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Black Curativeness: Understanding Black Voter Selection through an Assessment of Racially-charged Districts¹

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Abstract

Since the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 most scholarship on Black voter selection explains who Black voters select as opposed to why they select them. This study seeks to deepen understandings of Black voter selection beyond descriptive explanations through an assessment of a racially-charged district. Racially-charged districts can be used as microcosms for understanding political thought and behavior of racial minorities, particularly Black voter selection. These locales, where proven racial inequity propels race and racism as the overarching themes for all political and social concerns, are important in understanding why Black voters show positive affect towards viable Black candidates. Using data from the 2016 University of Missouri-St. Louis Exit Poll, this research provides evidence towards explaining why a candidate's race is a prominent factor in vote choice for Black voters. The study concludes a substantial segment of the Black voting demographic view the election of Black officials as paramount and remedial to enduring institutional discrimination on the basis of race—a notion of Black curativeness.

Keywords: Black voter selection, descriptive representation, racialization, racially-charged district

Introduction

African Americans share a common social, economic, and political history that links them as a political group (Berelson 1954).² This largely explains why African American opinion and political behavior are largely monolithic, even in light of some diversity (Walton, Smith, and Wallace 2017). No other place is this Black identity demonstrated more distinctly than in the voting booth (Tate 1991; Preuhs 2006; Greenwald et al. 2009; McFayden 2013). Black voters consistently vote for Black candidates (Sullivan and Johnson 2008), Democratic candidates (Cox 2019), and for religious candidates, particularly those who have garnered the support of Protestant leaders in the Black church (Walton, Smith, and Wallace 2017).

Noting the election of Barack Obama, an overwhelming percentage of Blacks, more than 90%, selected Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012 because he was Black (McFayden 2013). Linked to his race, the Black voting demographic perceived Barack Obama as the best choice to address Black issues in 2008 and 2012, even absent sufficient knowledge of his policies (Sullivan and Johnson 2008; Shah, Marschall, and Ruhil 2013). This was descriptive representation personified—voters showing positive affect towards candidates and officials who reflect certain demographics and who they believe will advocate for policies that improve real-life conditions because of the shared identity (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2014). This understanding of descriptive representation is central to this study's premise: Black voters select Black candidates from a cognitive position of

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amelioration. This paper examines this line of thought in the context of a racially-charged district—locales where institutional racism has prompted a lens that racializes all policy, even non-racial ones—and concludes that Black voters see the election of Black officials as paramount and remedial to the Black condition of enduring racism institutional racism—a notion of black curativeness.

This study draws this thesis from three key findings about the political cognitions of Black voters in its assessment of a racially-charged district. First, Black voters prioritize national issues under a different paradigm compared to White voters; where, for a substantial segment of Black voters, race takes preeminence over nationally-salient issues, such as education or immigration. This cognitive prioritization can be explained by their views on racism in their district and nationally, since racism sustains and reinforces racial hierarchies (Harper 2012). Secondly, this study finds that Black voters are more likely to characterize racism as an institutional phenomenon, rather than individual choice, when compared to White voters. And, lastly, Black voters desire the election of Black candidates as a solution to the inequities of institutional racism. African Americans have experientially understood the controversial reality of majorly White representation—white policy makers are less likely to consider and propose pro-Black policies (Garcia and Tate 2013). This paper elucidates these findings under the narrative that African-Americans in racially-charged districts see the election of Black candidates as a solution to sustained institutional racism; and, it is this cognition that is at the forefront of a significant segment’s thinking when voting.

The next section presents literature discussing race and political party as the dominant narratives in Black voting, but also shows the absence of examining this political phenomenon in the context of racially-charged districts. This paper will follow the literature review with the theorization of a racially-charged district, drawn from the racialization institutions model. Additionally, this section will affirm Ferguson, Missouri as a racially-charged district and, by default, the district’s legitimacy as the data source for this study. Then, the paper presents hypotheses and a methodological framework designed to map the cognitive concerns of Black voters as they vote. This is followed by data and methods; then findings; and, the paper ends with a concluding summary that includes implications.

Race and Party: Descriptive Explanations of Black Voter Selection

A significant portion of literature on Black voter selection informs us as to who Black voters select, and a smaller portion, which often defaults to group consciousness explanations, attempts to explain why Black voters select those candidates. Tate (1991), Greenwald et al. (2009), McFayden (2013), and Trautman (2019) all show that race, to some degree, plays a role in voting. While, Fairdosi and Rogowski (2015) and Cox (2019) informs us that political party has some effect. In 1991 Katherine Tate published a study that presents a classic model of Black participation and an assessment of Black voting when a viable Black candidate is seeking a major political party’s nomination. Tate develops a multivariate model using group resource measures—for example, was the persons a member of a politically active church or Black organization—and standard predictors, such as age, gender, education, and income. She assesses statistical significance, along with size and direction of logit coefficients. She concludes that Black disapproval of Ronald

Regan and Jesse Jackson's favorability among Black voters, though Jackson did not secure the nomination, "stimulated Black turnout in 1984," while group resources measures, like church membership were not significant (Tate 1991, 1171).

McFayden (2013) reaffirms the relationship between Black voter selection and Black candidates. McFayden performs a historical assessment of presidential elections since 1936 and finds that only the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 had a larger impact on Black voter turnout than the candidacy of Barack Obama—the first African American to secure the nomination of a major political party. Not only did Black voter turnout increase, but in "every state examined... Barack Obama received over 90 percent of the all votes cast by African Americans" (McFayden 2013, 14). This study's implication reinforces the impact of candidate's race, by noting the difference in Black vote among Democratic candidates when the candidate is White—a Clinton-Obama comparison shows an 11% point difference. However, the notion of a candidate's race factoring into voter selection is not limited to the Black demographic. Greenwald et al. (2009) found that White preference led White voters to vote for John McCain in the 2008 presidential election. And, Ebonya Washington's (2006) study, "How Black Candidates Affect Voter Turnout" finds that Black voter turnout increases in response to Black candidacy. But, similarly to Greenwald, et al. (2009), Washington's work also demonstrates that Black candidates seem to mobilize White voters as well, but in opposition to Black candidates.

All of these studies omit new cognitive explanations as to why the race of the candidate is so important for Black voters. The default explanation of McFayden (2013) and other scholars come from the Berelson (1954) and Dawson (1994) school of thought (McFayden 2013, 13). As afforded by Dawson (1994) Blacks politically operate under the presumption that they must perform functions that contribute to their collective blackness and advancement of black people. However, a reliance on macro explanations of political behavior, like group conscious and linked fate, may theoretically lead to a missed opportunity in understanding the objectives in the collective race behavior. Louis Kriesberg (2007) provides a comprehensive theoretical discussion of conflicts between groups in society, and affirms that the collective action of a group may transcend the group composition and may be motivated by "values and norms," or the effort to combat "social structures that engender external conflict" (Kriesberg 2007, 33). Applying this concept to racial political thought and behavior, can mean that analyses that rest on explaining behavior only in terms of racial group differences, with no discussion of the objective(s) of the respective groups, may only sustain differences and never lead to resolution.

Contemporary scholars, like Linda Trautman (2019) have begun to assess the motivations behind Black voting, beyond collective blackness. In her study of bill sponsorship in the Ohio state legislature, she notes there were substantive goals for the Black voting electorate. Black voters wanted bill proposals that addressed Black issues: racial injustice, protection of voter rights, and social reform (Trautman 2019, 97). She presupposes that Black voters elected these Black candidates—who are members of the Democratic Party, the minority party in Ohio—because of their willingness to propose legislation on relevant socio-political issues, not solely because they were Black.

However, race is not the only descriptive used to explain Black voting. Political party affiliation is also used to explain Black voting, as black voters overwhelmingly vote for Democratic candidates (Fairdosi and Rogouski; 2015; Walton, Smith, and Wallace 2017; Cox 2019). Ebonya Washington's (2006) study, referenced earlier, discusses more than Black candidates; it also provides a discussion and assessment of the interaction between candidate's race and political party. By assessing U.S. House of Representative, Senate and gubernatorial races from 1988-2000 she finds that Black Democrats enjoy a higher 2-3 percent voter turnout among Black voters; but, not for Black Republicans (Washington 2006, 974). She assigns this difference to the perception of Black voters who assume the liberal ideological stance of a Black Democrat and the inference that it increases the stakes of the election (Washington 2006, 976).

Scholars, like Fairdosi and Rogowski (2015), would agree with Washington's affirmation of the effect of a candidate's race and political party; affirming that the mobilization of Black voters is not singularly explained by race. Amir Fairdosi and Jon Rogowski's (2015) study starts from a premise of accepting that coracial candidates increase the turnout for Democratic candidates, but assesses whether shared identity is singularly causal in this increased participation. Theoretically, "Black Democratic candidates and Black Republican candidates [would] have an equivalent effect on black voter turnout" (Fairdosi and Rogowski 2015, 339). Reaffirming that Black voters are not mobilized in the same way for Republican candidates as they are for Democratic candidates these scholars conclude:

"In spite of the importance of racial group identity for black political behavior... black citizens' application of partisan lenses enables them to use partisanship as a simplifying heuristic for political decision making" (Fairdosi and Rogowski 2015, 346).

These studies, with the exception of the Trautman (2019) study, seemingly stop short of an adequate explanation as to why Black voters vote overwhelmingly for Black candidates, particularly from a cognitive understanding. For this, the study turns to a racially-charged district to assess Black voter cognitions.

Theorizing a Racially-charged District

The concept of a racially-charged district builds on the racialization institutions model, as explained by Robert Preuhs (2006). Preuhs's study of descriptive representation, examines the influence of "highly racialized political context" on minority representation (Preuhs 2006, 587). Preuhs affirms a relationship between minority representation and the racial context of a district, concluding that racialization is a barrier to Black descriptive representation (Preuhs 2006, 598). Drawing more specifically from Preuhs's discussion of the racialized institutions model, there are districts where, because of the exclusion of minority groups, the entire political context is characterized by "racial cleavages" (Preuhs, 2006, 587). Thus, the first definitional component of a racially-charged district is the impact of race, essentially becoming the overarching social and political issue. This logically leads to a query: how does race become the overarching issue in a locale?

The answer can be gleaned from Maria Escobar-Lemmon and Michelle Taylor-Robinson's (2014) discussion on the dilemmas in representation in which they state:

The problem [of representation] is further complicated when we consider the

interests of groups traditionally excluded from power. Especially, if institutions have been structured to deliberately under-represent, exclude, or marginalize a group, what representation “means” and what it looks like may be very different from representation of majority interests... (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2014, 1).

Contextualized, this means that institutional racism has excluded African Americans from elected office and other areas of representation, and creates a sense of deprivation where the issues and interests of the Black voters have been dismissed from societal concerns. This exacerbates the racial cleavages afforded by Preuhs (2006) and promotes a lens of institutional distrust rooted in White privilege (Harper 2012), to the degree that all social and political issues are viewed through a lens of suspicion of further discrimination.

However, accusations of institutional racism must be proven, according to legal theory as afforded by James Blumstein (1983). Blumstein implies that unproven accusations of racism only demonstrates disadvantage and not discrimination. He writes:

Race discrimination requires either the ‘deliberate use by government of race as a criterion of selection...’ or proof that a course was pursued ‘at least in part because of... its adverse effects upon an identifiable racial group (Blumstein 1983, 642).

Based on this framework, this paper defines a racially-charged district is a locale where proven inequity caused by enduring institutional racism, prompts race and racism as the overarching issue for all political and social concerns for racial minorities in the locale.³ In these districts, every social and political issue is viewed and scrutinized through a lens of race in suspicion of racial discrimination. However, racially-charged districts are not anomalies, but microcosms where the socio-political environment make respondent-admission more forthcoming about the imperative of race politics and perceptions of racial mistreatment; or, as asserted by Preuhs (2006), racialization conditions the responsiveness of citizens to government and government to minority group interests. Walton, Smith, and Wallace (2017) affirm that Blacks—as a political group—deal with symbolic racism and/or disparate impact (institutional racism). And, this makes Black voters, as a whole, perpetually race-conscious in the same manner as Black voters in racially-districts. Therefore, in theory, the cognitions of Black voters in these districts, or a substantial portion of these voters, will often mirror national sentiments in a variety of efficacy measures.

Ferguson, Missouri as a Racially-charged District

This paper asserts that there are several candidate districts that have experienced racialization and proven measures of institutional racism that qualify them as racially-charged districts. Genesee County, Michigan is such a district. Differences in racial treatment, particularly in Flint, Michigan, has conditioned citizens of the majorly-Black municipality to be distrustful of government (Egan 2016). The government distrust in the district, primarily around the issue of safe drinking water, is over 70% according to the 2016 Target Insyght/MIRS News poll. This distrust of government is reflective of national government distrust. According to the Pew Research Center (2015), national distrust of government has consistently been higher among Blacks, only dropping lower than Whites during the Obama Administration.

However, this study selects St. Louis County, Missouri and the municipality of Ferguson, Missouri as the racially-charged district to elucidate the concept of Black curativeness. Ferguson, Missouri demonstrated itself as a highly racialized locale, even before the 2014 killing of Michael Brown, which sparked the Ferguson Protests. Walton, Smith and Wallace (2017) state that the conditioning of racialization in Ferguson was “historically rooted in the pernicious effects of decades of racial and socioeconomic segregation, due to discriminatory housing practices and unregulated suburban development” (Walton, Smith, and Wallace 2017, 137). The 2014 killing of Michael Brown only sparked the conversation about treatment of African Americans in the district; and, brought particular focus to the governing institutions. Perceptions of institutional racism were observed in the racial makeup of the cities leadership with the mayor and five of the six council members all being White in 2014 (Brown 2015). The city’s justice system further reflected the institutional political exclusion of Blacks, with 94% of law enforcement and all of the Municipal Court being composed of White citizens (Brown 2015). Enforcement was also disproportionate. 95% of people arrested for petty offences, such as jaywalking, were black and 86% of vehicle stops involved a black driver (Brown 2015).

But, as Blumstein (1983) affords racism must be proven; and, the accusations of racism were proven to be more than mere perception in 2015 by the U.S. Department of Justice. The 2015 Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department performed by the U.S. Department of Justice—Civil Rights Division found that “Ferguson’s approach to law enforcement both reflects and reinforces racial bias...” (Department of Justice 2015, 4). And, it was this institutional discrimination that undermined community trust and gave citizens, particularly Black citizens, cause to view any changes in city governance or policy through a lens of racial animus—a condition “attributable to Ferguson’s approach to law enforcement... unnecessarily aggressive... discouraging a culture of accountability and neglecting community engagement” (Department of Justice 2015, 5-6).

Methodological Framework and Hypotheses

The aim of this paper extends beyond the legitimacy of the racially-charged districts as an observable phenomenon in political science, but uses such locales to provide some explanatory understanding of the cognitions of Black voters in their selection of Black officials. As the presented literature shows, the bulk of literature on Black voter selection is more descriptive than explanatory; and explanatory assertions default to Berelson’s (1954) and Dawson’s (1994) notions of collective consciousness. However, this research proposes a methodological framework that maps the cognitions of voters from the attitude that makes race preeminent among voter concerns, through the voters thinking of the system that the candidate will operate in if elected, to the desired outcome from selecting Black candidates.

Peggy McIntosh (1988) argues that race is more salient for Black voters, because white privilege allows a White citizenry to live absent self-consideration of racial awareness. And, according to expert interviews in a study on race and attitudes about non-heteronormative persons, Lewis (2017) finds that there is a perpetual consciousness of race for African-Americans—“every day you wake up in Brown skin, knowing society sees that as something less than.”²⁴ To assess if race is a prominent cognition for Black voters, this

study will test the following hypotheses:

H1: Black voters in racially-charged districts will prioritize national political issues differently than White voters.

H2: Race will be a more salient issue for Blacks in racially-charged districts, surpassing than the economy, immigration, education, terrorism or health care, compared to issue saliency of White voters.

Assuming that the findings of earlier hypotheses will not deviate from literature, and that race is preeminent for Black voters, then attitudinal processes would dictate an investigation of cognitive causes. It may seem logical to some to go to racism as the cause for this race-centered cognition in voting. However, “sociologists [and most social science researchers] routinely fail to explain that the ‘race effect’ in their findings is the outcome of racism” (Harper 2012, 10). Not only is proven racism a component of the concept for racially-charged districts, but if implications from Shaun Harper’s (2012) characterization of institutional racism are applied to Black voters, it informs that there is likely a cognitive connection between the candidate’s race and the system that “sustains[s] White privilege and permit the ongoing subordination of minoritized persons” (Harper 2012, 10). Therefore, subsequent hypotheses are developed to assess if perceived discrimination, individual or institutional, differs along racial lines and if those differences are statistically significant in voter selection of a Black candidate.

H3: Black voters in racially-charged districts will more likely perceive racism as institutional rather than White voters in racially-charged districts.

H4: Black perceptions of racism will have greater statistical significance on the favorability of Black officials than that of White perceptions of racism.⁵

A repetitive theme in literature was the allegiance of Black voters to the Democratic Party (Washington 2006; Fairdosi and Rogouski 2015; Cox 2019). Leading to speculation that it may be party affiliation and not race that cause Black voting to seem monolithic—a notion seeming to have validity when assessing Black candidate support in the Republican Party. Therefore, the next hypothesis continues to follow attitudinal processes for understanding the desired outcome of voters, but also factors in political party. The next assessment investigates if the subset of Black voters with strong attitudes about institutional racism have greater favorability of Black officials. This stage of the study draws a connection between Black voter selection and their opinion regarding institutional racism. This connection provides evidence that the selection of Black candidates are to remedy a system than is disadvantageous towards Black citizens.

H5: Black voters with an institutional cognition towards racism will have a statistically significant relationship in their higher favorability of Black candidates than will white voters seeing racism as individual choice, factoring effects of political party.

Data & Methods

This study uses the 2016 University of Missouri-St. Louis Exit Poll Survey. This survey data is derived from questionnaires voluntarily completed by voters during the 2016 presidential election at twenty-one separate polling sites throughout St. Louis County, which includes Ferguson, Missouri. Voters completed a total of 948 surveys before departure of polling sites. Voter race, which serves as the dependent variable in this study, was measured on a

dichotomous Black-White paradigm. Percentages of other racial demographics were too small to be assessed and maintain validity and reliability in the findings; thus, voter race was recoded to include only respondents from Black and White voters—“1” for voters who identified as Black and “0” for voters who identified as White.⁶ In H1 and H2 the independent variable is a survey question for respondents to select the most important national issue. Respondents were given six options—the economy, immigration, education, terrorism, health care, and race, with no option for other. In H3 and H4 the independent variable is voter perception of racial discrimination against Black citizens, whether its continued presence is a result on individual actions or laws and institutions. In H5 the independent variable is a proxy question for electing a Black candidate—a favorability of President Obama, who was ineligible to run again because of term limits, was used to assess this because no person of color had secured the nomination of a major political party in that election. This hypothesis includes political ideology, political party, and education level as additional independent variables and controls for the attitudes of the voter on the causes of racial discrimination.

In this assessment, the study uses a combination of multivariate tabulations—to establish evidence of a relationship—and logit regressions—to demonstrate statistical significance of the observed relationships, as drawn from Pollock’s (2012) detailing of quantitative political analysis. H1 is to assess if there is a relationship between race of the voters and the importance of race; H2 then assesses if that relationship is statistically significant. H3 is to assess if there is a relationship between race of the voters and their attitudes on racial discrimination, specifically institutional racism; and H4 assesses if that relationship is statistically significant. H5 assesses the relationship between Black voters who affirm institutions contribute to sustained racial inequity and their desire to elect Black officials; and if that relationship is statistically significant factoring in other explanations for Black voting, such as party identification.

Findings

Findings prove evidentiary for the assertion of black curativeness—the notion that Black voters vote for Black candidates who are also Black, because they believe that candidate will advocate for policies that improve real-life conditions because of the shared identity. Black voters prioritize prominent national political issues differently than White voters. When asked to select the most important issue facing the country, both Black and White voters chose the economy; however, its importance seems much more pronounced for Whites compared to Blacks. Half of White voters in St. Louis County labeled the economy the most important issue; whereas, only 39% of Blacks deemed it the most important issue (*see Table 1*). The eleven point difference affirms there were other issues where African-American voters placed importance. Looking at each race’s second-most selected issue reveals a more complete image of issue prioritization. For Whites, the second-most important issue was education, with only 16.31% of respondents selecting it; whereas, for Blacks the second issue is race, with 26.6% of respondents feeling it was the most important national issue. One in every four Black voters deemed race a more important issue than education, healthcare, terrorism, and immigration; whereas, fewer Whites selected race than any other issue.

Results also demonstrate that this observed relationship between Black voters and the salience of race is statistically significant. For Black voters, race was the only issue that was statistically significant. Table 2 displays the results from a multinomial logit regression, along with the predicted probabilities and concludes that Black voters are more likely to prioritize race relevant to all other political issues. However, logit coefficients do not lend themselves to a straightforward interpretation, therefore CLARIFY was used to compute the change in the predicted probability of a Black voter selecting the respective national issue (King et al., 2000).⁷ Black voters yield an increase in the probability to selecting race as the most important issue by 22%.

Findings about racism reveal there is no significant difference in the discussion of racism locally or nationally for Black voters. This further validates the theory that racially-charged districts can serve as microcosms of national paradigms on matters of race. A majority of neither Black nor White voters feel that institutions contribute more to ongoing racism than individuals. However, comparatively, a greater percentage of Blacks assigned ongoing racism to institutions—20% more of voters compared to White voters (*see Table 3*). Perceptions of discrimination, locally and nationally, are statistically significant for Whites in their voting choice for president in the 2016 election, but not for Blacks. These findings may appear to present conflicting conclusions, since race is highly prioritized by Blacks and statistically significant in voting, yet perceptions of racism do not demonstrate statistical significance for Blacks in voting. However, when the regression output is refined to assess the portion of Black voters who see ongoing racism as a manifestation of institutions, the proxy measure of candidate race proves statistically significant. In the same model, neither political ideology nor political party demonstrate statistical significance (*see Table 4*).

Conclusion and Implications

Racially charged districts are microcosms of the nation in regards to studying and assessing race. The proven institutional discrimination of these locales prompt a racial lens for a significant percentage of Black voters. In St. Louis County, which includes the municipality of Ferguson, Missouri, Black voters prioritize the importance of race above immigration, education, terrorism and healthcare; whereas, White voters prioritized race last. Race is such a prominent issue for Blacks in racially-charged districts, because as the name suggests, institutional inequity constantly reminds minorities of their subordination. The institutional and structural components of the socio-political reality creates an environment where white privilege excuses Whites from the consideration of race, and racial discrimination makes race a more important issue for Blacks, more so than enduring national concerns of education or healthcare. And, this statistically significant relationship leads to an interpretation that means, for a percentage of African Americans it would be impossible to deal with the policy flaws of terrorism, immigration, and healthcare, without dealing with the current racial inequities that surrounds those issues and institutions.

Not only is race important, but racism is perceived differently by Black and White voters. Most White voters see racism as a manifestation on individual choice; whereas, a sufficient subset of African Americans see it as inextricably linked to the institutions and structures of society. When compared to Whites, Blacks are twice as likely to characterize institutions as perpetuating racism, locally and nationally. Paradoxically, for the collective

Black voting demographic there is no statistically significant relationship between their perceptions of racism and their voting. But to accurately assess the racialization that can happen in locales espoused by Preuhs (2006), assessment of those who see through a racial lens must be assessed—in this study that is the 40+% of Black voters who see ongoing racism as a result on socio-political institutions rather than individuals. These persons show statistically significant favorability to Black candidates, even in statistical models that include political ideology and political party. This segment of Black voters is favorable and likely to vote for Black candidates, because the Black candidates are unrepresentative of the racially inequitable system of White racist exclusion. These voters see their shared identity as remedial to a system of racialization that sustains racial inequity—Black curativeness.

The racially-charged district provide fertile ground for studying Black cognitions, likely enhanced because of local racialization of institutions, but that does not mean these cognitions are solely limited to Blacks in these locales. If, as Walton, Smith, and Wallace (2019) assert, Blacks face symbolic racism and disparate impact as collective group, studying racially-charged districts will only improve attempts to understand Black political thought nationally, without the need to persistently rely on national data.

Future Research

Future research in racially-charged districts should work towards increasing the validity of these districts as adequate locales for studying Black political thought, not only in the respective locale, but to understand Black socio-political thought as a collective national group. Replicating this research in another presumed racially-charged district on in an election year of the same racially-charged district, would also increase reliability of using localized data for understand nationally-studied political groups. Future research should consider replication and cognitive elaboration. Including a wider array of explanatory questions on voter selection will create a more complete cognitive mapping of race, system disparities, and voter selection.

Notes

1. Acknowledgments: The author would like to thank Dr. Kenneth Moffett, Dr. David Kimball, Ms. Tara Huntley, and Mr. Christopher Thomas for the contributions and feedback to this study.
2. Terms “African American” and “Black” are used interchangeably in this article.
3. The concept of racially-charged district, as explained and characterized, is unique to this study, enhancing this paper’s contribution to the existential literature on cognitions of Black voters.
4. Expert interviews references are a part of the dissertation, *Repercussive Discrimination: Racial Discrimination as an Explanation of Prevalent Homophobia among Racial Minorities*.
5. In the 2016 National Presidential Election there was no Black candidate on the Ballot; therefore, the study uses a favorability of Barack Obama as a proxy to assess an inclination towards electing a Black official.
6. Of the voters that completed surveys, 71.38% were “White;” 24.19% were

“Black;” 0.76% were “Hispanic/Latino;” 1.19% were “Asian;” and 2.48% identified as “Other.”

7. To compute the change in predicted probability of a Black voter selecting an issue, the value of race was set to “0”—coded value for White voters—and using the following command STATA computed the probability of change from White to Black voters: “simqi, fd(pr) change x(Black 0 1)”

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Tables

Table 1. Ranking of Political Issue Importance, by Race

Race of Voter	Highest Importance	2 nd -Most Important	3 rd -Most Important	4 th -Most Important	5 th -Most Important	Least Important
White	Economy (50.35%)	Education (16.31%)	Healthcare (14.89%)	Terrorism (8.16%)	Immigration (6.03%)	Race (4.26%)
Black	Economy (39.45%)	Race (26.61%)	Education (17.43)	Healthcare (10.09%)	Terrorism (6.42%)	Immigration (0.00%)

Source: 2016 University of Missouri-St. Louis Exit Poll

Table 2. Political Issue Importance for Black Voters in Racially-Charged Districts

Independent Variable	Immigration		Education		Terrorism		Healthcare		Race	
	Logit Coefficient	Change in Predicted Probability	Logit Coefficient	Change in Predicted Probability	Logit Coefficient	Change in Predicted Probability	Logit Coefficient	Change in Predicted Probability	Logit Coefficient	Change in Predicted Probability
Black Voters	-30.34 (1713750)	-0.06 (0.01)	0.31 (0.32)	0.02 (0.04)	0.01 (0.47)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.15 (0.38)	-0.05 (0.04)	2.08* (0.38)	0.22 (0.04)
Constant	-2.12 (0.26)		-1.12 (0.17)		-1.82 (0.22)		-1.22 (0.18)		-2.47 (0.30)	

N 391
 Chi-Squared 47.32
 Prob > Chi-squared 0.0000
 Psuedo R2 0.0405
 Log-Likelihood -506.12203

Source: 2016 University of Missouri-St. Louis Exit Poll
 Standard errors in parentheses.
 *p<0.01

Table 3. Black-White Perceptions on Local and National Racism in Racially-charged Districts

	Local Racism		National Racism	
	Black Voters	White Voters	Black Voters	White Voters
Institutions Contribute More	40.74%	20.36%	48.62%	28.32%
Individuals Contribute More	59.26%	79.64%	51.38%	71.68%

Source: 2016 University of Missouri-St. Louis Exit Poll

Table 4. Black Voter Favorability of Black Candidates, controlling for Perceptions of Institutional Racism

Independent Variables	Logit Coefficients
Favorability of President Obama	2.61* (1.00)
Political Ideology	0.79 (0.45)
Political Party	-0.15 (0.25)
Education Level	-0.59* (0.22)

89
 N 17.71
 Chi-squared 0.0014
 Prob > Chi-squared 0.1466
 Psuedo R2 -51.56447
 Log-likelihood



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