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RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Are We All Alright? The Influence of Socioeconomic Status on Black Women's Political Beliefs and Policy Preferences by Region

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**Abstract**

Black women have come to be seen as a dominant force in American politics—particularly in support of the Democratic party. However, this dominance in the political sphere has not translated to dominance in the economic sphere. Despite Black women's outperformance of their Black male peers in higher education outcomes and overrepresentation in the labor force, there is still an economic gap between Black women and their male counterparts. In addition, regional differences in cost of living have led to diverging local conditions for Black women as well. What do Black women's socioeconomic outcomes mean for their political ideology and political preferences? Few studies capture intra-group variation among Black women and how the context in which they live may shape their economic and sociopolitical outlook. Using the 2016 Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey, we examine how the relationship between Black women's socioeconomic status and their political beliefs and the relationship between Black women's socioeconomic status and political preferences are conditioned by region. We capture the individual factors and regional context that shape differences among Black women in their political beliefs and policy attitudes. This research furthers our understanding of differences in Black women's politics.

**Keywords:** Black women; region; socioeconomic status; political beliefs; policy preferences

## Introduction

Black women have come to be known as a collective powerhouse in the United States electorate (Gillespie & Brown 2019). In recent years, we have witnessed significant milestones for Black women, such as the historic election of Vice President Kamala Harris and the appointment of Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, symbolizing strides in leadership and representation. Despite these political achievements, Black women's high level of political engagement

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(Brown 2014; Prestage 1991), and the overrepresentation of Black women in the labor force (Roux 2021), the economic landscape for Black women in the United States is characterized by a complex interplay of advancements and persistent challenges. While Black women are the fastest-growing demographic of entrepreneurs, around 40% of Black women in the United States still have annual household incomes under $50,000 (AAUW 2023). Furthermore, regional differences in economic opportunities, cost of living, and sociopolitical culture add a spatial dimension to the conversation about Black women's finances and politics. Comparisons between Black women and their race and gender counterparts tend to obscure growing intra-group complexities and spatial differences among Black women. Thus, this raises the question, to what extent do individual and contextual factors create differences among Black women in their beliefs about politics and policy?

Extant literature has shown that employing an intersectional framework provides insightful perspectives on the political behavior and attitudes of Black women (see Gay & Tate 1998; Simien 2005, 2012; Simien & Clawson 2004; and Stout, Kretschmer, & Ruppanner 2017). Historically and currently, intersectional oppression works to disadvantage Black women in the American political space (Alexander-Floyd 2007; Hancock 2004; King 1975) and American society more generally (Collins 2002; Crenshaw 1991). Though Black women may hold a semblance of political power, there seem to be limits on their ability to wield their political power to create tangible material benefits (Frymer 2011). Many Black women are reaping the benefits of their increasing educational attainment, but a large segment of Black women find themselves stuck in the depths of struggle. Unfortunately, largely due to data limitations, very few empirical studies capture intra-group variation among Black women. Even fewer specifically address the importance of geographic identity, though we know place can moderate access to economic opportunities and political beliefs (Frasure-Yokley & Wilcox-Archuleta 2019; Grant 2019).

Using a sample of over 2,000 Black women from the 2016 Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey (CMPS), our scholarly objective is twofold. First, we want to know whether socioeconomic status has a significant impact on Black women's political beliefs and attitudes, respectively. Second, we want to know the extent to which the effect of socioeconomic status on political beliefs and attitudes among Black women changes based on where they live. We argue there are regional and socioeconomic status differences in Black women's political beliefs and attitudes. More specifically, the effect of socioeconomic status on Black women's political ideology formation and policy preferences is conditioned by their region of residence, causing significant intra-group division. We find that educational attainment significantly predicts Black women's political beliefs, whereas income does not. In addition, we see differences between the West and other regions in how education impacts ideology and the Northeast and other regions in how education impacts linked fate. When it comes to policy attitudes, the respective effects of income and education on how Black women think about aid to the poor and healthcare spending are also conditional on the region in which they live. In particular, we see differences between Black women in the Northeast and other regions in their support for these policies.

Our research challenges conventional expectations surrounding the relationship between socioeconomic status, political ideology, and policy preferences. Black

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Women's allegiance to the Democratic party obscures and flattens underlying divisions, making it easy to dismiss their multifaceted political beliefs (Philpot 2017; Tate 2010; White & Laird 2020). We show what happens when we put mainstream political allegiances aside and strip away the assumption that Black women are a political monolith. By taking an intersectional approach to the study of race, gender, class, and place, we see not only intra-group division among Black women but also the limits of understanding how Black women engage in politics when we do not take into account the sociopolitical context in which they operate. We hope this work prompts deeper inquiry into the ways traditional political science concepts such as socioeconomic status, inequality, and regionalism are disrupted by the evolving geo-economical complexity of marginalized communities and the diverse lived experiences of Black people.

## Understanding Black Women's Political Beliefs

A foundational component of Black women's political beliefs is their political ideology, formed through a multifaceted process as evidenced by extant literature spanning political science and psychology. Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes (1960) laid the groundwork for understanding political values along a traditional liberal-conservative spectrum. Subsequent studies on political ideology have sought to either dismiss the concept, arguing that most citizens do not have a coherent and structured set of political beliefs (Converse 2006), or explore the multidimensionality of political ideology (Feldman & Johnston 2014). The concept of structural heterogeneity in ideology suggests that the conventional unidimensional space of ideology is insufficient to capture the full spectrum of political beliefs and preferred societal aims. Individuals may hold varied beliefs across different dimensions, such as economic and social issues. Within these dimensions, individuals can occupy different positions resulting in diverse political ideologies like fiscal conservatism coupled with social liberalism or vice versa (Ellis & Stimson 2012; Feldman & Johnston 2014; Treier & Hillygus 2009).

African American political thought illuminates a unique ideological landscape, distinct from their white counterparts and traditional liberal-conservative paradigms (Dawson 2001; Harris-Lacewell 2010; Philpot 2017). This uniqueness is particularly pronounced for Black women whose lived experiences are shaped by race and gender. Consequently, their political beliefs do not always conform to established political labels and party allegiances. For example, while the general population aligns conservatism with Republican support (Abramowitz & Saunders 1998), this linkage is less evident among Black voters, including Black women (Hajnal & Lee 2011; Philpot 2017). Black women, while often appearing more liberal than their male counterparts in policy attitudes, also engage with traditional social conservative principles, emphasizing self-reliance and religiosity (Harris-Lacewell 2001; Harris-Perry 2011; Lewis 2013; Lizotte & Carey, Jr. 2021). Respectability politics, a conservative racial uplift strategy spearheaded by Black church women, exemplifies the influence of religious values on political ideology formation and the rich history of conservatism in the Black community (Higginbotham 1994). However, Black political ideology is less about having an attachment to a label, like

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"conservative" or "liberal," and more about a sense of a shared reality with other Black people.

Linked fate theory compliments and complicates the traditional political ideology spectrum, representing a pivotal construct for understanding Black political behavior. Michael Dawson, in his seminal work, *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics* (1994), posits that individuals within a racial group perceive their personal life chances as connected to the fate of the group as a whole. Linked fate theory explains how a collective political consciousness develops based on shared racial experiences (Dawson 1994). Studies have shown how this type of group consciousness is rooted in the strength of one's attachment to the Black community. Furthermore, feelings of linked fate often moderate the expression of conservative ideology and influence partisan identity (Philpot 2017; White & Laird 2020).

In regard to gender consciousness, studies have shown gendered linked fate to be a weaker political belief for American women, in comparison to the expansive nature and capacity of linked fate rooted in racial identity (Gay, Hochschild, & White 2016). For Black women, shared experiences of intersectional oppression amplify their sense of linked fate, and racial-linked fate reinforces identification with gender-linked fate (Gay & Tate 1998; Simien 2005; Stout, Kretschmer & Ruppanner 2017). Furthermore, subscribing to Black feminist ideology does not preclude someone from having solidarity with the racial group (Simien & Clawson 2004). This shows how gender categorization and racial group membership interact within the historically contingent frameworks of patriarchy and racial hierarchy in the United States (Campi & Junn 2019). Black women identify with the broader experiences of the African American community but also grapple with specific gendered aspects of racial discrimination and sociopolitical exclusion. Linked fate for Black women extends beyond racial solidarity to encapsulate an understanding of gendered struggles within the racial group, forming a unique Black feminist consciousness that shapes their political behavior (Simien 2005, 2012; Simien & Clawson 2004; Stout, Kretschmer, & Ruppanner 2017).

Understanding Black women's policy preferences requires an approach that acknowledges their unique position as citizens and targets in social policy discussions. During welfare reform discussions in the 1980s and 1990s, the pervasive "welfare queen" stereotype, a construct steeped in racial and gender biases, served to unfairly depict Black women as habitual exploiters of public assistance systems (Gillens 1999). For instance, the image of the Black mother as a primary Medicaid recipient reflects not just a racialized view of welfare recipients but also a gendered one, where Black women's roles as caregivers are simultaneously recognized and undervalued (Hancock 2004; Masters, Lindhorst, & Meyers 2014). In regard to affirmative action, Black women are often characterized as undeserving or unqualified, failing to acknowledge the systemic barriers that Black women face in education and employment (Crenshaw 1998, 2006). The stereotyping of Black women in American policy discussions has played a significant role in shaping public opinion and social policy in a manner that often disregards their genuine challenges (Gillens 1999; Soss, Fording, & Schram 2011).

A commitment to communal well-being and a critical awareness of systemic inequalities marks many Black women's lives. However, shared experiences of

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disadvantage because of their race and gender do not mean that all Black women think in the same way about the best political strategy to achieve change for the group (Collins 2002; Hancock 2014; Jordan-Zachery 2007; Simien & Clawson 2004). These differences among Black women are often hidden by pressures to consider the best policy option for the group—whether that pressure be internal or external (White, Laird, & Allen 2014). Contrary to the self-interested tendencies that might be expected under the strain of socioeconomic challenges, Black women often exhibit a pronounced ethic of care in their political attitudes (Collins 2000). The policy preferences of Black women, therefore, are not merely a reflection of their individual circumstances but are deeply intertwined with communal experiences of race and gender. This phenomenon has led to the development of a distinct Black female consciousness that significantly influences their political attitudes (Simien 2012; Simien & Clawson 2004; Stout, Kretschmer, & Ruppanner 2017). This underscores the critical need for a more nuanced, historically sound, and empathetic understanding of Black women in social policy frameworks, particularly in regard to racialized policies.

Racialized policies are policies that are easily translated into racial issues with redistributive undertones, whether worded using race-neutral or explicitly racial references (Burns & Gimpel 2000; Gillens 1999). These policies can either perpetuate racial inequality and discrimination (i.e., drug sentencing laws and mass incarceration, welfare policy, inequitable public school funding, redlining, and gerrymandering) or address racial discrimination while producing opportunities for advancement (i.e., affirmative action in higher education, free community college tuition, job training programs, housing voucher programs, etc. (Bobo & Gilliam 1990; Campbell, Wong, & Citrin 2006; Gillens 1999; Michener 2019)). Government assistance for the poor, government healthcare, and affirmative action are all examples of social policies that have racial implications and racial undertones due to how they have been discussed in the public sphere. We believe that in addition to political ideology, Black women's support for these racialized policies can also vary based on socioeconomic status and region.

## Rethinking Socioeconomic Status

A foundational political science theory is that an individual's position within an economic structure fundamentally shapes their political consciousness and ideology due to inherently conflicting interests, which are reflected in their political preferences and actions. Central to this theory is the "Resource Model," which posits that individuals with higher socioeconomic status possess greater political resources, such as time, money, and civic skills, leading to increased political engagement (Verba & Nie 1972). Traditionally, socioeconomic status has been delineated primarily through two key indicators: education and income. Education is viewed as offering individuals a pathway to upward mobility, enhanced cognitive abilities, and exposure to diverse perspectives, all influencing their political attitudes. Conversely, income is seen as a direct reflection of one's economic well-being and security, often shaping policy preferences based on personal financial interests (Form 1973). Though both are used broadly, often interchangeably or in tandem, to gauge an individual's economic and social standing, socioeconomic status models have been

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critiqued for limited applicability to people of color. For example, while some studies suggest that the political attitudes of whites become more conservative with increased socioeconomic status, this trend is not consistently observed among African Americans (Tate 1994). Assumptions that higher socioeconomic status universally translates to conservative economic policy preferences must be challenged when considering the racialized experiences of Black communities and the theory of linked fate. Furthermore, Black women's income or educational attainment alone does not capture the full spectrum of their economic standing.

According to the American Express 2019 State of Women-Owned Business Report, Black women are the fastest-growing group of entrepreneurs. Black women-owned businesses expanded by 50% from 2014 to 2019, compared with a 21% growth rate for women-owned businesses overall (Express 2019). Between 2011 and 2019, Black women saw a greater increase in bachelor's degree attainment compared with White and Asian women. However, Black women are the most likely demographic to have student debt, and their average debt level of $38,000 surpasses that of Black men and White women and men, further exacerbating income disparities (Hale 2023). The assumption that high educational attainment invariably correlates with high income is contested, especially when considering the wage and wealth gap experienced by highly educated Black women compared with their white counterparts. In 2021, Black women earned only 64% of what non-Hispanic white men were paid. The average annual earnings for Black women were $46,543, lower than those for White women ($51,451) and Asian American women ($63,867), and markedly below the median annual earnings for men overall ($61,180) (Now 2023; AAUW 2023). Overall, a significant number of Black women are disproportionately represented in lower-paying service occupations and are underrepresented in higher-paying sectors such as engineering and computing (AAUW 2023). According to a 2021 Gallup poll, Black women (in comparison to their White, Latino, and Black male counterparts) are less likely to say that there are good job opportunities in their communities and less likely to say that they can live comfortably on their present income (Lloyd 2021).

A substantial income gap acts as a significant driver in maintaining a significant wealth gap for Black women. Black households possess nearly 15% of the wealth of white households (Institute 2023). Black women own nearly 10% of the wealth of the median white household. This gap is slightly larger for single Black women relative to single white men and is further exacerbated by national economic challenges (Sachs 2023). According to an extensive 2017 study by the Cook Center at Duke University, unlike for white women, a college degree and marriage fail to yield significant wealth gains for Black women. Married white women without a college degree have nearly four times the wealth of married Black women without a college degree. Single white women with a bachelor's degree have seven times the wealth of single Black women with college degrees. Single black women aged 60 and older and with a college degree have a mere $11,000 in wealth, which is in stark contrast to the $384,400 in median wealth among single white women that age with a bachelor's degree (Zaw et al. 2017). This data makes clear that the traditionally assumed relationship between education and income is profoundly disturbed by the economic realities faced by Black women in the United States.

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Patricia Hill Collins uses an intersectional approach to explain the unconventional nature of Black women's economic position and political thought (Collins 1990, 2000, 2015). She claims traditional economic analyses often overlook the unique challenges faced by Black women, who are positioned at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities. Her black political economy framework examines how historical and ongoing systems of power, including race, class, gender, and sexuality, intersect to shape the economic experiences and opportunities of Black individuals, particularly Black women (Collins 2000). Most interestingly, Collins also posits that Black women's economic perspectives are not just about individual prosperity but are deeply rooted in notions of collective care and community well-being. Thus, for Black women, going to college and becoming highly educated are rarely in pursuit of purely selfish gain, but also as a way to help others (Collins 1990). This sentiment is echoed by other seminal Black women scholars, such as bell hooks and Angela Davis, who argue for a comprehensive understanding of Black women's economic status and political beliefs, one that integrates individual achievement, historical legacies, cultural narratives, and systemic challenges (Davis 1983; Hooks 2000). Less discussed in Black feminist literature and even less studied in political science research is increasing intra-group socioeconomic inequality among Black women.

Intra-racial socioeconomic theory suggests increased educational or economic differences within a racial or ethnic group produce divergent attitudes (Allen & Farley 1986; Hyman & Sheatsley 1956; Hochschild, Weaver, & Burch 2012; Jackman & Muha 1984). Unified Black public opinion diminishes as the community becomes more dispersed and segregated along economic lines (White & Laird 2020). The underlying rationale is that when some members of a racial or ethnic group attain financial success, and others do not, it distorts individual views of persisting marginalization, causing intra-group perceptual gaps (Hochschild, Weaver, & Burch 2012; Shelby 2005). The emergence of this trend is particularly evident when examining intra-group income inequality through the lens of the Gini coefficient, a widely recognized metric for assessing income distribution. The Gini coefficient ranges from 0, indicating perfect equality, to 1, signifying maximum inequality. Notably, despite the overall lower income levels of Black households compared with their white counterparts, the Black community exhibits the highest level of intra-group income inequality. In 2016, the household Gini index for Blacks stood at .50, surpassing Whites and Hispanics at .47 and Asians at .46 (Wilson 2018).

A main driver of increasing intra-group inequality among African Americans is the substantial income gains among the more affluent Black households. Specifically, the share of Black households with incomes exceeding $75,000 more than doubled from 1975 to 2016, reaching 24% after adjusting for inflation. Even more striking is the fourfold increase in Black households earning $100,000 or more, which rose to 15%, in comparison to the growth in high-income white households, which was less pronounced. Conversely, the proportion of Black households earning below $15,000 witnessed a modest decline of only six percentage points, settling at 20.6% in 2016 (Wilson 2018). These statistics illuminate a widening economic chasm within the Black community, marked by significant gains at the higher income spectrum and persistent struggles at the lower end. This growing intra-group income inequality is reshaping the socioeconomic landscape among Black

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women, leading to increased divisions and diverse experiences based on economic standing. We believe increasing intra-group income inequality is shaping Black women's political ideology and their policy preferences.

## Regional Variation in the Black Experience

Black geographies, as a field of study, posits the inherent spatiality of Black life, emphasizing the spatial imaginaries, space-making practices, and senses of place that are deeply rooted in Black communities (Bledsoe & Wright 2019; Brown 2021; McKittrick 2006, 2011). This approach challenges the traditional perspectives in geography, which often portrayed Black people either as lacking geography due to the disruptions of the transatlantic slave trade or as mere victims of geography, subjected to ongoing displacement and spatial segregation (McKittrick 2011). This perspective refutes current spatial arrangements as natural, innocent, and ahistorical. It also negates the notion of space as a passive backdrop for racist activities, arguing that racism is inherently a spatial practice (Hawthorne 2019). Space is both a reflection and a reproducer of racism, with a key aspect of anti-Blackness being its tendency to cast Blackness as perpetually "out of place" or as placeless (Domosh 2017). A Black geographies political economy framework posits that the socioeconomic experiences of Black women cannot be understood solely through the lens of class or economic status. Racial and spatial dynamics interact with economic factors, while race and class intersect within specific geographical contexts (Bledsoe & Wright 2019). By integrating this understanding into the analysis of Black women's class and political attitudes, we can more accurately capture the multifaceted nature of their experiences, acknowledging the role of space and place in shaping their economic realities and political perspectives.

Since V.O. Key's seminal work, "Southern Politics" (1948), scholars have often limited their understanding of regions by emphasizing the significance of the South or the former Confederate states, thereby overlooking the potential influence of other regions. This oversight has become embedded in the study of U.S. racial attitudes, where regional analysis is frequently sidelined as arbitrary, with more attention given to neighborhood effects. However, for African Americans in particular, regional configurations have become anything but arbitrary. Regions and subregions, while united under the umbrella of nationalism, possess distinct racialized histories. These histories, replete with their unique challenges and triumphs, add layers of complexity to the overarching narrative of racial progress. Hunter and Robinson's (2018) "Chocolate Map" theory posits that Black citizens are not mere passive observers in the creation of these regional identities. Instead, they are active participants, shaping and being shaped by their regional environments. This perspective recognizes the shared experiences of Black individuals across the "domestic diaspora," from the communal joy felt during backyard barbecues to the shared pain of police brutality. It is also sensitive to the ways in which national phenomena, such as the Civil Rights Movement and deindustrialization, impacted Black people differently across regions. The theory underscores the South's significance as a pivotal region for African Americans while simultaneously highlighting the distinct racialized political and social experiences of Black people residing in the Midwest, Northeast, and West (Hunter & Robinson 2018)

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## Intersecting Status and Context

Underexplored in the literature are the ways in which region of residence adds a spatialized dimension to one's socioeconomic status, particularly for Black women. Nie, Powell, and Prewitt (1969) examine the impact of economic development on political participation, emphasizing the role of socioeconomic status and spatial dynamics. This work highlights how economic growth leads to social changes such as urbanization and the expansion of the middle class, which in turn increase political engagement (Nie, Powell, & Prewitt 1969). We suggest there is a relationship between Black women's political beliefs, individual socioeconomic status, and regional dynamics. An individual's socioeconomic status often shapes their access to resources, information, and networks, which can influence their political perspectives and priorities. However, when this is juxtaposed with regional nuances, each with its unique socioeconomic, historical, and political contexts, the complexity of Black women's political attitudes becomes evident. One's region of residence provides access to specific cultural knowledge and practices and unique social networks deeply embedded in the regional fabric (Baker 2022). For Black women, this regional cultural capital can be instrumental in navigating both personal and professional spheres, influencing their social mobility and overall socioeconomic status.

Consider the South, for instance. Historically agrarian, the region has seen a significant increase in the Black population and a shift toward more diversified economies in recent decades (Grant 2019). For Black women, the South may offer more economic opportunities, especially with the reverse Great Migration bringing a resurgence of Black entrepreneurs and Black businesses to southern cities (Jones 2019; Jourdain 2020). What is pulling African Americans to the South contrasts greatly with what is pushing Black people out of the Midwest and Northeast. Declining job opportunities and stagnant wages, coupled with increasing concentrations of poverty and geo-economic isolation, present a different set of challenges for Black women in these regions (Bluestone 1988; Hobor 2013). Meanwhile, with its entertainment and tech-driven economies, the West presents a unique landscape and issues of inclusiveness for Black women that are often overlooked (Moretti 2012). Thus, while economic indicators remain central to discussions of socioeconomic status, the intrinsic value of regional sociopolitical culture and economic capital for Black women underscores the need for a more spatial and intersectional approach to the concept.

The unique position of Black women in the labor market, along with growing intra-group complexities over time, beg us to treat education and income as distinct, albeit interconnected, facets of one's socioeconomic status. We know that for many Black women, educational and professional achievements have not equated to proportional economic benefits. However, while there are many Black women who may not be doing as well as their white counterparts, they are doing very well in comparison to others in their racial group. We suspect the changing geo-economic landscape for Black women may have profound implications for their political ideology, perspectives, and priorities. The ongoing struggle with wage and wealth gaps, compounded by the disproportionate burden of student loan debt and barriers in accessing high-paying sectors, creates unique points of economic pain for select

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Black women. We believe this postmodern economic context is driving growing division within the group, as differing individual and place-based experiences lead to varied attitudes.

Altogether, the extant literature leads us to develop the following expectations. The relationship between Black women's socioeconomic status and political beliefs will be conditioned by region. We expect Black women with higher education to have stronger feelings of linked fate, but this effect will be most pronounced among women outside of the South. The South has been a region in which Black life has traditionally been tied and, more recently, has thrived. Thus, the racial enlightenment effect that education can have on Black women will have a stronger effect in regions with smaller Black populations, like the Midwest, Northeast, and West. We think income will play more of a role in the formation of political ideology for Black women in the Northeast and Midwest, but we expect Black women in the South to be the most conservative. We also expect that the relationship between Black women's socioeconomic status and political attitudes will be conditioned by region. Again, we expect education to have an enlightening effect on Black women—making them more accepting of policies that lend to government intervention. However, this effect will be more pronounced outside of the South—given our expectation that southern Black women will be more conservative. Finally, we expect that income will have varying effects across regions. While southern Black women will be more conservative in their attitudes than their counterparts in other regions, Black women in the Midwest, Northeast, and West may lean into notions of collective care or seek to care for their own interests because of income concerns.

## Data and Methods

In order to carry out a test of our theory, we make use of the 2016 CMPS. The 2016 CMPS was the first survey to capture responses from a multiracial/multiethnic, multilingual sample in the post-election context (see Barreto et al. 2018). This survey is opportune for our purposes given that it includes a large sample of Black respondents ($n = 3{,}102$) from various regions in the United States, of which 2,141 are Black women. Furthermore, this survey includes a number of questions and economic and political attitudes, along with standard demographic information and questions about support for various groups and policies. In addition, because of the nature of the survey, we are able to capture the regional effects of the communities in which our Black women respondents live.

In our first set of models, we focus on how their region of residence moderates the relationship between Black women's socioeconomic status and political ideology. That is, we use an interaction between socioeconomic status (income and education, respectively) and region (Northeast, South, Midwest, and West) as our main independent variables. We model income and education given that Black women's educational attainment does not necessarily equate to their economic earnings. As we noted above, the number of Black women attaining higher education is indeed increasing, but the wage gap between Black women and their Black and white male counterparts persists. Thus, income or education alone does not tell the full story about Black women's socioeconomic status. In our model estimation, both variables are scaled from 0 to 1 and treated as continuous

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variables.[1] As it pertains to our region variable, we follow the U.S. Census designation for what states are grouped by region.

In the aforementioned models, we use ideology and linked fate as dependent variables. As our primary goal here is to examine Black women's political attitudes, these measures are important to speak to the heterogeneity in attitudes among Black women. We include ordinary least squares models in Table 1, which show the relationship between the main independent variable and each dependent variable. While political ideology might be canonically defined as one's self-placement on a liberal-conservative spectrum, we take the lead from the Black politics literature, which accounts for that traditional measure along with a number of others—namely, linked fate (Dawson 1994). The Black politics literature has long pointed to the ways in which linked fate captures intra-group dynamics. Because we use ordinary least squares models to measure these relationships, we treat each dependent variable as continuous, and each is scaled from 0 to 1.[2] For the traditional ideology measure, the 0 to 1 scale captures the range from the most conservative (0) to the most liberal (1). For linked fate, the 0 to 1 scale captures the range from no attachment to the belief (0) to a strong attachment to the belief (1).

We include a number of control variables in our models. We capture demographic variables such as age, home ownership, marital status, being a parent, being foreign-born, and religiosity. We note that we control for income in the models in which we treat education and region as our main independent variable and vice versa in models in which we focus on income and region. Age, income, religiosity, and education are continuous in our models. Marital status (married or not), home ownership (homeowner or not), military status (served in the military or not), and being a parent (parent or not) are coded as dichotomous, with the baseline group of comparison being "no" to each of these items. Thus, our models show an indicator for married Black women, Black women homeowners, Black women who have served in the military, and Black women who are parents. Theoretically, these variables hold meaning given the ways that they may contribute to Black women's conservative or liberal beliefs. For example, age is negatively associated with support for marginalized groups (see Bunyasi & Smith 2019), and military status provides a means for upward mobility but has often been associated with more conservative policy preferences (see Philpot 2017). On the other hand, Black-educated women are more likely to subscribe to linked fate beliefs, which has implications for more liberal policy attitudes (see Stout, Kretschmer, & Ruppanner 2017). Moreover, religious adherence has been associated with more conservative beliefs as well (see Lewis 2013; Philpot 2017).

In our second set of models, we take our analysis one step further in order to understand the relationship between policy attitudes and socioeconomic status by region among Black women. Our first set of models speaks to the preceding step—what might lend to those political beliefs.[3] In these models, we seek to establish the link between Black women's socioeconomic status and their policy preferences while accounting for their political beliefs. We make no causal claims here about the potential of a mediating relationship between Black women's social status, political beliefs, and policy preferences. Instead, we use the ordinary least squares framework[4] to capture the partial effect of Black women's socioeconomic status on their policy preferences when political beliefs are controlled for.[5] We make use of

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**Table 1.** Relationship between socioeconomic status and political beliefs conditioned by region

| | Dependent variable: | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Ideology | | Linked Fate | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| Midwest | .021 | −.001 | .048 | −.015 |
| | (.054) | (.027) | (.037) | (.075) |
| Northeast | .032 | .036 | −.041 | −.214*** |
| | (.051) | (.028) | (.039) | (.069) |
| West | −.147** | −.024 | .076 | .048 |
| | (.062) | (.039) | (.052) | (.087) |
| Education | −.015 | .007 | .162*** | .057 |
| | (.046) | (.036) | (.049) | (.062) |
| Income | .037 | .036 | .001 | .052 |
| | (.032) | (.041) | (.058) | (.045) |
| Age | .0005 | .001 | −.003*** | −.003*** |
| | (.001) | (.001) | (.001) | (.001) |
| Home Ownership | .007 | .008 | −.039 | −.041* |
| | (.018) | (.018) | (.025) | (.025) |
| Marital Status | −.016 | −.018 | −.029 | −.025 |
| | (.017) | (.017) | (.024) | (.024) |
| Parent | −.036** | −.035** | −.038 | −.037 |
| | (.017) | (.017) | (.023) | (.023) |
| Military Status | .027 | .023 | .028 | .033 |
| | (.028) | (.028) | (.038) | (.038) |
| Born in the United States | .080*** | .082*** | −.004 | −.003 |
| | (.024) | (.024) | (.034) | (.034) |
| Religiosity | −.099*** | −.098*** | −.062** | −.063** |
| | (.021) | (.021) | (.030) | (.030) |
| Midwest × Education | −.017 | | | .187 |
| | (.089) | | | (.124) |
| Northeast × Education | −.016 | | | .382*** |
| | (.085) | | | (.119) |
| West × Education | .216** | | | .065 |
| | (.099) | | | (.140) |
| Midwest × Income | | .048 | .165 | |
| | | (.074) | (.105) | |

(*Continued*)

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**Table 1.** (*Continued*)

| | Dependent variable: | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Ideology | | Linked Fate | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| Northeast × Income | | −.043 | .115 | |
| | | (.070) | (.098) | |
| West × Income | | .007 | .030 | |
| | | (.090) | (.126) | |
| Constant | .572*** | .556*** | .615*** | .654*** |
| | (.039) | (.036) | (.050) | (.053) |
| Observations | 1,388 | 1,388 | 1,516 | 1,516 |
| Log Likelihood | −225.581 | −227.845 | −815.303 | −811.306 |
| Akaike Inf. Crit. | 483.161 | 487.691 | 1,662.605 | 1,654.613 |

*$p < .1$; **$p < .05$; ***$p < .01$.

the same set of control variables, as described above, but shift the dependent variable to focus on a set of policy preferences. More specifically, we examine respondents' support for spending on aid to the poor, Medicare, Medicaid, and health services, and respondents' preference for affirmative action as a policy priority, all scaled from 0 to 1. We focus our attention on these policies because of the racialized meaning often associated with these policies. In addition, because support for these policies is often highest among Black people, examining Black women's attitudes here is a test of how geographic context and socioeconomic status may lend to variation in Black women's policy support.

## Findings

We begin our discussion of the findings with an examination of our main independent variables—income and education conditioned by region. We show this in Figure 1. Each bar represents the percentage of Black women, by region, who have attained a particular level of education and income status.[6] We note that there is indeed variation in Black women's social status across regions. That is, higher educational attainment does not necessarily lend to higher income status for this group. For instance, when we look at the group of Black women who report making less than $50,000 a year, we see that Black women with a college degree or higher represent the highest percentages in the South and Northeast. Moreover, educational attainment does not impede Black women's access to higher income. When we look at the group of Black women who report making $150,000–$199,999 a year, Black women with a high school degree or lower are represented across regions—though at a greater percentage in the South. In the highest income category, Black women who make more than $200,000 and Black women with a high school degree or lower are represented here as well—though this varies by

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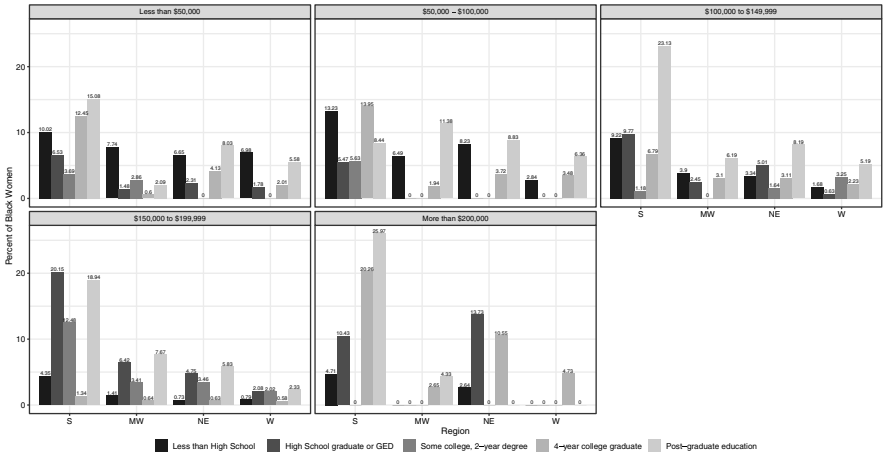


**Figure 1.** Percent distribution of Black women's educational attainment conditional on level of education and level of income

region. Altogether, our descriptive evidence gives us reason to think about the role that education and income play in shaping Black women's political beliefs and policy preferences.

We examine the relationship between social status and political beliefs, with a host of control variables, in Table 1. Again, our main variables of interest are the interaction between education and region and income and region, respectively. Before examining our main variables of interest, we discuss the significance of some of our control variables as they speak to the heterogeneity among Black women in their political beliefs above and beyond our main independent variables. In particular, religiosity lends to more conservative beliefs among Black women and weaker belief in linked fate. In addition, being a parent is negative across models but is significantly associated with more conservative ideology in models 1 and 2. Being born in the United States is also significant in models 1 and 2 and lends to be more liberal ideology. Finally, we note that age is negatively related to linked fate beliefs.

As our theory would suggest, there is some evidence that the relationship between socioeconomic status and political beliefs is moderated by region. This is best seen in models 1 and 4. That is, as educational attainment increases, our interaction terms show that Black women in the South are significantly different from Black women in at least one other region in their political beliefs. The display of the model alone does not show the full picture of regional variation, though, so we display the difference in the conditional effect of education between regions in Figure 2. We do not see a significant difference in political beliefs when we account for income conditioned by region in models 2 and 3. Moreover, the conditional effect of income given region is not significant across post hoc comparisons for either model 2 or model 3. Thus, we exclude the graphical display of the difference in the conditional effect of income by region in the body of the paper and include it in the appendix as Figure A1.

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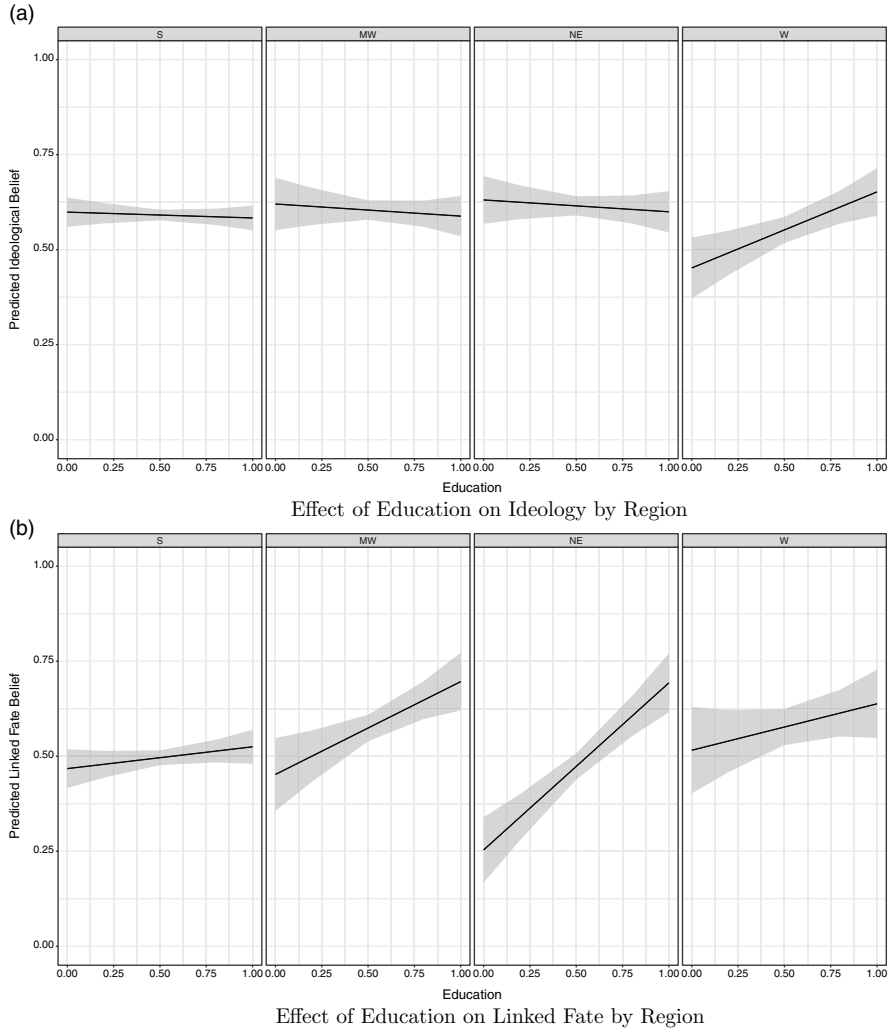


**Figure 2.** Predicted effect of education on political beliefs conditioned by region

*Note:* The graph displays 84% confidence intervals to show the probability of confidence intervals overlapping at the .05 significance level (see Julious 2004). In addition, for Figure 2a, the y-axis extends from 0 to 1, accounting for the most conservative (0) to most liberal attitudes (1). Similarly, for Figure 2b, the y-axis extends from 0 to 1, accounting for the weakest (0) to strongest (1) belief in linked fate.

Turning to Figure 2, we see that Figure 2a is the graphical display of the conditional effect of education on ideology by region, and Figure 2b is the graphical display of the conditional effect of education on linked fate by region. In both figures, each panel represents the predicted effect over the range of education values in a region. We note that the panel farthest to the left is the conditional effect of education in the South (the baseline category in our models), while the panel farthest to the right is the conditional effect of education in the West.

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In Figure 2a, we see that Black women in the West are significantly different from those in the Midwest, Northeast, and South—at least at lower values of educational attainment. That is, Black women in the West are significantly more conservative in their political ideology than their counterparts in the Midwest, Northeast, and South when they have less education. Moreover, as Black women's educational attainment increases, there is a significant difference between the South and West in ideological beliefs—this is the effect we see in model 1 in Table 1. More specifically, Black women in the South are significantly less liberal than Black women in the West as they attain higher levels of education. Here, education is significantly more of a liberalizing force for Black women in the West than it is for Black women in other regions.

In Figure 2b, we see that Black women in the Northeast are significantly different from those in the Midwest, South, and West at lower values of educational attainment. Here, Black women in the Northeast have a significantly weaker sense of linked fate than their counterparts in other regions when they have less education. On the other hand, as Black women's educational attainment increases, there is a significant difference between Black women in the South and Northeast in their linked fate beliefs—the effect we see in model 4 in Table 1. That is, increased educational attainment leads to significantly higher linked fate beliefs among Black women in the Northeast than among Black women in the South. While all Black women's linked fate beliefs trend upward across regions with higher educational attainment, the effect of education is most pronounced among Black women in the northeast region.

Altogether, our models from Table 1 and the aforementioned figures reveal a relationship between education and political beliefs, moderated by region. This stands in accordance with our expectations. The fact that education is a noticeably liberalizing force for Black women's ideological attitudes in the West, as well as how regional context lends to variation in how Black women perceive their ties to other Black people, speaks to the ways in which sociopolitical context along with socioeconomic status can work together to produce unique political perspectives among Black women. That our indicators for income and region are not significant predictors of Black women's political beliefs runs contrary to our expectations. This may speak to the idea that the relationship between Black women's income and political commitments is more complicated. While our sample includes Black women at various levels of income, income does not necessarily translate to a particular knowledge base or orientation among the group.

Given that there is some evidence for a relationship between socioeconomic status and political beliefs, moderated by region, in Table 1, we next turn to understanding how socioeconomic status is related to policy preferences. As previously mentioned, we are interested in understanding the partial effect of Black women's socioeconomic status on policy support when political beliefs are accounted for. While we are not arguing that causal mediation is at play here, we are making the claim that Black women's socioeconomic status should be considered alongside their political beliefs to explain their policy preferences.

In Table 2, we examine whether the relationship between Black women's socioeconomic status and policy preferences is conditioned by region. As a reminder, we examine policy preferences among Black women in regard to aid to the poor, healthcare spending, and affirmative action. In accordance with our

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**Table 2.** Relationship between socioeconomic status and policy preferences conditioned by region

| | Dependent variable: | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Aid to the Poor | | Medicare, Medicaid, and Health Services | | Affirmative Action | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Ideology | .085*** | .088*** | .028 | .030 | .093*** | .094*** |
| | (.025) | (.025) | (.026) | (.026) | (.031) | (.031) |
| Linked Fate | .054*** | .049*** | .043** | .038** | .085*** | .084*** |
| | (.017) | (.017) | (.018) | (.018) | (.021) | (.021) |
| Midwest | .036 | −.0080 | .008 | −.054 | −.007 | −.034 |
| | (.024) | (.050) | (.025) | (.051) | (.030) | (.061) |
| Northeast | −.052** | −.155*** | −.047* | −.117** | −.046 | −.086 |
| | (.026) | (.047) | (.027) | (.048) | (.032) | (.058) |
| West | −.027 | .042 | −.001 | .016 | −.047 | −.075 |
| | (.035) | (.057) | (.036) | (.059) | (.044) | (.070) |
| Income | −.009 | .005 | −.025 | −.034 | .011 | .019 |
| | (.038) | (.030) | (.039) | (.031) | (.046) | (.037) |
| Education | .010 | −.030 | .079** | .047 | .055 | .024 |
| | (.033) | (.042) | (.034) | (.044) | (.040) | (.052) |
| Age | .001** | .001*** | .002*** | .002*** | .0003 | .0003 |
| | (.0005) | (.0005) | (.0005) | (.0005) | (.001) | (.001) |
| Home Ownership | .002 | .002 | .011 | .010 | −.012 | −.013 |
| | (.016) | (.016) | (.017) | (.017) | (.020) | (.020) |

(*Continued*)

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**Table 2.** (*Continued*)

| | Dependent variable: | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Aid to the Poor | | Medicare, Medicaid, and Health Services | | Affirmative Action | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Marital Status | −.019 | −.020 | −.008 | −.009 | −.023 | −.021 |
| | (.016) | (.016) | (.016) | (.016) | (.019) | (.020) |
| Parent | .010 | .010 | .014 | .014 | .017 | .017 |
| | (.016) | (.016) | (.016) | (.016) | (.019) | (.019) |
| Military Status | −.047* | −.046* | −.073*** | −.069*** | .009 | .010 |
| | (.025) | (.025) | (.026) | (.026) | (.031) | (.031) |
| Born in the United States | −.081*** | −.081*** | −.073*** | −.074*** | −.038 | −.038 |
| | (.022) | (.022) | (.023) | (.023) | (.027) | (.027) |
| Religiosity | .020 | .021 | −.004 | −.004 | −.004 | −.004 |
| | (.020) | (.020) | (.020) | (.020) | (.024) | (.024) |
| Midwest × Income | −.067 | | −.102 | | .081 | |
| | (.068) | | (.070) | | (.083) | |
| Northeast × Income | .146** | | .103 | | −.028 | |
| | (.064) | | (.066) | | (.078) | |
| West × Income | −.011 | | −.104 | | .005 | |
| | (.082) | | (.085) | | (.103) | |
| Midwest × Education | | .051 | | .067 | | .083 |
| | | (.082) | | (.084) | | (.100) |

(*Continued*)

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**Table 2.** (*Continued*)

| | Dependent variable: | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Aid to the Poor | | Medicare, Medicaid, and Health Services | | Affirmative Action | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Northeast × Education | | .268*** | | .185** | | .058 |
| | | (.079) | | (.081) | | (.097) |
| West × Education | | −.123 | | −.085 | | .052 |
| | | (.090) | | (.093) | | (.111) |
| Constant | .824*** | .841*** | .790*** | .811*** | .602*** | .616*** |
| | (.037) | (.040) | (.038) | (.041) | (.046) | (.049) |
| Observations | 1,388 | 1,388 | 1,388 | 1,388 | 1,365 | 1,365 |
| Log Likelihood | −105.736 | −101.507 | −145.654 | −145.837 | −370.326 | −370.545 |
| Akaike Inf. Crit. | 247.472 | 239.014 | 327.309 | 327.673 | 776.653 | 777.091 |

*$p < .1$; **$p < .05$; ***$p < .01$.

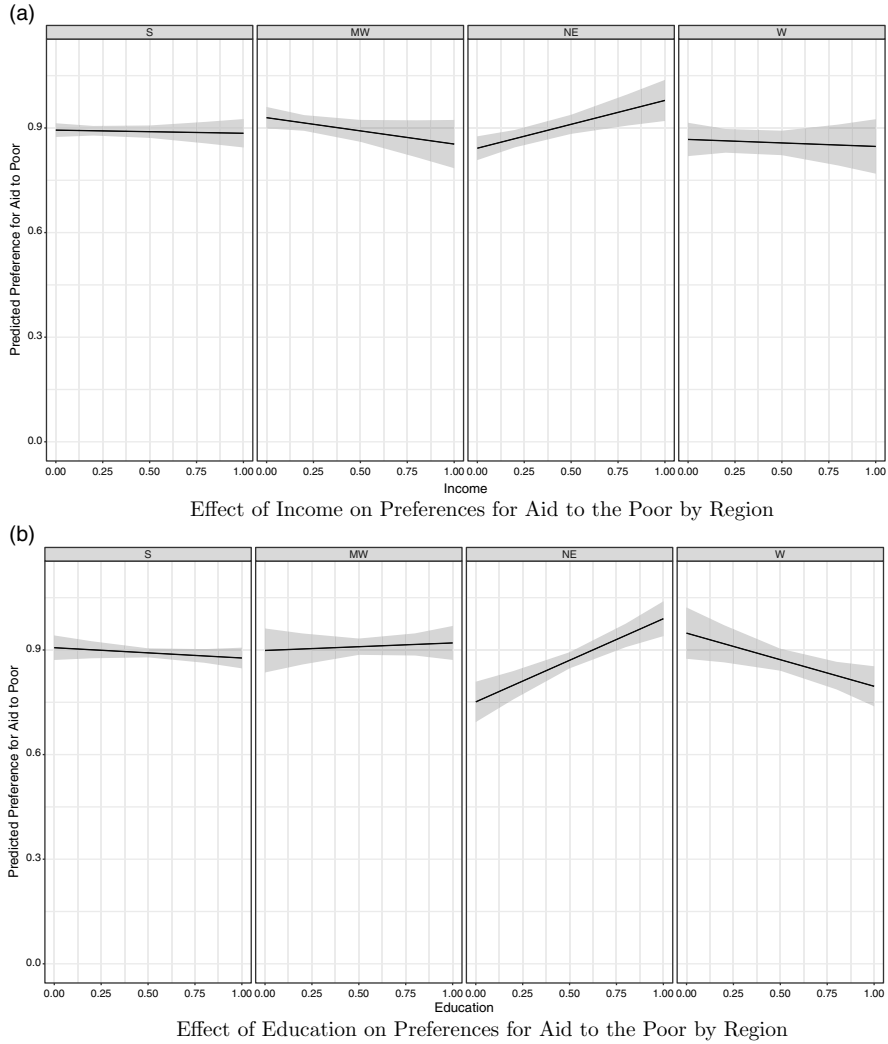


**Figure 3.** Predicted effect of socioeconomic status on preferences for spending on aid to the poor conditioned by region

*Note:* The graphs display 84% confidence intervals to show the probability of confidence intervals overlapping at the .05 significance level (see Julious 2004). For both figures, the y-axis extends from 0 to 1, accounting for no support for aid to the poor (0) to strong support for aid to the poor (1).

expectations, we do, in fact, see that the relationship between preferences for aid to the poor and socioeconomic status is conditioned by region (models 1 and 2). That is, models 1 and 2 show that as Black women's income and education increase, at least one region significantly differs from the baseline region, the South. Similarly, in models 3 and 4, the relationship between preferences for healthcare spending and socioeconomic status is conditioned by region. We display the conditional marginal effect of socioeconomic status given region in Figures 3 and 4. We observe these

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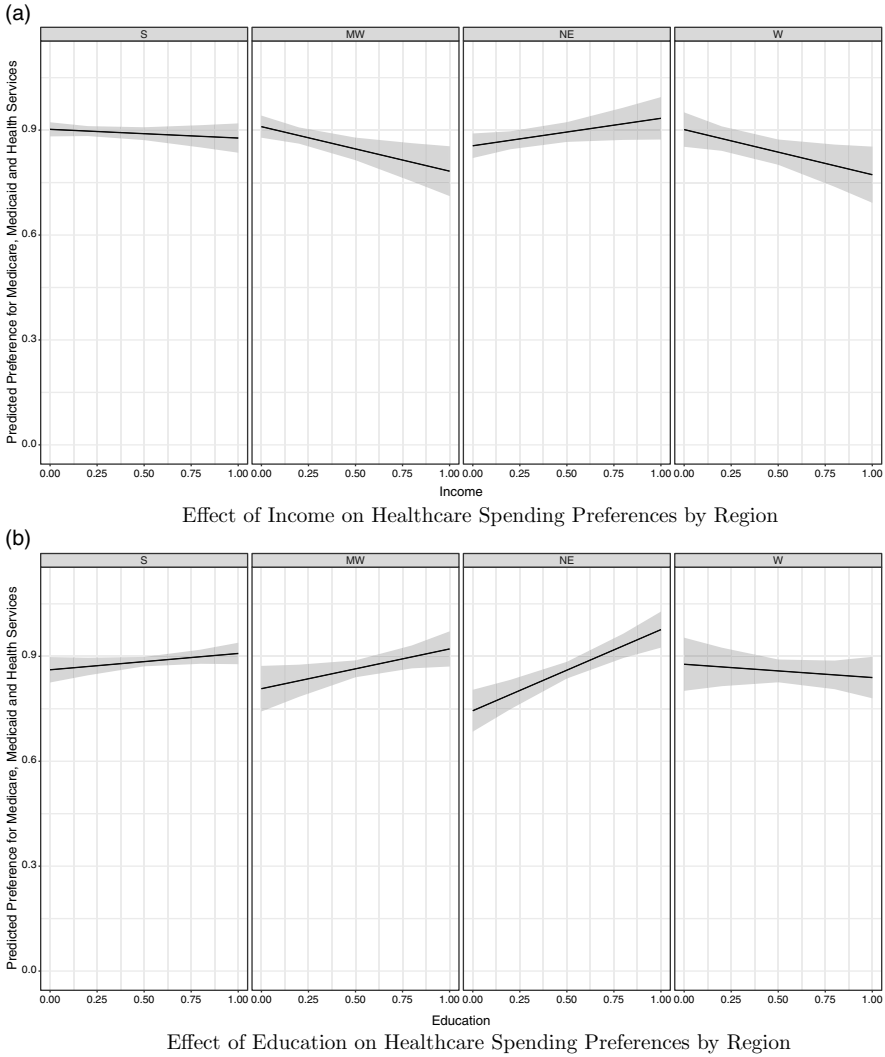


**Figure 4.** Predicted effect of socioeconomic status on preferences for spending on Medicare, Medicaid, and health services conditioned by region

*Note:* The graphs display 84% confidence intervals to show the probability of confidence intervals overlapping at the .05 significance level (see Julious 2004). For both figures, the y-axis extends from 0 to 1, accounting for no support for Medicare, Medicaid, and health services (0) to strong support for Medicare, Medicaid, and health services (1).

regional effects even as we account for traditional ideology and linked fate. Linked fate is a significant predictor of Black women's policy preferences across all models in Table 2, while ideology is also a significant predictor of policy preferences, but only in models 1, 2, 5, and 6.

While models 1 through 4 in Table 2 and subsequent post hoc comparisons reveal an interactive relationship between region, socioeconomic status, and policy

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attitudes (specifically support for aid to the poor and healthcare spending), we do not see this same relationship in models 5 and 6. Specifically, we do not see a significant conditional effect for socioeconomic status by region when it comes to affirmative action. This departs from our expectation that socioeconomic status, along with geographic context, would factor into Black women's policy beliefs. Here, we see no evidence that income or education, regardless of Black women's geographic location, would factor into Black women's support for affirmative action.

It would appear that ideology and linked fate attitudes better explain Black women's support for affirmative action than any other factor. This lends support to previous work that suggests Black people's preference for affirmative action policies is tied to their attitudes about racial progress (and the lack thereof) in the United States as well as the underlying expectation that government solutions can lessen inequality (see Smith 2014). Thus, the significance of linked fate speaks to Black women not only considering themselves but other Black people as well. Moreover, the belief that government can and should step in to provide solutions is a liberal-leaning position.[7] We exclude the graphical display of the conditional effect of income and education by region for affirmative action in the body of the paper to save space and include it in the appendix as Figure A2.

Turning to Figure 3, we show the graphical display of the conditional effect of socioeconomic status by region on preferences for aid to the poor. Again, the panel farthest to the left is the conditional effect in the South (our baseline category in the models), and the panel farthest to the right is the conditional effect in the West. We do not take for granted that Black women's overall support for aid to the poor is generally high. However, this high support does not mean that there are no patterns of difference among Black women in how they think about this policy issue.

In Figure 3a, we observe that as Black women's income increases, there is a significant difference between the South and Northeast—this is the effect we see in Table 2. In particular, as Black women's income level increases, there is a significantly lower predicted favor for spending on aid to the poor in the South than in the Northeast. While we observe no other significant regional differences in comparison to the South, we do see that Black women in the Northeast are significantly more supportive of aid to the poor than in the Midwest and West as Black women's income increases. Notably, the slope for the conditional effect of income in the South, West, and Midwest is decreasing—though this decline is more pronounced in the Midwest. It is only among Black women in the Northeast that we see a positive relationship between income and preferences for spending on aid to the poor.

Figure 3b reveals a similar pattern. In particular, we note the significant difference between Black women in the South and Northeast—which we also see in relation to income. That is, as Black women attain higher levels of education, it is Black women in the Northeast who are significantly more supportive of spending on aid to the poor than Black women in the South. Moreover, while there are no other significant differences in relation to the South here, we note that, again, it is Black women in the Northeast who are significantly more supportive of spending on aid to the poor than in the Midwest and West. It should also be noted that education has a different effect on predicted spending preferences than income among Black women in the Midwest. That is, here, there is a positive relationship between education and predicted preference for spending on aid to the poor among Black women in the

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Midwest. The relationship between education and predicted spending preferences for aid to the poor is negative among Black women in the South and West.

Finally, we examine the conditional effect of socioeconomic status on preferences for spending Medicare, Medicaid, and health services in Figure 4. We note that the conditional effect of income by region is displayed in Figure 4a, and the conditional effect of education by region is displayed in Figure 4b. We first note Black women's high support for spending on Medicare, Medicaid, and healthcare services. However, Black women's education and income indeed lend to differences in support for regional spending.

In looking at Figure 4a, we are able to see the conditional effect that was not apparent from model 3 in Table 2. Recall the baseline region for our models is the South and there was no significant difference between the South and other regions. From the figure, we are able to see the significant difference between the Midwest and Northeast and the Northeast and West as income increases. This suggests that as income increases, Black women in the Northeast show a significantly higher preference for spending on Medicare, Medicaid, and health services than Black women in the Midwest and West. Among Black women in the Northeast, there is a positive relationship between income and predicted preference for healthcare spending. However, that relationship is negative among women in the South, Midwest, and West.

We look to the conditional effect of education on support for spending on Medicare, Medicaid, and health services by region in Figure 4b. We first discuss the relationship that was visible in model 4 of Table 2. As Black women's educational attainment increases, Black women in the Northeast are significantly more supportive of spending on healthcare than their counterparts in the South. At lower levels of education, Black women in the Northeast are significantly less supportive of healthcare spending than Black women in the South. We observe a similar pattern when comparing the West and Northeast. Black women in the Northeast are significantly more supportive of healthcare spending than their counterparts in the West at higher levels of education. At lower levels of education, Black women in the West show higher support for healthcare spending than Black women in the Northeast. In addition, we note that education is positively related to support for healthcare spending in all of the regions except the West.

Overall, our models from Table 2 and the associated figures show a relationship between socioeconomic status and policy preferences, conditional on region. We note that these models diverge from the ones in Table 1 because the indicators for income and region are significant predictors. This suggests that both Black women's income and educational attainment, along with the context in which they live, shape how they think about policy—particularly aid to the poor and healthcare spending. While support for these policies is generally high among all Black women, we show where Black women's attitudes vary. That we see regional variation in Black women's preference for aid to the poor and healthcare spending as their income and educational attainment increases speaks to how one's sociopolitical context lends to differences in cultural knowledge, information, and perspectives on who should receive government assistance. More specifically, while affirmative action might be perceived as a structural discrimination issue, aid to the poor and spending on Medicare, Medicaid, and health services are issues that Black women vary in how

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much they expect individuals to care for themselves in lieu of government solutions (see Nunnally & Carter 2012; Smith 2014).

Moreover, we note that these findings speak to the imperative of thinking about the effects of income and educational attainment separately. In particular, we draw the reader to consider the positive trend in the relationship between income and support for aid to the poor in the Midwest and the negative trend in the relationship between education and support for aid to the poor in the same region. We note a similar effect when it comes to healthcare spending. There is a negative trend in the relationship between Black women's support for healthcare spending as income increases in the South and Midwest. However, in those same regions, there is a positive trend in Black women's support for healthcare spending as Black women's education increases.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Socioeconomic status, operationalized as income and education, has long been discussed as a meaningful explanatory variable for understanding the American political experience. However, few works have thought critically about how the intersections of race, gender, class, and place might matter for political beliefs and policy preferences. We first speak to the ways in which Black women's sociopolitical positioning does not necessarily mean that higher educational attainment will be positively related to higher income. For this reason, we model income and education, conditioned on region, to understand Black women's political beliefs and policy preferences and how these beliefs and preferences may differ within the group. Our findings speak to regional variation among Black women—both negating the idea that Black women are monolithic and complicating where regional differences may exist. In particular, education and income can have varying effects on how Black women engage with politics, and this variation is not necessarily based on one region.

In alignment with the critical insights of Black women theorists, we help explain the complexities of individual income and the expanding intra-group inequality among Black women within the broader context of growing inter-group disparities. Our study reveals that while Black women collectively face wage disparities compared with their counterparts, there is significant variation within the group itself, driven by factors such as educational attainment, income, and geographic location. This growing intra-group inequality highlights the multifaceted nature of economic challenges faced by Black women, underscoring the importance of considering the impact of individual, collective, and contextual socioeconomic status on political attitudes. Furthermore, it reveals the nuanced ways in which systemic inequities manifest, complicating the progressive narrative. Despite advancements in educational outcomes for Black women, these gains have not uniformly translated into economic equity due to entrenched barriers that continue to hinder their economic mobility.

Our examination of regional differences in Black women's political attitudes is grounded in careful theorizing rather than mere empirical obligation. We are sensitive to the confluence of historical and contemporary economic shifts, which create distinct patterns of regional development that affect the lives of Black women.

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In the Northeast and Midwest, deindustrialization uprooted established employment avenues for upward Black mobility that once helped create financial security for Black families and sustain Black communities. In cities like Gary, IN, Detroit, MI, and Cleveland, OH, the closure of factories and the globalization of labor, along with the contraction of public sector employment, have precipitated not just a downturn in available jobs but have also left indelible marks on the socioeconomic fabric of Black women's lives. This shift has bred economic instability and heightened unemployment, reshaping the political and economic ideologies of Black women in these areas. Concurrently, the reverse Great Migration is recalibrating the demographic and economic landscape of the South. Black women continue relocating to cities all across the region, like Atlanta, GA, Charlotte, NC., and Houston, TX., in search of greater opportunity. In addition to facilitating a demographic shift, the economic resurgence of the South may operate as a conduit for shared political policy perspectives as well. Geographic variations in employment prospects, wage levels, and cost of living contribute to the diverse economic landscapes that Black women navigate.

The implications of this spatial nuance on the fabric of Black politics and, by extension, the broader terrain of American politics are particularly noteworthy. Regional diversity introduces complex dynamics for political parties and candidates, compelling a reevaluation of a one-size-fits-all approach to policy formulation and campaigning. To remain relevant to Black female voters, political parties need more evolved engagement strategies and platforms that speak to the diverse priorities, economic situations, and political preferences within their Black female constituency. Some Black women may feel a sense of political urgency dictated by an overwhelming economic context. Some Black women genuinely care about Black issues but may not have the same sense of urgency if they live in an economically secure community. Place-based policy initiatives that are tailored to specific regional and local economic challenges and conditions could more effectively address their multifaceted challenges.

In conclusion, the regional differences in socioeconomic conditions for Black women, shaped by historical and contemporary economic shifts, play a critical role in shaping their political ideologies and policy preferences. Studying the Black political experience in totality is most certainly meaningful, but the ways in which race, gender, class, and place-based identities work to shape Black women's political experience deserve more consideration. By delving into intra-group differences, we join a growing body of work that seeks to understand Black women's political perspectives on their own terms. We anticipate future studies will further unravel the complexities of spatial and regional dynamics in shaping political attitudes. Beyond stressing the importance of individual and contextual influences on political attitudes and behaviors, we hope this paper pushes the need for policies addressing Black women's diverse challenges and aspirations across the United States.

**Supplementary material.** To view supplementary material for this article, please visit https://doi.org/10.1017/rep.2024.8.

**Funding statement.** None.

**Competing interests.** None.

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## Notes

**1** Income and education could be modeled as categorical variables. We include analyses with income and education modeled categorically in the appendix as Table A2. The substantive findings do not change.
**2** Our dependent variables could be measured categorically, which would make an ordered logit model the most appropriate choice. We include ordered logit models in the appendix in Table A3 and ordinary least squares models in the body of the paper for ease of interpretation.
**3** In essence, we have performed an auxiliary regression, which allows us to explain the relationship among independent variables.
**4** Because of the nature of our dependent variables, we recognize that an ordered logit model would be the most appropriate model choice here. We move forward with ordinary least square models in the body of the paper for ease of interpretation and include the ordered logit models in the appendix in Table A7.
**5** We account for both the traditional measure of political ideology and linked fate in these models. However, in the appendix, we account for how income and education (respectively) fare in relation to each political belief in Tables A4–A6.
**6** Each panel represents the conditional distribution of Black women's educational attainment by region who have reported a particular income status.
**7** As previously mentioned, the ideology score is coded from 0 to 1. Higher scores are associated with more liberal position-taking, while lower scores are associated with more conservative position-taking.

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