ARTICLES

African American's Political Attitudes, Party Affiliation, and Voting Behavior

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Abstract Recent research has demonstrated that despite sharing some attitudes consistent with the Republican Party, African-Americans still tend to support Democratic candidates (Kidd et al., *Social Science Quarterly*, 88: 165–176, 2007). The current study represents a snapshot of political philosophies 2 weeks prior to the presidential election and actual voting behavior of a diverse sample. Factor analysis of a questionnaire measuring current political attitudes revealed five dimensions, which in turn, were shown to vary depending on political party affiliation and ethnicity. Results showed a detailed picture of exactly which attitudes African-Americans share with different political parties.

Results of the 2004 presidential election revealed deep polarization in the United States (Olsen and Green 2006). These polarizations or "gaps" in voting behavior were evidenced by large differences in the percentages of different groups voting for Bush versus Kerry. The differences were most noticeable in the areas of ethnicity, region or place, and political affiliation. For example, "George W. Bush obtained 58.7% of the White vote (which comprised 77.1% of the electorate), but just 27.6% of the non-White vote (22.9% of the electorate)" (Olsen and Green 2006, p 443). Voting behavior's relationship to self-identified political party indicates that 89% of democrats voted for John Kerry, 11% for George W. Bush, and less than 1% for Ralph Nader (Olsen and Green 2006). In a similar way, 93% of Republicans voted

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for George W. Bush, 6% for John Kerry, and 0% for Ralph Nader. Race and ethnicity accounted for the largest voting gap, by far, for the 2004 presidential election. The data suggest that the race and ethnicity gap in voting was ten times greater overall than the final Bush–Kerry popular vote differential.

Past research has examined some of the factors involved in polarization of voting behavior, such as gender and ethnicity (Flannelly 2002), the impact of racial and ethnic diversity (Citrin and Green 1990; Hero 1998), and the impact of class on political affiliation (Brooks and Manza 2004). While these studies show relationships between some demographic factors and voting, they fail to show how these factors relate to underlying political philosophy. Studies that have included aspects of political attitude variables have tended to focus on specific aspects of liberalism and conservatism (Henningham 1996; Carmines and Berkman 1994). However, since the relevancy of current issues is always changing the relevancy of the studies changes as well (Meharabian 1998). There are even fewer studies involving African Americans because they are assumed to share Democratic philosophies and vote almost exclusively Democratic (Welch and Foster 1992).

African Americans in the past election and most of the recent past have overwhelmingly supported Democratic candidates (Welch and Foster 1992; Olsen and Green 2006; Kidd et al. 2007). Even with a direct competition between two African Americans with one running as a Republican who emphasized traditional values, the competing candidate running as a Democrat supporting gay marriage and abortion still won the majority of African American votes (Kidd et al. 2007). These authors found that despite the Republican candidate's highlighted support of issues important to African Americans, the Democratic label had more of an effect on African American voting behavior in the congressional election they studied. They note that although the social issues highlighted in the election such as abortion and gay marriage were important to African Americans, they were not issues central to African Americans as a group. Instead, the Democratic Party itself was associated with progressive causes, like welfare, that were perceived to be of more central importance to African Americans.

The current study attempts to link beliefs about current political issues to form a factor structure of political attitudes. In turn, we relate these political attitude factors to ethnicity and actual voting behavior of a diverse sample voting in the 2004 election. We hoped to get a more detailed picture of the exact social attitudes important to African Americans voting behavior compared to other groups, and a better understanding of the interrelationships between these attitudes. In order to compare ethnic voting trends, the sample included students from an Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in North Carolina and a private predominately White school in Texas.

Since Kidd et al. (2007) was able to show ethnic differences in attitudes towards abortion and gay rights and that these differences did not translate into voting behavior, we expected to see similar inconsistencies in the national election. That is, despite some issues represented by the Republican Party being important to African Americans, their voting behavior was predicted to be predominately Democratic. By examining the factor structure of many of the ideas represented in the past election, the factors most important to African American voting behavior can be determined.

Methods

Participants

There were 424 students that participated for course credit, and 357 of these participants completed the second session in which actual voting behavior was assessed. For the entire sample, 73% were female, 27% were male, with an average age of 19.98 (SD=4.06). Eighty percent of the students studied at a private mostly White school in Texas, and 20% studied at a HBCU in North Carolina.

The sample was 64% Caucasian, 24% African American, 7% Hispanic, and 5% other. In addition, the sample contained 30% Democrats, 44% Republicans, 8.5% Independents, 16% were not affiliated with a particular political party, and 1.5% who indicated "other" as their affiliation.

Procedure

One week prior to the 2004 presidential election, participants completed an initial attitude questionnaire and returned 1 week after the election to report their actual voting behavior. In the initial session, participants first completed a demographic/background questionnaire that assessed their age, gender, major, political party, and ethnicity. Next, participants completed a 22-item questionnaire assessing political attitudes. The questionnaire included items on a wide range of political attitudes. Examples included "Are you in favor of the Patriot Act?" and "Are you in favor of the death penalty?" Each question was rated using the same 1(not at all) to 7(very much so) scale (see the results section for the exact questions used)[1]. One week after the election, participants returned for a second session and answered questions about whether they had voted and for whom they voted for president.

Results

Since race and testing site largely co-varied, with only 4% of Caucasian students coming from the HBCU sample, the two samples were combined. Thus, the analyses focused on differences due to ethnicity rather than those due to testing site.

Demographics and Voting Behavior

For the sample that reported their voting behavior, 60.7% voted for George Bush, 38.4% voted for John Kerry, and 0.8% voted for Ralph Nadar. Of more interest were the voting "gaps" based on ethnic group and political party. For African Americans 13.8% voted for Bush, while 85.1% voted for Kerry, and 1.1% for Nadar. For Caucasian voters 80.8% voted for Bush, 18.3% voted for Kerry, and 0.9% voted for

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[1] Participants also rated their approval of 32 well-known political figures, read one of three different articles, and evaluated the article on several dimensions. There were no significant relationships in the reported results due to these measures.

Nadar. For the remaining ethnic groups (Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and Bi-racial), 51.2% voted for Bush, and 47.6% voted for Kerry.

Similar voting "gaps" were observed for different political parties. Of the 110 reported Democrats, 13.6% voted for Bush and 86.4% voted for Kerry. Of the 164 self-identified Republicans, 97.6% voted for Bush and 2.4% voted for Kerry. For the 85 participants reporting to be independent, other, or having no political affiliation, 50.6% voted for Bush, 45.9% voted for Kerry, and 3.5% voted for Nadar.

Political Attitudes Questionnaire

The 22-item questionnaire assessing political attitudes was subjected to a factor analysis using Varimax rotation. Five major factors, with corresponding reliability coefficients, were determined: *punitive* ($\alpha=0.70$), *secular/evangelical* ($\alpha=0.48$), *global concern* ($\alpha=0.58$), *civil rights* ($\alpha=0.67$), and *hot button* ($\alpha=0.33$). Table 1 displays the five factors, the questions associated with each factor, and their factor load scores.

Most of the items loading on the Punitive factor dealt with issues surrounding "the war on terrorism." Participants had high scores on this factor if they supported the Patriot Act, and preemptive war. Items on the Secular/Evangelical dimension dealt mostly with the separation of church and state and whether moral beliefs should guide political agendas. The Global Concern factor consisted of questions dealing with global and scientific cooperation, and other common progressive issues of international concern. The Civil Rights factor had questions related to civil rights and voter disenfranchisement as well as attitude toward social programs. The Hot

Table 1 Factor analysis scores for political attitudes questionnaire

Factors	Questions
Punitive	To what extent do you favor preemptive war? (0.716)
	Are you in favor of the war on terror? (0.715)
	To what extent are you in favor of the death penalty? (0.682)
	To what extent do you support the troops? (0.578)
	Are you in favor of the Patriot Act? (0.577)
Secular/ Evangelical	Do you think drugs should be legalized? (0.663)
	To what extent do you support gay marriage? (0.695)
	To what extent do you consider yourself to be Pro-Choice? (0.646)
	Are you in favor of the separation of church and state? (0.593)
	How important is it to you that the government support family values?(−0.557)
Global Concern	To what extent do you feel global warming is something the government should be concerned about? (0.673)
	Are you in favor of cooperation with the United Nations? (0.622)
	To what extent do you consider yourself to be an Environmentalist? (0.617)
	Do you think scientific evidence should direct governmental policy?(0.448)
Civil Rights	Are you concerned about voter disenfranchisement (i.e., every vote should count)? (0.748)
	To what extent do you support civil rights? (0.737)
	Are you in favor of federally funded social programs? (0.537)
Hot Button	Are you in favor of "outsourcing" American Jobs to other countries? (0.631)
	Are you in favor of the privatization of social security (i.e., individual savings accounts that would replace social security as it now stands)? (0.625)
	Are you in favor of reinstating the draft? (0.573)
	Are you in favor on gun control? (−0.37)

Button factor had questions that dealt with recent controversial issues in politics. Privatization of social security and "outsourcing" of American jobs are examples.

Ethnicity and Political Attitudes

Ethnicity was tested as an independent variable with the five political attitude factors as the dependent variables in a multivariate analysis of variance test (MANOVA). Due to the small size of some categories only the African-American, Asian, Caucasian, and Hispanic categories were considered, leaving a total of 395 participants. There was a significant overall multivariate effect for Political Attitudes X Ethnicity, $F(5, 389)=22.24$, $p<0.0001$. Table 2 shows the mean factor score for each of the five factors by ethnicity. Interestingly, only Caucasians had a positive attitude toward issues on the Punitive factor. All the other ethnic groups showed negative scores for the Punitive factor $F(3,391)=12.71$, $p<0.01$. Inconsistent with Kidd et al. (2007), there were no significant differences in how different ethnic groups rated the Secular/Evangelical factor, $F(3,391)=0.372$, ns. Interestingly, African-Americans and Caucasians both scored negatively on the Global Concern factor $F(3,391)=6.67$, $p<0.01$. Asians and Hispanics, on the other hand, both had positive mean ratings for issues, like environmentalism; that are more of an international concern. As one might expect, African-Americans and Hispanics both showed more concern for civil rights related issues than either Caucasians or Asians $F(3,391)=20.43$, $p<0.01$. In general, all the other ethnic groups had positive attitudes toward issues loading on the Hot Button factor, but in contrast, the African Americans generally had negative attitudes towards these issues $F(3,391)=4.42$, $p<0.01$.

Political Attitudes and Political Party

In order to determine where African Americans differ from the Democratic Party in political attitudes, we tested political party as the independent variable with factor scores for the same five political attitude factors used again as the multivariate dependent variable. Participant who failed to rate their party preference, or rated their political party as "other" were eliminated from the analyses, leaving a sample of 397 participants. There was a significant multivariate effect for Political Attitudes X Political Party, $F(5,391)=62.14$, $p<0.0001$. Table 3 shows the mean factor score for each of the five factors by political party. Only Republicans had high scores on the Punitive factor. All the other groups had negative attitudes towards these "war on terror" issues $F(3, 393)=38.537$, $p<0.001$. Republicans also differed from the other political parties on questions loading on the Secular/Evangelical factor. Republicans

Table 2 Standardized factor score for political attitudes by ethnicity

	African American (N=87)	Caucasian (N=267)	Hispanic (N=27)	Asian (N=14)
Punitive	−0.51	0.19	−2.0	−0.39
Secular/Evangelical	−0.10	0.01	0.06	0.07
Global Concern	−0.12	−0.07	0.34	0.96
Civil Rights	0.62	−0.18	0.27	−0.74
Hot Button	−0.25	0.01	0.25	0.64

Table 3 Standardized factor scores for political attitudes by party

	Democratic (N=117)	Republican (N=182)	Independent (N=35)	None (N=63)
Punitive	−0.48	0.50	−0.38	−0.39
Secular/Evangelical	0.16	−0.23	0.38	0.10
Global Concern	0.12	−0.23	0.38	0.32
Civil Rights	0.53	−0.34	−0.03	−0.01
Hot Button	−0.27	0.11	0.10	0.04

were the only group to be against issues that ran counter to church teachings, $F(3, 393)=6.70$, $p<0.001$. Republicans were also different than the other groups for the Global Concern factor. They had relatively more negative attitudes than Democrats or Independents about going along with these progressive issues, $F(3, 393)=7.74$, $p<0.001$. Democrats scored relatively high for the Civil Rights factor compared to all other groups, $F(3, 393)=8.63$, $p<0.001$. Finally, Democrats differed from all the other political parties in terms of their attitudes on the Hot Button factor. All of the political parties were associated with positive attitudes toward "outsourcing" and other controversial current events, whereas, the Democrats were associated with relatively negative scores, $F(3, 393)=3.68$, $p<0.05$.

Voting Behavior Comparisons

Actual voting behavior was also used as an independent variable with factor scores for the five philosophical factors used again as the multivariate dependent variable. The participants that voted for Ralph Nadar and the participants who either did not return for the second session or who did not report their actual voting behavior were eliminated from analyses dealing with actual voting behavior. Thus, there were 332 participants included in the analyses. There was a significant overall multivariate effect for Voting Behavior X Political Attitudes, $F(5,327)=50.34$, $p<0.0001$. Table 4 shows the mean philosophical factor score for each of the five factors by actual voting behavior. The relationship between political attitudes and actual voting behavior mirrored the relationship between political attitudes and political party. Those that actually voted for Kerry showed relatively negative scores on the Punitive factor compared to those voting for Bush, $F(3, 330)=86.91$, $p<0.001$. Voters for Kerry were relatively positive on the Secular/Evangelical factor compared to Bush voters, $F(3, 330)=14.89$, $p<0.001$. Kerry and Bush voters also showed opposite attitudes toward issues loading on the Global Concern factor ($F(3, 330)=12.08$, $p<0.01$ and Civil Rights factor ($F(3, 330)=29.37$, $p<0.001$, with Kerry voters having

Table 4 Standardized factor scores for actual voting behavior by political attitudes

	George Bush (N=208)	John Kerry (N=124)
Punitive	0.45	−0.59
Secular/Evangelical	−0.22	0.20
Global Concern	−0.13	0.25
Civil Rights	−0.19	0.41
Hot Button	0.09	−0.20

relatively positive scores for both factors. Kerry voters were relatively negative on the Hot Button Issues compared to Bush voters, $F(3, 330)=6.33$, $p<0.05$.

Discussion

Overall, voting results showed a polarization of voting behavior based on ethnicity and party affiliation. African Americans and Democrats overwhelmingly voted for the Democratic candidate, while Caucasians and Republicans overwhelmingly voted for the Republican candidate. The factor analysis for political attitudes yielded five factors: Punitive, Secular/Evangelical, Global Concern, Civil Rights, and Hot Button. Since the reliability of some of these factors was low, results should be viewed with caution.

There were several interesting ethnic differences and similarities in attitudes as revealed by the factor scores shown in Table 2. African Americans' attitudes could be described as anti-war, evangelical, with a strong concern about civil rights. They were suspicious of trendy political ideas and environmental concerns. Caucasians and African Americans were similar only in their negative response to the Global Concern factor. Although it is an extremely small sample for the Asian group, it is interesting how strongly they rate the Global Concern factor compared to the other groups and how little concern they seemed to have shown for civil rights issues.

Factor scores for the five attitude factors, shown in Table 3, were fairly predictable for the Democrats and Republicans. Democrats were anti-war, pro-secular, pro-global concern, pro-civil rights, and against hot button issues. Republicans had attitudes in the exact opposite direction from the Democrats for each of the five attitude factors. Those that identified as Independent or with no party affiliation sided with the Democrats on war issues, secular/evangelical issues, and environmental type issues, but sided with the Republicans for the hot button issues and civil rights.

The factor analysis of the political attitudes questionnaire revealed that African Americans and Democrats showed similarities for several of the attitude factors; however, there were also inconsistencies. Notice in Table 2 the negative ratings for African Americans on the Secular/Evangelical factor and the Global Concern factor, but in Table 3 the positive ratings for Democrats on these same factors. African Americans' attitudes were inconsistent with the Democratic Party for these factors, and were instead consistent with the Republican Party. Democrats as a whole were supportive of secular issues while African Americans' negative ratings on issues like abortion and gay marriage demonstrate more evangelical attitudes. In addition, African Americans' were negative and consistent with Republicans for attitudes toward environmental or global type issues. Thus, in addition to the differences between Democrats and African Americans on the issues of abortion and gay rights as shown by Kidd et al. (2007), the current study shows that African Americans' also differ from the average Democrat on environmental or global type issues. It should be noted that the Secular/Evangelical factor in the current study was a combination of those attitudes (abortion and gay marriage) measured by Kidd et al. (2007), but also included broader issues like legalization of drugs and government support of family values.

The inconsistency between the attitudes of African Americans and Democrats lends some support to the idea presented by Kidd et al. (2007) that the Democratic

party label is more important to African Americans than the specific issues candidates express. While African Americans may differ from Democrats on some issues, it is not enough to change their voting behavior. Caucasian participants were slightly more consistent with the Republican Party on the five political attitudes' factors. Thus, it is unclear if Caucasian Republicans would be as loyal to their party as African Americans are to the Democratic Party.

African Americans were more consistent with Democrats on the Punitive, Civil Rights, and Hot Button Issues factors. As one might expect, African Americans felt more favorable than most groups on the issues of civil rights and socially funded programs, which were also associated with the Democratic Party. They also had negative attitudes toward hot button issues and "war on terror" issues that Republican's championed in the last election. Since these were the only factors in which ethnicity made a difference and in which African Americans sided with the Democrats, these factors must be essential in their support of the Democratic Party.

The current study provides detailed information about issue-relevant attitude differences among students with different ethnic backgrounds and different self-identified political affiliations. It should be noted that one of the limitations of the current study is that both samples came from states that predominantly vote Republican in presidential elections. Also, most of the African Americans in the sample came from a different state (North Carolina) than most of the Caucasian participants, who came from Texas. While these systematic differences did not interact with any of the results reported here, it still remains a confounding concern vis-à-vis the demographic variables. In addition, any account of current political views is by definition changing as events evolve. The results should be viewed as a snapshot of current political views instead of an enduring feature of political organization (Henningham 1996).

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