Obama 2008: An Origin for Post-Racial America?

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Discrimination in America

- When trying to summarize this massive issue into some sort of measurable value, I decided to find out how many people really felt discriminated towards, since that could either be exclusive to your race, or include it. The numbers came in that the most people only felt that there was “a little” discrimination in the world around them and personally.
- The number for people who believed they had been discriminated a great deal was extremely low according to the ANES survey and I wasn’t sure if it was because of the survey parameters or just the opinion of the surveyor, but I knew different aspects could also be measured in order to further my study.
- The idea of a Post-Racial America seems so appealing to say after the many years of strife and incongruence America has had regarding race relations. Some say the election of a Black president was a huge progressive step, however some say this is still not enough with racial tensions still boiling; but the end-all, be-all would have to be the results and facts of constant polls simply grasping the public feel and opinions on this subject matter.

Introduction to Research

- This study explores the effects of the Obama elections on personal discrimination, voter turnout, and opinions on media coverage. This election was seen as a starting point to a more progressive America in 2008. Many thought this was the beginning of a new era in which any racial/gender group could start to make their mark on politics, and that the huge issue regarding race was behind us.
- With many racial debacles arising in the last couple years I wondered if America’s idea of progressiveness was truly progressive enough to promote the thought of a post-racial society and even influence voters to be more active or even the contrary. I feel that social change was assumed with the Obama election, but the political aspects of representation and citizenship were varied.

Hypotheses:

H 1: People who feel discriminated against voted less or not at all in the 2012 election.
H 2: Minorities felt the same amount of personal discrimination regardless of the election of Obama.
H 3: People who feel discriminated against feel the media needs to pay more attention to acts of discrimination.

Data

### H 1: Voter Turnout

**Does Discrimination Affect Voter Turnout?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of Discrimination</th>
<th>A great deal</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>A moderate amount</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>None at All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A great deal</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>1737</td>
<td>1888</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### H 2: Progress of Personal Discrimination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>A lot of real progress</th>
<th>Hasn’t been much real progress</th>
<th>Unsure/No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6/18-22/14</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/26-30/14</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/7-11/13</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### H 3: Media’s Attention on Discrimination

**Table Interpretation:**

- The voter turnout table polled voters in the 2012 election. The poll was a cross tabulation measuring how much the person felt discriminated against and if they voted in the 2012 election.
- The table describing the progress of personal discrimination was measured from August of 2013 to June of 2014. The subjects used the 1960s as a comparison point to base their opinion.
- The table about the media’s attention to discrimination was a cross tabulation comparing the amount of discrimination the person has felt and whether or not the media should pay more attention to discrimination.

Findings

H 1: Voter Turnout

People who have never felt discriminated against were 31% more likely to vote in the 2012 election. With only 3% of voters who felt discriminated against representing themselves in the election, most voters had never experienced it prior to this election.

H 2: Progress of Personal Discrimination

On average 77% of Americans believe that discrimination is continually progressing positively. There was no real perception gap regarding Blacks and Whites when polled. However, when asked if they felt no real progress was achieved blacks numbers started to rise in the later polls.

H 3: Media’s Attention on Discrimination

The general consensus was that people believed the media was doing a good job representing the acts of discrimination in America. However, the small amount of people who felt discriminated a great deal believed that the media could do a much better job when discussing these topics.

Conclusions

- My hypothesis regarding voter turnout proved to be correct, and when I followed up with the 2014 midterm elections, black adult vote has significantly lowered 20% compared to midterm elections in years past. Is this trend because of the candidate, or current events? Further research must be conducted to find out.
- My hypothesis about personal discrimination was incorrect, since the level of progress was deduced to have gotten much greater over the years. While this was the standing number for 2013-2014, this percentage could be fluid regarding events that have happened in recent years and the election of a new president.
- My last hypothesis about the media’s discrimination coverage proved to be correct, but once again this should be measured for further research to keep up with current events.

References

- Obama 2008: An Origin for Post-Racial America? Calah Vargas Department of Political Science, Chapman University; Orange, California