

# Same-Sex Marriage in Maryland: The Saliency of Religiosity in Determining Voter Support

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## Abstract

During the Maryland 2012 General election, 52% of voters statewide approved Question 6 legalizing same-sex marriage. In an overwhelmingly Democratic state, early polling demonstrated a difference in support between White and Black Democrats with 70% of White Democrats favoring the measure and over half of Black Democrats disapproving. Nevertheless, the final vote tally in majority Black Prince Georges County showed an even split among voters. A review of survey data from the Washington Post will demonstrate the saliency of religiosity, not race, as the primary factor determining voter support for same sex marriage.

KEYWORDS: Religiosity, Partisanship, Civil Rights, LGBTQ, Same-Sex, Pacifism

## Introduction

The Maryland State Legislature in 2012 became the 10<sup>th</sup> state to expand the definition of marriage to encompass same-sex couples. Immediately upon passage, a citizen's ballot referendum movement was initiated and successful in gathering enough signatures to challenge the new law during the 2012 General election. Leading up to the referendum vote, much of the focus from the local media centered on the chasm within the African-American community on the issue of same-sex marriage. In 2011, upon receiving passage in the Maryland State Senate, proponents of same-sex marriage were rebuked in the House of Representatives. The opposition was due in large part to delegates from majority Black Prince Georges County including Southern Maryland and the Baltimore suburbs (Wagner, 2012, p.1). In response, the wife of Governor Martin O'Malley, Catherine Curran O'Malley labeled opposing delegates as cowards. In 2012, proponents prepared for another battle at the Maryland state capital that took on a national character. On one side of the debate were Democratic Party leaders such as President Barack

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Obama and Congresswoman Donna Edwards (D-Maryland) whom both endorsed the initiative. The Executive Director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Benjamin Todd Jealous endorsed the bill along with Civil Rights icon and Chairman Emeritus of the NAACP Julian Bond.

On the other side of the supposed Black Divide were those such as Maryland State Senator Rev. C. Anthony Muse (D-Prince George's) along with House Delegates Emmett C. Burns Jr. (D-Baltimore County) and Jay Walker (D-Prince Georges). They believed the passage of such a law would discriminate against religious institutions in their interactions with the state. Upon the passage and signing of the same-sex bill into law, Delegate Burns was quoted as saying,

"They may win in the Senate, they may win in the House, but when the history of this fight is over, we shall, and we will win on referendum" (Warren, 2011, p.2).

Rev. Muse particularly viewed same-sex marriage as a low priority in comparison to issues such as jobs, education, and housing. In a Washington Post opinion editorial, Rev. Muse, brought up potential issues such as churches being barred from using public parks or renting government buildings based on not marrying citizens of the same sex in accordance with their religious beliefs (Muse, 2012, p.1). Rev. Muse went further to say:

"We need to face the facts about Question 6. Before we redefine marriage in Maryland, we must contemplate the conflicts that will result between the government, individuals, and religious institutions who believe marriage is the union of one man and one woman. With all due respect to the religious leaders who claim otherwise, our religious freedom hangs in the balance with Question 6."

Rev. Muse's advocacy for religious freedom and liberty may have found credence in the case of Gallaudet administrator Dr. Angela McCaskill. McCaskill was suspended based on having signed the 200,000 plus person petition to repeal Maryland's same-sex law (Hollingsworth, 2013, p.1). Upon being reinstated, McCaskill was demoted and her budget reduced according to the 16 million dollars federal lawsuit her lawyer filed in US District Court. McCaskill states she never advocated her position on campus to students and that she only wanted the issue to be decided directly by Maryland voters. McCaskill states her motivation to sign the petition came from her pastor at Reid Temple AME Church in Glenn Dale, Maryland.

Despite the warnings from Rev. Muse, the ballot referendum clearly stated that, "No religious entity may be required to provide services, if they are related to the celebration of a marriage that violates the entity's religious beliefs unless state or federal funds are used for a specific program or service" (Maryland House Bill 438 (2012) act amends current law to allow gay and lesbian couples to obtain a civil marriage license).

Opposition from Black clergy was statewide in character led by the Maryland Marriage Alliance. Rev. Frank Reid, of Bethel AME Church in Baltimore, urged parishioners to distinguish between voting for Question 6 and the candidate of their choice (Lavers, 2012, p.1). With President Barack Obama and other Democratic Party leaders having endorsed the initiative, it

was clear that Reid wanted Black faith voters to distinguish between voting for President Obama and voting their consciences.

There was organized support from Black clergy for Question 6. Rev. Delman Coates of Mt. Enon Baptist Church in Clinton, Maryland and Rev. Donte Hickman Sr., pastor of Southern Baptist Church in East Baltimore were the lead pastors statewide in favor of the referendum. Marylanders for Marriage Equality featured Coates and Hickman in a statewide commercial supporting the initiative three weeks leading up to the election (Linskey, 2012, p.3). Coates and Hickman were lobbied and supported by Governor O'Malley and the Rev. Al Sharpton of the National Action Network. For Coates, the issue was one of Civil Rights. At a press conference at the National Press Club in September 2012, Rev. Coates said:

"History has shown us the painful lessons of attempting to govern based upon subjective religious beliefs. The Bible was used to justify slavery. It was used to defend the subjugation and the subordination of women. In a real sense, this is about preserving our democracy. We cannot as a nation spend billions of dollars every week to export freedom abroad, and then enact laws that deny freedom of fellow Americans here at home" (Davis, 2012, p.2).

The advocacy Reid and the Maryland Marriage Alliance championed came to fruition on Election Day to some extent. Black voters, the majority population in Baltimore City and Prince Georges County supported President Barack Obama overwhelmingly. President Obama won Baltimore City by 87% of the vote while capturing Prince Georges with 90% of the vote (Olson, 2012, p.1). However, votes for Obama in these enclaves did not necessarily correlate towards votes for same-sex marriage. The referendum passed in Baltimore City with 57% of the vote while Prince Georges voters narrowly disapproved with 51% voting against (Morgan, 2012, p.1). Black voters constitute 64% of the population in Baltimore City and 65% in Prince Georges while comprising roughly 25% of all voters across the state.

One story under-represented in the press is the support Question 6 received in conservative Republican strongholds throughout the state. Overall, six Maryland jurisdictions voted for Question 6 which included the counties of Anne Arundel and Frederick, which voted overwhelmingly for Mitt Romney (Olson, 2012, p.1). In other Republican strongholds such as Carroll and Queen Anne's County, the referendum ran roughly ten percentage points ahead of President Obama. The referendum narrowly passed statewide by 52% while President Obama won the state of Maryland decisively with 62% of the vote. Maryland, along with Maine and the state of Washington, became the first states where voters approved same-sex marriage through ballot referendum (Linskey, 2012, p.1).

### **Attitudes toward Gays in the Black Community**

American Black attitudes on same-sex marriage and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) community is not monolithic. Popular culture tends to present the

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Black community as the most homophobic community within the United States. Judging this prevailing viewpoint through the lens of the Human Rights movement over the past 70 plus years, one would question whether or not this is an accurate assessment. One individual that personifies and embodies this dichotomy is the late Civil Rights and Peace activist Bayard Rustin.

Born in West Chester Pennsylvania in 1912, Rustin was raised by his activist grandparents, his grandmother an active Quaker. NAACP luminaries such as W.E.B Dubois and James Weldon Johnson were frequent guests in the Rustin home. While an undergraduate student at Historically Black Cheyney State Teachers College, Rustin participated in an activist training program sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). As a young activist, Rustin organized to free the Scottsboro Boys, joined the Young Communist League (YCL) and in 1937 became a member of the 15th Street Meeting Religious Society of Friends. In 1941, the renowned Pacifist A.J Muste recruited him to the staff of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), a pacifist organization dedicated to ending the war and all forms of oppression through non-violent action. In 1942, Rustin help two other FOR staffers, George Hauser, and James L. Farmer, Jr., launch the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). From 1944-46, Rustin was incarcerated in the federal penitentiary for violating the Selective Service Act for refusing induction in the United States Armed Forces. In 1947, Rustin help to strategize and personally participated in the Journey of Reconciliation, which was the first freedom ride to test the Morgan v. Virginia Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation in interstate bus travel.

John D'Emilio, author of *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin*, documents that despite Rustin's successful work as a peace organizer, his personal life caused him complications dating back to his days as an undergraduate student. Rustin was forced out of Cheyney State 46 hours short of his undergraduate degree due to gay sexual relations he had with an upstanding White elite of the West Chester community (D'Emilio, 29). While incarcerated, Rustin's organizing of prisoners against racism was curtailed by authorities due to consensual relations he had with other male prisoners (D'Emilio, 96). Seven years later in 1953, Rustin would be fired from the staff of FOR by his mentor A.J Muste for a vagrancy lewd morals charge (Long, 151). Three years later Rustin found himself in Montgomery Alabama mentoring a young Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the principles of Gandhian non-violence. While successful in steering King and his followers away from using self-defense methods, Rustin prematurely left the city of Montgomery. At the urging of A. Phillip Randolph, Rustin departed the Bus Boycott for fear his criminal record on homosexuality would jeopardize the movement (Long,79).

Four years later in 1960, Rustin would be forced out of the Civil Rights Movement indefinitely by King due to Congressman Adam Clayton Powell's threat to label Rustin and King as lovers (Long, 75). The purpose of Powell's threat was to halt the planned demonstrations the SCLC were planning at the both the Democratic and Republican conventions on the issue of Civil Rights (Long, 73). In 1963, a compromise took place between the Civil Rights leadership on the capacity Rustin would serve within the structure for the planned March on Washington. Rustin wanted to be Director of the March but Roy Wilkins of the NAACP and Whitney Young of the

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Urban League protested the idea (Long, 86). Wilkins and Young feared southern Senators would use Rustin's sexual history to smear the March. The leadership agreed to name A. Phillip Randolph as Director and him in turn named Rustin as his Deputy effectively making Rustin the Director but behind the scenes.

Rustin faced obstacles in both the Black Civil Rights and White Peace Movement due to his sexuality. A.J. Muste and Dr. King both viewed homosexuality as a problem in society. Muste personally advised Rustin to abandon homosexuality and King viewed homosexuality as a moral and psychological problem evident by his written response to a young man struggling with his sexual feelings in *Ebony Magazine* 1958 when he said:

"Your problem is not at all an uncommon one. However, it does require careful attention. The type of feeling that you have toward boys is probably not an innate tendency, but something that has been culturally acquired. Your reasons for adopting this habit have now been consciously suppressed or unconsciously repressed. Therefore, it is necessary to deal with this problem by getting back to some of the experiences and circumstances that lead to the habit. In order to do this I would suggest that you see a good psychiatrist who can assist you in bringing to the forefront of conscience all of those experiences and circumstances that lead to the habit. You are already on the right road toward a solution, since you honestly recognize the problem and have a desire to solve it" (Long, 42).

In contrast to King and the Civil Rights Movement, Huey Newton and the Black Panther Party viewed the emerging Gay Rights movement as allies in the struggle. In a speech given August 15, 1970, Newton about the gay rights movement says:

"I speak of the homosexuals and women as oppressed groups, we should try to unite with them in a revolutionary fashion. We must gain security in ourselves and, therefore have respect and feelings for all oppressed people" (Hilliard & Weise, 157).

A generation later, the Black community, through its leadership and votes, is having an internal debate about whether or not LGBTQ rights are indeed Civil Rights. *Ebony* magazine posed the question in its July 2004 issue to Civil Rights icons Julian Bond, Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth and Rev. Walter Fauntroy along with poet Nikki Giovanni. Giovanni and Bond stated yes, while Fauntroy and Shuttlesworth stated no. The common denominator seemed to be the religion not race as both Fauntroy and Shuttlesworth couch their opposition from their perspective as proponents of the gospel.

In 1983, Coretta Scott King fought internally to ensure representation for gay and lesbian groups at the 20th anniversary of The March on Washington against the opposition of March Director Rev. Walter Fauntroy (Long, 15). By 2004, Coretta Scott King was advocating against President Bush's constitutional amendment to define marriage as being between a man and a woman (Long, 21). However, King's advocacy was not shared by her outspoken youngest child Rev. Bernice King. Bernice participated in a march from the Martin Luther King Center for Non-

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Violent Social Change to Turner Field opposing gay marriage and supporting President Bush's constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage (Long, 26).

In 2005, Rev. Willie Wilson as national director of the Millions More Movement led by Minister Farrakhan blocked Black gay activist Keith Boykin from speaking at a rally on behalf of the National Black Justice Coalition (Chibbaro, 2010, p.2). Wilson's action was consistent with Farrakhan's advocacy over the years. In 1996, Farrakhan was quoted as saying,

"God don't like men coming to men with lust in their hearts like you go to a female. If you think that the kingdom of God is going to be filled up with that kind of degenerate crap, you're out of your damn mind (Long, 26).

Former Black Congressman Mel Watt from North Carolina believes Black support of LGBTQ rights and same-sex marriage within the Black community is determined mostly by framing. On this issue, Watt is quoted as saying,

"I never really talk it in civil rights terms. I talk about it in civil liberties terms, respecting the individual. It's really a personal freedom issue more than a civil rights issue. It's the ability of a person to be who he or she is. I have cautioned gay groups not to talk about it that way to Black people. Black people tend to think of that as the right to vote and have jobs (House, 2005, p.4).

One may sense a bit of an irony in the nation's first Black President ushering in the federal government reversing course in acknowledging benefits to same-sex couples via the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). In 2011, President Obama instructed his Attorney General Eric Holder to no longer enforce Section 3 of DOMA denying married benefits to same-sex couples (Sullivan, 2012, p.3). Barack Obama, having run in 2008 opposed to same-sex marriage, became the first United States President to support marriage for the LGBTQ community. This act led to Newsweek naming President Obama as the nation's first Gay president in its May 2012 issue.

There has been limited research utilizing survey data that analyzes Black attitudes toward gays. Much of this research was reviewed by Block and Seltzer (2012). They also used exit poll data to examine attitudes toward Proposition 8 in California (the 2008 referendum that would have outlawed gay marriage in the state). Blacks were more likely than whites to support this Proposition. However, this race difference disappeared after controlling for religiosity. They also examined seven national surveys and found little difference between Blacks and Whites attitudes toward gay marriage that were not accounted for by the greater religiosity of Blacks.

Similar research was conducted by Gregory B. Lewis (2003). He examined 31 surveys over a period dating back to 1973 which record responses from forty-three thousand Whites and seven-thousand Blacks on their attitudes and dispositions on a host of social issues. The result is that while Blacks expressed more disapproval of homosexuality, Blacks shared similar views with Whites on issues of sodomy laws, gay civil liberties and employment discrimination. When Lewis controlled for religious and educational differences, Blacks remained more disapproving of homosexuality but were moderately more supportive of gay civil liberties and more opposed to antigay employment discrimination than Whites (Lewis, 76).

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## Methodology

Our hypothesis is based on the presumption that religiosity, not the race, was the salient primary variable determining support and lack thereof throughout the state of Maryland. To conduct our analysis, we used two random sample telephone surveys of 1000 individuals conducted by the Washington Post in January and October of 2012.<sup>1</sup> The January survey consisted of respondents over the age of 18. The October survey only included registered voters. Both surveys asked questions relevant to Proposition 6.

In January, respondents were asked whether they would favor or oppose a state law allowing gay and lesbian couples to get married. The October question asked directly about Proposition 6: "If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on Question 6? Both surveys asked, "Which one of the following has had the biggest influence on your thinking on allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally (a personal experience), (the views of your friends and family), (what you have seen or read in the media), (your religious beliefs), (your education), or something else?

The October survey asked a question, not asked in January, to ascertain the influence clergy had on parishioners. Respondents who attend religious services were asked "Does the clergy at your place of worship ever speak out about gay marriage, or not?"

We compared Black and White respondents on these various questions using Chi Square. Among Blacks and Whites, we also looked at the effects of gender, age, education, partisanship, and ideology. If Black-White results were statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) we used log-linear modeling to determine whether the differences were a function of the various questions that measured religiosity.

## Results

### Black and White Attitudes toward Same-Sex Marriage

In terms of race, White voters in the state of Maryland supported the initiative more than Black voters statewide. In the January poll, 57% of Whites supported the initiative in comparison to 43% of Blacks ( $p \leq .001$ ). In the October poll, 59% of Whites supported the initiative in contrast to 45% of Blacks ( $p < .001$ ).

The effect of party identification was far stronger among Whites than Blacks. In the January survey White supporters were more likely to be Democrats (74%) and Independents

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<sup>1</sup> Special thanks to the Washington Post for providing access to the underlying data.

(58%) compared to Republicans (35%). Party identification had no effect among Blacks. The December survey showed almost identical results.

The variable of ideology is comparable to party identification in its effect on support for Proposition 6. Among Whites, liberals and moderates were more likely to support the measure compared to conservatives (79%, 65%, and 25%). In January, the effect of ideology was smaller among Blacks compared to Whites (54%, 45%, and 30%; LR=10.6, 2; p=.005). By October, the effect of ideology was similar within Whites but its effect had diminished among Blacks.

Respondents with higher levels of education were more supportive of Proposition 6 than other respondents. This was true for Blacks and Whites in both surveys. However, the effect of education was far smaller than the partisanship and ideology effects discussed above. Income had even less effect among Blacks and Whites for both surveys.

Gender had little impact in either survey for Black and White respondents.

Age is a significant as it relates to attitudes among White respondents. In the January poll, 77% of Whites ages 18-29 supported the measure compared to 58% between the ages of 30 and 49 and 48% over the age of 50 (p<.001). This trend remained consistent in the October poll. Age is not a significant indicator for Black respondents.

### **Black and White attitudes and the variable of Religiosity**

There were two questions measuring religiosity and two questions measuring the effect of the respondent's religiosity on Proposition 6.

Both surveys asked respondents how frequently they attended religious services, and the January survey asked whether the respondent was a Born Again or Evangelical Christian.

Both surveys asked what was the greatest influence affecting their attitudes toward gay marriage (religion was one of the options) and in the October survey respondents were asked whether their clergy spoke out about gay marriage.

For both Blacks and Whites, those attending religious services most often were most opposed to Proposition 6 (January - Whites: 42% v 70%; Blacks: 36% v 59%). The effect was similar in December.

In the January survey the effect of being Born Again was greater among Whites than Blacks (Whites: 20% v 67%; Blacks: 33% v 54%; LR=13.1,df=1,p<.001). In fact, among those who were Born Again, Blacks were more likely to support Proposition 6 and after controlling for being Born Again, the racial differences were no longer statistically significant (LR=0.78, df=1).

In the January, survey Blacks were more likely than Whites to say that their attitudes toward Proposition 6 were affected by religious beliefs (61% v 38%). Whites were more likely to refer to personal experiences and friends. A similar result occurred in the October survey.

In the October survey, Blacks were more likely than Whites to say their clergy had spoken out against gay marriage (32% v 14%). However, it is only among Whites that the clergy opposition had an effect (White - 29% v 64%; black - 38% v 48%; LR=7.5,df=1, p=.006).



Table 1

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Changing topics, would you favor or oppose a state law that would allow gay and lesbian couples to get married? W Post, January 23-26, 2012

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Overall Favor	53	
<b>Race</b>		
White	57	**
Black	43	
<b>Party Identification</b>		
White		
Republican	35	**
Democrat	74	
Independent	58	
Black		
Democrat	45	
Independent	50	
<b>Political Ideology</b>		
<b>LR=10.6,2;p=.005</b>		
White		
Conservative	25	**
Moderate	65	
Liberal	79	
Black		
Conservative	30	*
Moderate	45	
Liberal	54	
<b>Gender</b>		
White		
Male	54	
Female	59	
Black		
Male	34	**
Female	51	

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<b>Age</b>		
White		
18-29	77	**
30-49	58	
50+	48	
Black		
18-29	54	
30-49	45	
50+	36	
<b>Education</b>		
White		
HS grad	42	**
Some college	57	
College grad	69	
Black		
HS grad	35	
Some college	45	
College grad	53	
<b>Income</b>		
White		
Under \$30,000	55	**
\$30,000-\$50,000	46	
Over \$50,000	66	
Black		
Under \$30,000	46	
\$30,000-\$50,000	41	
Over \$50,000	46	
<b>Born Again Xtian</b>		
<b>LR=13.1,1;p=.000</b>		
White		
Yes	20	**
No	67	
Black		
Yes	33	**
No	54	

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**Attend Relig Services**

White

Monthly	42	**
Less	70	

Black

Monthly	36	**
Less	59	

\* &lt; .05, \*\* &lt; .01

Table 2

Which one of the following has had the biggest influence on your thinking on allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally – (a personal experience), (the views of your friends and family), (what you have seen or read in the media), (your religious beliefs), (your education), or something else?  
W Post, October 11-15, 2012

	White	Black	
Personal Experience	21	12	**
View family & Friends	20	12	
Media	5	5	
Religious Beliefs	38	61	
Your Education	17	11	

\*\* &lt; .01

W Post, January 23-26, 2012

	White	Black	
Personal Experience	23	15	**
View family & Friends	15	7	
Media	6	6	
Religious Beliefs	42	59	
Your Education	14	15	

\*\* &lt; .01

Table 3

As you may know, Question 6 on the state ballot is the “Civil Marriage Protection Act.” It would allow gay and lesbian couples to obtain a civil marriage license, provided they are not otherwise prohibited from marrying. It protects clergy from having to perform any particular marriage ceremony in violation of their religious beliefs, affirms that each religious faith has exclusive control over its own theological doctrine regarding who may marry, and provides that religious organizations and certain related entities are not required to provide goods, services, or benefits related to the celebration or promotion of marriage in violation of their religious beliefs. If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on Question 6? W Post, October 11-15, 2012

Overall Yes	55	
<b>Race</b>		
White	59	**
Black	45	
<b>Party Identification</b>		
White		
Republican	32	**
Democrat	78	
Independent	65	
Black		
Democrat	43	
Independent	49	
<b>Political Ideology</b>		
<b>LR=30.1,2;p=.000</b>		
White		
Conservative	27	**
Moderate	71	
Liberal	88	
Black		
Conservative	39	
Moderate	46	
Liberal	51	

**Gender**

## White

Male 55

Female 63

## Black

Male 45

Female 45

**Age**

## White

18-29 75 \*\*

30-49 64

50+ 52

## Black

18-29 45

30-49 51

50+ 38

**Education**

## White

HS grad 46 \*\*

Some college 62

College grad 67

## Black

HS grad 36

Some college 45

College grad 52

**Income**

## White

Under \$30,000 51

\$30,000-\$50,000 61

Over \$50,000 62

## Black

Under \$30,000 41

\$30,000-\$50,000 47

Over \$50,000 44

### Attend Religious Services

White		
Monthly	42	**
Less	75	
Black		
Monthly	39	**
Less	69	

### Clergy Opposed Prop6

White		
LR=7.5,1;p=.006		
Yes	29	**
No	64	
Black		
Yes	38	
No	48	

\*<.05, \*\* <. 01

Table 4

Does the clergy at your place of worship ever speak out about gay marriage, or not? W Post, October 11-15, 2012

	White	Black	
Yes, Support	2	1	**
Yes, Oppose	14	32	
Both or no opinion	2	4	
Not speak out	82	64	

\*\* <. 01

### Conclusions and Discussion

The results of the Washington Post polls indicate White respondents as being influenced by a broader set of indicators for determining their perspective on same-sex marriage than Black respondents. Hence, the polls indicate more homogeneity among Maryland Black voters in their

views towards Question 6. According to these poll results, Religiosity would be the major determinant of whether or not Blacks support same-sex marriage. For White respondents, their perspective is determined by a myriad of indicators including political party identification, ideological perspective, religious persuasion, education level, and age. Higher education was the only variable of significance other than religion that impacted the perspective of both Black and White voters.

Religion was the most salient indicator among all surveyed. Nevertheless, there were differences in how religion influenced these voters. Black voters heard more opposition from their clergy than White voters. However, Born Again Whites opposed Question 6 more strongly than Born Again Blacks. This indicates that listening to clergy had more of an impact among Whites than Blacks. While religion was the dominant indicator of Black resistance to Question 6, it had more impact among Whites opposing the referendum than Blacks. Hence, religious attitudes and prayer had no greater effect among Blacks than Whites.

While the media focused much of its attention on the struggle within the Maryland Black community, very little focus was given to the overwhelming support from Black voters for President Obama despite his support for the referendum. There is a 41% difference between Black voter support for Obama in Prince Georges County (90%) vs. Black voter support for same-sex marriage (49%) (Olson, 2012, p.1). These results indicate conscious split voting among the Black electorate. Clearly, a sizable portion of Black voters saw no contradiction in opposing same-sex marriage while supporting President Obama. This unequivocal Black support for President Obama is a contrast to the 2004 Presidential election where President George W. Bush made inroads in the Black community on the issue of banning same-sex marriage through a proposed constitutional amendment.

President Bush made a conscientious effort to attract Black voters in 2004 through his faith-based initiatives. Ed Gillespie, former Chair of the Republican National Committee (RNC), drew the contrast between Bush and Senator John Kerry with Black church congregations (Walters, 178). Even Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr. attempted to play down the significance of the same sex marriage issue within the general election. One month before the 2004 General Election, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies showed a 100% increase in the level of support for Bush among Blacks from 2000. Bush only managed to obtain 11% of the Black vote nationally however a state by state analysis paints a more realistic picture. Bush was able to attract 18% of the Black vote in California, 17% in New Jersey, 15% in South Carolina, 14% in North Carolina and 13% in Florida (Walters, 179). In the state of Ohio where Bush beat Kerry by 118,775 votes, the Black Republican turnout was roughly 100,000 votes.

One of the key aspects proponents used towards building cross-regional and sectional support was framing the referendum as a Civil Rights issue. Given the level of White and Black support for Question 6, the race was not the major determining factor for passage of Same-Sex marriage in the state of Maryland.

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