

The role of race attitudes in the 2012 Presidential election

Anthony G. Greenwald
University of Washington
Department of Psychology

Page–Barbour Lecture Series

“The Political Unconscious in the 2012 Election”

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Overview

Conclusion: Race prejudice has changed
(but it's not gone)

Estimating the role of race in the Presidential vote
(puzzling prediction errors in 2008 Democratic Primary polls)
(puzzling prediction errors in the 2008 General Election polls)
(an imaginative use of Google's search archive)

Analyses of data collected in 2008 & 2012
(measures of race attitudes and voting choices)

Race may be the cause of at least a 10% handicap for Obama



Mahzarin R. Banaji
Harvard University

Collaborators



Brian A. Nosek
University of Virginia

N. Sriram
University of Virginia

Teri Kirby
University of Washington

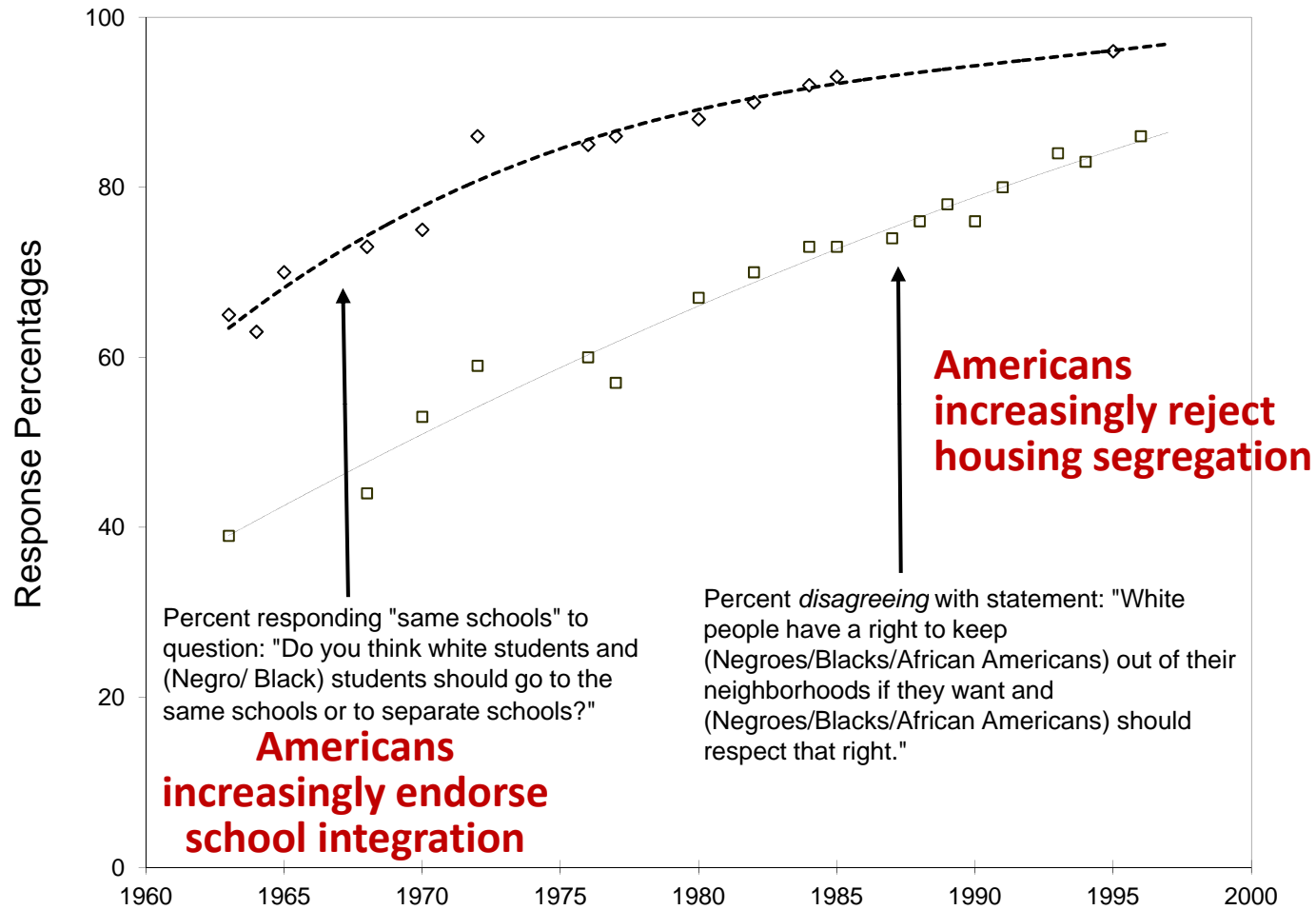
Kaiyuan (Frank) Xu
University of Washington

**Research support: National Science Foundation,
National Institute of Mental Health, and**

PROJECT IMPLICIT 

Race attitudes have changed

Survey evidence: 1960–2000



Percent responding "same schools" to question: "Do you think white students and (Negro/ Black) students should go to the same schools or to separate schools?"

Americans increasingly endorse school integration

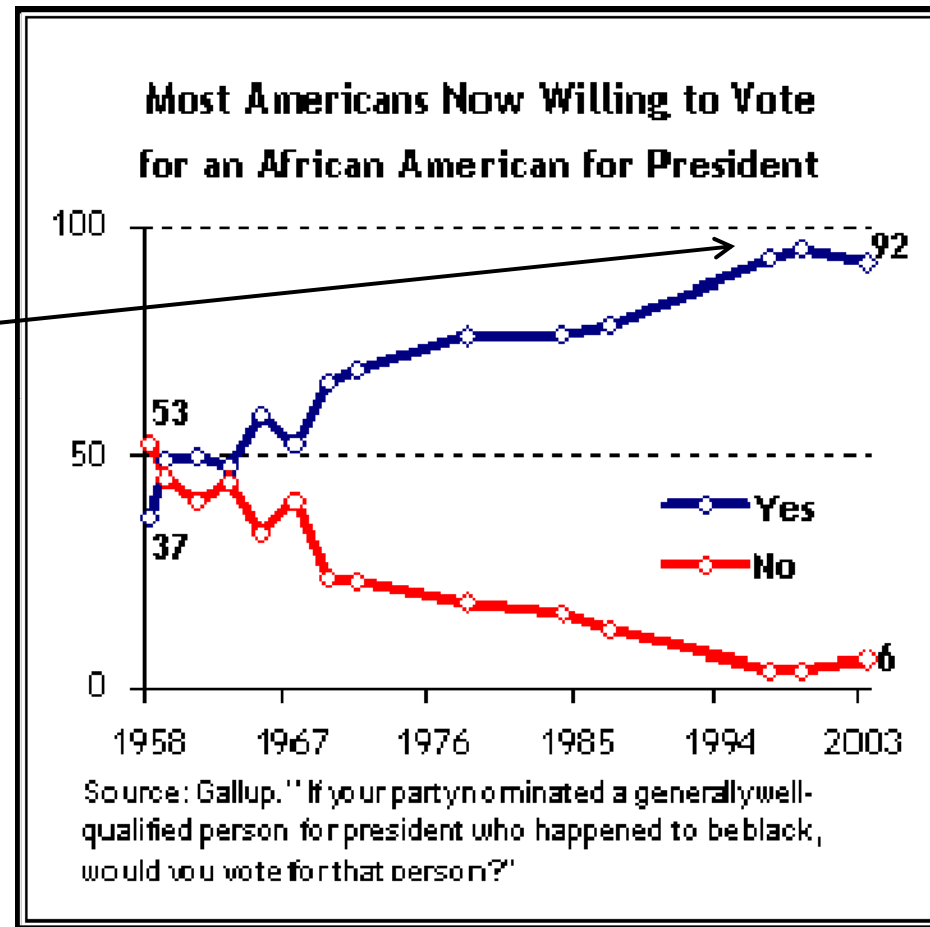
Percent *disagreeing* with statement: "White people have a right to keep (Negroes/Blacks/African Americans) out of their neighborhoods if they want and (Negroes/Blacks/African Americans) should respect that right."

Americans increasingly reject housing segregation

Data source: Schuman, H., Steeh, C., Bobo, L. & Krysan, M. (1997). *Racial attitudes in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University. Tables 3.1A and 3.1B, pp. 104–107.

More survey evidence: 1958–2004

Americans are increasingly willing to vote for a Black president



Source: Can You Trust What Polls Say about Obama's Electoral Prospects?

Two Important Trends Suggest Americans May Now Be Ready to Elect an African American President

Scott Keeter & Nilanthi Samaranayake

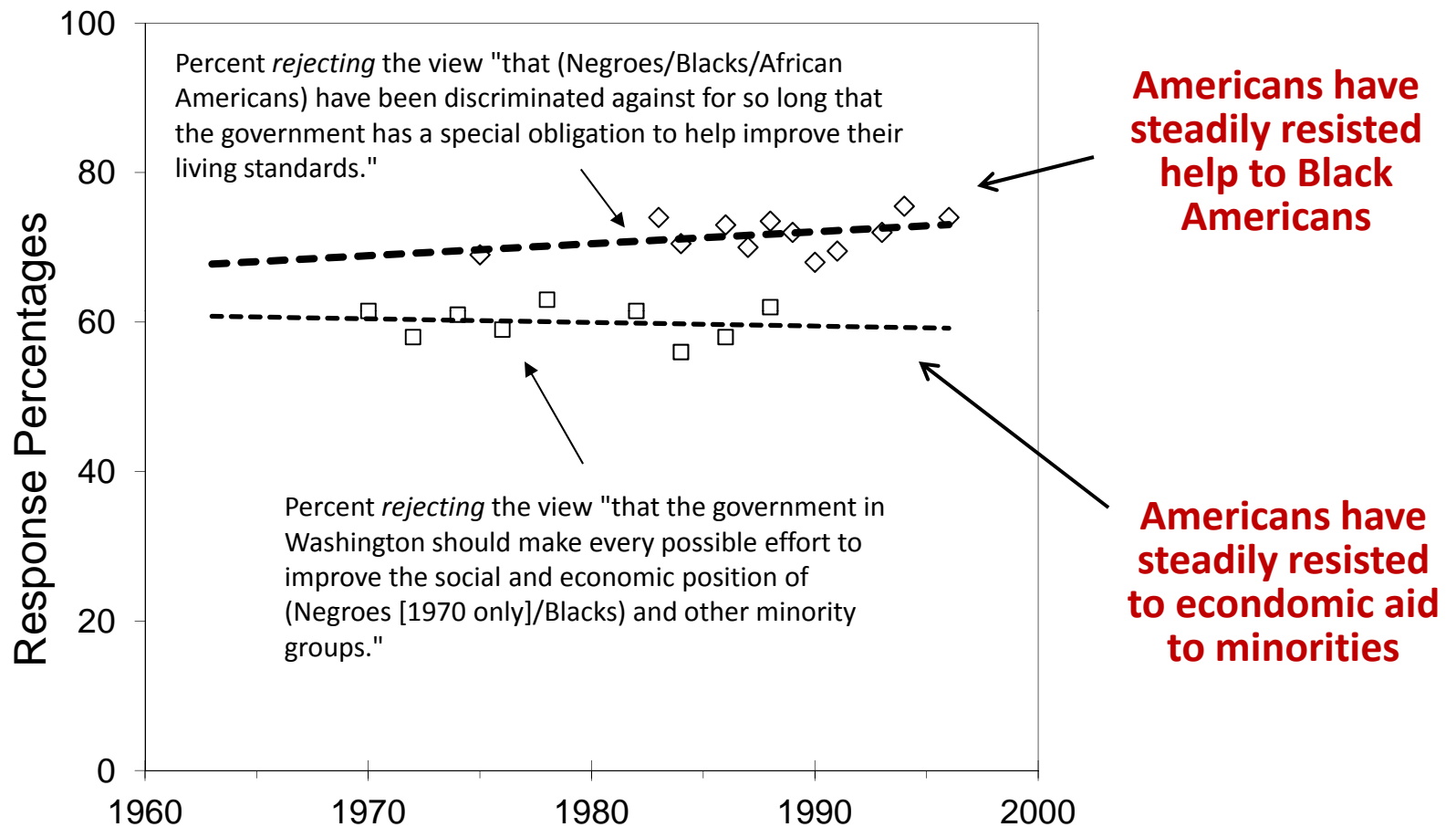
(Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, February 7, 2007)

<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/408/can-you-trust-what-polls-say-about-obamas-electoral-prospects>

But how much has changed?

More survey data: 1960–2000

Americans steadily reject assistance to disadvantaged minorities



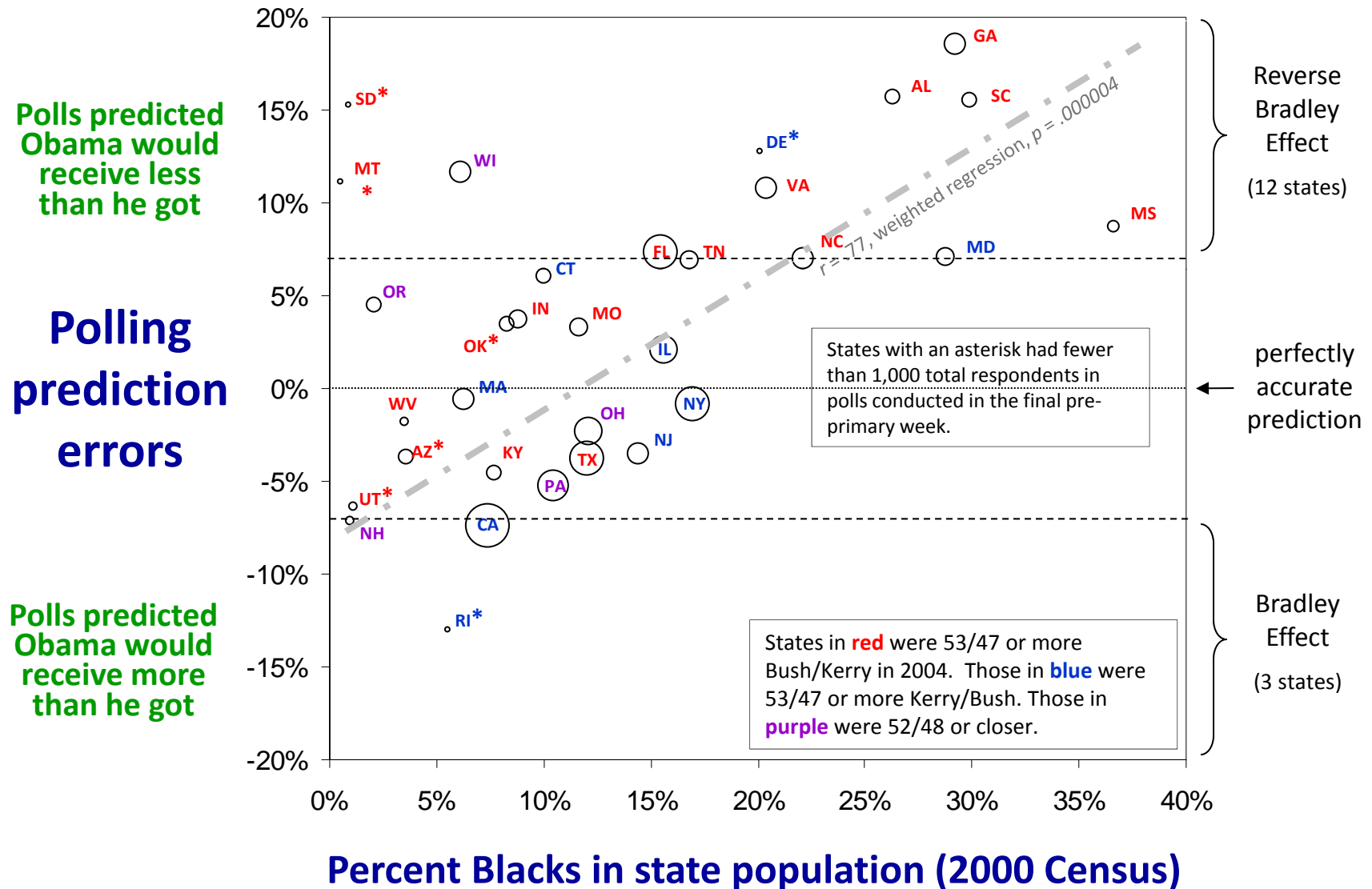
Data source: Schuman, H., Steeh, C., Bobo, L. & Krysan, M. (1997). *Racial attitudes in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University. Tables 3.1A and 3.1B..

What do we learn about Americans' race attitudes from the unprecedented situation of Americans having the opportunity to vote for an African American for President?

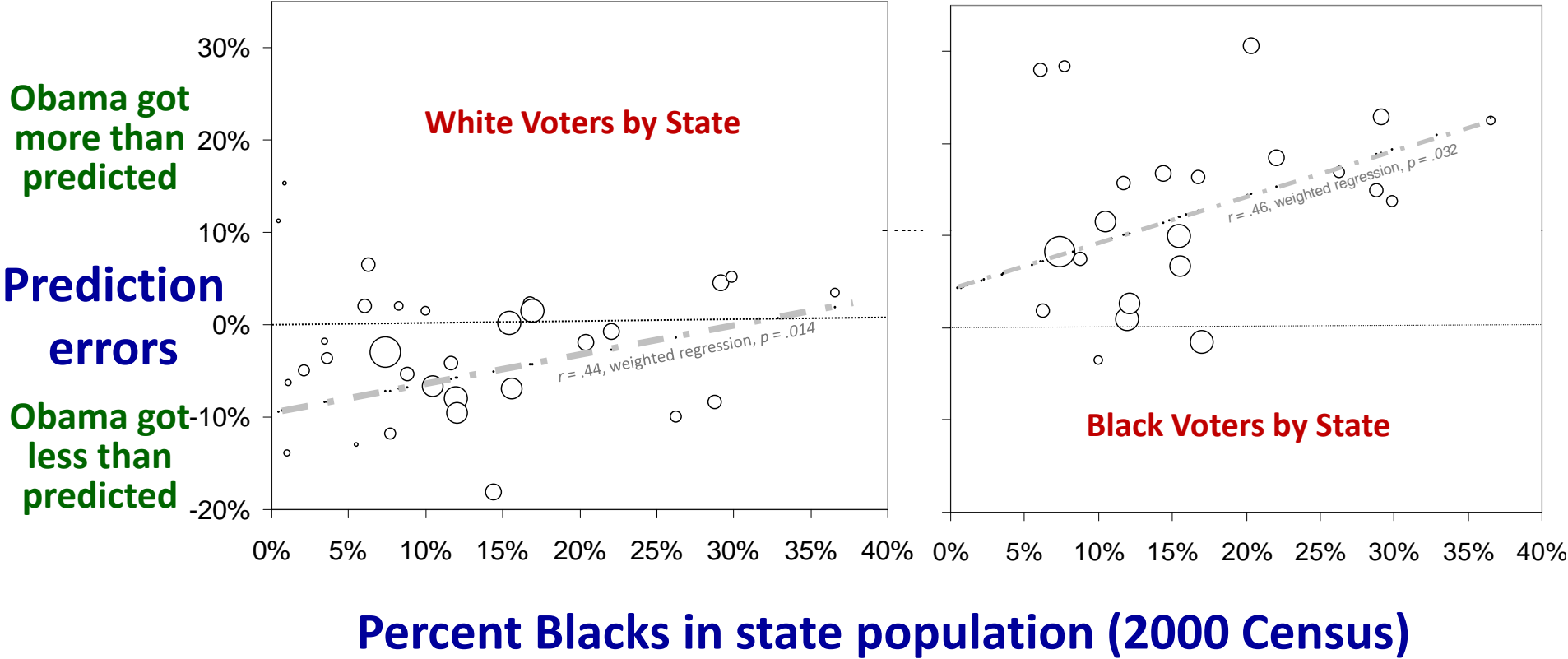
The 2008 Democratic Primaries

Data are from 32 states in which Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton competed **and** in which pre-election polls were conducted in the week before a primary vote. Sizes of bubbles are proportional to number of voters in each state. Prediction errors of 7% or more in either direction (above or below the dashed lines) are noteworthy — they are well outside the polls' expected margins of error.

Surprising Errors in Vote Prediction Errors in the 2008 Democratic Primaries

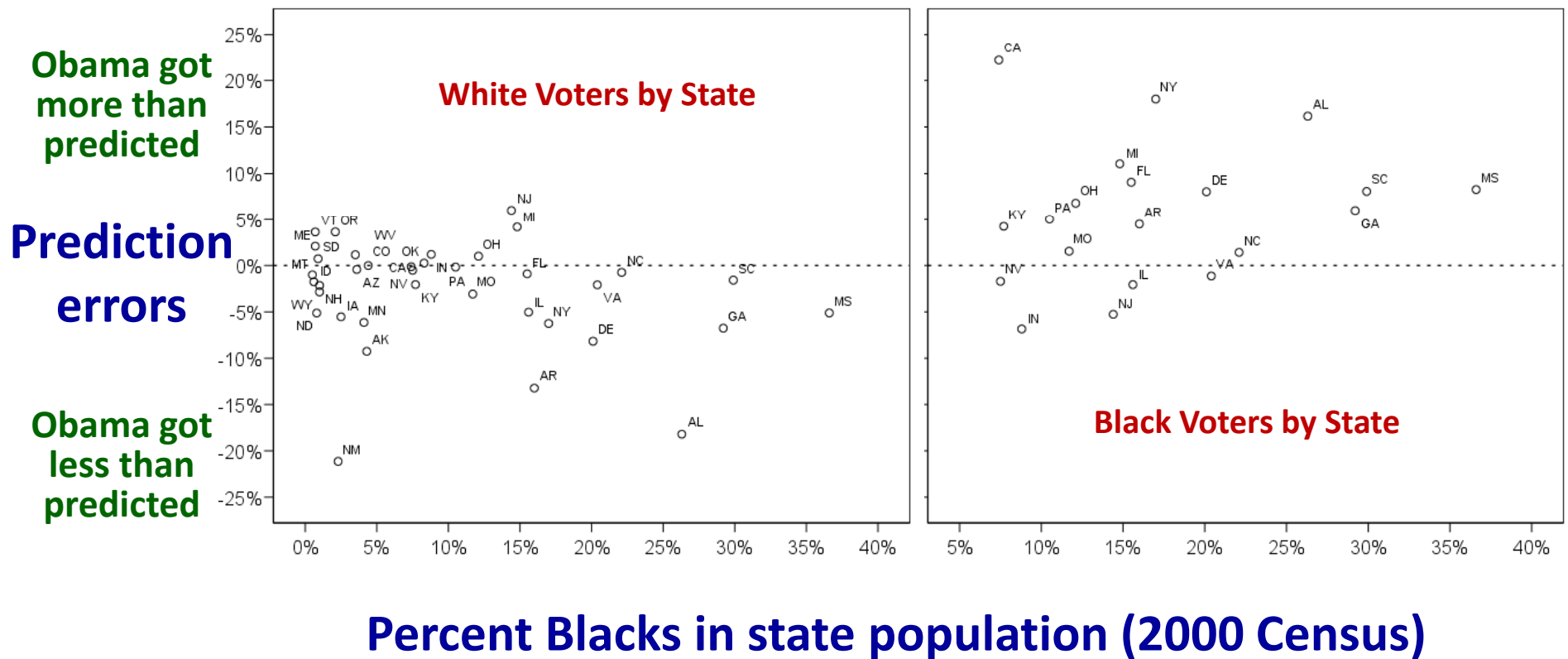


Prediction errors for White and Black voters in Democratic primaries — 2008



The 2008 General Election (November)

Prediction errors for White and Black voters in the Presidential Election — Nov 2008

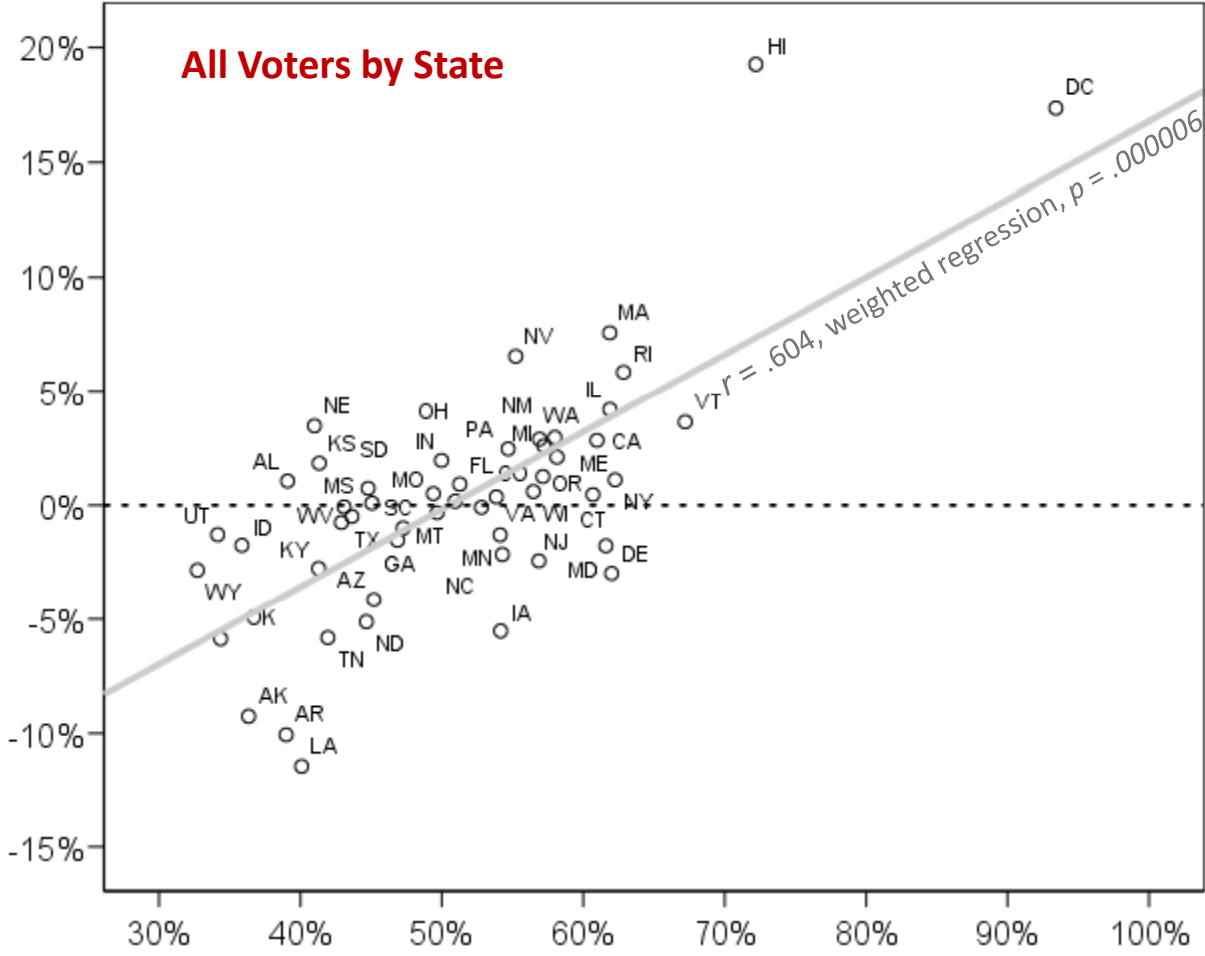


Surprising Errors in Predicting the Presidential Vote — Nov 2008

Obama got more than predicted

Prediction errors

Obama got less than predicted

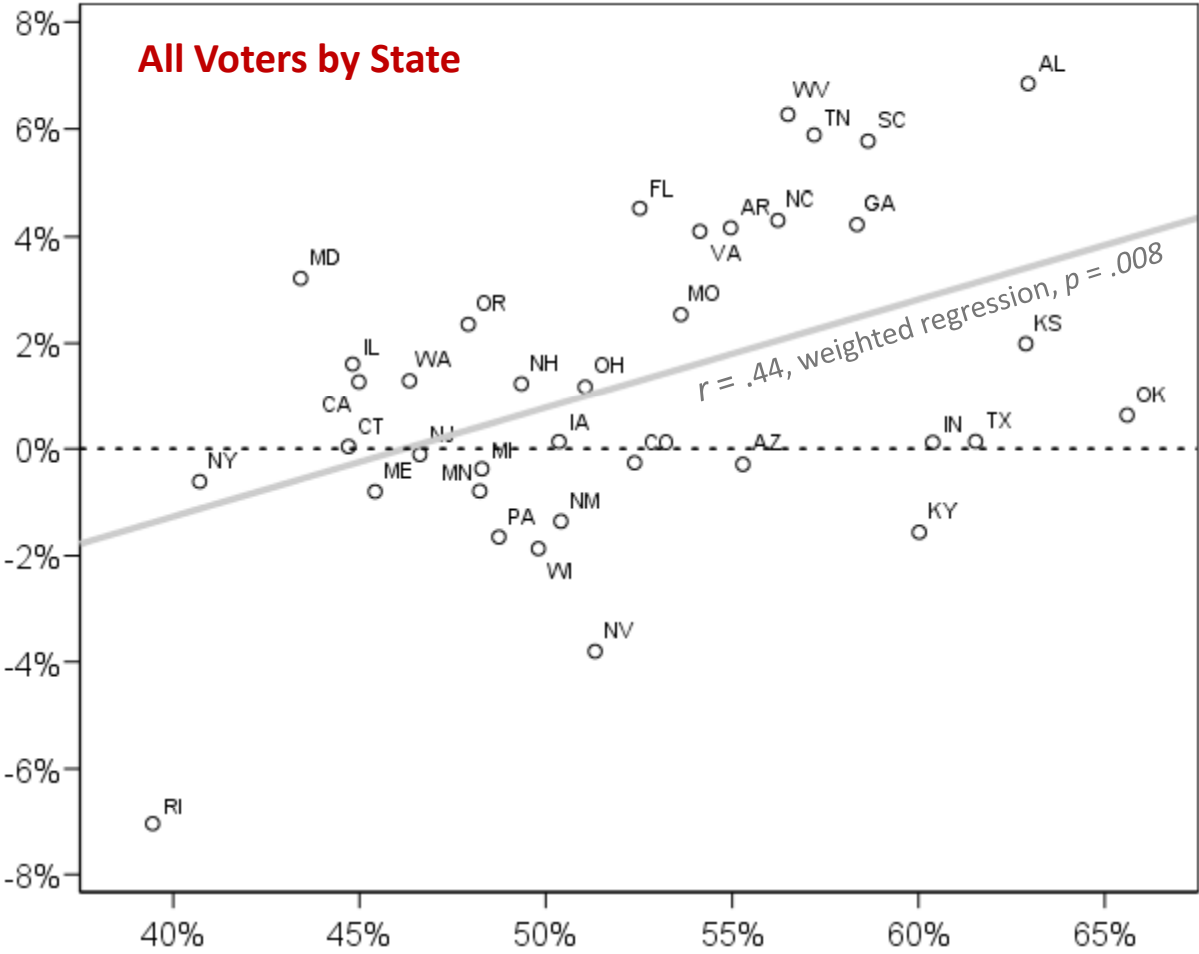


Percentage of states' voters voting for Obama

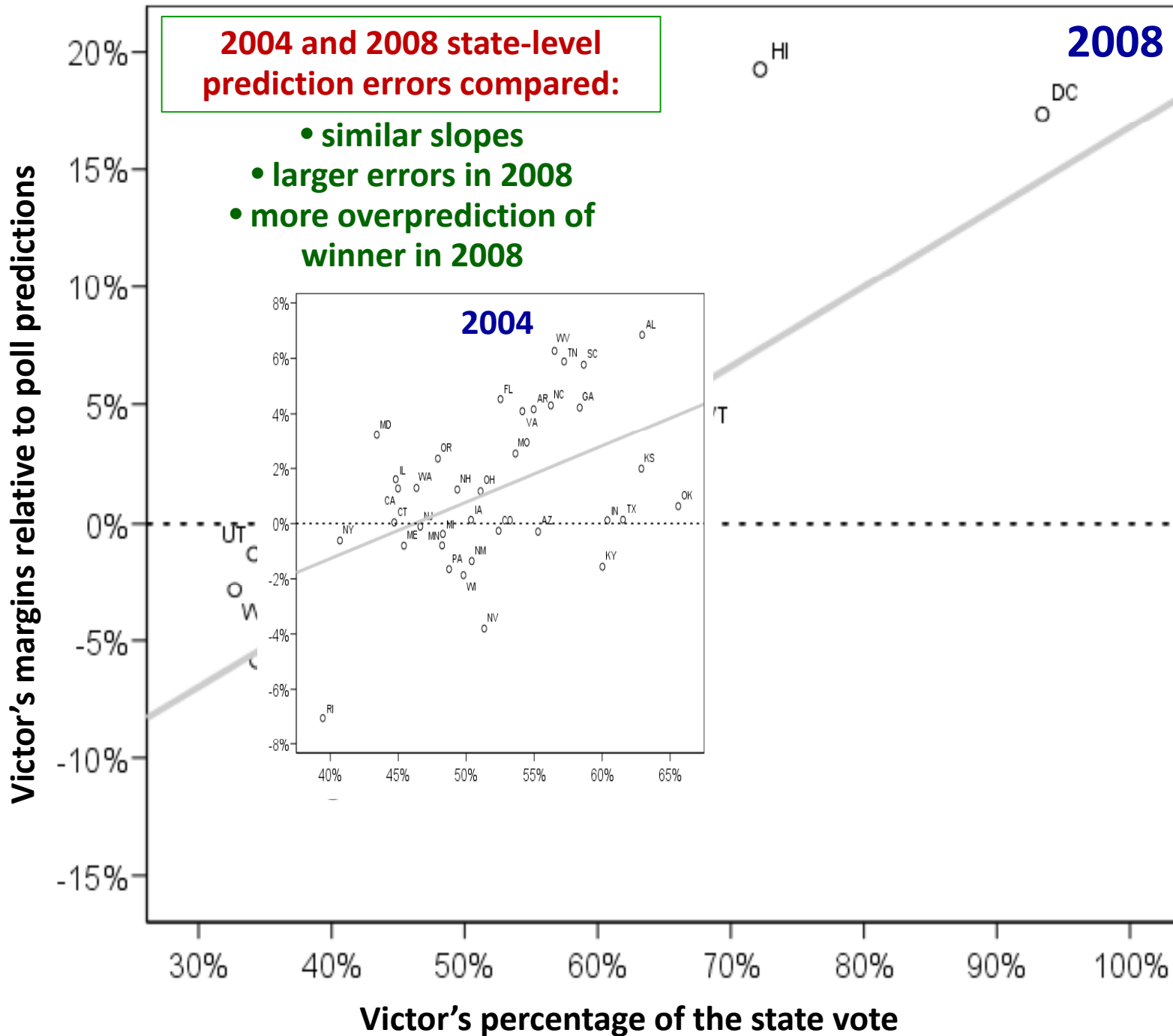
For Comparison: Predicting the Presidential Vote — Nov 2004

Bush got more than predicted

Prediction errors



Percentage of states' voters voting for winner (Bush)



Internet data collection

October 29–November 3, 2008

&

January — November, 2012

Internet data collection

October 29–November 3, 2008

Participant Characteristics

- 2,226 eligible-voter research volunteers at the Project Implicit web site
- 62% women, 38% men
- 65% provided at least partial data
- Average age: 36.0 years (SD = 15.5)
- Race distribution: 79.2% White, 6.9% Black, 13.9% other
- Considerably more politically liberal than U.S. population
 - median (& mode) ideology: “moderately liberal”
 - 84% prefer Obama to McCain
 - lower than usual White preference on race IAT

Internet data collection

Procedure

- Demographic information obtained prior to participation
- Counterbalanced order of administration of:
 - Self-report measures of candidate attitudes
 - Self-report measures of racial attitudes
 - Race preference Brief Implicit Association Test (BIAT)
 - Race preference Affect Misattribution Procedure (AMP)
- Debriefing included feedback on IAT measure

[The Race Implicit Association Test](#)

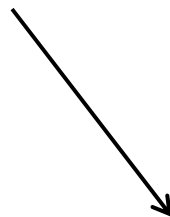
IAT Demonstration web site:

<https://implicit.harvard.edu>

Project Implicit®



**Decision 2012
Study**



Demonstration

The demonstration site for the Implicit Association Test. Click this button to learn more about implicit associations and try out some sample tasks. Or, go directly to our featured task: [Decision 2012 IAT](#).

Research

The research site for Project Implicit. Click this button to participate in on-going research measuring implicit associations for a variety of topics.

Visit our brand new website: [Project Implicit Mental Health!](#)



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Sample Brief IAT instruction screen

"E" = NO

YES CATEGORIES

"I" = YES

Black and **Good**
Faces and **Words**



Good, Love, Friend

Place your fingers on the Yes ("I") and No ("E") keys.

Press the Yes key for **Black faces** and **Good words**.

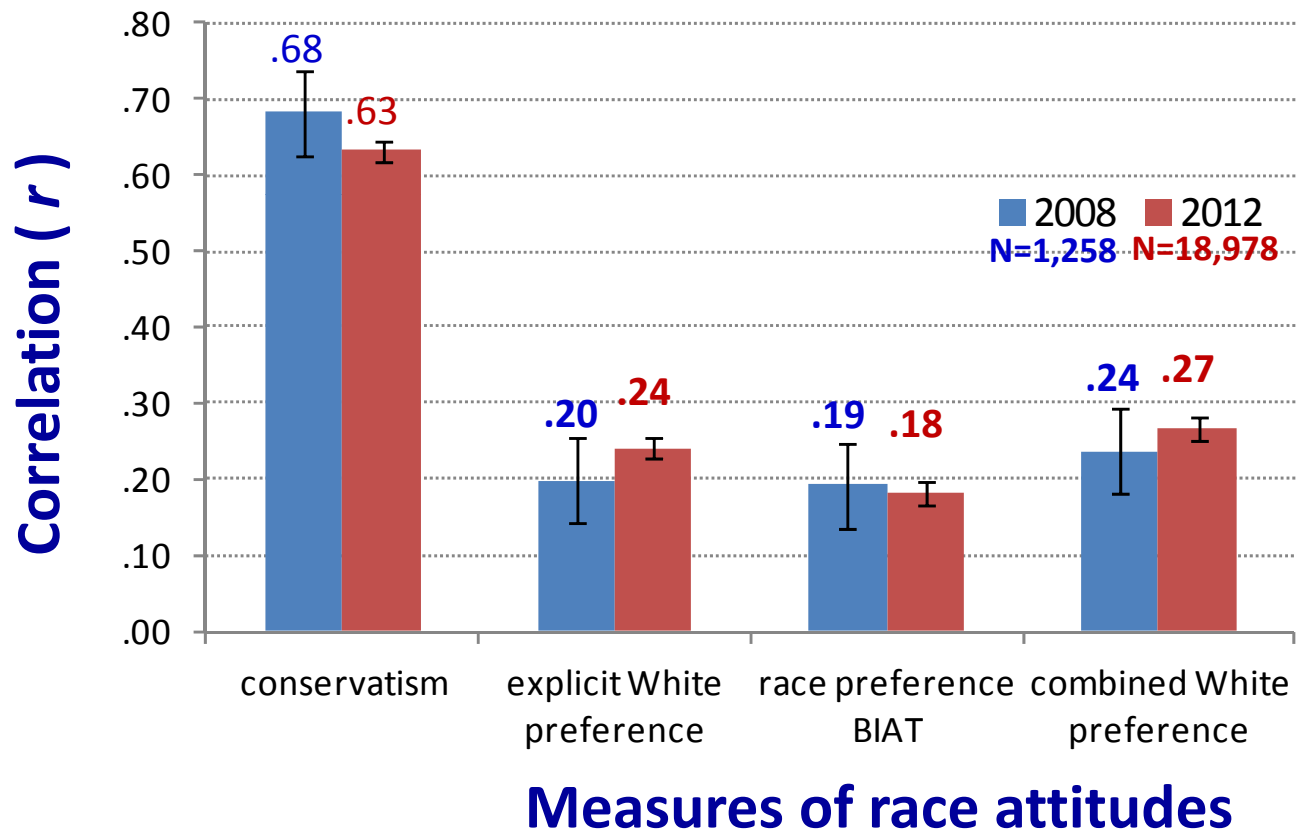
Press the No key for **White faces** and **Bad words**.

Go as fast as you can. An **X** appears if you make a mistake. Press the other key to fix it.

Hit **space bar** to begin

Internet data collection — 2008 (Nov) & 2012 (primaries)

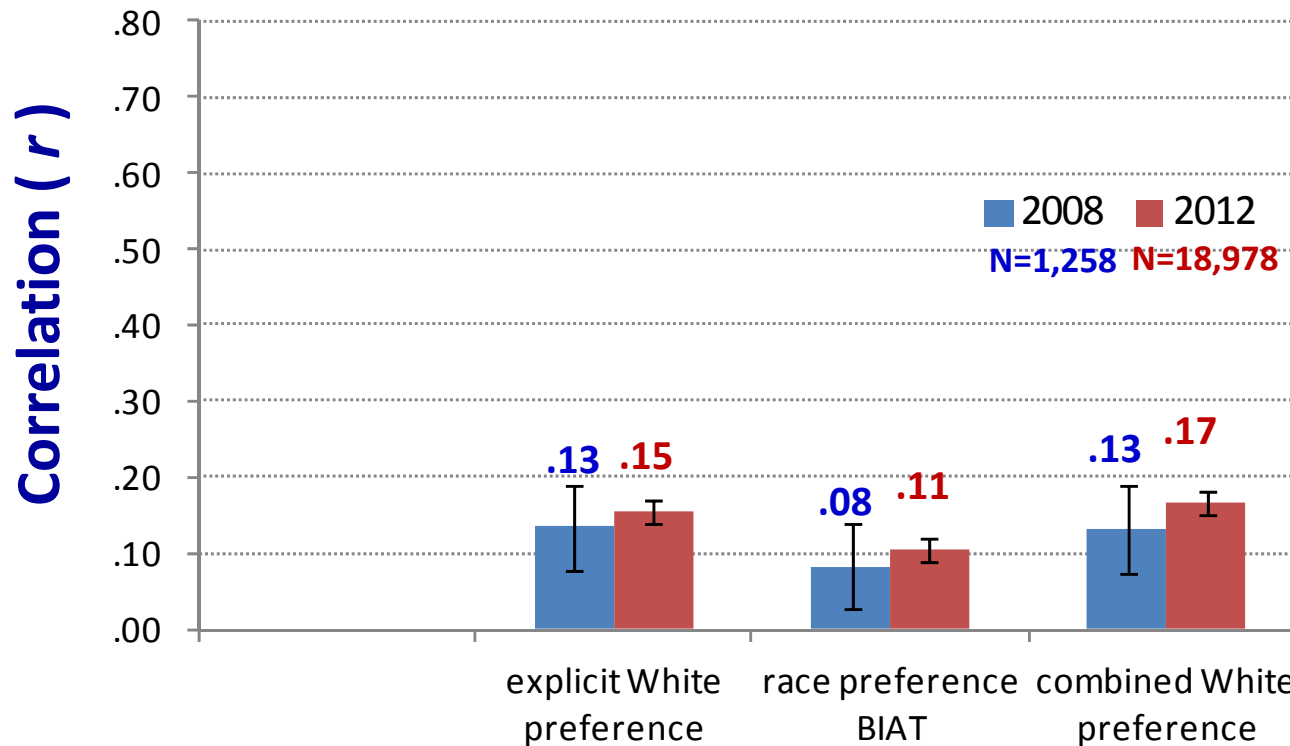
Candidate preferences predicted by liberalism–conservatism (strongly) and race attitude measures (moderately)



Error bars are 95% confidence intervals

Internet data collection — 2008 (Nov) & 2012 (primaries)

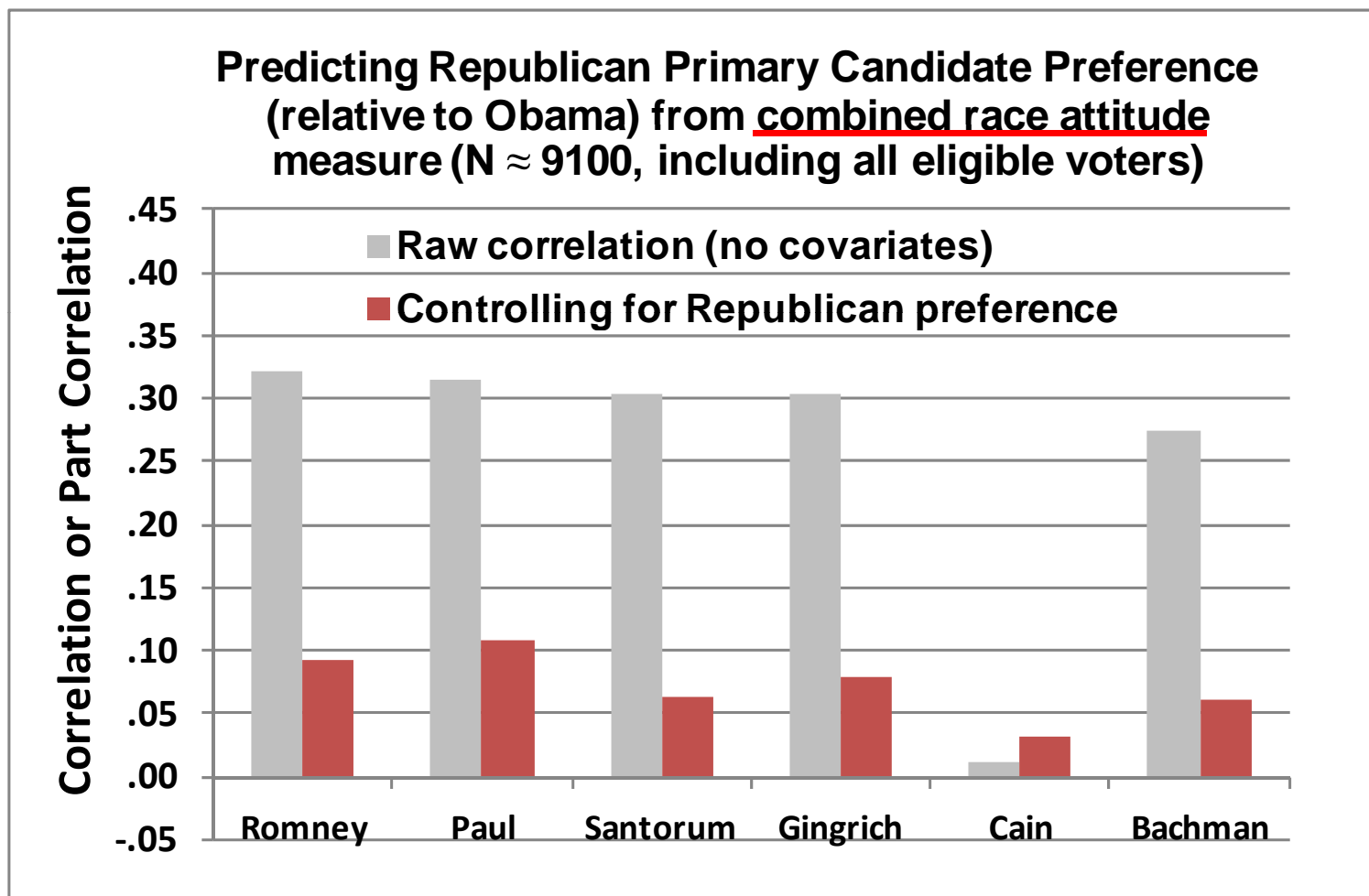
Candidate preferences predicted by race attitudes independently of liberalism–conservatism



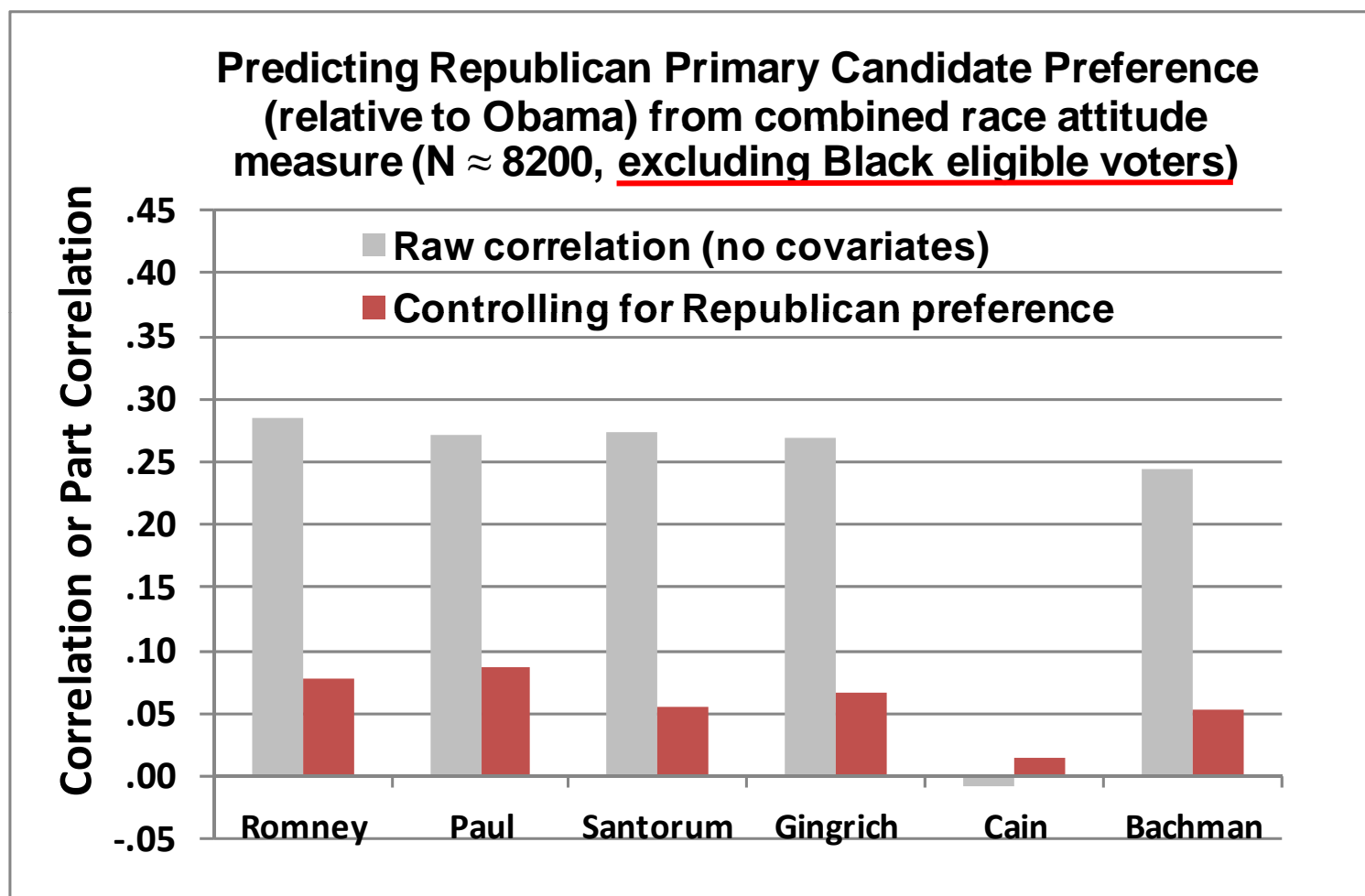
Measures of race attitudes

Error bars are 95% confidence intervals

2012: Primary candidate preferences predicted differentially by race attitudes (including all eligible voters)



2012: Primary candidate preferences predicted differentially by race attitudes (excluding Black eligible voters)



**Some other
interesting data**

“Harvard Study Claims Racism Cost Obama 3 To 5 Percent Of Vote”

THE EFFECTS OF RACIAL ANIMUS ON A BLACK
PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE:
USING GOOGLE SEARCH DATA TO UNCOVER
WHAT TRADITIONAL SURVEYS MISS*

Seth Stephens-Davidowitz
sstephen@fas.harvard.edu

June 9, 2012

Electronic copy available at: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2050673>

The New York Times

Sunday Review | The Opinion Pages

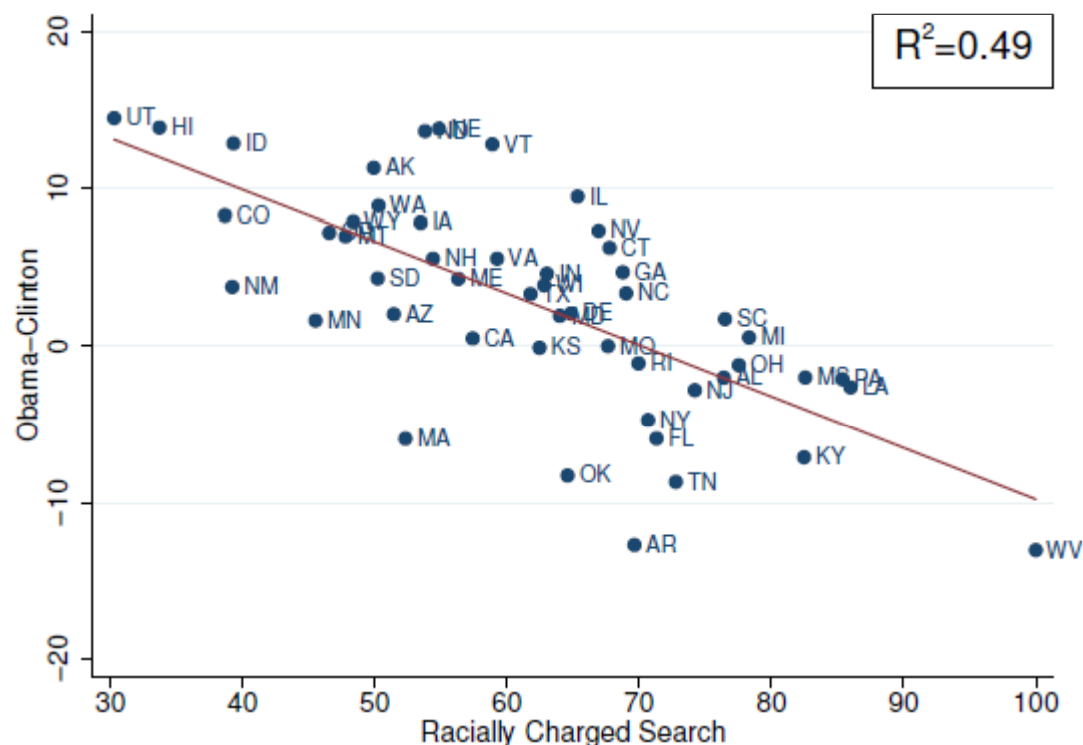
“Racially charged search” volume (by state) predicted underperformance of Obama relative to Hillary Clinton in 2008 Democratic Primaries

Figure VII
Obama-Clinton (Whites) and Racially Charged Search

Obama did well relative to Clinton

Obama – Clinton margin

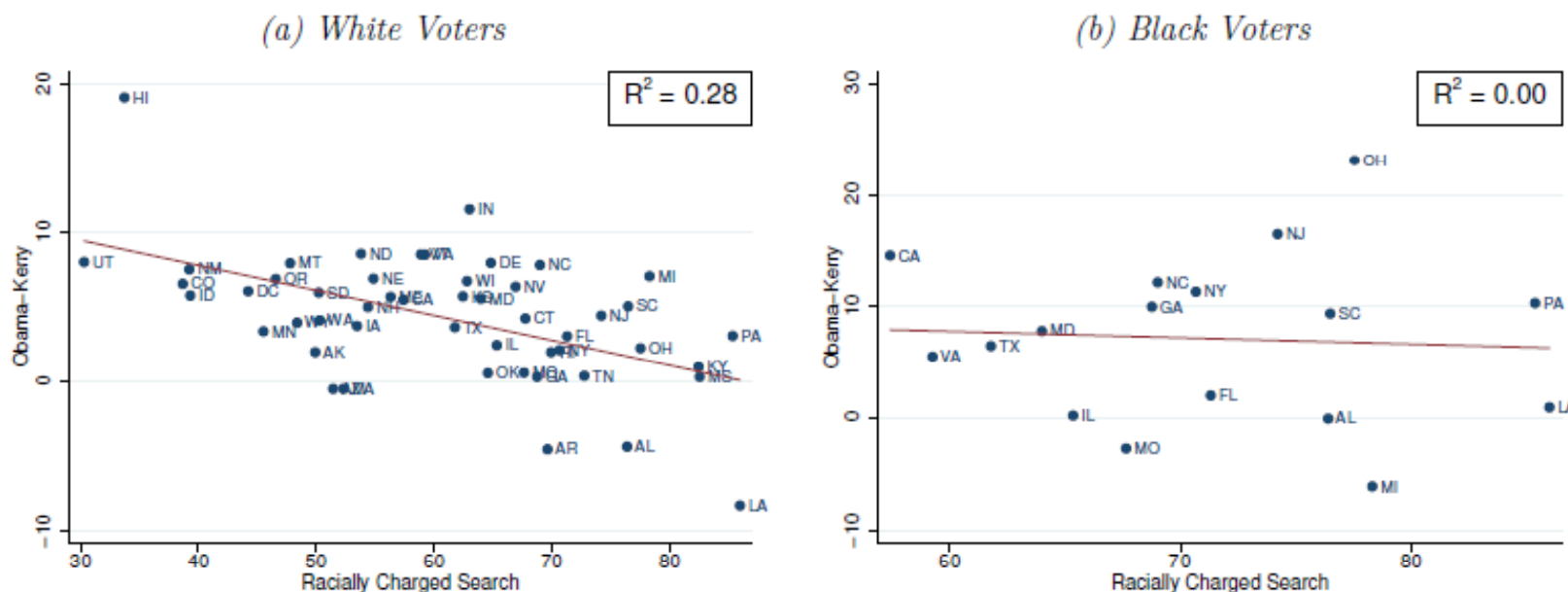
Obama did less well relative to Clinton



Notes: The x-axis is the unrounded value from Table A.1. The y-axis is based on polling data from SurveyUSA. In particular, it is the difference in Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton’s two-party vote shares, among whites, in a hypothetical matchup with John McCain. The polls were conducted in February 2008. They are available for all states but not the District of Columbia. The data were first used by Donovan (2010). I am grateful to the author for providing the data.

“Racially charged search” volume (by state) predicted underperformance of Obama (2008) relative to Kerry (2004)

Figure VIII
Obama-Kerry and Racially Charged Search, by Race



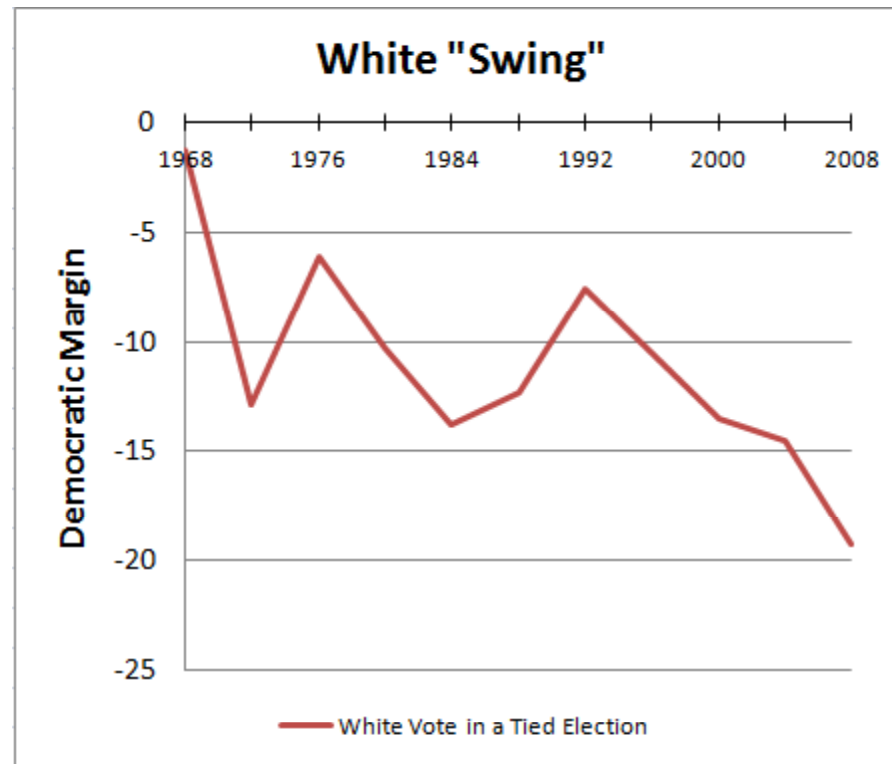
Notes: Both panels of this figure use the unrounded value from Table A.1. Panel (a) compares the difference in the two-party vote share for Obama and Kerry, according to exit polls, among whites. This data were graciously provided by Highton (2011). Exit poll data from 2004 for West Virginia are not available. Panel (b) compares the difference in the two-party vote share for Obama and Kerry, according to exit polls, among African-Americans. I do not include any states for which the number of African-Americans surveyed was fewer than 20 in either 2004 or 2008. There is no significant relationship, though far more noise, among racially charged search and black voters' support, using all states.

A shrinking minority of White voters favor Democrats (from polling data: 1968–2008)

The Politikal Blog

Comparing the White Vote and the General Vote

Posted on August 11, 2010



<http://mypolitikal.com/2010/08/11/comparing-the-white-vote-and-the-general-vote/>

The Spillover of Racialization into Evaluations of Bo Obama

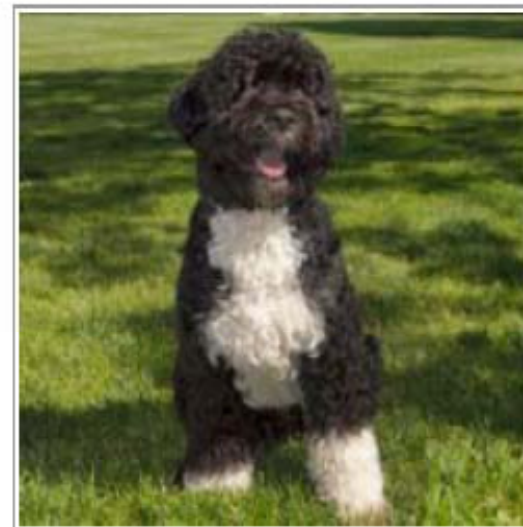
by [Michael Tesler](#) in [Model Politics](#)

APRIL 10, 2012

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Like 12

As mentioned in a previous [Model Politics post](#), racial attitudes remain a much stronger predictor of attitudes towards Barack Obama than previous presidential candidates. Perhaps even more interesting, a series of findings by social scientists indicate that presidential vote choice isn't the only thing that has become increasingly polarized by racial attitudes since Barack Obama's rise to prominence. Indeed, these studies show that racial attitudes' influence on a number of political evaluations increased significantly after becoming connected to Obama's presidency—evaluations that include health care opinions, tax policy preferences, approval of Supreme Court nominees, midterm vote choices, and even identification with the Democratic Party (see: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)). We have referred to this phenomenon as *the spillover of racialization*.



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10% handicap for Obama**

contact information

agg@uw.edu

<http://faculty.washington.edu/agg/>