An Analysis of the Effects of Race on Albany County Voting for Hillary Clinton for Senator of

New York

PAI 701: Quantitative Skills in International Relations

December 8, 2015

Jessica Laycock

<u>Introduction</u>

In U.S. politics, many factors come into play as to what types of people prefer which candidates. With the race towards the 2016 presidential election well under way, there is a need to look back at past elections to discern answers and derive predictions. Right now, the front-runner of the democratic primaries is Hillary Clinton, and the vast majority of polling is confident that she will be the Democratic candidate for president in 2016. In her first election ever, in 2000, she ran for Senator of New York and won. What this paper will strive to determine is how race amongst voters affected Hillary Clinton's number of votes for Senator in 2000 and what the result mean for her campaign heading into the 2016 elections.

When Hillary Clinton first ran for president in 2008, race certainly did play a role in the results. She lost, and our country went on to elect its first African-American president, Barack Obama. Since that time, many studies have been made on how race affected President Obama's ascension to commander in chief and these studies can help us understand what types of obstacles Hillary Clinton may be facing. Some people argue that the large increase in black voter turnout for President Obama was clearly attributed to the fact that the candidate himself was also black. However, a 2009 study showed that "party mobilization was a critical force in boosting Black turnout. Attitudinal factors, in contrast, appear to have been less robust in this election than one would assume" (Philpot, Shaw & McGowen 2009, pp. 995). It is possible that similarly, Hillary Clinton would be better served relying on mobilizing the Democratic Party to rally behind her, rather than on individuals of her constituencies identifying with her on an attitudinal level. When the Democratic Party as a whole, and not just the candidates administration, craft what ideologies this party and candidate will encompass, voters of any race do not fall prey to

"race-based misperceptions of candidates' ideologies [that] have a significant indirect impact on voting decisions in elections" (Jacobsmeier 2015).

Since the following data analysis will be on the Hillary Clinton's Senate race of 2000, a good comparison would include information on how race affected Obama during his 2004 Illinois Senate campaign. During this election, "manipulating the visual images and portrayals of then-candidate Barack Obama… deemphasizing his race and connection to the African American community … had an immediate impact on evaluations of Obama among White Democratic voters in Illinois. The more deracialized the treatment, the more positive White Democrats were about Obama in their assessment of both his ability and empathy. To the extent that voting dynamics among White Democrats in Illinois follow similar patterns among White Democrats in other states, our findings suggest Obama's race remained a potent and easily manipulated factor in how he was evaluated during the 2008 Presidential election as well" (Andersen & Junn 2010, pp. 463-464). In looking at the case of Hillary Clinton's campaign for Senator of New York in 2000 it is likely that she used similar strategies in de emphasizing her femininity when interacting with certain racial demographics, as well as with different genders, amongst her constituents. This political strategy proves successful and furthermore, I would wager to say that her ability to appear less feminine, when necessary, will contribute to her ultimate success in becoming President of the United States in 2016.

On the other hand, it is important to note that there is evidence to the contrary. In a 2014 evaluation on voting for women, the "data provide[s] little evidence that people take any traditional gender stereotypes they may hold and translate them directly into a decision to vote for or against a woman candidate" (Dolan 2014). Furthermore, what was more important in

deciding to vote for a woman candidate was her political party. Thereby again confirming that party mobilization is a sound strategy in gaining political trust amongst voters of different demographics.

In any democratic election there will always be some voters who are well informed on the candidates positions and have strong opinions on the issues. However, the majority of American citizens qualified to vote are not as politically savvy. In "[l]ow-information elections voters compensate for a lack of information by taking informational shortcuts, based on candidate cues, to make voting decisions" (McDermott 1998). These cues, are the foundational factors by which candidates make political strategies to gain support. They are the factors that, as of late, have been a driving force in the progressive liberal reform outcomes of U.S. executive elections. "The informational content of voters' stereotypes about women and black candidates, and how these stereotypes affect voting behavior" is what candidates like Obama and Hillary Clinton, two societal minorities, can use to their advantage in running a successful presidential campaign (McDermott 1998).

Description of the Variables

This analysis will utilize a data set crafted by American University from the 255 precincts in Albany County, New York that recorded number of votes for Hillary Clinton for Senator in 2000 by city or town and by different races including: white, black and white-hispanic and black-hispanic and also by different political affiliations including: democrat, republican, and conservative and liberal. For the purpose of this analysis, our dependent variable is an interval variable that is the number of votes cast for Hillary Clinton. Our multiple independent variables are all recoded into 5 separate dummy variables. With these dummy variables we are able to test

the hypothesis that race affects voting for Hillary Clinton, by seeing the effect on her number of votes based on whether a precinct has more or less whites versus blacks and more or less white-hispanics versus black-hispanics, holding rurality and political affiliation constant. Our regression equation is written:

$Y = A + Bx_1 + Bx_2 + Bx_3 + Bx_4 + Bx_5 + e$

Y = number of votes cast for Hillary Clinton

Bx_1 = A dummy variable, which represents City (1) and Town (0) in Albany County

Bx_2 = A dummy variable, which represents Democratic (1) and Republican (0)

Bx_3 = A dummy variable, which represents Liberals (1) and Conservatives (0)

Bx_4 = A dummy variable, which represents White (1) and Black (0)

Bx_5 = A dummy variable, which represents White-Hispanic (1) and Black-Hispanic (0)

Summary of the Findings

If the Hillary campaign took a look at the results of this multiple regression analysis they would find that in her first election, only certain information about the voters, that was used in this analysis, had a significant effect on the number of votes for Hillary Clinton for Senator of New York, and it was not race in this case.

Variables	Coefficients (t)
Constant	403.375 (5.934)
Town or City	-135.873* (-2.610)
Dem or Rep	-42.565 (-.804)
Lib or Con	-76.402 (-1.747)
White or Black	-42.127 (-.625)
W.Hisp. or B.Hisp.	94.881 (1.454)
Adjusted R^2:	0.154

Note: *$p < .05$

In fact, the only independent variable that was statistically significant at the .05 level was City or Town. According to the R^2 figure, the X variable City or Town explained 15.4% of the the variation for Y, number of votes cast for Hillary Clinton. In order to determine if there were any issues of multicollinearity we analyze the Pearson correlations between the X variables. In this case, we found that being a democrat and living in a city had a strong positive correlation of .763; however, only living in a City or Town was statistically significant, so we do not have to concern ourselves with choosing which to use to create our line of best fit.

<u>Conclusions</u>

The findings and conclusions for this research were not able to corroborate the hypothesis that race affected voting for Hillary Clinton. In this case, race either white or black or white-hispanic or black-hispanic were not significant and therefore could not be used to make a prediction about the greater population of New York state. However, knowing whether a voter was from a city or a town of Albany county does explain about 15% of the votes casted for her, during her run for the Senate. Our other independent variables, the political affiliations of Democrat or Republican or Liberal or Conservative, did not have any foretelling qualities either.

When future research is conducted, likely on the data provided by the 2016 presidential election cycle, researchers would be best served to continue to search for the effect race has on voting and also include more demographic factors, to have more independent variables with better predictive capabilities, such as gender, education and income. With new information incorporated into the dataset collected the adjusted r-squared value will raise and better explain what demographic characteristics among voters are the best determiners for why Hillary Clinton was elected Senator of New York in the year 2000.

References

Andersen, D. J., & Junn, J. (2010). Deracializing Obama: White Voters and the 2004 Illinois U.S. Senate Race. *American Politics Research, 38*(3), 443-470. doi:10.1177/1532673X09339356

Dolan, K. (2014). Gender Stereotypes, Candidate Evaluations, and Voting for Women Candidates: What Really Matters?. *Political Research Quarterly* 2014, Vol. 67(1) 96–107. Retrieved from http://prq.sagepub.com/content/67/1/96.full.pdf

Jacobsmeier, M. L. (2015). From black and white to left and right: Race, perceptions of candidates' ideologies, and voting behavior in U.S. house elections. *Political Behavior,37*(3), 595-621. doi:10.1007/s11109-014-9283-3

McDermott, M. (1998). Race and Gender Cues in Low-Information Elections. *Political Research Quarterly* 1998, Vol. 51(4) 895-918. Retreived from http://prq.sagepub.com/content/51/4/895.short

New York. American University. Retreived from http://www.american.edu/spa/ccps/Data-Sets.cfm

Philpot, T. S., Shaw, D. R., & McGowen, E. B.. (2009). Winning the Race: Black Voter Turnout in the 2008 Presidential Election. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, *73*(5), 995–1022. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/40467655