Introduction

Most Black people don't think alike, but most Black people vote alike.
– Representative J.C. Watts (R-OK)

On April 15, 2013, Herman Cain held a press conference to announce the convening of a new organization, the American Black Conservatives (ABCs). The ABCs are a group of about a dozen Black conservatives, including neurosurgeon Ben Carson. The purpose of the group is to unite Black conservatives and create a separate Black conservative "brand" (Travis 2013). Although he previously ran for the Republican presidential nomination in 2012, Herman Cain has since advocated for the distinction between conservatism and Republicanism. In an effort to attract more African Americans to the conservative movement, Cain wants to distance himself and other Black conservatives from the negative perception Blacks have of the Republican Party. Furthermore, in contrast to the contemporary Republican Party and other conservative groups, Cain and the ABCs are interested in explicitly bringing a Black perspective to solving the nation's economic problems, suggesting a unique brand of conservatism experienced through a racialized lens (Travis 2013).

Arguably, Herman Cain's political views do not represent those of the average African American. Yet, the tension between Black ideology and Black party identification can be observed among members of the rank-in-file Black electorate. As former Member of Congress J.C. Watts notes in the opening quotation, most Black people vote alike. To be sure, contemporary American politics is marked by Blacks' overwhelming support for the Democratic Party and its candidates. Roughly three-quarters or more of Blacks have identified with the Democratic Party since the 1960s. Over

this same period, Democratic congressional and presidential candidates have benefited from no less than 85 percent of the Black vote (Bositis 2008). Despite repeated attempts to cut into the Democratic Party's stronghold on the African-American electorate, GOP outreach efforts have fallen on deaf ears (Philpot 2007).

Representative Watts is also correct in noting that there is quite a bit of heterogeneity in the political thinking of African Americans, certainly more diversity than their voting behavior would suggest. In particular, in the Black community there is a long history of conservatism that predates Emancipation. This conservatism is thought to be based on a shared tradition of "being churchgoers, of building cohesive family units through [Blacks'] reliance on extended family and kinship networks, and of adhering to other principles that have been identified as conservative" (Watson 1998, 75). Thus, African Americans' religiosity and subsequent conservative position on moral issues suggest that Blacks should be more receptive to the Republican Party.

This, however, is not the case. Take, for instance, the debate surrounding whether homosexual couples should be legally allowed to marry. During the general election in November 2004, 11 states held ballot referenda calling for the banning of same-sex marriages, domestic partnerships, and/or civil unions. Supporters of gay marriage bans condemned the union of same-sex couples along moral grounds. Those in opposition heralded same-sex marriage as a civil rights issue (Clemetson 2004). Because of its size and cohesion, the Black voting bloc could determine victory or defeat in many states (Walton and Smith 2010). But, *a priori*, the Black vote could have gone either way:

> The fact that many black Christians are both politically liberal and socially conservative makes them frustratingly difficult to pigeonhole in a political environment in which, many pundits contend, voters are cleanly split along ideological lines. Many blacks opposed to gay marriage, for example, support equal benefits for gays as a matter of economic justice (Clemetson 2004, A1).

Prior to the election, those on both sides of the debate made appeals to Black clergy and their congregations, with conservative groups like the Family Research Council courting conservative denominations and liberal groups such as the National Black Justice Coalition reaching out to the more liberal factions of the Black church (Clemetson 2004). Ultimately, however, framing same-sex marriage as a civil rights issue did not resonate with many Black voters and Black religious groups. For example, in

TABLE I.1 *Percent voting for same-sex marriage ban and George W. Bush in 2004, by state*

	White Support for Same-Sex Marriage Ban	Black Support for Same-Sex Marriage Ban	Bush Vote among White Supporters of Ban	Bush Vote among Black Supporters of Ban
Arkansas	76	64	74	8
Georgia	75	78	88	15
Kentucky	75	68	76	15
Michigan	58	57	71	12
Mississippi	88	72	89	10
Ohio	62	57	73	19
Oklahoma	76	72	80	34

Note: Figures are weighted values.
Source: National Election Pool General Election Exit Polls, 2004.

response to the larger political culture bringing the issue of gay marriage to the forefront, delegates to the African Methodist Episcopal Church, with a membership of 2.5 million, voted at their 2004 General Conference to ban the performance or blessing of gay marriage in the church (Chang 2004).

Ultimately, the exit poll data presented in Table I.1 show that in seven of the eleven states in which the gay marriage ban appeared on the ballot,[1] a majority of Blacks voted for ballot measures defining marriage as a union between one man and one woman (National Election Pool, Edison Media Research, and Mitofsky 2005). Black support for the ballot referenda was on par with that of Whites. Levels of support for the same-sex marriage ban were lowest among Blacks in states like Michigan and Ohio, where overall support for the ban was closer to the 50 percent threshold. In the Deep South states of Georgia and Mississippi, where voters convincingly passed these ballot initiatives, about three-quarters of Blacks voted in favor of excluding homosexual couples from the institution of marriage. Even in states like Arkansas and Kentucky, where Black support lagged behind White support, nearly two-thirds of Blacks voted in favor of a same-sex marriage ban.

If opposition to homosexual marriage is any indication of the conservative nature of voters in these states, then Black voters should have been

[1] Montana, North Dakota, Oregon, and Utah are excluded because of too few Black observations.

ripe for the picking for the Republican Party. The link between ideology and party identification is well established, even if the strength of the relationship is debatable (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; Carmines and Stimson 1989; Rapoport 1997; Box-Steffensmeier and De Boef 2001; Levitin and Miller 1979). Decades of empirical research documents that ideological conservatism is positively correlated with support for the Republican Party and its candidates. This relationship can be observed by looking at George W. Bush's vote share among Whites who voted in favor of the same-sex marriage ban in 2004. Regardless of state, no less than 70 percent of this group voted for Bush. Despite their overwhelming support of it, however, the gay marriage ban did not become a defining issue for Blacks in the 2004 presidential election. As noted at the time by Reverend Gene Rivers, president of the National Ten-Point Leadership Foundation, "Most of the same people who believe fundamentally that marriage is between a man and a woman and who will stand up and support that with conservatives voted for Al Gore in 2000 and oppose tax cuts for the rich and cutting social services in 2004" (Clemetson 2004, A12). Consequently, no more than 20 percent of Blacks who voted in favor of banning same-sex marriage voted for the incumbent Republican president, with Oklahoma being the exception. In Arkansas, the Bush vote share among Black supporters of the gay marriage ban did not even reach 10 percent (see Table I.1).

By 2012, a majority of Americans indicated that they supported gay marriage, including President Obama. During a radio interview in 2004 while running for the U.S. Senate, President Obama stated that, based on his faith as a Christian, he believed that marriage was "something sanctified between a man and a woman" (Healy 2008, A1). Eight years later, President Obama revised his position and announced his support for same sex marriage during an interview with co-anchor of "Good Morning America" Robin Roberts (Obama 2012). President Obama's "evolving" ideas about gay marriage matched the general trend on this topic. A recent study by Pew Research Center indicated that there was a 17 percentage point increase in support for same sex marriage – from 31 percent in 2004 to 48 percent in 2012. And although there was a 34 percentage point difference between Democrats and Republicans in their support of gay marriage (66 percent of Democrats in support, compared to 32 percent of Republicans), the percentage of Republicans supporting gay marriage had also increased from 2004 to 2012 ("Changing attitudes on gay marriage" 2015). Nevertheless, the gap between Democrats and Republicans on this issue indicated that it was

still a good predictor of partisan support in 2012. But was this true for both Blacks *and* Whites? Using the 2012 ANES, we are able to gauge support for gay marriage as well as support for political parties. The results suggest that despite the heightened saliency that came with President Obama declaring his support for gay marriage, this issue failed to become a deciding factor in Blacks' partisanship. Overall, 29 percent of Blacks and 25 percent of Whites opposed gay marriage.[2] Among Blacks who opposed gay marriage in 2012, less than 3 percent reported voting for Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, compared to 87 percent of Whites. Likewise, less than 2 percent of Blacks who opposed gay marriage self-identified with the Republican Party.[3] The rest either identified as Democrat (75 percent) or Independent (24 percent). Of the Whites who opposed gay marriage, 55 percent identified as Republican, 33 percent identified as Independent, and 12 percent identified as Democrat.

Why doesn't ideology predict party identification and candidate support the same way among Blacks as it does for Whites? This question serves as the impetus of this book. *Conservative but Not Republican* explores the ways citizens make sense of ideological labels. More specifically, the central aim of *Conservative but Not Republican* is to examine the factors that influence both the predictors of Black ideology and the applicability of ideology to Blacks' partisan evaluations. I argue that we cannot fully understand the relationship between Blacks' ideology and party identification unless we take into account the mix of considerations – including Blacks' attitudes about religious, social welfare, racial, military, and moral issues – used to determine whether African Americans will ultimately label themselves as liberal or conservative. Furthermore, we must also consider how racial considerations can often supplant the expression Blacks' ideology when it comes to choosing with which political party to identify. Taking into account the unique conceptualization and conditional applicability of the liberal–conservative continuum offers a more comprehensive understanding of the structure and function of ideology in American public opinion.

[2] Respondents were asked which answer choice came closest to their view: 1) Gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to legally marry; 2) Gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to form civil unions but not legally marry; or 3) There should be no legal recognition of a gay or lesbian couple's relationship. For these analyses, opposition to gay marriage denotes respondents' selection of the third answer choice.

[3] Party identification here is measured using the 3-point pid_self variable provided in the 2012 ANES time series study. The category "Independent" included respondents who specified they had no preference or another party preference.

IDEOLOGICAL TRENDS IN BLACK AMERICA

Evidence of conservative thought in the Black community dates as far back as the eighteenth century (Eisenstadt 1999). In addition to well-known historical Black conservative figures such as Booker T. Washington, Black leaders from W.E.B. DuBois and Frederick Douglass to A. Philip Randolph and Louis Farrakhan have incorporated conservative thinking into their advocacy of a more equal America. Most commonly, Black conservatism has manifested in the tension between the pursuit of government response to racial injustice versus the desire to pursue a strategy of Black political and economic autonomy (Eisenstadt 1999). Thus, strains of conservatism have, to some extent, always permeated Black politics – from the elite level on downward.

Recent work has demonstrated that there are actually a multitude of ideological strains within the Black community (Dawson 2001; Harris-Lacewell 2004). Dawson (2001), for instance, describes six Black ideologies – radical egalitarianism, disillusioned liberalism, Black Marxism, Black nationalism, Black feminism, and Black conservatism – that serve as trends in Black political thought.[4] Of these six ideologies, Dawson argues that Black conservatism has the least grassroots support within the Black community, although his conceptualization is much narrower than that considered here and in the broader research on ideology in American politics.[5] For instance, Lewis (2013) argues that Black conservativism is not only defined by anti-government attitudes, but also religiosity and support for traditional family values. Further, when we use this broader definition, Black conservatism is not as far out in the margins of Black political thought as previously conceived.

[4] Dawson (2001) does not examine Blacks' placement on the liberal–conservative continuum. From his perspective, that is not to say that Blacks do not organize their politics along this dimension. Rather, Dawson argues that there have been "dramatically divisive conflicts within the black community," such as the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas hearings, which did not fall neatly along the liberal–conservative continuum (45). In these cases, alternative ideologies, which developed out of Black counterpublics, better explain those cleavages.

[5] Dawson's measure of Black conservatism is based on a narrow set of racial and economic issues that do not fully encapsulate the nature of Black conservatism. He finds support for this claim using an additive index of four measures that conceptualize Black conservatism and radical egalitarianism as polar opposites of each other. Moreover, Dawson's radical egalitarianism/Black conservatism scale's reliability coefficient is only 0.28, suggesting that this conceptualization of Black conservatism is not an internally consistent measure.

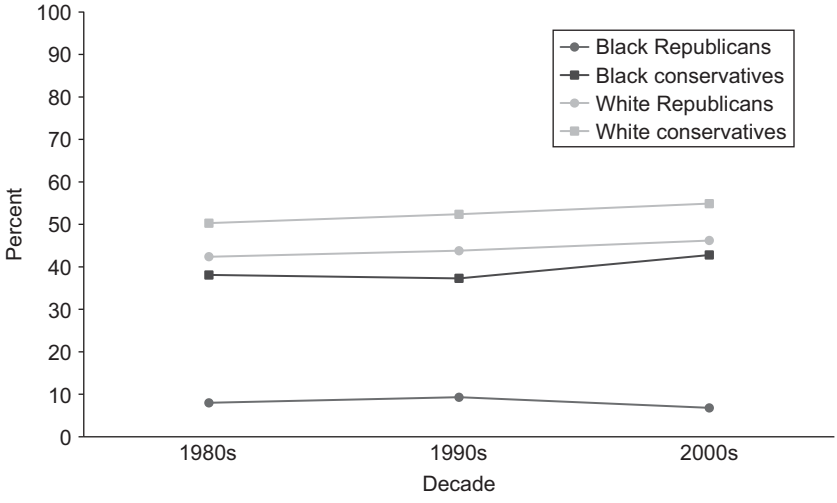

FIGURE I.1 Percentage of conservatives and republicans, by race
Note: Figures are weighted values. Republicans include strong and weak Republicans, as well as Independents who lean Republican. Conservatives include extremely conservative, conservative, and slightly conservative.
Source: American National Election Study Cumulative Data File, 1948–2012.

Moreover, scholars have actually noted the growing conservative nature of the African-American electorate over the last few decades (Watson 1998; Tate 2010). Generally speaking, Whites tend to be more conservative than Blacks in any given decade. Nevertheless, a significant percentage of Blacks self-identify as conservative. For instance, during the 1980s, 50 percent of Whites and 38 percent of Blacks self-identified as conservative (see Figure I.1). Two decades later, that number is 55 percent for Whites and 43 percent for Blacks (American National Election Studies and Stanford University 2015).[6] Yet, the rate at which Blacks identify as

[6] These numbers were generated using the summary liberal–conservative scale provided in the ANES cumulative data file. Originally, respondents were asked to place themselves on a seven-point scale, ranging from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. The "conservative" category is comprised of those respondents who indicated that they were either extremely conservative, conservative, or slightly conservative. Included in these figures are responses to the follow-up "choice" question whereby respondents who initially indicated that they didn't know or hadn't that much about their ideological self-identification were asked "If you had to choose, would you consider yourself a liberal or a conservative?"

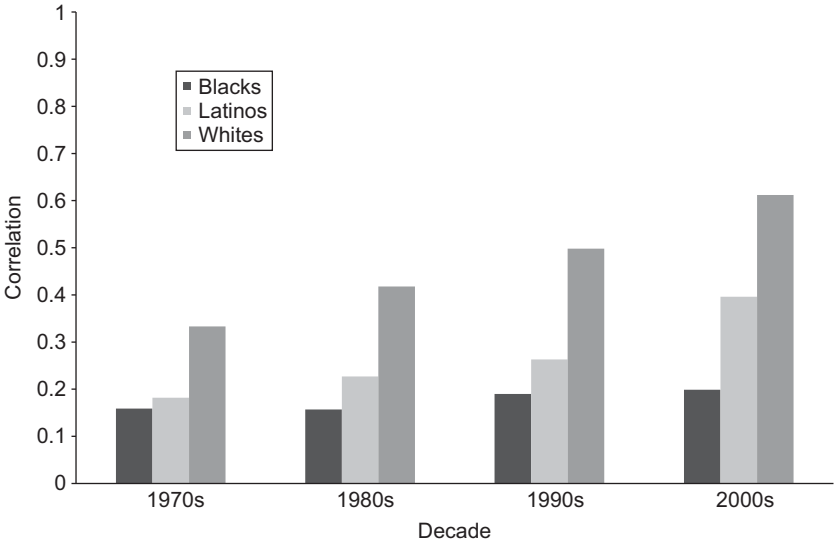

FIGURE I.2 Correlation between party identification and ideology by race and decade

Note: Values are Pearson product–moment correlations. Party identification is a seven-point scale ranging from strong Democrat (0) to strong Republican (1). Ideology is a seven-point scale ranging from extremely liberal (0) to extremely conservative (1).

Source: American National Election Study Cumulative Data File, 1948–2012.

Republican lags considerably, especially when compared to Whites.[7] The percentage of Black Republicans never reaches beyond 10 percent, regardless of decade. The percentage of White Republicans, on the other hand, moderately increases from 42 in the 1980s to 46 in the 2000s (American National Election Studies and Stanford University 2015).

Figure I.2 provides a longitudinal look at the correlation between ideological self-identification and party identification.[8] Among Whites, the relationship between party identification and ideological self-identification has been growing stronger over the last four decades. During the 1970s, the correlation between these two constructs was 0.33. Since then, the correlation has increased from 0.42 in the 1980s,

[7] Party identification here is measured using the Party ID Summary provided in the ANES cumulative data file. The category "Republican" includes both strong and weak Republicans, as well as those Independents who lean Republican.

[8] The full seven-point party identification and ideological self-identification scales are used for these analyses.

0.50 in the 1990s, to 0.61 in the 2000s. The correlation between party identification and ideological self-identification has remained consistently low among Blacks over the same time period, hitting its lowest point in the 1970s and 80s (r = 0.16). Currently, the correlation among Blacks is 0.20, one-third that of Whites. As a comparison, Figure I.2 also indicates that the correlation between Latinos' party identification and ideological self-identification had been consistently low and on par with that of Blacks throughout the 1970s and 80s. But by the 2000s, that correlation had increased to 0.40, 20 percentage points higher than Blacks. This evidence suggests that Blacks truly are the exception to the rule when it comes to the American electorate's recent alignment of their partisanship with their ideological self-identification.

Not only does Blacks' ideological self-identification weakly correlate with party identification, Black conservatives behave more like Black liberals than they do White conservatives when it comes to vote choice. In 2012, for instance, 96 percent of Black liberals and 78 percent of Black conservatives identified with the Democratic Party (see Figure I.3). In contrast, 81 percent of White liberals identified as Democrats while only 13 percent of White conservatives did so.[9] We see a similar pattern emerge when we look at presidential vote choice in 2012. Among Whites, we observe the expected relationship. Eighty-six percent of liberals voted for Obama, the Democratic Party's presidential candidate, while only 14 percent of conservatives voted for him. Nearly all of Black liberals reported voting for Obama and 89 percent of Black conservatives reported voting for the incumbent Democratic president (ANES 2012). Note that this is not just an artifact of the 2012 election. There is strong support for the Democratic presidential candidate among Black conservatives, even when that space is not occupied by an African-American candidate. In 2004, 83 percent of Black conservatives voted for Kerry, compared to 97 percent of Black liberals. Compare this to Whites, where 82 percent of liberals and just 18 percent of conservatives voted for Kerry in 2004 (University of Michigan 2006). So while fewer Black conservatives voted for Kerry than Black liberals, the difference between the two is nowhere near as stark as it is among Whites. Thus, Black conservatives lean toward the Democratic Party and its candidates significantly more so than their White counterparts.

[9] The same variable construction described in footnotes 6 and 7 were applied to the 2004 and 2012 data.

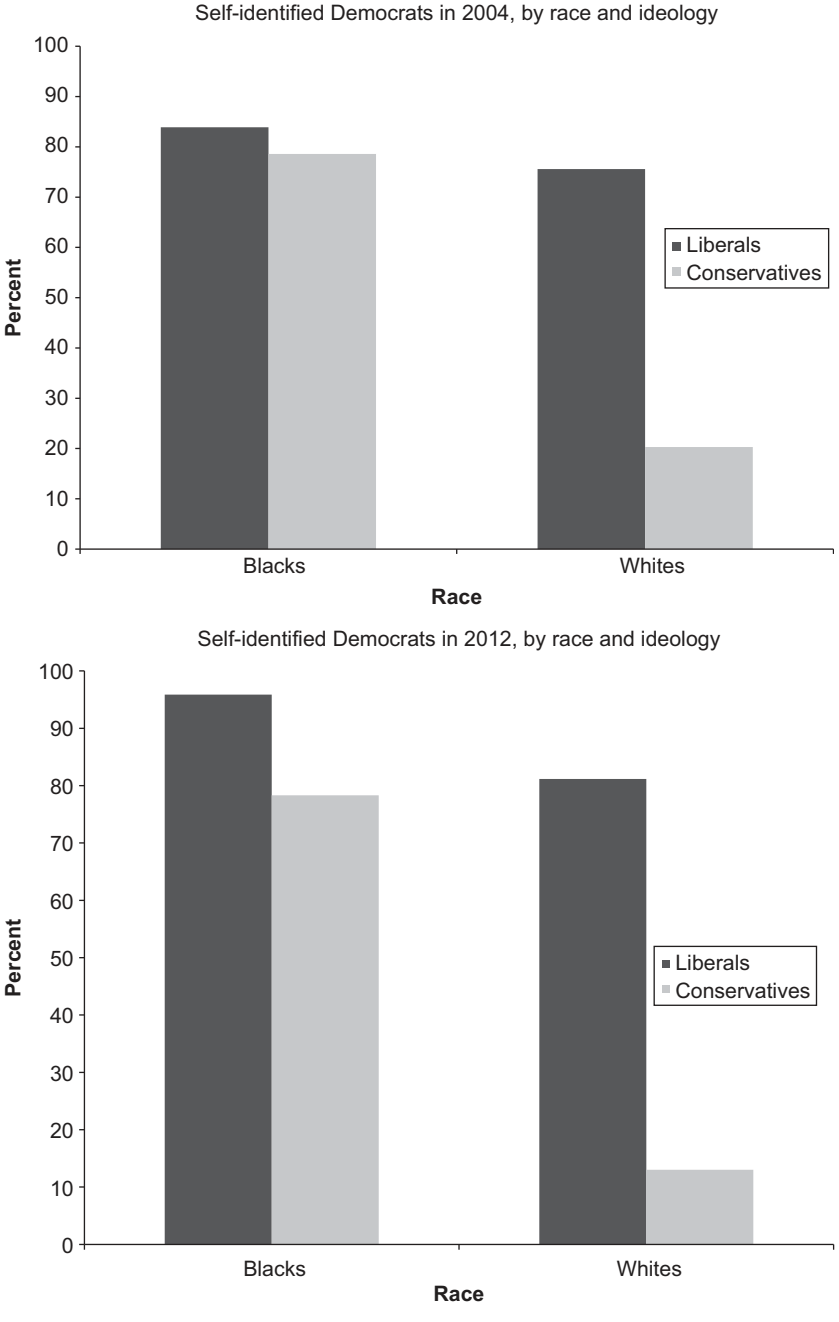

FIGURE 1.3 Party and candidate support, 2004 and 2012
Note: Figures are weighted values. Democrats include strong and weak Democrats, as well as Independents who lean Democrat. Conservatives include extremely conservative, conservative, and slightly conservative. Liberals include extremely liberal, liberal, and slightly liberal.
Source: American National Election Studies, 2004 and 2012.