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# African-American Conservatism: A Longitudinal and Comparative Study

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Angela K. Lewis entitled "African-American Conservatism: A Longitudinal and Comparative Study." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Political Science.

John Scheb, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Patricia Freeland, William Lyons, Anthony Nownes, Dwight Aarons

Accepted for the Council:

Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Accepted for the Council:

Dr. C.W. Minkel

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Associate Vice Chancellor and  
Dean of The Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file in the Graduate Admissions and Records Office.)

**AFRICAN-AMERICAN CONSERVATISM:  
A LONGITUDINAL AND COMPARATIVE STUDY**

A Dissertation

Presented For The

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Angela Katrina Lewis

May 2000

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## DEDICATION

*But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favor on me.*  
1 Corinthians 15:10 NLT

This dissertation is dedicated to my family:

Joseph Lewis

Regina Warren

Jessica, Jazmin, and Joshua Warren

A special dedication is reserved for my Mother

Cynthia B. Lewis

for giving me

everlasting love, support, and encouragement.

I love you Mom!

And I cannot forget about you,

Espresso.

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Sorors of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. – Oak Ridge Alumnae Chapter  
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Dr. Ronald McFadden and the McNair Staff

And to my family and friends (and those I may have forgotten), thanks for being here for me throughout this tedious process. I appreciate and love you all.

## **ABSTRACT**

The proposed research addresses the following questions: “Have African-Americans become more conservative over the last 25 years?” While numerous commentators have noted the existence of a Black conservative group, heretofore, none have attempted to document this phenomenon empirically. In fact, the question of whether conservatism has substantial support in the Black community remains unanswered (Welch & Combs, 85; Welch & Foster, 87; Randolph, 95). The purpose of this dissertation is to systematically address the preceding question through the use of the National Black Election Study (1984, 1988, & 1996) and the National Election Study.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The main focus of this research is conservative ideology among African-Americans. Although we know a great deal about ideology in general, very little is known about African-Americans and ideology.

This research seeks to address the following questions: Have African-Americans become more conservative over the last 25 years? How has Black conservatism developed? Is Black conservatism distinctly different from conservatism in the White community? Does Black conservatism lead to different electoral preferences and partisan identification than White conservatism?

#### *Conservatism*

Several authors have offered a cyclical theory of American politics. However, none have attempted to document cycles empirically among African-Americans (Smith, 1990; Schlesinger, 1986; Barber, 1980; Burnham, 1980; Sellars, 1965; Key, 1955). The cycle most relevant to this study is Schlesinger's liberal-conservative electoral cycle. Schlesinger (1986) argues that American history is characterized by repeated swings between periods of conservatism and periods of liberalism. This cycle is prominent in realignment models of American politics,

which state that “the American party system consists characteristically of a majority party and a minority party, both oriented around a particular set of problems” (Schlesinger, 34). Aldrich (1995) states that these problems consist of differing values, usually representing either a liberal or a conservative ideology. For example, “the Democrats are more likely to favor the active intervention of the government,” which represents a liberal position (8). “Whereas the Republicans are much less so inclined,” which is commonly held to be a conservative position (8). Because of these views, certain groups such as minorities, the working class, and ethnic groups usually support the Democrats, who are liberals, while the middle and upper classes, Christian fundamentalists, and business leaders usually support the Republicans.

Historically, most political commentators have suggested that conservatives are a homogenous group consisting of mainly educated, White upper class Americans. However, conservatives today are a diverse lot; Jews, Catholics, college students, union members, and Hispanics are among nationally renowned conservative voices. What about African-Americans? Although, African-Americans and conservatives agree on a wide range of social issues, research indicates that African-Americans remain overwhelmingly liberal and thus loyal to the Democratic Party (Meyerson, 1984; Tryman, 1986; Welch & Foster, 1987; Muzzio, 1992; Bolce, De Maio, & Muzzio, 1992; Dawson, 1995; Goode, 1996; Simpson, 1998). Nonetheless, a number of African-American

conservatives have become prominent in recent years. For example, Clarence Thomas, Thomas Sowell, Armstrong Williams, Walter Williams, and Glen Loury are all well known conservative intellectuals who have had their voices heard throughout America (Randolph, 1995; Toler, 1993; Jones, 1987). Not only have they been successful on the lecture circuit, but Black conservatives have also formed various organizations, think-tanks, journals, and web sites to voice their opinions and let America know that an alternative voice exists among African-Americans (Goode, 1996; Boyer, 1998). There is also a growing number of African-American Republican politicians. In fact, a record 25 Black Republicans ran for Congress in 1994 (Ponnuru, 1996). It has also been documented that over twenty-five percent of African-Americans have voted for Republican governors in New Jersey, California, and Virginia (Reiland, 1996). Moreover, a *Washington Post* poll reported that twenty-six percent of African-Americans identified themselves as conservative. “They support prayer in schools, business incentives, tougher sentencing for criminals, school vouchers, smaller government, welfare reform, and lower taxes” (Reiland, 1996:9).

There are several reasons to expect an increase in the number of African-Americans identifying themselves as conservative. Among them is increasing upward mobility. The more African-Americans integrate with the White middle-class, the more we would expect them to imitate their political beliefs and become more conservative. Scholars state that the views of Blacks, especially middle

class Blacks, will probably change over time. They note that the Black middle class will eventually have the same views as middle class Whites. They would desire the same policies and programs as middle class Whites. One scholar put it this way: “the growing Black middle class would be drawn toward a conservative platform as it became more prosperous” (Ashbee, 1999:241). This is not an unusual expectation because we know that higher income people tend to be more conservative and are less likely to believe that the government should be involved in social programs (Welch and Foster, 1987). In general, Blacks tend to agree with conservatives on issues such as personal values, crime, and the death penalty. Moreover, DeVaux (1997) states, “The fact is, most Blacks have a conservative understanding of people and things. They have deep and abiding appreciation for traditional values” (22). We also know that increasing numbers of African-Americans are displeased with the failure of government programs. They believe that these programs have caused problems in the Black community. Black conservatives believe that these programs have created a sense of dependency among African-Americans. They have also caused the deterioration of Black families. What was once referred to as an oxymoron may now be “an important and controversial movement in America that touches raw nerve among liberals” (Gaiter, 1991:1). According to one scholar, the agreement between conservatives and Blacks, “is more likely to lead them to vote Republican” (Ashbee, 1999:241). Thus, despite evidence to support the notion of Black



allegiance to the Democratic party, political scientists must not assume that all African-Americans identify themselves as liberals. But does this group of conservative intellectuals have a constituency in the African-American community?

Some have argued that they do not, stating that “recent Black conservatism is inauthentic, without true roots in the Black communities” (Eisenstadt, 1999:xxvii). Most Black Americans believe that conservatism is a step backward rather than forward. In short, the Black community has rejected Black conservatism. Other scholars refer to the Black conservative group as media hype because many of them have syndicated newspaper columns or radio talk shows where their views may be heard more than other leaders in the Black community. Randolph, (1995) states that “the liberal media indirectly served as a conduit for Black conservative voices” (155). Benjamin Hooks, former chairman of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) also believes that the talk about Black conservatives is greatly exaggerated. He states that “Their names couldn’t fill a small-town phonebook” (Gaiter, 1991). Even though there is anecdotal evidence that Blacks are becoming conservative, that evidence has been attacked by public opinion organizations. For example, these organizations state that a large gulf remains between Black conservatives and the Black community. The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, for example, found that a major belief of Black conservatives, limited government

involvement in social policy, is rejected by most Blacks (Gaiter, 1991). Moreover, even as a conservative trend has been documented in the general electorate, African-Americans often feel that supporting this trend along with their White counterparts is inimical to their interests (Tryman, 1986; Barker, et. al, 1999). Consequently, Black conservatives have been unable to convince most African-Americans that a conservative ideology is politically advantageous.

Today, African-American conservative intellectuals have a higher profile than ever. But have the masses of African-Americans become more conservative? Political scientists have for the most part ignored this question. Several scholars, however, have noted the importance of studying this new group of African-American conservatives. Among them is political scientist Mack Jones (1987), who argues that, “The political thought of the new Black conservative is an important factor which could influence the course of the Black struggle for equality in the United States” (Randolph, 149). Lewis Randolph (1995) echoes this sentiment. He states that the general conservative tide among the White population and racial polarization tactics being used by the Republican party make the study of African-American conservatives “imperative at this time” (149).

Therefore, it is important to examine the apparent conservative “trend” among African-Americans. Not only may African-American conservatism affect the struggle for equality, but the mere existence of an African-American

conservative cohort raises questions about African-Americans' overwhelming loyalty to the Democratic party and questions concerning a possible realignment (Welch & Foster, 1987).

### ***Ideological Trends***

Historically, there have been major shifts in American electoral politics between periods of liberalism and conservatism. These shifts have been demonstrated in the literature through examinations of the ideological identifications of the electorate. As Emerson noted in 1841: "The two parties which divide the state, the party of Conservatism and that of Innovation are very old, and have disputed the possession of the world ever since it was made... Now one, now the other gets the day, and still the fight renews itself as if for the first time, under new names and hot personalities" (Schlesinger, 23). In short, the conflict between conservatism and liberalism is not new. This trend was well documented in the 1950s and 1960s. Since then, however, researchers have more or less ignored it.

Although many scholars saw the Reagan era as a conservative backlash against expansionist government, political scientists have failed to find conclusive evidence that the electorate has become more conservative (Knight & Erikson, 1997; Miller, 1992; Smith, 1990; Robinson & Fleishman, 1984). While some researchers discovered increased conservative identification during the late 1970s and early 1980s, others have reached conflicting conclusions (Smith, 1990 & Robinson & Fleishman, 1988).

The ebb and flow between periods of liberalism and conservatism has not been well documented among African-Americans. While scholars have provided anecdotal evidence suggesting a conservative trend in the general electorate, very few have attempted empirically to document this phenomenon among African-Americans. Although there are several notable intellectuals who profess a conservative ideology, one question remains: Do these self-proclaimed conservative leaders have a following in the African-American community?

Although other scholars have attempted to examine conservatism in the mass public, none have attempted to address the existence of a Black conservative group in the general electorate. The few studies that have sought to examine Black conservatism either fails to examine the historical context of conservatism in the Black community or fails empirically to demonstrate that there are segments of the Black population which identify with conservatism. The research contained in this paper attempts to not only document their existence by using national survey data, but it also seeks an understanding of the development of Black conservatism. This research also seeks to fill these gaps by answering the following questions: Is there an African-American conservative cohort in the electorate? Is Black Conservatism distinctly different from conservatism among Whites? And, does Black Conservatism lead to different electoral preferences and partisan identification than White conservatism?

Answers to these questions will help to close a large gap in the literature. The plan of this dissertation is as follows. First, a discussion of ideology in the general electorate will be undertaken. Any research that attempts to examine ideology should start with the landmark studies and discuss how the study of ideology has evolved in political science. Therefore, this section will focus on ideology as a concept, the public's level of ideological sophistication, and more recent developments in the operationalization of ideology. For comparative purposes, ideological trends in the general electorate will also be discussed. Second, conservatism in the African-American community will be discussed. This section will define conservatism by describing the political thought of Black conservative political figures of the past and present. Ideological trends among African-Americans will also be discussed. And finally, the latter section will introduce the research questions.

In order to examine these questions, this research will rely heavily on survey data from large national data sets. These are: (1) the biennial election studies from the Center for Political Studies (CPS) of the University of Michigan conducted from 1972-1998 and (2) a collection of studies also done by CPS from 1984, 1988, and 1996. Both data sets are nationally recognized and contain samples of approximately 1500 adults.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *Ideology*

Belief systems [ideology] have never surrendered easily to empirical study or quantification. Indeed, they have often served as primary exhibits for the doctrine that what is important to study cannot be measured and that what can be measured is not important to study (Converse, 1964:206).

The study of ideology is an important part of understanding political behavior. Although there is general agreement among political scientists that ideology is important, there is still considerable disagreement about the concept itself. It was not until the 1940s and 1950s, with the advancement of behaviorism in the social sciences, that scholars undertook systematic and empirical analyses of ideology. Attention to ideology resulted from attempts to observe, analyze and explain political behavior.

Most of the disagreement surrounding ideology concerns what the term actually means and how it should be conceptualized and measured. One recurring question is whether or not the American electorate is fully capable of understanding what an ideology is. A related question concerns whether or not individuals are capable of using ideology as a tool to assist them in making important political decisions.

Historically, scholars of public opinion have used ideological terms to describe how Americans think about politics. These descriptions rest upon the notion that the public's view of politics somehow mirrors those of political elites. Nonetheless, political scientists discovered that many citizens are unaware of what ideology as a concept means.

Political scientists themselves are unsure of how to define ideology. In fact, there are several definitions of ideology. Political scientists commonly refer to ideologies as "systems of belief that are elaborate, integrated, and coherent (McClosky, 1964:362). In other words, an ideology assists the individual in making sense of the political world. An ideology comprises a pattern of opinions on particular issues that stem from a basic underlying belief. The presence of an ideology aids an individual in forming opinions on a wide range of social, economic and political issues. It was once believed by Converse (1964) that a person who had an ideology took consistent positions on all issues. More recently, this assumption has been rebutted and individuals can identify with either group without subscribing to all of its beliefs.

The most common terms used when describing ideology in America are "liberal" and "conservative." Any research that deals with ideology must define what the terms liberal and conservative mean. Most scholars would agree with the following definitions of liberalism and conservatism offered:

Today's liberals believe that unfettered economic markets are limited in their ability to serve the public welfare, and that government must play an active role in regulating business and in rectifying gross imbalances in economic power and the distribution of wealth. This belief is in stark contrast to the conservative creed of governmental noninterference in private economic and social choices. Liberals are convinced that political and social egalitarianism are the instruments of democratic government, and that democratic government must be trusted as the register of the common good. Thus, although they are not unconcerned with economic liberties, and have promoted protection of the rights of workers and their opportunities for self-determination, liberals place their priority on social justice and civil equality, whereas conservatives place individual economic freedom of business entrepreneurs at the top of their list of concerns. Yet, liberals have never lost sight of the potential for tyranny in big government; typically, they have opposed governmental regulation of the 'private' realms of political and personal choice, again in contrast to conservatives, who are generally willing to cede these points to government (Collins and Skover, 1988:189,195).

More specifically, liberals are portrayed as believing that government should play an active role in domestic policy by helping individuals and communities with health, education and welfare. Liberals also demonstrates tolerance for social change and diversity, and opposition to excessive military spending and imperialism. Conversely, conservatism demonstrates a strong resistance to government involvement in domestic affairs. Conservatives also firmly support economic individualism, a strong defense establishment, and traditional social values. Although some of the views and beliefs of these two camps have altered over the years, the bases of these ideologies remain the same.

The reliability of these terms rests on the notion that the liberal-conservative continuum has proven exceedingly useful in Western society. As



Converse (1964) notes, the use of this yardstick conveys a wealth of information when describing political objects such as legislation. While the use of the liberal-conservative continuum is common among political elites, ideological thinking is somewhat rare in the mass public. Even though scholars generally agree on what the terms liberal and conservative mean, there is no guarantee that individuals who adopt these labels will adopt the meanings that scholars have given these terms.

### ***The Importance of Ideology***

Ideology is important to the study of American politics because it is assumed to affect political behavior. Implicit in most research on ideology is the notion that the electorate uses some type of organization in making political decisions.

Traditionally, political scientists have believed that it is vital to the success of democracy for citizens to be informed in their political decision-making (Maddox and Lillie, 1984). In fact, the earliest views of the American citizen were optimistic and purported that citizens were “attentive, informed, and rational” in their political decision-making (Maddox and Lillie, 1984:24). The “textbook” citizen was portrayed as ideological and politically active (Maddox and Lillie, 1984).

While there has always been general agreement among scholars that ideology is important, there has been consistent disagreement about the ability of the general electorate to think along ideological lines (McClosky, 1958; Campbell

et al., 1960; Converse, 1964; Converse and Markus, 1979; Conover and Feldman, 1981; Luttbeg and Gant, 1985; Knight, 1990; Knight and Erikson, 1997). In the 1960s, the textbook citizen was displaced by the view that most citizens were not ideological. Today, however, most scholars agree that the use of ideological labels plays a significant role in voter behavior.

Scholars have consistently sought to determine how ideology affects issue orientation. More specifically, research has attempted to discover what importance the electorate places on ideological self-identification and what role ideology plays in determining the outcome of an election. Despite repeated attempts to revive the view of the "textbook citizen," there continues to be suspicion that many voters are irrational and uninformed when making political decisions or at least most citizens do not act along ideological lines.

### ***Ideology and the Electorate***

Numerous scholars have studied ideology. While many early studies assess whether or not the electorate has some level of political sophistication, latter studies have attempted to be broader in their approach to ideology. In fact, more recent studies look at ideology through the self-identification measure. Even though scholars that used the self-identification measure realize the importance of whether or not the electorate is political sophisticated, they choose to concentrate specifically on what impact ideology has on political behavior. While research

about ideology has produced a wealth of knowledge, the results of these studies are somewhat contradictory and it has gaps.

More specifically, early research on ideology examined political sophistication and latter research examines the electorate's placement on the 7-point scale. Both bodies of work fail to examine how ideology affects African-Americans. Previous research fails to examine African-Americans' and their levels of political sophistication or their placement on the liberal-conservative continuum. Thus, it has ignored a group in the American electorate, which could impact electoral politics. Furthermore, previous research also fails to document the claim of an emerging conservative class among African-Americans. This research seeks to fill this gap.

In order to understand the significance of ideology, the researcher should understand how the study of ideology has evolved. This will be accomplished through a discussion of the earliest studies of ideology. First, *The American Voter* (1956) will be discussed. Next, an examination of Converse's seminal work on ideology, "*The Nature of Beliefs Systems in the Mass Publics*" (1964) will be undertaken. Afterwards, research rebutting the conclusions of these works will be discussed.

#### *The Unsophisticated Electorate*

Most of the work concerning ideology can be traced back to either *The American Voter* (1956), or "*The Nature of Belief Systems in the Mass Publics*" (1964).

These two works set the research agenda and the parameters of the debate concerning ideology. Scholars continue to use the conclusions of these studies as baselines. Although their findings have come under attack, researchers have generally accepted their definitions and methods.

The first portrait of an ideologue is provided by Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes (1960), whom were primarily interested in determining the role of party identification in determining voting behavior. As a way of determining that role, it was imperative to examine the electorate's attitude structures. They assumed that attitude structures in the electorate were similar to partisan preferences in that both would be stable and that attitude structures contributed to the constancy of partisan preferences.

They viewed ideology "as a particularly elaborate, close-woven, and far-ranging structure of attitudes" (192). The existence of an ideology allows an individual to organize his/her beliefs in some coherent fashion. Later scholars have generally agreed with Campbell et al's definition of ideology, stating that it is "an abstract, integrated view of the political world giving rise to a logical structure of attitudes toward policy issues, political parties, and candidates" (Lyons and Scheb, 1992:573).

Two measurements of ideology were derived from *TAV*: attitude structures, and level of conceptualization. An attitude structure, later referred to as constraint, provides evidence that citizens know what issues go together.

Theoretically, this means that liberals will take consistently liberal positions on issues and conservatives will take consistently conservative positions. This is largely a result of an ideological predisposition to which the issue is related. TAV drew a close analogy between the level of conceptualization index and a taxonomic system, whereby perceived objects and events are coded into classes where a more general range of objects required a more abstract concept of classification.

Being the first scholars to give a portrait of the ideologue, Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes (1960), state that the individual whom possesses an ideology--"an ideologue"--would be able to make sense of a wide range of political events. The ideologue would be able to conceptualize politics by interpreting political behavior and change through some type of abstract or philosophical ideological lens. For example, ideologues are those who perceive a liberal-conservative continuum on which various political objects may be located, and may shift over time. Additionally, ideologues are capable of locating political parties and themselves on the continuum. Non-ideological individuals are incapable of these tasks.

In their landmark study, the authors of *The American Voter* replaced the idea of a "textbook citizen" with a new view of the "nonideological citizen." Being the first scholars to attempt to quantitatively deal with the concept of ideology through the use of survey techniques, they concluded that Americans

were not ideological. Of primary importance in their research are two items: the level of connectedness between citizen's attitudes and opinions, and the degree of differentiation of the citizen's political world. The basic question is whether or not the electorate is "sensitive to its own policy mood in terms of a left-right continuum; and is sensitive as well to the shifting policy positions of both parties on the same continuum" (Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes, 1960:217). More specifically, the interest lies in the level of conceptualization used to assess political events and whether or not their preferences can be documented by references to specific policy debates. In short, they were "interested in the structure of thought that the individual applies to politics" (Campbell, et al. 1960:222).

Citizens were assigned various levels of conceptualization on the basis of their responses to "like/dislike" questions about political parties and candidates. These levels of conceptualization were intended to provide a single judgement as to levels of ideological sophistication. Four levels of conceptualization were operationalized: "ideologues" (Level A), "group benefits" voters (Level B), "nature of the times" voters (Level C), and "no issue content" voters (Level D). Respondents categorized as ideologues, the highest level of abstraction, were those whose responses consisted of any abstract conception that could be associated with an ideology. While explicit use of the liberal-conservative continuum was unnecessary, a demonstration that political objects could be

located on that continuum was essential. Surprisingly, while this category represents the highest level of abstraction, only 12% of the sample and 15% of eligible voters in the 1956 election fit into this category.

The second level, labeled as “group benefits” voters, were those who responded in terms of group interests or “ideology by proxy,” which consisted of 50% of the sample, and 60% of the voters. This was the modal category. This group did not articulate any group interest or any sense of ideological structure. Instead, they referred to current issues and accounted for 24% of the sample and 23% of voters. The final group contains those who evaluated candidates and parties without reference to issues or ideology. This group contained 22 ½% of the sample and 17 ½% of voters. Thus, the authors of *TAV* concluded that less than 20% of the electorate was capable of conceptualizing politics along the liberal-conservative continuum. Therefore, the belief became prevalent among political scientists that the bulk of the American electorate were politically unsophisticated.

Converse (1964) confirmed the findings of *TAV*. Although his view of ideology is similar to *TAV*'s, Converse expands on the definition of ideology and instead chooses to use the term “belief system.” A belief system is defined as “a configuration of ideas and attitudes in which the elements are bound together by some form of constraint or functional interdependence” (207). Along with this new approach to ideology is the introduction of the notion of constraint, which is

a determinant of whether or not a person has a belief system. Constraint is “the success we would have in predicting, given initial knowledge that an individual holds a specified attitude, that he holds certain further ideas and attitudes” (207). The higher the level of constraint, the more likely it is that someone’s view can be predicted with knowledge of their opinions on other issues. If an individual possesses a high level of constraint, there is “a high degree of consistency among political attitudes-attitudes on a wide range of issues falling into clear liberal and conservative tendencies” (Nie and Anderson, 1974:541).

Converse (1964) focused on the differences in the nature of belief systems held by political elites and the masses. Converse states that many historical observations were based upon a common assumption that the mass public mirrored the belief systems of political elites. However, he argues that, “there are important and predictable differences in ideational worlds as we progress downward through such ‘belief strata’ and that these differences, while obvious at one level, are easily overlooked and not infrequently miscalculated” (206). What he means is that when one moves down the ladder from political elites to the mass public, there is a decrease in the level of constraint in mass belief systems.

Converse (1964) confirms this argument and the original findings of *TAV*, and documents the public’s lack of ideological thinking. By re-interviewing original respondents from the 1956 survey and introducing the terms “liberal” and “conservative” in survey questions for the first time, respondents were asked if



they knew which party was most liberal and which was most conservative. Even though the proportion of respondents understanding the terms was approximately 20% of the sample, Converse found that only 17% of the sample could be categorized as having a broad philosophy (a number slightly higher than TAV's 12%). Thirty-seven percent of the respondents were entirely vague as to the meaning of the term, a higher proportion than was found in *TAV*.

In an attempt to further explore the public's levels of ideological thinking, Converse attempted to measure levels of constraint through an examination of attitudes and opinions on a wide range of domestic and foreign policy issues. He states, "When it comes down to specific attitudes and behaviors, the organization is there nonetheless, and it is this organization that matters, not the capacity for discourse in sophisticated language" (228). Not surprisingly, Converse found higher levels of constraint among the elite than the mass public. More specifically, there is a lack of information in the mass public. In other words, the general public is less capable of realizing that broad beliefs of culturally familiar principles and specific cases belong in the same belief system. For example, when respondents are asked about concepts such as freedom and democracy, their beliefs are highly constrained, but where more specific policy issues are concerned, the individual is incapable of realizing that it belongs to the same belief system. Converse (1964) therefore concludes that the public's opinions are not highly constrained, and that many responses are random, suggesting that

many citizens have “nonattitudes.” In sum, both cornerstone studies of ideology in the American electorate concluded that the mass public is incapable of conceptualizing the political world in liberal-conservative terms.

### *A Sophisticated Electorate?*

The conclusion that the American electorate is non-ideological has not been universally accepted (Field and Anderson, 1969; Pierce, 1970; Nie and Anderson, 1974; Nie, Verba, and Petrocik, 1976). While Campbell et al. (1960) and Converse’s (1964) studies established a paradigm in electoral behavior research, their research was criticized in subsequent studies. Two schools of thought emerged from critiques of these landmark studies. The first school of thought consists of scholars that criticize the methods utilized in early studies while the second consists of scholars whom have argued against the results of early studies because they are from a single time period. In short, both schools of thought argue that scholars should be careful when accepting the findings from early works.

Scholars who belong to the first school of thought raise questions about the methods of the landmark studies. They argue either that the definitions used in these studies were too restrictive or that the measurements of ideology were flawed. For example, common to both measurements level of conceptualization and constraint is the idea that the terms “liberal” and “conservative” are “capping abstractions’ each summarizing a highly constrained set of attitudes” (Lyons and

Scheb, 1992:573). There is also general agreement that a belief system provides an economical way for an individual to conceptualize the political world into a general understanding. In addition, scholars recognize in these conceptualizations of ideology that substantial cognitive skill is a necessary component for an individual to be able to consistently align issue positions and vote choice along ideological lines.

Research that attacks the methodology utilized in landmark studies argues that the statistical analyses used are incorrect and inadequate for the study of mass belief systems. For example, Pefley and Hurwitz, (1985) believe that Converse's use of correlation coefficients contributed significantly to his inability to find evidence of ideological constraint in the electorate. According to Converse's view, constraint is central to a belief system and a necessary element of an ideology. Constraint is the consistency between component idea elements in an ideology. It involves more than consistency between issue positions. It also connotes consistency between concrete views and more abstract beliefs. This latter requirement makes it necessary to utilize methods more sophisticated than correlation analysis. According to some scholars, the difficulty in documenting evidence of constraint in the electorate could be a result of the use of this unsophisticated statistical procedure (Pefley and Hurwitz, 1985). Furthermore, some researchers have suggested that sophisticated ideologies are often multi-dimensional and call for more advanced techniques. Therefore the use of

correlation analysis as a measurement tool for ideological structures more complex than the liberal-conservative dimension are inappropriate (Luttbeg, 1968; Maddox and Lillie, 1984).

To demonstrate the necessity of advanced methodologies, Pefley and Hurwitz, (1985) developed a new causal model of ideology which suggests that causation flows from abstract attitudes consisting of liberal/conservative positions, to general policy attitudes, to specific policy attitudes. Utilizing a LISREL model from an independent survey, they found constraint levels, measured as the relationship between general and specific elements, much higher than in previous studies. They concluded that traditional methods of measurement consistently underestimated levels of constraint.

Scholars who comprise the second school of thought, those which criticize early studies, warn that the findings are all based on a single historical time period. Furthermore, they argue that there are various reasons to expect a more ideological electorate, higher levels of educational attainment and a changing political landscape. In contrast to the dim view of the electorate offered by *TAV* (1960) and Converse (1964), several scholars note that ideological thinking is not at all uncommon in the American electorate (Nie and Andersen, 1974; Nie et al., 1976). The most powerful statement of a changing and thus more sophisticated electorate is found in *The Changing American Voter* (1976). Using identical techniques as *TAV*, which classified a low proportion of the electorate as

ideologues, *CAV* documents a substantial increase in the number of ideologues after 1952. *CAV* also documents an increase in levels of constraint. They state:

The increase in issue consistency across issues means that individuals who answer a question on one topic in a liberal direction are now more likely to answer liberally on another topic, and vice versa for conservative answers (137).

*CAV* goes on further to argue that the dim view of the electorate stated by *TAV* could largely result from the fact that it is time bound and analyzes only one election year as opposed to several.

*CAV* was merely an extension of the work done previously by Nie and Andersen, (1974). *CAV* argues that past studies are rather limited because they are based on data from a single historical period. Utilizing techniques similar to those used by Converse, *CAV* found major increases in levels of attitude consistency in the mass public since 1956. Moreover, in an analysis of presidential elections from 1952-1972, Nie et al. (1976) confirm that the electorate has become more politically sophisticated since *TAV*. More specifically, they find that the proportion of the electorate that can be considered ideologues increased dramatically between 1956 and 1972. In an analysis of the consistency between issue positions, most correlations in the 1956 data set were consistently low or negative, a finding consistent with Converse. However, analysis of respondents from the 1964 data set reveal striking results. Nie and

Andersen (1974) found that respondents who took liberal/conservative positions on one issue also took liberal stands on other issues. Therefore:

The existing description of low levels of attitude consistency in the mass public and the absence of an over-arching liberal/conservative ideology indicated by this lack of consistency no longer appears accurate (559).

Additional studies that suggest a reasonably sophisticated electorate employ the self-identification approach to studying ideology (Levitin and Miller, 1979; Gant and Luttbeg, 1985; Knight, 1985). More specifically, when comparing respondents in latter studies to those of the 1950s, one finds a reasonably sophisticated electorate (Gant and Luttbeg, 1985). This is largely because substantial proportions of the population are now capable of attributing the correct characteristics to the terms liberal and conservative.

#### *Back to the Unsophisticated Electorate*

While there is anecdotal evidence to suggest increasing levels of political sophistication, several later scholars have stated that these results are unfounded. In his own analysis of belief systems in the mass public which offered conflicting conclusions, Stimson (1975) urges scholars to use caution when discussing the alleged importance of ideology. More specifically, when an examination of ideology in the mass public takes place, its impact will be overstated because large percentages of the electorate “systematically selects itself out of such analyses by not voting and not responding to measures of ideology” (400). He

also reminds us of the importance of formal education and its association with ideological sophistication. Stimson notes that respondents of higher cognitive abilities assign more meaning to the liberal-conservative continuum than those of lower abilities. Furthermore, it is difficult to state what the liberal-conservative dimension means to these respondents or even if it has meaning for them. Therefore, he concludes: "For the electorate as a whole, the evidence suggests that these widely used concepts have no shared connotations" (403).

Even some of the research dealing with ideological self-identification, presumably a new approach, confirms the findings of Converse and *TAV* (Holm and Robinson, 1978; Levitin and Miller, 1979; Conover and Feldman, 1981; Gant and Luttbeg, 1985). Although individuals have demonstrated the ability to place themselves on the scale, a close examination of ideological self-identification as it corresponds to the respondent's thermometer ratings of liberals and conservatives, as well as closed-ended questions on specific issues, reveals striking conclusions. The public's use of ideological labels is "largely symbolic" and "non-issue oriented" in meaning (Conover and Feldman, 1981). This finding was confirmed by later research, which asked respondents to list what they thought the terms liberal and conservative meant. About 40% of the respondents could not give any description of what they believed these terms mean. Furthermore, most of the research concludes that at least a third of respondents are incapable of placing themselves on the 7-point ideological scale, thereby being labeled as apolitical or

possessing a non-attitude where citizens confessed themselves ignorant of any type of ideological thinking (Converse, 1964; Holm and Robinson, 1978; Levitin and Miller, 1979).

Furthermore, Gant and Luttbeg (1985), found that when citizens were incapable of placing themselves on the scale, they responded to the self-identification question by stating "that they had not thought much about the words, or did not know what they meant" (Gant and Luttbeg, 1985:82). Knight (1985) confirms this finding. In addition to finding that over 40% of the respondents had not thought about where they would place themselves on a liberal-conservative scale, more than half could be classified as political inarticulates. However, of those considered to be ideologues, ideological placement had a more significant impact on candidate choice than partisan identification. But ideologues accounted for only 22.1% of the sample and 26.2% of voters. This study confirms the work of Converse and *The American Voter*. In short, it is evident to a large number of scholars that "many members of the public may lack a complete understanding of such ideological terms {liberal and conservative} as traditionally conceptualized" (Conover and Feldman, 1981).

#### *Why the Change?*

There continues to be wide disagreement among scholars concerning whether or not the mass public is politically sophisticated. However, several have offered reasons as to why the public has had increasing levels of political sophistication.



There is also a group of scholars who argue that no real change has taken place; that the mass public continues to lack political sophistication when it concerns ideology.

Scholars who believe there has been a change in the mass public suggest that many factors may have led to increased levels of political sophistication in the electorate. Some researchers attribute it to the increased political salience of the 1960s (Nie and Andersen, 1974). Others believe that the level of political discourse in campaigns has increased citizens' use of ideology. In particular, the political landscape of the 1960s and 1970s contained many issues that were divided along ideological lines and ideologically visible candidates (Robinson and Fleishman, 1984). Along with this more interested citizenry, the argument goes, came the dissemination of more political information, thus increasing consistency between citizens attitudes and behaviors (Bishop, Oldendick, Tuchfarber, and Bennet, 1978).

Some authors have noted that a politically sophisticated electorate could be due to educational attainment. More specifically, Nie et al. (1976), see increasing levels of political sophistication as a result of a more educated mass public, they note that the proportion of the population most likely to be capable of ideological thinking --those with at least some-- college training has increased. Converse found attitude consistency to be rather low among the general public, but that consistency increased with higher levels of education. Bishop et al.

(1978) note that in 1952 only 15% of the population had some college training, but by 1972, the figure nearly doubled to 29%. Furthermore the proportion of citizens with less than a high school education decreased from 61% to 38% during the same time span. Therefore, according to Converse's model of mass belief systems, changes such as these should correspond to a change in the public's level of ideological sophistication. However, while there have been substantial increases in educational attainment, these shifts "have had little if any impact on the changes in the structure of mass beliefs" (Nie et al., 1976:149). In fact, increases in consistency have been greater for lower educational groups, which according to the theory of mass beliefs would have less capacity for ideological thinking. Thus, an increase in educational attainment does not account for increase in issue consistency in the mass public.

Another explanation for increased political sophistication is the entrance of a new population into the electorate. The data demonstrate that this is not the case. Attitude consistency in all age groups increased at almost the same rate. So, what can really account for the changes in the public's level of ideological thinking?

Political life has changed. The level of debate in elections, the salience of issues and the penetration of politics into the lives of citizens have changed the way most people think about politics. When one makes a comparison between elections of the 1950s and the 1960s, politics has changed dramatically.

Collectively, these events have all occurred along side the change in levels of political sophistication. Nie et al. (1976) demonstrate the penetration of politics into the lives of citizens through an analysis of political hopes and fears in citizens' personal life. For all educational levels, the penetration of politics has increased, meaning that politics affects all citizens regardless of cognitive abilities. Not only have issues become more relevant and salient to many citizens, election campaigns have been filled with more ideological debates.

In an effort to document the increased saliency of politics to citizens, Stimson (1975) examines the Nixon-McGovern election of 1972. Constant ideological cues were provided to voters by the media. Specifically, the primaries were always described as contests between the "left" and "right." Stimson further states that even the most apolitical segments of the electorate would have been made aware of the ideological stances of the candidates. In addition to the media's coverage of the ideological positions in the election, issue positions were also sharply drawn. In short, a final analysis of major changes in elections from the placid 1950s to the 1970s is that elections of the latter provided "ideological cues of unprecedented clarity and consistency" (396).

Some scholars doubt that there has actually been an increase in ideological sophistication among the electorate. They state that either the methods utilized to measure levels of conceptualization are incorrect or that the public has lacked an interest in politics. More specifically, many scholars have noted and

hypothesized that an increase in the political sophistication of the electorate is directly related to changes in political motivation as a result of the 1964 election. Therefore, if citizens are motivated about politics and are more sophisticated, Bishop et al (1978) believe that they should also be more interested in politics. However, analysis of the public's interest in politics shows that there was no change from 1960-1964.

Further evidence to discredit the claim of a more sophisticated electorate suggests that this sophistication is largely a result of changes in surveys. Bishop et al. (1978) attributes the rise in issue consistency to “a basic methodological artifact: changes in question wording and format” (782). At the same time a massive shift was noted in the electorate, the Michigan Survey Research Center instituted major changes in the format and content of questions. According to Bishop et al., this, “creates serious problems of comparability for trend analysis” (253). Furthermore, it “raises the question of much of the change in mass sophistication reported by Nie and others might be due to methodological artifacts” (253). To directly test the artifact proposition, three different formats of the Michigan survey issue questions were randomized to a national sample. These sets included questions that were used prior to 1964, those instituted in 1964, and those used more recently. They concluded that when the changes in question wording are taken into account, the changes in mass belief systems disappear or are negligible.

Smith (1980) also documents methodological problems in the level of conceptualization measure, and concludes that the electorate is not more ideologically aware. In an analysis of the “level of conceptualization” index developed by Campbell et al. (1960), but also used by Field and Anderson (1969) and Nie, Verba, and Petrocik, (1976), the reliability and validity of the measure is called into question. In Smith’s rather frank discussion of the stability of the levels of conceptualization measure, he states that whereas *The American Voter* expected little change, Field and Andersen and Nie et al. accounted for some variability in the measure due to environmental factors, such as the style and level of interest in a presidential campaign. However, both concluded that levels should remain relatively stable because a person’s cognitive ability is a permanent trait and environmental factors would only influence those of higher cognitive ability. Analyzing data from the 1956-1960 National Election Panel Study, Smith concludes that the level of conceptualization measure is neither valid nor reliable. Since the measure was projected to be a stable trait, findings of unreliability suggest that conceptual sophistication is not really being measured, but rather a measurement of short-term environmental forces. Responses to like and dislike questions about candidates and parties could be a result of rhetoric to which the person was exposed to by the current campaign or through the media. In the end, it is difficult to conclude which argument is correct: an unsophisticated electorate or a reasonably sophisticated electorate.

In summary, despite the fact that Smith (1980) found the level of conceptualization measure invalid and unreliable, scholars have continued to study ideology and its impact on political behavior. In the end, there is evidence to support both views of ideology. Two landmark studies, *The American Voter* and Converse (1964), have been followed by more studies which suggest that the public is incapable of ideological thinking due to limited cognitive abilities, a relatively stable trait. Yet scholars have shown evidence to suggest otherwise. For instance, increases in levels of education have contributed to higher cognitive ability. Educational attainment was a trait Converse found necessary to engage in ideological thinking. There have also been major changes in the political environment. Changes in the political environment have facilitated more interest and involvement in the political process among many individuals.

#### *Toward a New Understanding of Ideology*

More recently scholars have attempted to redefine the notion of ideology by conceptualizing it through the use of the 7-point self-identification. Scholarly disagreement over what the terms *liberal* and *conservative* mean has led to an increased reliance on self-identification as the dominant measurement of ideology. This research relies on this conceptualization to measure ideology, although its limits are recognized (Lyons and Scheb, 1992). The earliest survey question on ideological identification is available through the Roper Center asked in the Gallup Poll in 1938:

In politics, do you regard yourself as a liberal or conservative? (Robinson and Fleishman, 1984:52)

This question did not provide respondents with a middle-of-the-road opinion, therefore, more recently, ideological identification is measured through the use of the following question found in both the General Social Survey and the Center for Political Studies:

We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. I'm going to show you a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal—point 1—to extremely conservative—point 7. Where would you place yourself on this scale? (Robinson and Fleishman, 1984:52)

This question allows the respondent more choices and it also gives an option for a middle-of-the-road response. Moreover this measurement of ideological identification allows for differentiation between different degrees of ideological commitment.

The self-identification measure of ideology allows the researcher to gauge the level of ideological thinking of the American electorate, whatever that level may be. Furthermore, it also an extremely economical way to measure ideology without being overly concerned with “what it is” (Knight, 1999). Although scholars dismissed self-labeling in the past, the self-identification measure is “now the dominant means of assessing individual ideology in political science” (62). Its advantages are manifold. First and foremost, it relies on how the voter

sees him/herself, and not whether or not he/she fits into a socially defined model. Furthermore, it is analogous to the party identification measure because it allows voters to align themselves with a group that may affect their vote choice. And finally, it is general enough to include various forms of ideological thinking, from those respondents who use the continuum in evaluating candidates to those whom think policy issues out in ideological terms (Holm and Robinson, 1978). However, the self-identification measure of ideology should not be used without caution because it is possible that respondents may align themselves without knowledge of how to use ideology in making vote choices. Furthermore, respondents may also place themselves at the same point on the scale using different information about what it means to be conservative or liberal. Nevertheless, scholars who use this measure have shown that ideology has an impact on issue position and vote choice. Furthermore, the liberal-conservative continuum continues to be the dominant conceptualization in American politics that is easily recognized by respondents.

According to Knight, (1981), previous assessments of the public's ideological thinking "were simply too restrictive" (833). While previous research seems to require high levels of conceptualization and constraint in the electorate, this research eases this expectation and views ideology as "some product of policy preferences or issue opinions" (Knight, 1999:60-62). It seems best to view ideology from the same lens as partisanship, "as a perceptual screen or filtering



device which requires little in the way of sophistication” (Knight:833). This work also chooses to follow the course of Jacoby (1995) whose notion of ideological is not bipolar. He argues:

Ideological thinking is not a dichotomous characteristic, such that people *do* or *do not* think about politics in ideological terms. Instead, ideological thinking is best viewed in continuous terms; that is, there are many gradations among individuals’ abilities to apply the liberal-conservative continuum to specific political stimuli (314).

Utilizing this new approach to ideology, an emerging group of scholars decided to re-focus attention on the popular use of ideological labels as opposed to the individual's level of conceptualization and constraint. More specifically, researchers put forth efforts to analyze “citizens’ direct application of the liberal and conservative labels to themselves” (Levitin and Miller, 1979:752). The use of this approach was not an attempt to by-pass the controversies surrounding ideology in electoral behavior literature. Rather its primary aim was to provide a new focus on the study of ideology in order to ascertain the exact role ideological labels play in determining behavior.

While numerous studies have concluded that the mass public lacks any type of ideological structuring, others have found, through the use of the self-identification measure, that ideology has a significant impact on vote choice, and thus had a significant impact on the outcome of several major elections (Stimson, 1975: Holm and Robinson, 1978: Levitin and Miller, 1979: Robinson and

Fleishman, 1988). More specifically, a respondent's use of ideological labels to describe political objects, events, parties, and candidates plays an important role in their voting behavior (Levitin and Miller, 1979).

To demonstrate the increased importance of ideology to the public, Stimson (1975), using 1972 American National Election Study data, asked respondents to place themselves on issue dimension scales and a liberal-conservative scale. The relationship between ideology and vote choice was strong and consistent for those voters in which the liberal-conservative continuum was meaningful. Additionally, he concluded that at least half of the electorate displayed belief structuring in line with that of Converse, suggesting that they:

Show evidence of using the left-right dimension in a manner which is sufficiently abstract to encompass a wide scope of more specific political attitudes, and which is demonstrably important in predicting their responses to choices offered by the political system (414).

Other research attempting to document the importance of ideology include Holm and Robinson (1978) and Levitin and Miller (1979). In an effort to refute assumptions rampant in the literature about the "end of ideology," these studies find that ideological self-identification had significant predictive power in determining vote choice for the 1972 election. Comparing ideology and party identification's predictive power, they concluded that the former was second in importance to the latter. And for independents, ideology was a stronger predictor

of vote choice than party identification. In addition to those findings, they concluded that younger and more educated respondents utilized ideology more because of their rejection of party identification.

Using the self-identification approach to ideology, Levitin and Miller, (1979) found evidence that the public was capable of using the terms liberal and conservative. For the first time, a combined measure of ideology was developed where respondents were questioned about their own individual perceptions of the terms *liberal* and *conservative* which included responses to the 7-point identification scale as well as a question concerning group closeness. Respondents were asked to identify the groups they felt close to and groups that had similar ideas and beliefs as theirs. Specifically, they were asked if they felt close to either liberals or conservatives. And finally, respondents were asked to rate liberals and conservatives on a feeling thermometer.

In a detailed examination of the relationship between ideological self-placement, vote preferences, and the citizens' application of the ideological labels to parties, candidates, and issues, Levitin and Miller came to several surprising conclusions. In a normal vote analysis of the 1972 and 1976 elections evaluating the direct role of ideological location apart from partisanship, the authors concluded that ideological concerns "made a separate and significant contribution to the vote decision in both 1972 and 1976" (757). They also document a strong relationship between respondents' placement on the 7-point scale and their

perception of where their party and its presidential candidate are on the scale. More simply, Democrats were consistently more likely than Independents and Republicans to locate their party and their party's candidate closer to their own ideological identification than the Republican party and vice versa. They also found that ideological location provides an independent point from which citizens view politics and it is relatively stable. The authors concluded, "ideological position is not simply a summary statement of issue positions," it has many meanings (769). One of which that has importance is that "ideological location is an important factor in shaping voters choices on Election Day" (Holm and Robinson, 1978:769). In short, ideological labels are powerful, political symbols to many members of the public (Conover and Feldman, 1981).

Another body of research that supports the use of the self-identification measure of ideology follows Jacoby (1995), whose conceptualization of ideological thinking is based on a continuum. Jacoby shows that people have different levels of ideological thinking, rather it be on the high or low end of ideological sophistication, but people consistently choose the candidate that is closest to their own views. Politically sophisticated voters have the cognitive ability to organize their issue positions consistently (Jacoby, 1986). However, even those who are unable to organize their beliefs along this continuum can still utilize ideology, "as long as ideology is framed not as a set of issues constrained by some underlying philosophical thread but instead is cast in symbolic or group

identification terms” (Lyons and Scheb, 1992:583). In sum, even voters who are not politically sophisticated are capable of utilizing ideology when they vote, even if it only plays a role in candidate evaluation.

In short, as it has been demonstrated, all measurement tools of ideology have limitations. The level of conceptualization and constraint approaches are bipolar in that either an individual possess an ideology and is capable of articulating that ideology, or they do not possess one, thereby resulting in the respondent being classified as having a non-attitude (Converse, 1970). The self-identification approach runs the risk of respondents using the terms without knowledge of how they would define the terms. Nevertheless, this latter measurement, self-identification, allows some flexibility and focuses on how ideological labels are utilized by the electorate to understand the political world. It thus assumes that individuals who successfully place themselves onto the 7-point ideological scale have some level of ideological thinking and are capable of utilizing that placement in making political decisions. Therefore, keeping these things in mind, this research is primarily interested in the self-identification and constraint approaches to studying ideology. The self-identification measure will allow us to identify the respondent’s ideology, and the notion of constraint will allow us to identify issue positions the respondent should have given knowledge of their self-identification.

### ***Ideological Trends in the General Electorate***

Numerous scholars have concluded that ideological labels have significant impact on voting behavior. More specifically, they state that even voters who may not be politically sophisticated are still capable of utilizing ideology even if it only plays a role in candidate evaluation (Lyons and Scheb, 1992). They also argue that ideological position has political significance. In sum, ideology continues to be a significant predictor of voting behavior (Robinson and Fleishman, 1984).

Part of the importance placed upon the study of ideology derives from its affect on realignment. The public's political beliefs are communicated through their ideological identification at the polls. Election results are thus analyzed as communicating whether the public is moving to the left or to the right. As previously discussed, liberals are more likely to support Democrats, and Republicans are often the choice of conservatives. If the electorate shifts ideologically, that change could affect partisan identification and vote choice. Consequently, the party that is in the majority can become the minority party. In his discussion of the role of partisan identification and ideology on political behavior, Robinson (1984) states that ideology does a better job of describing the public's political beliefs than partisanship does. He goes on to argue that ideology, partisanship, and issues are "so intricately interconnected" that it is hard to determine which has more impact. Thus political scientists should examine the

ideological preferences of voters in the same manner that partisan affiliations are studied.

If Schlesinger's cyclical theory is correct, eras of public and private interest should be linked to the American electorate's ideological identification and issue preferences. Are they? The research is inconclusive. Since 1979, there has been a shift in voter attitudes toward conservatism but there is question as to whether this has led to a general realignment of the electorate. For example, Robinson, (1984) examines issue positions of the electorate during the 1970s and early 1980s and finds evidence of a conservative trend. During that time period, more Americans took conservative stances on a variety of issues. They were more opposed to abortion, the abolition of the death penalty, government spending on social programs, homosexual rights, and racial integration. But in an analysis of national survey data, Robinson fails to document this trend. Table 2-1 displays the results of his analysis.

The data from Table 2-1 is inconclusive. While it does demonstrate major decreases in liberal identification in the electorate, it fails to provide ample evidence of a general conservative trend. The largest increase in conservative ideological identification is a five- percent increase from 30% in 1974 to 35% in 1983. The Gallup Poll actually reveals a decrease in conservative identification from 46% in 1970 to 44% in 1981. Moreover, if these data were analyzed from year to year, it would be difficult to identify this slight conservative trend.

Robinson concludes that the American electorate has perhaps moved to the right, but not much.

Robinson and Fleishman (1984) come to different conclusions using several national surveys. In an examination of the Gallup Poll, they found an increase in the number of conservatives between 1938 and 1973. Although there were larger proportions of liberals than conservatives until 1964, by 1970, self-identified conservatives outnumbered liberals by more than 64%. They also found that other national surveys such as the General Social Survey and the Roper organization reflect general conservative trends in the electorate. Further research by Miller (1992) finds similar results among the young. He finds that the proportion of young identifying themselves as conservatives, increased from 17.8% in 1974 to 30.7% in 1986. More recently, Knight and Erikson, (1999) also found an increase in conservative identification. Utilizing data from the National Election Study from 1972 to 1994, they concluded that, "Since at least the early 1970s more voters call themselves conservative than liberal. And this tendency has clearly been growing" (Norrander and Wilcox:99).

This increasing conservative identification, however, did not affect the electorate's issue positions, which remained liberal during this entire period. Smith (1990) reaches this conclusion in his study of the electorate since World War II. In an analysis of 455 issues from several different survey organizations, he finds no general conservative trend in attitudes. In fact, during the same years



Robinson and Fleishman (1984) document a conservative trend in identification, Smith documents liberal growth. Robinson and Fleishman (1984) also document a move towards liberalism on certain issues such as support for increased funding on domestic problems, the environment, education, and welfare services. In sum, there is a difference between ideology and issue position. In the general electorate, an increase in conservative identification does not necessarily reflect adoption of a conservative position on issues.

### ***Conclusion***

Although scholars have learned a great deal about ideology and the electorate's level of political sophistication, there is a tremendous gap in this literature. Specifically the research totally ignores the impact ideology and what impact it has African-Americans' political behavior. It also fails to analyze ideological trends among Blacks and what impact a "left" or "right" trend could possibly have on realignments. This research seeks to fill that gap.

In general, studies of ideology continue to raise more questions than they answer because there continues to be intense disagreement over the role of ideology. While the early scholars who examined ideology concluded that the mass public was politically unsophisticated, later scholars have found that ideology does indeed play some role in determining political behavior. If we were to view the debate concerning ideology from the same lens as Stimson, (1975), we find that both camps tend to look for different things in their research,

and both tend to interpret the same facts differently. For example, earlier studies attempted to spell out what a belief system is. They hypothesized that an ideology would look like a single powerful underlying dimension. This is based on several premises. These scholars believed that the belief structures that elites utilized could also be the basis upon which respondent's belief consistency is measured. Their research is based on the elite's belief system against which the mass public is found lacking. The second set of scholars looked for belief structuring first, or rather the evidence of a belief system. They asserted that the electorate has the ability for rational choice. Using deductive reasoning, they started with models and make inferences as to what the electorate would look like if the model fit. Their primary focus was to look for rationality first and the evidence of a belief system second. Thus the debate is whether the ideological glass is half empty or half full. In short, scholars state that the "conclusion must be a middle of the road one: there has been a substantial change in the way the public conceptualizes politics, yet there is evidence for inertia as well" (Nie et al., 1976:122).

However, my view of ideology and the electorate is more optimistic. Although numerous scholars have concluded that the electorate is non-ideologically oriented in its political thinking, political scientists as well as political commentators continue to measure the ideological identification of the general electorate. Furthermore, they have shown that it is irrelevant whether the

electorate is fully capable of defining the terms “liberal” and “conservative” because regardless of differing definitions, the terms still have significance in determining political behavior.

## CHAPTER III

### **BLACK CONSERVATISM**

Most of the research on conservatism in America largely ignores the existence of a Black conservative group. Moreover, current discussions about Black conservatism lack historical perspective. They assume that conservatism in the African-American community is a new phenomenon. However, this assumption ignores a large literature that discusses the history of African-Americans and the political thought of major Black intellectuals. This research seeks to fill the gaps left by previous research. It will briefly discuss the history of conservatism in America and will trace the development of Black conservative political thought.

#### *Conservatism in America*

Black conservatism cannot be understood as an isolated movement in the African-American community. It must be understood within the context of the history of conservatism in American. In the early twentieth century, America evolved from a conservative tradition rooted in 18<sup>th</sup> century political thought. This is when Black conservatives' political views became popular. Thus, before one is capable of fully understanding the arguments of Black conservatives, one must examine the historical development of conservatism in America.

In general, conservatism in America can best be understood from three different perspectives: anti-statist, organic, and neoconservative (Randolph, 1995). Anti-statist thought originated in 18<sup>th</sup> century Manchester. Proponents of this school of thought oppose expanding the role of the state. More specifically, anti-statist thought comprises these ideas:

(1) it places greater emphasis on the role of the individual (i.e., unlimited individual freedom); (2) it supports strict limits on governmental authority; (3) it advocates a very narrow role of government in the market place; (4) it adamantly opposes communism and socialism; (5) it opposes the welfare state in its present form; and finally, although most anti-statist oppose the use of quotas, they do support moderate forms of affirmative action programs such as set-asides, and minority hiring preferences to promote diversity (150).

In terms of contemporary politics, anti-statists represent the “establishment” or the moderate wing of the Republican Party. They usually control the White House as well as the party’s national candidates. In relation to Black conservatives, prior to the 1980s many Black elites who identified with the Republican Party were aligned with this sub-group of conservatives.

Organics represent the second perspective of conservatism in America. They are primarily “concerned more with social and cultural dimensions of life, that is with the moral values and religious or ethical spirit that suffuse the social order and give meaning to life” (Randolph, 150). They are extremely conservative and are heavily influenced by religion. In the United States, these conservatives are often characterized as the “New Right” or the “Religious Far

Right.” They are against affirmative action, gun control, the welfare state, abortion, and busing. Moreover, members of this camp such as Senator Jesse Helms (NC) have worked adamantly to weaken the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The organic conservatives have given tremendous financial and political support to Black conservatives.

Neoconservatists are primarily composed of ex-liberals, original proponents of the Great Society programs, ex-Black power advocates, and former socialists. Generally, neoconservatives support traditional family values, self-help programs, and vouchers for education. They are mainly against set-aside programs for minorities and an expanded role for the government. Black conservatives who identify with this group usually agree with neoconservatists on matters surrounding self-help and education.

Generally, organics and anti-statists are the dominant sub-groups of conservatives in the United States. Therefore, this paper will focus on the development of these two camps among Black conservatives.

### ***Origins of Black Conservatives***

It is difficult to trace the development of Black conservatism to African culture.

Walton (1969) states:

It is true that Blacks were also aware of an aristocratic tradition in their African Kingdoms. But the impact of this feudal structure upon their thinking is not known nor is the degree of this aristocracy among the different Blacks brought to America known. In other words, the number

of Black aristocrats and Blacks with aristocratic thinking that survived the “middle passage” and made it to America is unknown. Moreover, the influence of this group upon Black thinking is also unknown. Thus, for all intent and purposes then Black conservatism emerged on the American continent (151).

Most Black writers conclude that conservatism in the African-American community is largely a result of slavery and racism (Randolph, 1995). Black conservatism arose from the different types of living situations experienced by free Blacks and slaves. While slaves were working in the abolition movement, free Blacks were able to acquire property, education, and wealth. Over time, the small number of Blacks who were free began to increase their wealth and emulate the aristocratic ideas of Whites. This created an even larger gulf between freed Blacks and slaves. The harsh realities of slavery and racism left free Blacks with no alternative but to favor the status quo conservatism. This allowed them to keep their positions (Hwang, Fitzpatrick, & Helms, 1998). These class cleavages not only existed during slavery but they have been perpetuated throughout history. Many scholars have documented the distinctions between these two groups of Blacks, arguing that throughout history there has always been a large gulf between the Black middle class and the larger masses of the poor. “Every study that has looked closely at the Black community has found a gulf between the Black middle classes and the mass of impoverished Black citizens. This was true

in antebellum times at the turn of the century, in the New Deal, World War II period in the postwar era and through the 1960's" (Welch & Foster, 1987: 447).

### ***Black Conservatism Defined***

Defining Black conservatism is difficult. For clarification purposes, when a reference made to Black conservatism, Black conservative intellectuals are the subjects, not the masses of African-Americans in the electorate that may consider themselves as conservative. Like the views of other groups, the views of Black conservatives are not monolithic. Any definition of Black conservatism will face two limitations. First, it will not be true of all Black conservatives. Second, it will be true of many who are not Black conservatives (Eisenstadt, 1999).

Although it is difficult to define Black conservatism, its basic tenets can be identified. First, Black conservatives show great respect for Western civilization, its culture, and its institutions. Most Black conservatives believe that through their own resources African-Americans can succeed in American society. Individual achievement, not government assistance, is seen as the key to success. Black conservatives also believe that Western institutions provide all Americans with an equal chance for success. A major argument of Black conservatives can be summarized by the following statement, "If we play by your rules and prove our worthiness according to your standards, you will have no choice but to accommodate to us" (Eisenstadt, 1999:xi). Black conservatives believe that no matter how Whites attempted to block African-Americans from full participation



in the American system, their efforts to prevent full participation will be defeated by the universality of those systems. Commonly referred to as “civilizationalism,” this belief has been central to Black political thought.

Black conservative intellectuals also have a deep appreciation for capitalism, often at the expense of direct participation in the political system. Capitalism is seen as an advantageous tool for African-Americans because it gives everyone who can master its ways an equal opportunity for success. This is evident through Black entrepreneurs such as Martin Delany and Earl Graves. It is also demonstrated by the number of Black-owned business in America before the Civil War. For instance, during the 1820s and 1830s, Blacks flourished in such businesses as real estate, construction, manufacturing and transportation. The success in these businesses was evident by the fact that many Black businesses employed White Americans. For example, Black conservative James Forten, a Philadelphia abolitionist and entrepreneur, was a living example of the possibilities business success could bring to Blacks. He was a strong defender of economic success for African-Americans. Similarly, Stephen Smith, a successful lumber merchant, had annual sales of over \$100,000 by the mid-nineteenth century. Prosperity in a capitalistic market, according to Black conservatives, depends not on personal connections or one’s inherited position, but the individual’s innate talent. In fact, research shows that enslaved Blacks in the south took advantage of free enterprise. Records indicate that slaves were able to

hire other slaves from their master and some slaves were able to purchase their freedom. Although capitalism has been viewed negatively by some African-Americans, Black conservatives still believe that “collective self-advancement” through capitalism is a lasting strategy of success for the race.

Also within the strains of conservatism that Black intellectuals posit is the presence of the so-called “Protestant Work Ethic.” Jupiter Hammon, said to be the founding figure of Black conservatism, was a Long Island slave and a literary figure. His literary work emphasized the importance of respectability, humility, morality, Christianity, and deference towards authority. Conservatives in the Black community believed that Free Blacks had a responsibility to set examples for others by upholding high moral standards. This included proving themselves worthy of freedom, the avoidance of laziness and stealing, and dispelling myths about Black incapacity and undirected lives.

Black conservatives are optimistic and choose to focus on Black accomplishments in the face of obstacles rather than on the problems of slavery and racism. To those who argue that African-Americans have more to achieve, Black conservatives say that much has already been achieved. For many Black conservatives, there was a pride in accomplishment and a respect for mutual cooperation with Whites for the advancements of the race.

### *Contemporary Black Conservatism*

Among the leading Black conservatives today are Thomas Sowell, Walter Williams, Glen Loury, and Clarence Thomas (Singer, 1981; West, 1987). The Black conservatives' aim is to "undermine the position of Black liberals and replace them with Black Republicans (or even conservative Black Democrats), who downplay governmental regulation and stress market mechanisms and success-oriented values in Black communities" (West, 1987:82). Black conservatives also express the sentiment that ideas offered by liberals are "played out," because they have not solved the problems of the Black community. Black conservatives say that they provide a new way to look at old problems with new solutions. According to Toler (1993), Black conservatism rests upon five points:

- 1) Although lingering racism still exists, thanks to the victories of the civil rights struggles, racial discrimination is no longer a critical obstacle to Black progress. We can speak of a racist American past, but not of a racist contemporary America.
- 2) African American demands for equal opportunity made during the Civil Rights era now go too far in demanding equal outcomes. A non-discriminatory America does not ensure equal outcomes. Capitalism maximizes skill and talent and any differences among ethnic groups, or between genders, is a function of each group's particular strengths and weaknesses.
- 3) Today's problems of race relations and Black poverty cannot be remedied by government policy alone. The roots of today's problems are located first and foremost within African Americans: in our inability to successfully compete in a free market system, in the poor values and irresponsible and offensive behavior of poor Blacks, in our psychological hang-ups about group identity and past victimization, and/or in our failure to take full advantage of existing opportunities. In this light, not only are government social welfare and legal remedies, such as affirmative action

programs, unnecessary, they are detrimental to the development of Black people. Social welfare programs destroy Black families, foster debilitating dependency, and reward irresponsible behavior.

4) Affirmative action programs lower Black self-esteem since Whites will always diminish Black accomplishment as reflecting only affirmative action imperatives and Black beneficiaries of affirmative action programs can never be fully confident that their success stems from their talent. These programs are also detrimental to Blacks because of the White (male) resentment they engender. Affirmative action has, in any case, only benefited more advantaged Blacks.

5) The appropriate strategy for African Americans is one focusing on self-help. First we need to de-emphasize racial identity and loyalty in favor of an American identity. Second, African Americans should compete on the basis of merit only. Third, we need to de-emphasize government programs and civil rights legislation in favor of racial self-help. Blacks need to focus on Black entrepreneurship, building and supporting Black business, particularly in poor Black neighborhoods. And most important, the Black middle-class needs to teach poor African Americans appropriate values and behavior (5-6).

Generally speaking, in addition the views listed above, Black conservatives oppose federal intervention into the lives of African-Americans. Conservatives are less confident than liberals in the ability of human beings to be rational. Therefore they place their faith in the economic marketplace. Karenga (1986) states that contemporary Black conservatives subscribe to the “minimal state whose principal business is protection, securing contracts, and above all non-intervention in the lives of good, property-holding citizens” (44).

A common thread found among contemporary Black conservatives is a demand for high moral standards and centrality of character. Central to their argument is that racism is not the only thing to blame for problems in the Black

community. Black economist Glenn Loury argues that the problem of the Black poor is a moral one. He states that Black leadership and the Black middle-class refuse to confront the “enemy within” because they ignore the pathological culture of the Black poor (Barker, Jones, and Tate, 1999). This pathological culture exhibits a lack of concern for values such as self-reliance and delayed gratification and results in high crime rates, unwed mothers, and poor academic performance of Black youth. Loury believes that the moral decay of Black communities is beyond the reach of government programs. Black conservatives believe that government social welfare programs have created a sense of dependency. This sense of dependency has created a major problem facing the Black community. It decreases the importance of the solidity of the family and self-reliance. Black conservatives also believe that government programs such as the New Deal and Great Society programs whose objective was to fight the “War on Poverty” have largely failed. They note the increase in illegitimacy (out of wed lock births) and crime rates in the Black community as well as the failure of many Black businesses. This view of the Black conservative intellectual is often used to attack affirmative action, set asides, and other tools of federal government intervention. Black conservatives argue that these programs are no longer needed because race is not as serious an obstacle to the attainment of education and employment.

Major policy programs advanced by contemporary Black conservatives include educational and employment reforms (Barker et al., 1999). Black conservatives believe that the economic inequality that African-Americans experience is a result of substandard schools. A solution to the problem of education is a free-market system whereby assistance is given to needy students through the use of vouchers so that they can attend schools of their own choosing. Because of competition, the argument goes, substandard schools would either be forced to improve their quality or shut down.

Other policy alternatives of Black conservatives are the imposition of a sub-minimum wage to enhance the position of Black youth in today's labor market. Black conservatives believe that the passage of minimum wage legislation denies Black youth opportunities for employment because it overprices labor. This denial of employment carries over into other social problems in the Black community. They stress that if Black youth were afforded the opportunity for gainful employment, they could gain valuable work experience that would make them marketable in the future.

### ***The Development of Black Conservatism***

There are four distinct eras in American history that can explain the emergence and continuation of Black conservatism: Post-Reconstruction (1890s-1930s), the New Deal Era (1930s-1950s), the Civil Rights Era (1950s-1960s), and the Post-

Civil Rights Era (1970s-present). Black conservatism is not a new phenomenon. It was prevalent during both the Post-Reconstruction Era and the New Deal Era.

The Post-Reconstruction Era, which is often called the “Age of the Conservative,” saw the emergence of several notable Black conservatives such as Booker T. Washington and Marcus Garvey as spokespersons for Black Americans. Whites saw Washington as a “model Negro” who believed that Blacks would eventually “be accorded ‘all the political rights’ to which their ‘ability, character, and material possession’ entitled them” (Suggs, 1999:82). In line with the Black conservative political thought, Washington emphasized self-help and entrepreneurship for Blacks. This is evident in the establishment of the Negro Organization Society and the National Negro Business League, both of which he founded in the early 1900s. Both of these organizations sought to improve living conditions of African Americans through self-help programs. He also favored incremental as opposed to radical change to the race problem.

Marcus Garvey, the leader of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, was also an important leader at this time. His organization’s platform openly listed issues that were central to Black conservative thought. Although most scholars would not classify Garvey as a conservative, his underlying social conservatism is evident if one examines his movement, which had an underlying emphasis on business enterprise. In an effort to take advantage of the free market system, Garvey established the Negro Factories Corporation in

1919, which was set up to manufacture every marketable commodity. The corporation developed grocery stores, a hotel, a printing press and a restaurant. Garvey held fast to the beliefs of Washington, whom Garvey viewed as his mentor. Garvey acknowledged that although circumstances handicapped Blacks, society is not keeping Blacks from progress. Garvey was also in agreement with Washington on ideas regarding self-help, the importance of religion, and self-sufficiency.

The Post-Reconstruction Era is best characterized by “the reconciliation and reunion of North and South” which was plagued with violence against Blacks and White supremacy (Randolph, 1995:152). John Mitchell’s statement in the *Richmond Planet* described how Blacks felt about government action for protection, they believed “it is useless to look to the President of the United States, Congress, or the Supreme Court of the country for the betterment of our condition” (Randolph, 1995:152). Knowing that they lacked protection from the federal government, Blacks, especially the middle class, sought to forge political alliances with White conservatives for protection during reconstruction. As a result of their subservient relationship to Whites, their societal statuses were protected and they were afforded spoils under the new system of segregation. For example, conservative Blacks were appointed to high positions in education as principals of Black public schools and as presidents of Black state colleges. Blacks who went against Washington’s leadership during this time were subject



“to feel the full weight of the Tuskegee Machine,” an elite group of Black aristocrats who counted on Washington for jobs (Randolph, 1995:153).

Black conservatism declined by the end of the Post-Reconstruction Era. Several major events contributed to this decline. They included the Harlem Renaissance, the African-American shift to the Democratic Party, the Civil Rights Movement, and the transfer of power from the states to the federal government. The rise in liberal integrationist ideologies also help to undermine the support of conservatism in the Black community. As a result, two distinct camps emerged in Black politics: the liberal camp, which supported full integration and equal rights; and the conservative camp, which favored cautious incrementalism. W. E. B. Du Bois, Monroe Trotter, and Frederick Douglass represented the liberal camp, while Booker T. Washington represented the conservative camp.

The New Deal Era is characterized by the realignment of Blacks to the Democratic Party. For some time, Blacks had been loyal to the party of Lincoln because of the party’s performance during the Civil War. After time, however, the Republican Party began to lose Blacks when Herbert Hoover publicly endorsed it as being the “lily white” party of the south. Nonetheless, Black conservatives continued to support Republican candidates, but they also showed little willingness to identify with Republicans as a party. Black support continued for the party in part due to the lack of involvement of Blacks in state and local Democratic parties. In most places, state law described party machines as private

organizations for Whites only. In addition, southern Democrats were very hostile toward Black membership in the party. Therefore, Blacks continued to identify with the anti-statist wing of the Republican Party (Randolph, 1995).

It was not until the Democratic Party politicized Blacks during the New Deal that Blacks realigned to the Democratic Party. However, full integration did not occur because Blacks were still unable to get involved in local parties. The few Blacks that did realign identified with the national party. As a result, conservatism survived.

The influence of Black conservatives declined even further during the Civil Rights Era. The hostility directed toward Blacks in general and the moral and religious convictions of the movement, along with the support of White America silenced Blacks who were opposed to the Civil Rights Movement. Moreover, Blacks who had attempted to join the Dixiecrat Party were shunned socially and economically, which meant that middle-class Black business owners who espoused their conservative views lost customers. Conservatism declined even further during the Civil Rights Movement because of differences within the Republican Party. Barry Goldwater, who voted against the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and his nomination as the Republican presidential candidate manifested these differences. He was also vocal in his defense of state's rights and his opposition to integration. Few Black Republicans remained supportive of the party.

Although Black conservatism declined during this era, it survived through the voice of George Schuyler, an influential Black journalist. Schuyler, a figure of the Harlem Renaissance, was characterized in his early years as a quirky liberal. However, Schuyler was drawn towards conservatism because he became disenchanted with socialism. Not only does his autobiography serve as a verification of his conservative political thought, but Schuyler contributed significantly to prominent conservative magazines including the *National Review*. While Black liberals sought full equality and integration during this era, Schuyler argued that cautious incrementalism was the best possible way to achieve lasting racial harmony. Schuyler was enraged by the Civil Right Movement. He believed it focused too much on Black failures and not enough on the success of the Black middle class. For example, the liberalism that inspired African-American aspiration for integration was premised upon the notion that the lives of Blacks had suffered because of separation and alienation.

During the Civil Rights Era, different types of conservatives controlled the national Republican Party and the local parties. The national party was controlled by the anti-statists while the organic conservatives controlled local parties. The national party was more moderate and more supportive of civil rights than state parties. As a result, many Black conservatives found themselves often having to support the Democratic presidential candidate because the national Republican Party was opposed to the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The arguments of Schuyler and other Black conservatives fell mostly on deaf ears between the 1950s and 1960s. It is this absence from political discourse, which makes the reappearance of conservatism in the African-American community so noteworthy. During the Post-Civil Rights Era, Black conservatives experienced resurgence. While most Black moderates supported the decisions during the Civil Rights Movement, to grant Blacks equal rights, Black conservatives were skeptical of federal encroachment on state powers and decisions by of the Warren Court. Again, Black conservatives' support in the African-American community was dense with somewhere between ninety-five and ninety-nine percent of African-Americans rejecting the conservative candidate for president, Barry Goldwater and supporting the Democrat, Lyndon Johnson (Eisenstadt, 1999).

However, the continued negative portrayal of African-Americans by the liberal establishment made Black conservatives who had been silent uneasy. For instance, the pathologizing of Black culture by liberals reached its peak with the publication of the Moynihan Report in 1965. This report emphasized that the major cause of poverty was the breakdown of the family structure. Despite the fact that the Moynihan Report was described by many as fatuous, Black conservatives were compelled to speak. In particular, Schuyler, in his 1966 autobiography referred to liberal pathologizing as the "culture of poverty" school of sociology (Eisenstadt, 1999:xxiv). Schuyler was not the only one who opposed

Black liberalism. Others included Ralph Ellison, Albert Murray and Joseph Jackson.

During this time however, Black support for the Republican Party remained minimal. Despite failed efforts by the party to recruit Blacks, the gulf between voting behavior and party identification was maintained (Ashbee, 1999). The number of Blacks who described themselves as conservative was negligible. This was of secondary importance to some Republicans because they were attempting to win the votes of southern Whites.

However, President Richard Nixon had several Blacks in his administration, each of whom were Republicans. He attempted to recoup the efforts to lure Blacks back to the party. They focused on wealth creation and the development on Black capitalism civil rights were given secondary importance. Under Nixon's administration, the Office of Minority Business Enterprise (OMBE) was established to assist Black Republicans in accomplishing their goals.

Despite consistent problems, the Republican Party received increased support from the general electorate in the 1980s. The newfound prominence of the Republican Party came with little or no support from African-Americans despite several failed recruiting efforts. Some Republicans however, regarded the loss of the Black vote as a weakness and sought to change it. They noted that the Republicans had to win 20 percent of the Black vote to become the dominant

party (Ashbee, 1999). Republican National Committee Chairman Lee Atwater echoed this sentiment by stating that “making Black voters welcome in the Republican Party” was a priority (236). He stated that the lack of Blacks in the party could eventually harm their base support. The Republican Party also believed that if they did not recruit African-Americans they would be viewed as racist. In short, Black support for the Republican Party became a moral imperative.

With this in mind, several organizations were formed to rebuild Republicanism in the Black community. The Heritage Groups Division was founded to focus on minority issues. The National Black Republican Council and the Council of Concerned Afro-American Republicans all made special attempts to win back Black support for the Republican Party. Still later, a Black owned consulting firm was hired to assist in these efforts, which proved successful. The rise of the New Right as well as the party’s previous failures to reach Black constituencies all led to the emergence of Black conservatives. Not only had a prominent Black conservative, Thomas Sowell, been prepared to take the education secretary post in the Reagan administration but a conference of Black dissidents was also held. Organized by Edwin Meese, leader of Reagan’s transition team, it served as a conduit for Blacks who were sympathetic to Reagan’s goals.

With visibility and Republican support, Black conservatives were rewarded for their patronage. They attained positions in the White House and many were more willing to publicly espouse their views and beliefs. As a result, they became prominent and their views were heard widely in the media. At this time, political scholars and commentators began to speak in terms of a Black conservative movement. They point to Clarence Thomas, Glen Loury, and Walter Williams who all became increasingly visible in the past two decades. The appointment of Clarence Thomas to the United States Supreme Court gave Black conservatives legitimacy. Shortly after the appointment in 1991, Black conservative Republicans flourished. In 1990, there were 12 Black Republican nominees for the House of Representatives, by 1994 it had risen to 28. Gary Franks of Connecticut and J.C. Watts of Oklahoma are examples of this growth. They were the first Black Republicans elected to Congress since 1978.

Though there were Black conservatives that aligned with the Republican Party, most African-Americans did not join the Republicans. Furthermore, some scholars suggest that Black conservatives that have defected to the Republican Party are often disappointed because in actuality, Blacks who call themselves conservative are actually moderates. There are also questions about the increasing prominence of Black conservatives because of the failure of the Republican Party to recoup Black support. As Ashbee (1999) notes: “both the Reagan and Bush administrations and successive party leaders proved largely

unresponsive to the politics of Black conservatism” (244). Thus, the big questions remain, are these Black conservative intellectuals truly conservative? And do they have a following in the general Black community?

### *Ideological Trends among African-Americans*

Some of the strongest voices in Black political discourse include the voices of major Black conservatives such as Clarence Thomas, Thomas Sowell, Shelby Steele, Armstrong Williams and Ward Connerly. Scholars such as Cornell West state that these Black conservatives do not have true ties in the Black community. Instead, they have been promoted by their White counterparts and have no true Black support. This is evident by the unsuccessful election bids of major Black conservative candidates. For example, Alan Keyes, rarely obtains public support from Black conservatives in his bid for the presidency and there have only been two Black Republicans elected to Congress since the end of World War II and both were elected from primarily White districts (Eisendstadt, 1999).

Moreover, there seems to be discontent among Black conservatives in the Republican Party. They are displeased with the fact that certain segments of the Republican Party ignores their views. Instead, they state that the party attempts to cozy up with Jesse Jackson and other liberal Blacks who will never support their views and they ignore talented conservatives who have supported them.

Additionally, Republican Party officials and their Black auxiliary organizations are reluctant to endorse Black conservatism. These Black auxiliary organizations



choose to support a moderated message that is more often than not associated with liberalism. Thus, the so-called Black conservatism may not actually be conservative and may not have a voice among African-Americans or in the Republican Party.

Many scholars have speculated that middle and upper class African-Americans are becoming conservative. Researchers believed that the growing economic gulf in the African-American community would result in attitudinal differences (Welch & Combs, 1985). This is an expectation because we know that higher income people tend to be more conservative and are less likely to believe that the government should be involved in funding domestic welfare issues (Welch and Foster, 1987). The growing problems of poverty that persist after years of government programs, and increasing number of Blacks are wondering if the Democratic Party's solution with government programs have been counterproductive and ineffective (Gaiter, 1991). Furthermore, some Black voters believe that the solutions of the past simply no longer work in the African-American community (Reiland, 1996). Although Blacks continue to support the Democratic Party nearly unanimously, a large number of them are looking beyond the party for alternative solutions.

However, few scholars have examined the presence of conservatism in the African-American community. This phenomenon challenges the assumption that African-American's political attitudes are homogenous. The homogeneity of

African-American political behavior is evident from the fact that African-Americans nearly unanimously vote for Democratic presidential candidates. Researchers who do attempt to document this phenomenon come to similar conclusions as researchers who examine trends produced in the general electorate. They all produce conflicting and contradictory results.

Even as the general electorate became more conservative, African-Americans remained overwhelmingly liberal (Welch & Combs, 1985; Seltzer & Smith, 1985). Many scholars have concluded that there are very few African-American conservatives. Despite the paucity of numbers, the media amplifies their views. Some argue that these African-American conservatives fail to engage in discourse with the African-American community and that this severely limits their credibility (West, 1987). Others argue that Black conservatives will not be able to mobilize support until they earn the trust and respect of the larger African-American community. Gilliam (1986), for example, states that most African-Americans were politically socialized during the Civil Rights Movement, an era in which government intervention was necessary and thus do not identify with conservatives. Black conservatives disagreed with every aspect of the Civil Rights Movement. They criticized how the movement forced federal encroachment on state powers and they were skeptical of the motives of liberals who pathologized Black culture. Toler (1993) goes as far as to argue that the term “African-American conservative” is an oxymoron. In sum, as West (1987) states,

as most Blacks would agree with, “Black liberalism is indeed adequate, but Black conservatism is unacceptable” (148).

Several sources suggest that African-Americans remain overwhelmingly liberal. Today, for example, middle-class African-Americans are just as likely to be liberal as lower-class African-Americans. Furthermore, college educated, middle-class African-Americans are *more* liberal than lower class, uneducated African-Americans, and African-Americans in the north are more liberal than African-Americans in the south (Welch & Combs, 1985). Though Welch and Foster (1987) argue that the African-American middle class is more conservative in regards to affirmative action and social welfare, African-Americans as a group are still more liberal than Caucasians at all income levels. In sum, many studies suggest that there is no new African-American middle-class conservative group (Seltzer & Smith, 1985; Welch & Combs, 1985; Welch & Foster, 1987).

To conclude, we are still uncertain as to whether African-Americans in general have become more conservative. Unlike research that documents trends in the general electorate, most scholars who focus on African-Americans have merely looked at ideological identification and issue positions at one point in time. Due to this limitation, definite conclusions cannot be drawn about ideology among African-Americans. Welch & Combs (1985) state that “a longer time period to measure change would be desirable. Up to now, however, there has been no research on this question based on a national sample and looking at

longitudinal changes” (96). This research is important because it is the first to document trends in ideological identification over a period greater than 10 years. Therefore, the first question I will address is: Have African-Americans become more conservative over the last 25 years? And more importantly, do Black conservatives have support in the African-American community?

## CHAPTER IV

### METHODOLOGY AND HYPOTHESES

In this dissertation, ideological identification is examined in the electorate and among African-Americans specifically. Analyses are also undertaken to examine differences which may exist among African-Americans who identify themselves as conservative and Caucasians who identify themselves as conservative. Data are taken from the American National Election Study (NES) for the years 1972 to 1998 and the National Black Election Study (NBES) from 1984, 1988, and 1996. Both surveys include several questions relating to ideology. Although the NES typically contains only about 200 African-Americans, it is a number sufficient to do general analysis. However, the NBES is also used to supplement the NES. It is the only survey, which provides a large sample of African-Americans.

Several studies have utilized issue questions posed by the National Opinion Research Center's General Social Survey to determine a respondent's ideology (Welch & Foster, 1987; Gilliam, 1986; Seltzer & Smith, 1985; Welch & Combs, 1985). However, none of the studies that examine African-American ideology over time have utilized data from the NES or NBES, which is highly regarded (Norrande & Wilcox, 1997; Gant & Luttbeg, 1995; Abramson et. al, 1995; Lyons & Scheb, 1992; Jacoby, 1986; Nie & Anderson, 1974). Even though

there are problems with this measure of ideology, Lyons and Scheb (1992) conclude, “the liberal-conservative self-identification measure retains considerable utility” (575).

Utilizing these data, several hypotheses are tested. First, we would expect to find an increasing number of African-Americans identifying themselves as conservative over the past 20 years. This hypothesis will be addressed by utilizing the standard 7-point ideological identification scale used in the NES since 1972. However, there was a slight variation in the question for the 1996 NES, which is demonstrated below. The question used to construct the scale reads as follows:

We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is (1996NES:I’m going to show you) a 7-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal (1) to extremely conservative (7). Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven’t you thought much about this?

In order to provide a more complete analysis of trends, recoding was necessary. Respondents in the NES who responded either extremely or slightly conservative/liberal were collapsed into the “conservative” and “liberal” category.

The NBES of 1984, 1988, and 1996 will be used to examine African-American ideological identification. Somewhat similar to the questions used in the NES, the NBES uses the following questions to measure ideological identification.

In general, when it comes to politics, do you usually think of yourself as a liberal, a conservative, a moderate, or what? (v.2100)

Do you think of yourself as a strong liberal/conservative or a not so strong liberal/conservative? (v.2101)

Do you think of yourself as more like a liberal or more like a conservative?(v.2102)

Although this question is different from the one used in the NES, it is the only one where there is a large enough sample of African-Americans over time.

Respondents in the NBES who responded either “strong liberal/conservative,” “not very strong liberal/conservative,” or “moderate slightly liberal/conservative” were collapsed into the “conservative” and “liberal” category.

Other hypotheses are as follows: Black conservatives’ partisan identification and electoral preferences are different from White conservatives. There is an expectation that conservative African-Americans identify more with the Democratic party and thus vote Democrat more than conservative Caucasians. Several scholars note that a majority of African-Americans support the Democratic Party. This hypothesis will be tested by crosstabulations of ideological identification and partisan identification and ideological identification and vote choice. The vote choice variable provided the respondent with the following choices, Democrat, Republican or major third party candidate, and is only applicable to presidential years. Questions used from the NES are as follows:

Partisan identification (v. 301): Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what? (If Republican or Democrat) Would you call yourself a strong (Rep?Dem) or not very strong (Rep/Dem)?

Vote Choice (v. 704): (If r voted) Whom did you vote for?

Questions from the NBES are similar to those in the NES.

Partisan identification (v. 1047): Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, and independent, or what? Would you call yourself a strong Republican/Democrat or a not very strong Republican/Democrat?

Vote Choice (v. 2068): (If r voted) Who did you vote for?

To provide a more complete analysis, recoding was necessary for both data sets.

Respondents who identified themselves as either “strong” or “not very strong Democrat/Republican” were collapsed into the “Democrat” or “Republican” category.

Before offering remaining hypotheses about conservatism, clarification is necessary. For the purpose of this research, conservatism means someone who is more likely than a liberal: (a) to oppose government spending on domestic problems, such as healthcare, welfare, and other social services; (b) to give higher ratings to public figures who espouse conservative views such as Newt Gingrich and Colin Powell; (c) to oppose laws protecting homosexuals; (d) to favor the death penalty. These hypotheses concern whether or not there are distinct and visible differences between African-Americans who identify themselves as conservatives and Caucasians who identify themselves as conservative.



Liberal means that the respondent will call for more government involvement in domestic issues, have lower ratings for conservative political leaders, favor laws protecting homosexuals, and oppose the death penalty.

From this information, several hypotheses are formed. African-Americans who identify themselves as conservative will have different issue positions than Caucasians who identify themselves as conservative. It is expected that Black conservatism means something distinctly different than White conservatism. In order to test this hypothesis, issue positions of both groups will be cross-tabulated against ideological identification and difference of means test will be done. For example, when respondents are asked about laws protecting homosexuals, those who identify themselves as conservative should be against laws protecting homosexuals and those who identify themselves as liberal would favor laws protecting homosexuals. However, there is an expectation that African-American conservatives and Caucasians who identify themselves as conservative may disagree on this issue.

And the following question remains. Do Black conservatives have different issue positions than Black liberals? These questions will examine differences between liberals and conservatives on issues that are more relevant to African-Americans. These questions are only provided in the NBES and they deal with a variety of topics ranging from economic power to political power. These questions were chosen because they were issues where Black conservative

intellectuals have views that are different from the masses. On these questions Black conservatives and liberals should have different positions. For example, for questions dealing with such topics as self-help, entrepreneurialism, and affirmative action, we should see clear differences between Black liberals and conservatives. The hypothesis is that Black liberals and conservatives will take different positions on these issues. This hypothesis will be addressed by cross-tabulating the issue positions of the respondent's ideological identification and issue position.

Finally, levels of constraint will be examined. Constraint is "the success we would have in predicting, given initial knowledge that an individual holds a specified attitude, that he holds certain further ideas and attitudes" (Converse, 1964, 297). Constraint will be measured by an analysis of correlations between ideology and several issues from the 1996 NES. These issues include questions pertaining the respondent's self placement on the help to Blacks, guarantee job/standard of living, reduction of crime, women's rights, protect the environment/jobs, abortion, service/spending, defense spending, and health insurance scales. An average correlation measure will be calculated to measure level of constraint for Caucasians and African-Americans. It is expected that African-Americans have lower levels of constraint than Caucasians because conservatism may have different meanings for African-Americans.

## CHAPTER V

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### *African-American Ideological Trends*

Hypothesis One is confirmed. The data in Table 5-1 indicate an ebb and flow in African-American ideological identification between periods of liberalism and conservatism. While Caucasians have consistently identified themselves as conservative over the time period studied, increasing no more than ten percent, African-Americans have experienced a conservative trend by doubling their numbers. The number of African-Americans identifying themselves as conservative rose sharply between 1972 to 1998, from 14% to 34%. Those identifying themselves as liberal decreased from 54% in 1972 to 40% in 1998. During the same time period, the proportion of Caucasians identifying themselves as conservative stayed the same. These results contradict earlier studies that have discovered no conservative movement among African-Americans (Welch & Foster, 1987; Welch & Combs, 1985; Seltzer & Smith, 1985).

The data also indicate a sharp shift in ideology among African-Americans between 1976 and 1980. Large proportions of African-Americans appear to have taken up the conservatism of the general electorate. Although Caucasians have consistently demonstrated higher levels of conservatism than African-Americans.

African-Americans experienced more dramatic changes in ideology. Specifically, between 1976 and 1980, conservatism among African-Americans more than doubled, increasing from 12% to 30%, while Caucasians only experienced a seven-percentage point increase. Even though the number of African-Americans identifying themselves as conservatives decreased during the 1980s, a resurgence occurred between 1992 and 1998. The number of conservatives increased by ten percent, from 24% to 34%. The major increase in the proportion of African-Americans identifying themselves as conservative appears to have occurred between 1994 and 1996.

The results from Table 5-1 came from the National Election Study (NES), which contains a small proportion of African-Americans. These analyses are supplemented with data from the National Black Election Study (NBES) which is presented in Table 5-2. Although this analysis does not indicate a conservative trend, there are limitations to conducting trend analyses on this data because there are only two years examined, 1984, and 1996. During this time period, the NES demonstrates changes in the proportion of African-Americans identifying themselves as conservative, from 25% in 1984 to 33% in 1996. Other limitations of the NBES are that it was first done in 1984, twelve years after the NES started asking ideological questions. Moreover, the question formats and coding in the NBES are different from those in the NES. For example, the NES provides the respondent with a seven-point scale from extremely liberal to extremely

<b>TABLE 5-2</b>		
<b>AFRICAN-AMERICAN IDEOLOGICAL IDENTIFICATION</b>		
<b>NATIONAL BLACK ELECTION STUDY</b>		
	<b>1984</b>	<b>1996</b>
<b>LIBERAL</b>	33%	38%
<b>MODERATE</b>	38%	39%
<b>CONSERVATIVE</b>	24%	23%
<b>N</b>	753	996

Source: National Black Election Study, Variables 2103 and G1.

conservative, while the NBES does not. It only provides the respondent with a three point scale. The lack of data dealing with African-Americans prior to 1984 has not allowed researchers the opportunity to analyze the political views of African-Americans. Moreover, the question formatting and coding of the NBES for 1984 and 1996 does not allow for adequate comparisons between the two data sets. This is clearly an oversight on the part of researchers. The data from the NBES suggest that at least a quarter of African-Americans are conservative. In short, both data sets indicate that a conservative trend has taken place among African-Americans. Somewhere between one-fourth and one-third of African-Americans identify themselves as conservative. This is a substantial enough subset of the Black population to warrant further investigation.

### *Possible Explanations*

Several scholars have offered explanations as to why we may expect an increase in the number of African-Americans who identify themselves as conservative. West (1994) argues that the inadequacy of Black liberalism has led to the rise of African-American conservatives. This inadequacy is visible when one observes the lack of political leadership in the African-American community. The argument goes that the deaths of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X left African-Americans without leadership. This has enabled conservatives to dominate political discourse. In order to make up for this lack of leadership, African-American conservatives sought to undermine whatever leaders there were and to “replace them with Black Republicans (or even conservative Black Democrats), who downplay governmental regulation and stress market mechanisms and success-oriented values in Black communities” (West, 148). In short, African-American conservative intellectuals believe that they provide an innovative way to look at problems.

Not only did a lack of leadership contribute to the rise of conservatism in the African-American community, but Singer (1991) argues that the Reagan Revolution also contributed to this increase. Conservative African-Americans having an ideological compatriot in the White House may be able to explain more African-Americans identifying themselves as conservative. President Reagan was openly hostile to the Civil Rights leadership. He sought to bypass them and work

with conservatives even if they happened to be Black. Furthermore, President Reagan also held a number of meetings with major Black conservative groups such as the Council for a Black Economic Agenda and the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise. The head of Reagan's transition team, Edwin Meese, also held a conference in California for Black dissidents from liberal leadership who were sympathetic to Reagan's goals. The twelve years of the Reagan presidency allowed Black conservatives to become "gatekeepers" in the capitol who could spread their conservative message through the media. Not only were African-American conservatives visible on Reagan's campaign task forces, but they were also appointed to key positions in his administration.

Others attribute the increase of African-American conservatism to social ills and the structural reformation of the economy. One author has noted: "The social problems of urban America are turning more Blacks back to the values of religion, family, and self-help. Meanwhile the cutting back of government is shrinking faith in the traditional path of middle-class advancement, closely associated with Democratic [liberal] politics" (Economist, 26).

Finally, the increasing upward mobility of African-Americans could explain an increase in conservatism. The Black middle-class desires the same things as the White middle-class. Black conservatives are saying, "I want a safe neighborhood [for] my kids to be able to grow up in, I want good schools, I want all these things and I'm not getting them" (Ashbee, 1999:241). In short, whether

it is the lack of leadership or the growing middle-class, there has been an increase in the proportion of Blacks identifying themselves as conservative.

### *Caucasian Ideological Trends*

Table 5-3 contains the results of my analysis for Caucasians. It confirms that a conservative movement has not taken place among Caucasians. When African-Americans experienced sharp increases in conservatism, Caucasians experienced declines. For example, between 1978 and 1980, African-Americans who identified themselves as conservative doubled from 15% to 30%, while the percentage of Caucasian conservatives only increased by 7%, from 39% to 46%. This is also evident between 1994 and 1996, when African-Americans who identified themselves as conservative increased from 24% to 33%, and Caucasians who identified themselves as conservative actually decreased from 48% to 46%. During the time period studied, while African-American conservatives increased by 20%, Caucasian conservatives only increased by one percentage point. There seems to be more of a liberal trend among Caucasians. Those identifying themselves as liberals increased by nine percentage points from 23% in 1972 to 34% in 1998. This finding confirms the work of several scholars who state that there is no conservative trend in the general electorate.

For example, during the same time period that Robinson and Fleishman (1984) found an increase in conservative identification, they also found a move toward liberalism in issue positions. In an analysis of GSS data, they found that



the proportion of respondents opposing laws against interracial marriages increased as well as those favoring the legalization of marijuana.

GSS data also indicate a liberalized sociopolitical climate. Robinson and Fleishman (1984) state that this climate signifies disenchantment of the Reagan administration and its conservatism. They argue that the public has supported increased spending on almost all domestic welfare programs, such as the environment, healthcare, welfare, and race relations. At the same time, the public has supported decreased spending on defense programs.

In summary, this research has found that there are substantial numbers of Blacks who identify themselves as conservative. Thus, it supports the notion that a Black conservative group exists in the electorate. But the question remains: Are Black and White conservatives similar in their partisan preferences and vote choices? More specifically, is conservatism among African-Americans manifested in partisan preferences and electoral choices? Previous research suggests that African-American are overwhelmingly loyal to the Democratic Party despite the fact that at least a quarter of them are conservative. The next section concerns the issue of partisanship and electoral choices.

### ***Partisanship***

What exactly does it mean that there is a substantial African-American conservative cohort? This section examines the partisan preferences of African-Americans and Caucasians during the time period studied. It seeks to find if

African-American and Caucasian conservatives have the same partisan preferences and electoral choices.

Aldrich (1995) states that the American party system consists of a majority and minority party which are centered on different values. “The Democrats are more likely to favor the active intervention of the government” which is a liberal position (p. 8). “Whereas the Republicans are much less so inclined” commonly held to be the conservative position (p. 8). Respondents who identify themselves, as conservative should prefer the Republican Party and those who identify themselves as liberal should prefer the Democratic Party. Therefore, there should be some similarity between the proportion of African-Americans who identify themselves as conservative and those who prefer the Republican Party.

Although there has been an increase in the proportion of African-Americans identifying themselves as conservative, this finding is contradicted when one examines this group’s partisan preferences. Table 5-4 indicates that collectively, African-Americans are overwhelmingly loyal to the Democratic Party. In 1998, while 34% of African-Americans identified themselves as conservative, 79% preferred the Democratic Party, while only 4% preferred the Republican Party. This finding confirms the work of previous scholars (Meyerson, 1984; Tryman, 1986; Welch and Foster, 1987; Bolce, De Maio, and Muzzio, 1992; Dawson, 1995; Goode, 1996; Simpson, 1998). There seems to be

some discrepancy between African-American's ideological identifications and partisan preferences. It is logical to assume that conservative ideological identification should also dictate a Republican partisan preference. But this is not true among African-Americans.

Examining the ideological identifications and partisan preferences of Caucasians, one finds consistency. Table 5-5 indicates that Whites have divided their ideological and partisan loyalties according to expectations. In 1972, 39% identified themselves as conservative and 37% preferred the Republican Party. This finding is consistent even in 1996, when 46% of Caucasians identified themselves as conservative and 47% preferred the Republican Party. It seems for the most part that conservatism may have different meanings for African-Americans than Caucasians. This is evident through the fact that we would have expected for Blacks who identify themselves as conservative to also prefer the Republican Party to the Democrats. But this is not the case, Blacks as a group prefer the Democratic Party to the Republicans.

However, the data from Table 5-4 indicate a decline in Democratic loyalty among African-Americans. Democratic loyalty reached its highest point in 1982 (91%) but decreased to 79% in 1984. Contrary to previous research that documents an increase in the number of African-Americans who prefer the Republican Party, that number has also decreased from 11% in 1972 to 4% in 1998. The data also indicate a slight increase in the percentage of African-

Americans who refer to themselves as independent, from 12% in 1972 to 18% in 1998. This is consistent with previous research that documents an increase in independent party identification.

### *Electoral Choice*

The changes in partisan preferences among African-Americans should also be evident when examining the electoral choices of this group. There should be a decline in the proportion of African-Americans who choose the Democratic presidential candidate. To really see if there is a conflict between ideological identification and partisanship, the electoral preferences of African-Americans must be examined. As previously stated, research argues that African-Americans show overwhelming support for the Democratic Party. However, if a third of African-Americans identify themselves as conservative, then that same proportion should also choose the Republican Party during elections. Table 5-6 indicates that this is not the case. There is discrepancy between African-American's ideological identification, partisan preference, and electoral choices. In every presidential year from 1972 to 1996, more than eighty percent of African-Americans supported the Democratic presidential candidate. The only year that more than a tenth of this group supported the Republican candidate was 1972. In that year, 13% of African-Americans chose the Republican candidate. African-American voters support for Democratic presidential candidates is even more pronounced in the last presidential election, when 96% of African-Americans

chose the Democratic candidate. This is true despite the fact that 32% identified themselves as conservative, which should denote support for the Republican presidential candidate.

When one examines the electoral choices of Caucasians, one finds that their electoral preferences are in tune with their ideology and partisan preferences. Table 5-7 demonstrates that in the last presidential election, 42% of Caucasians chose the Republican presidential candidate while 46% identified themselves as conservative. This finding is consistent with the literature, which suggests that conservative ideological identification should also denote Republican partisan preferences which should carry over into Republican electoral choices.

Contrary to previous research, this study has found that there is indeed an overall conservative trend among African-Americans. There also seems to be some discrepancy between Black ideological identification, partisanship, and electoral preferences. This discrepancy is not present among Caucasians.

Although nearly a third of African-Americans identify themselves as conservative, the same level of support is not found when one examines their partisan preferences and electoral choices. This leads to the conclusion that conservatism among African-Americans may mean something distinctly different than conservatism among Whites. For example, commentaries that discuss Black political thought do so from a social or moral perspective. They emphasize self-

reliance, entrepreneurship, and life-style choices, while White conservatives stress issues that deal with government involvement in the economy and positions on such issues as affirmative action. For example, one Black conservative intellectual views conservatism this way, he states, "It seems to me that conservatism is best understood as a state of mind and type of character, a way of looking at the social order" (Walker, 1997:29). Although Black conservatives do espouse views on the same issues as White conservatives, they tend to emphasize morality and individual self-reliance more than their White counterparts.

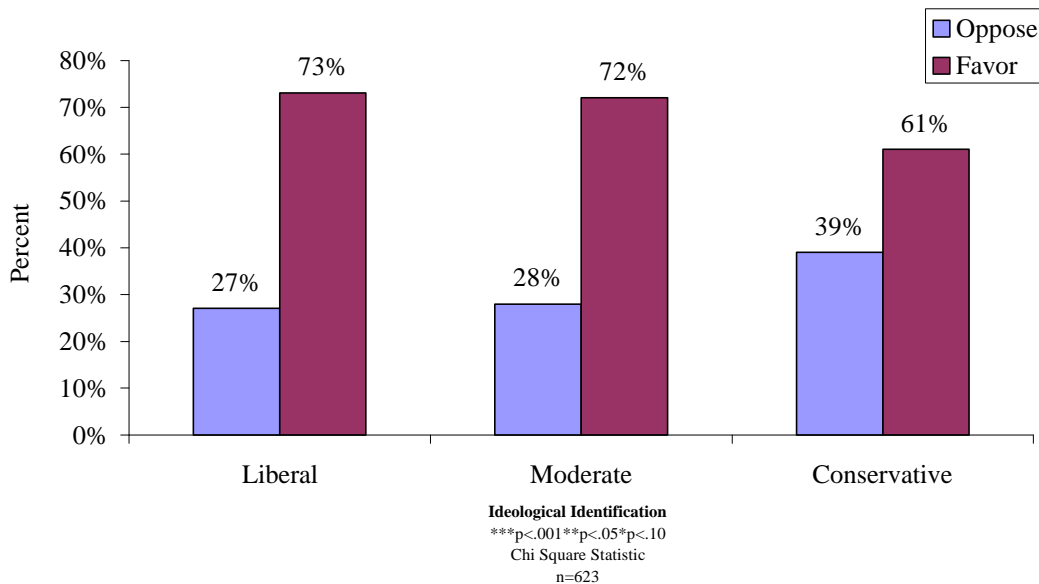
### ***The Issues***

This section will first compare differences that may exist between Black and White conservatives by examining issue positions in both the 1996 NES and the 1996 NBES. Afterwards, the 1996 NBES will be utilized to see if there are any differences between Black liberals and Black conservatives.

According to the literature, a conservative is more likely than a liberal to 1) oppose laws protecting homosexuals; 2) favor the death penalty; 3) oppose government spending on domestic programs such as healthcare, welfare, and other social services. On these issues, there should also be vast disagreement between respondents who identified themselves as liberal and those who identified themselves as conservative. Several issue dimensions will be examined. Feeling thermometer questions will also be utilized to ascertain whether or not Black and White conservatives give political leaders, who support

their beliefs, similar ratings. The social dimension will examine respondents' positions on laws protecting homosexuals, crime, and the death penalty. The economic dimension will look at several questions related to food stamp spending and government aid to Blacks.

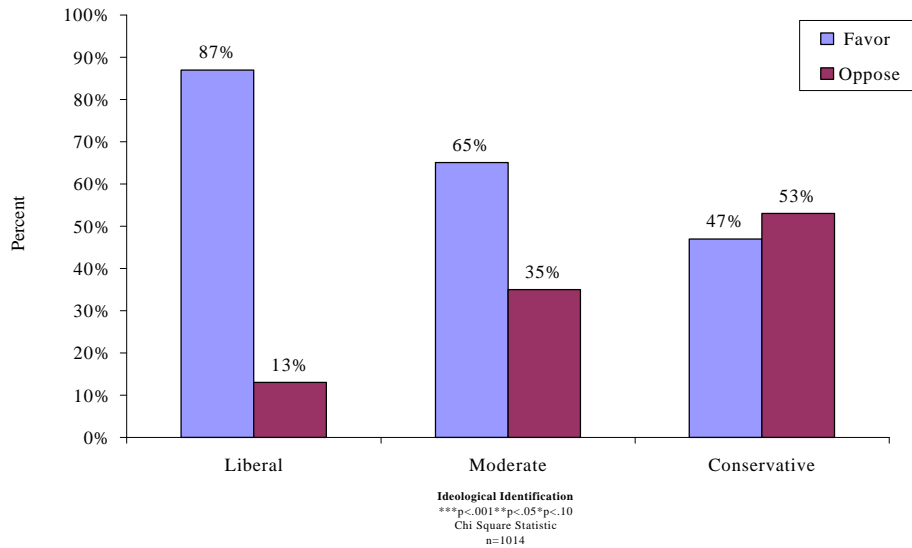
The first issue examined is a social one. It concerns laws protecting homosexuals. Respondents are asked if they favor or oppose laws protecting homosexuals against job discrimination. The literature states that conservatives are more likely than liberals to oppose these laws. Figure 5-1 indicates that Blacks who identify themselves as conservative are more likely than liberals to oppose laws protecting homosexuals. The figure also indicates that the differences between the groups are statistically significant. Slightly less than half, (about 39%) of African-Americans who identify themselves as conservative oppose laws protecting homosexuals, while only 28% of liberals oppose these laws. Contrary to expectations, however, nearly two-thirds (about 61%) of Black conservatives favor these laws, compared to 73% of liberals. A large percentage of moderate Blacks also favor these laws, about 72%. This is clearly contradictory to the conservative position. There is indeed some conflict among African-American conservatives when it comes to their positions on laws protecting homosexuals. Nonetheless, a small percentage of Blacks who say they are conservative do appear to adopt the conservative position on this issue.



**FIGURE 5-1**  
**\*\*LAWS PROTECTING HOMOSEXUALS**  
**AGAINST JOB DISCRIMINATION**  
**1996 NATIONAL BLACK ELECTION STUDY**

However, if we examine the positions of Caucasians on this issue we find that they are predictable. Specifically, there are significant differences between Caucasians who identify themselves as conservative and liberal on laws protecting homosexuals. Slightly more than half (53%) of Caucasian conservatives oppose laws protecting homosexuals, while less than fifteen percent of Caucasian liberals oppose these laws. Figure 5-2 also shows that while only 47% of conservatives favor these laws, a clear majority (87%) of liberals favor laws protecting homosexuals.



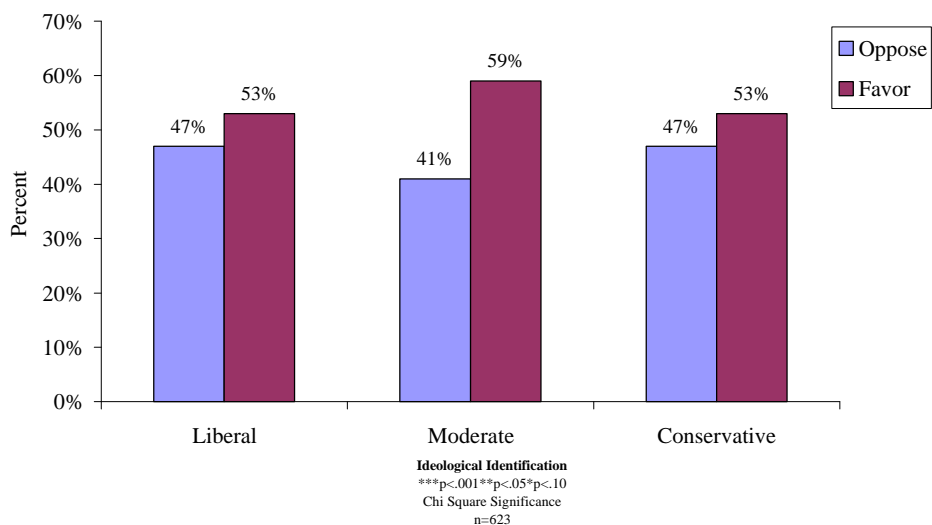


**FIGURE 5-2**  
**\*\*\*LAWS PROTECTING HOMOSEXUALS AGAINST**  
**JOB DISCRIMINATION**  
**NATIONAL ELECTION STUDY**

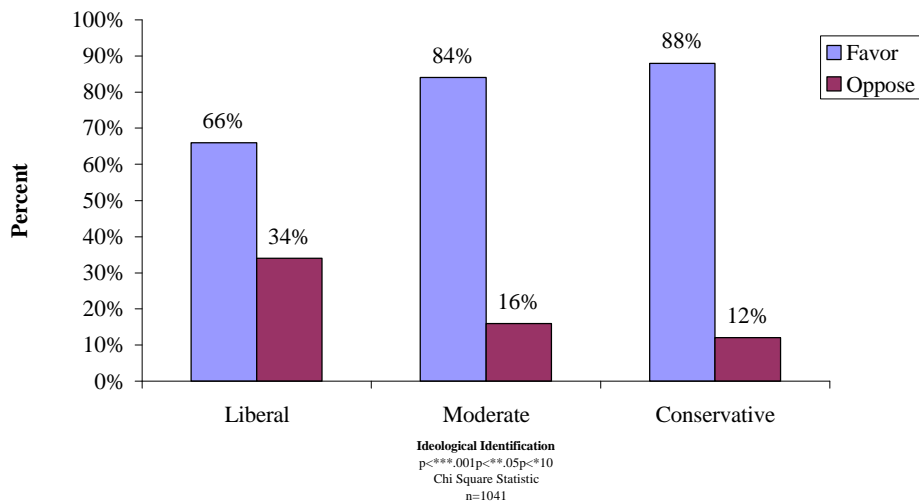
The tables clearly indicate that there are significant differences between Black liberals and conservatives and White liberals and conservatives when it comes to laws protecting homosexuals. But are there differences between Black and White conservatives? The conservative position on this issue is to oppose laws protecting homosexuals. Upon comparing these two groups, we find a thirteen-percentage point difference between these two groups. The data indicate that 53% of White conservatives oppose these laws while only 40% of Black

conservatives do. In fact, we find that Black conservatives are more likely to *favor* laws protecting homosexuals, rather than oppose them. The Black conservative position is not as strong as White conservatives, to oppose these laws. In short, on this issue there are some differences between Black and White conservatives.

The next issue examined is also a social one. It concerns support for the death penalty. The conservative position is to support the death penalty. Figure 5-3 indicates that African-Americans, liberals, moderates and conservatives, show great support for the death penalty. In fact, there are virtually no differences between liberals and conservatives on this issue. About 53% of both groups favor the death penalty. African-Americans as a group agree with each other on the death penalty. Similar to the previous findings, White views on the death penalty are congruent with expectations. Figure 5-4 indicates significant differences between White liberals and conservatives. An overwhelming majority of Caucasian conservatives favor the death penalty, (88%) compared to only 66% of liberals. Furthermore, only 12% of conservatives oppose the death penalty while about one-third of liberals oppose it. In short, White views on the death penalty conform to expectations.



**FIGURE 5-3**  
**DEATH PENALTY**  
**NATIONAL BLACK ELECTION STUDY**



**FIGURE 5-4**  
**\*\*\*DEATH PENALTY**  
**NATIONAL ELECTION STUDY**

When comparing the views of Black and White conservatives on the death penalty we find even larger differences than on the issue of protecting homosexuals against job discrimination. Fifty-three percent of Black conservatives support the conservative position, compared to eighty-eight percent of White conservatives. This is nearly a thirty-percentage point difference. Once again, we find that the hypothesis is confirmed. For the most part, Black conservatives take different positions than White conservatives. Although there is a sub-set of African-Americans that support the conservative position (40%), their views are not as pronounced as the proportion of Whites who do the same (53%).

The economic dimension contains several questions that will be examined. Comparisons between Black liberals and Black conservatives as well as comparisons between Black and White conservatives will be undertaken. This set of questions taps into one of the major aspects of Black conservatism the belief in self-reliance (Eisenstadt, 1999). Black conservative intellectuals believe that the government cannot provide solutions to the problems of the Black community (Toler, 1993; DeVaux, 1997). In fact, the government's attempt to solve poverty with the New Deal and Great Society programs, they argue, handicapped many Blacks because it created a sense of dependency. Black conservatives believe that the "welfare state has helped destroy many Black families by taking wage-earning fathers out of homes and replacing them with a monthly government check" (Lovelace, 1997:47). They argue that that before America's "War on Poverty"

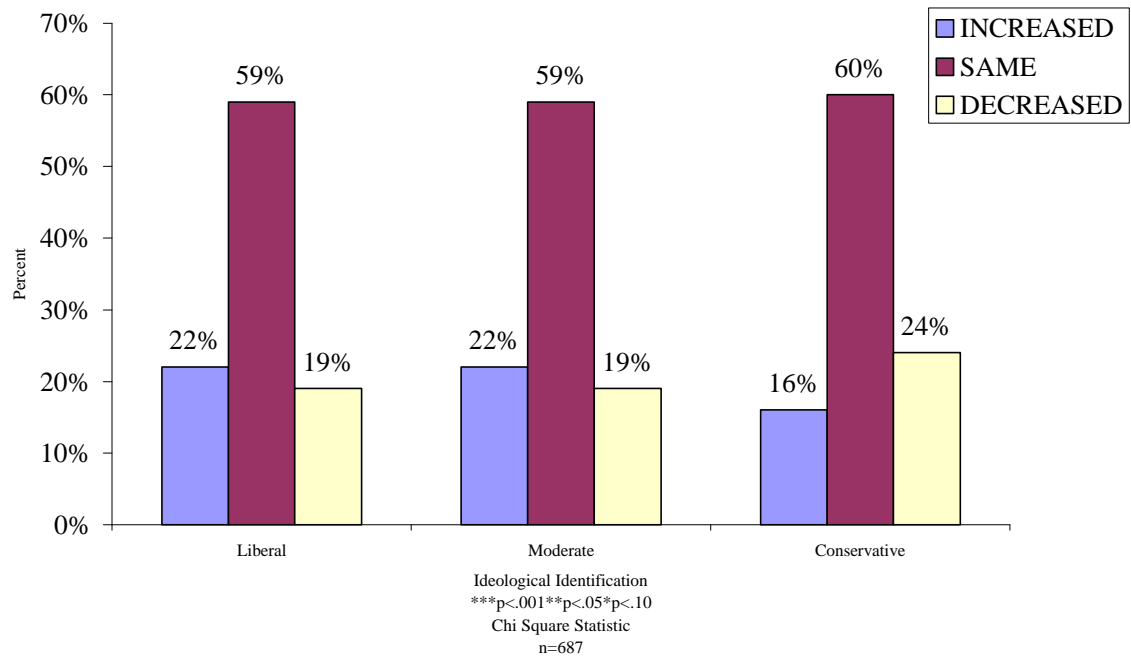
many Black businesses thrived and many Black people were financially successful. They give examples of several Black banks that stayed in business even when White ones failed during the Great Depression. They also argue that, years before, many slaves took advantage of the American free enterprise system by purchasing their freedom. With this, we assume that there will be significant differences between Black liberals and conservatives on this issue.

The first question concerns spending on food stamps. It asks respondents whether they believe that spending on food stamps should be increased, decreased, or kept about the same. Conservatives should be more likely than liberals to respond that spending on food stamps should be decreased.

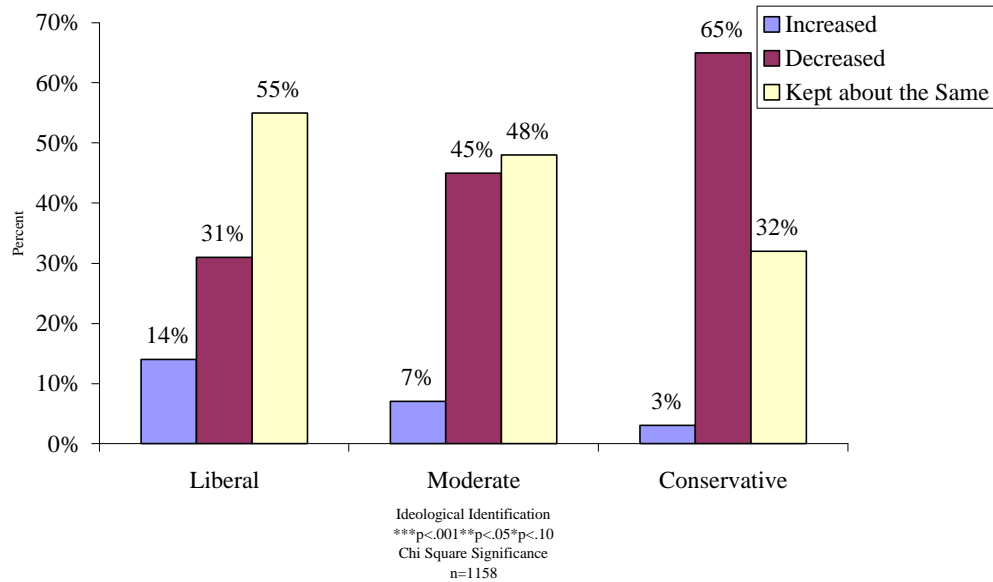
Figure 5-5 contains the results from this question. Similar to the responses from previous questions, there are no significant differences between Black liberals and conservatives on this issue. In fact, nearly the same percentage (60%) of liberals, moderates and conservatives believe that spending on food stamps should stay the same. Although there are slightly more conservatives than liberals who believe spending should be decreased, these differences are not significant.

However, when a comparison is done between White liberals and conservatives, one finds that there are significant differences between the groups. For example, Figure 5-6 indicates that about 65% of White conservatives believe that spending on food stamps should be decreased compared to only 31% of liberals who believe the same. Moreover, about a third of White conservatives

and more than half of White liberals believe that spending on food stamps should be kept about the same.



**FIGURE 5-5**  
**SPENDING ON FOODSTAMPS**  
**NATIONAL BLACK ELECTION STUDY**



**FIGURE 5-6**  
**\*\*\*SPENDING ON FOODSTAMPS**  
**NATIONAL ELECTION STUDY**

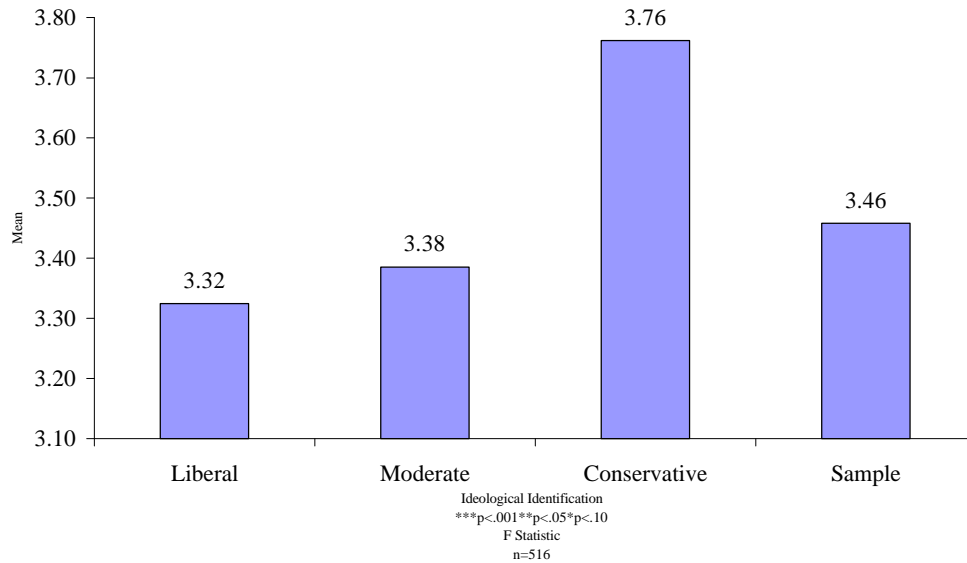
For Black conservatives, this question relates to the concept of self-help and individual responsibility. For White conservatives it deals with limited government involvement in social programs. Since this question has considerable meaning for both groups, both groups of conservatives should have similar positions. The data indicate otherwise. They show that there are sharp differences between Black and White conservatives. While 65% of White conservatives believe that spending on food stamps should be decreased, 61% of

Black conservatives believe that spending should be kept the same. There are clearly differences present when referring to conservatism among Blacks and Whites.

The next question examined should also show agreement between Black and White conservatives. It deals with whether the respondent believes the government should provide aid to Blacks to improve their economic and social positions. Again, this question relates to the Black conservative belief in self-reliance. Black conservative intellectuals state that the problems of the African-American community “cannot be remedied by government policy alone” (Toler, 1993:5). A major argument of Black conservatives is that the creation of government programs helped to destroy two institutions that were vital to African-Americans: work and marriage. They note the increase in illegitimacy and crime rates in the Black community and attribute these problems to government aid programs. Black conservatives believe that it is important that the Black community seek solutions to their own problems without assistance from the government. For this question, we also expect differences between Black liberals and conservatives.

First differences among Blacks will be examined, and then comparisons will be made between Black and White conservatives. This question provided the respondent with a range from one to seven. One means that the “government should make every effort to improve the social and economic position of Blacks”





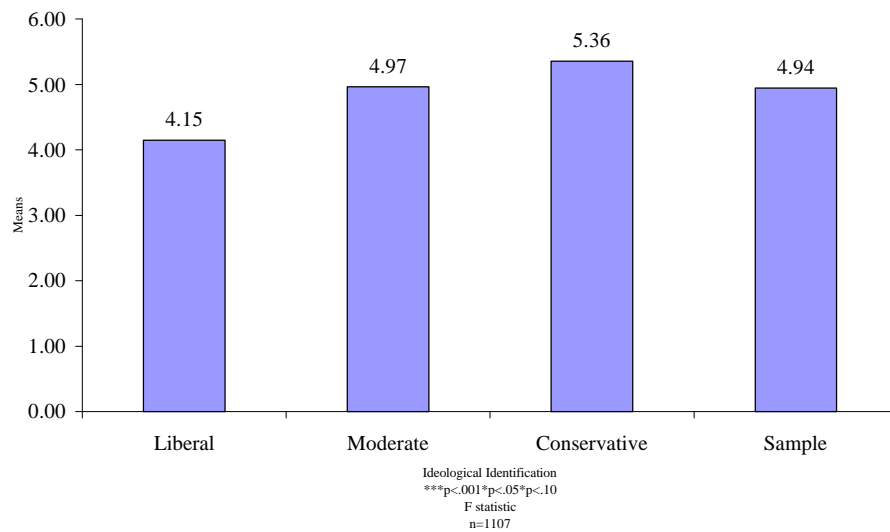
**FIGURE 5-7**  
**\*GOVERNMENT AID TO BLACKS**  
**NATIONAL BLACK ELECTION STUDY**

and seven means “the government should not make any special effort to help Blacks because they should help themselves.” Similar to the previous question, this question deals with an issue central to Black conservative thought, self-help. There should be significant differences between Black conservatives and liberals on this issue.

Figure 5-7 indicates that there are statistically significant differences between Black liberals and conservatives on this issue. The mean for Black conservatives is 3.76, which means that Black conservatives believe that the government should not make any special effort to aid Blacks. However, the

liberal position is not far behind the conservative position, with a mean at 3.32, also leaning towards the government not making any special efforts to aid Blacks. The mean for the entire sample, 3.46, is higher than the mean for liberals. Nonetheless, Black conservatives maintain their belief in self-help.

There are also significant differences between White conservatives and liberals. The differences between Caucasians are more pronounced than they are between African-Americans. For example, Figure 5-8 shows that the mean for conservatives is 5.36, whereas the mean for liberals is 4.15.



**FIGURE 5-8**  
**\*\*\*GOVERNMENT AID TO BLACKS**  
**NATIONAL ELECTION STUDY**

Despite the fact that this issue deals with a major belief of Black conservative thought, there are clear differences between Black and White conservatives. One would think that Black conservatives would align themselves with White conservatives on this issue, but this is not the case. The mean Black conservative position was 3.76, while the White conservative position was 5.36, nearly a two point difference. Although Black conservatives lean more toward their belief in self-reliance and limited government involvement, it is not as pronounced as the White conservative position. Again, this leaves the question as to what conservatism means among African-Americans.

So far, we know from examining four issues - laws protecting homosexuals against job discrimination, the death penalty, government spending on food stamps, and government aid to Blacks - that there are indeed differences between Blacks who identify themselves as conservative and Whites who do the same. In all of the issues examined, there were significant differences between Black and White conservatives. At least half of Whites who said they were conservative chose the conservative position, while less than half of Black conservatives chose the same position. This leads to the conclusion that conservatism may mean something different among Blacks than it does among Whites.

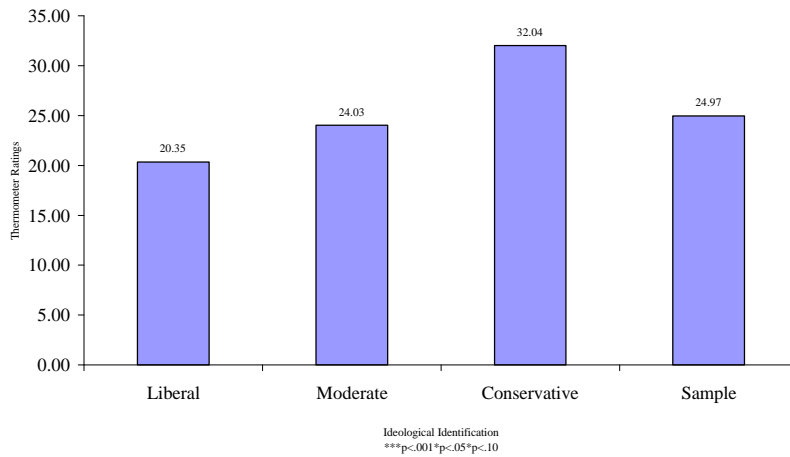
### *Ratings of Political Leaders*

Another way to determine whether or not there are differences between the way Black and White conservatives think is to examine their ratings of different political leaders. Both the NES and the NBES provide several questions in which respondents are asked to give a thermometer rating ranging from one to one hundred to various political leaders such as Newt Gingrich, Colin Powell, and Louis Farrakhan. These leaders were chosen because of their support for conservative values in America.

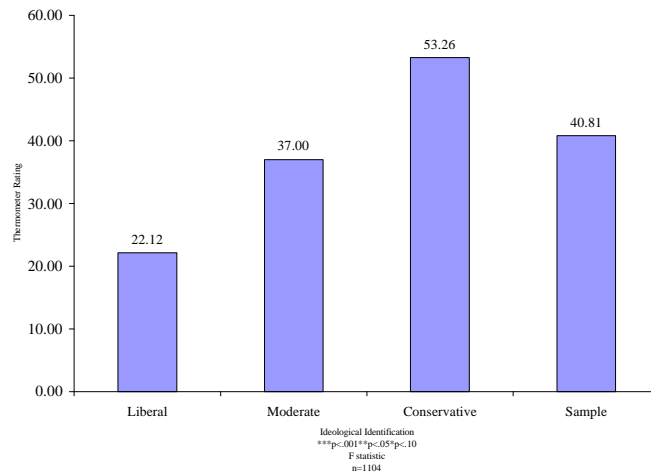
First, comparisons will be made between how Black liberals and conservatives and White liberals and conservatives rate these leaders, then comparisons will be made between Black and White conservatives on how they rated these leaders.

Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the House, led the conservative movement in America after the 1994 midterm congressional elections. Generally speaking, conservatives should give him significantly higher ratings than liberals. His ratings among Blacks reveal significant differences. Figure 5-9 show that Black conservatives give Gingrich far higher ratings than Black liberals on a scale from one to one hundred. The mean rating for conservatives is 32, while the mean for liberals is 20. In general, Blacks give Gingrich low ratings. However, conservatives are more likely to give him high rating than liberals.

There are also significant differences between White liberal and conservative ratings of Gingrich. Figure 5-10 displays these results. White conservatives give higher ratings to Gingrich at a mean of 53, while liberals give a rating of 22. This clearly indicates that Whites as a group give him higher ratings than Blacks.



**FIGURE 5-9**  
**\*\*\*GINGRICH FEELING THERMOMETER**  
**NATIONAL BLACK ELECTION STUDY**



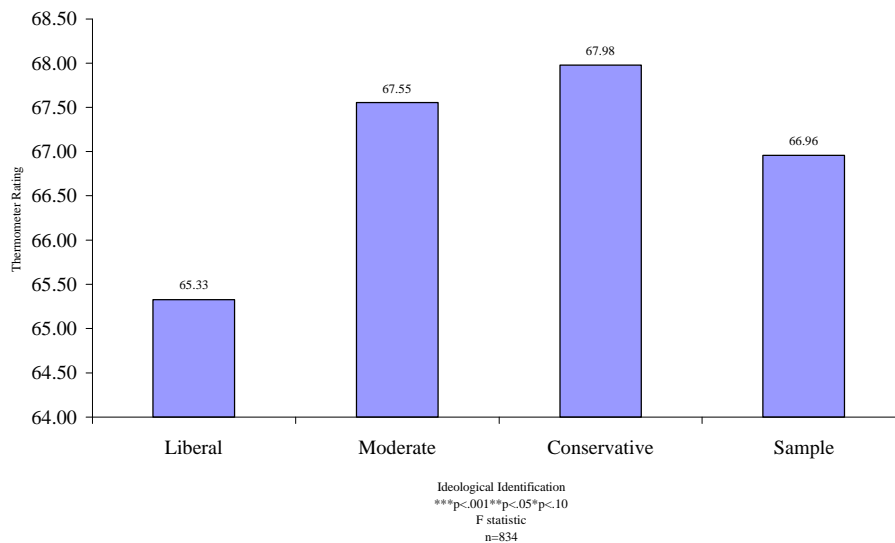
**FIGURE 5-10**  
**\*\*\*GINGRICH FEELING THERMOMETER**  
**1996 NATIONAL BLACK ELECTION STUDY**

However, Black conservatives give Gingrich higher ratings than White liberals do. While there are differences between Black and White conservatives on these ratings, both groups conform to expectations. Both groups of conservatives give higher ratings to Gingrich than liberals. However, White conservatives give Gingrich higher ratings than Black conservatives about 20 points. Again, this indicates that conservatism for Blacks may mean something different than it does for Whites. In short, there are clear differences between the two groups.

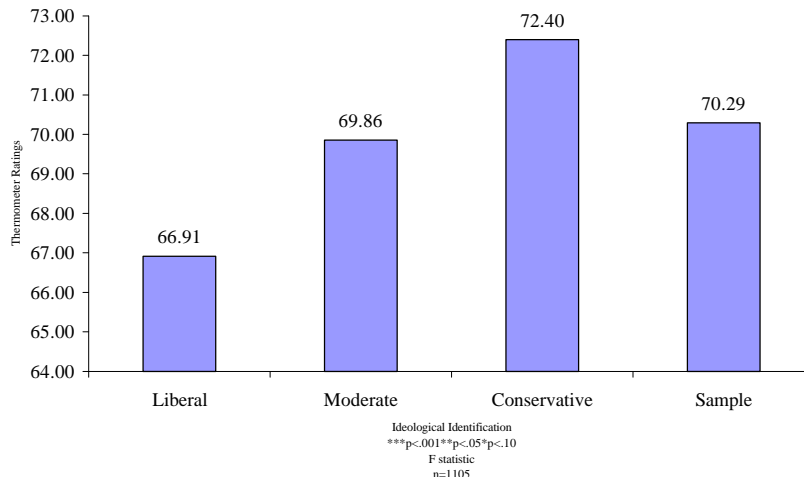
Colin Powell, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has professed a conservative belief system throughout his career. He has also made it known that he affiliates with Republican Party. Moreover, Powell consistently receives high ratings from Blacks and Whites, both liberals and conservatives. In fact, a Black conservative intellectual expressed disappointment in Powell's decision not to run for president. Shelby Steele states that Colin Powell, "said the right things and stood for the right things" (Conti and Stetson, 1997:145). Black conservative intellectuals believe that Powell is the person who could have realigned African-Americans to the Republican Party as a presidential candidate. But he refused to run for president. Thus, since he is an African-American that professes a conservative philosophy I expect there to be some difference between how Black liberals and Black conservatives rate him. But, there are no significant differences among African-Americans and how they rate Colin Powell. Figure 5-11 indicates that Blacks as a group give him high ratings. The mean rating for

Black conservatives is 68 while the mean rating for liberals is 65, only a three point difference.

Recent popularity polls show that Powell had higher ratings than President Clinton. The same polls showed that more Whites supported Powell than Blacks (Conti and Stetson, 1997). The conservative ideology that Powell professes is evident through Figure 5-12 which displays how Caucasians rate him. There are significant differences between how White liberals and conservatives rate Colin Powell. Although Whites in general give him high ratings, conservatives give Powell higher ratings than liberals, and the differences between these groups are significant.



**FIGURE 5-11**  
**POWELL FEELING THERMOMETER**  
**1996 NATIONAL BLACK ELECTION STUDY**

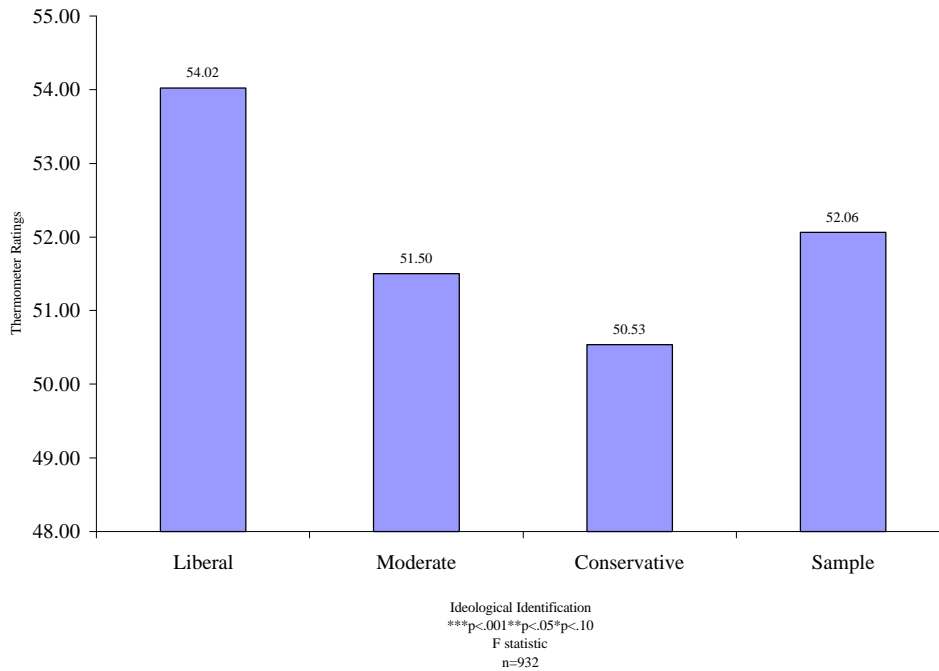


**FIGURE 5-12**  
**\*\*\*POWELL FEELING THERMOMETER**  
**1996 NATIONAL ELECTION STUDY**

Finally, we examine ratings of Louis Farrakhan, Nation of Islam leader, who sponsored the “Million Man March” in October 1995. Black political commentators suggest that this march signified a moment in history when Black Americans began to see the restoration of morality and traditional family values as a priority. More specifically, the event garnered support from one million Black men who wanted to “to atone for past sins and to take responsibility for their own lives, families, and their communities” (Jones, 1998:37). The general tone of the march was a conservative one. Its leaders agreed that through self-

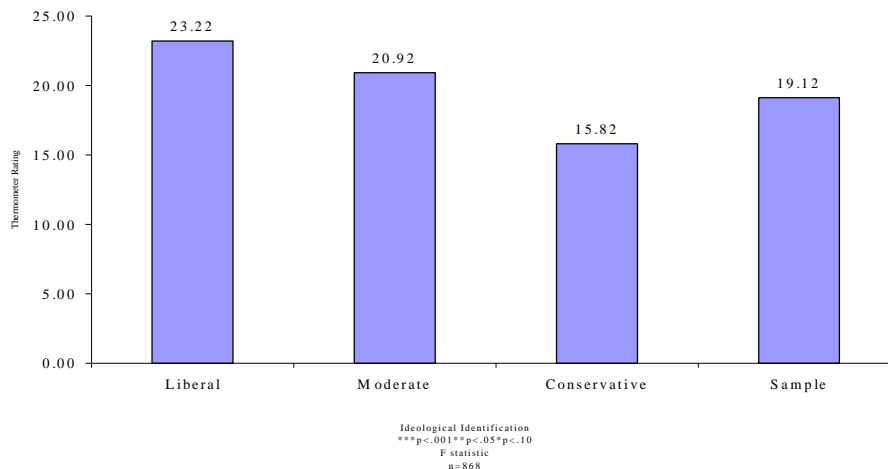


help and righteous behavior by Black men, Black America could achieve racial equality (Farrar, 1999). Due to the response Farrakhan received from leadership in this event we would expect to find Black conservatives giving him higher ratings than liberals. However, Figure 5-13 does not reveal this. Instead it shows that Black liberals give him higher ratings than conservatives, but these ratings do not indicate statistically significant differences between the two groups.



**FIGURE 5-13**  
**FARRAKHAN FEELING THERMOMETER**  
**1996 NATIONAL BLACK ELECTION STUDY**

Whites in general, both liberals and conservatives give Farrakhan low ratings. Figure 5-14 displays the results. There are significant differences between how these groups rate Farrakhan. The mean for conservatives was 15.82, and the mean for liberals was 23.22. Respondents' ratings for Farrakhan are somewhat similar to those for Gingrich. Whites in general rate Gingrich highly, while Blacks in general give Farrakhan high ratings. However, we do see that Black liberals give Farrakhan higher ratings than Black conservatives do. This is surprising when one considers the fact that Black political commentators consider Farrakhan a leader who espouses a conservative political thought. For example, they point to the Million Man March and its conservative theme and the goals of the Nation of Islam (Farrar, 1999).



**FIGURE 5-14**  
**\*\*\*FARRAKHAN THERMOMETER**  
**1996 NATIONAL ELECTION STUDY**

Again, it is clear that there are differences between Black and White conservatives. The hypothesis has been confirmed through an analysis of issue positions and ratings of conservative political leaders. Three political figures were chosen, Gingrich, Powell, and Farrakhan. While Gingrich and Farrakhan may represent extreme views for Whites and Blacks, Powell has an appeal to all Americans regardless of their race or political views. It is on this question where Black and White conservatives have similar views. There is less than a five-point difference in the ratings Black and White conservatives give Colin Powell. However, there are large differences between Black and White conservatives on how they rate Gingrich and Farrakhan.

To further examine possible differences that may exist between Caucasians and African-Americans, two additional variables were examined, religiosity and education.<sup>1</sup> Both variables were expected to have a significant impact on the respondent's ideological identification. Religiosity was measured by how often the respondent attended church services, and it was expected that there would be significant differences between liberals and conservatives. This meaning that respondents who identified themselves as conservatives, Caucasian and African-American, would be more religious than those who identified themselves as liberal. However, similar to previous findings, this is not the case. The expectation of conservatives being more religious holds true among Caucasians but not for African-Americans. Among Caucasians, a larger

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<sup>1</sup> The results of these analyses are located in the appendix (Pages 155-158).

proportion of conservatives than liberals attended church services weekly and the differences between these groups were statistically significant. When African-Americans are examined though, the same proportion of respondents, whether they identify themselves as liberal or conservative, attended church services weekly.

Unlike religiosity, education has a significant impact on how African-Americans identify themselves ideologically. African-Americans with a high school and junior college education are more conservative than those with only a grade school education or those who have received a bachelor's degree or beyond. The differences between these groups are also statistically significant. Education has the same affect among Caucasians, however, there is a substantial subset of Caucasians with bachelor's degrees and beyond to identify themselves as conservative. In short, education has a significant impact on ideological identification for African-Americans and Caucasians, but religiosity only has an impact on Caucasians.

### ***African-American and Caucasian Conservatives: A Summary***

Several questions were examined and comparisons were made between Black and Whites conservatives. The hypotheses are confirmed: there are differences in the partisan preferences and electoral choices of Black and White conservatives.

Although nearly a third of African-Americans identify themselves as conservative, the same percentage do not express conservative choices when one

examines their partisan preferences and electoral choices. But when Caucasians are examined we find that they are consistent. Caucasians who say they are conservative are more likely to support the Republican Party and its political agenda. In short, there is discrepancy when it comes to African-Americans ideology, party identification, and electoral choice. This research confirms that African-Americans remain overwhelmingly loyal to the Democratic Party (Meyerson, 1984; Tryman, 1986; Welch & Foster, 1987; Muzzio, 1992; Bolce, De Maio, and Muzzio, 1992; Dawson, 1995; Goode, 1996; Simpson, 1998).

In the beginning of this paper, definitions of “liberal” and “conservative” thought were discussed. Liberalism holds to the belief that the government should play an active role in domestic policy and it demonstrates tolerance for social change and diversity. Conversely, conservatism demonstrates a strong resistance to government involvement in domestic affairs. It also demonstrates strong support for traditional social values, economic individualism, and order (Knight, 1999).

Keeping those definitions in mind, I sought to find if African-American conservatives conformed to the views espoused by conservatives in the general electorate. All of the issues examined tap into some aspect of what conservatism means. Laws protecting homosexuals deal with diversity and social values. The conservative position on this issue would be to cling to traditional values.

Conservatives are therefore more likely to oppose these laws. The death penalty

issue also taps into the conservative value of morality and deference to authority. Conservatives are more likely to favor the death penalty. The next two questions deal with government involvement in domestic affairs, which conservatives oppose.

Of the issue questions examined, only two of the questions revealed similarities between Black and White conservatives' ratings of Colin Powell and government aid to Blacks. In all, there were clear differences between Black and White conservatives. The data support the hypothesis that conservatism for Blacks means something different than it does for Whites. In detail, we found that 53 percent of White conservatives opposed laws protecting homosexuals, while only 39 percent of Black conservatives opposed these laws. There were similar differences found on issue positions on the death penalty. Eighty-eight percent of White conservatives favor the death penalty while only fifty-three percent of Black conservatives favor it. Furthermore, there were also large differences between Black and White conservatives on government spending on food stamps. Sixty-five percent of White conservatives believed spending should be decreased while only twenty-four percent of Black conservatives believe spending should be decreased. An examination of these three questions reveals that there are significant differences between Black and White conservatives.

These findings indicate one of two things: either that African-American conservatism means something distinctly different than conservatism among

Whites, or that African-Americans who say they are conservative do not understand what conservatism means. There is support for both conclusions. As previously stated, Black conservatism deals more with social and moral concerns than with political issues. Black conservative political thought has always emphasized self-reliance, entrepreneurship, and life-style choices. In fact, early Black political leaders sometimes sacrificed participation in the political system for the accomplishment of these goals (Eisenstadt, 1999). No element of conservatism among Whites sacrifices political participation. Moreover, contemporary Black conservatism emphasizes religion more than politics. They see conservatism being about self-restraint and sacrifice for others (Goode, 1996). In short, it is possible that conservatism means something different for Blacks than it does for Whites.

There is also substantial support for the claim that African-Americans who say they are conservative are not sure as to what conservatism means based on the definitions scholars use. Studies in political science dating back to the two landmark studies of Campbell Converse, Miller and Stokes (1960) and Converse (1964) found that the American electorate is unsophisticated. Recent studies have confirmed the findings of these studies. They state that the impact of ideology has been overstated because large numbers of respondents select themselves out of analysis by not responding to questions relating to ideology (Stimson, 1975). Gant and Luttbeg (1985) confirm this finding. They state that individuals often

respond to survey questions about ideology by stating “that they had not thought much about the words, or they did not know what they meant” (82).

Despite continued efforts on the part of political scientists to nullify the importance of ideology, several scholars’ state that ideology continues to have an impact on electoral behavior. More specifically, Holm and Robinson, (1978) and Levitin and Miller (1979) found that ideology had significant predictive power in several presidential elections. Moreover, Jacoby (1995) found that the electorate had different levels of ideological thinking. And no matter what the level was, people consistently chose the candidate closest to their views. Therefore, scholars continue to pursue research dealing with ideology.

More specific to this study is Converse’s (1964) seminal work, which focused on the differences in the belief systems held by political elites and the masses. The next section will compare whether Blacks who say they are conservative have the same views as Black conservative intellectuals.

### ***African-American Liberals and Conservatives: The Differences***

Since Black and White conservatives seem to have slightly different views on these issues, further analysis and explanation of what conservatism means among Blacks is needed. This section will examine differences between liberals and conservatives on issues that are unique to African-Americans. These questions are only provided in the NBES and they deal with a variety of topics ranging from economic power to political power. These questions were chosen because they

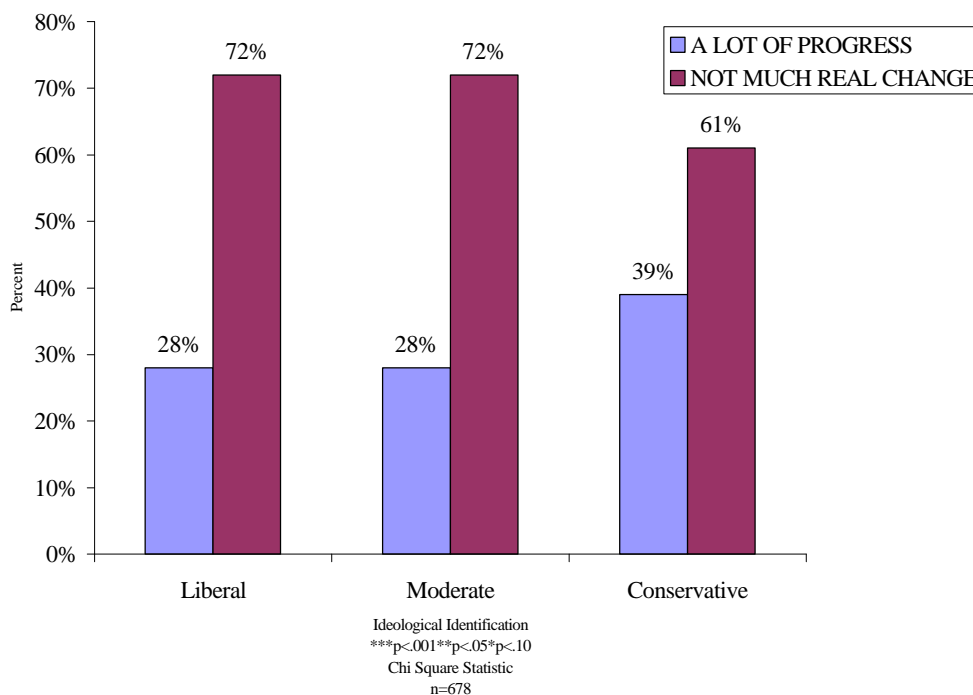


were issues on which Black conservatives and liberals should have different positions. For example, for questions dealing with such topics as self-help, entrepreneurialism, and affirmative action, we should see clear differences between Black liberals and conservatives.

The first question that will be examined concerns whether the respondent believes there has been progress in getting rid of racial discrimination. Again, this question is central to Black conservative thought. For clarification, Black conservative thought or a reference to Black conservatives consists mainly of the beliefs of Black conservative intellectuals. Conservatives choose to focus on the opportunities America has to offer rather than the problems faced by Blacks. To those who argue that there is more to achieve, Black conservative intellectuals point to the many successes that have been achieved by numerous Blacks. Conservative intellectuals believe that racial discrimination is no longer an obstacle to Black progress. As Toler (1993), states, Black conservatives intellectuals argue, “We can speak of a racist American past, but not of racist contemporary America” (5). Therefore, there should be visible differences between liberals and conservatives. Conservatives should be more likely to state that there has been much progress while liberals would be more likely to say that there has not been progress. Figure 5-15 displays the results.

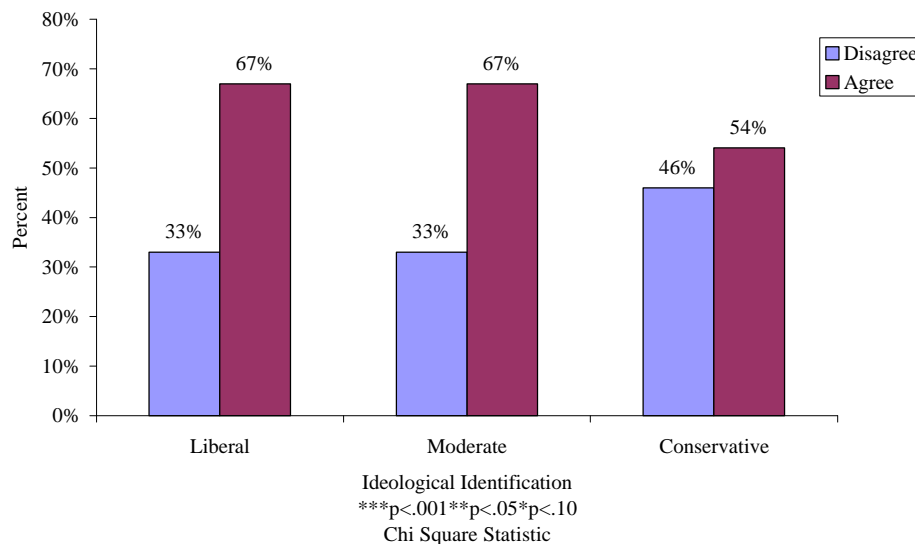
There are significant differences between Black liberal and conservatives on this issue. Blacks who identify themselves as conservative are more likely to

state that there has been a lot of progress, while liberals are more likely to state that there has not been much change in ending racial discrimination. Although more Blacks who identify themselves as conservative take the conservative issue position, nearly 61% of them believe that there has not been much real change. This finding is clearly contrary to the Black conservatives' attempt to accentuate the positive aspects of America rather than focusing on problems African-Americans have encountered.



**FIGURE 5-15**  
**\*\*PROGRESS MADE IN ENDING DISCRIMINATION**  
**NATIONAL BLACK ELECTION STUDY**

The next question deals with the entrepreneurial aspects of Black conservative thought. The idea underlying this issue is that Blacks should make use of capitalism and provide resources for themselves. It also argues that Blacks should support and shop in Black owned stores, a belief found in the writings of many Black conservative political leaders. Black conservative intellectuals state that “Blacks need to focus on Black entrepreneurship, building and supporting Black businesses” (Toler, 1993:6). This question asks respondents if they agree/disagree with the following statement: “Black people should shop in Black owned stores whenever possible.” Again, there should be significant differences between Black liberals and conservatives on this question because it taps into a major belief of Black conservatism, entrepreneurialism and self-reliance. Figure 5-16 displays the results.

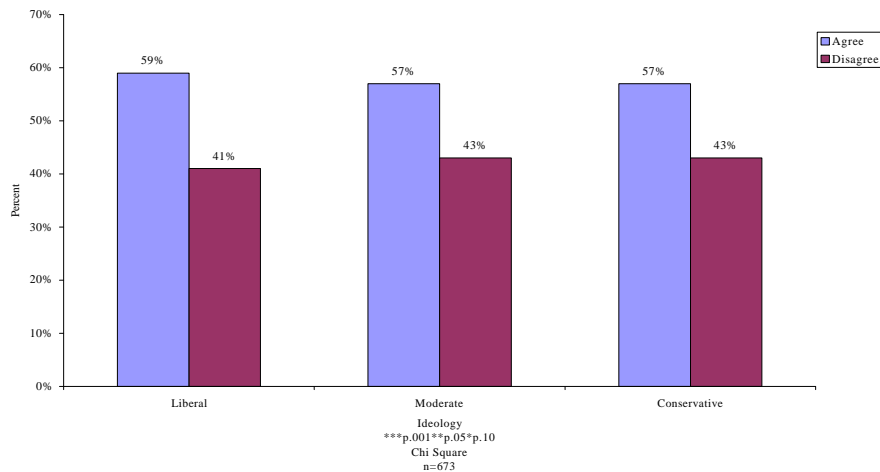


**FIGURE 5-16**  
**\*\*BLACK ONLY SHOP IN BLACK STORES**  
**1996 NATIONAL BLACK ELECTION STUDY**

The data indicate that there are significant differences between these two groups, but not in the expected direction. Black conservatives should be more likely to agree with the statement while liberals would be less likely. The data indicate otherwise. A larger percentage of liberals (67%) than conservatives (54%) agreed with this statement, and the differences are statistically significant. In fact, more conservatives than liberals disagree with this statement, which according to the literature is an underlying belief of Black conservatism. This figure suggests that Blacks who identify themselves as conservative may not actually know what they mean when they use that term. More specifically, Blacks in the general electorate do not view conservatism the same way the Black conservative intellectuals view conservatism. However, this result may have more to do with the fact that more than likely, Blacks in general agree that they should shop in Black owned stores whenever possible.

The next question deals with government assistance to minorities in employment. It asks the respondent whether they agree/disagree with the following statement, “Because of past discrimination, minorities should be given special consideration when decisions are made about hiring applicants for jobs.” This question taps into whether the respondent supports affirmative action programs. Affirmative action is opposed by most Black conservative intellectuals who believe that these programs foster a sense of inferiority among Blacks because they are not confident that their career success stems from their talents.

Moreover, these groups of conservative Blacks believe that affirmative action programs cause society to generalize from the aggregate to the individual. According to Stephen Carter (1991), these programs make society assume what the typical Black is and when an exceptional person is encountered, who happens to Black, they are deemed to be an “exception to the rule.” Other conservatives such as Ward Connerly and Clarence Thomas have put forth major efforts to voice Black conservatives’ opposition to these programs and to help eliminate them. Therefore, there should be clear differences between Black conservatives and liberals. Figure 5-17 displays the results.

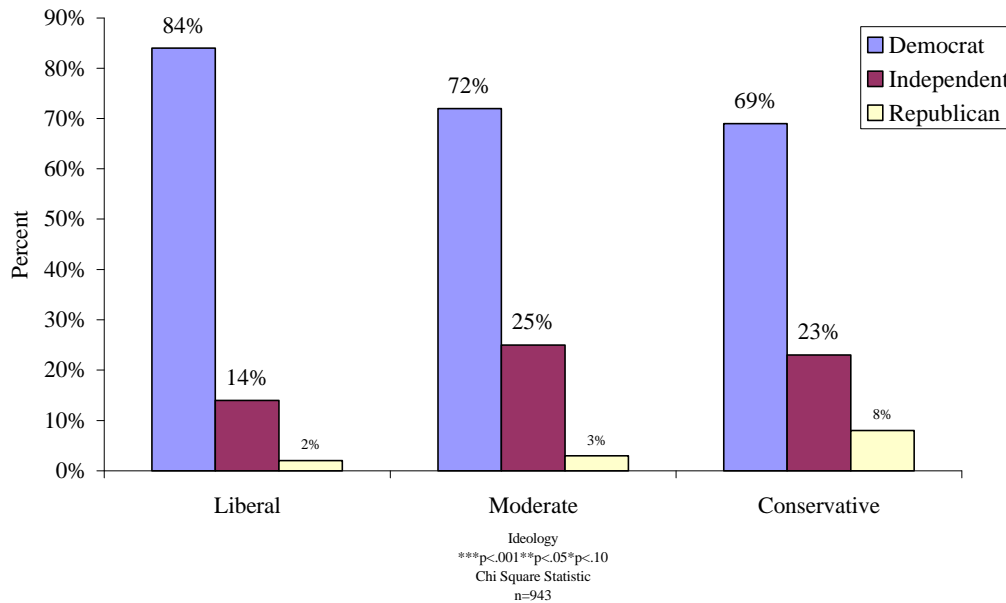


**FIGURE 5-17**  
**SPECIAL CONSIDERATION IN HIRING**  
**MINORITY APPLICANTS**  
**1996 NATIONAL BLACK ELECTION STUDY**

Similar to previous figures, there are no significant differences between Black liberals and conservatives even though we expected Black conservatives to take a strong stand on this issue. In fact, there is general agreement among all respondents that special consideration should be given to minority applicants.

Finally, we examine the partisan preferences of Black liberals and conservatives. As previously stated, conservatism is manifested in the Republican Party and liberalism in the Democratic Party. Thus, a natural assumption is for Black conservatives to identify with the Republican Party and liberals with the Democratic Party. In fact, Bravo (1998) states that “As more African-Americans reach middle and upper-middle-class status, we will continue to see a similar increase in the number of those people who espouse the conservative policies of the Republican Party” (21). In fact, African-Americans and Republicans agree on a variety of issues where they embrace traditional family values and entrepreneurship. They disagree with many policies advanced by Democrats, which enlarge the welfare state and have failed the Black community (DeVeaux, 1997; Jones, 1997; Lovelace, 1997; Randolph, 1995). Thus, we expect to see a large number of Black conservatives who are also Republicans. Figure 5-18 displays the results.

There are considerable differences between the partisan preferences of Black liberals and conservatives. However, they are not in the direction that would normally be expected. Conservatives should identify with the Republican



**FIGURE 5-18**  
**\*\*\*PARTISAN PREFERENCES**  
**1996 NATIONAL BLACK ELECTION STUDY**

Party and not the Democratic Party. And to some extent, Conservatives do identify with the Republican Party more than liberals. But more than a majority of Black conservatives chose the Democratic Party (69%) and a small percent (8%) chose the Republican Party. Despite the fact that many conservatives do not identify with the Republican Party, we do find that a substantial portion of Black conservatives, about 23% call themselves independent.

Black political commentators say that the lack of Republican partisan preferences by Black conservatives results from various factors, which include the

party's lack of outreach to Black constituencies and the hesitation by Blacks to admit that they are Republican (Ashbee, 1999). Many Black conservatives believe that the Republican Party does not see the African-American community as group worth pursuing (Thomas, 1998). They have ignored Black constituents and made many of them feel unwelcome in the party. However, the lack of Black support for the Republican Party seems to be changing. Recently, scholars have documented a growing number of African-American Republicans (Ponnuru, 1996). This is evident from the fact that over twenty-five percent of African-Americans voted for Republican governors in New Jersey, California, and Virginia (Reiland, 1996). Moreover, a record number of Black Republicans, about 25, ran for Congress in 1994. In short, although Blacks who identify themselves as conservatives do not choose the Republican Party, it is possible for this group to realign with the Republican Party.

### ***Constraint***

According to Converse (1964) constraint is "the success we would have in predicting, given initial knowledge that an individual holds a specified attitude, that he holds certain further ideas and attitudes" (297). More specifically constraint is evident through a consistency between issue positions. It is measured through an examination of opinions on a wide range of issues and how they relate to a respondent's ideological identification. Table 5-8 contains the results of the constraint measure. The hypothesis is confirmed.



The overall constraint measure for the entire sample is .202, which indicates little consistency between issue positions. Even more startling are the differences found between Caucasians and African-Americans. The data from Table 5-9 indicates a .220 level of constraint for Caucasians and Table 5-10 shows a constraint level of .118 for African-Americans. The hypothesis is confirmed-- African-Americans-- have lower levels of issue consistency than Caucasians. This finding suggests that ideology does not have the same policy specific meanings for African-Americans as it does for Caucasians. For example, the table reveals correlations between issue positions and ideological identification. For African-Americans the highest correlation is on the government health insurance question (.301). However, all other correlations are consistently low (less than .2). When an examination is done between ideological identification and issue positions among Caucasians, all correlations reach at least .27. Therefore, there is more evidence to support the conclusion that conservatism may mean something different for African-Americans than it does for Caucasians.

### ***Summary of Findings***

The data presented in this chapter provide support for all hypotheses proposed. First, despite statements of political commentators and scholars, the data indicate that there is indeed a Black conservative group in the electorate and it appears to be growing. Second, support is also provided for the second set of hypotheses. Black conservatives' partisan preferences and electoral choices are different from

those of Whites who identify themselves as conservative. Although substantial proportions of African-Americans identify themselves as conservative, African-Americans as a group continue to give overwhelming support to the Democratic Party and its candidates. Altogether, these findings begged the final hypotheses, which suggests that conservatism among Blacks means something different than it does for Whites. Again, the hypotheses are supported. The issues examined indicate that when Blacks say they are conservative it means something different than when Whites say they are conservative.

We also expected differences between Blacks who said they were liberal and those who said they were conservative. Black conservatives in the general electorate should have the same issue positions as Black conservative intellectuals. The results for this hypothesis are mixed. While some issues indicated differences between Black liberals and conservatives, others did not.

Taken together, these findings suggest that Blacks who say they are conservative may not be sure what conservatism means. This is clear when one looks at the constraint measures of Caucasians and African-Americans. Generally speaking, Caucasians have higher levels of constraint than African-Americans. In my attempts to ascertain what Black conservatism means among the Black masses, I found that this group confirmed the findings of Converse's (1964) seminal work, that when one moves down the ladder from political elites to the mass public, there is a decrease in the level of ideological thinking. This suggest

that political scientist may need to re-think traditional measures of ideology especially in reference to African-Americans. It further suggests that the belief systems of the mass of African-Americans do not mirror that the belief system of Black conservative intellectuals.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS

The objectives of this study were threefold. First, it attempted to document the existence of a Black conservative group in the electorate. Second, it sought to explain the development of Black conservatism. And last, it attempted to examine if there were differences between Black and White conservatives by looking at both groups' party identification, electoral choices, and issue positions. Although we knew a great deal about ideology as a concept, very little was known about Blacks and ideology. While there has been anecdotal evidence supporting the notion of a Black conservative group in the electorate, few scholars have attempted to document this phenomenon empirically.

This research also sought to address the need for more research on ideological identification among African-Americans. Data from the NBES, a national survey of African-Americans provided a large enough sample of African-Americans, to be able to examine differences that existed in the African-American community. More specifically, it answered claims of an emerging conservative group in the African-American community. It also examined African-American ideological identification and its consistency with issue positions.

This research assumed that ideological thinking is not a dichotomous characteristic, such that people either do or do not think ideologically. Instead this research assumed that there are various levels at which individuals are capable of applying the liberal-conservative continuum to political objects. Keeping this in mind, this research measured ideology using the standard seven point scale. This was not an attempt to by-pass the debate surrounding ideology. Rather it was an attempt to examine exactly how respondents use ideological labels. In fact, scholars have recognized that even voters who are not politically sophisticated use ideology when they vote (Jacoby, 1995).

### *Additions to the Literature*

Research dealing with ideology has various shortcomings. Most of the research on conservatism in America ignores the existence of a Black conservative group. The few studies that have attempted to discuss conservatism among African-Americans either fail to examine the historical context of conservatism in the Black community or fail empirically to demonstrate that there are segments of the Black population that identify with conservatism. This research began with the hope of merging several elements of research together. First it sought to bring ideology to the forefront of the minds of political scientists by reviewing the seminal works of Campbell et. al (1960) and Converse, (1964). It has also attempted to review the debates surrounding ideology in the electorate and its importance in determining electoral behavior. The new element here is the

analysis of conservatism among African-Americans, its existence, development, and resurgence

### *African-American Conservatism*

The hypotheses were as follows. I expected to find an increasing number of African-Americans identifying themselves as conservative. More specifically, between 1972 to 1998, there would be an increase in self-identified conservatism among Blacks. Contrary to previous research, the hypothesis was confirmed.

There is a long-term trend toward conservatism among African-Americans. The proportion of African-Americans identifying themselves as conservative doubled during the time period studied. Taking into account both the NES and the NBES, the data indicate that somewhere between one-fourth and one-third of African-Americans identify themselves as conservative. Although this is not a large proportion of the Black population, it is a substantial enough to warrant further investigation. In fact, a fourth of the Black vote is all the Republican Party believes it needs to establish dominance. Republican strategists argue that the loss of the Black vote was a critical weakness. They state that the only way the GOP would be a majority party is if it reached out to Blacks (Ashbee, 1999).

During the late 1970s, the GOP implemented a “Twenty Percent” solution program. This program was set up to assist the Party in its recruitment of African-Americans. The argument goes that if the Republican Party increased its share of the Black vote by “20%”, it could establish dominance (Bolce, De Maio,

& Muzzio, 1992). Therefore, even though there is a small sub-set of African-American conservatives, this group is large enough to possibly return the White House to the Republican Party and establish it as the majority party.

### ***Partisan Preferences and Electoral Choices***

However, after examining the partisan preferences and electoral choices of Black conservatives one finds that the Republican Party may want to increase its efforts to attract Black voters. After documenting the existence of a Black conservative group, their partisan preferences and electoral choices were examined. It was hypothesized that Black conservatives' partisan identification and electoral preferences were different from Whites who identified themselves as conservative. Once more the hypothesis was confirmed. Although nearly a third of African-Americans identify themselves as conservative, around eighty percent of all African-Americans preferred the Democratic Party while less than ten-percent chose the Republican Party. This is not surprising because when it comes to the Republican Party there has always been a gulf between the voting behavior and partisan identification of African-Americans (Ashbee, 1999). This finding supports previous research which states that African-Americans overwhelmingly support the Democratic Party (Meyerson, 1984; Tryman, 1986; Welch & Foster, 1987; Muzzio, 1992; Bolce, De Maio & Muzzio, 1992; Dawson, 1995; Goode, 1996; Simpson, 1998).

### *The Issues*

The next hypotheses dealt with the issue positions of Black conservatives. It was hypothesized that Black conservatism means something different than conservatism among Whites. Therefore we expected differences between the issue positions of Black and White conservatives. This hypothesis is confirmed. On several issues including government spending on food stamps, laws protecting homosexuals, and the ratings of Gingrich and Farrakhan, the Black conservative position was opposite of the White conservative position.

This finding suggests two things. First, there may be a difference between Black and White conservative belief systems. This suggests that Black conservatism is different from White conservatism. It was suggested that Black conservatism deals more with social and moral concerns than with political issues. Black conservative intellectuals emphasize self-reliance, entrepreneurship, and life-style choices. In fact, no element of Black conservatism emphasizes politics or African-Americans participation in the political system. Instead, conservatism for Blacks is seen as a belief in self-restraint, centrality of character, and economic self-help. These suspicions have been confirmed.

This finding may also suggest that Black conservatives may not understand what conservatism means. This is evident by the fact African-Americans in the general electorate do not hold the same views as Black conservative intellectuals. To see if this is the case, it was hypothesized that



Black conservatives would have different issue positions than Black liberals. This hypothesis was confirmed on all but two of the issues examined. There were significant differences between Black conservatives and liberals on questions concerning laws protecting homosexuals, government aid to Blacks, the progress that had been made in ending discrimination, Blacks shopping in only Black stores, and Black partisan preferences. Surprisingly, however, on the question that taps into whether or not minorities should be given special consideration in hiring, there were no differences between Black liberals and conservatives.

This research confirms the work of earlier scholars. It suggests that Blacks in the general electorate may not understand what conservatism means or may have a different understanding of conservatism. It also suggests that Blacks in the general electorate do not have the same views White conservatives or Black conservative intellectuals. Moreover, this research found that African-Americans had considerably lower levels of constraint than Caucasians. This suggests that that ideology does not have the same policy specific meaning for African-Americans that it has for Caucasians. So, this research asks, what does conservatism mean for the mass of Blacks?

Further research should seek to probe into African-American ideology to ascertain how Blacks view the terms “liberal” and “conservative”. A number of studies and commentaries examine what conservatism means for Black intellectuals, but none address what being a conservative means for the masses.

More specifically, future research should seek to define what conservatism means among African-Americans in the general electorate. Either in-depth interviews or focus groups could accomplish this goal. The main objective would be to examine the mass of Blacks who say they are conservative and to find what it means to them to be conservative. This would allow scholars to ascertain what respondents mean when they call themselves conservative. This will add significantly to the literature because most research that looks at ideology ignores how Blacks view ideology. This research could also address the lack of constraint among African-American conservatives.

### *Limitations*

It is obvious that these findings have several limitations. First, research suggests that there are myriad problems with survey data. Survey data often leads to a description of the electorate as “schizophrenic” because their views change quickly and drastically (Knight, 1999). There is also some question as to whether or not the electorate really understands abstract ideological concepts. Also, one should be wary of judging ideology through the self-identification questions because several authors have concluded that there is little consistency between ideology and issue positions (Smith, 1990; Luttbeg & Gant, 1984; Converse, 1964). And to some extent, the findings here confirm the suspicions of these scholars. This research found that Blacks who say they are conservative might not actually understand what it means to be conservative. This is evident by the

fact that there were major differences between Black and White conservatives and negligible differences between Black liberals and conservatives. Thus, one could conclude that among Blacks “self-declared conservatism seems to have little operational meaning” (Welch & Foster, 1987). However, this conclusion may be without foundation because definitions and issues examined in this research are based on how political scientists view conservatism and not how African-Americans view the term. Thus this research has encountered the same problems Converse (1964) had when he assumed that the mass public’s belief system mirrored the belief system of elites. This research assumes that African-American’s belief systems are the same as the belief systems of Caucasians, which has severely limited this research.

Scholars have also urged caution when using the standard seven point scale of ideology because of the large proportion of missing values it produces. This is a result of the fact that respondents had not thought about the terms much or that they did not know what they meant. This measure, however, is the only available source of information we have to look at ideology over time. It gives us a point of reference dating back to 1972, when the NES began asking questions concerning ideological self-identification. Furthermore, this measure is the only on African-American ideology over time. Although there is criticism of this measure of ideology, Lyons and Scheb (1992) conclude, “the liberal-conservative self-identification measure retains considerable utility (575).” Moreover, there

were also comparison problems between the two data sets utilized. The format and coding of the questions presented major problems for comparison.

### *Implications*

In short, I have examined trends in ideology between 1972 to 1998. Overall, I found a conservative trend among African-Americans since 1972. This contradicts most previous research (Welch & Foster, 1987; Welch & Combs, 1985; Seltzer & Smith, 1985). Moreover, I found that African-Americans are more likely than Whites to change their political views. This research also documents that there is not much cohesion in the ideological identifications, partisanship, and electoral choices of African-Americans. Although a third of African-Americans say they are conservative, as a group, they are still overwhelmingly loyal to the Democratic Party. However, this cohesiveness is present when we examine Caucasians. Equal proportions of Caucasians who identify themselves as conservative support the Republican Party. The meaning of the liberal-conservative dimensions continues to be diverse among the electorate, especially when we compare African-Americans to Caucasians.

African-Americans who identify themselves as conservative could play a large role in the realignment of the political parties. This is not surprising considering the fact that African-Americans realigned with the Democratic Party after the Great Depression. Liberal and conservative camps need to keep in mind that African-Americans fluctuate in their political attitudes. This is evident by the

fact that the proportion of those identifying themselves as conservative doubled during the time period studied. This could possibly have substantial effects on presidential elections if the Republican Party continues its “Twenty Percent” solution program. In fact, recent efforts by the Republican Party have already proven successful. They have Black Republicans in Congress and several of their gubernatorial and mayoral candidates have received support from African-Americans. Therefore, neither liberals nor conservatives should take African-Americans for granted. In other words, African-American voters should be seen as important players in electoral politics. The parties should actively seek to attract their support.

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## **APPENDIX**

## SELECTED VARIABLES

### NES Cumulative File 1948-1997

Variable CF0105	Respondent's Race
Variable CF0301	Partisan Identification
Variable CF0803	Ideological Identification
Variable CF0804	Categorized Self Placement
Variable CF0704	Vote Choice in Presidential Elections

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### 1996 NES

Variable 960284	Newt Gingrich Feeling Thermometer
Variable 960285	Colin Powell Feeling Thermometer
Variable 960288	Louis Farrakhan Feeling Thermometer
Variable 960368	Summary of Self-Placement on Liberal/Conservative scale
Variable 960417	Party Identification
Variable 960450	Self-Placement on Services Spending Scale
Variable 960463	Self-Placement on Defense Spending Scale
Variable 960479	Self-Placement on Government Health Insurance Scale
Variable 960483	Self-Placement on Guarantee Jobs Scale
Variable 960487	Self-Placement on Government Aid to Blacks Scale
Variable 960496	Self-Placement on Spending on Food Stamps
Variable 960519	Self-Placement on Crime Reduction Scale
Variable 960543	Self-Placement on Women's Rights Scale
Variable 960578	Attend Religious Services
Variable 960503	Abortion Scale
Variable 960610	Summary of Respondent's Education
Variable 961193	Laws Protecting Homosexuals
Variable 961197	Favor/Oppose the Death Penalty

### 1998 NES

Variable 980339	Partisan Identification
Variable 980399	Liberal/Conservative Scale
Variable 980673	Respondent's Race

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### 1984 NBES

Variable 2100	Liberal/Conservative Identification
Variable 2103	Summary: Respondent's Liberal-Conservative Placement.

### 1996 NBES

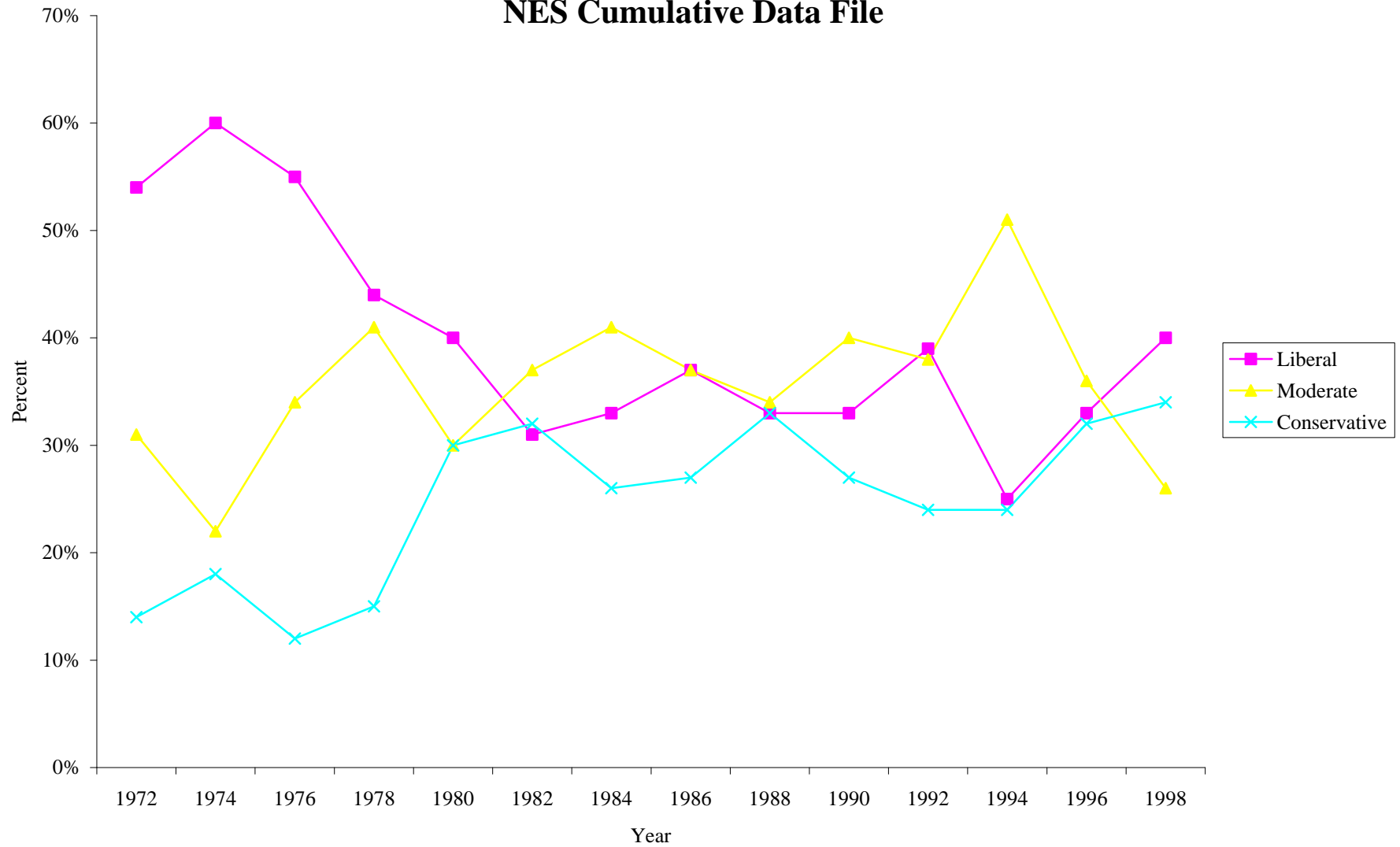
QG1	Liberal/Conservative Scale
QG2	Partisan Identification
QM1G	Louis Farrakhan Feeling Thermometer
QM1I	Newt Gingrich Feeling Thermometer

QM1J	Colin Powell Feeling Thermometer
Q7SA	Self Placement on Government Aid to Blacks
QS8A	Government Aid to Blacks
QU3	Church Attendance
QY3	Education
E2C	Blacks Only Shop In Black Stores
E5	Progress Made in Ending Discrimination
E9B	Minorities Given Special Consideration in Hiring
H1	Laws Protecting Homosexuals
H2	Death Penalty
M1B	Food Stamp Spending



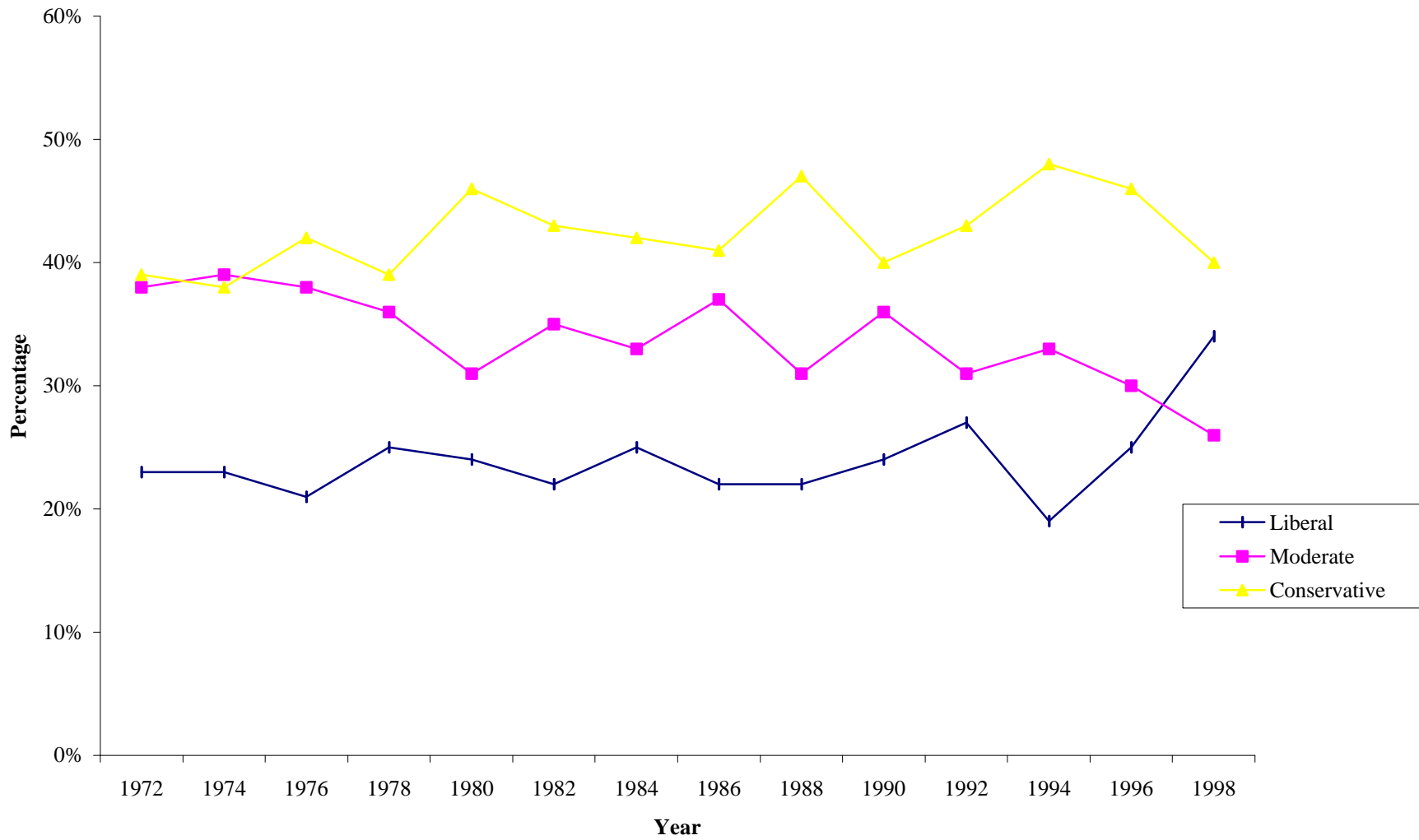
# AFRICAN-AMERICAN IDEOLOGY

## NES Cumulative Data File



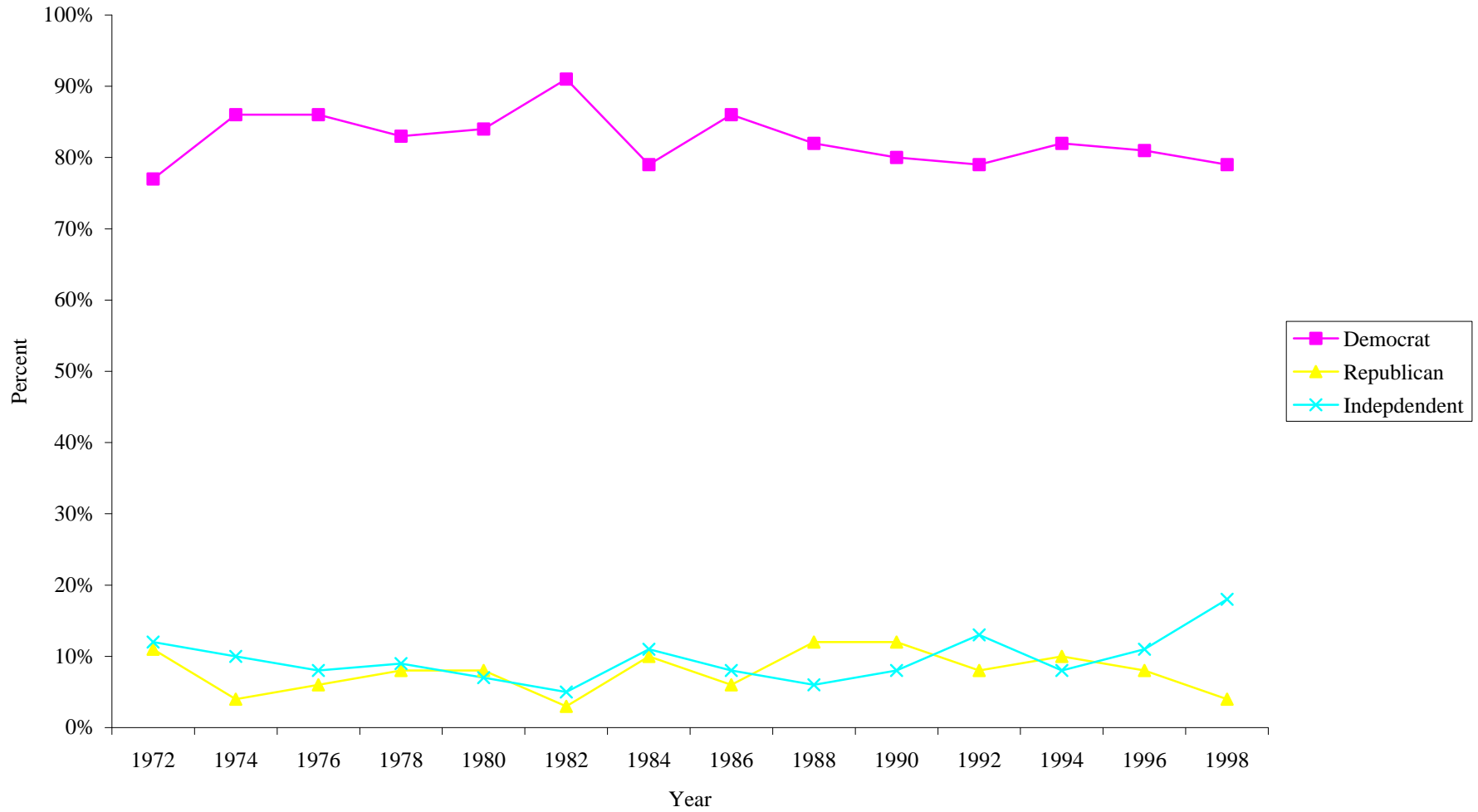
# CAUCASIAN IDEOLOGY

## NES Cumulative Data File



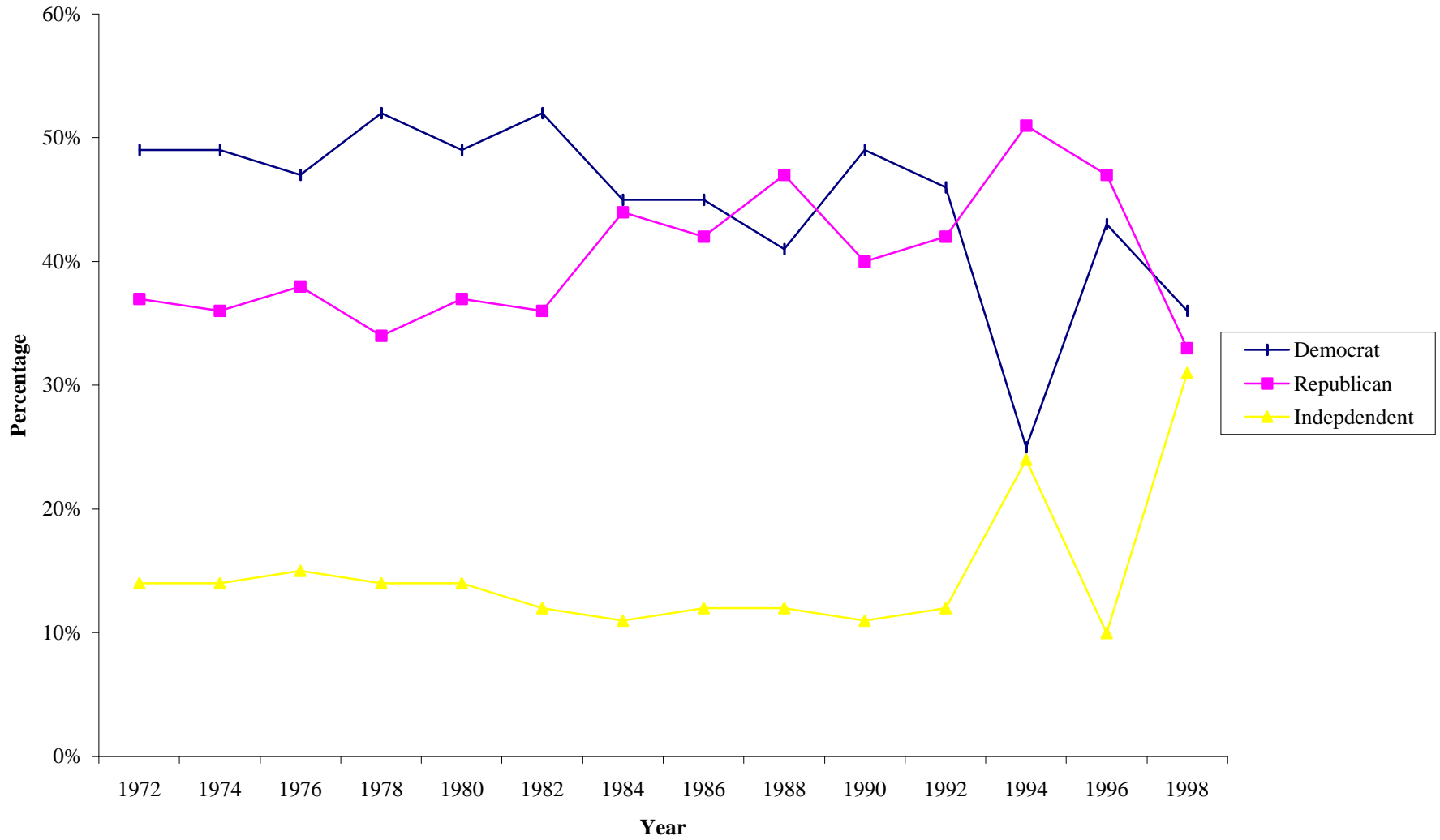
# AFRICAN-AMERICAN PARTISAN PREFERENCES

## NES Cumulative Data File



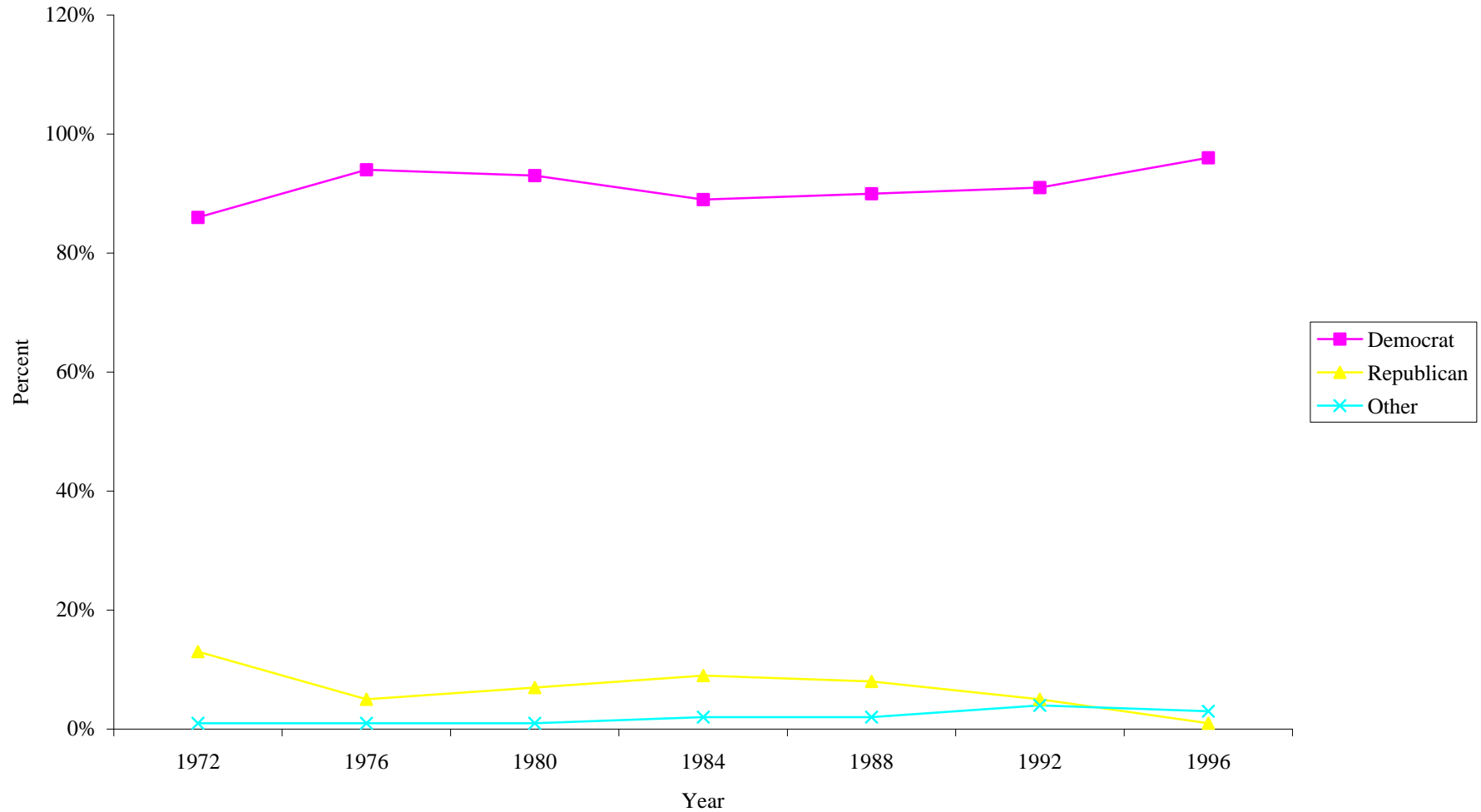
# CAUCASIAN PARTISAN PREFERENCES

## NES Cumulative Data File



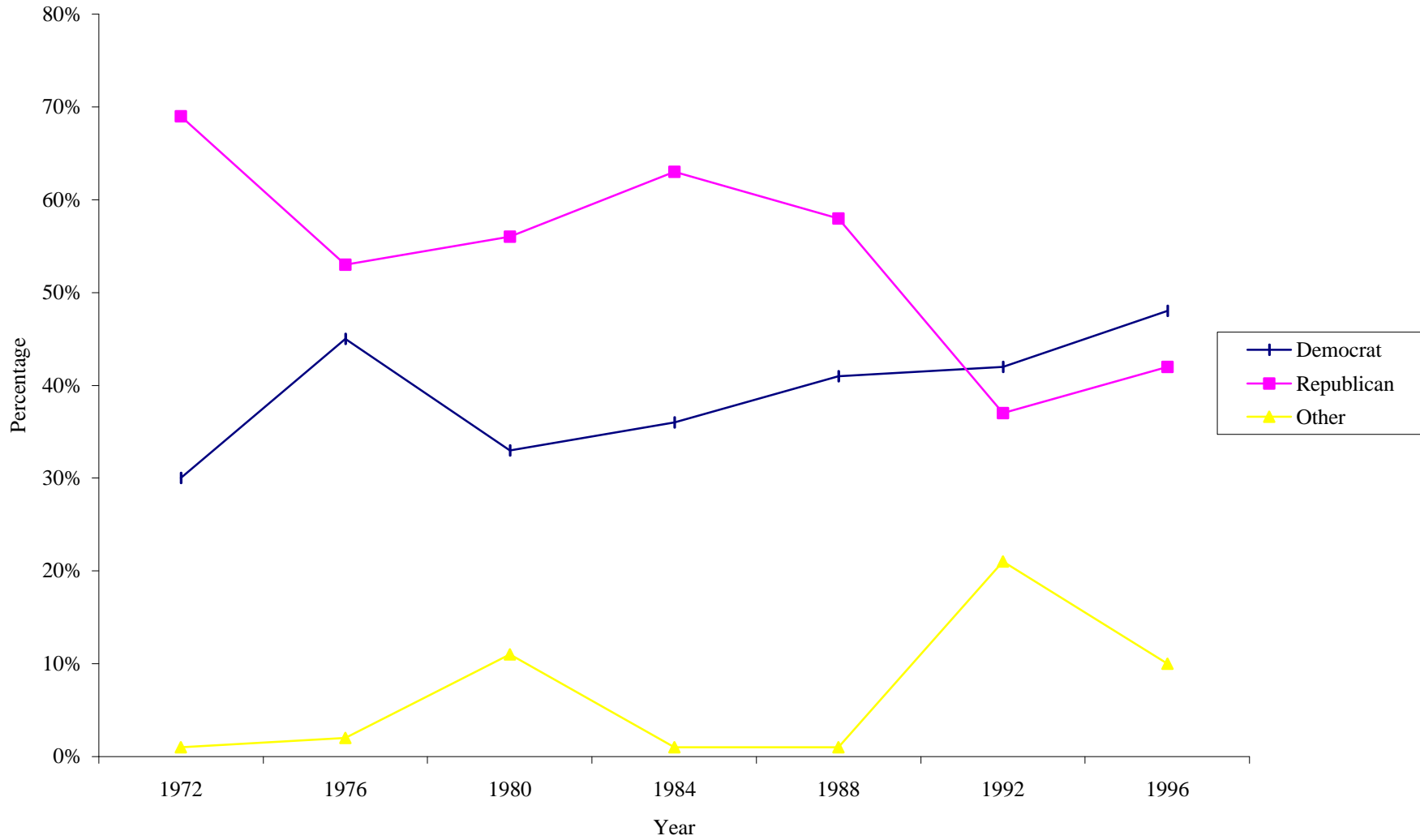
# AFRICAN-AMERICAN ELECTORAL CHOICE

## NES Cumulative Data File



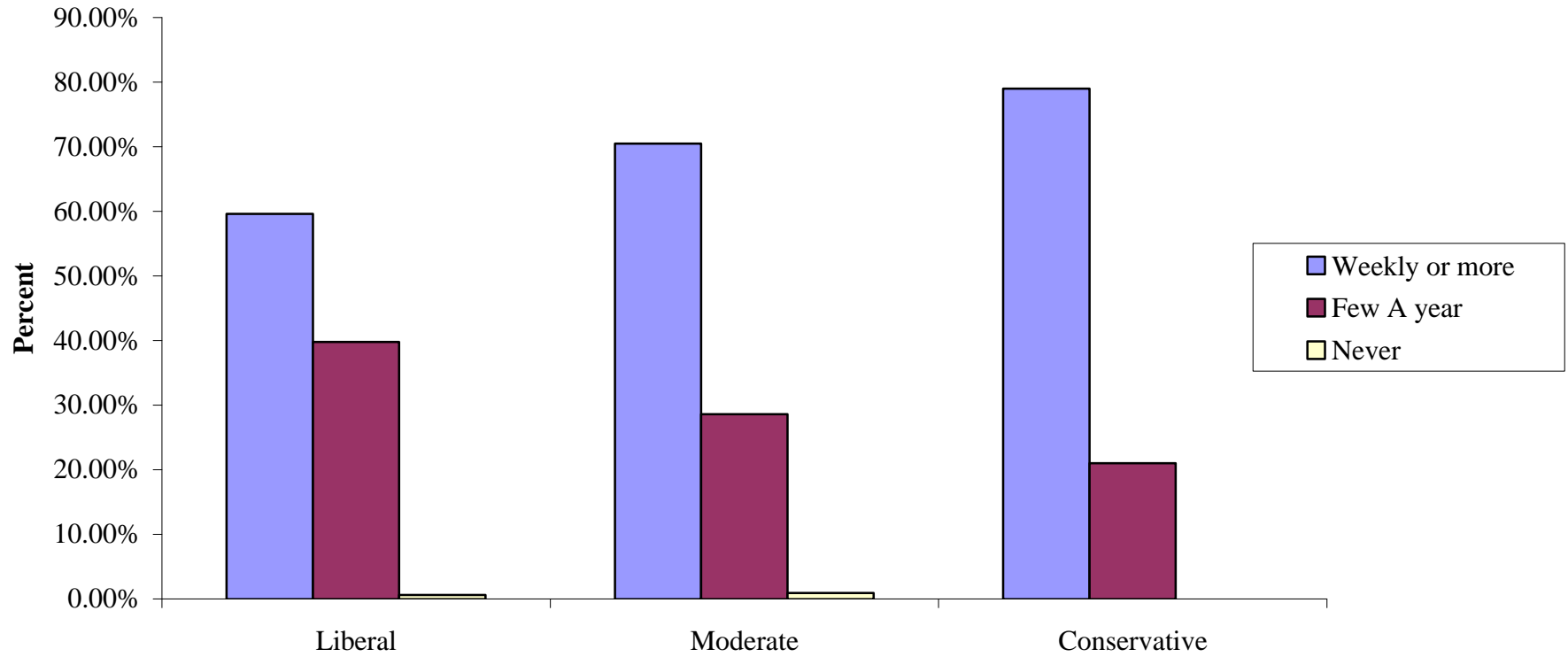
## CAUCASIAN ELECTORAL CHOICE

### NES Cumulative Data File



### \*\*\*RELIGIOUSITY

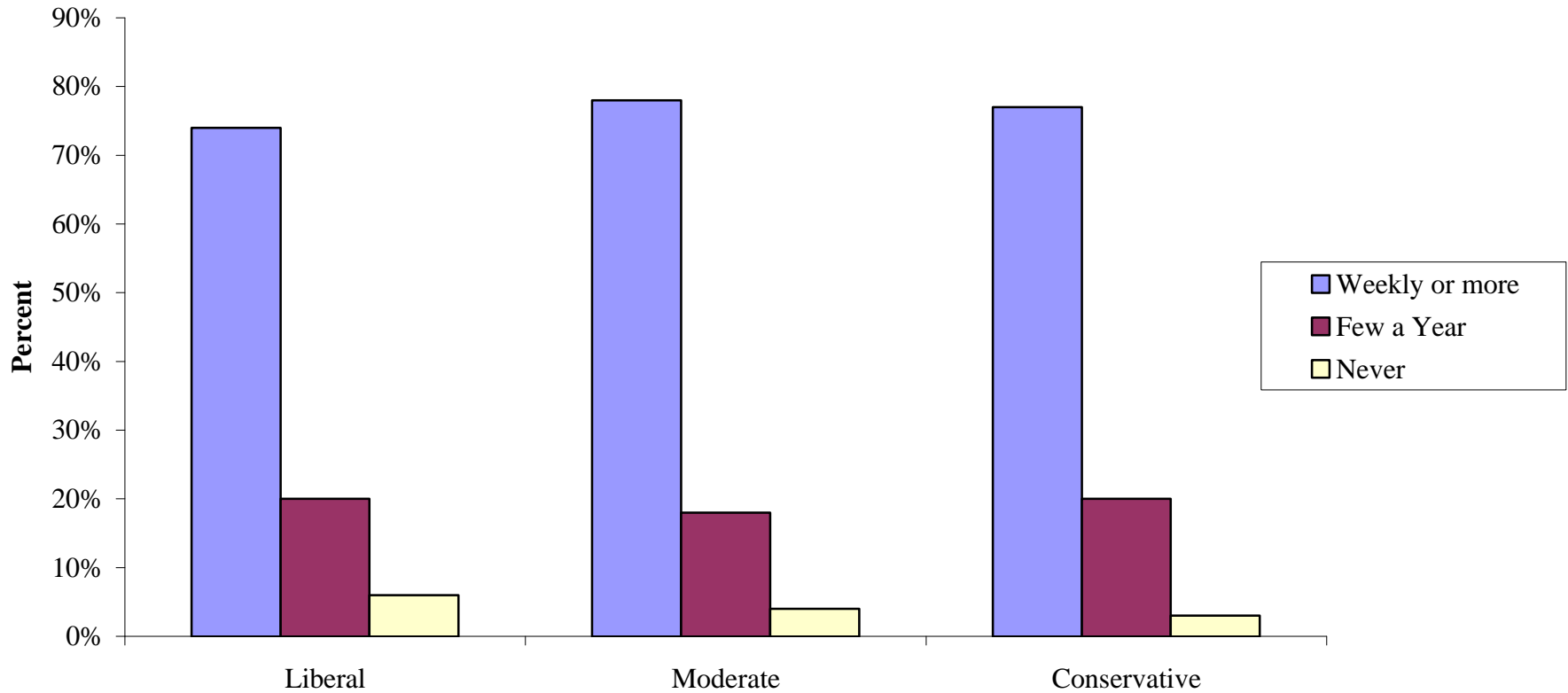
## 1996 National Election Study



Ideological Identification  
\*\*\*p<.001\*\*p<.05p<.1  
Chi Square Statistic  
n=831

# RELIGIOUSITY

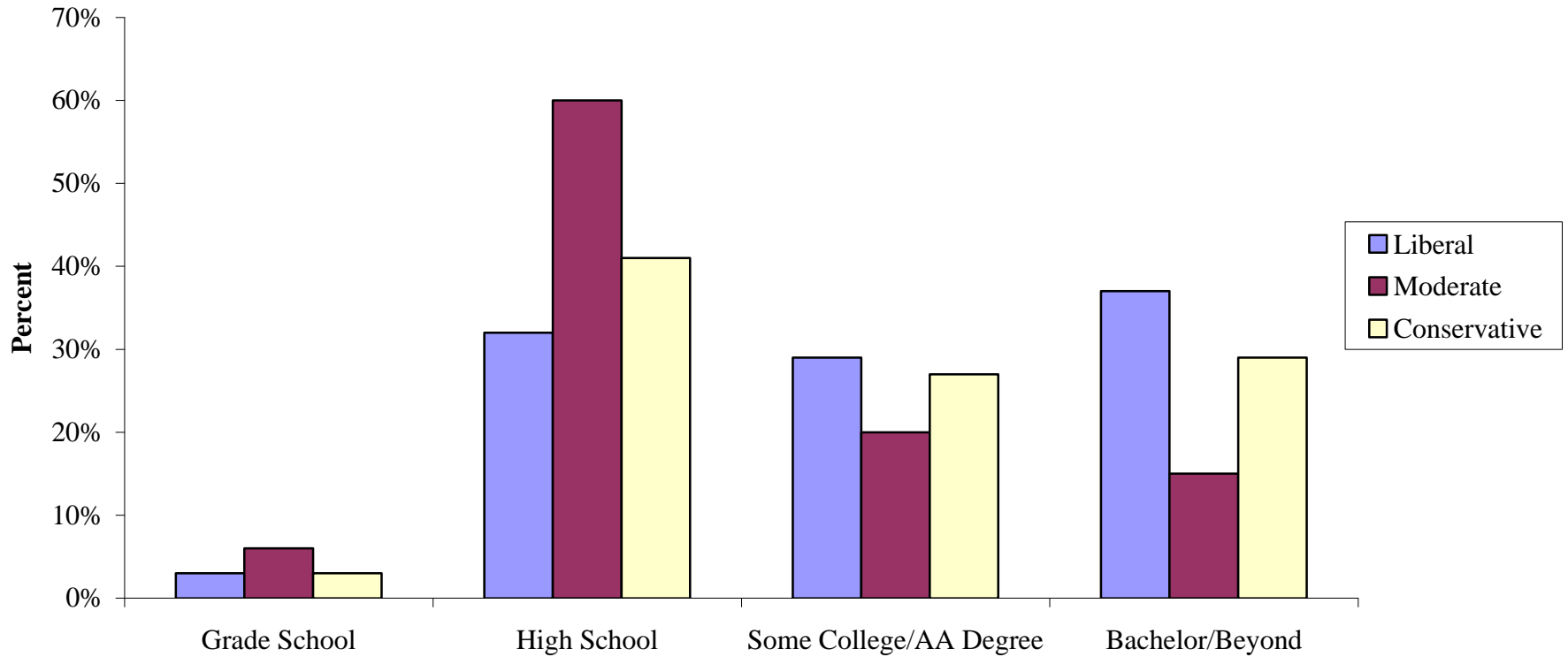
## 1996 National Black Election Study



Ideological Identification  
\*\*\*p<.001 \*\*p<.05 p<.1  
Chi Square Statistic  
n=992



### \*\*\*EDUCATION 1996 National Election Study



Ideological Identification

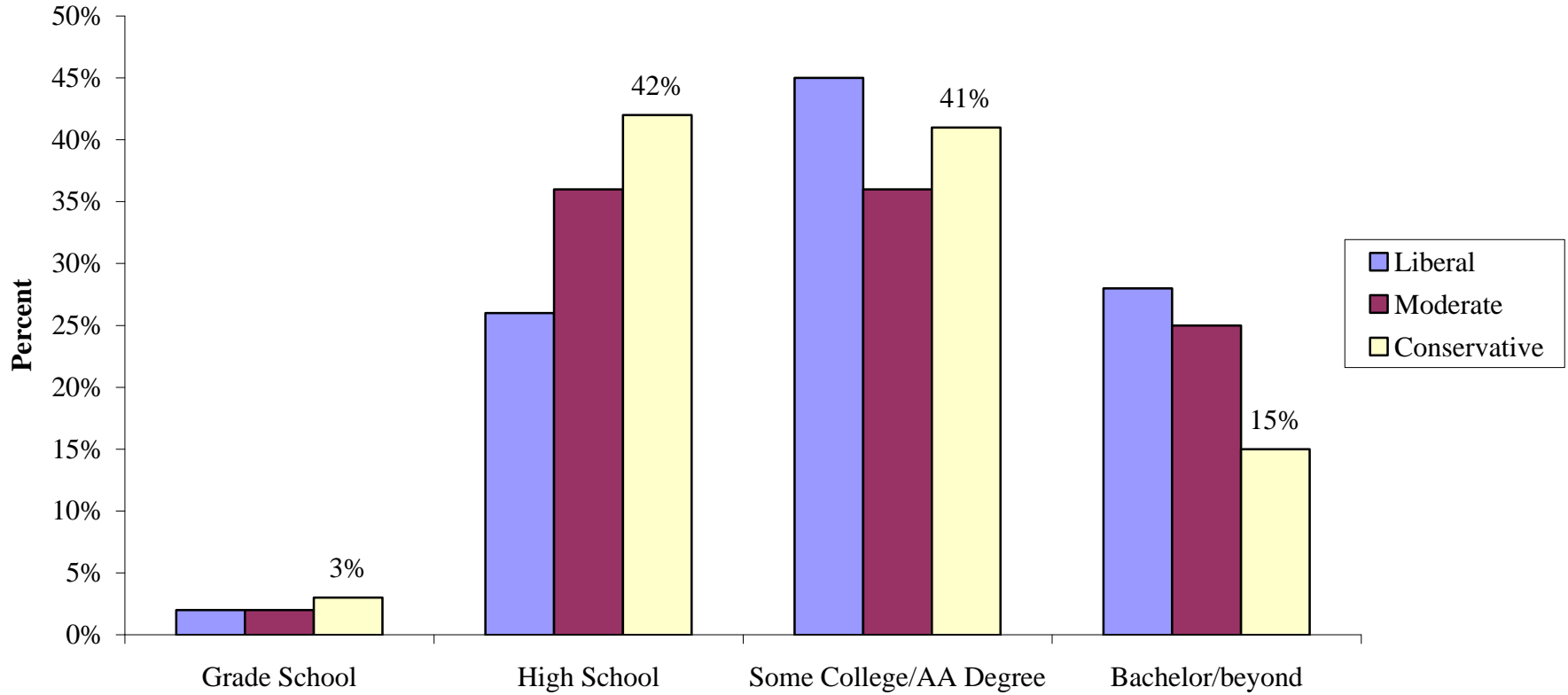
\*\*\*p<.001 \*\*p<.05 p<.1

Chi Square Statistic

n=1166

### \*\*\*EDUCATION

## 1996 National Black Election Study



Ideological Identification

\*\*\*p<.001\*\*p<.05p<.1

Chi Square Statistic

n=993

<b>Table 2-1</b>													
<b>IDEOLOGICAL IDENTIFICATION</b>													
	<b>1970</b>	<b>1971</b>	<b>1972</b>	<b>1974</b>	<b>1975</b>	<b>1976</b>	<b>1977</b>	<b>1978</b>	<b>1979</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1981</b>	<b>1982</b>	<b>1983</b>
<b>CPS/U. Michigan</b>													
Liberal			19%	21%		17%		19%		16%		15%	
Conservative			26%	26%		31%		27%		28%		27%	
<b>GSS (NORC)</b>													
Liberal				31%	30%	29%	29%	28%		26%		27%	24%
Conservative				30%	30%	31%	32%	24%		34%		32%	35%
<b>Gallup</b>													
Liberal	28%	25%									20%		
Conservative	46%	45%									44%		
<b>CBS/NY Times</b>													
Liberal						22%		22%	20%	21%	18%	20%	19%
Conservative						30%		27%	34%	30%	30%	34%	32%
<b>Roper</b>													
Liberal							25%				19%		22%
Conservative							40%				47%		43%

Robinson, John. (1984). The Ups and Downs and Ins and Outs of Ideology. *Public Opinion* 7:12-15.

<b>TABLE 5-1</b>														
<b>AFRICAN-AMERICAN IDEOLOGICAL IDENTIFICATION</b>														
<b>NATIONAL ELECTION STUDY</b>														
	<b>1972</b>	<b>1974</b>	<b>1976</b>	<b>1978</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1982</b>	<b>1984</b>	<b>1986</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1998</b>
<b>LIBERAL</b>	54%	60%	55%	44%	40%	31%	33%	37%	33%	33%	39%	25%	36%	40%
<b>MODERATE</b>	31%	22%	34%	41%	30%	37%	41%	37%	34%	40%	38%	51%	31%	26%
<b>CONSERVATIVE</b>	14%	18%	12%	15%	30%	32%	26%	27%	33%	27%	24%	24%	33%	34%
<b>N</b>	118	85	119	113	83	74	127	202	154	140	187	122	124	134

Source: NES Cumulative File, Variable 804 & 105

**TABLE 5-3**  
**CAUCASIAN IDEOLOGICAL IDENTIFICATION**  
**NATIONAL ELECTION STUDY**

	1972	1974	1976	1978	1980	1982	1984	1986	1988	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998
<b>LIBERAL</b>	23%	23%	21%	25%	24%	22%	25%	22%	22%	24%	27%	19%	25%	34%
<b>MODERATE</b>	38%	39%	38%	36%	31%	35%	33%	37%	31%	36%	31%	33%	30%	26%
<b>CONSERVATIVE</b>	39%	38%	42%	39%	46%	43%	42%	41%	47%	40%	40%	48%	46%	40%
<b>N</b>	1411	1045	1356	1525	908	815	1392	1399	1224	1136	1572	1211	1167	1047

Source: NES Cumulative File, Variable 804 & 105

<b>TABLE 5-4</b>														
<b>AFRICAN-AMERICAN PARTISAN PREFERENCES</b>														
<b>NATIONAL ELECTION STUDY</b>														
	<b>1972</b>	<b>1974</b>	<b>1976</b>	<b>1978</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1982</b>	<b>1984</b>	<b>1986</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1998</b>
<b>DEMOCRAT</b>	77%	86%	86%	83%	84%	91%	79%	86%	82%	80%	79%	82%	81%	79%
<b>REPUBLICAN</b>	11%	4%	6%	8%	8%	3%	10%	6%	12%	12%	8%	10%	8%	4%
<b>INDEPENDENT</b>	12%	10%	8%	9%	7%	5%	11%	8%	6%	8%	13%	8%	11%	18%
<b>N</b>	261	138	219	223	180	147	242	317	260	249	308	199	206	141

Source: NES Cumulative File, Variable 301 & 105

**TABLE 5-5**  
**CAUCASIAN PARTISAN PREFERENCES**  
**NATIONAL ELECTION STUDY**

	<b>1972</b>	<b>1974</b>	<b>1976</b>	<b>1978</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1982</b>	<b>1984</b>	<b>1986</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1998</b>
<b>DEMOCRAT</b>	49%	49%	47%	52%	49%	52%	45%	45%	41%	49%	46%	25%	43%	36%
<b>REPUBLICAN</b>	37%	36%	38%	34%	37%	36%	44%	42%	47%	40%	42%	51%	47%	33%
<b>INDEPENDENT</b>	14%	14%	15%	14%	14%	12%	11%	12%	12%	11%	12%	24%	10%	31%
<b>N</b>	2357	1366	1936	1953	1377	1220	1900	1757	1668	1630	2045	1496	1439	977

Source: NES Cumulative File, Variable 301 & 105

<b>TABLE 5-6</b>							
<b>AFRICAN AMERICAN ELECTORAL CHOICE</b>							
<b>NATIONAL ELECTION STUDY</b>							
	<b>1972</b>	<b>1976</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1984</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1996</b>
<b>DEMOCRAT</b>	86%	94%	93%	89%	90%	91%	96%
<b>REPUBLICAN</b>	13%	5%	7%	9%	8%	5%	1%
<b>OTHER</b>	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	4%	3%
<b>N</b>	139	106	106	131	125	189	108

Source: NES Cumulative File, Variable 704 & 105



<b>TABLE 5-7 CAUCASIAN ELECTORAL CHOICE NATIONAL ELECTION STUDY</b>							
	<b>1972</b>	<b>1976</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1984</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1996</b>
<b>DEMOCRAT</b>	30%	45%	33%	36%	41%	42%	48%
<b>REPUBLICAN</b>	69%	53%	56%	63%	58%	37%	42%
<b>OTHER</b>	1%	2%	11%	1%	1%	21%	10%
<b>N</b>	1447	1208	856	1231	1052	1425	995

Source: NES Cumulative File, Variable 704 & 105

**TABLE 5-8**  
**CORRELATION MATRIX**  
**NATIONAL ELECTION STUDY**

SAMPLE	Ideology	Help Blacks	Guar. Jobs	Reduce Crime	Women's Rights	Protect Env./Jobs	Abortion	Services Spending	Defense Spending	Govt. Health Ins
	961269	960487	960483	960519	960543	960523	960503	960450	960463	960479
<b>Ideology</b>		.300	.297	.247	.264	.254	-0.263	-0.333	0.254	0.32
<b>Help Blacks</b>			0.475	0.27	0.121	0.128	-0.058	-0.303	0.165	0.253
<b>Guarantee Jobs</b>				0.213	0.134	0.092	-0.014	-0.385	0.157	0.428
<b>Reduce Crime</b>					0.162	0.229	-0.184	-0.137	0.229	0.193
<b>Women's Rights</b>						0.237	-0.257	-0.11	0.133	0.121
<b>Protect Env./Jobs</b>							-0.14	-0.114	0.151	0.122
<b>Abortion</b>								0.053	-0.152	-0.095
<b>Services/Spending</b>									-0.041	-0.319
<b>Defense Spending</b>										0.184
<b>Govt. Health Ins.</b>										
<b>Constraint Measure (Average Correlation) = .202</b>										

<b>TABLE 5-9</b>										
<b>CORRELATION MATRIX</b>										
<b>NATIONAL ELECTION STUDY</b>										
<b>CAUCASIANS</b>	<b>Ideology</b>	<b>Help Blacks</b>	<b>Guar. Jobs</b>	<b>Reduce Crime</b>	<b>Women's Rights</b>	<b>Protect Env./Jobs</b>	<b>Abortion</b>	<b>Services Spending</b>	<b>Defense Spending</b>	<b>Govt. Health Ins</b>
	<b>961269</b>	<b>960487</b>	<b>960483</b>	<b>960519</b>	<b>960543</b>	<b>960523</b>	<b>960503</b>	<b>960450</b>	<b>960463</b>	<b>960479</b>
<b>Ideology</b>		.333	.320	.282	.278	.280	-0.302	-0.375	0.304	0.319
<b>Help Blacks</b>			0.459	0.311	0.103	0.163	-0.063	-0.276	0.214	0.267
<b>Guarantee Jobs</b>				0.234	0.105	0.114	-0.064	-0.383	0.185	0.444
<b>Reduce Crime</b>					0.193	0.232	-0.173	-0.159	0.265	0.205
<b>Women's Rights</b>						0.244	-0.266	-0.105	0.158	0.133
<b>Protect Env./Jobs</b>							-0.149	-0.161	0.161	0.149
<b>Abortion</b>								0.062	-0.162	-0.115
<b>Services/Spending</b>									-0.082	-0.349
<b>Defense Spending</b>										0.218
<b>Govt. Health Ins.</b>										
<b>Constraint Measure (Average Correlation) = .220</b>										

**TABLE 5-10**  
**CORRELATION MATRIX**  
**NATIONAL ELECTION STUDY**

<b>AFRICAN-AMERICANS</b>	<b>Ideology</b>	<b>Help Blacks</b>	<b>Guar. Jobs</b>	<b>Reduce Crime</b>	<b>Women's Rights</b>	<b>Protect Env/Jobs</b>	<b>Abortion</b>	<b>Services Spending</b>	<b>Defense Spending</b>	<b>Govt. Health Ins</b>
	<b>961269</b>	<b>960487</b>	<b>960483</b>	<b>960519</b>	<b>960543</b>	<b>960523</b>	<b>960503</b>	<b>960450</b>	<b>960463</b>	<b>960479</b>
<b>Ideology</b>		.116	.115	.037	.175	.88	0.01	0.069	-0.001	0.301
<b>Help Blacks</b>			0.458	0.089	0.238	0.035	-0.034	-0.216	-0.111	0.21
<b>Guarantee Jobs</b>				0.074	0.316	0.092	0.01	-0.176	0.053	0.227
<b>Reduce Crime</b>					0.042	0.25	-0.284	0.052	0.041	0.134
<b>Women's Rights</b>						0.159	-0.18	-0.11	0.031	0.035
<b>Protect Env./Jobs</b>							-0.069	0.013	0.074	0.034
<b>Abortion</b>								-0.001	-0.117	-0.209
<b>Services/Spending</b>									0.169	-0.004
<b>Defense Spending</b>										0.071
<b>Govt. Health Ins.</b>										
<b>Constraint Measure (Average Correlation) = .118</b>										

## **VITA**

Angela Katrina Lewis was born in Birmingham, Alabama and graduate from Ramsey Alternative High School in 1991. She then matriculated at the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa where she received a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Regional and Urban Planning in 1994. In August 1995, she entered the University of Tennessee in the Master of Public Administration program and completed that degree in December 1996. The Doctor of Philosophy degree in Political Science was gained in May 2000.

She is presently employed as an Assistant Professor of Political Science at High Point University in High Point, North Carolina.