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Abstract

On November 4, 2008, the majority of California's electorate supported a ban on same-sex marriage. Anecdotal evidence attributes its passage to increased turnout among black and Latino voters. This article determines whether this was so; it also examines whether blacks and Latinos were more likely than whites to oppose same-sex marriage, even when accounting for religiosity and political attitudes. Had black and Latino turnout remained at the same level as in the 2004 presidential election, Proposition 8 would still have passed. Moreover, blacks were more likely to favor a ban on same-sex marriage when compared to whites.

Keywords

same-sex marriage, voting, California, race/ethnicity, Proposition 8

The 2008 general election will be most remembered for the election of the nation's first African American president, Barack Obama. However, several statewide races were also in the spotlight—most notably, the battle over same-sex marriage continued to be a salient issue in California. While 61 percent of the state's voters in 2000 cast their ballots in favor of Proposition 22, which would have amended the state's Family Code to “only recognize marriage between a man and a woman,” the California Supreme Court struck down the initiative as unconstitutional on May 16, 2008.¹ In less than a month's time, opponents of same-sex marriage were able to get their initiative (known as Proposition 8) on the 2008 general election ballot.

On November 4, 2008, the majority of California's voters supported a ban on same-sex marriage, 52 percent to 48 percent. Based on National Election Pool (NEP) estimates, 70 percent of blacks cast their ballot in favor of Proposition 8, while 49 percent of whites, 53 percent of Latinos, 49 percent of Asians, and 51 percent from those of another racial/ethnic identity supported a ban on gay marriage.² In light of these results, the media reports that immediately followed the election concluded that opposition from Latino and black voters led to the passage of Proposition 8.³ For instance, one media report notes that

the “record turnout of black and Hispanic voters . . . [was] instrumental in the passage of Proposition 8.”⁴ Given the historic nature of the presidential general election, black turnout rates increased by 4 percentage points when compared to their turnout rates in 2004. Currently, blacks are 10 percent of the California electorate. The share of the Latino electorate also increased from its 2004 figure, jumping from 13 to 18 percent of voters in California. While the existing research has found that states using ballot initiatives exhibit higher rates of turnout (M. A. Smith 2001; Tolbert, Grummel, and Smith 2001; Tolbert and Smith 2005) than states without the initiative process, this landmark election appears to have generated the opposite effect.

Thus, the conventional wisdom regarding the passage of Proposition 8 can be summarized in the following way—had Obama not competed in the general election, turnout for these two groups would have been at their usual rates, and thus Proposition 8 would have failed.

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Were racial/ethnic minorities more likely to support Proposition 8 than nonminorities, even when accounting for their religiosity and political beliefs? This article addresses this question by analyzing voter attitudes toward Proposition 8 both prior to and on the day of the election. The pre-election analyses consist of two statewide public opinion polls that included questions on attitudes toward same-sex marriage. One was conducted in May 2008, and the other went into the field just one month prior to the general election. To understand voter preferences as they left the polls on the day of the election, I analyze exit poll data conducted by the Leavey Center for the Study of Los Angeles (LCSLA). These are the best available data on voters as they left the polls on Election Day, as the 2008 NEP data have yet to be publicly released.⁵ Finally, to determine whether increased turnout among black and Latino voters is responsible for Proposition 8's passage, I calculate the black and Latino vote on Proposition 8 based on their 2004 levels of voting.

The next section discusses the relevant literature on the dynamics of public opinions toward same-sex marriage and gay rights more broadly and the extent to which one's racial/ethnic identity factors into the formation of these attitudes. A brief discussion of the specific efforts made by the pro- and anti-Proposition 8 campaigns to target blacks and Latinos follows. Next, the research design and data are presented, along with the findings from the analysis. A final section concludes.

Racial/Ethnic Differences on Attitudes toward Gay Rights

A rich body of literature has examined the issue of gay rights, focusing both on opinion formation (Lewis 2003, 2005; Egan and Sherrill 2005; Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2008; Egan and Sherrill 2009; Lax and Phillips 2009; Barth, Overby, and Huffmon 2009) and the reasons leading states to adopt constitutional amendments banning same-sex marriage (Haider-Markel 2001; Bowler and Donovan 2004; Nicholson-Crotty 2006; Campbell and Monson 2008). Donovan, Wenzel, and Bowler (2000) have also examined statewide variations in the types of antigay policies enacted. This issue has also been more broadly packaged as part of the "moral values" platform used most recently in Bush's 2004 presidential campaign (Abrajano, Alvarez, and Nagler 2008; Campbell and Monson 2008). A subset of the public opinion research has focused on racial variations in public opinion toward gay rights, particularly between blacks and whites (Levitt and Klassen 1974; Hudson and Ricketts 1980; Schneider and Lewis 1984; Lewis 2003). The conclusions from these studies are mixed. Some have found whites to hold more negative attitudes than do blacks, while others

demonstrate the opposite effect. Explanations as to why blacks are less supportive of gay rights, when compared to other groups in society, have been attributed to their higher levels of religiosity and affiliation as fundamental Protestants when compared to whites (Taylor 1988; Taylor and Chatters 1996), the commonly held belief that blacks are more homophobic than are whites (Brandt 1999), and an opposition to the framing of gay rights as a civil rights issue (Gates 1999). It is also worthwhile to note that blacks' religious practices and affiliations have remained consistent and stable for some time. As the research by Egan and Sherrill (2009) points out, controlling for one's religiosity dissipates the role of race in explaining public opinion toward same-sex marriage.

However, Lewis's (2003) study of more than 20,000 white respondents and 3,800 black respondents from 1973 to 2000 reveals that even after controlling for religion, religiosity, and demographics, blacks are approximately 4 to 8 percentage points more likely than whites (of similar religious and demographic traits) to disapprove of homosexuality. In fact, Lewis finds that religious affiliation, religiosity, age, education, and gender all had a greater impact on white attitudes than they did for blacks' attitudes on homosexuality. He concludes that black-white differences on this issue may therefore be more strongly related to "black attitude formation" and their socialization process (Lewis 2003, 75). Lewis, however, finds no distinctions between blacks' and whites' attitudes on sodomy laws, antigay discrimination, and civil liberties. Thus, racial differences seem to emerge only with regard to the issue of same-sex marriage.

Of particular relevance to the main question raised in this article, Lewis and Gossett (2008) examine public opinion toward same-sex marriage in California from 1985 to 2006. Using field poll data, they conclude that cohort replacement explains most of the rise in public support for same-sex marriage in California during this time period. That is, younger people tend to be more supportive of same-sex marriage than are older individuals. They also demonstrate that these attitude changes are concentrated in particular subgroups within the electorate. Partisans, the religious, and racial/ethnic minorities are the three groups that demonstrated the greatest amount of attitude change over these twenty-one years.

Lewis and Gossett (2008) further conclude that the growth in the level of support for same-sex marriage among blacks has not been commensurate with the growth in support among whites, Latinos, and Asian Americans in California. These findings lend some credence to both the exit poll data on the black vote on Proposition 8 as well as the media reports attributing the passage of Proposition 8 to black voters. A similar rationale has been used to explain Latino attitudes toward same-sex marriage,

given that the majority are Catholic in their religious affiliation and tend to be socially conservative. Moreover, Latinos are rapidly identifying with the Evangelical Christian movement; in fact, it is the second largest religious group in the Latino community (Pew Research Center 2007).

While a smaller percentage of voters supported Proposition 8 when compared to the amount of support garnered by Proposition 22 in 2000, 52 percent versus 61 percent, the majority of California voters still cast their ballots in favor of a ban on same-sex marriage. Thus, Lewis and Gossett's optimism on the future of same-sex marriage in California needs to be reassessed in light of the recent passage of Proposition 8. Given that they attributed cohort replacement as the primary driving force behind public attitude change from 1985 to 2006, how can the passage of Proposition 8 be explained? According to media reports, turnout in 2008 was particularly high among younger voters, first-time voters, and racial/ethnic minorities. So in part, this may explain the 9-percentage-point drop in support for a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage from 2000 to 2008. On the other hand, young black voters who turned out to support Obama may have also voted in favor of Proposition 8.

Targeting California's Racial and Ethnic Minorities on Proposition 8

Since the passage of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) by Congress in 1996, states have followed suit by enacting their own laws prohibiting same-sex marriage. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, forty-one states have implemented their own statutory version of DOMA, while thirty states have amended their respective constitutions to define marriage as being between a man and woman.⁶ In the 2008 election cycle, California, Florida, and Arizona all had the issue of same-sex marriage on their general election ballots.⁷

Given that 23.7 percent of California's eligible voters are of Latino origin, and 7.3 percent are black (Pew Hispanic Center 2008), specific appeals were made to these minority groups. For Latinos, these efforts came in the form of televised Spanish- and English-language political ads, in hopes of persuading Latinos to cast their ballots either for or against Proposition 8. The campaign in favor of Proposition 8 created a Spanish-language commercial featuring *telenovela* (soap opera) actor Eduardo Verástegui. The actor discussed his pride in the Hispanic community along with the importance of children being raised by both a mother and father. Supporters of Proposition 8 also targeted the Spanish-speaking community through prerecorded phone calls. In a similar strategy as their opponents, the "No on Prop 8" campaign ads also featured Latino

actors and actresses. In this ad, several Latino and Latina actors from the popular television series *Ugly Betty* discussed the need to provide equal rights for gay friends and relatives. In addition to these ad buys, campaign leaflets and mailers from both camps were used to target Latino voters. In their Spanish-language ads, the campaigns created ads featuring Latino celebrities or elected officials to help in their efforts. The Spanish-language newspaper with the largest circulation in California, *La Opinion*, also issued an editorial in opposition to Proposition 8.

Efforts to target black voters were primarily channeled via black churches and their ministers.⁸ In October, Apostle Frederick K. C. Price, the influential minister of the Crenshaw Christian Center in Los Angeles, organized a press conference that included fifty African American and Latino pastors from the Los Angeles area to express their support for Proposition 8.⁹ Similar actions occurred in historically black churches in Oakland and San Francisco, where black ministers both in favor of and against Proposition 8 organized rallies. As Dawson (1994) and others have discussed (see Harris 1999), the church has traditionally been the most significant institution to help organize the black community, and on this particular issue, the role of the church was especially salient and relevant. Protestant churches with large Latino and Asian congregations have also followed suit by using the pulpit to organize these communities into political action (Wong, Rim, and Perez 2008).¹⁰

Just days before the general election, the Yes on 8 campaign targeted African Americans in Oakland and San Francisco with misleading mailers featuring Obama and several African American pastors, suggesting that Obama favored a ban on same-sex marriage (O'Brien 2008). The Obama campaign released a statement as a response to the mailers, emphasizing its opposition to Proposition 8 and commitment to equal rights.

Research Design

The goal of this article is to understand which factors influenced individuals' attitudes toward same-sex marriage in California and whether racial/ethnic group variations emerge, even when controlling for other important factors such as religiosity and political ideology. Unlike the report produced by Egan and Sherrill (2009), this analysis relies not just on one but on three sets of data to investigate voter attitudes toward Proposition 8. In addition, these surveys were conducted either before or on the day of the election and not on the days following the election. All in all, this mode of analysis offers a more rigorous test of the existing explanations on same-sex marriage opinion formation; it also makes it possible to determine whether similar conclusions can be reached from disparate and independent

data sources. The first pre-election survey was conducted by the *Los Angeles Times* and KTLA and focuses specifically on public attitudes toward same-sex marriage as well as homosexuality. The survey was in the field on May 20 and 21, 2008, and interviewed 834 adult residents of California.¹¹ Several months later, in October 2008, the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) interviewed California residents across the state; questions focused on the upcoming elections, particularly opinions on specific ballot initiatives, as well as evaluations of both the state and federal governments.¹²

The final data source is the LCSLA exit poll, which interviewed 2,686 voters from the city of Los Angeles as they left the voting booths on November 4, 2008. Although exit poll data are not typically used in academic research, these data constitute the best publicly available information of voter preferences on the day of the election.¹³ And since these data are being supplemented with other survey data, the analyses are not solely based on this data set.

The LCSLA survey was distributed in fifty randomly and ethnically representative precincts in the city of Los Angeles (Guerra, Magnabosco, and Barclay 2008).¹⁴ Based on this exit poll, 51 percent of blacks and 53 percent of Latinos supported Proposition 8, whereas only 36 percent of Asians and 21 percent of whites voted in favor of the measure. Thus, relative to the statewide estimates, blacks in Los Angeles appear to be more divided on the issue of same-sex marriage. Based on 2000 census estimates, the ethnic and racial breakdown in the city of Los Angeles is as follows: 11.2 percent black, 46.5 percent Latino, 46.9 percent white, and 10.0 percent Asian. Relative to the ethnic and racial breakdown at the state level, which is 6.7 percent black, 36.2 percent Latino, 42.7 percent white, and 12.4 percent Asian, the ethnic/racial composition of Los Angeles is not that divergent from these estimates, though the percentage of the black population in Los Angeles is higher than their share of the statewide population.¹⁵ Finally, as the primary interest is to determine whether ethnic/racial differences exist on Proposition 8, this exit poll is advantageous given its sizeable number of Latino and black respondents. Of course, the major shortcoming of this exit poll is that it can only shed light on voter attitudes toward Proposition 8 for a particular subgroup within the California electorate. But since the PPIC survey was conducted just a month before the general election, the analysis from this survey can help to validate the exit poll results.

In trying to explain attitudes toward same-sex marriage, the preelection models account for individuals' demographic characteristics, political dispositions (captured by their partisanship and political ideology), media consumption, marital status, religious affiliation and rate of church

attendance, and whether or not they have friends or family members who are gay.¹⁶ As Egan and Sherrill's (2009) analysis of vote choice on Proposition 8 reveals, religiosity, political ideology, age, and partisanship are the primary factors explaining public opinion toward same-sex marriage. Thus, in this analysis, it should also be the case that individuals who are older, ideologically conservative, highly religious (as measured by church attendance), and Republican will favor a ban on same-sex marriage. The vote choice model using the LCSLA exit poll data also accounts for a respondent's demographic attributes, political attitudes, and religious affiliation. Unfortunately, the exit poll survey did not ask respondents about their frequency of religious worship and also did not include a question about their friendship or familial ties with those who are gay. It did, however, ask respondents about their sexual orientation and is therefore accounted for in the model.

The primary dependent variable of interest pertains to an individual's vote choice on Proposition 8. However, the May 2008 survey also included other questions pertaining to same-sex marriage such as opinions on whether the institution of marriage will be degraded if same-sex marriage is legalized, whether or not same-sex marriage is the most important issue facing California, and one's views on the Supreme Court ruling on same-sex marriage. Thus, for each of these questions, a separate model is estimated, with the explanatory variables being similar to those used in the vote choice models. Given that measures on vote choice for Proposition 8 are dichotomous measures, these models are estimated using logit analysis. And since the responses to the questions pertaining to the institution of marriage, importance of same-sex marriage in California, and opinions on the Supreme Court ruling were ordinal in nature, ordered logit analysis is used.

Findings

Table 1 presents preelection polling data from several public opinion surveys on ethnic/racial groups' support for Proposition 8. The earliest preelection poll conducted by the *Los Angeles Times*/KTLA indicates that whites were nearly split in their support of Proposition 8. And while this survey suggests that a majority of Latinos, blacks, and Asians were in favor of the ballot initiative, these estimates are based on a limited number of respondents. In the months leading up to the election, three out of the four polls conducted by Survey USA reveal that a majority of black respondents supported a ban on same-sex marriage. However, the majority of whites, Latinos, and Asians were against the ballot initiative (the average level of support ranged from 54 to 55 percent). In the PPIC survey, whites and Latinos also

Table 1. Preelection and Election Day Polling: Percentage of Likely Voters Supporting Proposition 8, by Race/Ethnicity

	<i>Los Angeles Times</i>		Survey USA		Public Policy Institute of California	
	5/20–5/21	9/1	10/6	10/17	11/1	10/01
Asians	71.4	49.0	50.0	42.0	39.0	52.4
Blacks	82.2	53.0	52.0	58.0	45.0	52.6
Latinos	60.8	42.0	44.0	47.0	50.0	46.7
Whites	49.2	43.0	47.0	48.0	47.0	48.0

Entries are row percentages.

opposed a ban on same-sex marriage, while a majority of blacks and Asians favored it. Thus, with the exception of one preelection survey, blacks consistently supported Proposition 8. Whites, on the other hand, were opposed to the ballot proposition in all six of these preelection surveys.

These prepolling data are consistent with NEP estimates on white and Asian support for Proposition 8, but the predictions on the level of black support reveal some variation. Recall that the NEP estimates 70 percent of blacks casting their ballots in favor of Proposition 8, which is considerably larger than the average level of support estimated by the pre-election surveys. Among Latinos, the average level of support in the pre-election polls was 48.4 percent, whereas a majority of Latinos supported the measure (53.0 percent) in the NEP. Perhaps it was the last-minute campaign efforts targeting Latinos that led some to cast their ballot in favor Proposition 8; unfortunately, the analysis here cannot determine whether this was the case. Nonetheless, it is evident that the majority of Latino voters went from being against Proposition 8 prior to the general election to favoring it in the aftermath of the election.

Looking more closely at racial/ethnic differences in opinions toward different facets of same-sex marriage, Table 2 presents the distributions of these responses based on respondents' ethnic/racial identity. These questions, which were available in the preelection survey, asked respondents to provide their vote intention on Proposition 8, attitudes on the institution of marriage, the relative importance of same-sex marriage as policy issue in California, and opinions toward the Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage. First, when looking at the distribution on vote intention toward Proposition 8, all ethnic/racial groups, with the exception of whites, favored a ban on same-sex marriage.¹⁷ Considering that this survey was conducted in May 2008, the opinions expressed in this

survey did not change very much, with the exception of Asians.

Attitudes toward the belief that the institution of marriage will be degraded if gays are allowed to marry are more divided; among Asians, blacks, and Latinos, approximately one-third of each group agree strongly with this notion, while another third disagree strongly. For whites, 41.7 percent disagree strongly with this sentiment. In the question asking respondents whether same-sex marriage is the most important issue facing California, either a majority or plurality of respondents from each group believes that it is an important issue, but not the most important one facing the state. Thus, the California public did recognize the salience of this issue, though not as one that trumped all other issues, given that economic concerns dominated this election season.

Finally, on ethnic/racial group opinions on the Supreme Court decision to permit same-sex marriage in California, Asians, blacks, and Latinos appear to have been less conflicted than were whites. For instance, a strong majority of Asian respondents, 57 percent, strongly disagreed with the Supreme Court ruling. Among black and Latino respondents, the difference between those who strongly agreed and those who strongly disagreed was approximately 12 percentage points. For whites, 38.5 percent disagreed strongly with the ruling, while 36.9 agreed strongly with the Supreme Court's decision. These opinions reflect, to some extent, voter preferences on Proposition 8.

Do these ethnic/racial differences subside once other factors, such as religiosity and partisanship, are taken into account? Table 3 can help to address this question; it presents the logit estimates that examine the factors influencing public opinion toward same-sex marriage as of May 2008.¹⁸ The estimates presented in columns 2 through 4 (in which the dependent variable is the probability of supporting Proposition 8) indicate that blacks, Asians, and those identifying with another racial identity were all more likely to support Proposition 8 than were whites. Blacks were .29 more likely to favor Proposition 8 than were whites, while Asians were .27 more likely to support a ban on same-sex marriage than were whites. Note that the magnitude of these ethnic/racial effects is far greater than the magnitude of effects for the other explanatory variables in the model. Thus, even when controlling for an individual's religiosity, partisanship, age, and political ideology (for which all the coefficients reach statistical significance), racial/ethnic identity continues to play a role in shaping an individual's views on same-sex marriage. However, note that the coefficient capturing Latino respondents fails to reach statistical significance. As such, Latinos are no more or less likely vote in favor of Proposition 8 than are whites. This

Table 2. Attitudes on Same-Sex Marriage, by Race/Ethnicity (May 2008)

	Asian	Black	Latino	White	Other race
Vote intention on Proposition 8					
Haven't heard enough	0.0	0.0	2.8	1.3	2.8
Vote yes	59.5	74.0	50.7	42.8	50.0
Lean yes	0.0	0.0	2.8	2.1	2.8
Lean no	2.4	0.0	1.4	1.1	2.8
Vote no	21.4	16.0	33.1	45.3	30.6
Wouldn't vote	4.8	4.0	2.8	1.9	8.3
Not sure/refused	11.9	6.0	6.4	5.5	2.8
"If gays are allowed to marry, the institution of marriage will be degraded"					
Agree strongly	33.3	32.0	29.6	31.4	33.3
Agree somewhat	11.9	8.0	12.0	7.2	5.6
Disagree somewhat	19.1	14.0	18.3	14.4	16.7
Disagree strongly	31.0	32.0	35.2	41.7	41.7
Not sure/refused	4.8	14.0	4.9	5.3	2.8
Same-sex marriage most important issue in CA					
Most important issue	7.1	10.0	11.3	5.3	5.6
Important, but not most	47.6	50.0	54.2	55.7	50.0
Not important	42.9	40.0	32.4	37.3	41.7
Supreme Court decision to allow same-sex marriage in CA					
Agree strongly	19.1	32.0	26.8	36.9	33.3
Agree somewhat	4.8	8.0	15.5	12.9	16.7
Disagree somewhat	11.9	8.0	12.7	6.6	13.9
Disagree strongly	57.1	44.0	39.4	38.5	36.1
N	42	50	142	528	36

Source: *Los Angeles Times*/KTLA field poll, May 20–21, 2008.
 Entries, unless otherwise denoted, are column percentages.

finding suggests that, when accounting for political dispositions, religiosity, and other voter characteristics, being Latino did not increase one's chances of voting in favor of Proposition 8, relative to whites. Despite media reports attributing the passage of Proposition 8 to support from black and Latino voters, this assertion may not be entirely accurate with respect to Latinos in California.

The impact of race and ethnicity on the other same-sex marriage questions, however, is much less pronounced. Only in two other cases do voters' racial/ethnic backgrounds influence their views on same-sex marriage—whether or not same-sex marriage is the most important issue facing California and opinions on the Supreme Court ruling on same-sex marriage. Latinos, relative to whites, were .07 less likely to consider same-sex marriage as the most significant issue facing the state. Thus, it appears that moral values issues, despite hopes by Republicans that this issue area would convert Latino Democrats over to the Republican party, were not at the top of their concerns in this election cycle. Finally, Asians were more likely than whites to disapprove of the Supreme Court's ruling that overturned the ban on same-sex marriage.

Table 4 presents the logit estimates using the PPIC statewide data. Recall that this survey was conducted just one month prior to the general election. As these estimates reveal, racial variations toward Proposition 8 continued to emerge in the weeks leading up to the election. However, such a distinction only arises with respect to black respondents; they were .15 more likely to vote in support of Proposition 8 than were whites. Consistent with the previous logit estimates, along with Egan and Sherrill's findings (2009), political ideology, party affiliation, age, and identifying oneself as a born again Christian affect one's attitudes toward the ballot initiative. In comparing the relative influence of these various factors on one's likelihood of casting a "yes" vote on Proposition 8, being a black respondent has the largest impact, followed by religion and partisanship.

To determine whether the prepolling data are consistent with voter preferences on the actual day of the election, similar analysis was conducted on exit poll data. These estimates are presented in Table 5. Again, the model accounts for several of the factors used in the previous models, though a measure of religiosity was not available

Table 3. California Voters' Opinions toward Same-Sex Marriage (SSM; May 2008)

	Intend to vote yes on Proposition 8			Institution of marriage not degraded with SSM			SSM not most important issue facing CA			Disapprove of Supreme Court ruling on SSM		
	Coeff.	SE	Pr ^a	Coeff.	SE	Pr	Coeff.	SE	Pr	Coeff.	SE	Pr
Constant	-2.89***	0.73	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Latino	0.36	0.31	0.08	-0.05	0.26	-0.01	-0.46*	0.26	0.07	0.33	0.27	0.08
Black	1.62***	0.49	0.29	-0.08	0.37	-0.02	-0.01	0.37	0.001	0.17	0.40	0.04
Asian	1.49***	0.58	0.27	-0.43	0.42	-0.09	0.11	0.44	-0.02	1.56***	0.51	0.36
Other race	1.38***	0.47	0.26	-0.36	0.38	-0.08	-0.37	0.37	0.05	0.41	0.37	0.10
Age	0.32***	0.10	0.08	-0.18**	0.09	-0.04	0.6	0.09	-0.01	0.40***	0.09	0.10
Conservative	0.48***	0.11	0.11	-0.58***	0.09	-0.13	-0.26***	0.09	0.04	0.79***	0.10	0.20
Republican	0.40	0.31	0.09	-0.45*	0.25	-0.10	-0.36	0.25	0.06	0.21***	0.07	0.13
Democrat	-0.42*	0.24	-0.10	0.45**	0.20	0.10	-0.17	0.21	0.03	-0.57***	0.21	-0.14
Married	0.43**	0.21	0.10	-0.17	0.18	-0.04	0.64	0.18	-0.10	0.29	0.18	0.07
Don't follow news on SSM	-0.01	0.12	-0.01	0.04	0.09	-0.01	0.41***	0.10	-0.07	0.11	0.10	0.03
Born again	0.80***	0.26	0.18	-0.87***	0.21	-0.19	-0.28	0.21	0.04	0.71***	0.23	0.18
Catholic	-0.01	0.24	-0.002	-0.11	0.20	-0.03	0.11	0.20	-0.02	0.01	0.21	0.002
Religious	0.19**	0.08	0.05	-0.23***	0.07	-0.05	-0.11*	0.06	0.02	0.21***	0.07	0.05
Have gay friends	-0.51**	0.24	-0.12	0.30**	0.19	0.06	-0.07	0.20	0.01	-0.78***	0.22	-0.19
N	532			560			573			561		
Log likelihood	-287.28			-591.91			-479.99			-543.61		

Source: *Los Angeles Times*/KTLA field poll, May 20–21, 2008.

^aPredicted probability estimates; for the ordered logit estimates, the outcome variable was specified as the modal category. Estimates report the change in the probability for an infinitesimal change in each independent, continuous variable and the discrete change in the probability for dummy variables.

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

Table 4. Probability of Voting Yes on Proposition 8, Public Policy Institute of California Statewide Survey

	Coeff.	SE	Pr ^a
Constant	-1.40	0.17	—
Latino	0.12	0.18	0.05
Black	0.40**	0.17	0.15
Asian	0.25	0.22	0.09
Other race	0.25	0.22	0.10
Age	0.08**	0.03	0.03
Conservative	0.31***	0.04	0.12
Republican	0.34***	0.12	0.13
Democrat	-0.27**	0.11	-0.11
Married	0.10	0.10	0.04
Born again	0.36***	0.10	0.14
Catholic	-0.06	0.11	-0.02
Highly educated	-0.01	0.04	-0.003
High income	0.02	0.03	0.01
No political interest	-0.004	0.06	-0.02
N	1,011		
Log likelihood	-589.84		

Source: 2008 Public Policy Institute of California Statewide Survey, October 2008, Californians and Their Government.

^aReports the change in the probability for an infinitesimal change in each independent, continuous variable and the discrete change in the probability for dummy variables.

** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

in this survey. And even when accounting for one's political attitudes and religious affiliation, blacks were more likely to support Proposition 8 than were whites. This finding not only is consistent with the prepolling data that were drawn from two different sources but also is similar to the findings from the report where survey data were collected in the days following the election (Egan and Sherrill 2009). Note that while the exit poll analysis focuses only on a particular subset of the California electorate, they are identical to the results based on the statewide surveys.¹⁹ As such, across the three public opinion surveys analyzed, the black–white divide on the issue of same-sex marriage is quite consistent—blacks exhibited a greater likelihood of favoring a ban on same-sex marriage when compared to whites.

An individual's demographic attributes, partisanship, political ideology, religion, and sexual orientation continue to affect his or her vote decision regarding same-sex marriage. In looking at the marginal effect of each of these factors, one's ethnic/racial identity, partisanship, religion, and sexual orientation have the largest impact on the likelihood of supporting Proposition 8. Respondents who were born again Christians were .27 more likely to support Proposition 8, whereas respondents who identified as homosexual were .27 less likely to vote in favor of

Table 5. Probability of Voting Yes on Proposition 8, Leavey Center for the Study of Los Angeles Exit Poll

	Coeff.	SE	Pr ^a
Constant	-1.28	0.17	—
Latino	0.10	0.18	0.04
Black	0.50***	0.17	0.19
Asian	0.03	0.22	0.02
Age	0.01***	0.003	0.004
Conservative	0.34***	0.04	0.13
Republican	0.54**	0.22	0.21
Democrat	0.14	0.15	0.05
Married	0.28***	0.10	0.11
Born again	0.70***	0.21	0.27
Catholic	0.12	0.11	0.04
Highly educated	-0.12***	0.04	-0.04
High income	-0.08***	0.03	-0.03
Respondent is homosexual	-0.83***	0.23	-0.27
N	996		
Log likelihood	-560.68		

^aReports the change in the probability for an infinitesimal change in each independent, continuous variable and the discrete change in the probability for dummy variables.

** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

Proposition 8. The effect of identifying as a Republican is also fairly substantial; Republicans were .21 more likely to support Proposition 8 than were Independents. Finally, relative to white voters, blacks were .19 more likely to vote in favor of Proposition 8. Similar to the conclusions reached by Lewis (2003), this analysis of black voters in Los Angeles suggests that black opinions on same-sex marriage remain distinct, even when accounting for other salient factors that can affect public opinion on issues pertaining to gay rights. And while the direct impact of race is not as great as partisanship and religious affiliation, it is a relatively sizable impact and is considerably larger than political ideology or one's socioeconomic background.

The final piece of analysis attempts to assess the validity of those media reports suggesting that the record turnout among blacks and Latinos explains the passage of Proposition 8. In an effort to do so, Table 6 calculates the number of black and Latino voters supporting Proposition 8, based on their 2008 turnout rate as well as their 2004 turnout rate.²⁰ These estimates are based on both the NEP data (columns 2–3) and the independent exit poll survey conducted by David Binder Research (DBR), which is used in Egan and Sherrill's (2009) report.

If Latinos' and blacks' increased rates of turnout were responsible for the passage of Proposition 8, then would their vote preferences, if calculated at the 2004 turnout

rates, result in a defeat of Proposition 8? The total number of voters who casted their ballots on Prop 8 was 10,271,399, and the difference in the number of voters who supported and opposed the initiative is 504,479.²¹ If black and Latinos voters in 2008 voted at the same rates as they did in 2004, their combined support for Proposition 8 still would far exceed the vote difference in support or opposition of it. Moreover, regardless of the survey estimates used (DBR or NEP), the total number of blacks and Latinos who voted for Proposition 8 would still have led to its passage. Thus, the increase in the rates of black and Latino turnout in the 2008 general election is not to blame for the passage of Proposition 8. Even if these two groups in California voted at the same levels as they did in 2004, it would still have been enough to ban same-sex marriage in California.

Conclusion

In the 2008 general election, California's ethnic and racial minorities received a great deal of attention from the campaigns on the highly contentious ballot initiative to ban same-sex marriage. Both sides of the Proposition 8 debate targeted blacks and Latinos through political ads as well as campaign mailers. These voters were attractive to both camps for different reasons—those against the ban appealed to them by linking it to the issue of civil rights and discrimination, while those favoring the ban catered to Latino and black communities by emphasizing moral and religious values.

While media reports attributed record rates of black and Latino turnout for the passage of Proposition 8, the analysis presented in this article paints a more nuanced picture. First, even if turnout rates among these two groups remained at the same levels as they did in the 2004 presidential race, Proposition 8 still would have garnered a majority of support from California's voters. Nonetheless, given their large share of the state's eligible voting population (31 percent), black and Latino voters played an important role in the passage of Proposition 8. Individual-level analysis did reveal that blacks exhibited a higher probability of supporting the ban than did white voters in California. Especially among blacks identifying as born-again Christians, their likelihood of opposing Proposition 8 was more than double what it was for whites who identified with the same religion. However, blacks' political attitudes did not influence their vote intention toward Proposition 8 in the same manner as it did for whites.²²

In the aftermath of the Proposition 8 vote, the media reported that not enough was done by the "No on 8" campaign to link the ballot initiative with Obama. Although

Table 6. Calculations of Black and Latino Support on Proposition 8, Based on 2004 and 2008 Rates of Turnout

	2004 turnout rate	2008 turnout rate	2008 turnout rate (DBR estimate) ^a	2004 turnout rate (DBR estimate)
Number of black voters in support of Proposition 8	431,398	718,997	595,741	357,444
Number of Latino voters in support of Proposition 8	707,699	979,891	1,090,822	787,816
Total number of black and Latino voters in support of Proposition 8	1,139,098 ^b	1,698,889	1,686,563	1,145,260 ^b
Total vote on Proposition 8		10,271,399		
Difference between yes and no vote on Proposition 8		504,479		

^aDavid Binder Research (DBR) estimate is based on the exit poll survey discussed in Egan and Sherrill (2009).

^bThese are hypothetical estimates for the number of blacks and Latinos supporting Proposition 8, based on their 2004 rates of turnout.

Obama clearly expressed his opposition to Proposition 8, community groups serving black and Latino communities felt that this connection was not clearly conveyed to these communities. Furthermore, media reports suggested that Latinos were more likely to associate Proposition 8 with the Republican, as opposed to the Democratic, presidential candidate. This is likely because of the fact that issues pertaining to moral values were emphasized in Bush's 2004 reelection campaign as well as the Republican Party's vocal opposition to same-sex marriage (Abrajano, Alvarez, and Nagler 2008). Related research by Donovan, Tolbert, and Smith (2008), D. A. Smith, DeSantis, and Kassel (2006), and Campbell and Monsoon (2008) indicates that states with same-sex marriage ballot initiatives saw an increase in the level of support for Bush in the 2004 presidential election.

It may be the case that with greater mobilization efforts to inform ethnic/racial minorities about this issue, particularly in the form of personal contact (Barth, Overby and Huffmon 2009), attitudes toward same-sex marriage could potentially shift over time.²³ Consider that in 2000, 58 percent of whites, 65 percent of Latinos, and 59 percent of Asians voted in favor of a ban on same-sex marriage. Eight years later, white support for Proposition 8 dropped by 9 percentage points, Asian support decreased by 10 percentage points, and Latino attitudes toward same-sex marriage experienced the greatest change, with a 12 percentage point decrease during this period.

As this particular election highlights, California's racial and ethnic minorities have the ability to sway the electoral outcome. The targeted outreach efforts developed by both sides of the Proposition 8 campaign, when combined with blacks' and Latinos' preexisting dispositions, produced differential outcomes—blacks, as a whole, expressed more cohesive preferences on the issue of same-sex marriage than did Latinos. This end result is consistent with the existing work on black and Latino political behavior; in general, black political attitudes and vote preferences tend to be more homogenous when

compared to the opinions held by Latinos. The extent to which greater mobilization efforts, along with cohort effects, can cause Latinos to shift in one direction or another is the subject of future research endeavors.

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Notes

1. See <http://primary2000.sos.ca.gov/VoterGuide/Propositions/22text.htm>.
2. See <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/results/polls/#val=CAI01p1>. The report by Egan and Sherrill (2009) questions this level of support among blacks. Based on their analysis of precinct level voting data of five California counties, black support was more in the range of 57 to 59 percent.
3. For example, the *Washington Times* featured an article titled "Blacks, Hispanics Nixed Gay Marriage: Loyalists Defied Obama Stance," by Cheryl Wetzstein (November 8, 2008, A01). Another article was titled "Black and Latino Voters Critical to Same-Sex Marriage Ban's Success," by Mike Swift and Sean Webby (*San Jose Mercury News*, November 5, 2008).
4. See "Gay Rights Abandoned on Sidelines after Election," by Valerie Richardson (*Washington Times*, 2008, B01).
5. The survey data used in Egan and Sherrill's (2009) study are not publicly available.
6. See <http://www.ncsl.org/IssuesResearch/HumanServices/SameSexMarriage/tabid/16430/Default.aspx>.
7. The proponents and opponents of Proposition 8 in California spent more than \$75 million combined on their respective campaigns.
8. The only major African American leader to oppose Proposition 8 was Alice Huffman, president of California's state

- chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). However, this endorsement occurred although members of the organization did not vote on the matter, which is standard protocol to receive an endorsement from them. For more information, see "NAACP President Alice Huffman Sells Out African American Families" (PR Newswire, October 30, 2008).
9. See "Top African American Religious Leaders Join Apostle Frederick K. C. Price in Endorsing YES on Prop. 8" (PR Newswire, October 22, 2008).
 10. Asians make up 11.6 percent of California's eligible voters.
 11. In this sample, there were 528 white respondents, 142 Latinos, 50 blacks, 42 Asians, and 36 respondents who identified with another racial identity. The breakdown of support for Proposition 8 in this sample was as follows: 59.5 percent Asian, 74.0 percent black, 50.7 percent Latino, and 42.8 percent white.
 12. This survey was titled Californians and Their Government (Public Policy Institute of California [PPIC] Statewide Survey, October 2008). The ethnic/racial breakdown in the PPIC survey was 6.6 percent black, 27.0 percent Latino, 5.7 percent Asian, and the remaining respondents white.
 13. Exit poll data are not drawn from a random group of individuals, nor are they typically representative of the population in question.
 14. See Barreto, Marks, and Woods (2009) and Barreto et al. (2006) for a detailed discussion of this sampling methodology. There were 626 respondents of Latino origin, with the majority of these respondents hailing from Mexico (77.8 percent), and 619 black respondents. Whites were 40 percent of the sample, and Asians were 5 percent of the sample.
 15. These estimates are from the U.S. Census Bureau (2007).
 16. The coding of these variables is available in Appendix A. The last two variables were available only in the May 2008 poll.
 17. One factor to keep in mind is that the sample size of these ethnic/racial groups is rather small.
 18. I am unable to estimate this model separately for each ethnic/racial group, given the small number of ethnic/racial survey respondents interviewed. I am able to estimate this model using the Public Policy Institute of California survey (see Appendix A). These results indicate that blacks who identify as being born again are more likely to support Prop 8, as are whites who self-identify as being born again. Note that the impact of this variable on one's vote intention is much greater for blacks than it is for whites. The sample size of Asian respondents was quite small ($n = 46$).
 19. The Cooperative Campaign Analysis panel survey, conducted by Polimetrix, asked respondents about gay rights issues in December 2007 and again in October 2008. Over this time period, opinions toward gay rights exhibited only a small amount of movement (15 percent).
 20. I thank Melissa Michelson for her assistance on this discussion and analysis.
 21. In all, 5,387,939 individuals voted yes on Proposition 8 and 4,883,460 voted against Proposition 8.
 22. See Appendix B for the logit estimates. As the sample of blacks is quite small, these findings should be replicated where possible.
 23. This is especially true in light of Lewis and Gossett's (2008) finding that cohort effects largely explain the public's growing support for marriage equality in California.

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