons(s) at school
   d. Jesse Jackson Campaign
   e. other (please specify) ____________________________

3. What problems did you encounter in registering to vote?
   (CIRCLE LETTER OF ALL RESPONSES THAT APPLY)
   a. none
   b. transportation to and/or physical location of registration site
   c. difficulty in filling out form
   d. hostility from persons working in Registrar's Office
   e. other (please specify) ____________________________

4. Are you voting for the first time today?
   (CIRCLE LETTER OF RESPONSE)
   a. yes
   b. no

5. If yes, why did you decide to vote this time? (WRITE IN RESPONSE)

   ____________________________

   (If yes to question 5, omit question 6)
6. How often do you vote?
   (CIRCLE LETTER OF RESPONSE)
   a. every time there is an election
   b. only for local elections
   c. only for state elections
   d. only for national elections
   e. other (please specify) ____________________________

7. What party did you cast your vote for?
   (CIRCLE LETTER TO RESPONSE)
   a. Democratic
   b. Republican
   c. Independent
   d. Other races

8. Have you ever ...
   (CIRCLE APPROPRIATE RESPONSE FOR EACH ITEM)
   YES NO
   a. worked for a political campaign?
   b. attended political dinners, rallies
   c. contacted public officials about matters of interest to you
   d. contributed money to a candidate
   e. joined a political organization, neighborhood association, etc.
   f. worked in a voter registration campaign?
   g. other (please specify) ____________________________

9. What benefits do you get from voting?
   a. ____________________________
   b. ____________________________
   c. ____________________________

10. Do you feel that elected officials listen to citizens when they express their needs?
    (CIRCLE LETTER OF APPROPRIATE RESPONSE)
    a. ____________________________
    b. ____________________________
12. How many years of school have you completed?
   a. none
   b. 1-5
   c. 6-12
   d. 1-3 years of college
   e. finished college
   f. masters
   g. doctorate

13. What is your approximate income per year?
   a. less than $5,000
   b. $5,001 to 10,000
   c. $10,001 to 15,000
   d. $15,001 to 20,000
   e. $20,001 to 25,000
   f. $25,001 and over

14. If you are presently employed, what kind of work do you do?
   a. ______________________ (WRITE IN RESPONSE)
   b. retired
   c. unemployed

15. In which of the following age categories do you fall?
   a. 18-25
   b. 26-34
   c. 35-54
   d. 55-70
   e. over 70

16. What is your marital status?
   a. married
   b. single
   c. divorced
   d. widowed
   e. separated

17. How many dependent children do you have?
   a. none
   b. ________ (write in number)

Comments ____________________________
BIBLIOGRAPHY


