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**Working Paper No. 40**

**THE MICRO-FOUNDATIONS OF  
ETHNIC VOTING: EVIDENCE FROM  
SOUTH AFRICA**

by Karen E. Ferree

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## THE MICRO-FOUNDATION OF ETHNIC VOTING: EVIDENCE FROM SOUTH AFRICA

### Introduction

From Lipset (1963) onward, political scientists have been pessimistic about the prospects for democracy in the context of politicized ethnicity. Ethnic divisions are said to turn elections into a census, where the size of different groups consistently drives outcomes, leading to permanent winners and losers, the subversion of the democratic process, and the resumption of authoritarian rule. And even if democracy survives, the unfailing tendency of dominant groups to support a single party may loosen the chains of accountability between voters and leaders, reducing incentives for politicians to pursue policies in the broad interest of the country. Ethnic electorates, in other words, may give their leaders too much slack, allowing them to go unpunished for poor decisions and negative outcomes.

Yet in spite of the many (typically pessimistic) predictions about the incompatibility of electoral processes and ethnicity, we lack details on precisely *how* ethnicity shapes voting behavior. We believe that ethnicity matters, but in what ways? Different answers to this question lead to different predictions about: 1) the types of persuasion strategies that are available and viable to losing parties interested in reversing their electoral fortunes; and 2) ultimately the fluidity and durability of election outcomes in ethnically polarized systems. Is change possible, or are elections an immutable function of demographics? Specifying these micro-foundations is therefore a critical step to evaluating whether the current pessimism about elections and ethnicity is warranted. Given the recent expansion (or reintroduction) of elections to countries (like those in sub-Saharan Africa) where ethnicity is a powerful political force, these issues have a certain degree of political relevance as well.

This paper explores these issues, proposing and evaluating three different hypotheses about the role of ethnicity in voting behavior. The first sees ethnic voting as a primarily expressive act, a means of aligning oneself with a broader movement/party that represents the group with which one identifies. In this instance, breakdown of voting patterns – i.e., successful persuasion attempts by previously losing parties – depends upon identity change. The second sees voting as a straightforward selection between policy options. Ethnicity works behind the scenes to align the policy preferences of group members. Here, successful persuasion involves offering a more attractive set of policies to the group, or changing the preferences of group members. The third sees the primary role of ethnicity as informational, as providing a sufficient statistic that helps voters make decisions about electoral options under conditions of uncertainty. In this instance, successful persuasion involves altering voters' beliefs about the ethnic credentials of different parties, of altering the ethnic component of party labels. Here, ethnicity is important because voters have difficulty acquiring information and evaluating parties based on policy. Thus, in the first case, the immutability of ethnic census outcomes depends on identity; in the second, on policy; and in the third, on information and beliefs. These suggest different pathways for the erosion of ethnic census outcomes.

After laying out these hypotheses, the paper tests them using data from South Africa. It finds little support for the first and second hypotheses, but considerable support for the third one.

## The Micro-Foundations of Ethnic Voting: Three Views

There are at least three different ways of theorizing the micro-foundations of ethnic voting. The first, which might be termed the *expressive voting framework*, is based on Horowitz's (1985) social psychological view of ethnic conflict. Horowitz argues that individuals in ethnically divided countries seek affirmation of self-worth through their identity as a member of a particular group. Voters derive psychic benefits (enhanced self esteem) from supporting ethnic parties because the very act of casting a vote for an ethnic party is an affirmation of identity. Thus, voting is not an act of choice, based on a rational weighing of alternatives, but an expression of allegiance to a group. When ethnic parties are available, ethnic voters naturally gravitate toward them.

For parties on the losing end of these elections, the only viable persuasion strategy is to alter the identities driving them, to activate a different and perhaps less disadvantaging set of allegiances. To the extent that parties are unable to achieve this, voting behavior is likely to be quite fixed and rigid. Elections become a rubber stamp for demographics, a mere "counting of heads." While Horowitz develops this argument the farthest, its logic drives the conclusions of many other scholars regarding the negative effects of ethnicity on democratic processes.

According to a second way of thinking about ethnic voting, which might be termed the *straight policy framework*, voting is driven not by identity but by interests. When members of groups share common interests, they are likely to arrive at similar opinions regarding policy. Therefore, voting purely on the basis of policy, these voters converge on the same electoral option. Interests within groups correlate, so policy preferences and voting behavior also correlate. In this scenario, ethnicity plays no direct role in shaping behavior. Elections may have little overt references to ethnicity. Voters may not identify in clear ways with the groups in question. Yet behavior within groups is homogenous, thus fitting the "ethnic census" description. This type of perspective informs Rabushka and Shepsle (1972), who assume that conflict between ethnic groups is driven, in part, by conflicting policy preferences: within groups, preferences are uniform but across groups they are quite polarized, hence agreement and cooperation between groups is difficult.

The implications for losing parties under the second framework are very different from those under the first framework. Under the first framework, parties bring about changes in voting behavior by inducing changes in identity. In contrast, under the second framework, parties attempt to target their policies to fit the needs of the largest groups and/or the groups needed to swing election outcomes in the opposite direction. That is, persuasion involves the manipulation of policy platforms – not questions of identity. Because policy platforms are easier for a party to change than the identifications of the mass electorate, persuasion under this scenario is likely to be easier than under the first scenario. Consequently, patterns of electoral support are likely to be less rigid.

The third way of thinking about the micro-foundations of ethnic voting, which might be termed the *informational framework*, also sees voting driven primarily by interests. However, due to the presence of uncertainty about the relationship between individual interests and policy, the link between interests and behavior is less direct and does not run through policy. Voters are unlikely to pay attention to policy if policy is not a particularly useful piece of information for predicting how different electoral outcomes will affect them. This might be the case when the salient issues of an election are primarily valence issues, preventing parties from taking differentiated stances, or when voters have difficulty ascertaining the distributional impact of different policies. Chandra (2000) suggests that in patronage oriented societies, for example, the

relevant question concerning voters is not policy stances per se, but how the various ways of implementing policies will affect different groups.

Downs (1957) and later Popkin (1991) argue that situations like this induce voters to rely on “cognitive shortcuts” – easily acquired information that helps voters decide which options are most likely to benefit them in the future. For Downs, the primary informational shortcut is party ideology. Popkin widens the concept to include a large array of possibilities. In the Gerald Ford and the tamale story, for example, a candidate’s familiarity (or lack thereof) with a constituency’s food functions as a cue about his or her intentions vis-à-vis that group: his/her likelihood of favoring it if given the chance, his/her familiarity with its issues and concerns, and the priority he/she will give it when facing distributional questions.

Electoral uncertainty and the reliance on informational cues are general notions, applicable to elections in many different contexts, ethnic and otherwise. Ethnicity is, however, likely to affect the types of cues that voters privilege. If people believe that group membership has a large impact on individual prospects, then group-based cues (cues that indicate how a particular option is likely to affect different groups) are likely to be highly informative and valuable to individual voters. Furthermore, it is likely to be easier to collect information on the probable impact of different electoral options on groups as opposed to individuals. Thus, group cues are both informative and easy to acquire. Individuals are therefore likely to privilege them over the wide array of other types of cues out there.

Beliefs that group prospects and individual prospects correlate arise for a number of different reasons. Numerous historical processes could plausibly generate such beliefs. Colonialism, for example, divided people into groups and allocated access to economic resources, political power, educational opportunities, and jobs according to membership in them. Invidious political systems such as apartheid and Jim Crow created powerful barriers to economic and political advancement based on skin color. Patronage systems in American cities doled out benefits to individuals according to group membership. Affirmative action programs reward access to state aid based on group membership. It would be quite reasonable for individuals in any of these systems to believe that their personal situations depend greatly on the group they belong to and how that group is treated. And such beliefs may not spring from purely economic circumstances. When justice, for example, is differentially distributed according to group categorization, this is also likely to create and reinforce the link between individual and group circumstances. Thus, economic circumstances within a group might vary significantly, but if everyone in the group is subject to unwarranted arrest and prosecution (“driving while black” issues in the United States, for example) or random and frequent acts of violence simply because they are members of the group, this internal economic variation may be insignificant in shaping beliefs.<sup>1</sup>

In general, when rewards and punishments are based on group membership and individuals have difficulty moving between relevant groups (“passing” themselves off as a member of a different group), it is likely that individuals come to believe that their life chances depend on how well their group is doing. Political and cultural entrepreneurs that help connect individual experiences with those of a broader group may assist in developing these beliefs. On the whole, the creation of beliefs connecting individuals to groups (and particular groups) is likely to occur over time, to reflect material and political circumstances, and to be helped along by agents who benefit from their adoption.

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<sup>1</sup> See Dawson (1994) and Bates (2002) for similar perspectives.



It is possible (even likely) that beliefs about the correlation between individual and group situations vary across contexts – in one context, a particular group identity may be believed to matter significantly in shaping individual prospects but to not matter at all in other contexts. Furthermore, multiple group identities may correlate with individual prospects, with different contexts highlighting different relationships. In other words, this perspective is not opposed to constructivist insights that identity responds to context, even though it is geared not at identity per se, but at beliefs about the relationship between individuals and groups. Regardless of which group “matters” in a particular context, however, the point is that voters use group based information to help them understand how different electoral options affect their future prospects and vote accordingly.

Thus, to the extent that ethnic divisions correspond with beliefs that individual and group fates are heavily intertwined (and this might not be the case in all ethnically heterogeneous countries), then voters should find ethnic cues highly informative. Under situations of uncertainty, when policy is not particularly useful, voters are likely to pay close attention to ethnic information such as the ethnic reputation or credentials of different candidates and parties. Ethnicity should therefore be a significant component of party labels; voters should make evaluations of which groups a party supports and does not support. Furthermore, this information should play a key role in guiding their voting behavior.

Under the informational voting scenario, losing parties have two different options. First, they can attempt to alter beliefs about the correlations between individual and various group prospects. In essence, they can try to persuade voters that their interests do not lie with Group X, they lie with some other group, or they do not depend on group identity at all. To the extent that there is ambiguity or uncertainty about the link between individual prospects and different groups, parties may find success with this strategy. A second, perhaps more viable, strategy is to attempt to alter their own ethnic credentials – to transform their reputation with regard to various groups. Thus, if Party Y decides that winning over Group X will significantly alter its electoral chances, it attempts to present itself as a party that is friendly with Group X, a party that will look out for the interests of Group X in the long run.

In both of these different electoral strategies, *persuasion involves altering beliefs and expectations*, not manipulating identity or policy. The probability of these forms of persuasion paying off depends on two factors: first, the strength of voters’ existing beliefs (in Bayesian terms, their “priors”); and second, the ability of parties to produce information that contradicts these priors, causing them to generate new, updated beliefs that are different from their old ones. The stronger the prior beliefs and the more difficult it is for parties to produce information that contradicts them, the harder it is for them to change the beliefs and expectations guiding behavior.

It is worth highlighting the differences between the third approach and the first two. The first approach, the expressive voting framework, emphasizes the importance of identity. It is identity and the desire to express it that drives voting decisions. Therefore, a person must actively identify with a group in order for ethnicity to drive their behavior. Furthermore, they should clearly identify a party as “belonging” to their group before they vote for it, a factor that would seem to reduce the likelihood of multiethnic coalitions. In contrast, in the informational voting framework, identity and identification are not the relevant factors shaping behavior, interests are. A person may not actively identify with a particular group, but if they believe their personal fate is tied up with that of the group, they may nevertheless find group cues helpful pieces of information for making decisions under uncertainty. Thus, ethnicity can play an important role in elections *even in the absence of wide-scale ethnic identification*. In other words,

identification is necessary for the first framework to hold, but not for the third one. Furthermore, in the third scenario shifts in ethnic identification matter far less than changes in beliefs about correlation between individual and group prospects. Finally, though individuals should maintain information about the ethnic credentials of parties, there is no requirement that these credentials link parties exclusively to one group.

The second approach, the straight policy voting framework, and the third approach share a common emphasis on interests over identity, but they differ in the pathway they identify between interests and voting. For the second approach, the pathway runs in a straightforward way through policy. For the third approach, ethnic cues act as a sort of “sufficient statistic” helping voters link interests with electoral options. Such voters may ignore policy altogether, not because they are emotional or acting according to expressive motivations, but because they do not find policy a useful predictor of their future welfare. Thus, a major difference between the first and second approaches is the addition of uncertainty into the voting decision. More subtly, the second and third approaches differ in their conception of the homogeneity of interests within groups. The second approach argues that homogeneous interests results in homogeneous behavior. The third approach emphasizes the importance of beliefs. People must have the perception that their boat rises or falls with their group identity. This belief may or may not be accurate, though out-of-equilibrium beliefs (those that sharply contradict material reality) are unlikely to persist for long.

The three hypotheses also differ substantially in the types of persuasion strategies they view as available to losing parties. The expressive voting framework suggests that losing parties must alter the matrix of identity in the population if they wish to alter voting patterns. As this is likely to be a difficult and long-term process and it is unclear whether or not parties (as opposed to other types of political entrepreneurs) are the best situated to initiate these kinds of changes, persuasion is likely to be difficult under this scenario and patterns of support are likely to be rigid. In contrast, the pure policy voting framework sees persuasion as simply a function of coming up with a more attractive set of policies. It is therefore quite optimistic about the prospects for losing parties to alter their electoral circumstances. Finally, for the informational voting framework, persuasion involves manipulating beliefs and preferences. The success of persuasion depends on how sticky these beliefs and preferences are and the opportunities for parties to present information that contradicts them.

### **Testing the Three Approaches Using South African Data**

The theoretical questions raised in this paper have played out in empirical debates about the nature of voting in South Africa. To date, South Africa has had two rounds of national elections (1994 and 1999) and two rounds of local elections (1995 and 2000). During these elections, race has been an overwhelming predictor of voting behavior for both white and African voters (who together comprise nearly 90 percent of the voting age population) – so much so that South African elections are frequently described as a “racial census.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> A word on terminology: I use race here in the same way that I used ethnicity in the earlier theoretical section: to mean an ascriptive group category. In the South African context, race refers to the broad division of the population into four racial groups (Africans, whites, coloureds, and Indians), while ethnicity refers to ethno-linguistic groups that divide the white and African racial categories. Thus, whites divide into two groups (English and Afrikaans speakers) and Africans divide into a large number of sub-groups (Xhosa, Zulu, Pedi, Tswana, and so on). This nested (as opposed to cross-cutting) cleavage pattern is common in many areas of Africa (Scarritt and Mozaffar, 1999). With a few exceptions, ethnicity has *not* been predictive of voting behavior in South Africa, while race has. For this reason, I refer to the South African outcome as a “racial” as opposed to an “ethnic” census. But the same theoretical reasoning applies.

It is not difficult to see why. As shown by Tables 1 and 2<sup>3</sup>, two parties, the African National Congress (ANC) and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) have attracted the vast majority of African votes during both major national elections. Of these two, the ANC is by far the most dominant: all of the IFP's vote is concentrated in one (of nine) provinces (KwaZulu-Natal) and pulled from only one ethnic group (Zulus).<sup>4</sup> Practically speaking, the ANC is the only game in town for African voters in most parts of South Africa. At the same time, a different set of parties attracts the great majority of white votes: the National Party (now the New National Party or NNP), the Democratic Party (DP), and a handful of more conservative right-wing parties like the Freedom Front (FF) and the Conservative Party (CP). In 1994, the NNP was the largest of these; in 1999, it had been superseded by the DP.

**Table 1: 1994 Reported Vote by Race (percent)**

	<b>Africans</b>	<b>Whites</b>	<b>Coloureds</b>	<b>Indians</b>
<b>“White” Parties</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>50</b>
Democratic Party	0	10	0	0
National Party	4	66	67	50
Other White	0	14	0	0
<b>“African” Parties</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>42</b>
African National Congress	81	2	28	25
Inkatha Freedom Party	8	7	0	17
Other African	2	0	0	0
<b>Other</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>

Table based on data reported in Reynolds (1994).

**Table 2: 1999 Reported Vote By Race (percent)**

	<b>Africans</b>	<b>Whites</b>	<b>Coloureds</b>	<b>Indians</b>
<b>“White” Parties</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>34</b>
Democratic Party	1	57	6	18
National Party	2	16	34	16
Other White	0	8	0	0
<b>“African” Parties</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>30</b>
African National Congress	82	5	60	30
Inkatha Freedom Party	11	0	0	0
Other African	2	0	0	0
<b>Other</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>36</b>

Table based on data reported in Reynolds (1999).

These tables make it abundantly clear that whites and Africans do not support the same parties in South Africa. In an example of clear racial polarization, Africans consistently avoid voting for the set of parties favored by whites, and whites consistently avoid voting for the set of parties favored by Africans. Thus, by knowing that a person is African or white, you can make a very clear prediction about who they will *not* vote for. And if they are African and live outside of KwaZulu-Natal, you can be virtually certain that they supported the ANC. For these groups, then, race is extremely predictive of voting behavior.

<sup>3</sup> These are guestimates based on data in Reynolds (1994 and 1999). The specific numbers should be treated as provisional, especially for coloured and Indian voters. However, the broad patterns identified in the table are quite reliable.

<sup>4</sup> The IFP wins around half the Zulu vote in KwaZulu-Natal. The other half of the Zulu vote goes to the ANC. This is one of the few examples of ethnicity emerging in South African voting behavior – though, it should be noted that, because ethnicity nests within race, the ethnic pattern does not contradict the wider racial one – Zulu supporters of the IFP still conform to the broader pattern of racial polarization.

For the other two racial groups, coloureds and Indians, race is much less predictive of voting behavior. Generally speaking, these groups have split their votes across the parties supported by whites (in short-hand, white parties) and the parties supported by Africans (in short-hand, African parties). The exact breakdown has varied from election to election, but the overall lack of polarization has remained constant. For coloureds, no exclusively “coloured” party currently exists, though there have been examples in the past (Behrens, 1989). Indians do have the choice of supporting an exclusively “Indian” party (the Minority Front) but have not opted to do so in majority numbers.

These broad patterns – polarization between white and Africans, cross-racial voting by coloureds and Indians – have appeared in every election in South Africa since 1994. They also consistently emerge in mass surveys. There is therefore little controversy that, as a *descriptive* term, the racial census applies well to South Africa, at least for white and African voters, who make up the vast majority of the electorate.

However, as Mattes (1995) points out, the aggregate correlation between racial group membership and voting tells us little about the *causal* relationship between these variables. In fact, there has been significant controversy over whether these patterns result from identity voting (i.e., framework one) or are more reflective of interests, particularly policy preferences (framework two). These two different options are sometimes juxtaposed as “emotional” voting versus “rational” or interest-based voting. Evidence for either framework has not been especially persuasive. On the one hand, patterns of racial identification in South Africa are far more ambiguous than patterns of voting would suggest (Mattes, 1995). On the other hand, race plays a clear and undeniable role in election campaigns, and parties fail to distinguish themselves in terms of policy (Lodge, 1999).

Confronting this apparent impasse, Mattes has suggested that, because apartheid structured interests and perceptions of interests along racial lines, race has come to operate in South Africa as a sort of cue, as an “informational shortcut which serves to tell voters where their interests lie” (1995:11). Thus, the racial patterns of voting observed in South Africa do not indicate irrational, emotional identity voting, but conscious calculation and choice in the face of uncertainty. This notion clearly resonates with the argument in framework three regarding informational voting.

The following sections of this paper use data from several surveys to evaluate evidence for each of the three hypotheses, in some case replicating earlier analyses, while in other instances proposing new tests. The informational framework in particular has not been subject to significant testing, so much of the effort will be focused on it.

### ***Framework One: Expressive Voting***

There are three implications that flow from the expressive voting framework. First, because white and African voters fit the “racial census” pattern most clearly, racial identities should be prevalent in these groups. After all, identification is necessary in order for expressive voting to make any sense. Therefore, racial identification must be very high if it is a major force behind the polarization patterns in South Africa. Furthermore, Africans and whites who hold racial identities should be more likely to conform to the racial voting pattern than Africans or whites who do not hold these identities. And finally, African and white voters should have clear views of certain parties as “belonging” to them, as being *exclusive representatives* of their racial group. To the extent that these conjectures do not get support in the data, doubt is cast on the expressive voting framework.

Looking first at the prevalence of racial identities, two separate surveys (one from 1994 and one from 1996) provide insight into this issue. The 1994 survey, conducted by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (*Idasa*),<sup>5</sup> assessed self-ascribed membership to communal groups by asking: “In terms of culture, history, and language, do you consider you belong to a distinctive community (with its own distinctive culture and history)?” Overall, 64 percent responded in the affirmative. Indians displayed the highest number of affirmative answers (88 percent), followed by whites (80 percent), Africans (56 percent), and coloureds (41 percent).<sup>6</sup>

The survey followed up affirmative answers with the open-ended question: “If yes, which community?” Just over half (52 percent) of the responses to this question evoked a racial category. Broken down by race, Africans were the least likely (41 percent) to provide a racial category, followed by whites (61 percent), Indians (71 percent), and coloureds (73 percent). Africans who did not provide a racial category were most likely to provide an ethnic one (47 percent). This was also true of whites (31 percent). Putting the two questions together shows that just under one-quarter of African respondents believed they were part of a distinct racial community. Around three in ten coloureds held this opinion, as did close to half of the white respondents, and almost two-thirds of the Indian respondents. These results confirm and replicate the results in Mattes (1995) and suggest that racial identifications are *not* overwhelming in the South African electorate – especially amongst Africans.

**Table 3: 1994 Patterns of Identification (percent)**

	<b>Africans</b>	<b>Whites</b>	<b>Coloureds</b>	<b>Indians</b>
Belong to a Distinct Community	56	80	41	88
Belong to a Distinct <i>Racial</i> Community	23	49	30	62

Source: *Idasa 1994 Survey*

Additional confirmation for this observation comes from a survey conducted in 1996 by James Gibson and Amanda Gouws.<sup>7</sup> Respondents were prompted with an extensive list of possible communal identifications (23 in total, plus an “other” category) and then asked which option best described them. Even in this format, which puts more pressure on the respondent to select a communal identity, racial responses were not overwhelming. Africans were the most likely to pick a racial identity, but fewer than half did so. Only 5 percent of whites chose this option, while around one-third of coloured and Indian voters opted for it. Table 4 shows a condensed version of the data. Ethnic and religious responses were also popular. While these numbers are substantially different from those that come out of the *Idasa* 1994 survey (perhaps reflecting the different question wordings), they provide no evidence that racial identifications predominate in South Africa. If anything, they suggest significant *diversity* of identifications,

<sup>5</sup> The 1994 survey (known as the *Idasa* National Election Study, 1994) was nationally representative and interviewed 2517 voters between 26 August and 16 September 1994. The surveys were conducted in the language of the respondent in semi-structured interviews. The principle investigators were Dr Robert Mattes (University Of Cape Town), Dr Amanda Gouws, (University of Stellenbosch), Dr Wilmot James (*Idasa*), and Prof Hennie Kotze (University of Stellenbosch) and the research was funded by USAID. For more information, see *Idasa* National Election Study 1994, Codebook.

<sup>6</sup> It’s interesting to note that considerable numbers of respondents were uncertain about their response to this question – 15% of Africans, 9% of whites, and 22% of coloureds responded that they did not know if they were a member of a distinct community. Indians had no uncertainty with regard to the question.

<sup>7</sup> The Gibson/Gouws survey was nationally representative and interviewed 2557 respondents between April 1, 1996 and June 14, 1996. The surveys were conducted by highly trained interviewers in the language of the respondent. For more information, see Gibson and Gouws (2002).

including some, such as religion, which find no reflection in voting patterns. All told, the data from these two separate surveys suggest that identity is *not* driving the behavior of large numbers of South African voters.

**Table 4: 1996 Patterns of Identification (percent)**

Primary Identity is:	Africans	Whites	Coloureds	Indians
Racial	45	5	32	28
Ethnic	32	38	-	-
Religious	3	22	27	38
South African	19	28	30	31
Other	1	7	11	3

Source: Gibson and Gouws 1996 Survey

Tables five and six explore a second cut on the expressive voting framework, examining whether or not racial identifiers behave differently than non-racial identifiers. If the expressive voting framework is correct, then there should be a negative correlation between cross-over voting and being a racial identifier: those who vote across racial lines should be less likely to identify racially than those who do not.

The evidence from tables five and six is somewhat contradictory. For Africans, there is little evidence that racial identification prohibits cross-over voting. If anything, the relationship runs in the opposite direction. Table 5 presents a cross-tab of African racial identification versus support for white parties (NP, DP, and FF). It shows that propensity to identify as African is actually *higher* for cross-over voters relative to non-cross-over voters.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 5: African Identification and Support for White Parties among African Respondents**

	Do Not Identify as African	Identify as African
Do not support white parties	823 76%	259 24%
Support white parties	26 61%	17 40%

Pearson  $\chi^2(1) = 5.9895$   $Pr = 0.014$

Source: Idasa 1994.

For white respondents, on the other hand, racial identification does appear negatively correlated with cross-over voting. Table 6 shows a cross-tab of white racial identification versus support for the ANC. As expected by the expressive voting hypothesis, whites who engage in cross-over voting by supporting the ANC are less likely to identify as white than whites who do not cross-over.<sup>9</sup>

**Table 6: White Identification and Support for the ANC among White Respondents**

	Do Not Identify as White	Identify as White
Do not support the ANC	260 48%	278 52%
Support the ANC	11 79%	3 21%

Pearson  $\chi^2(1) = 4.9941$   $Pr = 0.025$

Source: Idasa 1994.

<sup>8</sup> This result holds even if the sample is restricted to exclude KwaZulu-Natal, so it is not simply an artifact of non-racial identifiers who support the IFP.

<sup>9</sup> These results persist if “African parties” are used instead of the ANC. The ANC is the only African party of an weight in all areas of South Africa except KwaZulu-Natal, so for most whites, it represents the only real alternative for cross-over voting.

These tests, though simple, do provide some support for the expressive voting framework – at least for white voters. It should be emphasized, however, that, because so few respondents break the polarization pattern (only 3 percent of African respondents indicated support for white parties, while only two percent of white respondents indicated support for African parties) the patterns revealed in the cross-tabs are being generated by a very small (and perhaps unusual) set of individuals.

A final cut at the identification framework involves looking at how voters think about the parties they are supporting. As Mattes (1995) has suggested, if voting is an expression of identity, then voters should clearly connect the party they are supporting with their identity group. Furthermore, multi-ethnic (in South Africa, multi-racial) coalitions should be less desirable because they are not exclusive representatives of a specific group (unless, of course, the multi-group identity is the one with which people identify). If the pattern of polarization in South Africa is driven by identity expression, then African voters should see the ANC as an “African party” and whites should see the DP and NP (NNP) as “white” parties.

The 1994 *Idasa* Survey and its companion survey in 1999<sup>10</sup> tap into these issues through a series of questions about the exclusivity of different parties. For all of the major parties, the surveys ask: “Do you think that [party x] looks after the interests of all in South Africa or after the interests of one group only?” The response options are: “All,” “Only One Group,” and “Do Not Know Enough About Them.” In 1994, the question was followed up with a second one asking respondents who answered “Only One Group” to indicate which group they associated with the party. Table 7 shows Africans’ evaluations of the ANC, while Table 8 and 9 show whites’ evaluations of the NP (NNP) and DP.

**Table 7: Africans’ View of the ANC (percent)**

<b>The ANC represents:</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1999</b>
All South Africans	91	98
Only One Group	3	2
Do Not Know	5	1

Source: *Idasa 1994, Opinion '99*

The African data are extremely clear: *fewer than five percent* of Africans in each survey viewed the ANC as an exclusive party. Furthermore, for the handful of Africans who viewed the ANC as exclusive, they largely associated it either with Xhosas (34%) or its “own supporters” (47%). Only 7 African respondents (out of a total of 1379) associated the party with Africans.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the data are unambiguous on this point: African voters do not see the ANC as an “African” party.

<sup>10</sup> The 1998 survey (known as *Opinion '99*) was conducted in four series. This chapter uses Series I, which involved 2200 interviews and was in the field 1-30 September 1998. In-home, face-to-face interviews were conducted by trained fieldworkers using a structured questionnaire in the language preferred by the respondent. *Opinion '99* was sponsored by a consortium composed of the South African Broadcasting Company (SABC), the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa), and Markinor (Pty) Ltd. (a polling organization). See *Opinion '99: Technical Background*, from [http://www.idasa.org.za/pos/op99/op99\\_tech.htm](http://www.idasa.org.za/pos/op99/op99_tech.htm).

<sup>11</sup> These follow up questions on who the party represents if it is viewed as exclusive are, at the moment, available only for the 1994 data.

**Table 8: Whites' View of the NP (percent)**

<b>The NP represents:</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1999</b>
All South Africans	79	60
Only One Group	12	28
Do Not Know	9	12

Source: Idasa 1994, *Opinion '99*

**Table 9: Whites' View of the DP (percent)**

<b>The DP represents:</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1999</b>
All South Africans	60	73
Only One Group	9	16
Do Not Know	30	11

Source: Idasa 1994, *Opinion '99*

For whites, a similar (if less stark) pattern emerges. In both 1994 and 1999, a majority of whites viewed the NP (NNP) as a party that represented all South Africans. The same was true for the DP. Interestingly, the NP appears to be becoming more exclusive in the minds of whites, even as it loses votes, while the opposite has happened to the DP. Furthermore, the whites who viewed these parties as exclusive did not tend to see race as the basis for this exclusivity. Fewer than half of the white respondents who saw the NP as exclusive associated it with whites, opting almost as often for “Afrikaners” or “own supporters” instead of the racial label. A similar situation applied to the DP: less than half of the handful of respondents who saw the party as exclusive associated it with whites – giving a total of 29 out of 664 white respondents identifying the DP as a white party. Thus, very few white voters considered the NP (NNP) and DP to be “white” parties. Combined with the African evidence, these results confirm Mattes (1995) analysis and provide little evidence that the primary parties in South Africa are viewed by their supporters as racial champions.

In sum, the expressive voting framework does not get much support in the data. A multiplicity of identities exists in South Africa. Race is one of these identities, indeed an important one, but it is not predominant enough to explain the near uniformity of racially polarized voting exhibited by whites and Africans. Furthermore, though racial identifiers do behave differently than non-identifiers, identification only appears to drive polarized voting for whites; for Africans, the effect is opposite. Finally, neither whites nor Africans view the parties they support as exclusive representatives of their racial groups. Altogether, then, the need to express an identity does not appear to drive the broad pattern of racially polarized voting in South Africa. To be sure, some fraction of the electorate could be motivated by these goals. But most people are not.

### **Framework Two: Pure Policy Voting**

If identity voting is not driving the pattern of racially polarized voting, then what is? A frequently posed alternative to “emotional” identity voting is “rational” policy voting. That is, voters weigh parties according to the package of policies they endorse, and then select the package (party) closest to them – i.e., the spatial voting model. This model could explain racially polarized voting if underlying policy preferences are homogeneous within groups yet polarized across them. Under this scenario, the racial credentials of parties should play little role in shaping voters’ beliefs about parties or their voting behavior, and policy, not race, should figure prominently in racial campaigns. Believing that South African democracy will not be fully consolidated until policy considerations drive voting, scholars of South African elections have eagerly combed data looking for evidence of this. However, they have not had much luck finding it. Two different observations point in this direction.



First, as Johnson and Schlemmer (1996) note, political attitudes within racial constituencies have tended to be quite diverse and heterogeneous, indeed, sometimes even contradictory. This is particularly true for the African electorate. Within this electorate, both radical/progressive views and moderate/conservative ones are well represented in survey responses. It is consequently difficult to argue that policy preferences are homogeneous within racial groups.

Second, there is little evidence of polarization in preferences across groups, at least in terms of the most politically salient issues of the day. This point is most relevant vis-à-vis African and white voters, who conform most strongly to the voting polarization pattern. Presumably, if policy preferences drive the polarization in voting, then whites and Africans should display sharp differences of opinion with regard to issues deemed important. However, by most accounts, African and white policy preferences do not radically diverge.

On one hand, whites and Africans (indeed, all South Africans) seem to be in agreement over what issues are most important for the country: unemployment and crime. Thus, the *Opinion '99* survey found that these two problems are consistently ranked as the top two by all South Africans, regardless of race. Whites place a higher emphasis on crime, Africans a higher emphasis on jobs, but both groups consistently list these problems as the two most pressing facing the country. The authors of *Opinion '99* consequently argue that, “in contrast to common wisdom, there is no lack of a national consensus with regard to priorities for government action. All South Africans are in general agreement over the key problems facing the country, despite differences of race, wealth, class or gender.” (Idasa, 1998: 2)

Of course, agreeing about the issues is not the same as agreeing about how to deal with them. Policy preferences can obviously differ along an issue dimension, so convergence on the issues does indicate an absence of policy polarization. However, both unemployment and crime are *valence* issues: less is better for everyone. It is not the case that whites want more unemployment and Africans want less. Everyone wants less unemployment because it will ease social tensions in the country. Similarly, lower crime rates will benefit all South Africans, not just one group. Therefore, sharp principled disagreements over these issues are unlikely to arise. Furthermore, unemployment and crime do not force trade-offs: resources devoted to one do not necessarily take resources from the other. Reducing unemployment is likely to reduce crime and fighting crime can create jobs. Thus, it is hard to read conflict into the differing ranks whites and Africans place on the issues. In fact, it is difficult to read policy polarization in these preferences at all. And, not surprisingly, party stances on issues did not differ substantially. After doing an extensive analysis of party manifestos, Lodge (1999: 108) concluded that: “What was striking about most of the policy proposals published by the different parties was the degree of ideological convergence they represented.”

To be sure, there are distributional overtones to issues like crime and jobs. One suspects that parties will address these problems in ways that will have differential impacts on groups. However, the distributional implications of different policies are not obvious. It is difficult to compare the ANC’s plan for dealing with crime with the DP’s and say that one unambiguously favors one group and the other unambiguously favors a different group. The differences are subtle, in the technical details, and it is difficult for policy analysts, much less average voters, to understand what their impacts will be for different groups. Thus, though there may be distributional overtones to the issues, these are difficult for voters to identify on the basis of the policies alone.

Finally, it is important to note that there are policy issues that have far clearer distributional implications: affirmative action, for example. At least for whites and Africans, the likely losers and winners of such policies are fairly clear. Land redistribution policy and taxes are examples that might fall into this category. However, affirmative action and land redistribution are consistently ranked extremely low on the list of priorities by survey respondents (in 1999, only 1 percent of survey respondents cited affirmative action as an important problem, 1 percent named land redistribution, and 2 percent identified taxes; all are essentially non-issues).<sup>12</sup> Consequently, though opinions may be divided on these policies, they are not issues that drive public opinion or, presumably, voting.

For these reasons, then, it is difficult to argue that policy differences account for the pattern of polarization observed in South Africa: political attitudes within groups are diverse, embracing a wide range of opinions, and there is little evidence of policy preference polarization between whites and Africans. If anything, these two groups seem to agree that the primary policies of any South African government should be more jobs and less crime.

### ***Framework Three: Information Voting***

Faced with negative evidence on both expressive voting and policy voting, many South African scholars have thrown up their hands, suggesting that “no firm conclusions” can be drawn about the role of race in elections (Lodge, 1999: 74). While the expressive voting framework has problems, it is difficult to dismiss the clear and obvious role that race plays in election campaigns, the strong patterns of polarized voting, and the apparent absence of strong policy differences between white and African voters. For most observers of these elections, it is clear that race is more than an epiphenomenal tracing of interests through policy preferences. But what then is its role?

Mattes (1995) and Mattes, Taylor, and Africa (1999) have made important contributions to defining the role of race in elections, suggesting that it acts as an informational shortcut that helps voters determine credibility, competency, and trustworthiness. Lacking information on policy or how different parties are likely to perform in office, factors like “skin colour, language, accent, who is leaving or joining a party, what like-minded people feel or say, and whether a candidate appears to know and understand their culture and what their problems are” become important in shaping voters’ views of parties (1999: 51). These insights clearly pertain to Framework Three, i.e., race as information.

In order for Framework Three to be applicable to South Africa, however, certain conditions need to hold. First, there must be considerable uncertainty over the future effects of policies, in particular, their distributional impact on different groups. And second, individuals in South Africa should believe that group identity, specifically racial identity, shapes their prospects as individuals. If the first condition fails, there is little reason for people to use cues. If the second condition fails, there is little reason for people to privilege racial cues over others.

The applicability of the first condition has already been dealt with in the previous section. Because of the nature of the issues facing South Africa today (unemployment, crime) and the fact that clear, differentiated solutions do not currently exist for them, it is difficult for South Africans to understand how the policies proposed by different parties are likely to affect them down the road and which set of policies is best. For these reasons, policy is not a particularly helpful piece of information for South African voters. Therefore, they are likely to rely on other types of information when making electoral decisions.

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<sup>12</sup> See Taylor and Mattes (1999), p.2.

The second condition is the more complex of the two. As the data presented in earlier sections showed, race is not the only relevant identity in South Africa. Religion and ethnicity (particularly ethnicity) also emerge as important in surveys. Why then, should South Africans specifically privilege *racial* information? And shouldn't the usefulness of cues depend on context, as argued earlier?

There are three reasons why, in the context relevant to national and provincial elections in South Africa, individuals are likely to connect individual prospects with racial categorization. The first reason is historical. Race, more than any other type of identity in South Africa, has been a driving force shaping individual interests for more than a century. In many ways, apartheid was a four (plus) decade long lesson that what racial group you belonged to mattered far more than anything you achieved or any qualities that you had as an individual. Under apartheid, most of life's consequential rights, abilities and choices depended on racial classification: the ability to own land, move freely around the country, and acquire occupational training and/or education; the right to vote and freely join political associations; the area where one lived; the jobs one performed and the wages they earned; and one's choice of spouse and sexual partner. This classification was strict and difficult to evade: individuals were explicitly designated with a racial identity, and passing between racial classifications was difficult.

In contrast, individual prospects were less firmly linked to ethnic identity. While the apartheid state acknowledged and indeed promoted internal differences within racial groups, prospects within these groups varied less than prospects between them. Perhaps the largest example of state efforts to promote intra-ethnic differences was its homelands policies. These policies created separate, ethnically homogeneous homelands for each African ethnic group (as defined by the state), and a goal of homelands policies was to reify and strengthen ethnic divisions between Africans. However, while reserving separate land for different groups, *the state did little to promote competition* between them. Perhaps the very fact that groups had their own territory complicated efforts to generate conflict. Whatever the reason, Zulus did not receive better facilities and educational opportunities than Xhosa; Xhosa were not better treated than Pedi, and so on. The differences in opportunities offered by the state to Africans versus coloureds or Indians *dwarfed* the differences in opportunities offered by the state to different African groups. Thus, while the state may have desired to promote divisions within racial groups (i.e., ethnic divisions) as well as between them, its legislation was far more successful with the later task.

This presents an interesting contrast to colonial states elsewhere in Africa. Numerous studies have shown how colonial administrations in Africa privileged certain ethnic groups over others, and how this privileging has shaped current patterns of ethnic conflict in modern politics. Apartheid South Africa, compared to these colonial states, emerges as an extremely clumsy and ineffective generator of intra-African competition.

Thus, race has historically been an extremely important indicator of interests in South Africa, while ethnicity has not. This may change over time, as groups become more internally differentiated, but there is little to suggest that it has changed yet.

The second reason race matters involves the geography of elections and the distribution of ethnic groups in South Africa. As noted earlier, beliefs about which groups matter can shift according to context. In a context where everyone belongs to the same racial group, then race ceases to shape variation in individual prospects and sub-racial distinctions may emerge as more important. Thus, a person might believe that race matters most at the national level, but some

other categorization (ethnicity perhaps) matters more in the local arena. Thus, voters may use racial cues in a national election, but ethnic cues in a local one.

South Africa is unusual, however, in that shifting from national to provincial or local context does not reduce the significance of race as a predictor of interests. This is the case because most provinces are more racially than ethnically diverse. African ethnic groups are geographically concentrated such that, with few exceptions, provinces are the exclusive domain of one specific ethnic group. Most provincial populations therefore consist of one ethnically homogeneous block of Africans, a block of whites, and (sometimes) a block of Indians and/or coloureds. Consequently, local racial competition is ubiquitous in South Africa, while local ethnic competition is actually quite rare. In most parts of the country, there is little sense that the interests of different ethnic groups are opposed to one another or that the interests of individuals in ethnic groups are fundamentally circumscribed by their ethnic – as opposed to racial – categorization. Thus, in the arenas that matter for electoral competition, ethnicity does not predict interests independently of race.

In addition to history and geography, a third factor, the logic of political competition, tends to reinforce these beliefs. With Africans forming three-quarters of the electorate, African leaders have strong incentives to underline the importance of race because it is an easy way to coordinate a majority. Although these politicians have not created racialized beliefs out of thin air, they have few incentives to try and change them. And, as they are the politicians with the power in current South African politics, this helps to stabilize and reify in voters' minds the importance of race as the prime shaper of individual prospects.

In sum, history, geography, and politics work together to equate in peoples' minds individual interests with racial (as opposed to ethnic) group identity. For this reason, race is likely to act as a useful summary statistic for individual interests – *at least in the context of national and provincial elections*. Where ethnic groups do compete with one another and people develop a sense that ethnic categorization matters, that the interests of ethnic groups are fundamentally opposed to each other, then ethnicity is likely to emerge as an important cue. This is not the case for most current elections in South Africa, however. Thus, racial cues are likely to be very important in shaping opinions about parties.

Furthermore, these cues can be useful even if individuals do not actively identify in racial terms. Ethnic identity – or religious identity – may matter more to a person in terms of how they think about the world, who they want to marry, who they associate with, how they answer survey questions, and so on, yet racial cues may still be very valuable when trying to make sense of electoral choices. For these reasons, a person may vote with their racial group, but not identify with it. In many ways, identity is irrelevant for voting choices.

All told, then, there are good reasons to believe that race functions as a sort of “summary statistic” for South Africans. South Africans should be inclined to see race as an important and useful cue when making electoral choices. If this is true, then we should expect two things to hold. First, voters should have clear views of the racial credentials of parties, i.e., which groups the parties do and do not represent. Voters may not all hold the same beliefs about the racial credentials of parties (indeed these should vary both across and within groups), but they should hold racialized impressions of some kind. Second, a voter's beliefs about who a party represents (or does not represent) should affect his or her impressions of its credibility and trustworthiness, as well as voting behavior.

On the first point, it is useful to return to the question of party exclusivity. When evaluating the expressive voting framework, analysis of data from the 1994 *Idasa* survey and *Opinion '99* revealed that Africans overwhelmingly view the ANC as representative of all South Africans, while whites hold similar opinions of the DP and NNP (Tables 7-9). One interpretation of this data is that racial credentials have little impact on voting: whites and Africans universally support parties they do not believe are champions of their groups. So where is the racial story? Do South Africans view their parties in racial terms at all?

A slightly different cut on the data reveals important nuances. Table 10 extends Table 7 to show how all racial groups view the ANC. While it is clear that Africans view the party as inclusive, *whites largely see it as exclusive*, representing only one group (especially in 1999). Coloureds are much more split on this issue – in 1994, slightly more than half (of those who answered the question) believed the party represented all South Africans; in 1999, slightly less than half believed this. Indians are also split on the issue, but less so than coloureds. Furthermore, according to the follow-up question that examined the nature of this exclusivity, non-African respondents who saw the party as exclusive tended to view its exclusivity in specifically *racial* terms. Thus, whites had a strong tendency to associate it with Africans (85 percent), as did coloureds (88 percent) and Indians (100 percent). Thus, although the ANC is not an African party to Africans, it is to whites. For Indians and coloureds, the story is more nuanced: many do not see the ANC as exclusive, but if they do, they associate it with Africans.

**Table 10: Views of ANC Exclusivity by Race**

Race (number of respondents)	1994			1999		
	All (%)	Only One Group (%)	Do Not Know (%)	All (%)	Only One Group (%)	Do Not Know (%)
Whites (223)	30	61	8	10	89	1
Africans (1776)	91	3	5	98	2	1
Coloureds (121)	46	34	19	41	56	3
Indians (80)	80	12	8	23	68	9

Source: *Idasa 1994, Opinion '99*

A similar pattern emerges for the NP (NNP) and DP. Table 11 shows views on the exclusivity of the NP for all groups. While most whites and many coloureds and Indians view the NP as inclusive, *Africans tend to see it as exclusive* – especially in 1994. Furthermore, according to the follow-up question on the nature of this exclusivity, Africans almost uniformly view this exclusivity in racial terms. Thus, while whites do not see the NP as a “white party,” many Africans do.

**Table 11: Views of NP Exclusivity by Race**

Race (number of respondents)	1994			1999		
	All (%)	Only One Group (%)	Do Not Know (%)	All (%)	Only One Group (%)	Do Not Know (%)
Whites (223)	79	12	9	60	28	12
Africans (1776)	26	45	29	53	41	6
Coloureds (121)	65	20	15	59	27	12
Indians (80)	71	18	12	79	11	10

Source: Idasa 1994, Opinion '99

Finally, Table 12 shows the data for the DP. The first thing to note is that many non-white respondents felt they did not have enough information about the party to evaluate it. This is not surprising, especially for 1994, when the party was small and had a very low profile. However, for the respondents that could make an evaluation, the same pattern emerges: while whites do not see the DP as exclusive, Africans do – especially in 1999. Furthermore, Africans largely identify the nature of this exclusion as racial.

**Table 12: Views of DP Exclusivity by Race**

Race (number of respondents)	1994			1999		
	All (%)	Only One Group (%)	Do Not Know (%)	All (%)	Only One Group (%)	Do Not Know (%)
Whites (223)	60	9	30	73	16	11
Africans (1776)	34	16	50	13	34	53
Coloureds (121)	33	11	56	27	15	58
Indians (80)	41	4	55	29	20	51

Source: Idasa 1994, Opinion '99

Several observations can be made about the patterns that emerge in this data. First, whites and Africans have very different views of the racial exclusivity or inclusivity of South Africa's three main parties. While whites see the DP and NP as representing all South Africans, Africans are more inclined to see them as white. For the ANC, the opposite story holds: for Africans, it is an inclusive party, but for whites, it is an African one. And for all of these parties, coloureds and Indians tend to be somewhere between whites and Africans, with far less uniform views of the racial credentials of parties. *Thus, while policy preferences are not polarized by race in South Africa, the racial credentials of parties do appear to be.*

Second, it seems that racial credentials work according to a negative logic instead of a positive one: it's about *exclusion*, not representation, i.e., who is excluded from a party, not who is represented by it. While this is not consistent with the expressive view of voting, it does not contradict the informational one – especially if individuals use these evaluations of exclusion to form opinions about parties and to guide their behavior.

A final (and intriguing) observation about the data is that evaluations of party exclusivity are not set in stone. Between 1994 and 1999, for example, the NP became more inclusive in the minds of many Africans, while the DP followed the opposite path, and the ANC become more inclusive for Africans, less inclusive for whites. Thus, the idea that voters act like Bayesians, updating their evaluations as new information emerges, receives some tentative support – though exactly how and when this happens (the types of information voters pay attention to, for example) is the subject of a different project.

In sum, there appears to be reasonably clear evidence that South African voters hold racialized views of parties – even if the supporters of a party do not view it as their exclusive racial representative. The next question is whether or not these racialized views matter, i.e., whether they shape opinions about parties and guide voting behavior.

As a first cut on this, Tables 13-15 use ordered probit models to explore the effects of racial profiles on views of party credibility and trust in 1999.<sup>13</sup> Table 13 shows this relationship for the ANC. The first specifications for each dependent variable (columns a and c) use basic demographic data to predict credibility and trust: a racial dummy variables (Africans are left out, so the effects of the other racial dummies should be interpreted in relation to Africans), age, gender, and education. Unsurprisingly, race has a massive and well-estimated effect on both credibility and trust. Whites, coloureds, and Indians are much less likely than Africans to view the ANC as credible and trustworthy. The second set of specifications for each dependent variable (b and d) adds the racial profile variable to the mix. The results are unambiguous: respondents who see the ANC as exclusive are far less likely to view it as credible or trustworthy. Furthermore, the inclusion of this variable more than halves the effects of the racial dummies in almost all cases, narrowing the differences between racial groups in how they view the ANC. This suggests that the perceived racial profiles of parties are a key (though not exclusive) avenue through which race affects views of party credibility and trust.

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<sup>13</sup> The dependent variables is categorical in each case and the data comes from Opinion '99. For party credibility, respondents were asked: "Please tell me about how much of the time you can believe what the different parties say. If I come to a party you haven't heard of or you feel you do not know enough about, just say so. About how much of the time can you believe what [party x] says?" For party trustworthiness, respondents were asked: "Please tell me about how much of the time you feel you could trust [party x] to do what is right if it ran the government." In both questions, respondents were given a choice of the following categories: "Just about always," "Most of the time," "Only some of the time," "Never, almost never," and "Do not know enough about them." The "do not know" responses were dropped and ordered probit models run on the remaining data. In the case of the ANC, this involved dropping 35 observations (1.6 percent of the total) for credibility and 25 observations (1.1 percent) for trust. In the case of the DP, it involved dropping 501 observations (22.8 percent of the total) for credibility and 844 observations (38.4 percent) for trust. In the case of the NP, it involved dropping 101 observations (4.6 percent of the total) for credibility and 116 observations (5.3 percent) for trust. These differences reflect the fact that the ANC and NP are more visible and better known to the majority of South Africans (especially Africans, coloureds, and Indians) than the DP.

**Table 13: Effect of Exclusivity on Trust and Credibility for the ANC** (T-stats in parentheses)

	Credibility		Trust	
	a	b	c	d
White	-4.417 (-20.740)	-2.27 (-8.169)	-4.988 (-23.170)	-2.55 (-9.021)
Coloured	-2.159 (-10.542)	-0.837 (-3.725)	-2.857 (-13.139)	-1.19 (-4.950)
Indian	-4.176 (-14.948)	-2.44 (-7.621)	-4.363 (-15.702)	-2.55 (7.849)
Age	0.013 (0.681)	0.010 (0.504)	0.232 (11.284)	0.242 (11.454)
Female	-1.102 (-12.353)	-1.12 (-12.436)	-0.557 (-6.186)	-0.555 (-6.059)
Education	-0.041 (-1.618)	-0.049 (-1.904)	-0.030 (-1.174)	-0.044 (-1.663)
Exclusive ANC		-2.98 (-11.226)		-3.31 (-12.447)
N	2165	2150	2175	2157

Source: *Opinion '99*

Table 14 replicates this analysis for the NP (NNP). Once again, race plays an important role in shaping views of credibility and trustworthiness: whites, coloureds, and Indians are more likely than Africans to trust and find credible the NP. The effects are particularly large for coloureds and Indians. Furthermore, as with the ANC, the racial profile variable has a large, well-estimated, negative effect. Finally, including this variable alters the effect of the racial variables. Controlling for racial profiles eliminates any differences between whites and Africans regarding the credibility of the NP and actually reverses the differences regarding trustworthiness (controlling for exclusivity, whites are actually less likely than Africans to trust the NP!). For coloureds and Indians, the impact of controlling for exclusivity is much milder but generally runs in the expected direction of reducing the differences between their views of the party and those of Africans.

**Table 14: Effect of Exclusivity on Trust and Credibility for the NP** (T-stats in parentheses)

	Credibility		Trust	
	a	b	c	d
White	0.388 (2.075)	0.219 (1.096)	0.278 (1.744)	-0.452 (-2.491)
Coloured	3.012 12.939	3.29 (13.183)	1.711 (8.235)	1.58 (7.196)
Indian	3.423 (12.193)	3.17 (10.579)	2.093 (8.913)	1.53 (6.067)
Age	0.011 (0.488)	0.117 (4.401)	-0.014 (-0.721)	0.187 (8.008)
Female	2.732 (23.264)	2.93 (22.589)	0.997 (10.894)	0.749 (7.419)
Education	0.584 (18.279)	0.625 (18.477)	0.161 (6.257)	0.213 (7.892)
Exclusive NP		-1.826 (-14.230)		-2.596 (-22.692)
N	2098	2009	2083	2017

Source: *Opinion '99*



Finally, Table 15 repeats the exercise for the DP. Once again, there are significant racial differences in views of credibility and trustworthiness. Whites are much more likely than Africans to find the DP credible, and all three non-African groups are more likely to trust it. Furthermore, racial profiles have a large, well-estimated negative effect on respondents' probability of giving the DP a high credibility or trustworthiness rating. Finally, controlling for racial profiles narrows (in the case of trustworthiness) or reverses (in the case of credibility) the differences between Africans and non-Africans.

**Table 15: Effect of Exclusivity on Trust and Credibility for the DP** (T-stats in parantheses)

	Credibility		Trust	
	a	b	c	d
White	0.572 (3.041)	-0.622 (-2.754)	2.726 (11.941)	2.18 (8.648)
Coloured	-0.008 (-0.029)	-1.32 (-3.863)	3.115 (9.733)	2.41 (6.496)
Indian	0.099 (0.317)	-0.985 (-2.567)	2.438 (7.120)	1.58 (4.200)
Age	0.349 (13.163)	0.437 (12.645)	0.363 (11.344)	0.367 (10.460)
Female	-0.766 (-7.108)	-2.39 (-14.738)	1.561 (10.759)	1.53 (9.184)
Education	0.180 (6.422)	0.175 (3.564)	0.544 (13.201)	0.238 (4.724)
Exclusive DP		-0.662 (-3.518)		-2.335 (-9.914)
N	1698	1076	1355	1086

Source: *Opinion '99*

Altogether, Tables 13-15 provide strong evidence that racial profiles have a large impact on voters' evaluations of the credibility and trustworthiness of parties. In all cases, viewing a party as exclusive significantly reduced the probability that a respondent would see it as credible and worthy of trust. Furthermore, racial profiles appear to be an important source of racial differences in party reputations for credibility and trust. Racial profiles are not randomly distributed across racial groups. Africans are much more likely to view the DP and NP as white parties, whites are much more likely to view the ANC as an African one. This fact helps explain why Africans are less likely to trust and find credible the DP and NP, while whites are less likely to trust and find credible the ANC.

Credibility and trust in turn affect vote choice (evidence not shown, but easy to produce). Consequently, racial profiles, working through these variables, affect vote choice. Rather than exploring this indirect relationship, however, the next set of tables explores the direct effects of racial profiles on voting. The main goal of these tables is to assess the extent to which racial profiles affect the voting polarization pattern detailed earlier. In particular, are the small set of Africans who view the DP and/or NP as inclusive more likely to support these parties (and thus break the polarization pattern) than Africans who see them as exclusive? And are the handful of whites who see the ANC as inclusive more likely to support it than whites who do not?

Tables 16-17 show simple cross-tabs that break down party support and views of exclusivity.<sup>14</sup> Table 16 shows African views of the exclusivity of the NP versus support for the

<sup>14</sup> Once again, the data come from *Opinion '99*, which included a "mock" ballot to assess how people would vote in a hypothetical election. Respondents were given a "ballot" paper listing the names of 13

NP. The results are very clear. *Inclusivity is a necessary condition for Africans to support the NP*: all but two of 185 African respondents who indicated support for the party viewed it as inclusive. However, also clear is the fact that inclusivity is *not sufficient* for Africans to support the NP. Of those who did not support the party, more saw it as inclusive than exclusive. Thus, winning votes requires a party to have the right set of racial credentials, but racial credentials alone are not enough.

**Table 16: NP Inclusivity and Support for the NP among Africans** (Count, Row Percentages)

	NP inclusive	NP exclusive
Do Not Support the NP	764 52%	718 48%
Support the NP	183 99%	2 1%

Pearson  $\chi^2(1) = 150.3918$   $Pr = 0.000$

Source: Opinion '99

Table 17 shows the breakdown for Africans and the DP. However, due to the structure of the data (the fact that no Africans admitted supporting the DP), it is impossible to evaluate the effects of exclusivity. Once again, it is clear that inclusivity is not enough to push Africans into the DP camp because some 27 percent saw the party as inclusive but did not indicate support for it. All we can say is that inclusivity may be necessary here as well, but it is not sufficient.

**Table 17: DP Inclusivity and Support for the DP among Africans** (Count, Row Percentages)

	DP inclusive	DP exclusive
Do Not Support the DP	223 27%	609 73%
Support the DP	-	-

Pearson  $\chi^2(1) = n/a$   $Pr = n/a$

Source: Opinion '99

Table 18 shows the breakdown for whites and the ANC. Here again we run into problems with the data. Very few whites (only three) admitted support for the ANC, giving us very little variation to study. This is thin soil for making strong conclusions, but the data do support the pattern: all three of these whites viewed the ANC as inclusive. And again, inclusiveness is not sufficient for support: an additional 19 whites saw the party as inclusive but did not offer support for it.

**Table 18: ANC Inclusivity and Support for the ANC among Whites** (Count, Row Percentages)

	ANC inclusive	ANC exclusive
Do Not Support the ANC	19 9%	198 91%
Support the ANC	3 100%	-

Pearson  $\chi^2(1) = 27.37$   $Pr = 0.000$

Source: Opinion '99

political parties. An “other party” option (which solicited a write-in response) and a “do not know” option were also provided. Respondents were asked to indicate on the paper which party they would vote for (separate answers for national and provincial) if the elections were held tomorrow. They were told that their vote was secret and were given an envelope in which to seal the vote before handing it to the interviewer. These measures were taken to help minimize misrepresentation and to simulate as closely as possible the actual voting process. The data generated by the mock ballot can be recoded into dummy variables, one for each option listed on the ballot.

Thus, these data suggest that racial credentials are necessary but not sufficient for support: a party must be viewed as inclusive for a voter to vote for it, but this alone is not enough to put a voter in a party’s camp. All the same, racial credentials appear to be playing an important (though not solitary) role in driving patterns of polarized voting. Whites must view the ANC as inclusive to support it, but few whites do; and Africans must view the NP as inclusive to support it, but many Africans do not.

However, the limitations of the data (the small numbers of whites and Africans who actually break the polarized voting pattern) make it hard to place too much weight on these conclusions. Consequently, the next set of tables approach the question from a slightly different angle, looking at respondents who claimed they were “uncertain” about which party they would support if the election were held tomorrow. It seems reasonable to suppose that these respondents might act as “harbingers” of future electoral change, i.e., the set of people most likely to challenge patterns of racial polarization in the future. From this perspective, being uncertain about vote choice is an important pre-condition to voting across racial lines, so factors that increase uncertainty can be seen as helping to create the conditions necessary for a breakdown in racial polarization.

Table 19 therefore looks at vote uncertainty amongst Africans and views of NP inclusivity. The pattern revealed in the table is quite clear: Africans who see the NP as inclusive are much more likely to be uncertain about how to vote than Africans who do not see it as inclusive. Table 20 explores the same relationship for the DP. Here, the pattern is even stronger. A total of 181 African respondents reported being uncertain of their vote choice. Of these, 176 (97 percent) saw the DP as inclusive. Thus, although viewing the NP or DP as inclusive may not be enough to push Africans into the arms of these parties, it does appear to make them much less certain about their vote choice, perhaps an important pre-condition for getting them to abandon racial patterns. Given the strength and invariability of polarized patterns in the past, this is a very important finding that underlines the significance of racial profiles. Changing these profiles – e.g., making “white” parties seem less white to Africans – would seem to be a necessary first step to breaking down patterns of polarization.

**Table 19: NP Inclusivity and Vote Uncertainty among Africans** (Count, Row Percentages)

	<b>NP inclusive</b>	<b>NP exclusive</b>
Vote Choice Certain	769 53%	697 48%
Vote Choice Uncertain	178 89%	23 11%

*Pearson chi2(1) = 93.8934 Pr = 0.000*

*Source: Opinion '99*

**Table 20: DP Inclusivity and Vote Uncertainty among Africans** (Count, Row Percentages)

	<b>DP inclusive</b>	<b>DP exclusive</b>
Vote Choice Certain	47 7%	604 93%
Vote Choice Uncertain	176 97%	5 3%

*Pearson chi2(1) = 584.9497 Pr = 0.000*

*Source: Opinion '99*

Finally, Table 21 explores white uncertainty and views of the ANC. No apparent pattern emerges: whites who see the ANC as inclusive are just as likely as whites who see it as exclusive to feel uncertain. This may be because these uncertain whites are not harbingers of racial change, but rather, are dithering over which white party (the DP or the NP) to support. Or it could mean

that the racial credentials of the ANC simply do not matter much to whites – they are unlikely to support it in any event.

**Table 21: ANC Inclusivity and Vote Uncertainty among Whites** (Count, Row Percentages)

	ANC inclusive	ANC exclusive
Vote Choice Certain	20 10%	181 90%
Vote Choice Uncertain	2 11%	17 90%

Pearson  $\chi^2(1) = 0.0064$   $Pr = 0.936$

Source: *Opinion '99*

All together, there is impressive evidence in support of the informational voting framework. First, there are large differences across racial groups in how parties are viewed. While Africans see the ANC as a party that represents all South Africans, most whites see it as “African.” And while most whites see the DP and NP as inclusive, Africans are much less likely to share this opinion, instead seeing them as “white.” Finally, coloureds and Indians have more mixed views of all the parties than whites and Africans. Second, these views of inclusiveness are an important source of racial differences in views about the credibility and trustworthiness of parties. And last, but not least, inclusivity appears to be a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for whites and Africans to vote against racialized patterns.

## Conclusion

The results in this paper suggest considerable support for the informational voting framework, but only weak support for the identity voting framework, and no support for the policy voting framework. What are the implications of this for South African politics?

First, to the extent that parties understand these dynamics, we should expect them to focus their persuasive efforts not on changing patterns of identification, but on manipulating beliefs: beliefs about how individual and group prospects align, and, perhaps more importantly, beliefs about the “racial credentials” of parties, who they have supported in the past, and who they are likely to support in the future. While having the right set of racial credentials does not guarantee that a party will win a group’s votes, it is a necessary first step for this to occur. Therefore, we should expect parties to concentrate their persuasive efforts on their own images, not on voters’ perceptions of identity.

Second, the ability of current electoral losers to become winners tomorrow depends crucially on their ability to alter their current racial image. The data presented in this paper provide suggestive evidence that racial images *can* change. The question for future work is how and under what conditions this is possible.

Third, the mere fact that ethnicity or race is politically salient does not imply how it will manifest itself in voting patterns. If the data presented in this paper are correct, South Africa's racial voters are not looking to attach themselves to racially exclusive parties. Rather, they are seeking parties that will look out for the interests of their group (and therefore, themselves) in the long run, even as they may be looking out for the interests of other groups as well. Provided voters do not view their interests as fundamentally and intractably opposed to those of other groups, there is no reason why parties cannot build multi-racial coalitions. This opens the possibility of fluidity in voting patterns as different multi-racial electoral coalitions compete for the support of groups or segments of groups a far more fluid and dynamic picture of electoral patterns in divided countries than is often assumed in the literature.

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