How Incarceration Impacts Voter Participation Across Communities

by

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Abstract

This research investigates how incarceration impacts political participation in specific communities in Alachua County, Florida. My research questions explore how incarceration impacts voter registration and turnout rates across communities of color, and more broadly, if the depopulation of a community due to high rates of incarceration creates a lack of civic engagement. I expect that communities with higher rates of incarcerated populations will have varied and potentially higher rates of voter registration and turnout due to personal and proximal contacts. My research leverages a cross-sectional analysis of Alachua County precincts (communities). By collecting public records on incarcerated individuals who resided in Alachua County communities prior to their convictions, and subsequent voter file data, and informing my theory of "participation deficits" through interviews with community leaders, I hope my research will provide greater insight into the barriers to participation that communities face due to the carceral state.

Motivation and Research Design

My research exploratorily examines the impact of incarceration on voter registration and turnout in three communities in Alachua County. My research questions are: What is the impact of incarceration on voter registration and turnout across communities of color? Do greater incarceration rates in a community create a lack of civic engagement in affected communities? How is the participation of families of those who are incarcerated and other community members impacted by incarceration? Specifically, I look for patterns in three Alachua County precincts—13, 19, and 27— 13 and 19 having higher Black populations and all three are located

on the East side of Gainesville. These communities have various levels of political participation. I expect the differential rates of incarceration within these communities create patterns in voter registration and turnout levels. Each of these communities have their unique experiences—lack of jobs to vibrant local businesses; affordable housing to gentrification; transient populations to longstanding, stable neighborhoods. In addition to state prison and county jail data, I draw on elite interviews and Census data to help better understand the underlying conditions of these neighborhoods. I use these data to compare and contrast why they have different levels of political participation. I expect that levels of incarceration affect these communities differently, concerning how mobilized members of the community, including levels of voter turnout and registration. By drawing on the work of Walker and Burch, an increase in mobilization may be reasonable or unexpected.

The empirical evidence I examine includes public records of Florida voter registrations, state prison and county jail records, and Alachua County records. Voter registration data enables me to look up racial and geographical data of registered voters. State prison and county jail records will allow me to look into current and former inmates, and study how the displacement from their communities has impacted registration and turnout. Alachua County records on the three communities—while limiting the external validity of my study—allows me to refine my project on a narrower area and to conduct elite interviews with community leaders, rather than studying Florida as a whole. I also draw on interviews with community leaders and elected officials, and I would like to interview those that have been incarcerated who have returned to these communities to discuss their experiences, including any barriers to participation. This will allow me to more accurately measure the efforts of different actors in the carceral state.

Interviewing community leaders will help me gauge the political effort that is put into these communities, what the communities care about, as well as to hear from those that may have proximal or personal contact with the carceral system. My elite interviews include local elected officials Gainesville City Commissioners Gigi Simmons, Gail Johnson, and Adrian Hayes-Santos. These community leaders have had experience in mobilization and political engagement with the communities that they grew up with and lead. Commissioner Hayes-Santos represents District 4, where precinct 27 is located. Commissioner Simmons serves District 1, where the other two precincts I focus on are located, and Commissioner Johnson is an At-Large commissioner, representing all of Gainesville, the county's largest city and the county seat.

My key explanatory variable in my study is a community's incarcerated population. I have collected information on those that have been incarcerated in Alachua county and matched those in this file with their registration data. My observations focus on the rate of voter registration and turnout in the impacted communities in recent state and local elections. I have collected data from voter registration records that detail voter addresses, from which I can track where incarcerated people, or a significant number of minorities may have resided, or even had been registered to vote prior to sentencing or after re-enfranchisement.

My study is a cross-sectional analysis of Alachua county precincts. There are 63 precincts in Alachua County, and each is a unit for analysis and comparison in my project. I am interested in what percentage of the voting population has been incarcerated and where communities where there is a density of incarcerated people are located. The cases that I include are any cases of incarcerated people as well as other voter registration data that contribute to the turnout in impacted communities. I then delve into the three aforementioned precincts to better understand

these communities and the impact of the carceral state on political participation. My focus on Alachua County creates a disadvantage of low external validity, but there is significant value in understanding variation within a single county. The specific levels of incarceration and political participation in Alachua County are not necessarily applicable to other counties and areas. However, my project does have potential valuable information that can build upon current literature. Alternative explanations within the county will most likely be easily accounted for, while those outside of the county and state will not be as accommodated.

Literature Review

Incarceration rates in the United States are higher than that of any other country in the world (Enns 2016). The trend towards incarceration has a history of targeting populations of color and those in poverty. These communities are losing members to the carceral state. In this study, I explore the relationship between a community's incarceration rate and its level of voter registration and turnout. I am interested in whether communities that face higher incarceration rates among their populations experience lower levels of voter registration and turnout, or whether these communities become resilient, able to respond politically when fellow community members enter the corrections system. My thesis assesses the impact of the carceral state on political participation by focusing on three communities in Alachua County, Florida. Specifically, I am interested in exploring how incarceration rates affect voter registration levels and voter turnout across these three communities that experience various levels of incarceration. Do all of three of the county's communities respond similarly when it comes to the incarceration of its community members? Are some more likely to become "democratic deserts," while others are able to proactively respond, becoming more determined and mobilized? I hope to expand on

how communities like these react to incarceration and their potential reasons for mobilization. Observing different levels of interaction with the criminal justice system that these three communities have can show how variable the impacts on voter registration and turnout are within the same county.

Literature on the Carceral State and Political Participation

The incarceration of members of a community often disadvantages the remaining population in a community, decreasing its political impact. Communities that face high incarceration levels of their populations are often systemically oppressed by institutions in place that are surrounding them. Many individuals who have had personal or proximal contact with the carceral state feel purposefully excluded from the political system (Walker 2020). The way convicted people are treated shows how the state excludes them from society (Burch 2013). In addition, individuals who are released from prison often return to the corrections system, increasing the overall recidivism rate (Burch 2013). Many communities are impacted by the rising incarceration rates. Some community members feel the need to mobilize as a result of the impact of the carceral state on their community; others feel discouraged from participating (Western 2018).

Due to a history of oppression that has occurred in minority communities, there is a disproportionate number of minorities that populate disadvantaged communities. These disadvantaged communities often face poverty and higher rates of incarceration (Leighly and Nagler 2013). Political participation is not only influenced by a person's social groups, but also their physical location (Burch 2013). In Georgia and North Carolina, Burch finds that households with incomes under $10,000 are positively correlated with imprisonment. In addition, Black

neighborhoods more commonly experience high levels of incarceration more frequently than neighborhoods with other racial demographics. The question of race is central to Walker's *Mobilized by Injustice* (2020). Walker argues that behavioral consequences of personal and proximal contact are conditional on a sense of injustice. As a result of these experiences, people choose to become politically active or inactive. Some groups self-defend by mobilizing in order to protect themselves, while others may detach from politics due to the same sense of injustice. The growing tensions in modern socio-political spheres in recent years has refocused public concern on equality and injustice. The Black Lives Matter movement, or BLM, has not been a focus of many of these works, because of its relevance or that the literature predates the movement. Mobilization efforts inspired by social movements have increased public scrutiny on inequality, racial injustices, and the carceral state. Walker (2020) goes into modern movements and events that impact voter turnout and engagement. BLM, and immigration concerns surrounding the Latin American community are the events that Walker ties to mobilization and injustice thermometers among minorities.

Public awareness is increasing and these movements have been gaining traction. Public punitiveness has an impact on larger political actors, and an influence on policy over time (Enns 2016). Interviews of former inmates and community members in the Boston area for example, show that there is a variety of reactions that communities and family members have from personal and proximal contact (Western 2018). Walker (2020) also looks into how and why people from disadvantaged areas in Seattle organize their communities. People typically will organize when resources, orientations, and recruitment that tie into their personal interests arise (Walker and Owens 2018). It can also be observed that carceral corrections do not have a

negative correlation with non-voting political behavior. As studied by Walker and Owens (2018), findings in Chicago confirm that less intense criminal justice contact, such as detainment, actually increases non-voting participation. The involvement of civil society organizations (CSOs) within communities often correlates with more non-voting participation in high-conviction communities, and on an individual level. Many may not see non-voting participation as active political participation, but Walker and Owens (2018) argue that it is a form of conventional participation. Leighly (1995) also argues that the act of participation does not reflect the motivations to participate within the general population of a community. Low-status individuals, such as formerly incarcerated felons, will have less opportunities to participate, according to the socio-economic status (SES) model. The SES model also confirms that people of a higher status or economic background will often have more opportunities to politically mobilize (Leighly 1995).

Incarceration rates in the United States have been growing rapidly, increasing 400 percent between the 1970s and 2000 (Enns 2016). About a quarter of the global prison population can be found in the United States. An observation of Brooklyn incarcerations by addresses shows the concentration of incarcerations are from primarily Black neighborhoods. In 2000 29 percent of Brooklyn families were below the poverty line, and of all residents 36 percent were Black and 20 percent were Latin American. From the 1970s to 2008, the American population grew from around 200 million to 300 million people (Leighly and Nagler 2013). This growth came with an increase in minority populations and decrease of the White majority from 83 to 66 percent. Black populations grew from 11 to 13 percent, while the Latin American demographic grew from 5 to 15 percent. Blacks and Latin Americans in Boston were less than a quarter of the city's

population, but they made up 75 percent of the formerly incarcerated sample used in *Locked Out* (Western 2018). While minorities make up a significantly lower percentage of the population, Blacks and Latinos have incarceration rates six and three times, respectively, higher than Whites (Walker 2020). While 46 percent of people know someone who has been incarcerated, 35 percent of Blacks have an incarcerated family member. These experiences contribute to communal senses of political distrust and injustice that Walker ties to how communities react and mobilize. People living in high-imprisonment neighborhoods may be 74 percent less likely to vote, and 43 percent less likely to mobilize in other forms (Burch 2013). Observations in North Carolina show that a voting block with no prisoners is predicted to have 14 percent higher turnout than a block with 250 prisoners per square mile. This clearly shows how imprisonment impacts voter turnout negatively. Walker's (2020) work discusses the reasons why disadvantaged communities may feel the need to mobilize, while Burch describes why they do not mobilize.

According to SES models of turnout, the wealthy are often overrepresented in elections, and the poor are underrepresented (Leighly and Nagler 2013). Factors such as income, education, age, and ethnicity will correlate with likelihood to vote. The poor have less income and education than the wealthy, often impacting their turnout negatively. People in poverty often do not have enough knowledge about campaigns and policies to feel motivated to vote. The existence of this income bias creates a difficult environment for people to be represented and have the attention of policymakers and politicians. Leighly and Nagler's *Who Votes Now* explores the economic struggles of voter participation without explicitly describing the systemic abuses that minorities in poverty experience. This work focuses on the stark differences between the wealthy, the poor, voters, and nonvoters.

The carceral state is sometimes thought of as the inheritor of institutional racism as seen with slavery and Jim Crow laws (Walker 2020). Since the 1960s, Black men are more likely to go to prison than receive a four-year college degree (Western 2018). The Black community has suffered greatly as a result of the War on Drugs, as they are more likely to be convicted of drug offenses (Manza and Uggen 2006). Drug offenses represent a third of convicted felons. Enns (2016) states that tough-on-crime sentiments include racial attitudes without directly asking for them. Social movements, such as the Black Panthers and Brown Berets, were radical public reactions to current events in the 20th century (Walker 2020). Many states have laws that disenfranchise convicted felons, which results in many minority communities losing their voting power (Manza and Uggen 2006). One of the first waves of disenfranchisement laws came after the Civil War and the felon population started containing a large Black population. These disenfranchisement laws can be traced to racial exclusion, and are still diluting Black votes in the modern day. At least one in seven Black men across the nation have lost their right to vote. In Florida about 19 percent of the Black population had been disenfranchised (Manza and Uggen 2006). Many believe that if felons in Florida were to have their rights restored the 2000 election would have had different results, because of the potential amount of Democrats found in felon populations (Enns 2016). Regional Republican party leaders admit to avoiding registration efforts because of the likelihood of mobilizing Democrats over the intended Republicans (Burch 2013). With needing to pay court fees and restitution before being able to apply for rights to be restored voting may not be financially viable for those that are disenfranchised (Manza and Uggen 2006). This is another way that those in poverty are kept from registering or turning out.

Levels of participation can be impacted by previous experience with the criminal justice system. Walker (2020) measures contact with the system by terms such as proximal, and personal contact. A proximal contact is when people are witnessing the criminal justice system in action around them with family or within their communities. Personal contact is firsthand experience with the carceral state. Walker develops a theory around participation and contact with the system through survey and interview data. Walker's interviews focus on mobilized community members in Seattle. In Western's *Homeward* (2018) the interviews conducted were of formerly incarcerated felons, their family members, and some community members in the Boston area. Similarly, some interview data used in Manza and Uggen's *Locked Out* (2016) were of former felons, but not as long term as Western's year-long observations. While *Homeward* did not focus on race, it did explain how growing up in a disadvantaged community impacts individuals in similar ways. Each of these works analyze the proximal and personal contacts that take place for those interviewed and within their communities. Burch (2013) acknowledges the power of personal and proximal contact, and how it deeply impacts communities.

Walker's (2020) highlighted individuals, Nick and Dina, are people who became mobilized after personal and proximal contact respectively. These people became involved in local efforts against an expansion of a detention center, BLM, Cop Watch, and prison abolition. These forms of activism aim to create change within their communities and fight back against the system that they have felt an injustice from. An individual's experience with a family member becoming incarcerated is an example of an event that can create a strong enough sense of injustice to mobilize. Nick's politicization came from witnessing so many members from his own community incarcerated with him. This insight created an understanding that his community

is being targeted in some way, which increased his sense of injustice. In both of these people's experiences they were extremely mobilized by the injustice around them. Walker's theory is clear here, as some sort of contact was needed for action. She also argues that using experiences with personal and proximal contacts to mobilize is significantly influenced by a sense of systemic injustice. Walker (2020) also interprets that these experiences overall contribute to political socialization, and racial socialization via the criminal justice system.

Many people feel hurt after being released from jail and not being allowed to vote (Manza and Uggen 2006). Felons also feel singled out, since they are attempting to reintegrate into society with a list of things they are not allowed to do. Most of the people interviewed in *Locked Out* seem to have been politicised by their time being incarcerated. Several people state how they did not care for voting until they were imprisoned and their rights were taken from them. It is difficult to tell what kind of political participation felons have, as there is no national survey data containing criminal records and voting behavior (Manza and Uggen 2006). Manza and Uggen estimate that a significant portion of the felon population would have voted in any election.

Locked Out is limited in that it only studies ex-felons and not much about those around them (Burch 2013). Some marginalized communities often lobby local officials with concerns about crime and policing (Walker 2020). Walker discusses a study that shows how any contact with the police is associated with increased participation, even though its conclusion stated the opposite which can cause confusion on this topic. In contrast, other research shows how imprisonment negatively impacts people with personal and proximal contact, especially families that choose to withdraw from community life (Burch 2013). When civic organizations reach out

to disadvantaged groups participation among the poor increases. Churches are a common organization that help mobilize communities, but disadvantaged communities can often be too poor to support the existence of these organizations in their neighborhoods. Political campaigns are another example of an organization that mobilizes, and will most likely reach out to homes with registered voters, which can exclude those with convictions and their potentially demobilized families. Burch's (2013) data shows that communities with higher spatial densities of imprisonment correlate with lower rates of participation, and that each prison admission can decrease neighborhood turnout 1.4%. Mobilization efforts may work, but still typically skip over communities and individuals that are not as statistically likely to vote due to effectiveness of targeting these people (Burch 2013). Burch describes how nonpartisan groups were more likely to successfully reach out to unregistered voters and ex-felons. These nonpartisan organizations, Burch observes, have the potential to counteract the demobilizing effects of incarceration, but experience restraints in tier resources and capabilities.

Many people who have had personal contact with the carceral state have experienced similar backgrounds while growing up. Many people that come from disadvantaged backgrounds have experience with mental illness, violence, poverty, substance abuse, or unstable families (Western 2018). Sexual abuse is high among prisoners, with 16 percent of male and 57 percent of female prisoners reporting an experience before incarceration (Burch 2013). Many parents find it difficult to speak about their child's incarceration as it can be something difficult to cope with (Western 2018). Children that grow up with these issues in their household or communities often do poorly academically or otherwise as well. It is common for people to struggle with finding employment after being released from prison. This leads to them needing to rely on their families

or communities to pay for their fees and other necessities. This can cause the individual to not be able to give back to their community, mobilize, or stay in a cycle of poverty and even recidivate.

As such, the long term impact of disadvantaged communities being neglected by institutions like the carceral state has downstream effects. Many respondents said they were mainly participating in the study for the money that was being offered after each interview. After a year, about a quarter of the respondents in Western's experiment had returned to jail for violations or new sentences. The reintegration of felons into society is an arduous process that is unsuccessful in many cases. The impact that poor mental health, economic distress, and bad reintegration has on communities is evident. Many felons come out of prison worse than how they came in, and their reintegration contributes to the social disorder in their communities (Burch 2013). Western displays that reintegration into communities has many different forms, and not all are successful. The suggestion is made that expanding social policy in these disadvantaged communities is vital for reform. There is a strong association between systemic racism, incarceration, and disadvantaged communities. Western (2016) also argues that the current condition of the carceral state is disappointing as it is prolonging Black oppression in the United States. A sense of injustice is a part of the identities of many minorities, and with mobilization many are finding ways for their voices to be heard (Walker 2020). Walker's ideas of mobilization clarify the reasons communities are fighting back against the impacts of incarceration that, as Burch (2013) describes, systemically deprives people of their engagement. The coherent narrative of group-based injustice that minorities experience is unique to their individual circumstances. Issues with the criminal justice system is at times already a part of the racial narrative included in being Black or Latin American. Being able to connect their

experiences as a community creates a better likelihood to mobilize on shared issues which increases political socialization.

Incarceration rates have been rising at a dramatic rate in the United States for decades. Tough-on-crime initiatives, like the War on Drugs, have specifically targeted minority and disadvantaged communities. Due to a legacy of institutional oppression on Blacks and Latin Americans in the US, many reside in the poorer communities that are being targeted and policed at higher rates. Minorities make up a disproportionately high amount of the prison and felon population, causing the communities that they come from to suffer from their absence or loss of rights. The proximal and personal experiences that community members have with the carceral state often encourage them to mobilize for change within their communities. Historical social movements such as the Black Panther Party, the Brown Berets, and Black Lives Matter have been mobilized from similar root issues of contact with the criminal justice system. Incarceration does not prepare felons for reintegration into society, which results in them not being able to give back to their communities as much as they would want. Those that have been disenfranchised do not have a chance to be heard democratically, and significant portions of disadvantaged communities are disenfranchised, and possibly demobilized.

Scholars differ on the effects of political participation. Burch (2013) argues that incarceration creates negative trends in political participation. She argues that mobilization efforts within communities suffering from incarceration are not enough to counteract the negative impacts. I use Walker's and Burch's arguments of mobilization in communities that suffer from incarceration to build this review while using historical explanations as well as interview data from Enns, Western, Manza and Uggen, and Leighly and Nagler's works. This

literature inspires my own research by detailing the impacts of incarceration on various communities and their individual members.

This literature does not cover the impacts of incarceration in modern Florida communities. The information about Florida is outdated as there have been monumental changes to felon voting rights in the state since 2018. I look into this niche, specifically within Alachua county to observe how Florida communities are experiencing incarceration. The carceral state has created a hostile environment for minorities and those in poverty to participate democratically. These populations have been historically neglected and will continue to mobilize against the institutions oppressing them. The rate of mobilization is increasing, but has yet to outweigh the levels of apathy and demobilization that has occurred for decades in these communities.

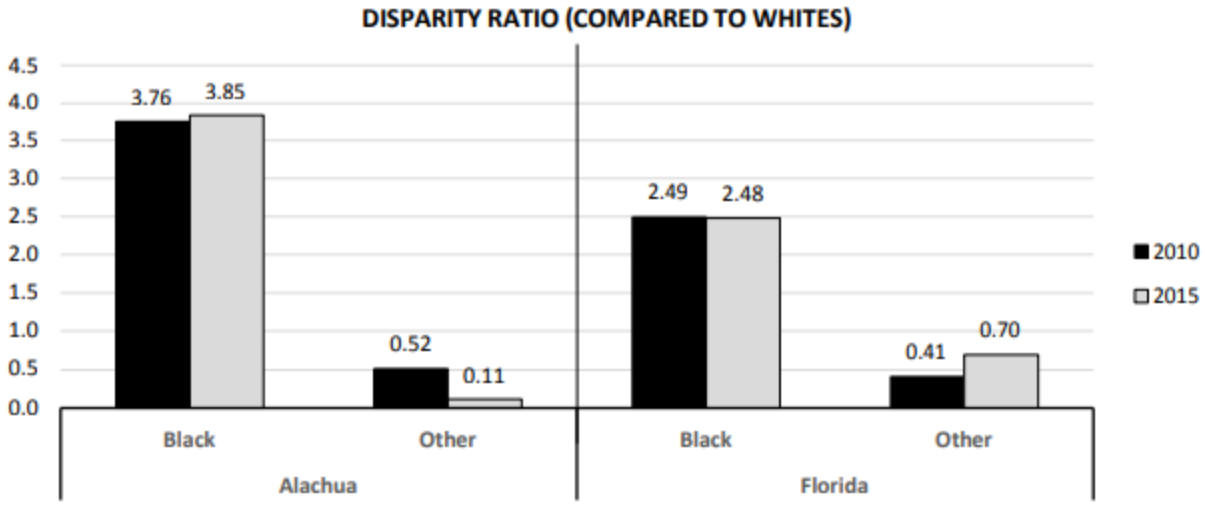
Data and Results

Alachua county has 67 precincts, each encompassing a different population with diverse demographics. I am focusing on precincts 13, 19, and 27 which are neighboring communities that each have differing levels of incarceration and participation. I use other precincts with denser Black populations as comparison points to precincts 13, 19, and 27. By using public records on felon data, Alachua voter registration, survey data, previous literature, and local interviews, I am able to find patterns on the impact of incarceration on Alachua county political mobilization based on the exploratory research I have performed.

In a study published by the University of Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) (2018), the impacts of racial inequality in Alachua county were assessed to

better understand the economic and political differences that minority groups experience in Gainesville. This study found disparities across economic well-being, education, and involvement. There is an acknowledgement of the many different facets that are woven together to create these observed inequalities across the life of a minority. One finding, as seen in figure 1, reveals how there is a clear increase of incarceration rates from 2010 to 2015, and Alachua county has higher rates of incarceration than the rest of Florida at this time. The impact that incarceration has on minority communities is greater than predominantly White communities, especially in Alachua county.

Arrest Rate



Bureau of Economic and Business Research - Understanding Racial Inequity In Alachua County
Figure 1

There is a greater threat to minority and underprivileged communities in Alachua county compared to the rest of Florida. This issue is apparent to Gainesville residents, as they believe that racism exists within Black interactions with the justice system and within education (BEBR 2018). Focus groups in the BEBR report (2018) expressed the belief that there is a lack of

education of the law within Black communities, and that criminal records creates more problems for those attempting to reintegrate into their communities. In my own interviews, I found the same concerns voiced by Tequila Mcknight, a Community Spring Fellow and formerly incarcerated woman.

> *"You can't get a job, you can't get a decent place to live. If you can't get a job or place to live what are you to do? How can you start your life after getting out of prison? I got a job at a restaurant and they hired me for a manager position. I worked training for three months and after three months they pulled my records and told me I couldn't work there with those records. I had put my records on the application, but they found out that I had been to prison and I couldn't work there anymore so I went everywhere looking for a job. I found a job here in Gainesville cleaning at a hotel earning $3.81 per room. That was the only job I could get. A person with 5 kids, a single mother, not able to get any kind of assistance because I've been to prison."* - Tequila McKnight, Community Spring fellow, on the difficulties of re-entering society after incarceration.

These difficulties are only the surface of what formerly incarcerated individuals suffer through in Gainesville. To observe the typical voting behavior in Alachua county I looked over registration data that was available through the supervisor of elections office. By observing the rates of registrations under what parties and comparing them to precincts 13, 19, and 27 I can see how these specific communities match up to the rest of the county. Table 1 displays new party registrations by year from 2008-2020 along with the total number of those registrations that year.

New Alachua County Registrations By Year

	DEM	**NPA**	**REP**	**TOTAL**
2008	7733	4703	3516	16371
2010	2866	2303	2065	7439
2012	5946	6129	3655	16032
2014	2014	3128	1380	6775
2016	7585	4854	3407	16095
2018	5562	3714	2277	11886
2020	6076	4156	3132	13809

Table 1

Alachua county registration has generally gone up in recent years, with noticeable upticks in presidential election years. I chose to only observe Democrat (DEM), No Party Affiliation (NPA), and Republican (REP) affiliations as they represent most of the registrations. Based on these observed years, it seems that presidential election years will result in around 16,000 new registrations, with an exception of 2020 which had 13,809 registrations. Every year seems to follow the pattern of more registered Democrats than Republicans or NPA's.

The main targeted precincts in this study are once again 13, 19, and 27. Table 2 shows the ethnic composition of these communities as of January 2021. Precinct 13 has the highest population as well as percentage of Black registered voters. Precinct 19 has a higher-than-average ratio of Black voters with 31% and seems to be more of a mixed community that is still predominantly White. Precinct 27 has a ratio of Black voters that is closer to the national average Black population of 13%. This data gives an image of the racial composition of

these communities, which is also a potential insight into the inner workings and types of socialization that may occur.

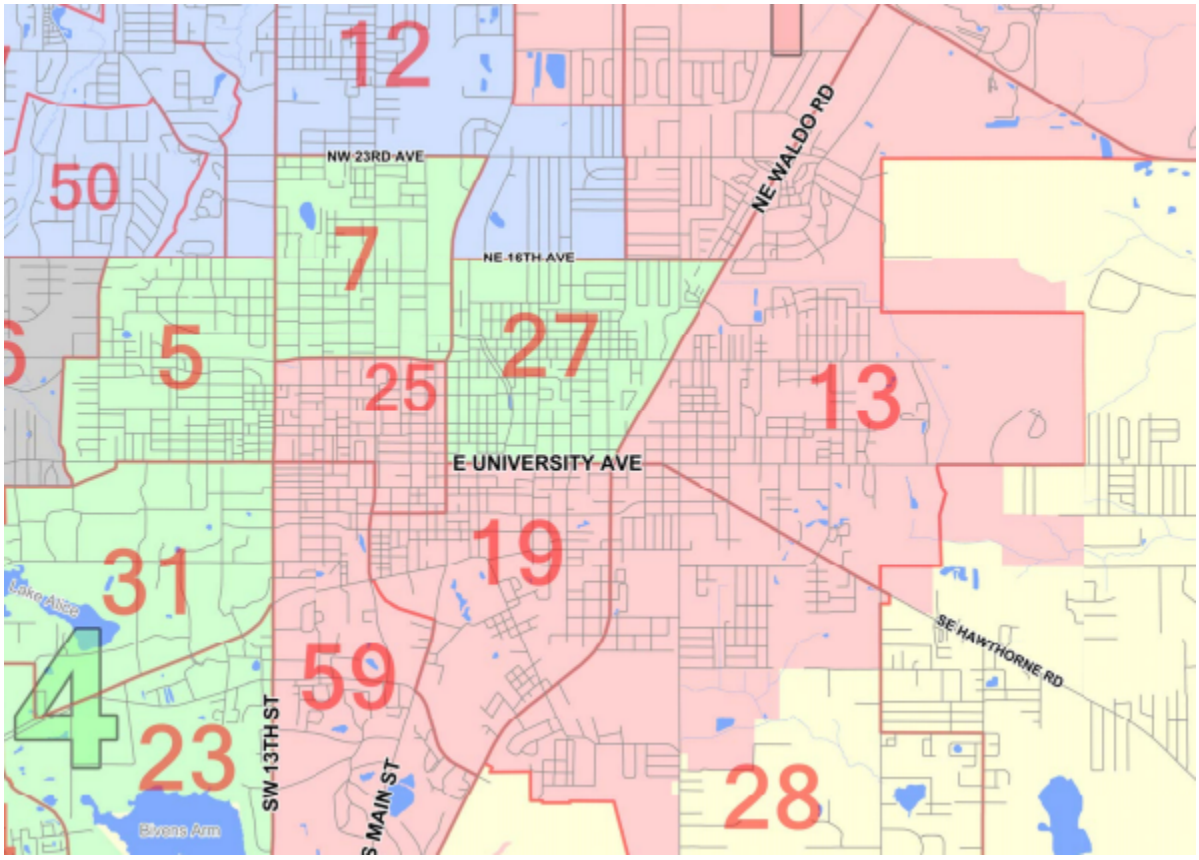
Precinct Racial Demographics of Registration by Percent and Population

	13		**19**		**27**	
BLACK	85.09%	2129	31.01%	786	12.89%	397
HISPANIC	1.76%	44	5.17%	131	3.96%	122
OTHER	13.15%	329	63.83%	1618	83.14%	2560

Table 2

Precinct 13 is located in the East part of Alachua county, beyond Waldo Road and is a majority Black community. Precinct 19 is located in a portion of Gainesville that is known as Porter's neighborhood. This neighborhood is located next to downtown Gainesville, and is actively becoming more gentrified over time. Precinct 27 is located North of precinct 19 and to the west of precinct 13. The map below is a visualization of current precinct borders and reflects how these three precincts are neighboring communities.

Map of Observed Alachua County Precincts



Map 1

As each of Alachua county's 63 precincts can be used as cases for comparison, I compiled some of the precincts with the highest percentage of registered Black voters to compare to precincts 13, 19, and 27 which have varying levels of Black populations. I accessed multiple years of data and compared registration data from January 2015 to January 2021. Comparing these years to each other allowed me to track the trends of populations that each observed precinct may have. Of precincts 13, 19, and 27 from 2015 to 2021, only precinct 13 decreased in the percentage of registered Black voters, by 6.1%. Precinct 19 increased in this same statistic 7.56%, and precinct 27 increased 0.17%. The observed precincts, 28, 30, 33, 52, and 55 also had

mixed changes over this period, with changes being -4.14%, -0.12%, 2.19%, -0.52%, and -2.97% respectively. Overall out of these five precincts with relatively high registered Black voter populations only one of them had net increases in the registered Black percentage.

Precincts With Highest Black Registered Populations and Percents - 2021 vs. 2015

	2015	**2021**	**Change**
13	85.09%	78.99%	-6.1%
	2129	2373	+244
19	31.01%	38.57%	+7.56%
	786	722	-64
27	12.89%	13.06%	+0.17%
	397	505	+108
28	76.80%	72.66%	-4.14%
	2363	2435	+72
30	60.44%	60.32%	-.12%
	1673	1844	+171
33	57.24%	59.43%	+2.17%
	1815	1856	+41
52	39.92%	39.40%	-0.52%
	937	1106	+169
55	57.42%	54.45%	-2.97
	766	856	+90

Table 3

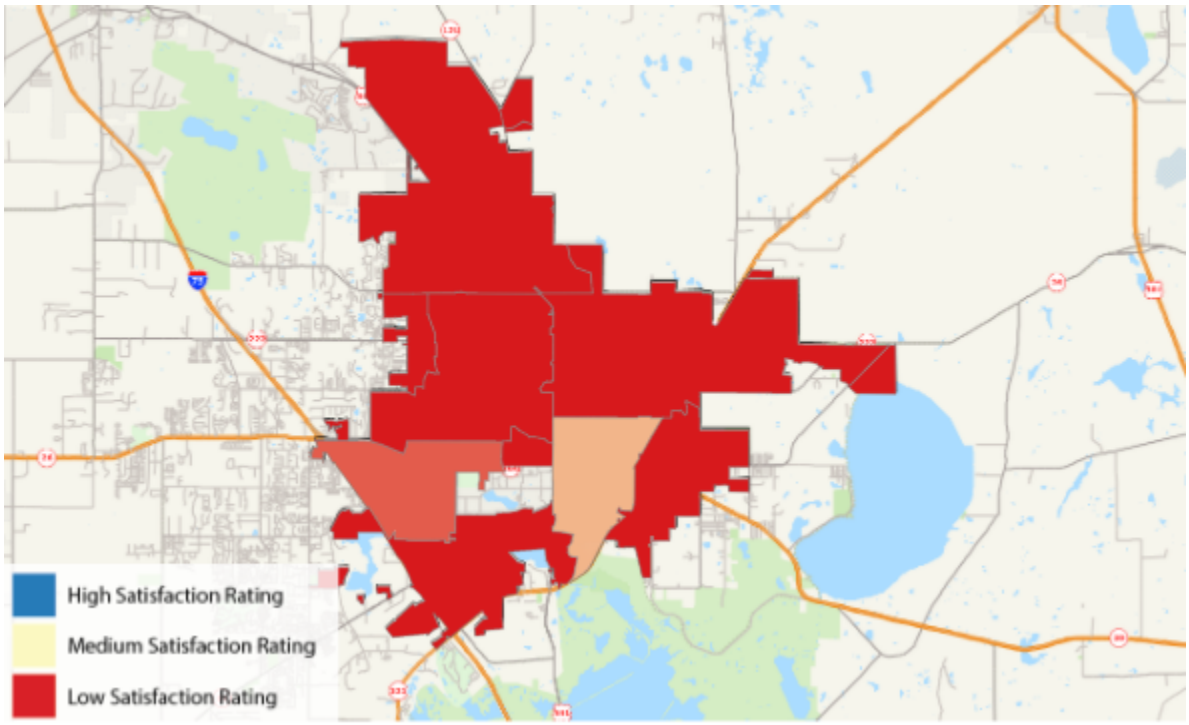
I chose five precincts to compare to 13, 19, and 27 because they had some of the highest numbers of registered Black populations. Out of these precincts, only precinct 19 had a decrease

in their registered Black population. All of the observed precincts that had a decrease in the percentage of registered Black community members also had an increase in the registered Black population. This may link to a higher rate of increase in other populations since there are more Black voters but they have become a smaller portion of the precinct. So overall, the registered population seems to be growing in these areas and potentially Gainesville in general. This can connect to higher rates of mobilization and voter outreach. Although, the opposite can be observed with precinct 19, which had a decrease in registered Black residents but an increase in population percentage. This can show that other populations are leaving the area at a higher rate than the Black population. These situations can be described by gentrification and White Flight.

The influx of predominantly White populations in a historically Black community is typically referred to as gentrification and can be observed in areas such as precinct 13. The decrease of other populations in precinct 19 can be potentially described as White Flight. As the Black population has also decreased in precinct 19 it seems that there may be a larger pattern of migration away from this area that has been ongoing.

The city of Gainesville has recently taken on a neighborhood survey project in 2020. Commissioner Hayes-Santos brought this up to me during our interview, and provided me with the data through a public records request. Through this neighborhood survey, Alachua county residents were able to express their opinions and sentiments about the current state of Gainesville and their communities.

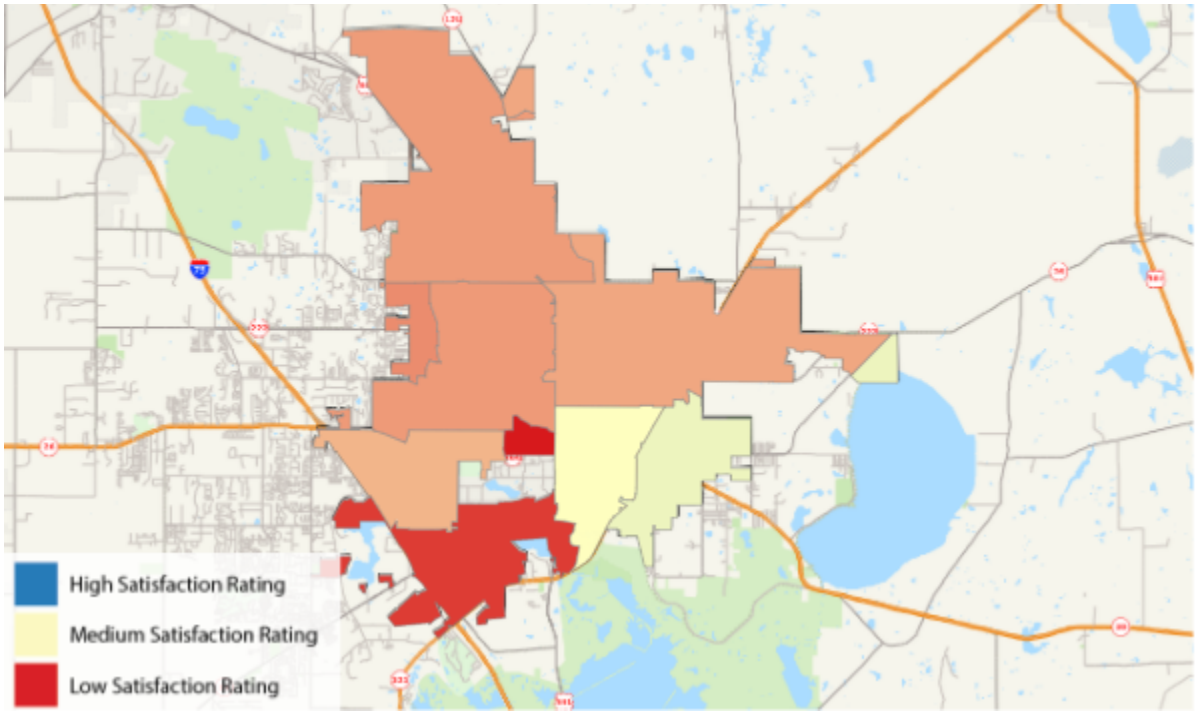
Survey Responses to “Have you Campaigned or advocated for an issue, cause, or candidate?”



Map 2
City of Gainesville - Neighborhood Survey (ETC Institute)

Map 2 shows the responses of Gainesville residents to the question “Have you Campaigned or advocated for an issue, cause, or candidate?” The general area where precinct 19 is a lighter shade of pink, which means the average response is between the two responses of “yes” and “no.” The surrounding areas are a deeper red, which shows how the average answer there would be “no.” In this case, the lighter-shaded area seems to reflect more involvement than other parts of town. When responding to a campaigning question this general area was a lighter shade of red than surrounding areas. This can show that general civic involvement may be low but it is slightly higher in this community.

Survey Responses to " Have you watched a city of Gainesville meeting online or on TV?"



City of Gainesville - Neighborhood Survey (ETC Institute)
Map 3

When asked about watching city meetings, this area again is a lighter shade than its surroundings which shows that it is more engaged with local events than their neighbors. The area that would encompass all of precinct 19, and small pieces on the edges of precincts 13 and 27 in this question are also in between "yes" and "no." Compared to the other areas with survey responses, this is the most politically engaged location in the city according to this one question.

> *"This neighborhood [precinct 27] is probably the most politically active in the city of Gainesville in terms of activism and donating to campaigns. I would say it is very liberal and a lot of people who are in this neighborhood are very active in the political*

community at least locally, some federally as well. So there definitely is activism in that sense, of people being involved in political campaigns and political organizations and such." - Commissioner Hayes-Santos, Commissioner for District 4 in Alachua county

Vote by mail ballot data in the most recent 2020 elections data and 2014 election data can show what the rates of approval and rejections may be in precincts 13, 19, and 27. Disadvantaged communities can be at risk for higher ballot rejection rates. The rates of vote by mail validation in these precincts show that most ballots do get accepted. The highest combined rate of rejection is 0.6% as of 2021 in precinct 27. This can assist in observing the ballot rejection rates and potential voter discouragement or suppression that may happen in traditionally majority-minority communities.

Ballot Proofing Rates in Observed Precincts 2021

2021	**Absentee Accepted**	**Absentee Rejected**	**Early accepted**	**Provisional rejected**	**Election day Accepted**
13	27%	.04%	16.56%	.13%	17.28%
19	28.53%	.14%	20.5%		13.99%
27	29.11%	.2%	18.22%	.4%	9.11%

Table 4

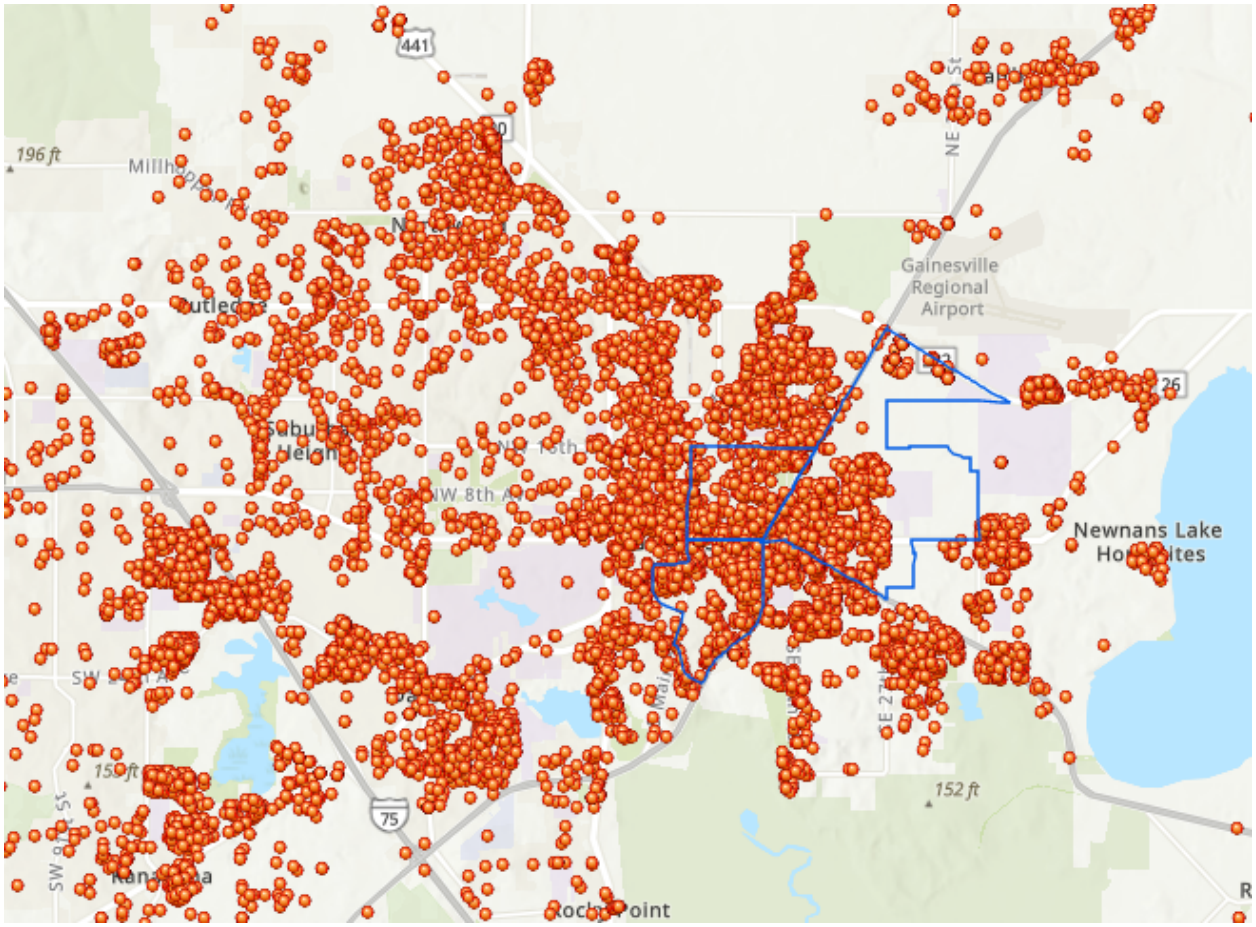
Ballot Proofing Rates in Observed Precincts 2015

2015	Absentee Accepted	Absentee Rejected	Early accepted	Provisional rejected	Election day Accepted
13	9.58%	.23%	6.15%	.09%	23.02%
19	11.58%	.13%	7.89%	.13%	20.74%
27	7.3%	.25%	7.81%	0%	17.88%

Table 5

After observing general data around Gainesville registration, race, and precincts 13, 19, and 27 I looked into people with felony convictions who are from Alachua county. The data had 13,224 unique people with convictions from Alachua county. I took this data and created a GIS map to plot all of these individuals' addresses and see where the bulk of people with felonies are geographically from.

GIS Alachua Felons Addresses With 13, 19, and 27 Outlines

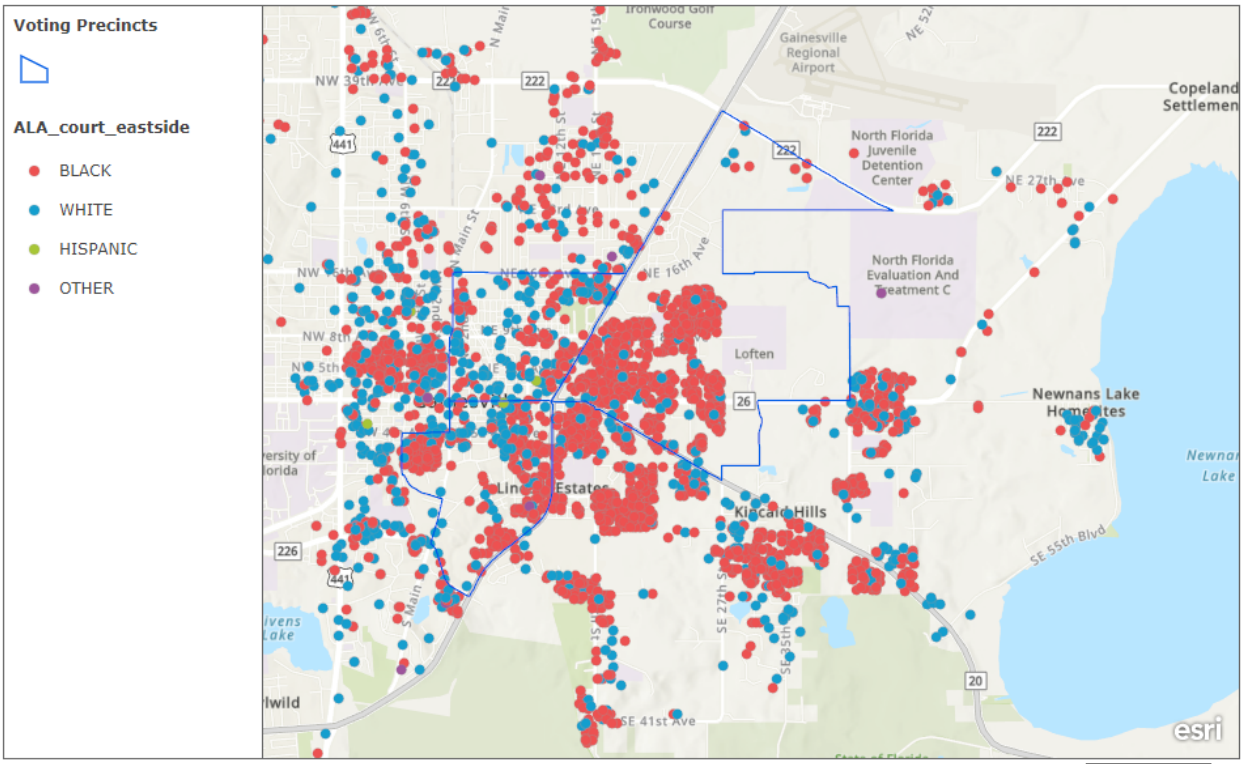


Map 4

Many of the felony convictions are committed by individuals all over the city of Gainesville. What can be observed on Map 4 is the few locations where the plotted points become denser. These dense areas include North Gainesville, and it appears that a generous bulk of the points are nearer to the downtown area and precincts 13, 19, and 27. I then took the felon file, and observed the addresses located in zip codes 32601, and 32641. These zip codes

encompass all three of the targeted precincts, and make up 5,028 of the 13, 224 unique felons in the data. Felons from these two zip codes make up 38% of the felons in Alachua county.

GIS Alachua Felons in Zip Codes 32601 and 32641 by Race



Map 5

With a closer look at the data, I noticed that a majority of these felons identify as Black (red points), with precinct 27 appearing to have the relative smallest population of felons. The disproportionate amount of felons located in these zip codes mean that these communities are suffering from higher rates of incarceration compared to other neighborhoods in the county. To observe felon voter participation, I managed to match up voter registration data to felons that have ever been registered to vote in Alachua county.

Registered Alachua County Felons by Party Affiliation

	DEM		REP		NPA		OTHER		TOTAL
Registered Felons	1413	73%	222	11%	282	15%	15	0.01%	1932

Table 6

Alachua county registered voters that are convicted felons lean Democrat, with similar amounts of voters being Republican or NPA. Compared to the total Alachua county party affiliation and registration, felon affiliation also leans Democratic but moreso than Alachua county's ratio.

Registered Eastside Alachua County Felons by Race and Party Affiliation

	BLACK		WHITE		HISPANIC		OTHER	
DEM	607	95%	33	0.05%	0		0	
REP	23	40%	33	59%	0		1	0.02%
NPA	67	73%	25	27%	0		0	
OTHER	3	75%	1	25%	0		0	
TOTAL	700	88%	92	11%	0		1	0.001%

Table 7

Table 7 displays the amount of registered felons in zip codes 32601 and 32641 by ethnic identity and party registration. The chosen zip codes encompass all three precincts that are being observed in this study. According to the figure, convicted felons with restored voting rights in these select Alachua county zip codes lean Democrat as well. Out of the total 1932 registered felons in Alachua county, 793 are registered in these zip codes which is 41% of re-enfranchised voters. Out of 793 individuals observed here, 700 identify as Black which is 88% of the sample.

Those with felony convictions registered in precincts 13, 19, and 27 make up 350 of the 1,980 felons registered in Alachua county. About 18% of the felons registered to vote in Alachua come from these three precincts.

Registered Felons by Precinct and Race

	13		**19**		**27**		**28**	**30**	**33**	**52**	**55**	**31**
BLACK	197	28%	70	10%	42	6%	190	117	107	86	67	1
WHITE	17	18%	10	11%	14	15%	8	16	15	9	8	0
TOTAL	214	27%	80	10%	56	7%	198	133	122	95	75	1

Table 8

All of the precincts observed in table 8 have majority Black re-enfranchised felon populations. This data matches up with the incarceration rates within Gainesville being disproportionately discriminatory towards people of color at higher rates than the rest of Florida has. Precinct 13 has the most registered Black voters in Alachua county, and precinct 19 has the 6th most amount, and 27 has the tenth most amount. The percentages shown are out of the Eastside zip code felon populations observed in table 7. This shows that out of the 700 Black felons in zip codes 32601 and 32641, which encompass precincts 13, 19, and 27, the Black felons that registered in precinct 13 made up 28% of them. All together, precincts 13, 19, and 27 make up 44% of the 700 Black registered felons in these two zip codes. These precincts together also make up 18% of the total re-enfranchised felon population in Alachua county. This suggests there's a larger effort in this area of Alachua county to restore felon voting rights.

Felon Disenfranchisement and Voting Rights

The voter registration of Alachua county felons by year is intriguing. The midterm elections in 2018 marked a historical landmark in Florida with the passage of Amendment 4. This amendment allowed for the restoration of voting rights for Florida felons, when previously their voting rights were indefinitely revoked after a conviction.

Registered Alachua County Returning Voters by Race and Year

	BLACK		**WHITE**		**HISPANIC**	**OTHER**	**YEARLY TOTALS**	
1968-2015	518	36%	243	50%	0	1	762	40%
2016	45	3%	18	4%	0	0	63	3%
2018	37	2%	11	2%	0	0	48	2%
2019	295	21%	83	17%	0	2	380	20%
2020	530	37%	134	27%	0	1	665	35%
RACIAL TOTALS	1425	100%	489	100%	0	4	1918	100%

Table 9

The voter registrations of Alachua county's convicted felons include all registrations on file. This can mean that some registrations were potentially made before that individual's conviction which would have then been revoked and later restored. I believe that after voting rights restoration, the registration of an individual would appear as their original registration date. This can prevent the data from reflecting if those individuals re-registered after the passing of Amendment 4. The data shows that in a 48 year period there were 762 registrations made by Alachua county felons. This equates to an estimated average of 16 registrations per year. Once the Amendment was passed in the midterm election, it had to be ratified in the Florida Senate.

When the bill passed through the state legislature was when felons were given their rights back (flsenate.gov 2019). This is why there is an increase in registrations from 48 in 2018 to 380 in 2019. There were more registrations in 2019 and 2020, 825, than in the 48 year period shown in table 9. This movement can also potentially be attributed to local organizing and motivations due to the political climate.

> *"Nationally we've had such impactful things that have taken place. What we have seen that has come out of that is that people are really uniting and wanting to make sure that certain issues are being heard once again, and that being united and working together and having one voice is really impactful. It also gets momentum and movement when you speak with one voice, that's what I'm seeing more of."* - former District 1 Commissioner Gigi Simmons

> *"Trump was elected and I recognized that there needed to be more women and people of color in office."* - Commissioner At-Large Gail Johnson on her motivation to run for office

> *"I know that the Alachua county labor coalition walked in these areas, a liberal organization that came out when Trump was elected."* - District 4 Commissioner Adrian Hayes-Santos

"When Trump was elected in 2016. When that happened I felt so defeated because I couldn't vote and so many other people couldnt vote." - Tequila McKnight, Community Spring fellow on her motivation to get involved with the campaign for Amendment 4

There have been a growing amount of opportunities for people to get involved in their communities in recent years. The election of Donald Trump as president ignited something in people to mobilize and achieve more. Commissioner Johnson was inspired to run for office, Tequila McKnight was inspired to get involved, the Alachua County Labor Coalition engaged more with the community, all in reaction to the 2016 election. Many saw things that were lacking in their own communities and chose to step up for those reasons. Organizations such as Community Spring arose to help felons re-enter society in Gainesville, along with sister organizations that give back just as much to the community. These events and initiatives are potential reasons for the campaigning for a stronger Democratic base that could be sourced from voters that have been disenfranchised due to felonies. Incarceration rates disproportionately impact Black populations, regardless of the share of the population that Black residents make up. As seen in precincts 13, 19, and 27, there may be a pattern of higher mobilization and registration efforts among the disenfranchised populations. Another motivator for these communities seems to have been the potential to re-enfranchise through the passage of Amendment 4. People such as Tequila McKnight wanted to vote and voice their experiences democratically and thus got involved in the process to make it happen. As seen in Leighly (1995), the patterns of mobilization may not reflect the entire population that are interested in

participating. With this logic it can be assumed that there is a greater amount of politically interested disenfranchised felons than just those that are registered and actively participating.

Discussion

Alachua county consistently experiences higher rates of incarceration, especially within Black and brown communities. As seen in the BEBR report, Alachua county has had a history of comparably high rates of arrests and racial inequality. Incarceration negatively impacts Gainesville communities and leaves lasting impressions on the affected individuals.

On the East side of Gainesville there is a historically Black community that resides within precinct 13. From 2015 to 2021, precinct 13 experienced an increase in the amount of Black registered voters, but the percentage of Black registered voters decreased. This implies that other, likely White, populations are coming into the area at a much higher rate than Black voters. This is gentrification, and has been impacting one of the Blackest communities in Gainesville.

> *"I think for one you look at density, geographically speaking its [precinct 13] a larger area. So you have a larger area compared to the Porter's community, geographically it's very different. You can see the infrastructure, and when I say infrastructure you can look at the make-up of the environment that's surrounding those different precinct areas. My area, Porter's, is more situated in the downtown community, right next to the University of Florida. We have depot park, we have south main, we have bustling businesses. So it's quite different from east Gainesville which is more family-oriented, more residential communities, more dense house population. So with those types of differences you're going to have unique challenges."* - Former Commissioner Gigi Simmons, on precinct 13

Precinct 13 does not seem to have as much competition for housing and also struggles with its schools. In Gainesville there is a lot of construction building new apartments to accommodate students during the academic year. This results in denser housing communities in many areas of Gainesville. Precinct 13 is not being developed at the same rate or for the same purposes as areas nearer to the University of Florida campus. This leads to the maintenance of that family-oriented environment. To speculate, this slower-paced environment compared to Porter's area or precinct 27, which are both nearer to downtown, is potentially a reason for the influx of White residents in precinct 13. There may be a growing sense of community and involvement in precinct 13, as it does have the most registered Black felons in the county. The community outreach may be more effective in this community.

The deserting as well as gentrification of areas such as Porter's neighborhood, also known as precinct 19, has deep ramifications on the neighborhood and its political behavior. Porter's was founded by Canadian settlers in the early 1800's, and plotted in 1884. In the early days of Porter's, it was home to African-American laborers who lived in and grew the community for generations. Into the 1970's and 1980's there was a crack epidemic that impacted the Porter's and Gainesville areas and caused many families to flee from their homes that they felt were becoming unsafe.

> *" I was born and raised in Porter's community, I'm actually a fifth generation Porter's resident... In those times in the 80s when I was a teenager, I saw the destruction and devastation that the crack epidemic had in our communities, not just porters but the city of Gainesville and all of our minority communities. We succumbed with a lot of flight, a lot of abandoned houses, and it was not a good time. It took its toll on our families during*

> *that time, they enacted the third strike you're out rule, we had a lot of people going to jail for being caught using crack during that time. It really devastated the families and changed the trajectory of a lot of Black families in our community."* - Gigi Simmons; Former District 1 Commissioner

Since this epidemic, Porter's has been experiencing overall flight from its community. Based on the available data, it appears that there is an exodus of members in this community, with both the Black and White populations. From 2015 to 2021 the Porter's population decreased yet the registered Black voter percent make up increased from 31% to 38.57%. This shows the potential that Black voters are leaving but are becoming a larger percentage of the population because White voters within Porter's are leaving at much higher rate than the Black demographic. There must be reasons that so many are choosing to exit instead of stay and better the community. Porter's, being so close to downtown Gainesville, is also experiencing outside community members coming and creating rental properties in their neighborhood. The tight-knit family that Porter's was, and still is in many ways, is becoming watered down by the introduction of outside members. While this overall creates a more diverse environment, it can lead to losing a sense of cohesion for the original inhabitants. Black identity is important for individuals to share with their community with similar experiences and generational knowledge. The loss of fellow Black community members to incarceration and flight has likely been as traumatic as former Commissioner Simmons described. Through the loss of community members, precinct 19 still seems to be more politically active than its neighbors. In the neighborhood surveys taken by the city of Gainesville when responding to questions about campaigning and watching city meetings, this area is more engaged in these activities than surrounding neighborhoods. The flight and

gentrification of this area mixed with historical issues may be resulting in more involvement from those that want to see positive change after so many negative events. In this situation it may seem like the history of incarceration, oppression, and gentrification are what is driving the community to make steps towards positive change.

North of University Avenue, we will find precinct 27 which encompasses the Duckpond and Northeast neighborhoods of Gainesville. Commissioner Hayes-Santos describes this community as the most liberal-leaning in his district. The demographics of 27's residents more resemble those of the nation on average, with only 12% identifying as Black. Out of the 505 registered Black voters in precinct 27, 42 have felony convictions which equates to 8% of the registered Black population in that community. Commissioner Hayes-Santos works on many environmental initiatives throughout the city of Gainesville, and is very proud of the work he has worked on in his time.

> *"I would say there is very strong support in district 4, being the most liberal district and youngest district in the city there is strong support for environmental measures... And when you do polling in the city and in our region, the environment is really our top polling issue."* - District 4 Commissioner Hayes-Santos

Since 27 is a more demographically average district, racial concerns do not seem to be as in the forefront as in precincts 13 and 19 that have 85% and 31% registered Black constituents respectively. This does not mean that carceral and racial issues do not exist in precinct 27 though, as Hayes-Santos told me a couple stories about voters he's encountered.

"I have talked to people, before the constitutional amendment [Amendment 4], that told me 'I can't vote because I have a felony.' It definitely was a major thing you would come across walking in certain neighborhoods and talking to them. While I was working in one of the neighborhoods, the poll sites for the democratic party were handing out site cards in the last election. There was an individual who came and had a big smile on his face, looked maybe in his 50s or 60s and he mentioned it was his first time being able to vote since the felony rule was being taken away. He had gotten a felony when he was in his 20's, so for 40 years he couldn't vote, and for the first time ever he was able to vote in an election. I think that change opened up for a lot more people who would not be a part of society in another aspect." - District 4 Commissioner Hayes-Santos

So after looking holistically at these three precincts and how they compare to the county it seems that, especially in recent history, incarceration has caused an increase in mobilization. Hannah Walker (2020) described how personal and proximal contact influence the political behavior of those impacted by incarceration. In her study, there are examples of this mobilization occurring because of specific individuals with their own personal or proximal contact choosing to start or contribute to a socio-political movement. These movements come in the form of political participation, socialization, and the forming of organizations. All of these events happened within Gainesville as a result of Amendment 4, which has radically altered the course of life after Incarceration in Florida. Groups composed of formerly incarcerated (personal contact) and family or community members (proximal contact) have formed coalitions to improve the lives of former felons, address racial inequality, and register those who are now eligible to vote.

"*I had been to prison so I was a convicted felon, and a person that I knew, Jhody Polk, had started the Florida Council for ending mass incarceration for women and girls at that time. She came up to me and started asking me about how it had been for me, because me and her were released a month apart. We both had gotten jobs at a hotel. She was there, came up to me and talked about it. That's how I got involved. She asked me what I had been going through, we went through the same things. I wanted change because I had experienced it myself."* - Tequila McKnight, Community Spring fellow

In Tequila McKnight's situation, she has worked closely with other people who were formerly incarcerated and determined to make changes. Amendment 4 was an opportunity to make a change, and give millions their civic voices back. When approached by another woman who has experienced the same things, McKnight took the chance to better her community. While there were many resources becoming available to current community members, McKnight did not have the same support when she was released from prison. All of these efforts are going towards a better future for people going through the same unfair life events, and Amendment 4 sparked the momentum for those to organize for each other.

"We're doing a lot of positive things and changing, especially as far as re-entry goes here in gainesville. We started Community Spring and they hired us. The campaign we started was about re-entry. Me and a couple of the other fellows had experienced that. We got together and started Torchlighters, which is a peer-support re-entry for people coming out of jail and their family to help them get the resources we know of or are creating because there weren't any." - Tequila McKnight, Community Spring fellow when asked if re-entry has changed since she was released from prison

Another reason Amendment 4 and incarceration caused more mobilization in Alachua, is the usual Democrat leanings of those with felony convictions. Liberal and Democratic organizations were campaigning to pass this Amendment 4 because it would increase Democrat voter registration. The missions of these organizations and the party go hand in hand with the more grassroots movements being led by these community members motivated by personal or proximal contact.

> *"We have people, parents calling, and sisters calling. Everyone needs support. That's someone they left that may have been an income they may have needed. They may have to start spending more for that person that's in there [prison] that's not earning any money. It's definitely impactful on everybody thats involved with that person, it's not just that person"* - Tequila McKnight, Community Spring fellow

Formerly incarcerated felons and their families also rely on the assistance of these types of communities for information and other needs, which ties into how they socialize. The groups that perform this outreach will ultimately be the ones influencing these populations. Groups such as Community Spring, Legal Empowerment and Advocacy Hub, the Florida Council for Incarcerated & Formerly Incarcerated Women & Girls, Dream Defenders, are only a few that have grown through the adversity of fighting for voting restoration for felons. These communities that have been historically underrepresented, neglected, and incarcerated have been able to be represented in more ways than before recently.

> *"Especially during the last election cycle I feel like it [representation] was pretty historic. There are now three women on the school board, of course there's me and Gigi, I was the*

first Black person elected at large in 30 years I think. Which is kind of wild to think about. We have a black sheriff, and a police chief now who is incredible and very much cares about proper policing and the community. This last election was very good, we have a Black female property appraiser and I think she's the only Black female property appraiser in all of Florida... I think that having black women or people with a different perspective outside of the White heterosexual christian men that run this country is important for us to be able to have a society that it truly inclusive and works for everyone." - Commissioner At-Large Gail Johnson

Incarceration has always been a political issue that advances racial inequality. Walker (2020) argued that convictions make an individual a larger stakeholder in policy outcomes that impact formerly incarcerated individuals, which is a perfect motivation for mobilization and activism. Burch (2013) argues that motivated organizations mobilizing impacted communities are not enough to counteract the negative impacts of incarceration. I argue that Walker's (2020) case is closer to the circumstances seen in Alachua county, especially in recent years. The campaigning around and passage of Amendment 4 gave tremendous hope to communities impacted by incarceration. By working together to pass this legislation, it opened new doors for communities to reconnect through their shared experiences with inequality. The enactment of Amendment 4 resulted in hundreds of new voter registrations in the two years since its passing, which is more than the total other ex-felon registrations over 52 years. Once felon voting rights were restored, there became more need for ex-felon voter education. This disadvantaged population received a lot of momentum, and now the organizations that were created for them in this crucial time are continuing to work for these communities.

"When the pandemic happened we started giving money, raising it, and giving it to people in the communities. We gave everybody on food stamps a chance for $300, we did an application and a drawing to choose names. We gave them the money, no strings attached. It was an easy process. A lot of people got to see who Community Spring was and what we were really doing for the community." - Tequila McKnight, Community Spring fellow

Walker's (2020) theory is relevant here, as the substantial amounts of personal and proximal contact caused individuals to find an outlet to make change together. When given the opportunity to rally behind Amendment 4, communities were able to mobilize with a shared group struggle in mind. While it cannot be refuted that incarceration has overall negative impacts on community organizing as Burch (2013) argues, this perfect storm of legislation, dedicated organizations, and fruitful results in Alachua county garnered increased participation as a result of incarceration being a large issue, as I predicted to observe.

Conclusion

Incarceration generally removes members from their communities, as well as their voting rights. Greater rates of incarceration are traditionally associated with significant decreases in voter mobilization over time. Precincts 13, 19, and 27 were found to have a large amount of the Black as well as felon populations that are registered to vote in Alachua county. Precinct 13 and 19 are known to have historically Black communities that have been impacted by incarceration, gentrification, and flight. These occurrences change the behavior that is exhibited in these communities over time. Precinct 27 is not as populated by Black constituents, and does not suffer

from the same historical events that its neighbors have. What they do have in common, is they are located near the core of Gainesville and its downtown area.

Voter mobilization is difficult in such communities known to be ravaged by incarceration and racial inequalities. Formerly incarcerated voters used to become disenfranchised once they have a felony conviction. This silenced the voices of many minorities as well as mostly Democratically-voting individuals. The introduction of Amendment 4 promised the re-enfranchisement of formerly incarcerated felons. While most organizations that target underrepresented communities fail to achieve notable outreach, this election was different. The promise of re-enfranchisement encouraged those who could not vote and their communities to organize for this cause. Organizations used the political socialization that occurs in these disadvantaged communities and demographics to target them about how important this opportunity could be for them. Communities stepped up behind organized mobilization efforts because of their own backgrounds with personal and proximal contacts with the carceral state (Walker 2020). The shared interest in racial inequalities, especially regarding incarceration, that impact the community as a whole is what seems to have driven these people to mobilize.

Felon voter registration dramatically increased after the passing of Florida's Amendment 4 in the 2018 midterm election. The lead up to the voting on this amendment was key in the efforts surrounding mobilization in impacted communities. Many people worked together through organizations such as Community Spring, LEAH, and others that Tequila McKnight has described being active in the Gainesville community. These organizations continue to be active in the community, as these issues regarding inequality and incarceration have not been resolved. They continuously provide resources and education to those that need it in Alachua, and are

contributing to a better quality of life among those communities including those who are formerly incarcerated and their families. All of these occurrences align with my hypothesis of increased voter registration and turnout as a result of the re-entry of incarcerated individuals. My research questions on the impacts of incarceration rates on families and community members have been expanded on primarily through my interviews with Tequila McKnight and Commissioners Simmons and Johnson. This research has shown a few different patterns and demographics within Alachua county that focus on the behavior of re-enfranchised felons. These patterns are not correlations, nor concretely conclusive.

As 2018 was still very recent, and felon registration has only been increasing since then, there may be a trend of increased mobility for the near future, especially with upcoming Senate and Gubernatorial races in Florida in 2022. These traditionally Democratic communities may continue to mobilize behind highly regarded issues in order to continue to support their current active community members, and those that are yet to register.

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