Black Americans at a Crossroads in American Politics: Electoral Participation, Protest, and Policy Change

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Black Americans at a Crossroads in American Politics: Electoral Participation, Protest, and Policy Change

By

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I give reverence first and foremost to the creator and my ancestors for pushing me when I thought the challenge was too much. This journey was not easy, but I found solace during difficult times, knowing I was protected at every step. I could not have gotten to the finish line without my daughter Evelynn Rose Carter's support and sacrifices to allow me to pursue my doctoral degree. Thank you to my sisters, Terri and Tonette, for your support and care of my heart and mental health through this journey. For that, I thank you with all my heart and soul. I thank my dear cousin Clazier Falconer for vigorously editing my comprehensive exam. If not for your help, I would not have gotten to the finish line. To my friends, some have been there from the beginning; others have entered this challenge along the way; nevertheless, you have championed me to the end. I am grateful to you all.
Making her-story on a quest to find balance; in the midst of this chaotic wonderment, I've fallen into Peace, bumped into Joy, and consumed happiness...

Tenille-Rose Martin

Abstract

This dissertation explores Black political participation in the United States. I argue there is a relationship between Black political participation and trust in government, political efficacy, group consciousness, linked fate, political knowledge, and desire to engage in social activism. This argument draws on research on political participation, group identity, and political behavior and attitudes within the Black community.

A mixed-method approach was used in the study. Data was collected from Blacks across the country via an original survey and interviews. The data analysis chapter determined some support for the theoretical framework, albeit aspects of the model were rejected. Results determined mistrust, group consciousness, political knowledge, motivation to participate in social activism, and salience of the issues profoundly influence Black political participation. However, contrary to prior research, political efficacy and linked fate are less effective in motivating Black political participation. In addition, trust in the criminal justice system is associated with increased non-electoral participation but not with voting.

The findings suggest Black political participation is not such an enigma. Black people have a great sense of group consciousness; with increased access to
teachings about the political process and how policies impact their daily lives, political participation can increase.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

I always knew I would attend graduate school, but I did not know when or what field of study I would pursue. On February 26, 2012, George Zimmerman killed Trayvon Martin for walking in their neighborhood wearing a hoodie. I hit the streets in protests with my then four-month-old daughter and friends. I wanted to effect change, but how unknown. Protesting the killing of a young black boy seemed at the time like a scream to police and politicians to see us.

See black boys, girls, men, and women as humans! When Darren Wilson, a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, a suburb outside of St. Louis, Missouri, murdered Michael Brown Jr. on August 9, 2014, I knew protesting was not the only way to affect change. I thought about police accountability, the inequities in prosecutions of white police officers who murder black people, and the lack of local government accountability for such actions. I then understood my life's purpose and began my doctoral degree in political science.

Even then, I understood protesting the killings of black people by white hands would not be the game-changer many protesters thought it would be. I
realized then that nonelectoral participation with electoral involvement was the only way to impact local, state, and federal policies. However, I wanted to understand my community's (Blacks) thoughts and lived experiences within the political system. I was curious and wanted a better understanding of blacks' socio-political behaviors and motivations to engage in traditional and non-conventional action. I found through casual and structured conversations many people had mixed feelings and a lack of understanding of how to effect policy change.

Numerous people I spoke with thought protesting was a reactionary consequence of problematic social justice issues. Once the topic was no longer significant to the media, the problem fell by the wayside. Others felt protesting was the only way to bring the plights in the Black community to light. A common theme in my conversations (formally and informally) with Black people is a lack of trust in the government. I heard countless times, "my vote doesn't count," or "they don't care what we (the Black community) think or want." My inquisitiveness and passion for progressive political engagement in the Black community led to my dissertation focus. This research aims to understand what factors motivate black socio-political engagement. In finding the answer, I think it is of the utmost importance to honor the participants; I will do so by grounding the study in their lived experiences.
Centering Black Voices

Julie, 45, a resident of New York City, attended a Black Political Literacy (BPL) session and suggested her interest in politics was piqued once she learned "the logistics of how the city's community is being managed. I recognized the conditions of my roads were not getting addressed, unlike other areas that were not majority-black. We have multiple requests for road bumps that have not been addressed. When you know better, you do better."

Jay, 28, lives in Iowa, explained he is originally from Chicago, and "In Chicago, there is a quiet-spoken understanding that government didn't really care too much about where I was from my neighborhood wasn't holding any weight or holding water as far as what would happen. And now I'm in Iowa; the area that I live in is pretty well-off. And it feels like we are looked at first as far as what changes should be made in the city."

Richard, 45, lives in St. Louis, Missouri. When asked what compelled him to get involved in politics, Richard replied, "I got involved being in St. Louis after the killing of Michael Brown Jr. Seeing the protest… The way in which his death was treated, we were able to see clearly it stems from who is in power on the local level. That caused me to be more involved."

Antonia, 23, resides in Chicago, Illinois. When asked what motivates black people to get involved in politics or not get involved?, she responded, "I think when they feel what they have to say matters, and they are valued. Some
people who don't vote feel like change cannot happen." She further explained, "I don't think they (government) care unless you make a lot of money and you are white," when asked whether local officials care about what you think.

**The Central Argument**

It is well documented that blacks' attitudes towards political matters - criminal justice system, housing, and education-differ from whites. This study aims to understand the Black voting bloc's behavior and motivation to engage in the political sphere.

Julie, Jay, Richard, and Antonia spoke of negative experiences with city agencies and the criminal justice system and, in their own way, expressed that government does not value Black communities. Richard, a resident of Missouri, and Julie, a resident of New York, indicate undesirable events inspired them to get involved in the political process instead of demobilizing them. Their experiences are representative of everyday encounters Blacks undergo across the nation. Their distrust of the government is not surprising; research shows Americans' trust in the government is declining (Putnam 1995; Putnam 2000; Tate 2003), even more so for Black Americans (Putnam 1995; Putnam 2000; Tate 2003). Therefore, centering participants' voices are essential to this study in analyzing Black socio-political behaviors.

The analysis demonstrates how trust, political efficacy, and group identity influence political behaviors. Group identity theory is a sense of commonality and
shared circumstances that encourage racial and ethnic groups to become politically involved (Dawson, 1994). I will utilize two principles of group identity in this analysis: group consciousness (black consciousness) and linked fate. Scholars have delved into group identity and discovered a profound link between group consciousness and linked fate effects on participation among marginalized people (Shingles, 1981, Sanchez and Vargas, 2016).

While racial data is critical in understanding Americans' participation, there are limitations; one limitation I want to highlight is the centering of whites' experiences; (with whites as the baseline), which leads to misinformation and an unfitting evaluation of Black's involvement and impact on the political system. Katherine Tate highlights the deficiencies in the field, asserting that "it was clear that a true understanding of the politics of black Americans could not emerge comparatively, specifically in contrasting black political behavior against white political behavior" (Tate, 2014). For this reason, my data collection will focus exclusively on the Black experience. Some may consider this a limitation, but this is purposeful.

In October 2021, Pew Research Center surveyed Black Americans to explore how important identity is to their lives and how they relate with others of the diaspora. They found that 70 percent of respondents feel being Black is integral to their identity (Cox and Tamir, 2022). The discipline of political science
must allow a space in which the Black sociopolitical experience is fully explored to determine how the voting bloc can and will impact our political landscape.

Traditional politics leans on two schools of thought for evaluating political trust; unhappiness with the political system (Citrin 1974) and disapproval of an incumbent and its policies (Miller 1974). Most studies utilize the current administration's approval ratings and policy outcomes to gauge trust. Contrary to the traditional understanding, Avery (2009) found that Blacks with a high sense of group consciousness - recognizing systemic racism and power inequities in government and society - are less trusting of the entire political system. There's no surprise here, considering the historical experiences of Blacks in America.

Political efficacy - the assumption that an individual citizen can play a part in bringing about political and social change (Campbell, Gurin, and Miller, 1954)-
is another component widely accepted in the study of political participation to impact political engagement positively. Studies have shown that political efficacy and trust at different rates affect the propensity to engage in politics (Gamson, 1968, Milbrath and Goel, 1977, Shingles, 1981). In general, people with more trust and efficacy are more likely to participate in politics than people with low levels of trust and efficacy; however, it differs when looking at Black participation.

Blacks generally have a negative view towards government yet, participate in politics at the same rate as whites once variables for socioeconomic status are controlled. It is worthwhile to explore how group identity principles influence Blacks with low rates of trust, involvement in nonelectoral and electoral participation. After all, trust is fundamental for democracy.

**Theoretical Framework**

I will employ critical race theory (CRT) and group identity as frameworks to examine black sociopolitical behaviors. CRT methodology notes the need to develop ideas and texts centered around each group and its condition. Critical race theory acknowledges that racism still exists, and the historical political experiences of Blacks in America post-slavery and Jim Crow permeate the social fabric of America. Why this methodology? First, it is a robust theory dedicated to social justice and has influenced political progress (Hawkesworth, 2010). Secondly, political scientists have used CRT to understand voting patterns, and
the method has set precedence for informing political behavior. Lastly, and most importantly, CRT centers the black voice and affirms participants' experiences. I will utilize three tenets of Critical Race Theory in this research:

• Racism is salient or a normalized experience

• Race is a social construction rather than a biological or genetic difference.

• The recipients of racism and not the perpetrators have the authoritative voice to describe the experience of racism (Delgado and Stefancic 2017).

The group identity framework recognizes marginalized communities have group norms that unite them in their way of thinking and acting. Black people are no different. Historical and contemporary political occurrences have uniquely bound blacks. There is a common understanding and shared experiences, a "we-ness," if you will, that is continuously at the forefront of our minds during political decision-making. I will expound further on the concept of group identity and critical race theory's effects on Blacks' political involvement in chapter 3.

Summary of Main Findings

In this study, I postulate that blacks who do not trust the government but have a sense of political efficacy will engage in political participation at higher rates. As well as, Blacks with a sense of group consciousness and linked fate are more politically active. Lastly, I explore if mistrust and political efficacy inspire Black people to engage in nonelectoral behavior more than traditional participation routes. Contrary to the literature, the data shows a statistically
significant inverse relationship with mistrust. Blacks with greater distrust, according to the data, are deterred from participating in political acts. However, mistrust yields a positive statistically significant relationship when analyzing nonelectoral participation. Indicating, Blacks with greater distrust participate in protest acts. The findings hold true to Avery's results, detailed in chapter 2.

The data analysis reveals efficacy and linked fate has no bearing on Black political behavior. However, the data suggests that motivation to engage in social activism, political knowledge, and group consciousness are significant predictors of political engagement. The analysis of the third hypothesis if distrust and efficacy impact voter turnout and nonelectoral behavior the same, neither mistrust nor political efficacy are found to impact voting. On the other hand, political knowledge was evidenced as an influence for Blacks to vote. Chapter 4 will explore the data in more detail.

**Roadmap of the Dissertation**

Chapter 2 introduces literature on racial political behaviors and motivations. In doing so, I examine Black political participation, exploring group identity principles—group/black consciousness and linked fate—trust and political efficacy. Drawing on political science literature and positioning Black voices via the eleven interviews collected, I argue there are varying relationships between political participation, group identity, trust, and political efficacy.
Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory and group identity and the methodological approach used to test the hypotheses in the research study. The Black Political Literacy program is introduced, and I familiarize the readers with the mission and explain why I developed it and how it fits into the research.

For this study, a mixed-method approach was employed to garner the necessary data to investigate and evaluate the hypotheses. The data collection instruments—interviews, Black Political Literacy chats, and a questionnaire—were collected from December 2021 through March 2022. Respondents were recruited for the study via a snowball effect through social media and word of mouth.

The data collection occurred in three different phases: The first phase of data comes from two sessions of the Black Political Literacy program offered in December 2021 and January 2022. There was a total of 12 attendees between the two sessions. Of the participants, 11 completed the survey, but 6 completed the program by developing an action plan.

Each respondent completed a survey designed to understand their political knowledge, motivation, and level of black consciousness and linked fate. Descriptive statistics are presented, identified, and defined in the chapter. Lastly, the qualitative design is introduced but will be developed further in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 presents the findings and analysis of the survey data results and quantifies the relationship between group identity, trust, political efficacy, and
electoral and nonelectoral participation. The themes garnered from interviews and
discussion from BPL sessions are embedded in the analysis for two reasons: the
participants' voices give a more insightful understanding of the quantitative data,
and secondly, while this is an academic paper, I want to honor my ancestors and
participants by crafting this dissertation as a memoir of their lived experiences.

Chapter 5 concludes the dissertation with a summation of significant
findings from interviews, and survey data, followed by an exploration of the
proposed hypotheses. Lastly, I will discuss the implications and limitations of the
results and suggest future research on the subfield of Black political participation.
Besides the factors that determine all political behavior in America, black political behavior is informed by unique forces. It is a variant form of American political behavior. It is inspired and shaped by some features and currents that do not form the basis of all-American political behavior because it is rooted in the black experience in America...In fact, to fully understand black political behavior, one must know the context from which it sprang and the factors that influenced and nurtured that context. To FAIL in this most elemental task is to misunderstand black political activity,

Hanes Walton Jr (1985)

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Black's sociopolitical behavior weighs heavily on years of slavery and institutionalized subjugation sanctioned by the United States via slavery, Black Codes, Jim Crow laws, police killings, and systemic racism, which impact motivation to become political actors. A Pew Research Center study, "Race in America 2019," confirms that 63% of respondents of all races believe the legacy of slavery still has societal effects on Black people. "Yet, despite slavery’s prominence in shaping American history and despite volumes written by economists and historians on its consequences, political scientists have largely overlooked how American slavery and the events following its abolition could continue to influence the South’s contemporary politics... it would be surprising if such a fundamental aspect of American history had no persistent impact on American politics" (Acharya, Blackwell, Sen, 2016). The study found more than half of the respondents felt being Black is a disadvantage. Still, hundreds of years
later, this study finds evidence that the institution of slavery still influences politics in America today.

It is critical that the historical underpinnings of Blacks' experiences in American politics are acknowledged to grasp the complete picture of modern political participation. With that being said, this research gives reverence to the ancestors that paved the way for Blacks in America to navigate the political system. In this chapter, I will present historical and contemporary literature on political participation, group identity, and Critical Race Theory that contribute to our understanding of Black attitudes and political behavior.

The Roots of Black Political Participation

When learning about political involvement, slave resistance is hardly ever identified as a way of participating in the political process. However, it was the method enslaved Africans used to disrupt the system of chattel slavery.

Many enslaved Africans challenged the institution of slavery by engaging in "day-to-day resistance," causing a disruption or slowdown of the daily flow of plantation operations.
(Marable, 2002). While this may seem like a trivial act of defiance, the enslaved people knew the economic effects this would have on the enslaver's bottom line.

Slave resistance persisted, and the stakes got higher. The first documented collective act of Black political rebellion occurred in Gloucester, Virginia, in 1663. It is known as the Servant's Plot, in which enslaved Africans and indentured servants unsuccessfully protested the treatment they received from the tobacco industry owners. There were several hundred slave revolts across North America and the Caribbean (Momodu, 2022).

One such revolt had political consequences: on September 9, 1739, the Stono Rebellion took place in Charlestown, South Carolina. Enslaved Africans rebelled, killing white landowners as they attempted to flee to liberty (Sutherland, 2018). The group was unsuccessful in achieving freedom, but the revolt impacted slave policies in South Carolina. The colony enacted the Negro Act of 1740, which imposed many restrictions on enslaved people and few on enslavers.

The Negro Act of 1740 restricted the international trade of purchasing enslaved people and sanctioned enslavers who treated the enslaved harshly. "On the theory that mistreated and overworked enslaved people were a menace, the revised slave code stipulated that masters avoid working enslaved people on Sundays and provide them with adequate clothing. The law of 1740 was detailed and comprehensive, creating a slave regime that was stricter and, at least in certain respects, more humane than its predecessor (Wax, 1982)." Slave uprisings
created incremental local policy changes that affected enslaved people's lives and their descendants. Still, systemic racism made it challenging to form nationwide coalitions to dismantle slavery in America during this time.

By the mid-to the late 1800s, Black political leaders had appeared nationally in the fight to abolish slavery. During this time, two schools of thought emerged from Black leaders: "integrationist" and "Black nationalism" (Marable, 2002). Frederick Douglass was a significant proponent of racial integration (integrationist). He championed the right for Blacks to be freed from the bondage of slavery to assimilate into American society.

On the other hand, Martin R. Delaney pushed for Black nationalism, which encouraged Blacks to build socio-political and economic ecosystems to demand access to resources awarded to whites (Marable, 2002). I speak of these two schools of thought because they are both at the forefront of Black Political discourse centuries later. Yes, the ideas have evolved, but both influence how Blacks navigate the American political machine.

The Civil War had political implications that undermined the very structure of slavery. History rewrites the Civil War as a conflict about slavery when in fact, it was an appendage. The Civil War was about federal control over states, and abolishing slavery, was a means to justify the end. The hundreds of thousands of enslaved Black men fought in the civil war; their conviction was freedom. And they got a form of it. In December 1865, the thirteenth amendment
was ratified and eradicated slavery in America. As Manning Marable put it in his book Race, Reform, and Rebellion, "black emancipation occurred not by fiat, but by direct actions of the slaves themselves" (Marable, pg.5, 2007). Blacks entered the political sphere for hundreds of years through resistance instead of the conventional route. This tradition is not lost, but Blacks have found that protests and sit-ins will not move the needle alone. Hence, the increase in Black voter turnout in the 2020 election.

**Political Mistrusts**

The study of political behavior has accepted that socio-economic status (SES), age, and civic-mindedness motivate political participation (Verba and Nie, 1972). Verba and Nie's 1972 study employed the SES model and found high levels of political involvement in groups with higher socio-economic status. It is expected that Blacks will engage in politics less than whites due to the lack of education, income, efficaciousness, and motivation necessary to participate (Tate, 1991).

Conventional wisdom argues that political trust is explicitly linked to unhappiness with incumbents and their policies, and trust does not directly influence political participation (Citrin, 1974). Early research had an atypical outlook on trust and political participation, disregarding race as an influential factor. Contrary to the traditional understanding, Avery (2006) found trust was
linked to a "more profound unhappiness with the political system" than with the current administration.

Maruice Mangum further posits that Blacks' knowledge of socio-political race relations in America, their desire for political, social, and economic equity, and group-centeredness increase mistrust (Mangum, 2016). Avery's 2006 study found distrust significantly impacted non-electoral participation but did not influence Black electoral behavior (2006). The lack of trust is no surprise, considering the historical and contemporary political ethos and the government's lack of interest in the Black agenda.

Blacks experience greater incarceration rates, harsher interactions with the criminal justice system, higher unemployment rates, and poor access to quality K-12 education.

Pew Research Center surveyed Americans in 2019 to grasp racial relations in the country. They found that 67% of participants agreed police mistreat Blacks, and 65% believe Blacks are treated less fairly by the criminal justice system (Horowitz, Brown, and Cox, 2019).
In my interview with Jay, he alluded to the history and attitudes of the Black community toward police and the government. Jay stated,

"There was always a stigma around anything bad to deal with government control. But it isn't the same view as people outside of our neighborhood. It was more, hey, somebody comes down representing the government; they're likely here because someone did something wrong. And they're here to enforce some kind of penalties and punishment. But there was also the thought that, and I don't know how deep historically, people look at these things. But for myself, I was big on trying to understand what was the founding behind police and policing people. And lo and behold, that arose from keeping certain ethnicities in check in certain eras when certain things were legal. Right? ... But it's very hard for those communities to not view government, governance, politics as a method of oppression, right, as a certain type of oppressor."

In Shayla Nunnally's book *Trust in Black America: Race, Discrimination, and Politics*, she postulates that Black distrust in local government is higher when compared to all other racial groups. When observing Black residents' interactions with the local government, often police encounters are discussed, but these interactions are unfavorable. Minorities often report that they are treated more harshly than Whites in encounters with the police (Wentz & Schlimgen, 2012). Relationships between police and Black communities tend to erode public trust. It is worth highlighting Blacks' experiences with police officers and the criminal justice system when analyzing political participation because they are first-line government officials. Often Blacks' first encounter with the "system" (government) is through disciplinary action. Voigt et al. found that "more than one-quarter of the public (ages 16 and over) comes into contact with the police
during the course of a year, most frequently as the result of a police-initiated traffic stop" (Voight et.al, 2017).

Ronald Weitzer conducted a research analysis of police relations in Washington, D.C., from 1996-1997. He interviewed residents from two majority African American neighborhoods and a predominantly White neighborhood. His findings were as such: race influenced police interactions, and Blacks were "generally subjected to disparate treatment by police" (Weitzer, pg.151, 2000). Weitzer found many Black interviewees either had negative interactions with the police or witnessed maltreatment.

Many studies have shown the disproportionate hostile contact minorities have with police. Schlosser, Cha-Jua, Valgoi, and Neville highlight the stop-and-frisk policy introduced by Mayor Rudy Giuliani during his administration in New York City. The "stop and frisk" policy permitted police officers to apprehend perceived criminals and search their persons without reason. According to the New York City Liberties Union (NYCLU), the New York City police department reportedly stopped 685,724 people in 2011 via the "stop and frisk" program. NYCLU found that “Black and Latino males between the ages of 14 and 24 accounted for 41.6 percent of stops in 2011... " of those stopped, 90 percent were innocent (Stop and Frisk, 2012)".

Charles R. Epp, Steven Maynard-Moody, and Donald Haider-Markel's study "Beyond Profiling: The Institutional Sources of Racial Disparities in
Policing" researched Kansas City's Metropolitan police department's investigatory stops on the border of the Missouri and Kansas state lines in 2014. They define an investigatory stop as a police officer stopping a person because they look suspicious, even if they did not violate any laws. They mention that, in essence, investigatory stops are not inherently racist; they are race-neutral. However, they recognize" that officers, when directed by their superiors to stop people based on suspicion of criminal activity, are likely to make choices about whom to stop on the basis of implicit racial stereotypes of black criminality" (Epp et al., pg.172, 2017).

Epp et al. found that investigatory stops are an institutionalized process that disproportionately affects Blacks. Blacks "were 2.7 times more likely than whites to experience an investigatory stop" (Epp et al., pg.174, 2017). The researchers underscore the adverse effects investigatory stops have on those being stopped, the community, and public trust. Blacks have endured many injustices inflicted by criminal justice policies, and public confidence is weakened.

As noted above, many policies sway Blacks' trust in police and the government. Still, we cannot discount public officials (police officers) attitudes and treatment of Blacks as an influence on public distrust. Voigt et al., the study looks at Oakland Police departments body camera footage in 2014; they evaluated police officers' language and tone during traffic stops with white and Black community members. The researchers used human raters in the first study to
identify if police officers displayed respect during routine stops. The participants "rated officer utterances on several overlapping dimensions of respect. With a high degree of agreement, participants inferred these dimensions from officer language. Even though they were not told the race of the stopped driver, participants judged officer language directed toward black motorists to be less respectful than language directed toward whites (Voigt et al., pg.6522, 2014)."

The scholars are mindful that several dynamics are at play when officers stop drivers. However, they recognize a police officer’s tone is a crucial element in these interactions "the language of those in positions of institutional power (police officers, judges, work superiors) has greater influence over the course of the interaction than the language used by those with less power (Voigt et al., pg. 6521, 2014)".

Voigt et al. research is distinctive in that they examine a vital part of interactions with public officials that are not often studied but heavily impact public trust. In her text, The New Jim Crow, Michelle Alexander describes the humiliation felt by Black and Latino men during the "stop and frisk" program. She likens the experience to days when Blacks would be beaten or lynched for looking at a white woman (Alexander, p.136, 2020).

How those in power treat one creates a power dynamic that is either accepting and nurturing or hostile in nature. The occurrence often sets the tone for future interactions with public officials (officers, public service employees). In the
Department of Justice (DOJ) 2015 Report: Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department, the document underscores this concern "African Americans’ views of FPD are shaped not just by what FPD officers do, but by how they do it." DOJ unearthed a sundry of harmful documented altercations Blacks endured at the hands of FPD.

Remarkably, when investigators asked the Chief of Police about police public trust in the police department, he thought the relationship was good prior to the killing of Michael Brown Jr. On the other hand, rank and file officers and Mayor Knowles admitted there was an apparent disconnect with the Black community laden with mistrust and fear. The DOJ gave FPD a directive to foster community relations" To improve community trust and police effectiveness, Ferguson must ensure not only that its officers act in accord with the Constitution, but that they treat people fairly and respectfully" (DOJ, pg.81, 2015).

Countless studies demonstrate racial disparities in policing and the criminal justice system. I present a few, with different vantage points, of how policing and criminal justice contribute to Blacks' negative attitudes toward the government. In Chapter 4, I will discuss how these factors show up in the interviews and how they affect Blacks' motivation to engage in politics.

Political Efficacy

Trust is one-factor researchers have found that positively impacts political behavior. Generally, people with high levels of trust are more likely to vote.
While those who lack trust in government are less likely to participate in the political system. On the other hand, Blacks who perceive racial discrimination and inequality are more likely to engage in protests as trust diminishes (Avery, 2006). Another factor that is said to impact political participation positively is political efficacy. Political efficacy is the assumption that an individual citizen can bring about political and social change (Campbell, Gurin, and Miller, 1954). It is widely accepted that politically savvy and efficacious people are more politically active than those ignorant of politics (Reichert, 2016).

Frank Reichert conducted an analysis using the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES) of German residents 16 and older; he posits that "political knowledge raises internal political efficacy and thereby indirectly increases the chance that a citizen will participate in politics" (Reichert, 2016). He found that political knowledge translates to internal efficacy and significantly impacts voting but does not directly impact non-electoral participation.

Valentino, Gregorowicz, and Groenendyk (2008) suggest in their study that efficacy sparks anger, which increases participation when citizens perceive a political threat. In sum, citizens who feel threatened politically and are assured of their ability to influence politics will engage in the political system. Robert Dahl (1961) and Valentino, Gregorowicz, and Groenendyk (2008) agree that efficaciousness and political engagement have a cyclical relationship. The latter scholars perceive that relationship as most significant when participants are angry.
due to a political threat and "A positive feedback loop between efficacy and participation is likely to develop for a very large portion of the electorate...especially if some event or development arouses their anger in the campaign" (Valentino, Gregorowicz, and Groenendyk, 2008). They determined internal efficacy motivates participation by enabling anger.

There is a common understanding amongst those mentioned above that more politically knowledgeable efficacious citizens become more politically involved. How do trust and efficacy motivate Black participation? Do they similarly impact traditional and nontraditional participation when studying trust and efficaciousness?

Researchers Pierce and Carey explored the efficaciousness of Black New Orleanians and their motivation to engage in traditional political participation and protest via a survey conducted in late 1969 and early 1970. They found that thirty percent of participants with high efficacy rates measured medium to high protest participation. On the other hand, they noted, "Despite the relatively significant differences among levels of efficacy, it is also apparent that a great deal of the traditional participation cannot be accounted for by a high sense of efficacy" (Pierce and Carey, pg.211, 1971). Pierce and Carey identified that participants who protested and engaged the system in conventional participatory acts; however, the study suggests traditional views of political efficacy are insufficient in explaining Black residents of New Orleans' political participation.
Another set of scholars, Southwell and Pirch, examine political alienation's effects on Black voter turnout using the National Election Study (NES) data from 1996 and 2000. They found Black voter turnout increased in the 2000 presidential election, closing the Black/White voter turnout gap. What motivated the increase in Black voter turnout? Southwell and Pirch discovered evidence of an increase in Black political alienation between the 1996 and 2000 presidential elections. Their study distinguished alienation into three sub-categories: internal inefficacy- "reflects the individual's belief that he or she affects the course of political events"; external inefficacy- "represents a more general evaluation of how political institutions are to input from all individuals"; and political cynicism or mistrust- "refers to the belief that the government is not producing policies according to expectations" (Southwell and Pirch, 2003).

The study indicates political efficacy -internal and external- was not a significant motivator for Black voter turnout in 1996 or 2000. "Inefficacy for them as a group tends to be a long-term political appraisal that is not jarred loose by more immediate political events and, as such, contributes less to any of the turnout fluctuations among Blacks from one election year to the next" (Southwell and Pirch, 2003). In their evaluation of alienation's effects on voting, they found vast differences between Whites and Blacks. "For blacks, distrust appears to be a mobilizing force, spurring them to electoral participation in both years, while such cynical attitudes had no such effect for whites" (Southwell and Pirch, 2003).
Their research findings for political efficacy are consistent with past scholars’ analysis—lack of political efficacy discourages electoral participation. In contrast, their cynicism results go against conventional understanding—higher trust in government motivates electoral participation. They found greater cynicism or distrust encouraged Black voter turnout during the 2000 presidential election.

Soss and Weaver's article “Police Are Our Government: Politics, Political Science, and the Policing of Race-Class Subjugated Communities” centers on the experiences of what they deem Race, Class Subjugated Communities (RCS) interactions with a police state of control over the resident's' in Ferguson, Missouri. They employed the Department of Justice's 2015 report to illustrate the city government and criminal justice systems' egregious actions imposed on the Black community. The report is worth noting in great detail to stress the inequities and contempt Black residents experienced with the city government. Unfortunately, many of the cases highlighted in the study happen across the United States to Black people.

The DOJ report found that Blacks in the Ferguson community received excessive unscrupulous treatment at every level of the criminal justice system. The Municipal Court imposed unnecessary obstacles and retaliatory practices on community members seeking resolution causing detrimental but preventable outcomes such as jail time, multiple arrests, and exorbitant fines.
The Department of Justice found overwhelming evidence of Ferguson Municipal Court imposing "constitutionally deficient" practices. "A 67-year-old woman told us she was stopped and arrested by a Ferguson police officer for an outstanding warrant for failure to pay a trash-removal citation. She did not know about the warrant until her arrest, and the court ultimately charged her $1,000 in fines, which she continues to pay off in $100 monthly increments despite being on a limited, fixed income" (DOJ, pg.42, 2015).

The financial burden placed on Ferguson residents did not go unnoticed neither did the financial windfall gained by the city. The DOJ findings exposed financial gains of "$442,901 in fines for Failure to Appear violations in 2013, which comprised 24% of the total revenue the court collected that year " (DOJ, pg.43, 2015).

Whereas the DOJ's report of punitive damages on Black residents is disconcerting, the discovery of retaliatory practices from prosecuting attorneys and judges is just as unsettling. "We have concerns not only about the obstacles to resolving a charge even when an individual chooses not to contest it, but also about the trial processes that apply in the rare occasion that a person does attempt to challenge a charge...the adjudicative tribunal provided by the Ferguson municipal court appears deficient in many respects. Attempts to raise legal claims are met with retaliatory conduct" (DOJ, pg.43, 2015).
They found egregious patterns of misuse of discretionary power by prosecutors and judges. One case highlighted was an email exchange with a court clerk and a prosecutor. The court clerk asked the prosecutor about their process when a defendant's attorney appears before the court to fight charges on a red-light ticket “I usually dismiss them if the attorney merely requests a recommendation. If the attorney goes off on all of the constitutional stuff, then I tell the attorney to come . . . and argue in front [of] the judge—after that, his client can pay the ticket” (DOJ, pg.44, 2015).

The Department of Justice discovered copious amounts of incidents of misuse of authority. Another instance underscores Judge Brockmeyer’s abuse of judicial power. A defendant "retained counsel who, during the trial, was repeatedly interrupted by the court during his cross-examination of the officer. When the attorney objected to the interruptions, the judge told him that if he continued on this path, “I will hold you in contempt, and I will incarcerate you” (DOJ, pg.47, 2015). It was widely known that Judge Brockmeyer's methods in court violated defendants’ civil rights and were unconstitutional.

In 2012, City councilmembers wrote to the City Manager opposing Brockmeyer's reappointment, asserting he "does not listen to the testimony, does not review the reports or the criminal history of defendants, and doesn’t let all the pertinent witnesses testify before rendering a verdict" (DOJ, pg.18, 2015). The Councilmember acknowledged by not reappointing Judge Brockmeyer as the
Municipal Judge, the City of Ferguson could see a financial decline but felt "it’s more important that cases are being handled properly and fairly "(DOJ, pg.18, 2015). The City Manager admittedly understood the concerns of the councilmember " but urged that the Judge be reappointed, noting that “[i]t goes without saying the City cannot afford to lose any efficiency in our Courts, nor experience any decrease in our Fines and Forfeiture" (DOJ, pg.18, 2015).

The City Council again reappointed Judge Brockmeyer at the City Manager's encouragement. The tragedy of Michael Brown Jr's death triggered the DOJ's investigation into the City of Ferguson, which brought to light the years of " repression and lucrative pilfering—generating an average of three arrest warrants per household and revenues to cover one-fifth of the municipal budget " (Soss and Weaver, 2017).

Soss and Weaver intimate that neighborhoods like Ferguson reflect more than just the citizens' trust in their ability to change the government (political inefficacy). It also includes punitive, despotic policing and egregious misuse of judicial power that, in fact, negatively influences behaviors and attitudes (trust) toward the government.

When contemplating the lack of trust in local government, we cannot consciously forget about the slayings of -Sandra Bland, Philando Castile, Eric Garner, Michael Brown Jr., and George Floyd - Black people at the hands of local
law enforcement. These encounters permeate mistrust and do little to encourage Blacks to trust their government.

This section presents scholarly literature explaining how public trust and political efficacy contribute to our understanding of Black political participation. The literature acknowledges trust and political efficacy influence Black political participation differently than whites. While traditional wisdom says trust and political efficacy increase political participation, we see from the literature that Black political participation does not align with this school of thought. In fact, the studies demonstrate mistrust as a motivator for participation. Scholars do not widely find that Black electoral participation is impacted by trust. Southwell and Pirch found cynicism as a leading factor in voter turnout. Conversely, the scholars did not find political efficacy as a significant influence on voter turnout for Blacks but did for nontraditional protest behavior.

**Group Interest**

"The spatial isolation of Negroes from whites created Negro 'communities' and increased consciousness of their separate subordinate positions. This, in turn, gave rise to black institutions, black politics, and black folkways and class ways behind the dark curtain. This complex of forces led to the rise of the black culture."

(Hanes Walton Jr., pg.26, 1985)

While mistrust and political efficacy have been identified as predictors of participation, another leading factor is group interest. Blacks in the United States have a unique experience and viewpoint of belonging. We carry the weight of our race in our accomplishments and failures. As a race, we work collectively to
overcome national transgressions instead of making decisions that would benefit us individually. The continued perception of racial injustice and systemic racism perpetuate a sense of community and we-ness embedded in Black culture. That is not to say Blacks are monolithic, but we recognize our socio-political strife is merely for being Black in America.

The shared cultural experiences and behaviors are intellectualized in the concept of group identity. Researchers of Black politics have used many terms to describe this phenomenon: common fate, linked fate, racial solidarity, and race/group consciousness. They each parallel a belief system that minorities' political decision-making is not individualistic but rather decided based on the benefits to their race. This study will explore the ideology of group interest to grasp how it impacts Black political participation.

The theory of linked fate advises Blacks who think their life experience influences the entire race. Linked fate theorists believe race/ethnic minorities have developed group customs that influence their political decision-making as a collective (Dawson, 1994). According to Avery, group consciousness "involves the perception of continued discrimination, racial inequality, and discontent with Blacks' power in government and society" (Avery, 2006). Although there is diversity in Blacks' socio-economic status, historical political experiences have united Blacks' political action. This shared belief- what happens to one Black person is bound to happen to others- "creates a rational basis for choosing to act
collectively, since the success of the individual is dependent in part on the
treatment given to the larger group" (Escaleras, Kim, and Wagner, 2019). Linked
fate and group consciousness center group political interest and encourage
marginalized communities to engage politically.

Avery's 2006 study examined group consciousness, mistrust, and Black
political engagement using National Black Election Studies data from 1984
(Jackson, Gurin, & Hatchett, 1984) and 1996 (Tate, 1996). He used both data sets
to compare the results across two presidential administrations and noted the
political ethos as a lead factor in understanding Black political behavior during
the period. Ronald Reagan was a conservative president without a Black agenda.
In fact, during his eight years in office, Reagan cut social welfare programs and
was unsupportive of civil rights issues.

On the contrary, Bill Clinton was wholly supported by the Black
community and received endorsements from Black leaders. Avery opines the data
may be limiting but recognizes if the hypotheses are supported over the two very
different political periods, it will confirm Black political behavior is not specific
to a particular period or political context. He found during both political cycles,
"Blacks with more vital racial group consciousness-perceptions of continued
discrimination, racial inequality, and discontent with Black's power in
government and society- were less trusting than Blacks with lower levels of group
consciousness (Avery, 2009)."

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To determine participants' level of black consciousness, Avery looked at common fate, experiences of racial discrimination, discontent with the power structure, and racial and economic inequality across the two political cycles. He found that "overall, group consciousness significantly impacts Blacks' trust in government. His findings on group consciousness are consistent with other scholars such as Shingles, Bobo, and Gilliam (Shingles, 1981, Bobo and Gilliam, 1990).

Avery points out that "correctly perceiving racial discrimination is key to understanding mistrust among African Americans (Avery, pg. 666, 2006)". In his exploration of mistrust, he found that Blacks with less trust in the government participated in collective and individual protests more than those with greater confidence in the government. In contrast, mistrust was not a significant motivator of voter turnout in 1984 or 1996. Lastly, Avery discovers that political efficacy (internal or external) was not a motivator for Blacks to engage in political participation in either data set.

Robert Shingles' 1981 study uses Verba and Nie's 1967 survey from Participation in America to investigate black political participation further and why Americans choose one mode of involvement over another. His findings purport Black consciousness is a lead factor for political participation. Shingles found when looking at blacks and whites of equal socio-economic status; Blacks were more politically engaged. He furthers his analysis by investigating low-
income groups and discovered poor blacks with higher levels of black consciousness possess higher levels of internal efficacy and mistrust than their white counterparts and engage in political participation at higher rates. Overall, Shingles' study concludes Blacks with high black consciousness, internal efficacy, and mistrust have higher rates of political activity at a comparable socio-economic level as Whites (Shingles, 1981).

Leighly and Vedlitz analyzed data from a Texas statewide survey conducted in late 1993 and early 1994 to determine if Anglo and African American motivations explain the political behaviors of Asian Americans and Mexican Americans. They analyze five models of participation socio-economic status (SES), psychological resources, social connectedness, group consciousness, and group conflict. Leighly and Vedlitz found socio-economic status, psychological resources, and social connectedness are positive predictors of participation across all racial groups. At the same time, the intergroup distance measured by group consciousness was only found to be a predictor of participation for Asian Americans and Blacks. Leighly and Vedlitz, contrary to other scholars (Tate, 1991, Avery, 2006), found that group consciousness negatively impacts Black and Asian Americans to engage politically (Leighly and Vedlitz, 1999).

The research in this section emphasizes the impact group identity has on political participation. The majority of the studies show group consciousness
positively influences political participation. Notwithstanding, Leighly and Vedlitz study, in which their study found group consciousness demobilized Black and Asian Americans. These studies suggest that Blacks with group consciousness channel distrust and political efficacy differently than Whites.

**Political Participation**

Blacks' use of political engagement is typically highlighted in the Civil Rights movement; however, as noted earlier, Blacks entered the political arena in America long before the 1950s. The Civil Rights era is recognized as the movement that successfully ended rigid racial structures that oppressed blacks for decades. During the 1950s and 1960s, Blacks had the right to vote but were lambasted by some whites, Black codes, and racist policies that prevented them from voting. The Civil Rights movement, as Bayard Rustin -civil rights activist and adviser to Martin Luther King Jr.- advised, the movement was compelled to move from a protest movement to a social action group with political power to balance the inequalities in America (Bayard, 1965).

Political participation is a right we have as citizens to impact the local, state and federal political landscape. That said, the right to vote and the liberty to are not the same. "... the United States developed from the beginning a unique socio-economic structure and a political apparatus which was simultaneously racist, stubbornly capitalist, and committed to a limited form of bourgeois democracy: a racist/capitalist state. In electoral politics, free blacks from the
eighteenth century onward found it difficult, if not impossible, to exercise the franchise "(Marable, pg.4, 2007).

Electoral politics has not always been an avenue for blacks. However, since the Voting Rights Act of 1965, blacks have utilized their right to impact the policy arena. While suppression tactics are still being used, the black voting bloc's participation has grown and, in 2012, exceeded that of whites by 2.1% electing President Barack Obama (Taylor and Lopez, 2013).

Blacks voting behavior has been influenced by historical experiences detailed earlier, a continued feeling of inefficacy and mistrust in government, and a lack of understanding of how their vote impacts their day-to-day lives. Black people were beaten, burned, drowned, and lynched to deter them from participating in the electoral process. Jordan and Kadalie assert, "In spite of the significant progress African Americans have made through participation in the nation's electoral institutions, the politics of African Americans ... has more often than not occurred outside the nation's electoral institutions and has frequently involved litigation and protest"(Walton, pg. xxxvi,1994)

Marginalized people used nontraditional ways such as sit-ins, protests, revolts, and civic engagement to affect policies throughout American history. It is as old as our country and is a path of resistance to the status quo that marginalized blacks, natives, women, and other underrepresented groups have utilized to influence policies. "Organized protest against white domination has always been
on the cornerstones of the black experience... Blacks interested in social change inevitably gravitate to this "protest community" where they hope to find solutions to a complex problem" (Morris, pg. x., 1984).

Non-electoral participation is a "boots to the ground" process that requires coalition building, mobilization, and tenacity. Research suggests traditional participation (campaigning and electoral participation) demands participants have a high level of knowledge, power, money, and influence beyond determination. Studies show that poor and underrepresented groups often employ nontraditional methods because they lack the financial resources and capital to operate conventional participation routes (Verba and Nie, 1972). "The pattern of black protest leading to an expansion of civil rights and the subsequent contraction of these very rights through state-sanctioned violence is durable, and it is integral to the way the American political system has developed" (Francis, 2014).


Reverend T. J. Jemison, along with other clergies, the NAACP, and community members, mobilized under the United Defense League (UDL) to
protest the Baton Rouge bus system policy limiting where blacks could sit on the bus. Blacks utilized the public bus system to travel around the city, making up a large majority of the bus companies’ patronage. To be influential, the leadership understood blacks still had to get to and from work, and a network of blacks created a free car service to transport community members around the city.

The UDL understood if blacks did not ride buses, this would affect the bus company's bottom line. In fact, the boycott caused the bus company to lose $1600 a day (Morris, 1984). After ten days of protest, the Baton Rouge Bus boycott ended on June 25, 1963. The executive council of the UDL agreed to the compromise with the city, in which two front seats were reserved for whites, the rear seat was reserved for blacks and everywhere else was on a first-come, first-served basis (Morris, 1984). Morris details the frustration of some UDL members with the compromise. However, he notes, "that does not diminish its importance as a major victory against the Jim Crow system in Baton Rouge" he goes on to say, "...A victory for the entire community. It was the first evidence that the system of racial segregation could be challenged by mass action" (Morris pg.25, 1984). Morris concludes, "In a loud and clear voice, the civil rights movement demonstrated to those groups that organized nontraditional politics was a viable method of social change, capable of bringing about the desired results far faster than traditional methods (Morris, p.288., 1984)".
This section presented a historical understanding of black political experiences in America to foreground the study. I then explored the literature to lay the groundwork for a scholarly account of participation. There is a clear understanding that blacks' political behavior is unlike that of whites. The chapter then acknowledges and questions the effects group consciousness and linked fate has on blacks' political participation. A paradigm shift is essential to study Black political participation. The literature presented has demonstrated how group identity - black consciousness -, mistrust, and political efficacy interplay with one another to impact how and when Blacks enter the political system.

**Conclusion**

This chapter examines significant findings of political participation - mistrust, political efficacy, and group interest - literature that contribute to our understanding of black political participation. The focus on black political participation literature is important because these factors provide the theoretical foundation for my dissertation and will be further explored in Chapter 3.
“If one looks at the history of struggles against racism in the US, no change has ever happened simply because the president chose to move in a more progressive direction. Every change that has happened has come as a result of mass movements.”
Angela Davis, 2016

Chapter 3
Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This chapter outlines the dissertation's theoretical and methodological framework and describes the data collection processes. This study employs critical race theory (CRT) and group identity as the lens to understand the intersectionality of race and political participation. After a complete discussion of the theories presented, I introduce the readers to Black Political Literacy (BPL) and enlighten them on why I developed the program and how it fits into my dissertation analysis. Lastly, I will discuss the data used in the research study.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

CRT is a multidisciplinary methodology that centers on race, racism, and power. The method was designed by way of critical legal studies (CLS) in the 1970s by legal scholars Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, Richard Delgado, and Kimberle’ Crenshaw. "...legal scholars across the country realized, more or less simultaneously, that the heady advances of the civil rights era of the 1960s had stalled and, in many respects, were being rolled back" (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017). The founders questioned how the law and political institutions claiming to
be race-neutral conspire to propagate racial oppression rather than support dismantle oppressive laws and policies.

Since then, critical race theory has taken on a life of its own and has been used across academic disciplines. CRT allows political scientists like myself-interested in the complex nature of race and politics- to center race and critique how racism manifests in policy, institutions, and political participation.

In Barbara Graham's book chapter, Toward a Critical Race Theory in Political Science (2007), she critiques the field of political science's hesitance to accept CRT as a noteworthy methodology for "dismantling" critical race politics. Like Graham, Katherine Tate emphasizes the deficiencies in the field, asserting "it was clear that a true understanding of the politics of black Americans could not emerge comparatively, specifically in contrasting black political behavior against white political behavior (Tate, pg.93, 2015)". Researchers in political science have limited analytical frameworks to analyze the intersection of race and politics accurately and thoroughly.

Graham notes there is no singular methodology critical race theorists employ. However, two philosophies bind them: "The first is to understand how a regime of white supremacy and its subordination of people of color have been created and maintained in America, and, in particular, to examine the relationship between that social structure and professed ideals such as 'the rule of law' and 'equal protection. The second is a desire not merely to understand the vexed bond
between law and racial power but to change it" (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, and Thomas, xiii, 1995). Graham concludes her chapter by encouraging political scientists to embrace CRT: "Scholarship on race in political and legal contexts will be advanced by looking beyond the confines of the traditional subfields of political science and drawing upon the interdisciplinary work of CRT" (Graham, 226, 2007).

**Group Identity**

Delgado and Stefancic advise that CRT recognizes the importance of group interest, group identity and the necessity to cultivate coalition building aligned with the collective (2017). With that understanding, group identity theory and its principles complement the essence of two of the CRT tents used in this research: racism is salient, and race and power are socially constructed. Group identity is a sense of commonality and shared circumstances that encourage racial and ethnic groups to become politically involved (Dawson, 1994). Chapter 2 exhaustively details the two principles of group identity employed in the analysis - group consciousness (black consciousness), which involves the perception of continued discrimination, racial inequality, and discontent with blacks' power in government and society (Avery, 2006). And linked fate theorizes that blacks who think their life experience influences the entire race and their effects on political engagement (Dawson, 1994). In sum, scholars have a consensus that group
consciousness and linked fate profoundly affect political participation among marginalized people (Shingles, 1981; Sanchez and Vargas, 2016).

For hundreds of years, Blacks have worked together to confront socio-political dominance in America, from slave revolts to the Civil Rights movement and now the Black Lives Matter movement. Black people cannot win freedom and liberty individually; an alliance with shared values is necessary for progression. Dawson (1994) confirms the importance of kinship in moving the needle of justice and progress for black people. He suggests Blacks had to consider the "we"-group's welfare before individual interests in decision-making. The "we-ness" is deep-rooted in the black culture and can be a powerful motivator for occupying the political sphere. We saw this in the 2020 congressional race in Georgia.

Grounding the research in the theoretical frameworks of group identity and critical race theory permitted the participants' lived experiences to shine throughout the dissertation. The participants were recruited via the snowball method and social media (Facebook and Instagram); this enabled a much further reach in collecting data across the country. A total of 11 survey respondents completed the interview, four of which attended a Black Political Literacy. Their counter-stories allow readers to absorb the participants' lived experiences with an empathetic ear. All too often, black voices have been censored or silenced in political science; the discipline has centered on the white experience, and all other
races/ethnicities' experiences are "othered." For this reason, I made a conscious effort to position the black experience in hopes this research will provide a glimpse into the underpinnings of black socio-political engagement.
The 2020-21 Student United Way One-Time grant funds allowed me the opportunity to pilot the Black Political Literacy program. The program was created with three outcomes: educate, empower and close the federal/local voter turnout gap.

- Educate Black people about local politics and the impact local policies have on their day-to-day lives.
- Empower Blacks to occupy space in their local political system and recognize they have the power to be change agents in their community.
- Close the gap in federal and local -city and state- Black voter turnout. I anticipate an increasing interest in local politics and voter turnout, with an
understanding of how local policies affect daily lives (Federal turnout is larger).

In the Spring of 2017, I took Dr. Kimball's Multi-Method Research Design class. In the course, we analyzed voter turnout during the 2017 Mayoral election. We found only 28% of registered voters voted in the primary and general Mayoral elections, while 69% of registered voters cast a ballot for the general presidential election (Dolly and Martin, 2017). The data was eye-opening, to say the least; it gave me a pragmatic illustration of the gap in national and local voter turnout.

As the Department of Justice report on the City of Ferguson detailed in chapter 2 reveals, city government policies can have disastrous effects on a community. "Over time, Ferguson’s police and municipal court practices have sown deep mistrust between parts of the community and the police department, undermining law enforcement legitimacy among African Americans in particular" (DOJ, 2015). Understanding the voter turnout gap for local elections and knowing the impact city and state decision-making has on our day-to-day lives. I demonstrate real-life historical and contemporary experiences of political engagement in BPL sessions.

I firmly understand that “people who are more knowledgeable in the political realm and who feel more efficacious to influence political decisions are more politically active”(Reichert, 2016). The research shows civic knowledge can create a sense of internal political effectiveness, which activates political
participation. Alvarez-Padilla, Hylton, and Sims conducted an intervention workshop- Civic Literacy Project- over three years with Upward Bound high school students. Their intervention analyzed high school students; however, the results gleaned from the study are worth mentioning. After attending civic literacy workshops and engaging in political participation, they found that students displayed increased political efficacy (Alvarez-Padilla, Hylton, and Sims, 2020).

This study, and the research presented in chapter 2, inform the Black Political Literacy program outcomes. While their study was conducted on high school students, I believe, and research supports, political knowledge for adults equates to political action.

Unfortunately, the education system does not do a great job of detailing blacks' entrance into politics in America. Our history has been white-washed, and often black political participation starts with the Civil Rights Movement. Even still, the portrayal of the Civil Rights Movement is not fully explained. The teachings seem to uplift the non-violent movement. They do not accurately represent the many facets of black folks fighting to move the needle of equity, the black agenda, and the denouncement of white supremacy throughout the movement. Some may think historical references are not essential, but I argue that understanding the history of America and Blacks' ongoing fight against injustices is imperative for us to move forward. An African Ghanaian proverb from the Akan people says, "to go back and get it" the adage - the grounding
philosophy for the Black Political Literacy program - instructs us we must fully absorb and accept our ancestry experiences for progression to occur.

Many American patriots - of all ancestries- revere the history of the founding of America, and it encourages them to engage in politics. I want Blacks to recognize our ancestors' political contributions at every point in American political history, revere them, and be emboldened that their voice and actions-voting- matter. The time is up for the struggle narrative of Black political participation! I am in no way saying change happened swiftly, but the woeful narrative must end. Black Political Literacy sessions are narrated through a lens of triumph; as a political science student, I grasp that change is incremental. It is imperative that participants get that each slave revolt, protest, sit-in, the election of a black representative, vote, and letter/call to officials matter. I want participants to understand we do not have to win each battle. Still, the fight for equity and the total dismantling of white supremacy and institutional racism - will only be won if we are indefatigable in the struggle.

For that reason, we cannot depend on the system to inform us of the knowledge needed to enter the political domain. Initially, I started the program to encourage people to vote in local and state elections. Now I realize the true purpose is to enlighten participants, so they make informed decisions to engage in the political system. In the past, I held to the idea that "you cannot complain if you don't vote," but my viewpoint has changed. I believe an informed black
citizen that consciously decides not to vote in objection to the candidates' agendas makes more sense than an ill-informed black person voting. While I know voting effectively impacts local policies, not doing so also influence policy outcomes and informs agenda-setting.

Candidates depend on political forecasting and analyses when campaigning to determine electoral behaviors. When they rely on the black voting bloc to endorse them, but they don't, that sends a clear message to the candidate and party that they are not addressing the challenges and concerns of blacks. With this in mind, my objective was to enlighten participants with tangible representations to make policy efforts relatable to everyday Black people.

At this time, I am offering a foundation session to adult participants. In the future, I would like to offer sessions for school-age children starting with middle school and up. I think political fundamentals should be taught earlier in schools, just like the education system has done with financial literacy. The sooner we teach political literacy to our youth, the more they will become politically savvy earlier in life and positively impact their community.

**Black Political Literacy Sessions**

The program was designed to meet the need I saw to educate Black people on the effects local politics has on our daily lives. After discussing the program with some committee members, capturing data during the sessions was
recommended to inform my dissertation research. With this in mind, the sessions became a part of the data collection process.

Like the other data collected, recruitment for the sessions happened via social media and word of mouth. I conducted two sessions via Zoom, one in December 2021 and one in January 2022. Another session was scheduled in January, but I experienced technical issues with Zoom and had to cancel the session. In total, 12 people attended the BPL sessions; however, only 50% of the participants completed the entire program by creating an action plan. Although only six participants completed the whole program, 11 of the 12 completed the questionnaire, and the data is used in the research. Recruiting a larger sample of participants became a challenge. At the time, we were knee-deep in Covid-19, and I’m presuming many people were experiencing Zoom fatigue. On the one hand, Covid-19 created an obstacle in enlisting participants; on the other hand, it allowed space for a more diverse sample by including participants across the country.

Before the start of each session, participants completed an original survey to assess political knowledge, political motivation, trust, political efficacy, group consciousness, and linked fate. The BPL sessions take a unique teaching approach, imparting historical contributions through the lens of strength and political achievements to arouse and inspire participants to engage in the political arena. After the 60-minute session, participants completed an action plan detailing
a strategy to impact their local political landscape. The program aims to equip participants with the information needed to immediately engage in local politics and become change agents in their community.

**Hypotheses**

This research seeks to examine the relationship between trust, efficacy, group consciousness, and linked fate on black political participation. I postulate trust and efficacy will impact black's political participation specifically: as mistrust and efficacy increase, so will political participation. The hypothesis is duly supported by much research; what will be more contributory is determining if mistrust and efficacy motivate one kind of political activity over another. Shingles (1981) and Avery (2009) agree that greater distrust creates upsurges in non-electoral participation. According to Avery, an increase in "protest types of participation that are historically rooted in the civil rights movement and are often motivated by a strong desire for social and political change" (2009, p.132). I propose there will be no significant difference in Blacks with high mistrust and efficacy engaging in one type of political participation over the other. I believe mistrust and efficacy breed a desire to change the system via voting and protest actions at the same rate.

Secondly, I hypothesize that blacks with high levels of black consciousness will engage in political participation at higher rates than those with low levels of black consciousness. While literature maintains mistrust, efficacy,
group consciousness, and linked fate are motivators to engage in political activity (Dawson 1994; Tate 1993), the data these studies employed to understand, Black political participation is antiquated. There have been significant socio-political changes since researchers came to said conclusions. Therefore, I present these hypotheses in a contemporary context to revisit and understand what black political engagement looks like in the twenty-first century.

**Description of Data and Methods**

The analysis will employ a mixed-method approach utilizing original survey data, BPL session chats, and interviews. The data were collected in three phases from December 2021 until March 2022. Participants engaged in sixty-minute Black Political Literacy (BPL) sessions in the first phase. Participants were recruited via social media and snowball sampling. Before each session, participants completed a survey, and after the informative session completed their action plan. The BPL sessions provided survey data, chat sessions, and participant action plans which informed the exploration of motivation and behaviors. Due to the recruiting obstacle, I put the program on hold and focused on collecting the surveys and interviews.

Phase two came out of a need to reach more people quickly and increase the sample size. I took to social media with the survey (Appendix A) offered in the BPL session to gather enough participants for a decent sample. Respondents from phases 1 and 2 completed an identical online survey via Qualtrics. Each
participant answered questions measuring political knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors, including varying questions to determine black consciousness. Respondents were asked, if interested, to sign up for an in-depth 60-minute interview. The sample size of survey respondents (n= 63) was sufficient for testing the hypotheses.

In phase three, I conducted interviews in February and March 2022 via Zoom with respondents that signed up while completing the survey. I designed the interview sessions as a conversation. I used the questions as a guide post to continue the dialogue delving further into socio-political behaviors and motivation to participate in politics. I conducted eleven interviews (from a total sample size of n=63) during the last phase of the data collection.

This research centers Black voices and experiences in the political arena. With that in mind, only participants who self-identified as black and over the age18 were recruited for the study. Participants for phases 1 and 2 of the data collection were recruited via Facebook, Instagram, and snowball sampling.

**Operationalization of Variables**

H₁: Blacks with high mistrust and efficacy will engage in political participation at higher rates.

H₂: Blacks with a sense of group consciousness and linked fate engage in politics at higher rates than those with low levels of group consciousness and linked fate.
Do trust and efficacy influence Black electoral and non-electoral participation at the same?

**Dependent Variables** - Utilizing the primary survey data collected, I will assess the relationship between the dependent variable participation and the independent variables' trust and efficacy for the first hypothesis and linked fate and group consciousness for the second hypothesis.

Political Participation, the dependent variable, is comprised of four questions 20-point scale. If participants measured at a 12 or less on the scale, it’s assumed as low political participation; on the other hand, if they received a 13 or greater the participant exhibits high political participation. The questions posited are below:

*In the past year, have you:*
  *Voted in an election?*

*In the past two years, have you:*
  *Attended a meeting to discuss issues facing the community?*
  *Attended a protest march, demonstration, or rally?*
  *Contacted a government office about a problem you have or to get help or information?*

The possible answers below are in order of point assignment (1-5), with the last answer amounting to 5 points.

*I think I did that; I can’t remember for sure*
*I did not do this, and I am unlikely to do this*
*I did not do this, but I might do this in the future*
*I did not do this, but I will definitely do this in the future*
*Yes, I am certain I did that last year*
As a follow-up to the first hypothesis, I propose mistrust and efficacy will impact voting and non-electoral participation at the same rate. In analyzing the effects of distrust and efficacy on non-electoral participation and voting, the variable *non-electoral* was produced, with the last three questions listed above. Multiple regression analysis determines the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

**Independent Variables**

Trust is measured by the question, “How much time do you think you can trust the criminal justice system?“ Trust has a 4-point scale, with two or less signifying high trust in the government, while three or greater indicate distrust. The possible answers below are in order of point assignment (1-4).

- *Just about all the time*
- *Most of the time*
- *Only sometime*
- *Never*

Political efficacy also is quantified by one question asking, "Agree or Disagree? I don't think public officials care much about what people like me think". Efficacy has a scale of 1 to 4, ranging from strongly agree (1), indicating less efficaciousness, to strongly disagree (4), demonstrating high political efficacy.

Linked fate is measured using two questions with a scale of 1-6 because the first question has four possible responses, and the second has two options, yes and no. Participants who recorded less than three do not exhibit linked fate, while
those that recorded four or greater on the scale demonstrate a sense of linked fate. The questions measuring linked fate are: Do you believe what generally happens to black people will affect what happens in your life? Do you believe African Americans have similar economic interests?

The black consciousness variable has two questions: How important is being Black to your identity? How much would you say that Blacks in this country have a lot in common with one another? Group consciousness is measured on a 10-point scale. Participants who ranked three and below demonstrated low group consciousness, while those that ranked four and greater had a high level of group consciousness.

Motivation, another independent variable, is computed using five questions with a scale of 1-25. The questions measure how important factors such as: bringing social change, bringing justice to those affected by injustices, commitment to uplifting the community, meeting like-minded individuals, and if they believe voting is important in motivating them to participate in social activism. The possible answers below are in order of point assignment (1-5), with the last answer amounting to 5 points.

- Not at all important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important
Participants who are less motivated measure between 10-13, while participants who rank 14 above are highly motivated to engage in social activism.

The last independent variable is political knowledge—nine questions tested for the familiarity of local and state public officials' roles. The questions were pretty straightforward. The possible answers are yes, assigning 2 points for yes, and 1 point for no. The political Knowledge scale ranges from 1-18. Participants that scored six and below ranked low in the political measurement battery, while seven and above measured high on the political knowledge scale.

**Qualitative data**

I utilized a mixed-method approach to add depth to the research. The participant interviews and BPL chats enrich the data by responding to the complex research question. The study employed snowball sampling, a common practice in qualitative research whereby people make referrals to others that meet the research requirements.

The Black Political chats allowed participants to discuss their experiences within the political sphere and offer feedback on the presentation. The chat sessions were informal, but relative information was discussed that strengthened the study.

The interviews for this study included approximately eleven black people from across the United States. All interviews were conducted via zoom between February and March 2022. The sample included four males, five females, and two
people that identified as non-binary. Eight of the 11 hold at least a Bachelor’s degree and the other three are former military. Two of the interviewees are retired military and have Associate degrees.

Pseudonyms are used in this paper. Unrecognizability was ensured regarding names so that participants are not easily recognizable. All participants were open and honest about their experiences. I allowed participants to speak as much or as little as they saw fit. While each interview was set for an hour, a few went over, and it seemed interviewees had an outlet they did not know they needed. As such, some information that was shared was not asked of the participants but is relevant to the topic and will be shared in the findings.

In analyzing the qualitative data, a preliminary exploration of the data was conducted by reading through the transcripts; I then coded the data by categorizing and identifying common themes from the responses. Several themes emerged from the interviews: a sense of diminished trust and political efficacy, police violence accountability, political knowledge is essential for increased political participation, and salient social justice issues tend to inspire political engagement.

Questions asked to participants are below:

How did you get interested in local government issues?
Was there something specific that got you interested?
Is there an area of local government where you would like to get more involved?
If so, explain what that area is?
In responding to the survey question about whether local officials care about what you think, did you have any specific issues in mind?
In responding to the survey question about what generally happens to black people, do you believe black people have the same political and economic ideas and beliefs overall?
What do you think motivates black people to get involved in politics or not?
Has the BLM movement motivated you in any way? If so, how?
When you think about the criminal justice system, do you believe in reform? If so, what does that look like to you?
What are the most important policy issues that should be addressed at each government-federal, state, and local level?

I employed multiple linear regression analysis to determine how the independent variables - trust, political efficacy, group consciousness, and linked fate, motivation, and political knowledge- impact the dependent variables political participation, voting, and non-electoral participation. The secondary theory posited will be analyzed via a multiple linear regression model to determine if mistrust and efficacy affect voting and non-electoral participation at the same rate. The data findings and analysis will be presented in Chapter 4.

Conclusion

In this study, critical race theory and group identity converge to center Black counter-stories and experiences in the political sphere. CRT theory situates counter-stories while acknowledging race and racism as driving forces in law and politics. It authorizes an evaluation of politics while revealing intolerances in research, policy decision-making, and laws. In political science, much research focuses on the White experience and accepts the findings as the baseline measurement of political participation. Therefore, the study of Black political
participation is viewed as an enigma needing a different archetype to understand fully.

Conventional literature, albeit narrow-minded, declares people who trust the government, and believe they can shape policies, are the most politically active. Contrary to the general model of political participation, political efficacy is not entirely accepted as a significant factor in Black political engagement. Pierce and Carey (1971) examined Black residents of New Orleans and found high efficaciousness as a driving force for protest participation but not for traditional participation. Southwell and Pirch (2003) also found efficacy had no impact in their study on Black political participation. The research grounding efficaciousness is inconclusive in determining the effects on participation.

On the other hand, researchers found significant evidence that Black participation is stimulated by the lack of trust in the government. Scholars attribute group consciousness and linked fate for this stirring that occurs in Blacks. Because we share a cultural belief that social injustices such as police violence and discriminatory practices in housing and education can happen to any of us, this, in turn, generates the desire in Blacks to advocate for policy change. Scholars Shingles (1981), Avery (2006, 2009), and Dawson (1994) analyses found group consciousness diminishes trust but positively influences Blacks' nonelectoral participation. Similarly, Southwell and Pirch found cynicism (distrust) and high group consciousness increased Black voter turnout in the 1996
and 2000 presidential elections (Southwell and Pirch 2003). The research grounding Black political efficaciousness is inconclusive in determining the impact on participation.

In the next chapter, I will introduce the quantitative and qualitative results and provide explanations of my findings for the hypothesized relationships presented earlier in this chapter.
"The only way we can make this thing of equality a reality in America is to do all we can to destroy this system and bring this out to the light that has been under the cover all these years."

- Fannie Lou Hamer.

Chapter 4

Findings and Analysis

The research design was detailed in the previous chapter. This chapter reports the results from the survey experiment and interviews as they pertain to the set of hypotheses based on the theoretical framework presented. I will detail how mistrust, efficacy, and group consciousness inspire Black's drive to enter the political arena. To reiterate and summarize the research question, this research hypothesizes that a lack of trust and political efficacy, a sense of black consciousness, and linked fate motivate Blacks' to participate in both electoral and non-electoral participation.

The study identifies critical concepts that increase Black people's involvement in politics. This research takes a mixed-method approach to determine if the identified predictors are related to Black political participation. The quantitative data for the analysis looked at six predictive variables: a) mistrust in the criminal justice system, b) political efficacy, c) Black consciousness, d) linked fate, e) motivation, and f) political knowledge. The dependent variables for the hypotheses include a) overall political participation, b) non-electoral participation, and c) voting. Lastly, the interviews enrich the data.
collected and create a narrative to explicate the participants' experiences in local politics.

Three research questions were addressed by conducting descriptive and correlational analyses to discover the significance of the predictor variables in explaining variation in the dependent variable. The survey data was compiled and entered into the statistical analysis software R Studio to perform linear and multiple linear regression analyses.

As a researcher, it is essential to know the research participants; therefore, demographic data was collected. The table below (Table 4.1) details the demographics of the participants. Respondents were recruited using a snowball sampling technique via social media. Participants were asked to assist in identifying potential subjects to participate in the Black Political Literacy sessions in phase one. In phase 2, participants and social media followers were asked to share the post on their social media to recruit potential subjects. Respondents were recruited from across the United States.

**Demographics of Participants**

The respondents all self-identified as Black; of those (n=62), 12% identified as immigrants. The gender question revealed that 66% of the respondents identified as Female (n=41), 31% were male (n=19), and 3% identified as non-binary (n=2). A large portion of respondents, 42%, have earned their Master's degree (n=26). Regarding income, 66% of the participants made
between $60,000 and $89,999 (n=20) and $90,000 between $149,000(n=21).

There was a sizable disproportion in party affiliation; over half of the sample
identified as Democrats, 27% were Independents, and 11 participants chose
"other." Not one participant identified as Republican. This is not surprising at all;
Blacks typically overwhelming identify as Democrats. Lastly, a plurality of
participants was married, 45% (n=28).

While collecting demographics is essential to the research, the
demographic data did not influence the outcome variable with any of the
hypotheses. Therefore, the remaining analysis will not include any demographic
variables in the models.
### Demographic Characteristics of Pilot Study Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ancestry</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descendant of enslaved Africans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in the United States</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminal Degree (Ph.D., J.D.)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Binary</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$29,999 or less</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000- $59,999</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000-$89,999</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$90,000-$149,999</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never married</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partisanship</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.1 Demographics of Survey Participants*
Quantitative Data Analysis

For each hypothesis, a linear regression model was produced for each predictor variable and dependent variable. None of the demographic categories were statistically significant predictors when observing political participation, non-electoral participation, or voting. If the predictor variable was not statistically significant, it was not presented in the final model for the hypothesis. I examined the remaining variables to assess and establish the impact on Black political participation.

Histograms, descriptive statistics (Appendix L), and scatterplots are presented along with correlation matrices, variance inflation (VIF) plots, a Breusch Pagan test, and the final multiple linear regression model summary. The histogram shows the major features of the distribution of the data. Scatterplots are presented to ascertain if a linear relationship exists between the predictor variables and the dependent variable of each model. A correlation analysis was conducted for each model to discover the significance of the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable. I checked the data to confirm the assumption of multicollinearity and heteroskedasticity were not violated.

The first two hypotheses explore political participation as the outcome variable. Therefore, the linear regression results below explain the outcomes for each predictor variable for both theories. The first hypothesis looks at mistrust and efficacy's effect on political participation. Neither of the predictor variables,
mistrust (p-value =0.166) (figure 4) nor efficacy (p-value =0.924), are statistically significant. Distrust appears to have a negative relationship with political participation—higher levels of mistrust in the criminal justice system are associated with lower levels of involvement. As shown in the scatterplot in figure 4.4, distrust appears to have a negative relationship with dependent participation.

Three predictor variables showed statistical significance in the linear regression models: Black consciousness (grp_cons), motivation, and political knowledge (pol_know) when investigating political participation. Table 4.2. shows each model's standard error, t-value, p-value, and lower and upper confidence intervals at 95%. After the model summary, each model's scatterplot is presented.

In some scatterplots, thicker circles represent multiple survey respondents, as seen from the linear models in table 4.2. and the scatterplots below, Black consciousness (p-value= 0.017) (Figure 4.1), motivation (p-value=0.001) (Figure 4.2), and political knowledge (p-value=0.010) (Figure 4.3), each individually positively influence Black political participation. The remaining predictor variable linked fate (p-value=0.792) was statistically insignificant and will not be presented in the analysis or the final multiple linear regression model for political participation.
### Table 4.2 Linear Regression Model Statistics for Political Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model Description</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Lower 95%</th>
<th>Upper 95%</th>
<th>R-squared</th>
<th>F-Statistic</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black Consciousness</td>
<td>0.704</td>
<td>0.287</td>
<td>2.450</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.129</td>
<td>1.279</td>
<td>0.091</td>
<td>6.002</td>
<td>0.0170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>0.372</td>
<td>0.106</td>
<td>3.506</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>0.585</td>
<td>0.170</td>
<td>12.290</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>0.377</td>
<td>0.142</td>
<td>2.644</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.092</td>
<td>0.661</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td>6.99</td>
<td>0.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistrust</td>
<td>-0.892</td>
<td>0.6271</td>
<td>-1.403</td>
<td>0.166</td>
<td>-2.134</td>
<td>0.375</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>1.968</td>
<td>0.166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black Consciousness</td>
<td>8.41</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked Fate</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>3-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>21.13</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>11-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Knowledge</td>
<td>13.81</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>9-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>2-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>1-4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4.2. Black Consciousness and Political Participation Linear Model Scatterplot

Figure 4.3. Motivation and Political Participation Linear Model Scatterplot
Figure 4.4. Political Knowledge and Political Participation Linear Model Scatterplot

Figure 4.5 Mistrust and Political Participation Linear Model
Foundations Hypothesis 1 and 2

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted for hypotheses 1 and 2 to understand how the explanatory variables (mistrust, Black consciousness, motivation, and political knowledge) impact political involvement. In analyzing the first hypothesis, two multiple linear regression models were conducted; however, only the final model will be explored in great detail.

The first model includes mistrust, political efficacy, motivation, and knowledge. The model shows distrust (p-value=0.145), efficacy (p-value=0.872), and political knowledge (p-value=0.244) are not statistically significant on the outcome variable. The only significant variable in the model is motivation, with a p-value of 0.002.

Interestingly, the statistically significant variables in the linear model appear to have less influence on the outcome when presented in the initial multiple regression model. For this reason, a correlation matrix is shown in Table 3 to ensure multicollinearity is not demonstrated in the model. Due to the small sample size, pairs of independent variables are analyzed. This allows for one variable of interest to be examined while controlling for another known predictor of political participation.
Two more parsimonious models are presented in this next section. The second analysis will look at efficacy and motivation, while the third will analyze mistrust and motivation. The correlation matrix (Table 4.4.) in the first multiple regression model for hypothesis 1 checked for multicollinearity among the independent variables; however, another check, the VIF scores for model 1a (efficacy and motivation), was run on the model. Indicating a VIF score of 1.08. The third model, 1b, checked for variables distrust and efficacy, with the VIF score shown in Appendix B of 1.037. Both model 1a and 1b scores are well below ten, the baseline threshold level that indicates a strong correlation.

The Breusch Pagan (BP) test was performed to check for heteroskedasticity in the model. Heteroskedasticity transpires when the variance for all observations in a data set is not the same. The presence of
heteroskedasticity violates the assumption of ordinal least square. The null hypothesis for the BP test suggests homoskedasticity exists in models 1a and 1b. Model 1a (Appendix C) BP test results indicate a value of 0.18894. Model 1b, as shown in Appendix D, suggests a value of 0.5006; both are greater than 0.05. We can accept the null hypothesis.

A Cook's distance (Appendix E) was executed on models 1a and 1b to verify no influential outliers. In regression explorations, Cook's D is used to find significant observations within the explanatory variables that could potentially negatively affect the model. There were few influential observations in either model. Model 1a, the Cook's D value is 0.14. The point with the most noteworthy Cook's D was 0.17 in model 1b. There are four outliers; however, they were not removed from the final model due to the sample size.

**Hypothesis 1 Results for Model 1a and 1b**

Model 1a analyzed the relationship between efficacy, motivation, and mistrust. As shown in Table 4.5, efficacy (p-value= 0.355) is a statistically insignificant predictor for Black political participation. On the other hand, motivation (p-value=0.001) -the desire to participate in social activism- is a significant predictor of political involvement. A 1-unit increase in motivation is associated with a 0.4 increase in the participation scale. This model explains 15% of the variance in Black political participation. As seen in Figure 4.5, the regression shows no clear relationship between the outcome variable participation
and efficacy. Motivation is depicted in the variation of the blue dots. As motivation increases, the bubbles become a light blue color.

Model 1b summary (Table 4.6) indicates a statistically significant relationship exists between mistrust (p-value = 0.026), motivation(p-value=0.0002), and political participation. As shown in Figure 4.6, political participation decreases as mistrust in government increases. A 1-unit increase in distrust accompanies a 1.3-unit decrease in the participation scale. On the other hand, as motivation increases, so does participants' political participation. This model explains 21% of the variance of political involvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis 1a Final Model for Political Participation and Efficacy, Motivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Efficacy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Estimate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Error</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>t-value</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>p-value</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lower 95%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Upper 95%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Adjusted R-squared** = 0.154

**F-Statistic** = 6.565

**P-value** = 0.003

*Table 4.5 Hypothesis 1a Final Model Efficacy and Motivation*
Figure 4.6 Hypothesis 1: Model1a Scatterplot exhibits the relationship between Political Participation, Efficacy, and Motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Lower 95%</th>
<th>upper 95%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mistrust</td>
<td>-1.309</td>
<td>0.571</td>
<td>2.291</td>
<td>0.0255</td>
<td>-2.452</td>
<td>-0.166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>0.417</td>
<td>0.105</td>
<td>3.994</td>
<td>0.0002</td>
<td>0.0002</td>
<td>0.627</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adjusted R-square | 0.212 | F-Statistic | 9.205 | P-value | 0.0003 |

Table 4.6. Hypothesis 1b Final Model
Hypothesis 2 Results

In this section, the second hypothesis will be explored: Blacks with moderate to a high sense of group consciousness and linked fate engage in politics at higher rates than those with low levels of group consciousness and linked fate. We will examine the relationships between Black consciousness, linked fate, motivation, political knowledge, and political involvement. The first multiple regression model indicates Black consciousness (p-value=0.129) and linked fate (p-value=0.625) are not statistically significant. It appears motivation (p-value=0.008) and political knowledge (p-value=0.053) are statistically significant.
To ensure multicollinearity does not exist in the initial multiple regression model, a correlation matrix is presented in Table 4.7. As displayed in Table 4.7, we see none of the correlations reached the .80 threshold; therefore, the independent variables do not violate the assumption of multicollinearity.

The final multiple regression model for hypothesis 2 includes explanatory variables for Black consciousness and political knowledge. The final model summary in Table 6 suggests a positive statistically significant relationship exists between Black consciousness, political knowledge, and political participation. As Black consciousness and political knowledge increase, so does political participation. A 1-unit increase in Black consciousness is associated with a .6-unit
rise in the participation scale, while a 1-unit increase in political knowledge is associated with a .3-unit increase in participation. These relationships are illustrated in Figure 4.7. Approximately 14% of the variance in political participation is accounted for in the model's explanatory variables' Black consciousness and political knowledge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis 2 Final Model Political Participation Black Consciousness and Political Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estimate Standard Error t-value p-value Lower 95% upper 95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R-squared</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.8. Hypothesis 2 Final Model Summary*
The correlation matrix in the initial model for hypothesis 2 checked for multicollinearity of all the predictor variables to ensure they were not highly correlated in the final model. The VIF plot in Appendix F confirms that the last model's VIF score of 1.022 does not violate the multicollinearity assumption.

The Breusch Pagan (BP)test was performed to check for heteroskedasticity in the model. Heteroskedasticity emerges when the variance for all observations in a data set is not the same. The presence of heteroskedasticity violates the assumption of ordinal least square. The null hypothesis for the BP test suggests homoskedasticity exists. As shown in Appendix G, the final model

![Figure 4.8 Final Model Hypothesis 2 Political Participation Black Consciousness and Political knowledge]
Breusch Pagan test indicates a p-value of 0.7059, which is greater than 0.05. We can accept the null hypothesis.

A Cook's distance was executed on the final model to verify no influential outliers exist. In regression explorations, Cook's D is used to find significant observations within the explanatory variables that could potentially negatively affect the model. There are a few influential observations; the point with the most noteworthy Cook's D is 0.12. However, the outliers were not removed from the final model because the sample size and Cook's D were less than 1.

**Foundation Hypothesis 3**

In this section, the last hypothesis will be addressed: do mistrust and efficacy impact Blacks' voting and non-electoral involvement at the same rate? Multiple linear regression was conducted with the six explanatory variables and vote. The model suggests none of the independent variables are statistically significant. It is worth noting the small sample size makes it challenging to estimate a regression equation with all of the independent variables together.

**Hypothesis 3 Results**

The initial model's p-value= 0.32; hence, more parsimonious models are needed to analyze electoral participation. Multiple linear regression was conducted to investigate the relationship between mistrust, motivation, and electoral participation. As shown in Table 4.9, distrust (p-value=0.72) and motivation (p-value=0.11) are statistically insignificant.
A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine Black consciousness and political knowledge influence Black electoral participation. We can see in Table 4.10, Black consciousness (p-value= 0.44) is not statistically significant in predicting Black voter turnout. Political knowledge (p-value= 0.08) is statistically significant. A 1-unit increase in political knowledge is associated with a .13-unit increase in electoral participation. Roughly 2% of the variance in electoral participation is explained in the model.

### Hypothesis 3a1 Final Model Electoral Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mistrust</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjusted R-squared</strong></td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td><strong>F-Statistic</strong></td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>P-value 0.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.9 Hypothesis 3a1 Model Electoral Participation*

### Hypothesis 3a2 Final Model Electoral Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black Consciousness</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Knowledge</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjusted R-squared</strong></td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td><strong>F-Statistic</strong></td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>P-value 0.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.10 Hypothesis 3a2 Model Electoral Participation*
Now, let's look at non-electoral participation. A multiple regression analysis was conducted with explanatory variables for mistrust and motivation. The model summary in Table 4.11 indicates distrust (p-value=0.01) and motivation (p-value=0.001) are statistically significant. A 1-unit increase in mistrust is associated with a 1.4-unit decrease in non-electoral participation, while a 1-unit increase in motivation is associated with a .3-unit rise in participation. Approximately 20% of the variance in non-electoral participation is accounted for in the model.

The last 3b2 model includes Black consciousness and political knowledge impact on non-electoral participation. Table 4.12 suggests the model is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.03. While the model is statistically significant, neither variable political knowledge (p-value=0.113) nor Black consciousness (p-value= 0.06) is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level, but Black consciousness is statistically significant at the 90% level. A larger sample size may have resulted in a statistically significant p-value at the 95% confidence interval. It is worth noting, as shown in Figure 4.9 Black consciousness has a positive relationship on non-electoral participation.
### Hypothesis 3b1 Final Model Non-Electoral Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mistrust</td>
<td>-1.42</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>-2.80</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjusted R-squared</strong></td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td><strong>F-Statistic</strong></td>
<td>8.49</td>
<td><strong>p-value</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.11 Hypothesis 3b1 Model Non-Electoral Participation*

### Hypothesis 3b2 Final Model Non-Electoral Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black Consciousness</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Knowledge</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjusted R-squared</strong></td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td><strong>F-Statistic</strong></td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td><strong>p-value</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.72 Hypothesis 3b2 Model Non-Electoral Participation*
Figure 4.8 Hypothesis 3b1 Final Model Mistrust Impact on Electoral Participation

Figure 4.9 Hypothesis 3b2 Final Model Black Consciousness and Political Knowledge Impact on Electoral Participation
Comparing the final models for the third hypothesis, 3a1 and 3b1, we can see that mistrust, motivation, and Black consciousness are not statistically significant for determining Black vote turnout; however, political knowledge predicts electoral participation. In models 3b1 and 3b2, we can see mistrust and motivation are significant influencers for Black non-electoral participation. As noted earlier, Black consciousness is insignificant—the p-value of 0.06 brushing against being statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval however, at the 90% level Black consciousness reaches statistical significance. While Black consciousness is a predictor of political participation, it is worth noting it is a better predictor of non-electoral participation. However, political knowledge is not influential in motivating Blacks to participate in protest acts. In the next section, I will connect the findings in the data analysis with the qualitative data to give the readers a complete understanding of Black political participation from the participants' perspective.

**Counter-stories with Data Findings**

An explanatory mixed-method approach was implemented for this research. The chosen method allows the qualitative data to provide rich, copious descriptions to convey the findings from the quantitative data. In this section, the participant responses are embedded in the analysis of the three hypotheses presented in the research.
As a reminder, the qualitative data included in the study were collected during the pilot program of Black Political Literacy (BPL) sessions and from people who volunteered for an in-depth interview after completing the second data collection phase. The BPL sessions were conducted from December 2021 to January 2022 via Zoom. Interviews were conducted from January to February 2022 also via Zoom. There was a total of 11 interviews completed. The interviews were semi-structured to create a space for an authentic conversation about Blacks’ attitudes and behaviors toward participating in local politics. Each interview was scheduled for one hour, though some lasted longer. The interviewees ranged from 23 to 45 years old from across the nation.

The dialogues obtained through the interviews were transcribed using Descript, an online paid transcription service. The transcripts were reviewed for common themes, and codes were created using NVivo, a qualitative statistical software program based on interconnected responses. NVivo software does not identify the themes for researchers, but it is an efficient software platform that allowed me to identify themes and trends in the data for coding quickly. The software then organizes the core metrics of the data for analysis. Qualitative data describes the information and cannot be measured. It is used to investigate participant's true feelings and actions.

The survey findings identify mistrust, motivation, Black consciousness, and political knowledge as predictors of Black political participation. The
hypotheses pertaining to efficacy and linked fate are not supported because neither efficacy nor linked fate was found to be a statistically significant predictor of political participation in the investigation of the quantitative data. Interestingly, several themes emerged in examining the qualitative data, which accompany the findings in the quantitative data. Specifically, a sense of high mistrust of government was identified as a factor of Black political participation. Several participants admitted their ignorance of the political process kept them from joining in the political process on the local level. Participants acknowledged the need for programs like BPL—which increases civic knowledge—, for informed decision-making. Problematic social justice issues motivate involvement—hopelessness and inexperience with policymaking deter Blacks from engaging in politics.

Participants were asked a series of questions (Appendix H) designed to assess their political involvement and desire to engage in politics on a local level. Also, I wanted to garner their general understanding of Blacks' sociopolitical behaviors, feelings, and inspiration to get involved in the political sphere. Respondents were candid about their experiences with the government and how it affects their views of politicians and politics.

Overall, the interviewees' evaluation of the government was low, which we also see in the quantitative findings for the first and third hypotheses. Interestingly, the initial hypothesis looked at political participation and found
mistrust is a substantial predictor of political engagement. However, mistrust was not statistically significant as a predictor when voting was investigated as the independent variable (hypothesis 3a). Phil (40, AZ) spoke about protesting and electoral participation in his interview; he shared,

"I just, I feel like having done (protest) that myself in the past, the real power, the real change is at the ballot."

Several participants acknowledged their mistrust of the government and their lack of confidence (efficacy) in participating in politics (Appendix I). Respondents conveyed they feel like their local politicians are not concerned with the needs of their community. When asked, "Whether local officials care about what you think, did you have any specific issues in mind? Tonya (33, IL) responded

"... local politicians in my area care about who's funding (the city). What brings the city the most money, as well as things that have to do with the university." Like Tonya, Antonia (24, IL) also believes money drives interest from politicians. She explained

"I don't think they care about what you think unless you like, make a lot of money or, Well, unless you make a lot of money and your white."

A common sentiment of the respondents is that politicians' decision-making is constructed on the neighborhood's socioeconomic status. Jay (28, IA) has a unique viewpoint.
"Well, I guess the answer is twofold. I am originally from Chicago. I grew up on the south side; there was a, I guess, quiet (un)spoken understanding that government didn't care too much about where I was from. My neighborhood wasn't holding any weight. We just didn't get looked at very much. So, in that regard, I don't really think that local government does care too much about our community. Now having moved to Iowa, the area that I live in is pretty well-off, and it feels like we get looked at as far as what changes should be made in the city and how impactful what we do in our city is to the overall, I guess, status of the state".

Of the 11 participants interviewed, 10 mentioned a lack of trust due to police violence (Appendix J). Some participants called the names of black people killed by police: George Floyd and Michael Brown Jr, while others stressed their concerns about police use of force against Blacks. Phil did not readily identify police brutality but alluded to police misconduct when asked about his interests in local politics:

"Anything dealing with the police departments. We've had some incidents here, not anything newsworthy or an international or national level, but dealing with race, dealing with immigration, which is really hot here, in, you know, Southwest, just their interactions with, the local community here."

The quantitative data revealed that political knowledge influences political participation, and the interviews support these findings. Seven of the 11 participants declared unequivocally that political knowledge empowers Black voters and motivates political participation. Julie attended a Black Political Literacy session in January 2022. During her interview, she expressed concerns about her neighborhood roads; she wanted to address the issues but did not know where to start. Here's what she had to say about the BPL session she attended.
"It was on my to-do., but after your session, it was a must-do. I mean, I can't unsee and unknow what I know now. There is this sense of responsibility that I cannot shy away from. Mm-hmm... When you know better, you do better.

Tonya, another respondent that attended a BPL session, felt being knowledgeable empowers her to be a change agent in her community.

"I, uh, got to know about the work that you're doing. And I had the chance to be a part of some of the conversations you had about it (politics) Um, that's what made me feel like I should know more about what's happening in my community, um, so that I know what to expect...and I could be a part of some sort of change."

After thematically analyzing my research interviews to answer the research questions, a few unexpected themes emerged, which were common, and added a surprising depth to the research. One of the themes found in the interviews, but was not measured in the qualitative data, is salient social justice issues motivate participation.

Seven of the eleven participants felt Black people become more engaged in the political process when prominent social justice issues are highlighted in the media on a national level (Appendix K). When asked what motivates Blacks to get involved in politics, Hank, a resident of Missouri, said,

"I think when items...What helps them if they can see direct things happening. So, unfortunately, it takes something major social injustices or, you know, something big for, you know, things to get moving, unfortunately."

Richard, also a resident of Missouri, noted the killing of Michael Brown Jr. as an impetus in which Blacks entered local politics. He said,

"From my experience is more of a reactive approach. When something goes wrong, that's when we tend to jump around and say, Hey, let's get involved and try to influence it. So, it's a reactive approach..."
Black consciousness was not discussed in the interviews; however, in the participant's responses to the queries, the "we-ness" is evident in each person's response. The discussions were laced with their experiences with the government and that of their ancestors and community. The most evidentiary example of Black consciousness is observed in the respondent's responses when I asked, "Has the Black Lives Matter movement motivated you in any way?". Richard responded

"I've been to a few protests because, uh, me, mainly because of what they support, uh, what, what we support. I guess we because black life is my life. Um, yeah. So, you know, it has helped empower me to step out and protest and be a part of it".

The "we-ness" discussed throughout this research paper is rooted in the participant's essence and was conveyed to me interview after interview. One respondent, Jay, summed it up nicely when he spoke about why Blacks lack trust in the government and see them as oppressors.

"My grandmother would share with my mom her fear. My mom would embody and internalize those fears. And behold, they'd get reinforced with her experiences, and then she'd share that with me, and I would internalize that fear, and it would get reinforced, uh, with my experiences."

Limitations of the Research

The findings lead to a rejection of the null hypothesis. Still, factors limit the oversimplifying of the quantitative results: the sample size of respondents determines the probability of the hypothesized models obtaining statistically significant coefficients. A larger sample size of respondents from across the
nation would increase the chances of predictor variables bearing statistical significance.

Another limitation is the timing in which the data was collected. At the time, we were amid COVID-19, mass layoffs and economic deprivation in Black communities, and the killing of blacks at the hand of police. These events may have impacted participants' responses.

Since its surfacing in December 2019, the COVID-19 outbreak has influenced people's lives in many ways. The poor and unequal living conditions disproportionately affected Black communities in the United States. The disparities in access to the internet displaced students, parents, and families and deprived already poor people; this may have impacted the data by skewing the recruitment of participants across social and economic statuses.

The sample size in the research is not an accurate representation of the overarching Black population in the United States. Of the participants, 69% have a Bachelor's degree or higher, and 33% of participants are considered middle class due to their income. The median income of the study participants was $90,000; this is not an accurate representation of Black Americans in the United States; however, their quantitative and qualitative responses are actual and contribute to the overall understanding of Black political participation.
Conclusion

This chapter presents the findings and an analysis of the quantitative data and interviews. Traditional thought says political efficacy and trust are positive predictors of political participation. Contrarily, the results from the research sample indicate efficacy is not a significant predictor for Black political participation. Black consciousness was found to be statistically significant for predicting political participation and protest types acts. The results suggest the desire to impact change (motivation) positively influences participation and non-electoral participation. Black political participation literature suggests a connection between linked fate and Black participation. The sample results indicate linked fate is insignificant in predicting participation. On the other hand, results show political knowledge is a substantial predictor of political engagement and voter turnout. As indicated in Chapter 2, politically savvy citizens are likelier than ill-informed citizens to vote.

The interviews are interwoven with the survey results to enrich the findings with an in-depth narrative of Black socio-political experiences in the United States. The discussions revealed complementary themes to the quantitative data. Participants discussed their lack of trust in local politicians and their concern about police violence in the Black community. Many interviewees suggested a need for education programs in the Black community to teach people how to engage in politics. They felt one reason participation in local politics is low is that
people are not knowledgeable about how policies affect their day-to-day lives.

Another theme that was not expected was that salient social justice issues -such as police violence- motivate Black political engagement.
The struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, or it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never has, and it never will. Find out just what a people will submit to, and you have found out the exact amount of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them; and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows, or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress.

- Frederick Douglass, 1857

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This dissertation sought to explore the factors that influence Black political participation. Black Americans have wrestled with attaining political power since 1663. The Servants Plot was the first documented challenge against the establishment of slavery, a policy still detrimental to Americans today. Historically and currently, Black Americans employ non-electoral methods to impact policy changes. One might see it as a traditional participation route for Blacks since it was the only way to influence political decision-making when voting was not an option. The research question presented here does a lack of trust, political efficacy, a sense of black consciousness, and linked fate motivate Blacks' to participate in electoral and non-electoral participation?

Group identity and critical race theory (CRT) are the dual frameworks employed as the theoretical foundation of the research. The frameworks work well together; they allow race and power, experiential knowledge or counter-stories, to be centered in analyzing political participation.
Summary of Findings

American political behavior literature suggests that trust in government, political efficacy, and knowledge are positively associated with political participation. Traditional literature, notwithstanding its closed-mindedness, demonstrates that Americans (majority white) that have confidence in the government and believe they can effect change are more likely to be political players. Valentino, Gregorowicz, and Groenendyk (2008) and Robert Dahl's (1961) study reveal a cyclical relationship between political efficacy and participation. They found internal efficacy as a significant predictor of political participation. Reichert's (2016) study found political knowledge strengthens internal efficacy and results in political action.

Conventional political behavior literature has sought to overgeneralize political participation, but the analysis misses the mark when looking at minorities, particularly Black Americans. Black political behavior is a paradox because it defies the traditional understandings of political engagement. Historically, Black political participation in America is often in response to socio-political injustices and subjugation of civil rights. This confounds the conventional belief that trust in government and a sense of political efficacy motivate political engagement. Research suggests linked fate and group consciousness as a theoretical solution to the paradox. This research expands our comprehension of the underpinnings of Black political participation by building
on earlier literature. Scholars that study Black politics identify group consciousness and linked fate as critical elements for Black political participation. Dawson suggests that Black participation is grounded in linked fate- a sense of commonality and shared circumstances- embolden them to become politically involved. Avery (2006) and Shingles (1981) postulate group consciousness-the perception of discrimination, racial inequality, and unhappiness with Blacks' power in government and society- as the principal factor.

My dissertation research seeks to fill a significant gap in political participation literature by analyzing factors that influence contemporary Black political participation. The dissertation findings do not entirely match up with the previous literature. I argue that Blacks who distrust the government but who are efficacious and hold a sense of group consciousness and linked fate will engage in political participation at greater rates than those that do not exhibit these attitudes. It appears neither linked fate nor efficaciousness correlates with Black political participation among the participants in my study.

On the other hand, the study's results show a negative relationship exists when analyzing trust. Blacks, with greater distrust, participate less in electoral politics, agreeing with the literature. Holding to conventional political science literature, the more trust one has in government, the more one participates in voting. The qualitative data supports the findings. Many participants discussed their lack of confidence in local politics and the criminal justice system. Which, in
turn, discourages them from participating in their local political sphere. They instead stay on the sidelines divesting from impacting policies. The research in my study indicates Black consciousness significantly affects how Blacks participate politically. Akin to Avery's study, the empirical data suggests protest behavior increases as group consciousness and mistrust increase.

It appears that Black Americans who desire to engage in social activism and be change agents tend to occupy space in the political arena. The empirical results show political knowledge as a significant predictor of participation. Participants spoke of the need for programs to enlighten Black people about how the political process works and affects them. There is a need to understand "What's in it for me?" for political action to occur. The results lead to a more provocative implication because the results suggest efficacy is insignificant. Yet, the research emphasizes both political knowledge and non-electoral participation have cyclic relationships with internal efficacy.

Much remains inconclusive when evaluating Black political participation. There are limitations to the findings of this research. This project had many moving parts, including mistrust, efficacy, political knowledge, group consciousness, and linked fate, to examine how each factor influences Black political participation. Prior literature was relied upon, and traditional schools of thought, race-neutral political concepts, were applied to Black political behavior along with contrary Black science literature. The results enlighten the relationship
between said parts; however, the relationship between these factors may not interact in future studies as identified in this study's findings.

**Implications for Future Research**

Although not tested in this study, how would a test of salient social justice issues have impacted the study? Does saliency motivate political participation long-term? Or does it have short-term effects on political engagement? Does saliency propagate protest acts and voter turnout? There is a gap in the literature on the influence of infamous social justice occurrences on political participation. It is worth understanding how and why the saliency of injustices inspires Black political engagement.

The participants felt Black political participation would increase as Black people become more educated on the policy process. Many respondents felt ill-informed and did not know how to engage the political system. I saw this need years ago, so I started the Black Political Literacy program to educate and empower Black people to engage in the political system.

**Conclusion**

The dissertation is grounded in critical race theory to provide a perspective into political science, particularly Black political participation. CRT is a methodology that questions the role of racism in our society. The framework is ideal for expanding our understanding of the underpinnings of how race and racism impact the American political system. As Barbara Luck Graham put it in
her book chapter *Toward a Critical Race Theory of Political Science: A New Synthesis for Understanding Race, Law, and Politics*, “I argue that CRT is consistent with political trends and intellectual developments in the subfield of racial and ethnic politics. Both critical race theorists and scholars of race and ethnicity politics seek to understand how law and politics subordinate marginalized groups” (Graham, 2007).

Critical race theory evaluates how the racial stratum in the United States and institutionalized racism propagate a racial class system that promotes and affords Whites an unequal share of status and greater access to resources. CRT recognizes that racism is entrenched within our society from the legacy of slavery and segregation, and it continues to permeate the social fabric of our nation. The methodology, in this case, centers Black people’s experiences and truly allows political scientists like myself to understand political participation from their point of view.

One thing is certain, our understanding of political participation has been upended. I would venture to say; the research is out of touch with American political discourse and has some catching up to do with the current political climate. This paper focuses on Black political behaviors and feelings, but I would be remiss if I did not note the increase in overall distrust in American politics. At this time, political polarization, distrust, and internal efficacy have given way to the gravest assault on American democracy since the Civil War. The actions
exhibited at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, defy the customary understanding of how trust impacts American political participation.
Appendix A

Black Political Participation Survey

Q2. Are you registered to vote?
   Yes
   No

Q3. In the past year, have you: * Voted in an election?
   I think I did that, I can’t remember for sure
   No, I did not do this, and I am unlikely to do this
   No, I did not do this, but I might do this in the future
   No, I did not do this, but I will definitely do this in the future
   Yes, I am certain I did that last year

Q4. In the past two years, have you: * Attended a meeting to discuss issues facing the community?
   I think I did that, I can’t remember for sure
   No, I did not do this, and I am unlikely to do this
   No, I did not do this, but I might do this in the future
   No, I did not do this, but I will definitely do this in the future
   Yes, I am certain I did that in the last two years

Q5. In the past two years, have you: * Attended a protest march, demonstration, or rally?
   I think I did that, I can’t remember for sure
   No, I did not do this, and I am unlikely to do this
   No, I did not do this, but I might do this in the future
   No, I did not do this, but I will definitely do this in the future
   Yes, I am certain I did that in the last two years

Q6. In the past two years, have you: * Contacted a government office about a problem you have or to get help or information?
   I think I did that, I can’t remember for sure
   No, I did not do this, and I am unlikely to do this
   No, I did not do this, but I might do this in the future
   No, I did not do this, but I will definitely do this in the future
   Yes, I am certain I did that in the last two years
Q7. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an independent, or something else?"
  Republican
  Democrat
  Independent
  Other

Q8. Do you identify as an activist?
  Yes
  No

Q9_1. How important are each of the following factors in motivating you to participate in social activism? - Interest in **bringing social change**
  Not at all important
  Slightly important
  Moderately important
  Very important
  Extremely important

Q9_2. How important are each of the following factors in motivating you to participate in social activism? - Interest in bringing justice to **those affected by injustices**
  Not at all important
  Slightly important
  Moderately important
  Very important
  Extremely important

Q10_1. How important are each of the following in motivating you to participate in social activism? - Commitment to **uplifting the community**
  Not at all important
  Slightly important
  Moderately important
  Very important
  Extremely important
Q10.2. How important are each of the following in motivating you to participate in social activism? - Desire to meet like-minded individuals
   - Not at all important
   - Slightly important
   - Moderately important
   - Very important
   - Extremely important

Q11. Do you believe voting is important?
   - Definitely not
   - Probably not
   - Might or might not
   - Probably yes
   - Definitely yes

Q12. Do you know the responsibility of an alderperson/council member?
   - No
   - Yes

Q13. Do you know the responsibility of your local school board members?
   - No
   - Yes

Q14. Have you had contact with your local elected officials (alderperson/council member, state representative, state senator, mayor,)
   - No
   - Yes

Q15. If so why?

Q16. Do you know how to contact your local officials?
   - No
   - Yes

Q17. Do you understand the responsibility of the circuit attorney?
   - No
   - Yes

Q18. Do you participate in your neighborhood association?
   - No
   - Yes
Q19. Do you know the responsibility of your Mayor or City Manager?
   No
   Yes

Q20. Do you want to increase your political/civic participation?
   No
   Yes

Q21. Do you know the role and responsibility of your state congress, house of representative and senate?
   No
   Yes

Q22. How much time do you think you can trust the criminal justice system?
   Just about all the time
   Most of the time
   Only sometime
   Never

Q23. Agree or Disagree I Don’t think public officials care much about what people like me think
   Strongly agree inefficacy
   Somewhat agree mildly inefficacy
   Somewhat disagree efficacious
   Strongly disagree efficacious

Q24. Do you believe what happens generally to black people will affect what happens in your life?
   No
   yes, but not too much
   yes, some
   yes, a lot

Q25. Do you believe African Americans have similar economic interests?
   No
   yes

Q26. Race/Ethnicity
   1- Descendant of enslaved Africans in the United States
   2- Immigrant
Q27. How important is being Black to your identity?
   1- Not at all important
   2- Slightly important
   3- Moderately important
   4- Very important
   5- Extremely important

Q28. How much would you say that Blacks in this country have a lot in common with one another?
   1- None at all
   2- A little
   3- A moderate amount
   4- A lot
   5- A great deal

Q29. Education
   1- Less than high school degree and
   2- Highschool
   3- Some college but no degree
   4- Associate degree in college (2-year)
   5- Bachelor’s degree in college (4-year)
   6- Master’s degree
   7- Doctoral degree
   8- Professional degree (JD, MD)

Q30. Marital status
   1- married
   2- widowed
   3- divorced
   4- separated
   5- never married

31. Gender
   1- Male
   2- female
   3- non-binary

Q32. Income
Q33. What is your zip code recoded to show which region of the state participants are from?
   Region of the country

Q34. Employment status
   1- working (self-employed) combined
   2 – Not working
   3- Retired
   4- Disabled
   5 -Other
   6- prefer not to answer
Appendix B

Variance Inflation Factor Hypothesis 1 final model
Appendix C

Hypothesis 1 Model 1a Breusch Pagan Test

$p$-value from Breusch-Pagan test: 0.5006
Appendix D

Hypothesis 1 Model 1b Breusch Pagan Test

p-value from Breusch-Pagan test: 0.5006
Appendix E

Cook's Distance Hypothesis 1 Model 1a and 1b

Hypothesis 1: Model 1a Cook's Distance Efficacy, Motivation and Political Participation

Hypothesis 1: Model 1b Cook's Distance Mistrust, Motivation and Political Participation
Appendix F

Variance Inflation Factor Hypothesis 2 Final Model
Appendix G

Hypothesis 2 Breusch Pagan Test Final Model

p-value from Breusch-Pagan test: 0.7059
Appendix H

Interview Questions

How did you get interested in local government issues? Was there something specific that got you interested?

Is there an area of local government where you would like to get more involved?
If so, explain what that area is?

In responding to the survey question about whether local officials care about what you think, did you have any specific issues in mind?

In responding to the survey question about what happens generally to black people do you believe that black people overall have the same political, economic ideas and beliefs?

What do you think motivates black people to get involved in politics or not get involved?

Has the BLM movement motivated you in anyway? If so, how.

When you think about the criminal justice system do you believe in reform? If so, what does that look like to you?

What are the most important policy issues you think should be addressed, federally, state and locally?
Appendix I

Participants Who have Public Distrust

Political Distrust

Participants Who Identified Diminished Public Trust
Appendix J

Participants Who Mentioned Police Violence

![Bar chart showing police violence concerns](chart.png)
Appendix K

Participants Who Believe Saliency Increases Political Participation

![Bar chart showing participants who identified salient issues as motivators for participation.](chart.png)
Appendix L

Predictor Variables Histograms

Mistrust

Political Knowledge

Political Knowledge Distribution
References


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