

Why Trump Won: In-group favoritism and Out-group hostility

Donald Trump's victory over Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election defied nearly every prediction and poll. It has understandably sparked considerable debate as to whether Trump's racialized appeals may have been more important than his promises to stand up for ordinary people by putting "America First" to "Make America Great Again. Prominent recent studies already point to racial resentment and prejudice as the primary explanation for Trump's unwavering support among many white voters as well as the broader wave of reactionary racism, reflective of nativist anxieties over globalization, immigration, and cultural diversification. But before we go further, let's look into how Donald Trump's campaign possibly fanned the flames of racial resentment.

Is Trump racist?

Well if Trump were asked that, he would possibly deny any claims, as he has so far. However, Trump's actual record, tells a different story. Prior to and during the 2016 campaign, Trump used his political platform to spread disparaging messages against various racial groups. Trump claimed, "the overwhelming amount of violent crime in our cities is committed by blacks and His-

panics," that "There are places in America that are among the most dangerous in the world. You go to places like Oakland. Or Ferguson. The crime numbers are worse. Seriously," and retweeted a false claim that 81% of white murder victims were killed by black people (the actual percentage was 15%, according to the FBI for 2014). Trump launched his campaign in 2015 by calling Mexican immigrants "rapists" who are "bringing crime" and "bringing drugs" to the US. His campaign was largely built on building a wall to keep these immigrants out of the US. As a candidate in 2015, Trump called for a ban on all Muslims coming into the US. His administration eventually implemented a significantly watered-down version of the policy. While this list is indicative of Trump's pattern of outgroup hostility, in case it falls short there is a whole list of Wikipedia articles on 'Racial Views of Donald Trump' and some sarcastic tweets

Although Ezra Klein must have smirked while he came up with the joke, you can't help but wonder, instead of raising their voices against his racially discriminative policies, why is it that so many people agree with Trump?

Them vs. Us: The In-group/Out-group effect

Wikipedia defines it as "in-group is a social group to which a person psychologically identifies as being a member. By contrast, an out-group is a social group with which an individual does not identify". Research rooted in group theory has found that ingroup members can experience a wide range of negative emotions toward different outgroups, which can include anger, fear, disgust, envy, etc. Although political behavior has been found to be affected by several of these emotions, the research suggests that one of the most politically potent emotions is anger.

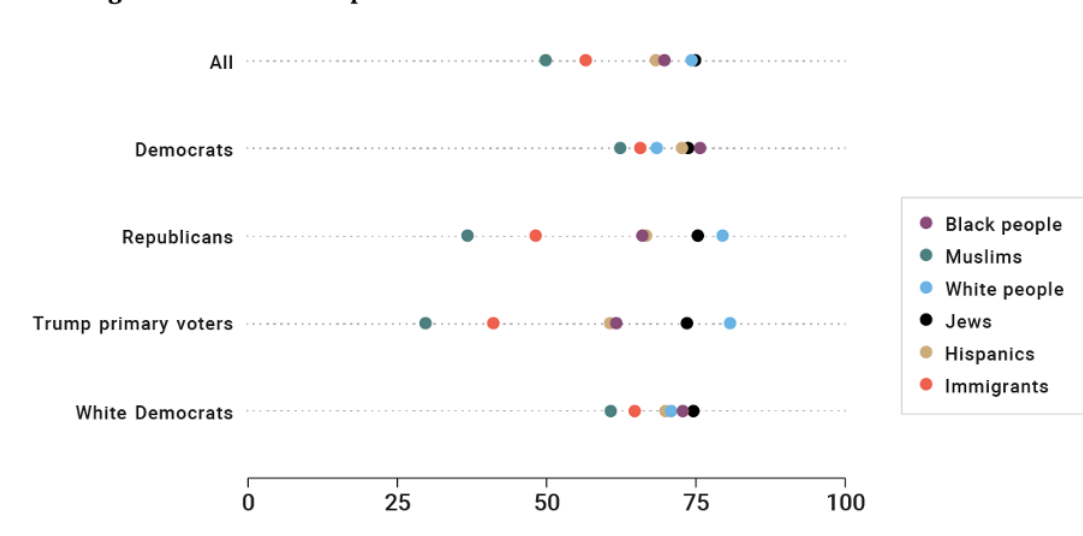


Generally, anger is triggered when an individual encounters a situation in which they feel that their goals or objectives are blocked, when they perceive they have been insulted, or when they perceive an injustice or violation of standards has occurred. Anger leads to a greater susceptibility to political misperceptions, a greater reliance on stereotypes in political decision-making, and a more punitive response as a solution. In addition, when combined with a strong sense of group identity, anger has been found to lead to an increase in political participation. When ingroup members experience outgroup-induced anger, political candidates can therefore elicit enthusiasm from angry voters by signaling to them that they are both willing and capable of implementing punitive policies targeting the outgroup, thus eliminating the source of their anger. Like anger, the generation of enthusiasm has also been found to have important effects on political decision-making. For this reason, when the behavioral effects of voter anger and enthusiasm align in the same partisan direction in a political campaign, this can have a decisive effect on the outcome.

Being Non-White: Racism and America Today

Research has suggested that whites are far more likely to hold negative attitudes toward blacks and Hispanics. This is especially likely to be the case among whites who believe that blacks and Hispanics are to blame for their lack of socioeconomic progress, or that members of these groups violate important ingroup values. The criminal stereotype of blacks in the US is an ethnic stereotype according to which African Americans, and African American males, in particular, are dangerous criminals. Opposition to immigration among whites has been fueled by narratives that characterize Latino immigrants as a cultural, economic, and security threat to white Americans. The racial resentment also stems from the idea that immigration levels will take jobs away from the people that originally belong to the country. Survey research has long documented the prevalence of negative stereotypes and hostility toward Muslims among whites, especially since 9/11. A survey conducted by the Voters Study Group aimed to study the ingroup affect towards outgroup members, using feeling thermometer scores. These scores were calculated using questions such as “Do you think the number of foreign immigrants permitted to come to the United States should be...(increased a lot -decreased a lot), “How likely is it that recent immigration levels will take jobs away from people already here... (very unlikely – very likely)”. The higher the score, the more warmth, the ingroup members display towards a particular racial group. As can be seen in the graph, the temperature scores given by Trump voters are particularly low for Muslims, Hispanics, and Black, which isn’t surprising.

Feelings About Social Groups



Conclusion

Surveys conducted after the 2016 elections suggest that the percentage of Blacks and Hispanics who voted for Trump were significantly less. Whites with less than a college education overwhelmingly supported Trump which also suggests that education level which proved to be the single strongest predictor of Trump's support is associated with racial prejudice. Hence, there is no denying that out-group hostility towards African Americans and Latino immigrants as well as Muslims has emerged as a key factor in affecting voting behavior. It filtered economic anxieties by providing target groups that could serve as scapegoats for economic and other types of anxieties in an age of globalization. It proved crucial in helping Donald Trump become the 45th President of the United States.

What can we do about it?

Racism and discrimination happen around us all the time. Often it is in the form of jokes, stereotypes or insensitive comments. If you see content on social media that you think violates guidelines, raise your voice against it, or report it to the platform. That is how President Trump got suspended from Twitter in the first place. If you witness a friend or family member saying racist or discriminatory things, talk to them, encourage them to learn more about the historical context of racial prejudice and discrimination. The first step to ending racism is to recognize its existence. We all have biases and prejudices because we have all been exposed to racist images and ideas. It is important to be aware of our own prejudices so we can choose new thought patterns and actions.

References:

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% of validated voters in 2016 who reported voting for ...

