8-1-2011

Measuring the salience of the economy : the effects of economic conditions on voter perceptions and turnout in Mississippi

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MEASURING THE SALIENCE OF THE ECONOMY: THE EFFECTS OF ECONOMIC CONDITIONS ON VOTER PERCEPTIONS AND TURNOUT IN MISSISSIPPI

By

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of
Mississippi State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts
in Political Science
in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Mississippi State, Mississippi

August 2011

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Title of Study: MEASURING THE SALIENCE OF THE ECONOMY: THE EFFECTS OF THE ECONOMY ON VOTER PERCEPTIONS AND TURNOUT IN MISSISSIPPI

Pages in Study: 48

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Past studies concerning the effects of economic conditions on voter perceptions have tended to generalize their findings to the entire national electorate. Such generalizations fail to account for the different ideologies, lifestyles, and economic conditions that exist from state to state. In the current study, I compare the effects of subjective financial evaluations with the effects of objective economic indicators on voter perceptions and turnout in the state of Mississippi. The purpose is to determine the extent to which past findings on the national level hold up on the state level, with Mississippi as the subject of analysis. Using data from the Mississippi Poll and employing a logistic regression method, the findings show that Mississippian's perceptions of political figures are more strongly influenced by subjective financial evaluations. Voter turnout, on the other hand, was more strongly influenced by objective economic indicators than personal financial satisfaction.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to extend thanks to everyone who provided the assistance necessary for this study to take place. First, I would like to thank my thesis chair, Dr. Mary McThomas, for taking time out of her busy summer and being so readily available to provide the assistance and suggestions needed to guide me through the thesis process. Thanks also to my other committee members, Dr. Rob Mellen, Jr., and Dr. Stephen Shaffer, whose advice and input significantly shaped this research. Finally, special thanks are due to Dr. Stephen Shaffer and Mississippi State University's Social Science Research Center for providing the data needed to conduct this research.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The most basic political activity and the key to accountability in a representative democracy is the act of voting. Every two years Americans voice their opinions by going to the polls and either rewarding or punishing incumbent candidates in national elections; numerous factors influence these decisions. Oftentimes voter decisions are based strictly on party affiliation, while at other times they may be based on the voter's perceptions of the candidate's job performance. A major factor influencing these perceptions is the voter's reaction to various issues: the more salient the issue, the stronger the reaction. Just as issues vary between elections, voter turnout rates also vary from election to election; significantly more people turn out to vote in Presidential election years than in midterm election years. An obvious cause for this disparity is the increased publicity of Presidential campaigns and the nature of the executive office as the 'face of the government,' but turnout rates also fluctuate between midterm elections (Abramowitz 1980). In addition to changes in voter turnout rates, midterm elections typically result in a loss of congressional seats for the President's party (Bean 1948; Campbell 1966; Alesina and Rosenthal 1989; Fiorina 1992); there have been very few exceptions to this trend.

This raises the question: is this ebb and flow of Washington's partisan composition the result of democratic accountability or simply a product of competition between the major political parties? These commonly observed characteristics of elections in America have produced a wide range of literature offering a variety of different explanations for such trends. However, the motivation behind a person's decision to vote and for whom to vote will inevitably differ between individuals and between elections. The salience of issues undoubtedly has an effect on voter behavior, and the most salient of these issues is often the economy (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000). The purpose of this study is to measure the effects of both subjective and objective economic voter perceptions and behaviors.

Past literature on voter reactions to economic conditions has offered a wide variety of explanations, but most of this literature suffers from the same weakness; the findings are generalized to the entire national electorate without comparing results between separate regions or individual states. While most studies of voter behavior have focused on the entire national electorate, this study will focus specifically on the state of Mississippi. Generalizing assumptions about voter behavior to the entire nation has numerous complications, such as failing to consider regional differences in political ideology, lifestyle, and economic matters. Factors such as ideology and party identification, the salience of issues, and political and economic context differ greatly between states. For example, the motivation for a Mississippian's decision regarding a national election will likely differ from the motivation of a Californian's decision regarding the same election due to differences in ideologies, issues, and economic

contexts. Mississippi and the South in general possess an economic and political context that differs significantly from other regions of the nation.

National economic conditions are typically reflected in state economies, and voters tend to hold incumbent candidates responsible for those conditions (Shaffer and Chressanthis 1991). However, southern states have a history of great social inequality and slower-than-average economic development, which inevitably affects this notion of economic and political accountability. The late industrialization of the South has caused a lag in the region's economic development and has magnified the effects of declines in the national economy on the region's local economies. The primary causes of the South's slow economic development may be attributed to its history of social and economic inequality, and this slow rate of development has led to high levels of poverty and unemployment, slow job creation, and sparse urbanization. For a more in-depth discussion of the South's economic development, see Tomaskovic-Devey and Roscigno (1997).

When comparing state and national economic indicators, such as unemployment rates, the trends are similarly shaped but far from identical. For example, as illustrated in Figure 1.1, Mississippi has experienced the same ebb and flow of unemployment rates as the nation's average rates, but Mississippi's rates have been consistently higher. Unemployment rates provide an efficient comparison of state and national economic conditions because high unemployment typically leads to higher poverty levels, less income, and less consumer spending. The unique economic context of the South makes it a useful population with which to measure the effects of economic recessions on voter

behavior, and Mississippi provides a useful population to use as the subject for this study. A state with unemployment rates above the national average is more suited to the purpose of this study than a state with rates below the national average, because the goal is to determine how voters respond to a bad economy: does a consistently poor economy mute the effect of economic conditions on voter behavior, or are those effects magnified? This study assumes the latter: if a state's economy is more strongly affected by declines in the national economy than other states, then the effects of economic decline on voter perceptions and behavior will also be greater than other states.

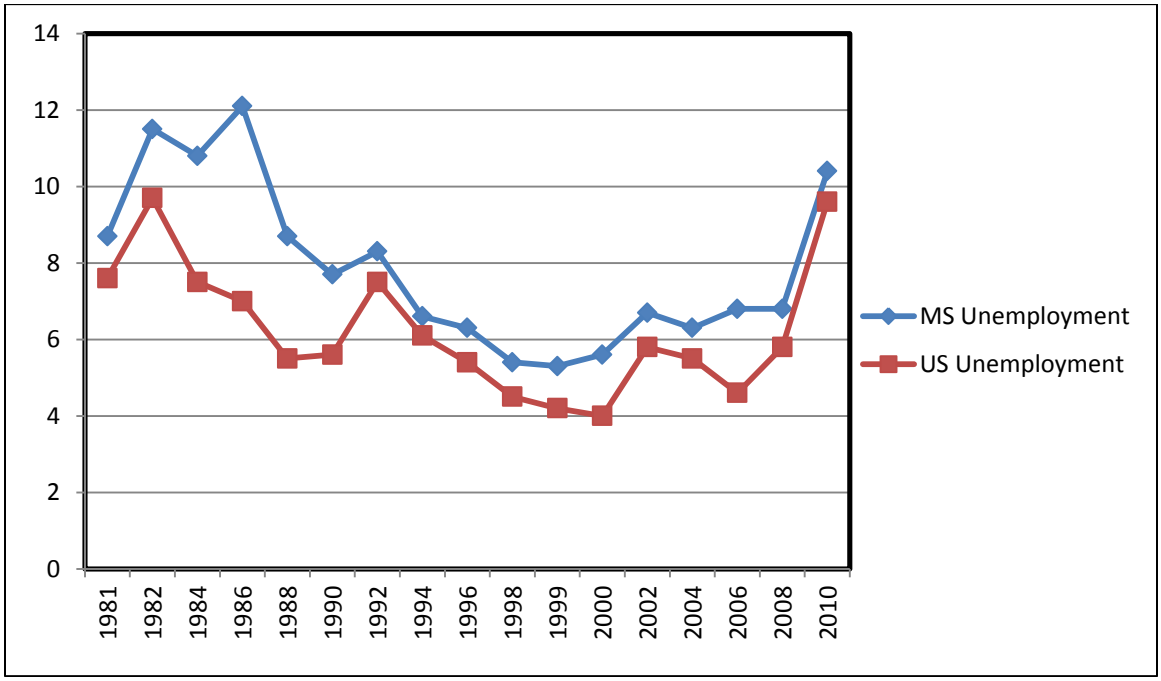

Figure 1.1 Mississippi and U.S. Average Unemployment Rates, 1981-2010

Source: Unemployment rates were obtained online from the Mississippi Department of Employment Security and the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Background

Shifts in the national electorate reflect the voters' willingness to hold public officials accountable for their actions in office. Political scientists have observed many trends in the outcomes of national elections, such as the tendency for the President's party to lose congressional seats in midterm elections (Campbell 1966; Campbell 1991; Erikson and Wright 2009). The literature has produced a variety of explanations for this trend. The 'coattails' thesis, for example, holds that the greater publicity of presidential elections tends to benefit congressional candidates of the winning president's party (Campbell 1991). Other studies have argued that while the coattails theory may partially explain the surge enjoyed by the president's party in presidential election years, it does not adequately explain the loss of congressional seats the president's party often suffers during midterm elections. Instead, some argue that this loss of seats during midterms is simply a natural tendency for the electorate to try and achieve an ideological balance in Washington (Alesina and Rosenthal 1989; Fiorina 1992; Bafumi et al. 2010). Neither the "withdrawn coattails" thesis nor the "balancing" thesis adequately addresses the role issues play in these shifts in the electorate. Salient issues have a significant impact on elections (Campbell 1966), and the issue that hits closest to home for many voters is the state of the economy (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000).

Studies that have looked more closely at these partisan changes have found a number of different causes for the trend. Campbell (1966) argued that strong candidates, salient issues, and unique circumstances such as war tend to provoke a greater campaign interest among 'peripheral' voters. The increased participation of these peripheral voters

weakens the vote of the 'core' electorate, which tends to be more strongly identified with the major political parties. As a result, the existence of salient issues weakens the majority party's electoral chances while boosting the chances of the minority party. From Campbell's (1966) study, it can be assumed that an economic recession is one of these special circumstances that can affect the outcome of an election. Applying this theory to the state of Mississippi, in which declines in the national economy tend to be magnified in the state's local economy, it can also be assumed that the effects of a recession on voter perceptions and behaviors will be more significant here than other states.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the current study is to measure and compare the effects of subjective and objective economic measures on job performance evaluations and likely voter turnout in the state of Mississippi. While this is not a new topic in political science, the past literature has displayed a tendency to generalize findings to the entire nation or, at best, to various regions. The study seeks not to disprove previous findings, but rather to test the extent to which they hold true on the state level, given a unique political, social, and economic context. By looking at a specific state, the effects of economic indicators on voter behavior in national elections can be measured more accurately, given that findings are not generalized outside of the state; as mentioned earlier, factors such as ideology, lifestyle, and the local economy differ significantly between states and regions. The first step in undertaking such a study is to define economic recessions on the state level. While trends in the national economy are typically reflected in states' economies,

the two are never identical. For this reason it is necessary to focus not on national economic conditions, but characteristics of an individual state's economy. Mississippi is a useful subject for a study of voter reactions to a bad economy because of its historically below-par economy.

In addition to objective economic indicators, this study will also look at the effects of personal financial satisfaction on voter perceptions of political figures and their intentions to vote or not to vote. The goal is to determine how voters' personal financial satisfaction relates to objective economic indicators and to compare the extent to which each affects job performance evaluations and likely voter turnout. By making such measurements within a single state rather than making generalized assumptions like much of the previous literature, the actual effects of the economy on voters within a single state can be seen more clearly. The primary purpose of this paper is to assess whether or not, and to what extent, previous findings at the national level may hold true in the state of Mississippi. Future studies may expand on this study by comparing Mississippi's results with the results for other states, thus producing a more accurate comparison of how the economy's effects on voter perceptions and behaviors vary from state to state.

Plan of Presentation

The outline of this study is as follows: Chapter 2 of the study will consist of a review of past literature concerning the relationships between various types of economic indicators and voter behaviors and perceptions. Studies concerning the effects of both subjective and objective economic evaluations on voter behavior will be addressed, and

the merits and inadequacies of each will be discussed. Chapter 3 will present the methodology to be employed, the variables and economic indicators used, and the hypothesized results. The methods behind the Mississippi Poll will be discussed, as well as some of its methodological challenges and limitations. Chapter 4 will present the analysis and findings of the study. The analysis will first look at the effects of personal financial satisfaction on job performance evaluations and likely voter turnout, while controlling for selected demographic variables and party identification. It will then bring into play three objective economic measures for the state of Mississippi and will compare their effects on job performance evaluations and likely voter turnout with the effects of financial satisfaction. Chapter 5 will summarize and discuss the findings, their congruence with the hypotheses, and their relevance and implications for Mississippi voters.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Political scientists have proposed many different explanations for shifts in the electorate. While the explanations differ, it is an observable fact that a President's party tends to gain congressional seats during a presidential election year while losing seats in the following midterm election. Two main theories exist with regard to these midterm partisan shifts. The "withdrawn coattails" explanation, also known as "surge and decline" theory, holds that the increased publicity and visibility of presidential elections benefits the President's party in elections for Congress during presidential election years. Two years later, the absence of these 'coattails' hurts the President's party in midterm elections (Bean 1948; Campbell 1966). James Campbell (1987, 1991) argued in his revision of surge and decline theory that this trend is the result of different electorates voting in midterm election years than in presidential election years. A second explanation holds that the electorate simply has a natural tendency to balance the ideological composition of the government, thus voting against the President's party in midterm elections (Alesina and Rosenthal 1989; Fiorina 1992; Bafumi et al. 2010).

While both of these arguments have their respective merits, neither takes into account the effects of salient issues, such as the economy, on national elections. Election outcomes are influenced by a wide range of issues, and the economy is typically the issue

that most significantly effects voters' decisions to vote or not to vote and for whom to vote (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000). In his critique of the surge and decline theory, Samuel Kernell (1977) noted the substantial impact of weak economies on the outcomes of the 1958 and 1970 midterm elections; congressional voting in midterm elections is greatly influenced by the president's popularity, and economic declines played a key role in both Eisenhower and Nixon's popularity. Other studies have found that voters tend to attribute responsibility for economic conditions more to Congress than to the president (Rudolph 2003).

A vast amount of literature exists on the effects of the economy on voter behavior. Much of this literature finds its base in the Downsian theory of rational decision-making. Anthony Downs (1957) argued in his seminal study, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, that voters base their decisions on rational calculations of what might bring them the most benefit for the least cost. Applying such a theory of rational decision-making to election studies has generated great dissent among political scientists; there is simply no way to accurately measure the costs and benefits that come with voting in an election, and it is unreasonable to assume that voters are capable of possessing and processing all the information necessary to make an accurate cost-benefit analysis. Some scholars have argued that voters become less likely to vote in elections when facing financial hardships. When confronted with economic adversity, the opportunity costs of turning out to vote become higher, and therefore individual voters become less likely to devote their resources to participating in politics (Brody and Sniderman 1977; Rosenstone 1982).

This notion of rational voting has brought other studies to very different conclusions. Some have argued that voters are more likely to blame the government when faced with financial hardships, and are thus more likely to turn out to vote due to a greater perceived benefit (Lipset 1960; Schlozman and Verba 1979). Lipset (1960) also found that lower-income occupational groups who suffer the most financially tend to hold leftist political views and support more liberal candidates. The problem with applying Downs' analysis to individual voter behavior is the dangerous assumption that voters base their decisions on completely objective observations and cost-benefit calculations without allowing their emotions to come into play. More recent studies have confirmed that emotions have a significant impact on voter perceptions and behaviors. Drawing a distinction between emotion and cognition, Conover and Feldman (1986) found that emotional reactions to the economy are not strongly correlated with cognitive observations of the economy. In addition, the authors found that emotional reactions to both personal and national economic conditions have a significant impact on voter perceptions.

This latter finding concerning reactions to personal financial situations and the national economic context presents another avenue for analysis – which type of reaction affects which type of voter? There is a large degree of consensus among the literature that voters tend to support incumbent candidates when they have positive perceptions of the economy and punish incumbents when they have negative perceptions (Kramer 1971; Shaffer and Chressanthis 1991). Studies have also shown that sociotropic economic evaluations (reactions to the national economy) tend to have a greater effect on individual

voter decisions than an individual's evaluation of his or her own personal financial situation (Feldman 1982).

Reexaminations of this finding have shown that the degree to which sociotropic or pocketbook evaluations affect vote intentions depends largely on the political sophistication of individual voters: a person with a high level of sophistication will more likely be motivated by pocketbook evaluations, while low sophisticates will more likely be motivated by sociotropic evaluations (Gomez and Wilson 2001). Expanding on Gomez and Wilson's analysis, Godbout and Bélanger (2007) found that the previous conclusion only held true when observing pre-election vote *intentions*; when taking into account actual post-election reported votes, higher sophisticates were less motivated by pocketbook evaluations than sociotropic evaluations.

Another topic addressed by the literature concerning the effects of economic conditions on election outcomes has been a comparison of Senate, House, and Presidential elections. A majority of the literature has focused mainly on House and Presidential elections, although studies of Senate elections have suggested that greater publicity and visibility makes Senators more accountable for their actions in office than members of the House (Abramowitz 1980). However, Shaffer and Chressanthis (1991) found that Senators are not as accountable for their actions as suggested by past literature. Their analysis showed that voters are more affected by their perceptions of reality, which are largely shaped by incumbent campaigning, than objective observations such as roll call votes and state economic conditions.

As time progresses, studies of the economy's effects on voter behavior become increasingly detailed, taking into account more factors than prior studies. However, the methodologies employed by these studies typically focus on the entire national electorate, thus overgeneralizing their findings. The problem with this is that the different social, political, and economic contexts of various regions will produce different associations between economic evaluations and voter behavior. Testing the hypotheses of Feldman (1982), Gomez and Wilson (2001), and Godbout and Bélanger (2007) in individual states will likely produce different results than those produced by studies focusing on the nation as a whole. An overview of the literature presents one common conclusion regarding the economy's effects on elections: everything depends.

Indeed, comparative election studies have shown that the effects of various economic evaluations on voter perceptions depend greatly on the structure of the political and economic system (Cohen 2004). The literature has transformed gradually from examinations of whether the economy affects voter behavior at all (Lipset 1960; Brody and Sniderman 1977; Schlozman and Verba 1979; Rosentstone 1982), to considerations of whether personal or national economic evaluations most significantly affect elections (Feldman 1982; Gomez and Wilson 2001; Godbout and Bélanger 2007), to comparisons of emotional/cognitive and retrospective/prospective evaluations of the economy (Conover and Feldman 1986; Cohen 2004), and so on. This study will attempt to identify which of these arguments hold true, if any, when focusing on an individual state with a unique political and economic context. Reactions to personal financial situations and

local objective economic indicators will be used to determine the degree to which subjective reactions affect voter perceptions and behaviors.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND HYPOTHESES

Most of the variables used in this study come from the Mississippi Poll and are outlined below. The independent variables include four economic indicators, one of which is subjective evaluations of personal financial situations and the other three of which are quantitative characteristics of Mississippi's economy. The three objective economic indicators for the state of Mississippi were obtained through the Mississippi Department of Employment Security and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). These objective measures of the economy include the state's annual unemployment rates, annual percent changes in the state's GDP, and annual percent changes in the state's average personal income levels. Other independent variables include education, age, race, sex, and party identification. The dependent variables include likely voter turnout and job performance ratings of three political figures and institutions: the president, governor, and the Mississippi state legislature.

Mississippi Poll

The Mississippi Poll is a statewide telephone survey conducted under Dr. Stephen Shaffer by the Survey Research Unit of the Social Science Research Center at Mississippi State University. Political science undergraduate students conduct the poll under the supervision of Dr. Shaffer and political science graduate students. The poll was first

conducted in 1981 and has taken place every two years since 1982 with the exceptions of 1988, in which two surveys were conducted, and 1999, in which an additional survey was conducted. The poll uses a random sampling technique to select household telephone numbers from across the state. Only one adult per household is interviewed and no substitutions are allowed. A Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing System (CATI) is used to collect the data from the survey. The sample sizes for each poll range from 523 to 1,022, with an average of 638 respondents per survey and a total of 11,482 respondents. The response rates range from 40% to 75%, with an average of 61% (see Appendix A for additional information on each individual poll; each year's data are weighted based on Census data to provide an accurate representation of the state's population).

The survey asks an array of questions on various political and social issues facing the state of Mississippi. The survey's questions are divided into social indicators, political indicators, state spending levels, state and national policy issues, party identification and ideological indicators, demographics, and elections. Some questions were asked in every year of the survey, while others were limited to only a few years or phrased differently in certain years. The only question used in the following analysis that was not asked in every year is the financial satisfaction question, which was not included in six of the surveys. Therefore, these six years are therefore not included in the analysis in order to eliminate the missing cases from those six survey years.

Methodological Challenges

The main problem facing the Mississippi Poll is its reliance on home telephone numbers. After 1990, the sample errors for individual polls became lower due to the purchase of working telephone numbers from a private sampling firm. In more recent years, the limitation to landlines has not produced an accurate demographic representation of the state of Mississippi. The increased use of cell phones has caused certain groups to be underrepresented; respondents under the age of 30, males, high school dropouts, and racial minorities have typically produced lower response rates. Therefore, the responses of each of these groups have been weighted in each year based on Census data to produce an accurate demographic representation of the state of Mississippi.

Variables and Economic Indicators

The following analysis will look at the effects of subjective and objective economic indicators on Mississippians' job performance ratings of political figures and their likely voter turnout. Education, age, race, gender, and party identification will also be used to determine which groups' perceptions and intentions to vote are the most strongly affected by the various economic indicators. All of the variables used in the analysis come from the Mississippi Poll with the exceptions of the three objective economic indicators, which will be discussed further below. For specific variable descriptions and coding information, see Appendix B.

The four dependent variables used in the analysis are likely voter turnout and job performance ratings of the president, governor, and state legislature. The Mississippi

Poll asks respondents to rate the job performance of various political figures as excellent, good, fair, or poor. This study will look at respondents' ratings of the president, the governor, and the state legislature in order to determine which political figures tend to take more of the blame for economic conditions. As for likely voter turnout, the Mississippi Poll asks respondents how likely they are to vote in the upcoming national elections: definitely will not vote, probably will not vote, probably will vote, or definitely will vote. It is worth noting that this is a measure of pre-election intentions, not actual post-election reported turnout. The purpose is to determine how the economy affects voters emotionally; that is, do voters see political participation as an appropriate reaction to negative economic evaluations, or do negative evaluations of the economy tend to disengage voters from the political process?

Subjective economic evaluations must be distinguished from objective economic measures; past studies have clearly shown that subjective or emotional reactions to personal finances are not always congruent with quantitative economic data, and they often impact voters more strongly than objective measures of the economy (Feldman 1982; Conover and Feldman 1986; Gomez and Wilson 2001). For the subjective economic indicator, the analysis uses the Mississippi Poll's question on financial satisfaction, which asks respondents if they are pretty well satisfied with their family's current financial situation, more or less satisfied, or not satisfied at all.

As for objectively measurable economic indicators, the analysis relies on the state's average annual unemployment rates, annual percent growth in the state's GDP, and the percent change in personal income levels from the first quarter of the previous

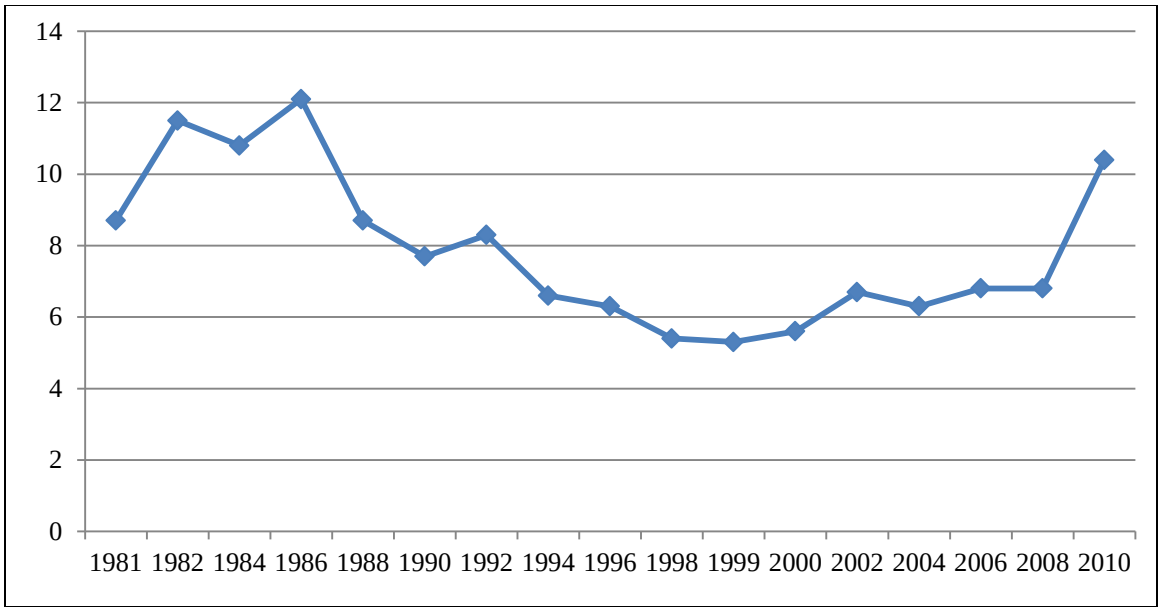

Figure 3.1 Mississippi Annual Unemployment Rates, 1981-2010

Source: Unemployment rates were obtained online from the Mississippi Department of Employment Security.

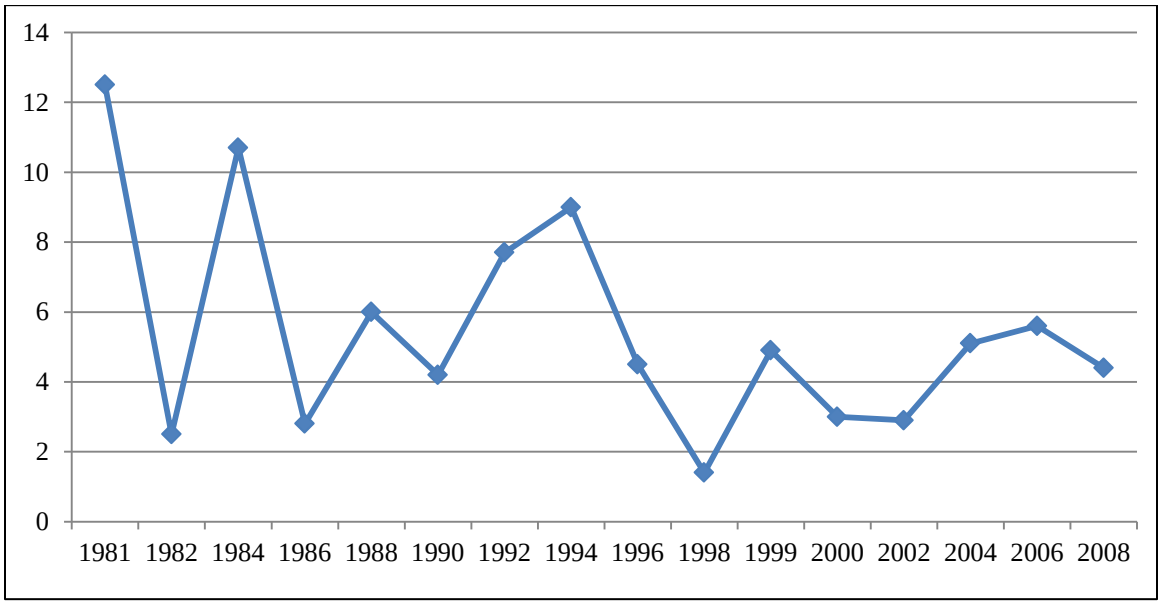

Figure 3.2 Mississippi Annual Percent Growth in GDP, 1981-2008

Source: GDP figures were obtained online from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis.

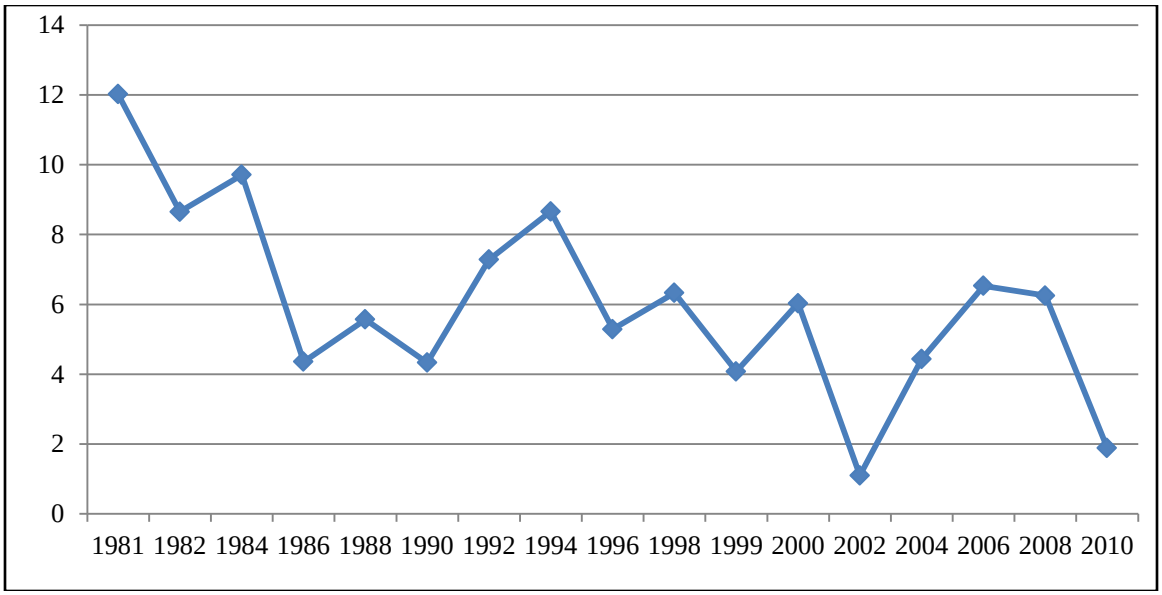

Figure 3.3 Mississippi Annual Percent Growth in Personal Income, 1981-2010

Source: Personal income figures were obtained online from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis.

year to the first quarter of each survey year. The trends for these three indicators are shown in figures 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3, respectively, and the data for each year is also shown in Table 5.2 of Appendix B. All three objective indicators are included in the model as interval measures.

Methods of Analysis

The analysis will first estimate the net effects of financial satisfaction on job performance ratings and likely voter turnout with the objective economic indicators and other independent variables excluded. Since financial satisfaction and all four of the dependent variables are originally coded as ordinal measures, this initial part of the analysis will employ a basic cross-tabulation to measure the significance and strength of the relationships. Financial satisfaction will then be used as a dependent variable with

demographics and party identification used as independent variables in an effort to assess how financial satisfaction varies between groups.

Since age is an interval level variable and race and gender are nominal levels, a basic cross-tabulation is not the appropriate method of analysis; instead, the variables are recoded and a logistic regression method is employed to estimate the effects of the independent variables on the probability of being financially dissatisfied. Therefore, after bringing party identification and demographics into the analysis, financial satisfaction is recoded into a dichotomous dummy variable. The 'not satisfied at all' category is coded as 1 with the other two categories coded as 0. Race and gender are also coded into dummy variables, with nonwhites and females coded as 1's and whites and males coded as 0's. Education is left as an ordinal variable, and age is left as an interval variable. For party identification, the Independent categories are large enough to serve as an anchor for Democrats and Republicans, thus allowing for two separate dummy variables. In one variable, Democrats are coded as 1 and Republicans as 0, and in the second variable Republicans are coded as 1 and Democrats as 0.

Many similar studies have tended to employ a simple OLS regression method. Linear regression is not used in this study because of the nature of the dependent variables; with only four categories each, it is not guaranteed that a linear relationship will exist with all four variables. By recoding the dependent variables into dichotomies and including interval measures and dummy variables as independents, logistic regression coefficients can be used to estimate the probability that a dependent variable

will equal a certain value based on the values of each independent variable. The formula for calculating probability using logistic regression coefficients is as follows:

$$P = {}^{1}/_{(1 + e^{-Z})}$$

$$\text{where } Z = \text{constant} + b_1X_1 \ldots + b_iX_i$$

In the final analysis, financial satisfaction will again be included as an independent variable, this time along with the demographic variables, party identification, and the objective economic indicators to be tested against job performance evaluations and likely voter turnout using the same logistic regression method. Each dependent variable is recoded into dichotomies; for the job performance ratings, the 'poor' category is coded as 1 with the other three categories coded as 0. For likely voter turnout, the 'definitely will vote' category is coded as 1, and all other responses are coded as 0. Party identification and the demographic variables are coded the same as in the previous model, in which financial satisfaction was used as the dependent variable; race, gender, and party identification are recoded as dummy variables, education is left as an ordinal variable, and age is left as an interval measure. In this case, financial satisfaction as left as a three-point ordinal variable. Each of the three objective economic indicators (unemployment rates, changes in GDP, and changes in personal income) are left as interval measures. For each dependent variable, the final analysis consists of two separate models: one regression in which the objective economic indicators are excluded, and another in which the indicators are included.

Hypotheses

H1: Personal financial satisfaction will more strongly impact job performance ratings than objective economic indicators.

H2: Personal financial satisfaction will more strongly impact voter turnout than objective economic indicators.

H3: Financially dissatisfied people will give lower job performance ratings to political figures than financially satisfied people.

H4: Financially dissatisfied people will be more likely to vote than financially satisfied people.

I hypothesize that personal financial satisfaction will generally have a stronger impact on job performance ratings than any of the three objective economic indicators, with financially dissatisfied people giving poorer performance ratings than financially satisfied people. I also anticipate that personal financial satisfaction will have a greater effect on likely voter turnout than any of the three objective economic indicators, with financially dissatisfied people being more likely to vote in upcoming elections. This hypothesis rests on the assumption that democratic accountability does exist, and voters will punish incumbents with low job performance ratings while rewarding those with high ratings.

As for demographics, I predict the findings of past studies will also hold true for the state of Mississippi. In particular, I anticipate than nonwhites, females, younger age groups, and lower educated groups will be more likely to give poor job performance ratings and be less likely to vote than whites, males, older age groups, and higher educated groups. I expect these groups' job performance ratings will be more strongly affected by personal financial satisfaction than whites, males, older age groups, and

higher educated groups, while their likelihood of voting in upcoming elections will not be significantly impacted by financial satisfaction. A common finding in the literature on voter turnout has been that minorities and lower educated groups are significantly less likely to vote than whites and people with higher levels of education. Only recently have women begun to outvote men, so it will be interesting to see the effects of gender on likely voter turnout exclusively in the state of Mississippi. Higher educated groups tend to be more knowledgeable of the economic and political system than lower educated groups, and will thus be more likely to separate their subjective evaluations of personal finances from their evaluations of various political figures' job performance.

It will be interesting to see how party identification factors into the final models, since eight of the twelve survey years used in this study had Republican presidents and governors. Based on this, I expect Democratic identifiers to be more likely to give poor performance ratings to political figures than Republican identifiers. An interesting avenue for future research, although not relevant for the current study, would be to compare financially dissatisfied Republicans' job performance ratings of Republican political figures with their ratings of Democratic political figures, and vice versa, in order to compare the extent to which financial satisfaction and party identification affect job performance ratings.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Before looking at the effects of objective economic indicators on voter perceptions in Mississippi, the effects of financial satisfaction on job performance ratings and likely voter turnout was measured. Table 4.1 shows a summary of these variables. The average Mississippian indicated that they were between being very financially satisfied and more or less satisfied, but slightly closer to the middle category. For all three job performance ratings, the average Mississippian gave a rating between the good and fair categories. For likely voter turnout, the average Mississippian was between probably voting and definitely voting in upcoming elections.

Table 4.1 Summary of Financial Satisfaction and Dependent Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	*N*
Financial Satisfaction	2.16[a]	0.749	*7,019*
Rate President	2.62[b]	1.011	*6,899*
Rate Governor	2.54[b]	0.881	*6,403*
Rate State Legislature	2.81[b]	0.758	*6,363*
Likely Voter Turnout	3.42[b]	0.932	*6,466*

Source: Mississippi Poll, conducted at Mississippi State University's Social Science Research Center.
Note: See Appendix B for variable coding information.
[a] Based on a 3-point scale.
[b] Based on a 4-point scale.

Tables 4.2 through 4.5 show the relationships between financial satisfaction and job performance ratings of the president, governor, and state legislature, as well as likely voter turnout. The relationship between financial satisfaction and ratings of the president's job performance had a magnitude of 11.4 % in terms of percentage difference, with 20.9% of financially satisfied people giving a poor rating compared to 32.3% of financially dissatisfied people. The relationship was in the expected direction, with a gamma value of -.141 and was statistically significant at the .001 level. Financial satisfaction and poor ratings of the governor's job performance had a relationship magnitude of 12.2%, with only 9.7% of financially satisfied people giving a poor rating compared to 21.9% of financially dissatisfied people. This relationship was also significant at the .001 level and was in the expected direction. Financial satisfaction's relationship with the governor's job performance rating was stronger than its relationship with the president's rating, with a gamma value of -.220. The relationship between financial satisfaction and poor ratings of the state legislature's job performance had a magnitude of 12.1%, with 13% of financially satisfied people giving a poor rating compared to 25.1% of financially dissatisfied people. Again, the relationship was significant at the .001 level and was in the expected direction, with a gamma value of -.196.

These findings suggest that negative evaluations of personal financial situations generally lead to negative evaluations of the job performance of political figures at both the state and national levels, with the governor and state legislature absorbing slightly more of the blame than the president. At the same time, financially dissatisfied people

Table 4.2 Financial Satisfaction and Job Performance Ratings of President

Rating of President	Financial Satisfaction			
	Not Satisfied at All	More or Less Satisfied	Very Satisfied	*N*
Excellent	11.6%	15.2%	18.0%	*1,058*
Good	26.0%	31.5%	34.0%	*2,140*
Fair	30.1%	30.9%	27.2%	*2,011*
Poor	32.3%	22.4%	20.9%	*1,639*
N	*1,463*	*2,852*	*2,533*	*6,848*
$\chi^2 = 105.578$***				
Gamma = -.141***				

Source: Mississippi Poll, conducted at Mississippi State University's Social Science Research Center.
Note: Entries total 100% down each column.
*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table 4.3 Financial Satisfaction and Job Performance Ratings of Governor

Rating of Governor	Financial Satisfaction			
	Not Satisfied at All	More or Less Satisfied	Very Satisfied	*N*
Excellent	7.9%	10.8%	16.5%	*783*
Good	27.7%	37.3%	39.2%	*2,285*
Fair	42.4%	38.1%	34.6%	*2,397*
Poor	21.9%	13.8%	9.7%	*890*
N	*1,363*	*2,636*	*2,356*	*6,355*
$\chi^2 = 200.202$***				
Gamma = -.220***				

Source: Mississippi Poll, conducted at Mississippi State University's Social Science Research Center.
Note: Entries total 100% down each column.
*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table 4.4 Financial Satisfaction and Job Performance Rating of the State Legislature

Rating of State Legislature	Financial Satisfaction			
	Not Satisfied at All	More or Less Satisfied	Very Satisfied	*N*
Excellent	3.0%	3.0%	4.7%	*231*
Good	19.2%	30.4%	33.3%	*1,838*
Fair	52.7%	49.5%	49.0%	*3,157*
Poor	25.1%	17.1%	13.0%	*1,090*
N	*1,343*	*2,614*	*2,359*	*6,316*
$\chi^2 = 148.144$***				
Gamma = -.196***				

Source: Mississippi Poll, conducted at Mississippi State University's Social Science Research Center.
Note: Entries total 100% down each column.
*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table 4.5 Financial Satisfaction and Likely Voter Turnout

Likely Voter Turnout	Financial Satisfaction			
	Not Satisfied at All	More or Less Satisfied	Very Satisfied	*N*
Definitely Not	9.5%	7.9%	8.3%	*539*
Probably Not	7.0%	5.6%	5.3%	*370*
Probably Will	25.5%	19.6%	19.8%	*1,344*
Definitely Will	57.9%	66.9%	66.6%	*4,160*
N	*1,374*	*2,626*	*2,413*	*6,413*
$\chi^2 = 38.064$***				
Gamma = .081***				

Source: Mississippi Poll, conducted at Mississippi State University's Social Science Research Center.
Note: Entries total 100% down each column.
*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

were slightly less likely to vote in upcoming elections than financially satisfied people, with 57.9% of respondents with no financial satisfaction indicating that they definitely will vote compared to 66.6% of those who were very satisfied. Although the relationship

between financial satisfaction and likely voter turnout was significant at the .001 level, the magnitude of the relationship was not as great as the relationships with job performance ratings, with a gamma value of only .081.

At this point, financial satisfaction is used as a dependent variable and tested against party identification and the selected demographic variables to compare levels of satisfaction between groups. It is expected that in a state with such a long history of socioeconomic inequality, financial satisfaction will differ significantly between demographic groups. In order to produce a better estimate of the effects of demographics and party identification on financial satisfaction, a logistic regression method was employed; such a method allows for an estimate of the probability that the dependent variable equals a certain value (in this case, financial dissatisfaction) based on the values of the independent variables.

Financial satisfaction was recoded into a dichotomous variable, with the 'not satisfied at all' category coded as 1 and the other two categories coded as 0. Education was left as a seven-point ordinal variable and age was left as an interval-level measurement. The two nominal variables, race and gender, were recoded into dummy variables with nonwhites and females coded as 1's and whites and males coded as 0's. Party identification was also recoded into two separate dummy variables, one in which Democrats are coded as 1 and Republicans as 0, and the other of which Republicans are coded as 1 and Democrats as 0. Appendix B can be referred to for more information on variable codings. Table 4.6 shows a summary of the effects of the selected demographic

Table 4.6 Regressions of Financial Dissatisfaction on Demographic Variables and Party Identification

Variable	Financially Dissatisfied
Education	-.074** (.024)
Age	-.006*** (.002)
Race (nonwhite)	.368*** (.068)
Gender (female)	.175** (.060)
Democrat	-.001 (.069)
Republican	-.638*** (.086)
Constant	-.807*** (.150)
Model Chi-square (Sig.)	204.864 (.000)

Source: Mississippi Poll, conducted at Mississippi State University's Social Science Research Center.
Note: Entries indicate logistic regression coefficients; standard errors are shown in parentheses.
*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

variables and party identification on the probability of a person being financially dissatisfied.

The relationship between education and financial satisfaction was in the expected direction, with increases in education level lowering the probability of financial dissatisfaction. The relationship between age and financial satisfaction was also in the expected direction, with the probability of financial dissatisfaction decreasing as age increases, although the magnitude of the relationship was not very great. The variable most strongly affecting financial satisfaction was race, with the probability of a financial dissatisfaction increasing significantly for nonwhites. The relationship between gender

and financial satisfaction was also in the expected direction, with the probability of financial dissatisfaction being greater among women than men. As for party identification, the probability of being financially dissatisfied decreased substantially for respondents identifying with the Republican Party. No significant relationship existed between Democratic identifiers and the probability of being financially dissatisfied.

At this point, financial satisfaction is again included in the analysis as an independent variable along with the three objective economic indicators, demographic variables, and party identification. This time two separate logistic regression models will be employed for each dependent variable, the first of which includes only financial satisfaction as an economic variable and the second of which also includes the three objective indicators. Tables 4.7 and 4.8 present the findings; under each dependent variable, the first model is shown in the first column, and the second model is shown in the second column. Table 4.7 shows the president and governor's job performance ratings, and table 4.8 shows the state legislature's job performance ratings and likely voter turnout. Each dependent variable is recoded into dichotomies, with poor job performance evaluations coded as 1's and all others coded as 0's; for likely voter turnout, the 'definitely will vote' category is coded as 1 with all other categories coded as 0. Each model's chi-square statistic was significant at the $p < .001$ levels, confirming the strength of the selected method.

For job performance ratings of the president, the demographic variable most strongly affecting the probability of giving a poor performance rating was race. As shown in Model 1 of Table 4.7, the relationship between nonwhites and the poor ratings

of the president's job performance was significant at the $p < .001$ level, with a coefficient of .359, indicating that nonwhites are significantly more likely to give a poor rating to the president than whites. After bringing the objective economic indicators into the analysis, race had an even stronger impact on the probability of the president receiving a poor job performance rating. As shown in Model 2 of the president's job performance ratings, the regression coefficient for nonwhites increased from .359 before including the objective indicators, to .534 after including them, suggesting that nonwhites' likelihood of giving a poor rating to the president is strongly affected by objective indicators.

Education and age were each statistically significant in the first model of the president's job performance ratings, although their strengths were both particularly low. They each became less significant after including the objective indicators in Model 2, and their relative impact on the probability of the president receiving a poor performance rating decreased as well. Females' coefficients were in the negative direction and also decreased in significance between Models 1 and 2. This suggests that the probability of the president receiving a poor performance rating decreases for females. Neither of the party identification variables was strong or statistically significant in either model of the president's job performance rating.

As expected, financial satisfaction had a strong impact on the probability of the president receiving a poor performance rating in both models. Remaining significant at the $p < .001$ level, financial satisfaction's coefficient increased from -.271 before including the objective indicators, to -.291 after including them in the second model. The negative direction of these coefficients confirms that the probability of the president

receiving a poor rating increases as people become less financially satisfied. Looking at Model 2 of the president's job performance ratings, financial satisfaction had a stronger impact on the probability of rating the president's performance poorly than any of the three objective economic indicators. Only the annual percent change in the state's GDP was not statistically significant. Unemployment rates and the percent change in annual income were each significant at the $p < .001$ levels, although the strength of each was relatively weak.

Looking at Models 1 and 2 of the governor's job performance ratings in Table 4.7, the results were very similar to the president's ratings. Race was the demographic variable most strongly affecting the probability of the governor receiving a poor performance rating. Financial satisfaction again had a stronger impact on the governor's receiving a poor rating than any of the three objective economic indicators. However, in both models financial satisfaction's impact on the governor's receiving a poor rating was significantly greater than its impact on the president's receiving a poor rating. Interestingly, in both models of the governor's job performance ratings the Republican identification variable was strong and statistically significant, with coefficients of -.430 and -.422 in models 1 and 2, respectively. The negative direction indicates that a Republican identification substantially decreases the probability of the governor receiving a poor job performance rating, regardless of which economic indicators are included in the model. This suggests that Republican identifiers tend to hold the governor in greater favor than the president. This is to be expected, since eight of the twelve survey years used in this analysis had Republican governors. The most interesting

Table 4.7 Regressions of Poor Job Performance Ratings and Likely Voter Turnout on Subjective and Objective Economic Indicators

Variable	President (poor rating)		Governor (poor rating)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Demographics				
Education	.087*** (.023)	.062* (.025)	.116*** (.029)	.107** (.031)
Age	.009*** (.002)	-.006** (.002)	.004* (.002)	.002 (.002)
Race (nonwhite)	.359*** (.069)	.534*** (.072)	.535*** (.085)	.488*** (.090)
Gender (female)	-.171** (.058)	-.124* (.063)	-.195** (.074)	-.169* (.079)
Party Identification				
Democrat	-.012 (.070)	.116 (.074)	.147 (.086)	.112 (.092)
Republican	-.046 (.077)	-.223* (.087)	-.430*** (.110)	-.422*** (.116)
Economic Variables				
Financial Satisfaction	-.271*** (.039)	-.291*** (.042)	-.425*** (.049)	-.380*** (.052)
Unemployment	--	-.084*** (.018)	--	-.086*** (.023)
GDP % Change	--	-.025 (.020)	--	.060* (.026)
Income % Change	--	.127*** (.030)	--	-.099** (.038)
Constant	-1.425*** (.165)	-1.301*** (.270)	-1.809*** (.209)	-.810* (.335)
Model Chi-square	115.371	233.428	215.582	176.269
(Sig.)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)

Source: Mississippi Poll, conducted at Mississippi State University's Social Science Research Center.
Note: Entries indicate logistic regression coefficients; standard errors are shown in parentheses.
*** $p \leq .001$, ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$

Table 4.8 Regressions of Poor Job Performance Ratings and Likely Voter Turnout on Subjective and Objective Economic Indicators

Variable	State Legislature (poor rating)		Voter Turnout (definitely will vote)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Demographics				
Education	.263*** (.027)	.261*** (.028)	.341*** (.021)	.330*** (.024)
Age	.013*** (.002)	.013*** (.002)	.016*** (.001)	.016*** (.002)
Race (nonwhite)	-.058 (.087)	-.015 (.090)	.170** (.061)	.129 (.067)
Gender (female)	-.646*** (.070)	-.620*** (.073)	-.262*** (.051)	-.278*** (.057)
Party Identification				
Democrat	-.487*** (.086)	-.450*** (.090)	.236*** (.062)	.340*** (.068)
Republican	-.193* (.085)	-.068 (.090)	.487*** (.067)	.520*** (.075)
Economic Variables				
Financial Satisfaction	-.513*** (.047)	-.501*** (.049)	.102** (.034)	.121** (.038)
Unemployment	--	.026 (.019)	--	-.361*** (.018)
GDP % Change	--	.110*** (.026)	--	.261*** (.019)
Income % Change	--	-.098** (.026)	--	-.030 (.027)
Constant	-1.814*** (.189)	-2.080*** (.301)	-2.090*** (.150)	-.580* (.240)
Model Chi-square	361.249	326.365	458.658	1148.311
(Sig.)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)

Source: Mississippi Poll, conducted at Mississippi State University's Social Science Research Center.
Note: Entries indicate logistic regression coefficients; standard errors are shown in parentheses.
*** $p \leq .001$, ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$

finding here is that eight of those same twelve survey years also had Republican presidents. It seems that Mississippians who identify as Republicans are more hostile to the national executive figure than the state's executive figure.

Turning to the models for the state legislature's job performance ratings, shown in Table 4.8, the results are very different. Education and gender more strongly affected the probability of the legislature receiving a poor performance rating than age or race. The age variable was statistically significant in both models, but its strength remained weak; race was not statistically significant in either model. Education had coefficients of .263 and .261 in models 1 and 2, respectively, and each was significant at the $p < .001$ level. The positive direction of these coefficients suggests that the probability of the state legislature receiving a poor performance rating increases as level of education increases. The gender variable had very strong and statistically significant coefficients, with -.646 in model 1 and -.620 in model 2. The negative direction shows that the probability of the legislature receiving poor performance ratings decreases substantially for females.

Looking at the impact of party identification on the probability of the state legislature receiving a poor performance rating, Democrats this time had a stronger effect than Republicans. With statistically significant coefficients of -.487 and -.450 in models 1 and 2, respectively, these findings suggest that the effects of a Democratic identification on the state legislature's receiving a poor performance rating are very similar to the effects of a Republican identification on the governor's receiving a poor performance rating.

As for the economic variables, financial satisfaction again had the strongest impact on the probability of the legislature receiving a poor job performance rating. Financial satisfaction's coefficients in both models were significantly stronger than in the president and governor's models, with coefficients of -.513 and -.501 in models 1 and 2, respectively. The only objective economic indicator that was statistically significant was the annual percent change in GDP, although its coefficient of .110 is relatively weak.

Finally, looking at the two models for likely voter turnout in Table 4.8, education and gender were the two demographic variables most strongly affecting the probability of turning out to vote. Education's coefficients in models 1 and 2 were .341 and .330, respectively, and both were significant at the $p < .001$ level. As expected, the likelihood of a person indicating a definite intention to vote increases with levels of education. Gender's coefficients were -.262 and -.278 in models 1 and 2, respectively, each of which was also statistically significant. The negative direction suggests that the probability of definitely voting decreases for females. The age variable was again statistically significant in both models, although relatively weak.

Both party identification variables were statistically significant in models 1 and 2 of likely voter turnout, although the effects of a Republican identification on a definite intention to vote were about twice as strong as those of the Democratic identification. Democrats' coefficients in models 1 and 2 were .236 and .340, respectively, compared to Republicans' coefficients of .487 and .520. These findings indicate that the probability of having a definite intention to vote increases with identifications with either major political party.

The most interesting finding in the voter turnout models was the economic variables. Financial satisfaction did not have a substantially strong impact on the probability of turning out to vote, with coefficients of .102 and .121 in models 1 and 2, respectively. Each was statistically significant, but only at the $p < .01$ level. Unemployment rates and annual percent change in GDP, on the other hand, were each significant at the $p < .001$ level. Unemployment had a coefficient of -.361, suggesting that the probability of voting increases with lower rates of unemployment. Annual percent change in GDP had a coefficient of .261, suggesting that greater changes in the state's gross domestic product increase the probability of turning out to vote.

Discussion and Conclusions

My first hypothesis stated that financial satisfaction will have a greater impact on job performance evaluations than objective economic indicators. The third hypothesis went on to predict that financially dissatisfied people will give lower job performance ratings than financially satisfied people. The findings of the study support both of these hypotheses. For all three of the dependent variables concerning job performance ratings, the probability of receiving a poor performance rating increased significantly as people became less financially satisfied. Also for all three of the job performance rating dependent variables, the three objective economic indicators did not bear any substantial impact on the probability of receiving a poor performance rating.

My second and fourth hypotheses, on the other hand, are not supported by the data. The second hypothesis predicted that financial satisfaction would have a greater effect on likely voter turnout than the objective economic indicators, and the fourth

hypotheses predicted that financially dissatisfied people would be more likely to vote in upcoming elections than financially satisfied people. The effect of financial satisfaction on the probability of voting was weaker and less significant than its effects on job performance ratings, and it was also in the opposite direction with the likelihood of voting increasing slightly as people became more financially satisfied. Unemployment rates and annual percent change in GDP had a much stronger effect on the probability of voting than did financial satisfaction. The only objective economic indicator that did not have a strong impact on likely voter turnout was the annual percent change in personal income levels.

In drawing conclusions, the main finding of this study is that in the state of Mississippi, voter perceptions of political figures are more strongly affected by their perceptions of their own personal financial situation than objective measures of the state's economy. Voter behavior, on the other hand, is more strongly affected by measures of objective reality, namely the state's annual unemployment rates and annual changes in the state's GDP. In other words, Mississippians' attitudes are most strongly affected by emotions, while their actual behavior is most strongly affected by reality. These findings illustrate the importance of not overgeneralizing the relationships between economic conditions and voter perceptions and behaviors. The economy affects voters in a variety of ways, and these effects will vary from state to state.

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APPENDIX A

MISSISSIPPI POLL SAMPLE SIZES AND RESPONSE RATES

Table A.1 Mississippi Poll Sample Sizes, Sample Errors, and Response Rates

Year	Sample Size	Sample Error	Response Rate
1981[a]	616	± 5.0%	75%
1982[a]	894	± 5.0%	70%
1984	610	± 5.0%	73%
1986	611	± 5.0%	73%
April 1988	632	± 5.0%	73%
September 1988[a]	1,022	± 3.8%	73%
1990	601	± 4.0%	73%
1992	558	± 4.0%	64%
1994	620	± 4.0%	69%
1996	601	± 4.0%	60%
1998	608	± 4.0%	64%
1999[a]	659	± 4.0%	60%
2000[a]	613	± 4.0%	49%
2002[a]	608	± 4.0%	50%
2004	523	± 4.4%	48%
2006	574	± 4.2%	50%
2008	528	± 4.4%	40%
2010	604	± 4.1%	42%

[a] Year not included in analysis because financial satisfaction was not included in survey.

APPENDIX B

VARIABLE DESCRIPTIONS AND CODING INFORMATION

Variable Wordings and Response Categories

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Financial Satisfaction

"We are interested in how people are getting along financially these days. So far as you and your family are concerned, would you say that you are pretty well satisfied with your present financial situation, more or less satisfied, or not satisfied at all?" (Not asked in 1981, 1982, Sept. 1988, 1999, 2000, and 2002). Coded: 1, not satisfied at all; 2, more or less satisfied; 3, very satisfied. Recoded in Table 4.6 as: 0, 'more or less' and 'very' satisfied; 1, not satisfied at all.

Objective Economic Indicators

(see Table B.1)

Education

"What was the last grade in school that you completed?" (Asked in every year). Coded: 1, fourth grade or less; 2, grades five through eight; 3, grades nine through eleven; 4, twelfth grade; 5, some college; 6, college graduate; 7, some graduate work.

Age

"In what year were you born?" (Asked in every year). Coded in number of years.

Race

"Is your race white, black, or what?" (Asked in every year). Coded: 0, white; 1, nonwhite.

Gender

Coded: 0, male; 1; female.

Party Identification

"Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or what?" Asked of Democrats: "Do you consider yourself a strong or not so strong Democrat?" Asked of Republicans: "Do you consider yourself a strong or not so strong Republican?" Asked of Independents: "Do you think of yourself as closer to the Democratic Party or the Republican Party?" Coded into Democrat and Republican dummy variables.

For Democrats: 0, pure Independent through strong Republican; 1, strong Democrat through Independent Democrat. For Republicans: 0, strong Democrat through pure Independent; 1, Independent Republican through strong Republican.

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Job Performance Ratings

Question set preceded by, "I'm going to ask you to rate the job performance of a few political figures and institutions. Rate each of them as excellent, good, fair, or poor." Coded: 1, excellent; 2, good; 3, fair; 4, poor. Recoded in Tables 4.7 and 4.8 as: 0, excellent-fair; 1, poor.

- *President*: "What about President […]?" (Asked in every year).
- *Governor*: "What about Governor […]?" (Asked in every year). (Governors were: 1981-82 Winter; 1984-86 Allain; 1988-90 Mabus; 1992-98 Fordice; 2000-2002 Musgrove; 2004-2010 Barbour).
- *State Legislature*: "What about the Mississippi state legislature?" (Asked in every year).

Likely Voter Turnout

"How certain are you to vote in the elections this November? Would you say that you definitely will vote, probably will, probably will not, or definitely will not vote?" (Not asked in 1981 and 1986). Coded: 1, definitely will not vote; 2, probably will not vote; 3, probably will vote; 4, definitely will vote. Recoded in Table 4.8 as: 0, definitely will not vote through probably will vote; 1, definitely will vote.

Table B.1 Mississippi Unemployment Rates, Annual Percent Change in GDP, and Annual Percent Change in Personal Income, by Year.

Year	Unemployment Rate	% GDP Change	% Personal Income Change
1981	8.7	12.5	12.02
1982	11.5	2.5	8.65
1984	10.8	10.7	9.71
1986	12.1	2.8	4.36
1988	8.7	6.0	5.57
1990	7.7	4.2	4.33
1992	8.3	7.7	7.28
1994	6.6	9.0	8.66
1996	6.3	4.5	5.29
1998	5.4	1.4	6.33
1999	5.3	4.9	4.08
2000	5.6	3.0	6.03
2002	6.7	2.9	1.1
2004	6.3	5.1	4.43
2006	6.8	5.6	6.53
2008	6.8	4.4	6.25
2010	10.4	(not available)	1.89

Sources: Unemployment rates were obtained online from the Mississippi Department of Employment Security. GDP and personal income levels were obtained online from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis.