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3120: African American Experience in Politics, Part 2 of 3

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Qualitative Research Methods

Case Study

3120:African American Experience in Politics

Preston Love Jr

Part 2 of 3

September, 2017

Introduction

This study attempts to investigate the question and the problem: **The Question: “who is voting and who is not voting. If not why”**. For my total Case Study the previous Quantitative narrative was the precursor to this qualitative analysis. The quantitative analysis provided a base for the qualitative. From the Part 1 Quantitative summary “What was significant, the findings supported the two hypotheses clearly.” The hypotheses and data qualifiers were as follows:

Hypothesis:

1. That Blacks and non-whites are outvoted by Whites.
2. That older citizens outvote younger voters

Data Qualifiers:

1. That a larger than usual sample of the survey participants may come from students and therefore could skew upwards the younger voters
2. That non-white voters whose most recent vote was 2008 (Obama vote) may skew the non-white data upwards and may be removed from the survey to create normalcy.

This segment of the study, the qualitative analysis will try to develop the base analysis with a possible answer to the question of the Case Study “... **who is not voting. If not why**”. From the previous report (Part 1) we know who is not voting, Non-whites and the young. Now we seek from the survey and interviews “Why”.

The Problem

Since 2008 there has been a steady drop in voter registration and Voter turnout in the black communities. Reference the trend locally:

Locally, the voter turnout during presidential years has dropped steadily since 2008 and notice the gap between the total Douglas county vote and that of North Omaha (the Black vote).

Today, the problem continues and the question resurfaces “**who is voting and who is not voting. If not why**”. This Case study has chosen to survey a random sample set, made up of, all sectors of the city, ages, and races to determine what we can deduct from their voting habits and reasons for not voting where applicable. In summary of the Part 1 and Part 2 case study elements, the quantitative (Part 1) will show the problem and Part 2 qualitative will attempt to show and answer the question, “...why not”.

Any important problem needs to be studied, dissected and analyzed in order to get from the cause to the affect, then ultimately to the solutions. That is the point of this case study.

Data Collection

Data collection was accomplished by using 21 UNO students. The students are members of a cross listed UNO Course. Cross listed between Black Studies and Political Science. The class is highly diverse in terms of race and culture. They were asked to obtain 5 responses from canvassing to complete a survey and interviews. They were given the freedom to survey and interview anyone of their choice, but not to limit it to students only. The data set has a skew to younger ages. The returned surveys captured 107 responses. The responses were captured on a survey form and the raw data has been committed to Excel spreadsheet workbook.

The survey included an interview question for non voters that was added to get at the question of the case study, why they are not voting. We received 23 responses from registered and unregistered non voters. The interview answers were grouped and are presented in [figure 1](#) below. Correlations as to Age and Race are presented respectively in [figures 2 & 3](#).

The grouping were as follows

1. Not Registered; Eligible voters who for whatever reason have not chosen to register to vote. This part of the sample and the real world, represents the potential for a work strategy to aggressively conduct voter registration initiatives
2. Recently Moved, not registered; Eligible voters and most cases they are registered voters in another state and have not registered in the State of Nebraska. These people tend to register when the opportunity presents itself. They are by-in-large voters and they have not taken the time to register. When approached they readily register and later vote.
3. Not a citizen; These are temporary residents of the USA. Green Cards, visa, etc. In the sample, most are here on student visas (that does not carry with it the right to vote), they are not eligible to vote. If they receive citizenship they are immediately eligible. At naturalization ceremonies, I have been part of efforts to register new citizens immediately after the ceremony. My experience has shown that without follow up and much civic education this group will most likely not vote
4. Religion; There are some religions who by doctrine, do not vote. In this sample Jehovah Witness was the religion.
5. Didn't like candidates; Most troubling decision by voters. First, it's a terrible response to your community to not vote. Secondly, whenever voters chose to not vote, because of the choice in one or two of the high-profile races, they fail to realize the impact on all the other very important races, most of which directly affect our lives and the lives of our families. Just as bad, are the voters who go to the polls and vote for the high-profile races and leave without voting for other offices on the ballot. That's horrible. The technical name for is "undervote" and it's a bad practice.

6. Apathy; “Who cares”, “what difference does it make”, “my vote doesn’t matter or count” and many other misinformed responses. Please add pure laziness to this category. Many issues and candidate races have been decided by a few votes per precinct. And many nonvoters are casting a vote for a candidate they are against, by not voting. There is no excuse for apathy, yet it persists. Historically, apathetic voters can only be awakened, if they are directly to profit, directly to suffer or they have some emotional reaction to the vote. The Obama candidacy and success can be partly credited to emotion.
7. Felon; Each state can legislate the voting status of its Felons. Some states forbid any felon ever to vote, some states allow felons to vote immediately after serving their sentence (debt to society). Some have waiting periods. Nebraska law requires a felon to wait until two years after release or after removal from “paper” (Probational requirements after release).
8. No used
9. No response

Overall Findings from Sample:

Total survey:

Total Survey Sample size 107

72% of the Sample is White

27% of the Sample Non-White

15% of the Sample are non-voters

Non-whites represent 55% of the Sample, they represent 69% of the non-voters

Whites present 45% of the Sample, but they represent 85% of the voters

Average age of voters, 28

Average age of the non-voters, 21

Age range 18 to 77

Of the voters only 2 have not voted since 2008

Of the voters only 3 have not voted since 2012

Total interviews

Sample interview size= 23

43% of the interviewed is White

57% of the interviewed is Non-White

100% of the interviewed were non-voters

Median age of the interviewed=22

Interviewed answered grouped distribution

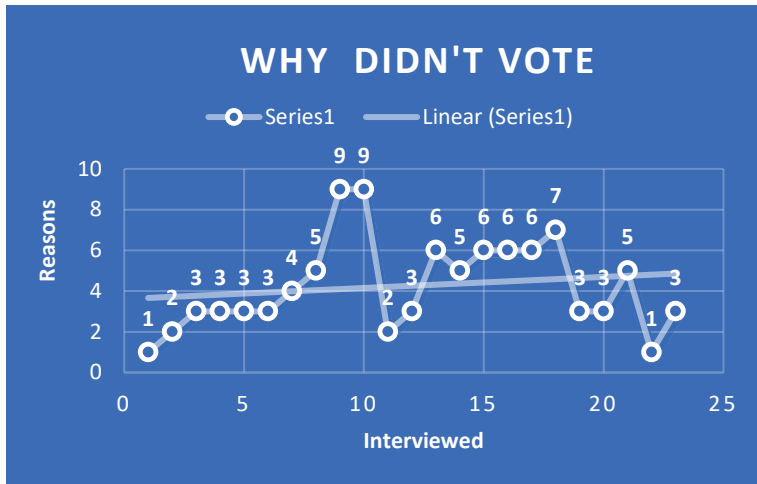


Figure 1

Legend:

1. Not Registered
2. Recently Moved, not registered
3. Not a citizen
4. Religion
5. Didn't like candidates
6. Apathy
7. Felon
8. Not used
9. No response

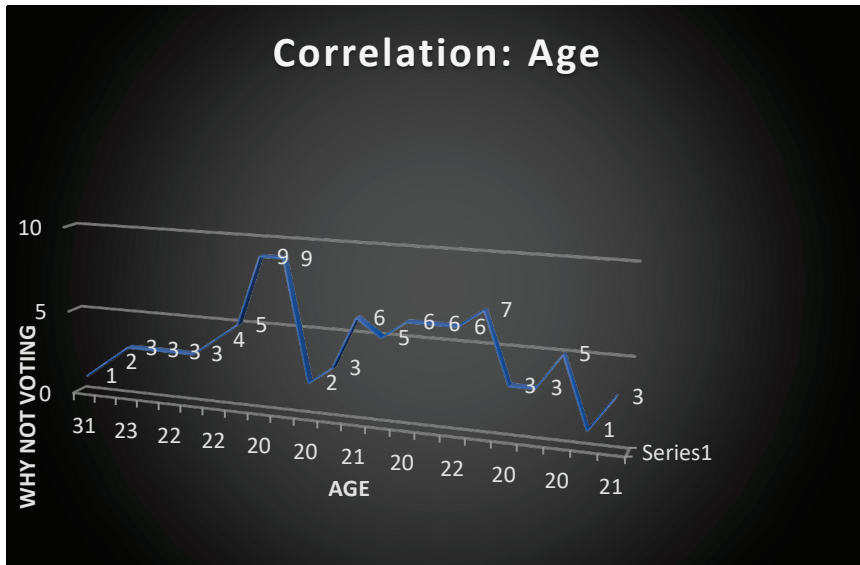


Figure 2

Legend:

1. Not Registered
2. Recently Moved, not registered
3. Not a citizen
4. Religion
5. Didn't like candidates
6. Apathy
7. Felon
8. No used
9. No response

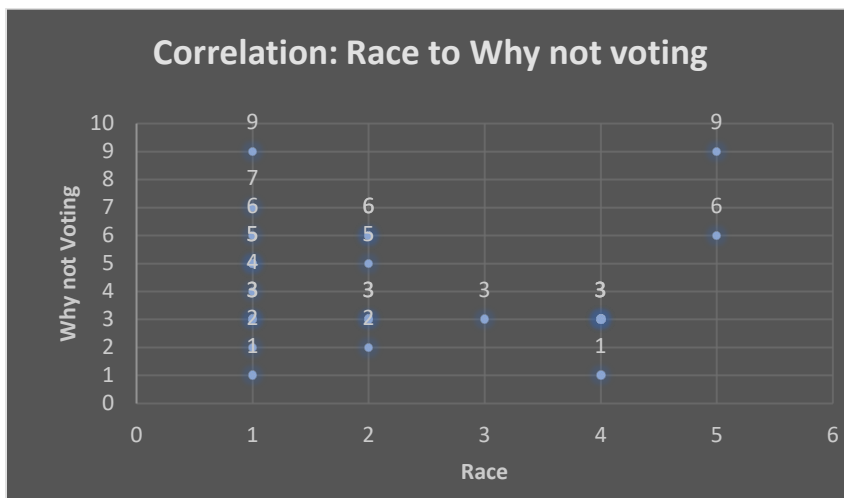


figure 3

Race Legend (1=Black, 2=White, 3=Latino, 4=Asian, 5=Other)

Analysis

The data that we see after analyzing the interviews, is that there were no surprises, none. Every one of the interview grouping categories are known and recognized as deterrents to voting. What may be surprising however, is that no matter how random the survey and or interviews these truths prevail. The correlations to age revealed no surprises. The correlation as to race reveal very little as to where black nonvoter tendencies tend to center, in fact black voter reasons covered the entire gamut in this sample set.

The advent of many ineligible voters because of citizenship raises many issues. In this sample 34% of the response were that of non citizen. Firstly, it should be noted that I am finding as the surveys confirms that the number non-citizens are growing. In north Omaha once thought of as the African American community, there is a change. North Omaha is currently also Latino, South Sudanese, Burmese, Viet Nameese and more. A large percent of these communities are not full citizens and therefore cannot vote. The sample also points out this reality.

Apathy represented 17% of the participants. But I would include in the apathy bucket, the idea of not voting because you don't like the candidates. Both reasons are growing phenomenon's. There is a slow loss of pure recognition of civic responsibility and part of that is due to poverty and income disparity. But voter reduction is widespread. Apathy, maybe falsely used to disguise a growing civic problem.

Summary

In a democracy, one would think the right to vote would be embraced and fully utilized. In many countries, the act of voting could mean loss of life or bodily injury. In many countries, there is high voter fraud, yet the people continue to exercise their right. In many countries the lines may cause voters to stand in line regardless of weather conditions for 10 to 12 hours, yet they come. So why in America are citizens voting less and less. Despite higher voting numbers once every four years during the Presidential race, , what is called the mid-term years, voting drops off dramatically to as much as 30 % points or more. During those midterm elections in Nebraska we elect US Senators, US Congressman, Governor, a host of very important state and local offices yet only 30% of the voter even focus and the ignore voting. For America this is a signal, like a dead canary in a coal mine. Is Democracy dieing?

So, we do a small sample survey and interviews and the people tell us they are apathetic, too busy to register and or vote. Also, they tell us they didn't vote because the candidates did not raise to their expectations.

Race and poverty surfaces into the picture and lack of voting is borne out even in this small and random survey. Non-whites are not voting. Add to the non-voting, within our democracy we have elements that are working hard to impede the voting process. As was the case in our history, during the Jim Crow era. The old impediments of poll tax, grandfather clauses, literacy test, Gerrymandering, redistricting, intimidation, and violence...have been replaced by the new impediments of Voter ID, voter purging, poll closings, manipulative voting times, early voting

games and our old “friends” Gerrymandering and redistricting. Fix these barriers or the canary will be reign.

Recommendations

This sample and all aspects of recent voting history point to a need for communities to recognize the message coming from low turnout. The message is coming from the entire community but is most intense in the poverty stricken and non-white communities. We need to continue to study the electorate in the context of low voter turnout and focus on measures that can improve, by attacking each of the reasons people are not voting. Focusing actions that are specific and directed to each of the reason like the ones brought out by this study.

I am the founder of an organization call *Black Votes Matter Institute of Community Engagement* that was organized for this very reason. The Agenda for this organization is included in the “References and notes” section of this paper.

Additionally, I plan to reproduce this study in the predominant non-white community of North Omaha to study the expected contrast with this sample.

References and notes

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Note: 2017, Love, *Voter survey for case study* (attached, space minimized for display),

VOTER SURVEY

(No Name Required)

1. Age _____ 2. Race _____ (African American, White, Latino, Black, Asian) 3. Employed _____ (Yes/No)

4. Household Family size _____ 5. Registered to vote (Yes/No) circle answer **if No go to #7**

6. Last time voted (circle answer) (2017, 2016, 2014, 2012 2008)

7. Why not voting?

Black Votes Matter
Institute of Community Engagement
The Agenda

Voter Participation

Voter Registration

Direct and collaboration

Deputy Registrar Training coordination

Voter Education

Providing events, Town Halls, to further voter knowledge

Collaboration with community and organizations to further voter knowledge

Distribution of the LVW Voter Guides

Lectures, Speeches to further voter knowledge

Focus on community, Seniors, Youth and Churches

Black Votes Matter Newspaper column (Omaha Star)

Voter Turnout Measures

Phone and door to door contact

Yard signs, buttons, billboards

Advocacy for increased voter participation and turnout

Election Day Measures

Ride to the Polls

Centralized coordination and Polling place monitoring

Post- election Day analysis and reporting

Community Development and Engagement Initiatives

Candidate Development workshops

Campaign Management workshops

Leadership Development workshops

Adult

Youth

Civic Education Youth Club

Collaboration with the Heartland Workers Center

Voter Participation

Development Initiatives

Annual Black Votes Matter Black History Tour

June, 2018

Visits to over 15 Iconic Southern civil rights venues culminating with the African American Civil Rights Museum in Washington DC. Will announce in August, 2017