

Covert Cross-Racial Mobilization, Black Activism, and Political Participation Pre-Voting Rights Act

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Abstract

We examine correlates of Black political participation (voter registration) pre-Voting Rights Act (VRA) to determine whether White candidates' covert pursuit of the Black vote had positive effects on Black political participation (covert cross-racial mobilization). Previous scholarship has discovered that both socio-economic and political variables account for variation in Black political participation, but scholars have not linked cross-racial mobilization to Black political participation during this time period, nor have they examined the covert ways that cross-racial mobilization occurred prior to the Voting Rights Act. We examine covert cross-racial mobilization in the context of a 1950 U.S. Senate campaign in Florida and show that some White candidates made covert appeals for the Black vote. We corroborate our qualitative findings with data suggesting that candidate covert appeals can possibly lead to increases in Black voter registration. We offer covert cross-racial mobilization as a new conceptualization that theoretically captures the reality White candidates faced when seeking to mobilize the Black vote during the pre-VRA time period.

Keywords: Southern Politics , Black political participation , Civil Rights

1 INTRODUCTION

Between 1944 - 1965, the southern Black vote steadily grew in size and relevance. Yet little research has sought to untangle the ways in which southern White candidates mobilized these voters, and whether southern Whites played any role in advancing Black political participation prior to the Voting Rights Act. This paper examines the impact of cross-racial mobilization on African American political participation (i.e., voter registration) in the context of 1950s Florida and the covert means by which candidates courted the Black vote in the pre-Voting Rights Act (VRA) period. We define cross-racial mobilization (CRM) as conscious race-targeted mobilization of blocs of voters of one racial group by politicians and campaign operatives of another racial group.¹ However, we maintain that during the pre-VRA period cross-racial mobilization was often done in an indirect fashion in the South to avoid the alienation of White voters who still dominated the electorate and who generally viewed Black political participation with great skepticism if not outright hostility. We define this form of indirect mobilization as covert cross-racial mobilization (CCRM). Candidates engaged in CCRM through three different channels: by providing monetary support to labor and other groups who would in turn mobilize the Black vote, by giving speeches in Black churches, and through communication with the Black community via African-American radio and newspapers. This paper looks mainly at the first of these.

Traditional models of Black political behavior during the Civil Rights era do not incorporate cross-racial mobilization; rather they tend to highlight a few broad factors in

¹Loren Collingwood, Matt A Barreto, and Sergio I Garcia-Rios. "Revisiting latino voting: cross-racial mobilization in the 2012 election". In: *Political Research Quarterly* (2014), p. 1065912914532374.

explaining African American participation in the South. First, prior to the implementation of the VRA, Blacks who lived in places that were especially racially hostile (i.e., the Black belt) tended to be registered at lower levels relative to their counterparts in less racially hostile counties.²³⁴⁵⁶ Second, institutional barriers, such as the White primary, poll taxes, and literacy tests, tended to retard Black registration.⁷⁸⁹ Third, Blacks who lived in places with strong social organizations (e.g., Black churches, large NAACP memberships), and who had higher socio-economic status tended to have greater resources resulting in higher rates of registration.¹⁰¹¹ A fourth, more elusive variable, which has received but passing attention, is the electoral mobilization of Black voters by White candidates and White interest groups (i.e., cross-racial mobilization).¹²¹³ This paper delves into this fourth variable by specifically examining Black voter registration. We proffer a framework for the analysis

²William A. Gamson. *The strategy of social protest*. English. ID: 1229459. Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1975. ISBN: 0256016844 9780256016840.

³S.E. Tolnay. "Black lynchings: The power threat hypothesis revisited". In: *Social forces* 67.3 (1989), pp. 605–623.

⁴V.O Key. *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. Fourth. New York: AA. Knopf, 1949.

⁵R.M. Valelly. *The two reconstructions: The struggle for black enfranchisement*. University of Chicago Press, 2004.

⁶W.A. Santoro. "The civil rights movement and the right to vote: Black protest, segregationist violence and the audience". In: *Social Forces* 86.4 (2008), pp. 1391–1414.

⁷Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro. "Political Factors and Negro Voter Registration in the South". In: *The American Political Science Review* 57.2 (1963), pp. 355–367. ISSN: 00030554. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1952827>.

⁸Robert W. Mickey. "The Beginning of the End for Authoritarian Rule in America: Smith v. Allwright and the Abolition of the White Primary in the Deep South, 1944-1948". In: *Studies in American Political Development* 22.02 (2008), pp. 143–182. DOI: [10.1017/S0898588X08000096](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0898588X08000096).

⁹David C. Colby. "The Voting Rights Act and Black Registration in Mississippi". In: *Publius* 16.4 (1986), pp. 123–137. ISSN: 00485950. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3330163>.

¹⁰Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro. *Negroes and the New Southern Politics*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1966.

¹¹D. McAdam. *Political process and the development of black insurgency, 1930-1970*. University of Chicago Press, 1982.

¹²Alfred B. Clubok, John M. De Grove, and Charles D. Farris. "The Manipulated Negro Vote: Some Pre-Conditions and Consequences". In: *The Journal of Politics* 26.1 (1964), pp. 112–129. ISSN: 00223816. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2127856>.

¹³Matthews and Prothro, "Political Factors and Negro Voter Registration in the South".

of covert cross-racial mobilization across the South, by looking at one specific Senate race in Florida and the strategies employed by candidates to mobilize African-Americans ahead of the election. That is, we examine variables associated with changes in Black voter registration. The introduction of covert cross-racial mobilization as a variable in models of Black political participation in the period following the *Smith v. Allwright* decision allows a more nuanced analysis both of what led to increases in Black voter participation in the pre-VRA South and the strategies developed by candidates when Black voters became a potentially valuable bloc in Southern politics.

To assess our theoretical framework, we employ a mixed-method design. We use archival data and secondary sources to unmask each candidate's cross-racial mobilization strategy vis-à-vis African American voters in an extremely high-profile U.S. Senate race in 1950s Florida. One candidate, Claude Pepper, quietly worked with the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) to financially and organizationally support Black registration drives in four counties across the state.¹⁴ As such, the numerical growth in Black voter registration leading up to the election in these counties was significantly greater than in other localities across the state. We suggest and show that covert cross-racial mobilization is an important variable in explaining variation in Black political participation prior to the massive social and racial upheaval of the mid-1960s. While previous research has hinted at the relevancy of this variable, scholarship has not included covert cross-racial mobilization in models of Black participation, perhaps because of the difficulty of measurement.¹⁵¹⁶

¹⁴The Pepper campaign tried to keep this cross-racial mobilization quiet, but eventually his opponent discovered the machinations and exploited it to his advantage.

¹⁵Matthews and Prothro, "Political Factors and Negro Voter Registration in the South".

¹⁶Matthews and Prothro, *Negroes and the New Southern Politics*.

We analyze Black political participation in Florida for two reasons. First, Florida has unique demographic and sectional variation, where on the one hand some counties exhibit historical trends similar to the old South while other counties demonstrate much different patterns.¹⁷ In other words, Whites in some parts of the state – namely in the North – share similar racial views as Whites in Georgia, Alabama, and other Deep South states. But the racial views of Whites in other parts of the state – notably South Florida – reflect a more racially moderate temperament as Whites in the North. This attitudinal cleavage should theoretically lead to variation in outcomes of minority political incorporation, so county level analysis can be conducted. In other states, such as Mississippi or Alabama, White intimidation and repression was so suffocating that Black political incorporation (registration) by 1950 was essentially null. Second, and more practically, Florida is one of the only southern states that collected concrete voter registration data by race in 1950 (and in a few years leading up to 1950). This analysis is simply not possible in most southern states prior to 1960.

In the next section we summarize the history of Black voting rights in the period preceding passage of the Voting Rights Act before reviewing the literature on Black political participation in the South and specifically Florida during this period. Next, we lay out our covert cross-racial mobilization framework followed by a review of the racial tactics used in the 1950 Senate Democratic primary race between Claude Pepper and George Smathers.¹⁸

Here, we present evidence indicating that both candidates weighed the pros and cons of

¹⁷Clubok, Grove, and Farris, “The Manipulated Negro Vote: Some Pre-Conditions and Consequences”.

¹⁸It should be noted that the main issue in the campaign was the “red record of Claude Pepper”; thus while race was important in the election, it was not the defining issue.

mobilizing the growing Black vote. Pepper engaged in various covert cross-racial mobilization tactics, including supporting a CIO Black registration drive; whereas Smathers was more cautious in his approach and on balance used race as a wedge issue to capture the White vote (Smathers campaigned hard against the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC), for instance, a federal commission designed to end racial discrimination in the work place). We next present our empirical findings, which support our qualitative account and interpretation. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of the implications of this research and the need to expand our analysis to more states and a broader time period.

2 THE HISTORICAL SETTING

In this section, we briefly discuss the events leading up to the *Smith V. Allwright* decision, and why this decision had such an impact on cross-racial mobilization. For a more detailed analysis of the events leading up to Smith, see Hine (1979),¹⁹ Zelden (2004),²⁰ or Mickey (2008).²¹ Drawing on this discussion, we pose some questions regarding how *Smith* may have affected Black participation in the South.

With the end of the Civil War, and the enactment of the 14th and 15th Amendments, Blacks were technically given the right to vote. And indeed, across the South during the Reconstruction Era, Blacks did enjoy some voting rights.²² But by the late 1890s, Southern

¹⁹Darlene Clark Hine. *Black Victory: The Rise and Fall of the White Primary in Texas*. Millwood, NY: KTO Press, 1979.

²⁰[zelden2004battle](#).

²¹Mickey, "The Beginning of the End for Authoritarian Rule in America: *Smith v. Allwright* and the Abolition of the White Primary in the Deep South, 1944-1948".

²²J.M. Kousser and R.G. Smolka. "The shaping of southern politics: Suffrage restriction and the establishment of the one-party south, 1880-1910". In: *History: Reviews of New Books* 3.4 (1975), pp. 90-

Democrats regained control of all aspects of government in the South and systematically disfranchised Black voters.²³ Using the Jim Crow tactics of poll taxes, intimidation and physical violence, and notably the all-White Democratic primary, Blacks were excluded from influencing politics across the Southern states. But tensions between the races grew on the eve of *Smith*, as World War II catalyzed changes to the racial status quo.²⁴²⁵ As some have argued, prior to *Smith* tensions between Whites and Blacks sometimes exploded in racial violence, resulting in increases in White threat of Black violence. While the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and other legal and activist organizations had long been fighting for Black voting rights, it was not until the *Smith V. Allwright* Supreme Court decision in 1944 that the All White Primary was ultimately abolished and the White authoritarian hold on politics began to unravel.

While White politicians generally maintained their stranglehold on power relations in Florida, the inexorable tide of Black participation moved at a quick pace. With the exception of Georgia, which had a concentration of Black political power in Atlanta, Texas, where the end of the White primary obviously had the most immediate impact (since the case originated in Texas), and Louisiana, where the Long faction tended to involve more poor Blacks in politics (Key, 1949; Kurtz and Peoples, 1992; Williams, 1981), increases in registration and raw figures in Florida place it near the top of Southern states for Black

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²³Kousser and Smolka, "The shaping of southern politics: Suffrage restriction and the establishment of the one-party south, 1880–1910".

²⁴M.J. Klarman. "How Brown changed race relations: The backlash thesis". In: *The Journal of American History* 81.1 (1994), pp. 81–118. ISSN: 0021-8723.

²⁵C.S. Parker. "When Politics Becomes Protest: Black Veterans and Political Activism in the Postwar South". In: *The Journal of Politics* 71.01 (2009), pp. 113–131.

registration. Registration figures are presented in Table 1, which is sorted by raw growth.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

The *Smith V. Allwright* decision was a watershed moment in voting rights that is often overlooked as the beginning of the end of Southern racial segregation. In *Smith v. Allwright*, the Supreme Court found that the all-White Democratic primary violated the Fifteenth Amendment by excluding Blacks from the Democratic primary in Texas. This ended the White primary and legally allowed Blacks in Southern states to participate in Democratic primaries, making them a potentially valuable voting bloc in close elections. With the Democrats dominating Southern politics, the primaries were in almost all cases the de facto general election since Republican victories were rare. Table 1 clearly shows Black voter registration improving across the South in the wake of *Smith v. Allwright* but noticeably in Florida. Many factors contributed to this rise in Black registration (the return of Black soldiers from World War II (Parker, 2010), NAACP organization and mobilization, national party interests, etc.); however, we are specifically concerned with how the reduction in electoral barriers increased the chances of White candidates engaging Blacks. By most accounts, scholars have shown that intense massive White resistance did not set in until after the *Brown V. Board* decision in 1954,²⁶²⁷²⁸ so in the years immediately following *Smith*, some candidates did tread tepidly towards Black incorporation, as, we argue, was the case with Claude Pepper of Florida.

²⁶N.R. McMillen. *The citizens's council*. Univ. of Illinois Press, 1994. ISBN: 0252064410.

²⁷F.M. Wilhoit. *The politics of massive resistance*. G. Braziller, 1973. ISBN: 0807607010.

²⁸C. Webb. *Massive resistance: southern opposition to the second reconstruction*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2005.

Indeed, as Klarman claims, “the pattern of response to Brown was consistent: Race became the decisive focus of southern politics, and massive resistance its dominant theme” (Klarman, 1994, p. 97). In his extensive review of Florida politics, Price (1957) argues that prior to the desegregation of public schools, the effect of race on the voting behavior of Whites in the South, and Florida in particular, was relatively soft compared to later years of massive White resistance.²⁹ The Smith decision made Blacks in the South a potentially valuable voting bloc in close elections if they could be mobilized covertly. While Democratic politicians had to be careful in how Blacks were courted (i.e., they had to be covert), it became clear that many White Southern Democratic politicians were interested in capturing the growing Black vote post *Smith*.

[INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE]

In the wake of the *Smith v. Allwright* decision, some Southern candidates began adopting a more moderate image on race, as reflected in Figure 2 above.³⁰ While events leading up to and after Smith have been well documented as leading to Black insurgency, the research linking specific variables to increases in Black participation – either registration, turnout, or other activities – is sparse. We argue that covert cross-racial mobilization played a role in the increases in Black participation across the South and that the *Smith* decision had a significant impact on the strategies employed by White politicians in the South. In other words, *Smith* produced a structural break in the politics of the South.

²⁹H.D. Price. “The Negro and Florida Politics, 1944–1954”. In: *The Journal of Politics* 17.02 (1955), pp. 198–220.

³⁰Loren Collingwood. “The Pursuit of Victory and Incorporation: Elite Strategy, Group Pressure, and Cross-Racial Mobilization”. PhD thesis. University of Washington, 2012.

We do not presume that our analysis is the first to uncover cross-racial mobilization in the South, as this has been documented to varying degrees across a wide time period. Yet none of this research has directly tied cross-racial mobilization – covert or otherwise to Black participation. We argue that this is potentially an overlooked measure that should be included in further analyses, and we demonstrate ways in which this can be done. Before doing so, however, we point to three bits of literature that are especially relevant to the study of African American political participation and political participation in Florida, which we review below.

3 Black Political Participation in Florida and Across the South

While it is unclear whether their sample is at all representative, Clubok et al lay out the many ways in which candidates and public officials corral the Black vote by investigating cross-racial mobilization in six towns across Florida during the 1950s-60s.³¹ They find cross-racial mobilization rampant in local politics: “In five of the six towns...Negro registration and voting was or had been encouraged, facilitated, and, to varying degrees, organized by members of the White political structure” (Clubok et al 1964, p. 117). However, Clubok and colleagues do not systematically examine the relationship between White cross-racial mobilization targeted at Black voters and variation in Black voter registration. Their findings, while instructive, are largely qualitative and do not assess the covert nature of

³¹Clubok, Grove, and Farris, “The Manipulated Negro Vote: Some Pre-Conditions and Consequences”.

the political mobilization/outreach.

In his investigation of Florida politics post *Smith*, Price (1955) shows that it was a fairly common strategy for [White] Florida candidates to mobilize African Americans. Regarding the 1950 Florida Senate Democratic primary – the same election we analyze – Price (1955) states: “The Negro vote is too large for conservative candidates to risk indulging in undiluted Negro-baiting, but neither do liberal candidates dare expose a too pro-Negro program or make too open a bid for Negro support” (page 217). Without providing in-depth evidence, Price seems to suggest that candidates were engaging in covert cross-racial mobilization designed to increase their support among Florida Blacks. Nonetheless, Price does not examine the strategies employed by candidates to increase Black political participation, nor the predictors of Black participation in a multi-variate context.

Clark (2011)³² finds more in-depth evidence of the candidates’ racial strategies: the *New York Times* notes that both candidates “are courting the Negro vote as much as they can without offending White voters.”³³ Clark further details the CIO registration campaign, noting that there was a “CIO report entitled ‘Survey of Negro Vote in Florida’ showing that labor organizers were working to register Black voters in Florida for Pepper” (Clark 2007, p. 139). He continues: “The registration effort...did produce greater numbers of Black voters in Jacksonville, Miami, and Tampa” (Clark 2007, p. 140). This evidence certainly suggests that Pepper was engaged in at least some form of cross-racial mobilization, even if indirectly via the CIO, but Clark does not provide close county-by-county details or linkages

³²James C Clark. *Red Pepper and Gorgeous George: Claude Pepper’s Epic Defeat in the 1950 Democratic Primary*. University Press of Florida, 2011.

³³New York Times, 8 April 1950.

between covert cross-racial mobilization and Black participation. Our analysis, however, builds off of Clark's work. The next section develops a covert cross-racial mobilization theoretical framework, then traces the contours of the 1950 U.S. Senate campaign between Claude Pepper and George Smathers. While the campaign's main debate was arguably around the "red record of Claude Pepper," archival evidence suggests that generally the two candidates took different strategies when it came to race. We show that Pepper covertly supported a CIO Black registration campaign, whereas Smathers cleverly used not so implicitly-designed racial appeals to the disaffected White vote via his discussion of the Fair Practices Employment Commission (FEPC) (see Figure 3 as an example brochure that Smathers campaign sent to voters).

[INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE]

Of course, covert cross-racial mobilization alone does not explain increases in Black participation in the post-*Smith* period. Matthews and Prothro wrote two articles in 1963 examining correlates of county-level Black voter registration across the South. Using data mostly from the late 1950s and early 1960s, these scholars find that both socio-economic and political variables contribute to variance in Black registration. Key among socio-economic variables is the percent Black, which tended to depress Black voter registration across the South during the late 1950s, because, it has been argued, White repression and intimidation was highest in these areas. Matthews and Prothro also find that Black education and Black income are positively correlated with Black registration, although these correlations decline when accounting for percent Black.

Among the political characteristics, Matthews and Prothro find the largest variation in Black voter registration at the state level, with Mississippi on the low end and Tennessee on the high end. That is, the state itself is the political variable that best captures variations in Black political participation. These findings suggest that analysts should examine Black participation separately by state or via multi-level modeling. Given the paucity of candidate-level data, we choose the former.

Matthews and Prothro find that institutional barriers (i.e., poll taxes and literacy tests), party factionalism, and Black activism contributed to variation in Black registration. In the former, poll taxes disproportionately disfranchised Blacks as African Americans were less likely than Whites to have the money for the tax. Literacy tests essentially gave the registrar of voters arbitrary power to determine voter qualifications; thus, the registrar could discriminate with relative impunity. In 1950, Florida had neither a poll tax or literacy tests, suggesting that the state should have relatively high Black registration rates.³⁴ Regarding Black activism, these scholars also find that local Black organizations, such as the Progressive Voter's League (PVL) and the NAACP are associated with increases in Black participation. Indeed, in Florida, Harry Moore's activism through the PVL and NAACP is widely credited as the driving force behind Black voter registration prior to his death in the early 1950s.³⁵

Matthews and Prothro find that Democratic party factionalism also tends to produce higher levels of Black registration. Under a multi-faction system, it is argued that can-

³⁴For an excellent account of the fight to end the poll tax see Farris (1954). (Charles D Farris. "The Re-Enfranchisement of Negroes in Florida". In: *Journal of Negro History* [1954], pp. 259-283).

³⁵<http://www.naacp.org/pages/naacp-history-Harry-T.-and-Harriette-Moore>

didates are more likely to make racial appeals to Blacks as a means of defeating their opponents. While these scholars are careful to note that Black voters can usually discern candidates more favorably disposed to them and that this may affect Black participation, Matthews and Prothro have no measure of cross-racial mobilization or candidate outreach to Blacks. Adding this measure into the study of Black political participation in the pre-VRA period is our primary contribution. Finally, for obvious reasons, variables such as White violence and hostility tend to depress Black registration, but only in counties that are the most hostile.

4 ESTABLISHING CROSS-RACIAL MOBILIZATION

In this section, we first outline our theoretical framework, which explains why candidates varied in their method of covert cross-racial mobilization. This framework helps explain theoretically why Claude Pepper engaged in covert cross-racial mobilization via donations to the CIO to help mobilize Black voters; and why his opponent was less inclined to engage in cross-racial mobilization. Following Mayhew,³⁶ we assume that each candidate is a rational actor where election, re-election, or ascension to a higher office is his or her central purpose. In other words, explanations for why a candidate courts certain blocs of voters, takes a certain policy stance, or sets a specific tone vis-à-vis race relations is largely a political decision driven by electoral goals. While this may not explain all political actors, as some actors may be solely motivated by ideological pursuits are put forth as sacrificial

³⁶D.R. Mayhew. *Congress: The electoral connection*. Yale Univ Pr, 1974.

lambs, we argue that the vast majority of serious candidates realize the necessity to get elected or re-elected in order to pursue their ideological goals.

With rational choice as their guiding motivation, candidates assess various geographic, demographic, and political characteristics of their political jurisdiction to determine whether to engage in cross-racial mobilization and the specific strategies that should be used in doing so. One characteristic concerns the dominant group. Candidates will assess the degree to which White backlash is a threat to their electoral coalition and electoral chances. If a candidate envisions White backlash or hostility as high, the candidate either will engage in anti-Black cross-racial mobilization,³⁷ no mobilization, or covert cross-racial mobilization. In the latter case, the candidate hopes to benefit from the minority vote, but distances him or herself from a public association with the minority group. However, if a candidate determines they can eschew White backlash by courting minority groups quietly, then the candidate is likely to engage in positive covert cross-racial mobilization through either donations to outside groups, speaking in Black churches, or reaching out to Black voters via African-American radio or newspapers. In the modern era, candidates can conduct cross-racial mobilization more freely,³⁸ but during times of racial unrest, White racial threat is more active and hence poses a bigger challenge to candidates.³⁹⁴⁰

A second factor is minority group characteristics. A White candidate should be more

³⁷Negative cross-racial mobilization occurs when a candidate goes out of their way to say harsh things about Black voters in order to court the “Negrophobe” White vote

³⁸Collingwood, Barreto, and Garcia-Rios, “Revisiting latino voting: cross-racial mobilization in the 2012 election”.

³⁹D Stephen Voss. “Beyond racial threat: Failure of an old hypothesis in the new South”. In: *The Journal of Politics* 58.04 (1996), pp. 1156–1170.

⁴⁰Marylee C Taylor. “How white attitudes vary with the racial composition of local populations: Numbers count”. In: *American Sociological Review* (1998), pp. 512–535.

likely to court a minority bloc if that group is a large or potentially large pool of the electorate and socially organized. The key here is that the pool of registered voters has to be large enough to swing a close election. Candidates also assess the likelihood of a close election; if so, one or both candidates may be more likely to court the Black vote. Finally – and crucial to the present analysis – candidates assess their main opponent(s) political reputation. If the opponent – through their policy positions and past record – is perceived (relatively) as a racial moderate, for instance, then the candidate is likely to take a racially conservative stance when it comes to cross-racial mobilization, and vice-versa. This is because candidates attempt to distinguish themselves from each other to the extent that voter groups are responsive to candidates' positions on the issues. During the 1950 Senate race in Florida all these factors, save for the latter, were the same for both candidates. Thus, the key variable that a-priori separates these two candidates' cross-racial mobilization stances is political reputation.

In 1950 Florida, White hostility was relatively high, as *Smith V. Allwright* and President Truman's civil rights program had begun to shake the White South's customs and traditions. However, several Black organizations – namely the NAACP and the Progressive Voter's League (PVL) – were organizing around the state. These were both led by Harry T. Moore, who was the founder of the NAACP in Florida as well as the leader of PVL. By 1946, Black registration in the state was approaching 50,000, and much of this was likely due to the organizational efforts of Moore and his colleagues. By 1948, Black registration shot up to about 85,000. While these numbers are not huge, they are certainly large enough to sway the election outcome in a close contest. Furthermore, the trajectory

was continued growth. Indeed, both candidates and the media perceived the election as competitive since Pepper had only avoided a runoff in the 1944 contest by a 10,000 vote margin. Finally, with Pepper's slightly more moderate record on race and foreign policy, a relatively unknown candidate like George Smathers could position himself in contradistinction to Pepper on the issues. In the case of race, Smathers drew the key distinction on the FEPC in an attempt to capture a large portion of the racially disaffected White voter.⁴¹ Thus, a priori, we expect Smathers to expend relatively little effort mobilizing the Black vote as he would think that vote was most likely to go for Pepper. Given his record – although not perfect – we expect Pepper to run a covert cross-racial mobilization campaign. In the next section we show this to be the case; followed by an analysis showing that Black political participation and voter registration were higher in areas that had the backing of Pepper's covert cross-racial mobilization.

5 THE 1950 SENATE RACE BETWEEN CLAUDE PEPPER AND GEORGE SMATHERS

In the pre-Voting Rights Act period in the South, we argue that cross-racial mobilization could not be conducted openly. Previous analyses looking to uncover CRM therefore may have looked past occurrences of politicians' cross-racial behavior because such behavior was mostly covert. Candidates who openly campaigned for the Black vote or appeared

⁴¹Neither Pepper nor Smathers could be considered "racially liberal" as both took strong positions in support of White supremacy in the South. However, Pepper's positions on some issues like the FEPC opened up the possibility of covertly courting the Black vote when it became clear it would be a close election.

too liberal on racial issues risked alienating the White voters who were needed to win. Alabama governor Jim Folsom lost the 1962 gubernatorial election in part because he was perceived as a racial liberal in a state that was openly hostile towards the African American community.⁴² Therefore, where cross-racial mobilization occurred in the period preceding the VRA, it was almost always done covertly. Candidates sought to attract the Black vote covertly and would often praise segregation on the one-hand while funneling resources to the Black community on the other hand. This funneling was designed to signal to Black voters that the candidate doing the funneling was ultimately one of the friendly candidates. Beyond Claude Pepper in Florida, examples of candidates who sought to mobilize the Black vote on their behalf, include, but are not limited to, Earl Long and Chep Morrison of Louisiana, Leroy Collins of Florida, Ellis Arnall of Georgia, James Coleman of Mississippi, and Terry Sandford of North Carolina.

The 1950 U.S. Senate Democratic primary pitted two-term incumbent Pepper against Miami Congressman George Smathers, who announced his candidacy for the U.S. Senate in early January, 1950, by giving a speech in Orlando's coliseum to over 3,000 people.⁴³ In the South at the time, the Democratic primary was tantamount to election, which meant that both candidates had but four months to fully campaign until election day on May 5, 1950. Over the course of his two terms, Pepper had taken more liberal stances on the Russia and Black questions than those endorsed by Smathers. It was quite clear early on that

⁴²Carl Grafton and Anne Permaloff. *Big mules and branchheads: James E. Folsom and political power in Alabama*. University of Georgia Press, 2008.

⁴³Election outcomes in the South during this time period were determined in the primaries as any serious contender was a Democrat. Republicans essentially had zero party organization and no funding so could not run competitive campaigns in the general election.

the campaign would be a referendum on Claude Pepper as Smathers went on a two-prong attack: Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) and Civil Rights; Communism and Pepper's support for the Soviet Union.⁴⁴

Why had Pepper taken at least some relatively liberal stances on racial policy matters prior to the 1950 senate election? He was born in Alabama and lived in Tallahassee, which was located essentially in Florida's Black Belt.⁴⁵ Based on this alone, it would be tempting to expect Pepper to act like other Black Belt politicians: as a race-baiter. While Pepper at times had expressed positions similar to other Black Belt politicians – like when he responded to the *Smith* decision by claiming that Democratic primaries in Florida could be “kept white” or when he filibustered against anti-lynching legislation – he was also thought to be relatively liberal for a White southerner and member of the Democratic Party. Indeed, for the South his positions were more moderate than many of his contemporaries.

One explanation for Pepper's behavior is that he may have had national aspirations for office. At the 1948 Democratic National Convention, Pepper offered himself as a candidate for about 24 hours. Pepper had first sought to nominate Eisenhower in an attempt to unseat Truman but Eisenhower refused the nomination. Pepper then offered himself, though his candidacy lasted only one day and he attracted but six and a half delegates.⁴⁶⁴⁷ While Pepper's candidacy is hard to take seriously by most measures, it does suggest that –

⁴⁴Clark, *Red Pepper and Gorgeous George: Claude Pepper's Epic Defeat in the 1950 Democratic Primary*.

⁴⁵Tallahassee is in Leon County, which contained 39.5% Black population in 1950.

⁴⁶Brian Lewis Crispell. *Testing the Limits: George Armistead Smathers and Cold War America*. University of Georgia Press, 1999.

⁴⁷Orlando Sentinel of Nov. 29, 1992

at least in the moment – Pepper had aspirations for higher office. If he did indeed have national aspirations, it meant that he had to consider the national viability of his policy positions, including on the Black question. Outside of the South, Blacks could both play a larger role in elections and the question of Black rights was not quite as one-sided as it was in Southern states. Pepper's stance on Black issues may thus have been due to national electoral considerations.

Newspaper accounts, archival data, and interviews with those involved in the campaign do paint a mixed picture with respect to the two candidates' racial strategies. Newspaper accounts intimate that both candidates campaigned for the Black vote. A *New York Times* article a month before election day acknowledged this: "Both candidates are courting the Negro vote as much as they can without offending White voters."⁴⁸ In an interview several decades after the campaign, Smathers claimed that neither candidate spent much if any time discussing civil rights:

See, in 1950 the state was very conservative. Pepper had been very liberal, so he did not want to talk about it. I, being from Miami, was somewhat liberal myself. I didn't particularly want to talk about it. The result was that he and I did not discuss civil rights. I don't think he ever made a speech in which he referred to me as either strong or soft on civil rights. I know I never made a speech about him and his advocacy of civil rights. He was a strong civil rights guy. I was sort of strong civil rights, coming from Miami.⁴⁹

⁴⁸*New York Times*, April 8, 1950

⁴⁹http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/resources/pdf/Smathers_interview_2.pdf, p. 38

However, the bulk of archival evidence suggests that Pepper engaged in significantly more covert cross-racial mobilization than did Smathers, and that Smathers almost completely used race as a wedge issue to try and win racially disaffected White voters. Below, we present each candidate's campaign strategy vis-à-vis Black voters. We demonstrate that the dynamics of cross-racial mobilization played an important role in the election and that Pepper financially and logistically helped various groups register Blacks primarily in Miami-Dade, Duval (Jacksonville), Hillsborough (Tampa), and Volusia Counties (Daytona Beach).

5.1 Claude Pepper

Given his past statements and positions that were ostensibly supportive of Black interests – at least relative to other Southern White candidates of the era – campaign documents from both candidates' archives reveal that Pepper was the clear favorite among African American voters. While we certainly recognize that these documents are not necessarily representative of opinion writ large, they are suggestive. Pepper's papers contain many more pro-Pepper letters from African-Americans than do Smathers' papers. Through constituency mail and advocacy, the Black community made it clear to Pepper that they supported his re-election efforts. For instance, in a letter to Pepper, Black newsman Edward D. Davis states, "Florida's colored voters appreciate the statesmanship you have displayed and they are unanimous in their determination to unite forces in helping to return you to Washington."⁵⁰ In another communication, Davis said: "Once members of our

⁵⁰Letter from Edward D. Davis to Claude Pepper, June 9, 1949.

racial group are qualified, they can be safely counted in your column.”⁵¹ Another Black leader, Herman Williams of the 20th Century Club, pushed Pepper to participate in the electoral mobilization of African Americans:

The purpose of this communication is to determine if I may come to Washington...to hold a conference with you relative to the matter of organizing and mobilizing the voting strength of Negro citizens of Florida...the mobilization of scores of social clubs, who are able to influence young and old through a unique ‘family like’ contact...if you are interested in another term, and we pray to God you are, we believe we can be the winning team to put you over.⁵²

Based on his reputation as the more liberal of the two candidates, Pepper was openly courted by Black leaders, making the covert mobilization of Black voters that much easier for his campaign. Since leaders within the Black community were reaching out, Pepper could much more easily engage in covert-CRM while still campaigning on a segregationist platform when speaking to White audiences. Thus, even though the bulk of White voters did not support greater Black inclusion in the political process so therefore posed a threat to Pepper’s overt inclusion of Blacks in his campaign, Pepper had an electoral incentive to expand the African American vote. In the end, we cannot say for sure the percentage of the Black vote that Pepper received; however, archival documents of precinct voting returns in Duval and Dade Counties strongly support the notion that Pepper overwhelmed Smathers in places where Blacks were most concentrated. For example, data from archival

⁵¹Letter from Edward D. Davis to Claude Pepper, dated June 9, 1949

⁵²Letter from Herman Williams to Claude Pepper, September 3, 1949.

documents reveal that Pepper defeated Smathers 9,538 votes to 583 in eight Duval County wards with large Black registration.⁵³ Another precinct (49) from Dade County shows registration figures of 904 Whites and 1,855 Blacks. Pepper won that precinct 893 - 272. Precinct 46 is also classified predominantly Black by Pepper campaign managers. The archival documents reveal that just 259 whites are registered in the precinct, but 2,323 Blacks are registered. Here, Pepper won the precinct 1,036 to 112. Again, it is impossible to know whether these patterns are replicated across the state, but the data are suggestive that the Black vote went strongly for Pepper.

Pepper engaged in cross-racial mobilization in two ways. The first is a more broad form of mobilization in that it was targeted at all Blacks, not just Blacks living in a particular jurisdiction or of a socio-economic class. Pepper sent cues to African American voters primarily through his earlier policy stances.⁵⁴ He favored an end to the filibuster in the U.S. Senate, arguing that it was undemocratic, and that it was used as a way to minimize the electorate (arguably a cue to Southern Blacks). During this time period, African Americans widely believed – correctly – that the filibuster was used to stall civil rights legislation. Pepper also opposed the poll tax, and supported President Roosevelt's Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) wartime measure (policies that were designed to end racial discrimination in the workplace).

While Pepper initially backed off his FEPC support during the 1950 campaign as he

⁵³Duval County vote total for 8 wards with large black registration.

⁵⁴Fauntroy (M.K. Fauntroy. *Republicans and the black vote*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007) discusses four categories that parties use to court Black voters: policy initiatives, political activities, state and local Black organizations that work with parties, and national African American organizations that work with parties.

recognized the damage it may cause in his standing with White voters, it nonetheless became an important issue raised by his opponent. The FEPC was a potentially explosive issue because it was initially designed to limit discrimination in the workplace in defense industries or government on grounds of race, creed, national origin, or color. The original motivation for Roosevelt's executive order was partly due to the lobbying efforts of labor organizer Philip Randolph (a Black civil rights leader), who had expressed his disgust in the fact that African-Americans were fighting overseas in segregated units. Roosevelt's push for the FEPC provoked an explosive response from Southern reactionaries, as it was seen as federal encroachment in the workplace, and something that could lead to challenges to the special Southern arrangement. During the campaign, Pepper tried to distance himself from the FEPC, but Smathers nonetheless used the FEPC as his primary racial attack. Taken together, these policy stances made Pepper relatively popular among African Americans, as indicated by hundreds of supporting letters from Black constituents and from Black organizations, such as the Progressive Voters' League.⁵⁵ However, while morally correct, these policy-backed CRM efforts were a tactical mistake for Pepper as he ended up losing the election in part because he was perceived as a racial liberal by some of Florida's White voters.

The second way Pepper engaged in cross-racial mobilization was via the covert support of a large Black registration campaign led at the local level by African Americans with union organization help. It is this registration campaign that serves as the basis of our empirical tests. Pepper's support was quiet so as to minimize the likelihood of White

⁵⁵Letter from Harry T. Moore to Claude Pepper, April 14, 1949.

voters hearing about the effort. While Pepper was not an architect of the scheme, his campaign was loosely affiliated (financially) with the registration drive, which targeted Blacks primarily in the large cities of Florida. Indeed, registration campaign organizers contacted Pepper ten months prior to the 1950 primary, seeking his input.⁵⁶

That same summer (1949), the record indicates that George L-P Weaver of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) – a major union – visited several Black communities in Jacksonville, Miami, Tampa, and Daytona Beach to gauge African American sentiment towards Pepper (see Figure 1). As a pro-union candidate, the CIO had an interest in helping Pepper protect his seat and in what looked to be a close race there was the possibility that the Black vote could tip the contest in Pepper's favor. Weaver selected these counties not because their percent Black was the highest in the state, but rather the size of their Black population was among the highest. Weaver concluded: "In each city that I visited, after talking with innumerable negro leaders, I found a general enthusiasm and, without exception, sentiment expressed in favor of Senator Pepper's re-election." Weaver continues, "it was agreed that in view of the low CIO membership in the state of Florida, the best method to increase the Negro registration and vote would be by aiding the existing organizations that are geared to political action in these several communities...This aid could take the form of contributing toward the payment of salaries and expenses incidental to a registration drive and organization to get the vote out on election day."⁵⁷ In other words, Weaver would secure funding for the registration campaign, which would be implemented

⁵⁶Letter from Edward D. Davis to Claude Pepper June 9, 1949.

⁵⁷Memorandum from George L-P Weaver to Jack Kroll, dated June 24, 1949

by actors at the local level.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

The findings of Weaver's investigations were communicated to Pepper associates. In another letter from Weaver to fellow intriguer, Ira Davis, Weaver states that the Pepper folks support the plan: "A copy of this report was sent to Senator Pepper, and I have had a chance to talk to the Senator and Mr. Clement, his political secretary, since my return...They [Pepper] are still desirous of selecting a Negro to be quietly put on Senator Pepper's payroll, in order to represent him in the state and help coordinate the activities. I would appreciate it if you would send me two or three recommendations for such a person."⁵⁸

Pepper's Executive Assistant, Jim Clements, met with Edward Davis, the Black newspaper man, to discuss Pepper's financial support for the registration plan (see Figure 4). Based in part on a two day meeting with the Pepper campaign, Black leaders put together a plan for a targeted registration drive in Duval, Hillsborough, Volusia, and Miami counties. A "Committee for Full Registration" was set up to bring their plan to fruition, and Pepper's campaign covertly sent the committee about \$4,000 to help fund the drive – which was run primarily by local Blacks on the ground.⁵⁹ Examining the data, we find that Black registration in these areas compared to registration in other parts of the state was significantly higher during the 1948-1950 time period. In just these four counties, Black registration increased by 20,251, whereas Black registration stood at 10,554 in the other

⁵⁸Letter from George L-P Weaver to Ira Davis, July 7 1949.

⁵⁹Letter from Edward Davis to Mr. Clements, September 22, 1949

63 counties around the state.

[INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE]

In the final analysis, the Pepper campaign did not – on the surface – appear to mobilize the Black community, beyond his policy stances from previous years on things like poll taxes, the FEPC, and the filibuster. Pepper did not unabashedly court the Black vote like some White candidates did in later years. We found no evidence of him giving speeches at Black churches or speaking at Black fish-fries, for example. The fears and racial hostility of White voters were simply too high in 1950 to allow Pepper to out-and-out court that constituency. As such, Pepper refrained from supporting or really even discussing civil rights issues while on the stump, claimed to be a supporter of segregation when talking to White audiences, and claimed to oppose the Federal Employment Practices Commission (FEPC).⁶⁰ Pepper's cross-racial mobilization was entirely covert, consisting of working through back channels to register African American voters. While it is impossible to know for sure whether the registration campaign would have been successful without Pepper's covert assistance, the fact that Pepper's campaign did not dissuade the registration campaign and actually contributed to it financially as well as logistically is strong evidence of CCRM. In reality, the nexus between Black leaders, the Black community, along with the covert assistance of White leaders who stood to benefit from enhanced Black registration, formed much of the impetus behind changes in Black registration immediately preceding the 1950 Democratic primary election.

⁶⁰Clark, *Red Pepper and Gorgeous George: Claude Pepper's Epic Defeat in the 1950 Democratic Primary*.

5.2 George Smathers

While there is some evidence that George Smathers was interested in courting the Black vote, for the most part, Smathers took a different approach than Pepper on the issue of race and whether to engage in extensive covert cross-racial mobilization.⁶¹ While he was not a defender of White supremacy in the vein of Southern demagogues Theodore Bilbo or Eugene Talmadge, Smathers used Pepper's relative racial and economic liberalism against him to appeal to the disaffected White, upscale, and rural vote. Smathers tapped into southern fears about Black voter registration, civil rights, and government encroachment. Indeed, he concluded his standard stump speech by asking White audiences if they "like the idea of Florida elections being controlled through the Negro vote."⁶²

Because of Pepper's reputation prior to the 1950 election, electorally there was little incentive for Smathers to also engage in cross-racial mobilization. Even if Smathers bent left on racial concerns, it would be hard to win over the Black vote since that vote was already fairly enthusiastic about Pepper. Instead, it made sense for Smathers' campaign to move to the right on racial matters, as Pepper was already going to receive most of the Black vote given his past policy stances and reputation within the Black community. This meant that despite Smathers later thinking of himself as a "strong civil rights guy" his campaign had a heavy incentive to criticize Pepper's stance on Black issues and to stake out a position to the right of Pepper when it came to race.

⁶¹One letter from R.G. Danner to Smathers County Chairmen asked people to ask all the people that work for them to speak to Black employees on behalf of Smathers. "Have them point out that Pepper is not the Messiah that he would have minority groups believe that he is." Danner, March 3, 1950.

⁶²Taken from Smathers stump speech, campaign trail 1950.

His racial point of attack focused primarily on the Federal Employment Practices Commission (FEPC), which he used as both a racial and small government (i.e., freedom to discriminate) appeal. This approach can be seen in a typical press release:

George Smathers, currently campaigning in West Florida for U.S. Senator, is maintaining a slashing attack on Claude Pepper's record on legislation to set up a Federal Fair Employment Practices Commission... 'Stripped of all its honeyed words,' Smathers says, 'FEPC is nothing more than an attempt by Northern radicals to break down segregation...If they can pass a law to say whom you may hire and fire, they can pass one to say whom your daughter will marry.'⁶³

Smathers attacked Pepper on the FEPC and civil rights on radio (see Figure 5), newspapers, magazines, and in brochures. Indeed, Smathers attacked Pepper on the FEPC in nearly every single speech, and he often brought up how the FEPC would bring down "our Southern traditions."⁶⁴

[INSERT FIGURE 5 HERE]

Given his general approach, it is no wonder that Black voters remained weary of Smathers – as indicated by his lack of support among Black-heavy precincts in Miami-Dade County and Duval County (See Figure 6).⁶⁵ Smathers did not launch or support any Black registration campaign, because these voters would be unlikely to vote for him en masse. Instead he was concerned with Blacks from Georgia coming down from Florida to illegally

⁶³Pepper's FEPC Record, Press release by Smathers' campaign.

⁶⁴Smathers speech transcripts.

⁶⁵Precinct results from Duval County reveal similar findings to Miami-Dade.

vote,⁶⁶ as well as registration drives in Dade County.⁶⁷ Clearly, Smathers' campaign knew about these registration efforts and was concerned that he would not be the beneficiary of them.

[INSERT FIGURE 6 HERE]

We have now laid out an account of the two candidates' strategies regarding the emerging Black vote. Both candidates were concerned with the rise of the Black vote; however, just one candidate, Pepper, seriously engaged the bloc by covertly supporting a Black registration campaign held primarily in four counties. The other candidate took the opposite tact and spent essentially no time or effort mobilizing the Black vote. Indeed, he took the opposite tact and employed threats against Black voters by questioning the legality of their registration. The next section presents a brief data analysis that supports the implications of our case study – that Claude Pepper's covert CRM may have helped bring about greater Black voter registration.

6 An Empirical Analysis of the Pepper-Smathers

Race

The historical documents support that Claude Pepper did engage in covert cross-racial mobilization in 1950 through financial contributions to the CIO, who in turn sought to

⁶⁶Rebekah James to W. Perry, March 28, 1950: "Enclosed is the list of Negroes who have recently registered and about whom it is strongly suspected they came from Georgia for that purpose."

⁶⁷Memo from R. G. Danner, February 20, 1950: "We have learned that in several localities, Dade County particularly, every conceivable effort is being made to register negroes...I think we can well assume the purpose and identity of the people behind this."

register Blacks in Florida. As we have argued, this makes perfect sense in a race that was close and where the Black vote could potentially tip the scales in favor of Pepper, as African-Americans were no longer excluded from participation in the Democratic primary as a result of *Smith v. Allwright*. However, our qualitative analysis does not provide any evidence that the attempts at CCRM were in any way successful in increasing Black political participation. For that, we must turn to an empirical analysis of the change in Black participation in Florida in the lead-up to the 1950 election. If Pepper (and the CIO) were successful at increasing Black participation we would expect greater Black registration in those counties where the CIO was actively engaged in mobilization of the African-American community than in those where this did not occur.

[INSERT FIGURE 7 HERE]

As Figure 7 shows, there was indeed a significant difference between those counties in Florida where the CIO was engaged in Black registration drives and those where they were not. For those counties without cross-racial mobilization, there was a significantly smaller increase in Black registration between 1948 and 1950 than in those counties where CRM occurred based on the findings of our qualitative analysis of the Pepper-Smathers race. This suggests that not only did the Pepper campaign engage in covert cross-racial mobilization but also that this was successful in increasing Black voter registration.

To further examine the effect of cross-racial mobilization on Black registration, we collected theoretically relevant census variables, voter registration statistics, and other relevant variables around 1950 to evaluate predictors of Black registration for a regression

analysis. The dependent variable is the total number of Blacks registered prior to the 1950 primary minus the total number of Blacks registered prior to the 1948 primary. Thus, we evaluate the change in Black registration in the two years prior to the election – the time period when candidates would begin thinking about the election. The independent variables consist of a few broad categories: Black characteristics, White characteristics, and electoral characteristics.⁶⁸

We ran three different models to assess the effect of cross-racial mobilization. The first model is the “Black agency” model where we only include Black characteristic variables in addition to control variables. One Black characteristic variable emerges as statistically significant: the number of NAACP members within a county. This makes sense because counties that have high levels of NAACP membership are places where Blacks are organized politically and therefore better equipped to challenge barriers to voter registration. In 1950 Florida, income, mobility, percent Black, and education did not have a statistically significant effect on the change in Black registration between 1948-1950. It could be that these variables – on the whole – are structural measures and that their relationship to Black registration is more long-term as opposed to short term.⁶⁹ That said, Black education nears statistical significance at the .10 level and is substantively quite large. If we had the data to replicate this analysis across the entire South during this time period, surely the larger number of observations would deem the variable significant.

Model two adds the additional White characteristic variable of White violence. As

⁶⁸For a detailed description of the variables included in the models, see Appendix 1

⁶⁹We checked this argument and it holds for Black education but not the other variables.

expected, the coefficient is negative indicating that fewer Blacks in violent localities registered between 1948-1950. However, the variable is not statistically significant, which is supportive of the findings from Matthews and Prothro: the effect of White violence diminishes with the presence of Black race organizations.⁷⁰ It may be that our measure of White violence does not fully capture all the county-level variation on White intimidation (i.e., there may be no violence in a county because Blacks are so scared to get out of line that no violence is needed). Unfortunately, to our knowledge this is the best measure of White violence/hostility. Model three adds in the covert cross-racial mobilization measure. This variable is both large and statistically significant, indicating that Blacks living in counties with the Pepper-supported CIO registration drive are much more likely to register to vote between 1948 - 1950 than their counterparts in other counties. Finally, we note that model fit only increases substantially once we account for the covert cross-racial mobilization variable, as the adjusted R^2 moves from 0.3 to 0.55.

[INSERT TABLE 2 HERE]

To aid interpretation, we present predicted values plots (Figure 8) of our two statistically significant variables from model three. According to the model, controlling for other variables, the impact of NAACP membership on Black registration has a significantly larger effect as we move from minimum-to-maximum on the range of the NAACP membership variable. Indeed, the change is approximately 2,700 new Black registrants. Finally, using the same approach, covert cross-racial mobilization's effect is approximately

⁷⁰Matthews and Prothro, "Political Factors and Negro Voter Registration in the South".

3,900 new Black registrants. Thus, covert cross-racial mobilization and Black agency – as measured via NAACP membership – work in tandem to produce relatively high levels of Black registration at the county level. These are important findings because the former has not yet been demonstrated in verifiable ways.

[INSERT FIGURE 8 HERE]

7 CONCLUSION

This paper engages an old debate about correlates of Black registration during the Civil Rights era. Scholars have long been interested in this question to tease out the degree that socio-economic or political variables are responsible for positive changes in Black registration. Matthews and Prothro discovered that both types of variables account for about 25% of the variance in Black registration, respectively.⁷¹⁷² In their follow-up analysis of Florida towns and cities, Clubok et al found cross-racial mobilization rampant.⁷³ They suggested that the cross-racial mobilization phenomenon may account for additional Black registration variance.

However, no one since has revisited this thesis with any sort of rigor, in part because the analysis often requires in-depth archival data. In addition, though, the study of Black participation shifted dramatically with the passage of the Voting Rights Act. Shortly after the passage of the Act, Black registration rose dramatically in the most racially

⁷¹Matthews and Prothro, “Political Factors and Negro Voter Registration in the South”.

⁷²Donald R Matthews and James W Prothro. “Social and economic factors and Negro voter registration in the South”. In: *The American Political Science Review* 57.1 (1963), pp. 24–44.

⁷³Clubok, Grove, and Farris, “The Manipulated Negro Vote: Some Pre-Conditions and Consequences”.

repressive states like Alabama, South Carolina, and Mississippi. Thus, scholars set out to examine the correlates of these shifts and to see county-by-county, whether federal examiners indeed contributed to Black registration.⁷⁴⁷⁵⁷⁶ While the post-VRA research was certainly a worthy endeavor, the question as to whether White candidates and party leaders helped contribute to Black participation prior to the VRA has remained unanswered and the methods used to court the Black vote unexamined.

The present analysis provides evidence that White candidates mobilized African-Americans following the *Smith v. Allwright* decision but; however, they did this in a way to try to avoid alienating a White electorate that was still hostile to Black voters. By providing support to the CIO, the Pepper campaign gave itself plausible deniability regarding the mobilization of African-Americans while also giving Blacks a reason to vote for Pepper in the 1950 primary. However, while the archival evidence supports that the Pepper campaign engaged in covert cross-racial mobilization, it doesn't tell us whether this had any measurable effect on Black voter registration. For that we turned to a statistical analysis of the effect of cross-racial mobilization on changes in Black voter registration between 1948 and 1950. We found evidence that not only were candidates – namely Claude Pepper – engaged in an indirect form of cross-racial mobilization, but that this appears to have contributed to increases in Black registration. Between 1948-1950, places where Pepper and the CIO launched registration drives had about 3,900 more registered Black

⁷⁴Joel A. Thompson. “The Voting Rights Act in North Carolina: An Evaluation”. In: *Publius* 16.4 (1986), pp. 139–153. ISSN: 00485950. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3330164>.

⁷⁵Colby, “The Voting Rights Act and Black Registration in Mississippi”.

⁷⁶Johnnie Daniel. “Negro Political Behavior and Community Political and Socioeconomic Structural Factors”. In: *Social Forces* 47.3 (1969), pp. 274–280. ISSN: 00377732. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2575025>.

voters compared to places with no CIO registration campaign.

The Pepper campaign's attempts to mobilize Blacks to register to vote do appear to have had a positive effect on African-American voter registration, though the extent that these findings generalize to other states and elections is uncertain. A few points are worth noting here when thinking about registration and voting. First, it is possible that Pepper's affiliation with the CIO may ultimately have hurt him in a state where unions, their leaders, and political associates were not always looked upon favorably. Second, it remains unclear whether these registration attempts actually led to a greater share of the vote for Pepper. After all, Pepper did lose by about 67,000 votes, and it is impossible to know how many of the Blacks registered during the lead-up to the election actually did vote. Turnout data by race are unavailable (even at the precinct level). However, these campaign-intensive registration efforts may have had long term impacts, since they likely provided some sort of symbolic sense of power to minority voters across the state. That is, the fact that so many Blacks were able to register to vote likely created a snowball effect that increased the chances other Blacks would register. Eventually, this may have led to greater political incorporation (i.e., elected officials, greater extractions from White politicians, etc.). In the end, this paper provides a baseline for future analyses by laying out research methodology that combines archival findings with statistical data to better understand cross-racial mobilization and its effects throughout the South in the wake of *Smith v. Allwright*.

8 Appendix 1: Variable Construction

Regarding the Black characteristics variables, we include a measure for Black median education from the 1950 Census. Counties with higher Black education rates are expected to contain higher percentages of Black registrants. We include a measure for Black income, which is the percent of Black household that make less than \$500 per year. Since this is the lowest income category, we expect a negative coefficient. We include a variable to measure Black mobility, which is the percentage of Black households that moved within the last year. It is expected that voter registration will decrease as Black mobility rises because residential mobility tends to depress political participation.⁷⁷⁷⁸ Percent Black – the variable deemed key by scholars⁷⁹⁸⁰ – is measured as the percentage of all county residents who are Black. This variable is expected to take on a negative coefficient because Whites in these areas are most wedded to White supremacy. Finally, we include a measure of NAACP membership to capture Black social organization. This variable is a count of the total number of NAACP members by county for the year 1947 when the NAACP enumerated county memberships across the United States. The coefficient for this variable is expected to take on a positive value because counties with strong NAACP organizations are more likely to have the infrastructure to begin challenging the status quo by legal and organizational methods.

⁷⁷Raymond E. Wolfinger and Steven J. Rosenstone. *Who Votes?* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980.

⁷⁸Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen. *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America*. New York: Longman, 2003.

⁷⁹Matthews and Prothro, “Social and economic factors and Negro voter registration in the South”.

⁸⁰Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation*.

Turning to the White group characteristics, we include a White violence variable where the value indicates the number of acts of racial violence against Blacks inside the county. This variable was created by Matthews and Prothro and is a combination of the Tuskegee Institute's lynching of Blacks between 1900 and 1931,⁸¹ and the Southern Regional Council's list of violent acts between 1955-1960. We treat this variable as a measure of latent White violence within the county, and expect a negative coefficient value because greater racial violence and intimidation within a county may deter many Blacks from registering to vote.

Our key independent variable is covert cross-racial mobilization, which we measure as a dummy variable where Volusia (Daytona Beach), Hillsborough (Tampa), Miami-Dade, and Duval (Jacksonville) counties receive a one and all other counties a zero. These are the four counties where the CIO and Pepper launched their Black registration campaign. It is expected that the change in Black registration will be higher in these counties than elsewhere; thus the coefficient should be positive.

Finally, to measure electoral competition, we use the closeness of the 1944 U.S. Senate contest. This variable is measured as $100 - (\text{absolute}(\text{candidate 1} - \text{candidate 2}))$. The variable is measured in such a way that higher numbers are indicative of greater competition. We expect this variable to take on a positive coefficient because.

⁸¹C.S. Johnson et al. *Statistical Atlas of Southern Counties*. University of North Carolina Press, 1941.

9 Figures

Figure 1: Cross-Racial Mobilization Pre-Post *Smith V. Allwright* shows that candidates were much more likely to pitch themselves as moderates once the All White Primary was eliminated.

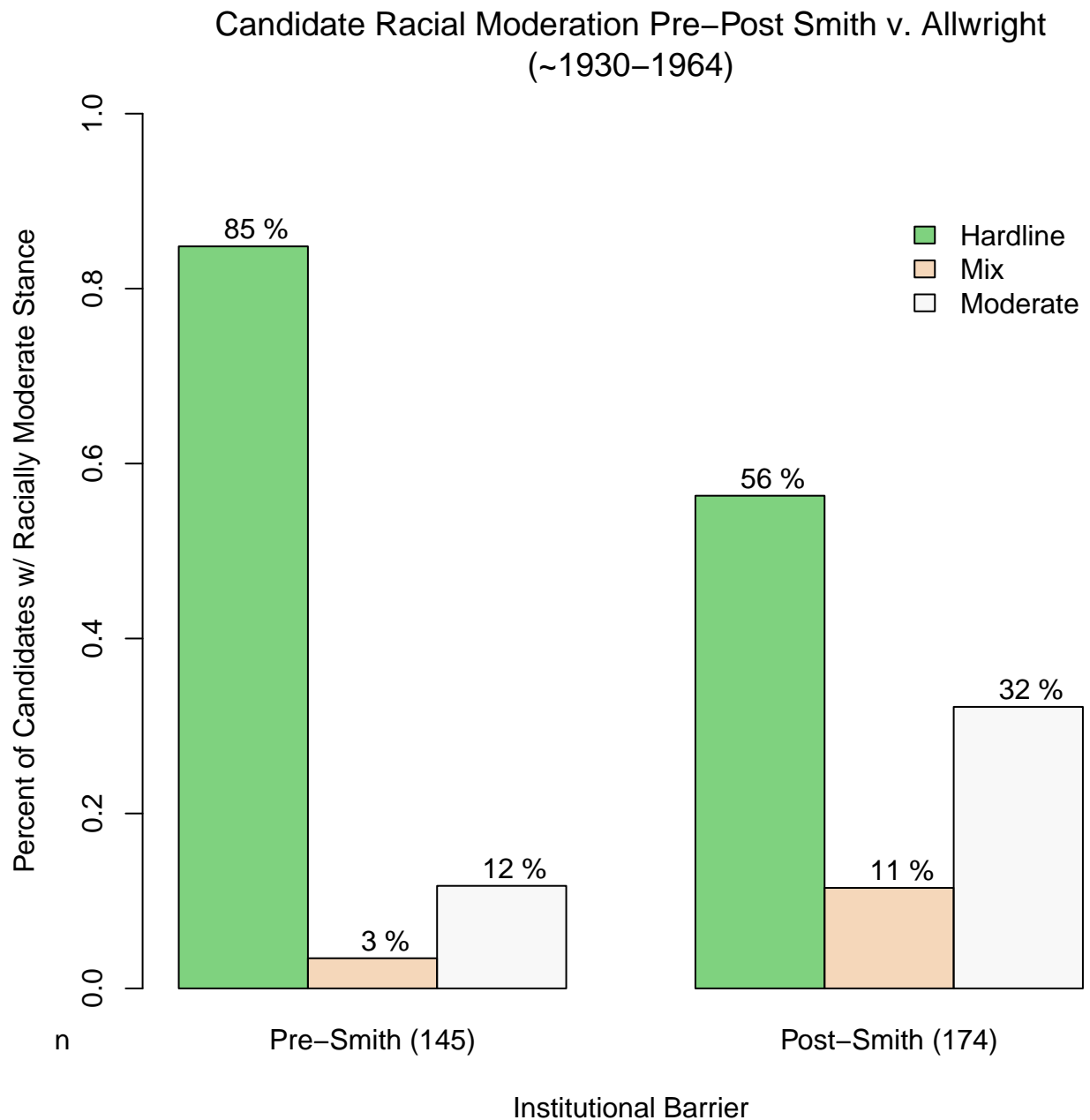


Figure 2: Black voter registration increases between 1948-1950 in counties targeted by Pepper allies.

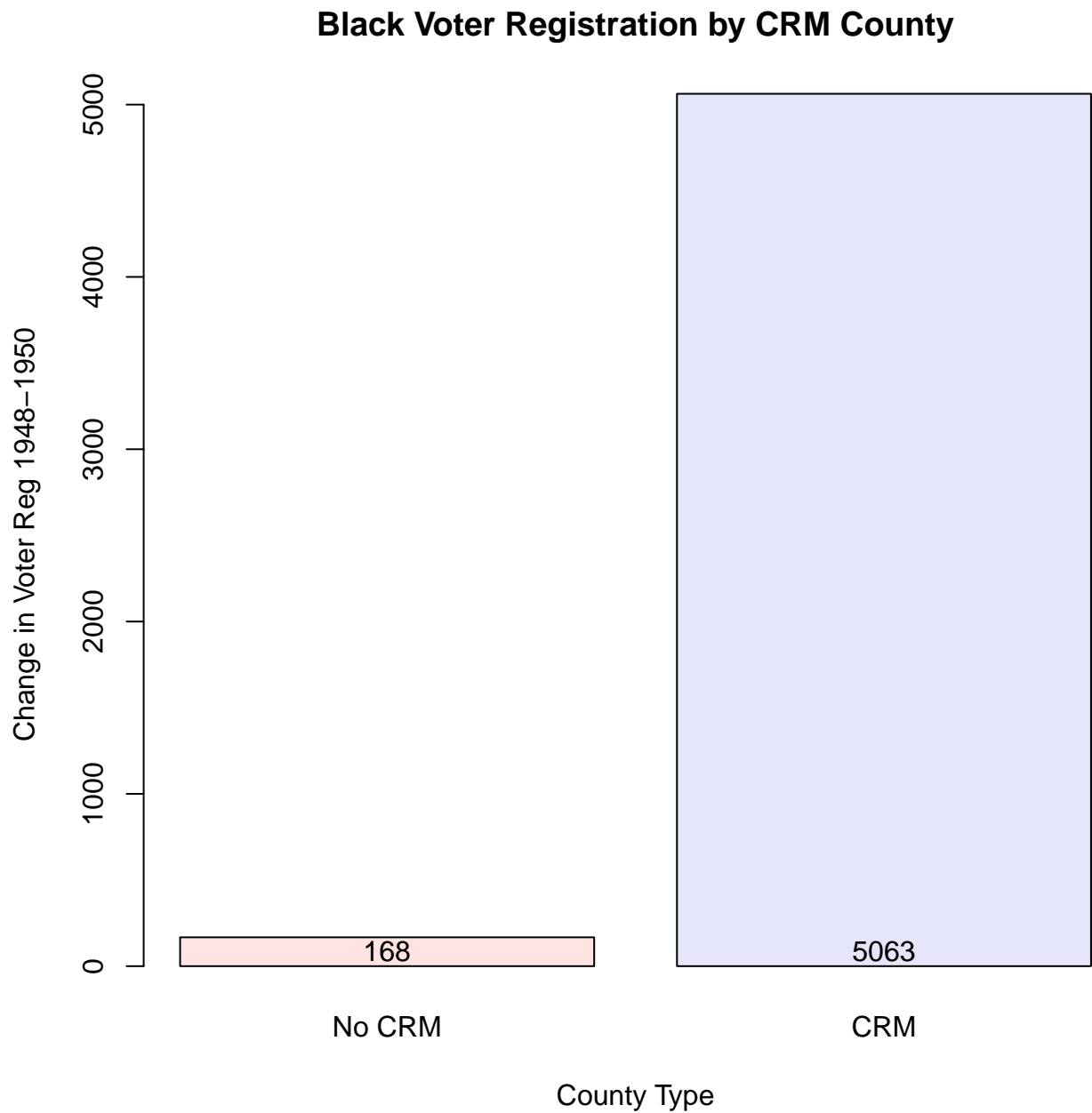
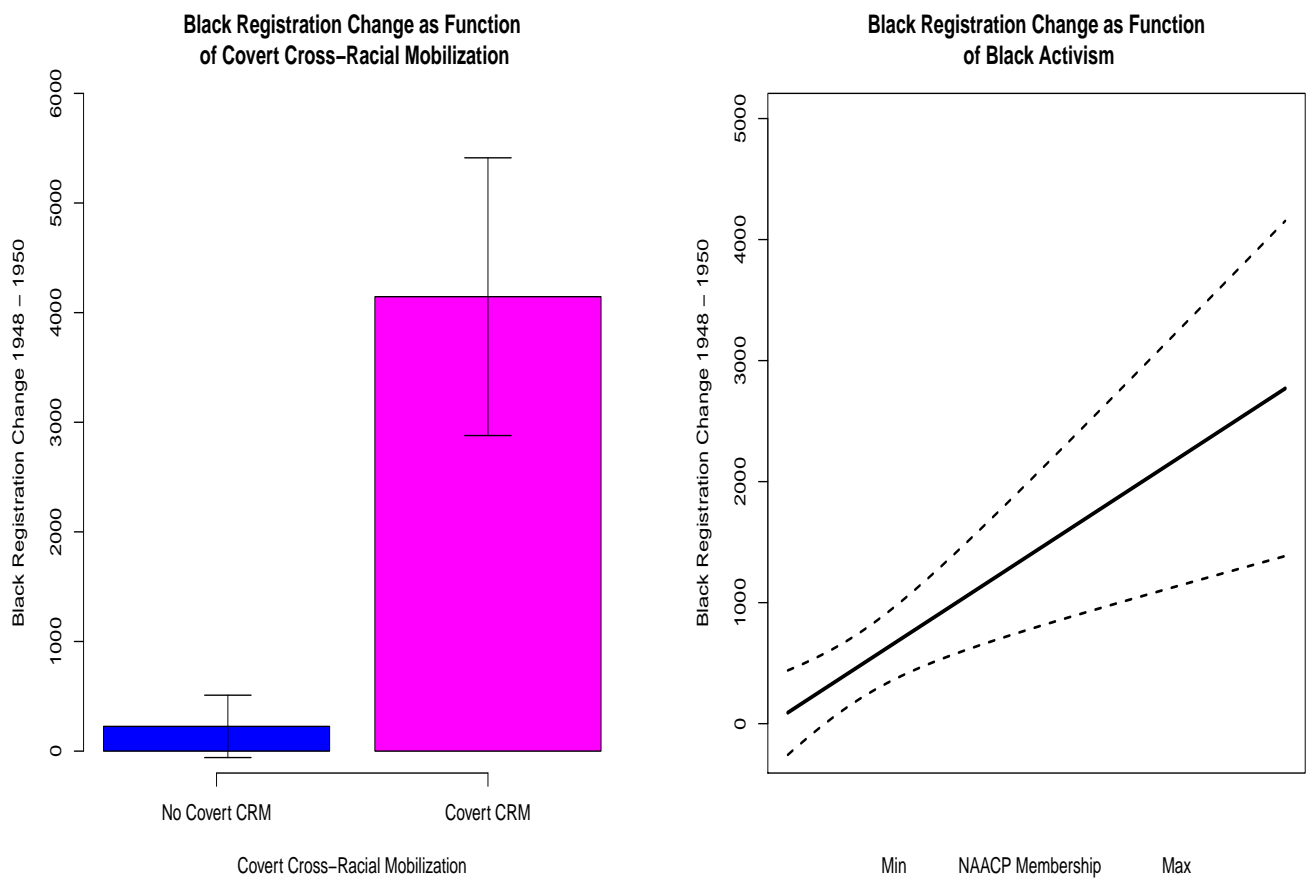


Figure 3: Covariates covert cross-racial mobilization and Black activism are both associated with increases in Black registration between 1948-1950.



10 Tables

Table 1: Increase in Black registration post Smith v. Allwright, Southern States

State	1947	1952	Growth	Percent Growth
Louisiana	10,000	120,000	110,000	1100
Texas	100,000	181,916	81,916	82
Florida	49,000	120,900	71,900	147
South Carolina	50,000	80,000	30,000	60
North Carolina	75,000	100,000	25,000	33
Virginia	48,000	69,326	21,326	44
Alabama	6,000	25,224	19,224	320
Georgia	125,000	144,835	19,835	16
Mississippi	5,000	20,000	15,000	300
Arkansas	47,000	61,413	14,413	31
Tennessee	80,000	85,000	5,000	6
Totals	595,000	1,008,614	413,614	70

Table 2: Predictors of Change in Black Registration in Florida 1948-1950

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Black Registration Change		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Number of NAACP Members	2.25*** (0.57)	2.26*** (0.57)	1.59*** (0.47)
Percent Black HH less than 500/year	2.48 (25.58)	3.21 (25.86)	-1.44 (20.55)
Percent Black Mobility	-1.20 (3.07)	-1.17 (3.10)	-0.80 (2.46)
Percent Black	8.26 (18.61)	9.14 (18.93)	4.56 (15.05)
Black Median Education	487.93 (304.46)	510.87 (314.19)	95.02 (259.04)
White Violence		-118.37 (351.15)	26.33 (279.88)
Covert Cross-Racial Mobilization			3919.69*** (657.15)
Electoral Competition 1944 Senate	-8.18 (11.88)	-8.88 (12.15)	-9.03 (9.65)
Constant	-2213.95 (2140.39)	-2299.78 (2171.36)	-22.80 (1765.90)
Observations	67	67	67
R ²	0.36	0.36	0.60
Adjusted R ²	0.30	0.28	0.55
Residual Std. Error	1397.93 (df = 60)	1408.37 (df = 59)	1118.30 (df = 58)
F Statistic	5.61*** (df = 6; 60)	4.75*** (df = 7; 59)	11.04*** (df = 8; 58)

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Notes