

Are Blacks and Latinos Responsible for the Passage of Proposition 8?
Analyzing Voter Attitudes on California's Proposal to Ban Same-Sex Marriage in 2008

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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 amongst 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.

Introduction

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 amend 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.ⁱ In less than a month's time, opponents of same sex marriage were able to get their initiative (known as Proposition 8) on to 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 Exit 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.ⁱⁱ 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.ⁱⁱⁱ For instance, one media report notes that the "record turnout of Black and Hispanic voters...[was] instrumental in the passage of Proposition 8".^{iv} 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, Black 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 (Smith 2001; Tolbert, et al 2001; Tolbert 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. Were racial/ethnic minorities more likely to support Proposition 8 than non-minorities, even when accounting for one's religiosity and political beliefs? This paper addresses this question by analyzing voter attitudes towards 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 towards 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). This is the best available data on voters as they left the polls on Election Day, as the 2008 National Election Pool (NEP) data has yet to be publicly released.^v Finally, to determine whether increased turnout amongst 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 towards 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 Towards Gay Rights

A rich body of literature has examined the issue of gay rights, focusing both on opinion formation (Lewis 2003; Lewis 2005; Egan and Sherill 2005; Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2008; Egan and Sherrill 2009; Lax and Philips 2009; Barth, Overby and Huffmon 2009) as well as 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, et al 2008; Campbell and Monson 2008). A subset of the public opinion research has focused on racial variations in public opinion towards 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, has 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 Sherill (2009) points out, controlling for one's religiosity dissipates the role of race in explaining public opinion towards same-sex marriage.

However, Lewis' (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 it did for Blacks' attitudes on homosexuality. He concludes that Black-Whites differences on this issue may therefore be more strongly related to "black attitude formation" and their socialization process (75). Lewis, however, finds no distinctions between Blacks' and Whites' attitudes on sodomy laws, antigay discrimination, and civil liberties. Thus, racial differences only seem to emerge with regards to the issue of same sex marriage.

Of particular relevance to the main question raised in this paper, Lewis and Gossett (2008) examine public opinion towards same-sex marriage in California from 1985-2006. 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 who 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 amongst Blacks has not been commensurate with the growth in support amongst 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 towards 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 1985-2006, how can the passage of Proposition 8 be explained? According to media reports, turnout in 2008 was particularly high amongst 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 & 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, 41 states have implemented their own statutory version of DOMA, while 30 states have amended their respective constitutions to define marriage as being between a man and woman.^{vi} In the 2008 election cycle, California, Florida, and Arizona all had the issue of same-sex marriage on their general election ballots.^{vii}

Given that 23.7% 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 Verastegui. 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 pre-recorded 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 of Proposition 8.

Efforts to target Black voters were primarily channeled via Black churches and their ministers.^{viii} 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.^{ix} 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, et al 2008).^x

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 their opposition to Proposition 8 and commitment to equal rights.

Research Design

The goal of this paper is to understand which factors influenced individuals' attitudes towards same-sex marriage in California, and whether racial/ethnic group variations emerge, even when controlling for other important factors like religiosity and political ideology. Unlike the report produced by Egan and Sherrill (2009), this analysis relies not just on one, but three sets of data to investigate voter attitudes towards

Proposition 8. In addition, these surveys were conducted either before or on the day of the election, and not in 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/KTLA, and focuses specifically on public attitudes towards same-sex marriage as well as homosexuality. The survey was in the field from May 20-21, 2008 and interviewed 834 adult residents of California.^{xi} 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 government.^{xii}

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, this data constitutes the best publicly available information of voter preferences on the day of the election.^{xiii} And since this data is being supplemented with other survey data, the analyses are not solely based on this dataset.

The LCSLA survey was distributed in 50 randomly and ethnically representative precincts in Los Angeles city (Guerra, et al 2008).^{xiv} 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: Blacks 11.2 percent, Latinos 46.5 percent, Whites 46.9 percent and Asians 10 percent. 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.^{xv} 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 towards 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 towards same-sex marriage, the pre-election models account for an individual's demographic characteristics, political dispositions (captured by their partisanship and political ideology), media consumption, marital status, religious affiliation and rate of church attendance, as well as whether or not they have friends or family members who are gay.^{xvi} 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 towards 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 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 is a dichotomous measure, these models are estimated using logit analysis. And since the responses to the questions pertaining 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 pre-election polling data from several public opinion surveys on ethnic/racial groups' support for Proposition 8. The earliest pre-election poll conducted by the L.A. Times/KTLA indicates that Whites are nearly split in their support of Proposition 8. And while this survey suggests that a majority of Latinos, Blacks and Asians are in favor of the ballot initiative, these estimates are based on a limited sample 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 opposed a ban on same-sex marriage, while a majority of Blacks and Asians favored it. Thus, with the exception of one pre-election survey, Blacks consistently supported Proposition 8. Whites, on the other hand, were opposed to the ballot proposition in all six of these pre-election surveys.

These pre-polling data are consistent with NEP estimates on White and Asian support for Proposition 8, but the predictions on the level of Black support reveals 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. Amongst Latinos, their average level of support in the pre-election polls was 48.4 percent, whereas a majority of Latinos supported the measure (53 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 a majority favoring it in the aftermath of the election.

[Table 1 goes here]

Looking more closely at racial/ethnic differences in opinions towards different facets of same-sex marriage, Table 2 presents the distributions of these responses based on a respondent's ethnic/racial identity. These questions, which were available in the pre-election 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 towards Proposition 8, all ethnic/racial groups, with the exception of Whites, favored a ban on same-sex marriage.^{xvii} 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.

[Table 2 goes here]

Attitudes towards the belief that the institution of marriage will be degraded if gays are allowed to marry are more divided; amongst 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 trumps 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 be less conflicted than are Whites. For instance, a strong majority of Asian respondents, 57 percent, strongly disagreed with the Supreme Court ruling. Amongst 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 towards same-sex marriage, as of May 2008.^{xviii} The estimates presented in columns 2-4 (in which the dependent variable is the probability of supporting Proposition 8) indicate that Blacks, Asians, and those identifying with another racial identity are all more likely to support Proposition 8 than are Whites. Blacks are .29 more likely to favor Proposition 8 than are Whites, while Asians are .27 more likely to support a ban on same sex marriage than are 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 one'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 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.

[Table 3 goes here]

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 the Republican party, does not appear to be at the top of their concerns in this election cycle. Finally, Asians are 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 towards Proposition 8 continue to emerge in the weeks leading up to the election. However, such a distinction only arises with respect to Black respondents; they are .15 more likely to vote in support of Proposition 8 than are Whites. Consistent with the previous logit estimates, along with Egan and Sherill’s findings (2009), political ideology, party affiliation, age, and identifying oneself as a born again Christian affects one’s attitudes opinions towards 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.

[Table 4 goes here]

To determine whether the pre-polling data was 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 in this survey. And even when accounting for one's political attitudes and religious affiliation, Blacks are more likely to support Proposition 8 than are Whites. This finding is not only consistent with the pre-polling data that was drawn from two different sources; it is also similar to the findings from the report where survey data was conducted in the days following the election (Egan and Sherill 2009). Note that while the exit poll analysis only focuses on a particular subset of the California electorate, they are identical to the results based on the statewide surveys.^{xix} 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.

[Table 5 goes here]

An individual's demographic attributes, partisanship, political ideology, religion and sexual orientation continue to affect their 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 are born again Christians are .27 more likely to support Proposition 8, whereas respondents who identify as homosexual are .27 less likely to vote in favor of Proposition 8. The effect of identifying as a Republican is also fairly substantial; Republicans are .21 more likely to support Proposition 8 than are Independents. Finally, relative to White voters, Blacks are .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 amongst 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.^{xx} These estimates are estimated based on both the NEP data (columns 2-3) as well as the independent exit poll survey conducted by David Binder Research (DBR), which is used in Egan and Sherill's (2009) report.

[Table 6 goes here]

If Latino 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 were 10,271,399 and the difference in the number of voters who supported and opposed the initiative is 504,479.^{xxi} If Black and Latinos voters in 2008 voted at the same rates as they did in 2004, their combined support for Proposition 8 still far exceeds the vote difference in support/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 the 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 paper paints a more nuanced picture. First, even if turnout rates amongst 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 amongst 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 towards Proposition 8 in the same manner as it did for Whites.^{xxii}

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 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. Further, 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 due to the fact that issues pertaining to moral values were emphasized in Bush’s 2004 re-election campaign as well as the Republican Party’s vocal opposition to same sex marriage (Abrajano, et al 2008). Related research by Donovan, et al (2008), Smith, et al (2006), as well as Campbell and Monsoon (2008) indicate 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 towards same-sex marriage could potentially shift over time.^{xxiii} Consider that in 2000, 58% of Whites, 65% of Latinos and 59% 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 towards same-sex marriage experienced the greatest change, with a 12 percentage point decrease during this time 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 subject to future research endeavors.

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Appendix

Script to Spanish-Language Radio Ad created by the No on 8 Campaign (Los Angeles Mayor Anotonio Villaraigosa speaking): “The Proposition 8 campaign has knowingly targeted the Latino community with shameful and deceitful advertising. Prop 8 is about discrimination, not education. It's disgraceful to use children to try to take away people's civil rights. Prop 8 attacks all California families, including our Latino families. I am confident that once our community understands the discrimination behind Proposition 8 they will join me and vote No.”

Coding of Variables (LA Times/KTLA Data):

The variables, *Latino*, *Black*, *Asian*, and *Other Race*, are coded as “1” if the respondent identifies with the ethnic/racial identity, “0” otherwise. The omitted category is White respondents.

Age is coded as a five-category variable, with 1 indicating those between the ages of 18 to 24, 2 as those between the ages of 25 to 34, 3 as those between the ages of 35 to 44, 4 as those between the ages of 45 to 64, and 5 as those age 65 or older.

Conservative is coded as a categorical variable, with 1 indicating very liberal, 2 somewhat liberal, 3 middle of the road, 4 somewhat conservative, and 5 very conservative.

The two partisanship variables are coded as 1 if they denote the party in question (either Democrat or Republican), 0 otherwise. The omitted category is Independents.

Married is coded as a dummy variable, with a “1” indicating that the respondent is married, “0” otherwise.

The variable capturing a respondent’s interest on news pertaining to same-sex marriage is a categorical variable, with a 1 indicating that they follow the news very closely, 2 somewhat closely, 3 not too closely and 4 not closely at all.

The two religious affiliation variables, *Born Again* and *Catholic*, are both coded as dummy variables, with a “1” denoting the particular religion, 0 otherwise.

The religiosity variable is coded as 0 if the respondent almost never attends service, 1 if one attends several times a year, 2 if one attends about once a month, 3 if one attends about once a week, and 4 if the respondent attends more often than once a week.

The variable capturing whether the respondent has a gay friend, family member or co-worker is coded as 1 if they know someone who is gay, 0 otherwise.

Coding of Variables (LCSLA Exit Poll Data):

The variables, *Latino*, *Black*, and *Asian*, are coded as “1” if the respondent identifies with the ethnic/racial identity, “0” otherwise. The omitted category is White respondents.

Age is coded as a continuous variable, and ranges from 18 to 96.

The variables *Conservative*, *Democrat*, *Republican*, *Married*, *Born Again*, and *Catholic* were coded in the same fashion as these variables in the LA Times/KTLA data.

Highly Educated is coded as a categorical variable, with 1 indicating less than a high school degree, 2 high school graduate, 3 some college/technical school, 4 college degree(s), 5 some graduate school, 6 graduate degree(s).

High Income is coded as a categorical variable, with 1 denoting that the respondent's income is less than 20k, 2 20k to 39,999, 3 40k to 59,999, 4 60k to 79,999, 5 80 to 99,999, 6 100k to 149,999, 7 150k to 249,999 and 8 more than 250k.

A respondent's sexual orientation is coded as "1" if he/she is homosexual, "0" otherwise.

Coding of Variables (PPIC Data):

The variables, *Latino*, *Black*, *Other Race*, and *Asian*, are coded as "1" if the respondent identifies with the ethnic/racial identity, "0" otherwise. The omitted category is White respondents.

The variables *Conservative*, *Democrat*, *Republican*, *Married*, *Born Again*, and *Catholic* were coded in the same fashion as these variables in the LA Times/KTLA data.

Age is a categorical variable, with 1 denoting a respondent is between the ages of 18 to 24, 2 between the ages of 25 to 34, 3 between 45 to 54, 4 between 55 to 64, 6 65 or older.

Highly Educated is coded as a categorical variable, with 1 indicating some high school or less, 2 high school graduate, 3 some college, 4 college degree(s), 5 post graduate

High Income is coded as a categorical variable, with 1 denoting that the respondent's income is less than 20k, 2 20k to 39,999, 3 40k to 59,999, 4 60k to 79,999, 5 80 to 99,999, 6 100k to 199,999 7 200k or more.

Political Interest is coded as a categorical variable, with 1 denoting a great deal of interest in politics, 2 fair amount of interest, 3 only a little interest, 4 none.

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

	L.A. Times		Survey USA			PPIC
	05/20-21	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

Note: Entries are row percentages

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

<i>Vote Intention on Proposition 8</i>	Asian	Black	Latino	White	Other Race
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
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
<i>"If Gays are Allowed to Marry, the Institution of Marriage will be Degraded"</i>					
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
<i>Same-Sex Marriage Most Important Issue in CA</i>					
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
<i>Supreme Court Decision to Allow Same-sex Marriage in CA</i>					
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
<i>N</i>	42	50	142	528	36

Entries, unless otherwise denotes, are column percentages. Source: L.A. Times/KTLA Field Poll, May 20-21, 2008

Table 3: CA Voters' Opinions towards Same-Sex Marriage (May 2008)

	Intend to vote yes on Proposition 8			Institution of Marriage Not Degraded w/SSM			SSM Not Most Imp't Issue Facing CA			Disapprove of Supreme Court Ruling on SSM		
	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Pr^a</i>	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Pr^a</i>	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Pr^a</i>	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Pr^a</i>
Constant	-2.89***	.73	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Latino	.36	.31	.08	-.05	.26	-.01	-.46*	.26	.07	.33	.27	.08
Black	1.62***	.49	.29	-.08	.37	-.02	-.01	.37	.001	.17	.40	.04
Asian	1.49***	.58	.27	-.43	.42	-.09	.11	.44	-.02	1.56***	.51	.36
Other Race	1.38***	.47	.26	-.36	.38	-.08	-.37	.37	.05	.41	.37	.10
Age	.32***	.10	.08	-.18**	.09	-.04	.6	.09	-.01	.40***	.09	.10
Conservative	.48***	.11	.11	-.58***	.09	-.13	-.26***	.09	.04	.79***	.10	.20
Republican	.40	.31	.09	-.45*	.25	-.10	-.36	.25	.06	.21***	.07	.13
Democrat	-.42*	.24	-.10	.45**	.20	.10	-.17	.21	.03	-.57***	.21	-.14
Married	.43**	.21	.10	-.17	.18	-.04	.64	.18	-.10	.29	.18	.07
Don't Follow News on SSM	-.01	.12	-.01	.04	.09	-.01	.41***	.10	-.07	.11	.10	.03
Born Again	.80***	.26	.18	-.87***	.21	-.19	-.28	.21	.04	.71***	.23	.18
Catholic	-.01	.24	-.002	-.11	.20	-.03	.11	.20	-.02	.01	.21	.002
Religious	.19**	.08	.05	-.23***	.07	-.05	-.11*	.06	.02	.21***	.07	.05
Have Gay Friends	-.51**	.24	-.12	.30**	.19	.06	-.07	.20	.01	-.78***	.22	-.19
N		532			560			573			561	
Log-Likelihood		-287.28			-591.91			-479.99			-543.61	

Estimate significant at the p<.01 level, **Estimate significant at the p<.05 level, *Estimate significant at the p<.05 level.

Source: L.A. 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.

Table 4: Probability of Voting Yes on Proposition 8, PPIC Statewide Survey

	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>Predicted Probability^a</i>
Constant	-1.40	.17	--
Latino	.12	.18	.05
Black	.40**	.17	.15
Asian	.25	.22	.09
Other Race	.25	.22	.10
Age	.08**	.03	.03
Conservative	.31***	.04	.12
Republican	.34***	.12	.13
Democrat	-.27**	.11	-.11
Married	.10	.10	.04
Born Again	.36***	.10	.14
Catholic	-.06	.11	-.02
Highly Educated	-.01	.04	-.003
High Income	.02	.03	.01
No Political Interest	-.004	.06	-.02
N		1011	
Log Likelihood		-589.84	

***Estimate significant at the p<.01 level, **Estimate significant at the p<.05 level, *Estimate significant at the p<.10 level.

Source: 2008 PPIC 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.

Table 5: Probability of Voting Yes on Proposition 8, LCSLA Exit Poll

	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>Predicted Probability^a</i>
Constant	-1.28	.17	--
Latino	.10	.18	.04
Black	.50***	.17	.19
Asian	.03	.22	.02
Age	.01***	.003	.004
Conservative	.34***	.04	.13
Republican	.54**	.22	.21
Democrat	.14	.15	.05
Married	.28***	.10	.11
Born Again	.70***	.21	.27
Catholic	.12	.11	.04
Highly Educated	-.12***	.04	-.04
High Income	-.08***	.03	-.03
R is Homosexual	-.83***	.23	-.27
N	996		
Log Likelihood	-560.68		

***Estimate significant at the $p < .01$ level, **Estimate significant at the $p < .05$ level, *Estimate significant at the $p < .10$ level.

^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.

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)*	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**	1,698,889	1,686,563	1,145,260**
<i>Total vote on Proposition 8</i>		10,271,399		
<i>Difference between Yes and No Vote on Proposition 8</i>		504,479		
*DBR estimate is based on the exit poll survey discussed in Egan and Sherill (2009)				
** These are hypothetical estimates for the number of Blacks and Latinos supporting Proposition 8, based on their 2004 rates of turnout.				

Notes

ⁱ <http://primary2000.sos.ca.gov/VoterGuide/Propositions/22text.htm>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/results/polls/#val=CAI01p1>. The report by Egan and Sherrill (2009) questions this level of support amongst Blacks. Based on their analysis of precinct level voting data of 5 CA counties, Black support was more in the range of 57-59 percent.

ⁱⁱⁱ For example, *The Washington Times* featured an article entitled, “Blacks, Hispanics nixed gay marriage: Loyalists Defied Obama Stance”, by Cheryl Wetzstein, November 8, 2008, A01. Another article was entitled, “Black and Latino voters critical to same-sex marriage ban’s success” by Mike Swift and Sean Webby, *The San Jose Mercury News*, November 5, 2008.

^{iv} See “Gay Rights Abandoned on Sidelines After Election” by Valerie Richardson, *The Washington Times*. B01.

^v The survey data used in Egan and Sherrill’s study (2009) is not publicly available.

^{vi} <http://www.ncsl.org/IssuesResearch/HumanServices/SameSexMarriage/tabid/16430/Default.aspx>

^{vii} The proponents and opponents of Proposition 8 in California spent more than \$75 million dollars combined on their respective campaigns.

^{viii} 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 in order to receive an endorsement from them. For more information, see “NAACP President Alice Huffman sells out African American Families”, PR Newswire, October 30, 2008.

^{ix} “Top African American Religious Leaders Join Apostle Frederick K.C. Price in Endorsing YES on Prop. 8”, October 22, 2008. PR Newswire.

^x Asians make-up 11.6% of California’s eligible voters.

^{xi} In this sample, there were 528 White respondents, 142 Latino, 50 Black, 42 Asian and 36 respondents who identified with another racial identity. The breakdown of support for Proposition 8 in this sample is as follows: 59.5 percent Asian, 74 percent Black, 50.7 percent Latino and 42.8 percent White.

^{xii} This survey was entitled “Californians and their Government”, PPIC Statewide Survey, October 2008. The ethnic/racial breakdown in the PPIC survey was: 6.6% Black, 27% Latino, 5.7% Asian and the remaining respondents were White.

^{xiii} Exit poll data is not drawn from a random group of individuals, nor is it typically representative of the population in question.

^{xiv} See Barreto, et al (2008), 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 5% of the sample.

^{xv} These estimates are from the U.S. Census Bureau (2007).

^{xvi} The coding of these variables is available in the appendix. The last two variables were only available in the May 2008 poll.

^{xvii} One factor to keep in mind is that the sample size of these ethnic/racial groups is rather small.

^{xviii} 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 PPIC survey (see appendix). These results indicate that Blacks who identify as being Born Again are more likely to support Prop 8, as are Whites that 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).

^{xix} The Cooperative Campaign Analysis (CCAP) panel survey, conducted by Polimetrix, asked respondents about gay rights issues in December 2007 and again in October 2008. Over this time period, opinions towards gay rights exhibited only a small amount of movement (15%).

^{xx} I thank Melissa Michelson for her assistance on this discussion and analysis.

^{xxi} 5,387,939 individuals voted yes on 8 and 4,883,460 voted against Proposition 8.

^{xxii} See appendix for the logit estimates. As the small sample size of Blacks is quite small, these findings should be replicated where possible.

^{xxiii} 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.

Appendix

Probability of Voting Yes on Prop 8, by Racial/Ethnic Group

	Blacks		Latinos		Whites	
	<i>Coefficient</i> (<i>S.E</i>)	<i>Predicted</i> <i>Probability</i> ^a	<i>Coefficient</i> (<i>S.E</i>)	<i>Predicted</i> <i>Probability</i> ^a	<i>Coefficient</i> (<i>S.E</i>)	<i>Predicted</i> <i>Probability</i> ^a
Constant	.10 (1.20)	--	-.57 (.49)	--	-1.46 (.36)	--
Age	.18 (.13)	.07 (.15)	.05 (.06)	.02 (.02)	.05 (.04)	.02 (.02)
Conservative Republican	.05 -- ^b	.02 --	.12 .44	.05 .17	.39*** .30**	.15 .12
Democrat	-.71 (.44)	-.24 (.12)	-.09 (.22)	-.04 (.09)	-.23 (.15)	-.09 (.06)
Married	-.23 (.37)	-.09 (.14)	-.10 (.20)	-.04 (.08)	.09 (.12)	.04 (.05)
Born Again Catholic	1.00*** .16	.37 (.13)	-.02 (.22)	-.01 (.09)	.42*** (.13)	.16 (.05)
Protestant	-.21 (.41)	-.08 (.15)	.22 (.53)	-.09 (.21)	.17 (.14)	.07 (.05)
Highly Educated	-.08 (.19)	-.03 (.07)	.07 (.09)	.03 (.03)	-.01 (.06)	-.003 (.02)
High Income	.10 (.11)	.04 (.04)	-.02 (.07)	-.01 (.02)	.001 (.04)	.001 (.01)
Female	-.79* (.42)	-.27 (.13)	.03 (.18)	.01 (.07)	-.23** (.11)	-.09 (.04)
N		76		212		652
Log Likelihood		-41.84		-141.53		-353.74

***Estimate significant at the p<.01 level, **Estimate significant at the p<.05 level, *Estimate significant at the p<.10 level.

Source: 2008 PPIC 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.

^bVariable was collinear with the dependent variable and was therefore dropped from the model.
