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# Political Identification: How Parental Values Are Influenced

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# Political Identification: How Parental Values Are Influenced

## **Abstract**

Politics is an ever-growing part of American culture and, as a result, party identification has become an integral part of many Americans' identity. Party affiliation largely impacts the values of different individuals. Using the 2012 National Election Survey, I evaluate the influence of party identification on what is seen as more valuable traits in children. Specifically, I focus on the preference of obedience over self-reliance and independence over respect. I find that in a comparison of individuals, when controlled for race, the opinions across non-white respondents of different political identifications are indistinguishable. Additionally, I find that among white respondents, those that identify as republicans favor obedience and independence at higher rates than respondents that identify as democrats. Future research should address the impact of race on political polarization.

## **Keywords**

Parenting values, party identification, independence, obedience

## **Disciplines**

American Politics | Political Science | Political Theory

## **Comments**

Written for Pol 215: Methods of Political Science

## Political Identification: How Parental Values are Influenced

### Research Question

In an increasingly politically polarized nation,<sup>1</sup> party affiliation has become a larger part of the individual's identity. This greater significance of a party affiliation to selfhood suggests that there is potentially also a growing importance of partisanship in determining factors that are influenced by how someone views themselves. The concept of identity is at the heart of many of the actions a person takes.<sup>2</sup> An example of one of these actions influenced by a person's identity relates to the different parenting styles among individuals.

Furthermore, the political science community has published ample research on the significance of parenting style on an individual's future partisanship and the impact that one's partisanship has on their parenting style. Expanding on this research that connects partisanship and parenting style, I argue that the traits an individual prefers a child to have is influenced by that person's party affiliation.

For my research, I will focus on the conditions in which individuals believe certain traits are more valuable in children than others. Specifically, under what conditions do individuals believe obedience is more valuable than self-reliance and independence is more valuable than respect. These are important values to consider, because the values an individual is raised with influences their other behaviors later in life. This connection will be discussed later. To determine the impact on what traits someone finds most desirable in children, it is important to

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<sup>1</sup> "Political Polarization in the American Public," Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, October 11, 2016, , accessed April 01, 2019, <http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>.

<sup>2</sup> Kristen Renwick Monroe, "Morality and a Sense of Self: The Importance of Identity and Categorization for Moral Action," *American Journal of Political Science* 45, no. 3 (2001): , doi:10.2307/2669234.; "The Impact of Identity," Facing History and Ourselves, , accessed April 01, 2019, <http://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/facing-ferguson-news-literacy-digital-age/impact-identity>.

consider integral parts of their identity; party affiliation is seen as one of these defining parts of one's identity. Thus, it is likely that people with similar party identification will have similar values, including parenting values. I will try to determine if this connection between partisanship and values extends to the preferred traits in children across people with different party identifications. Understanding how political identification influences the desired values in children allows us to better predict how individuals will raise their children. Other factors that may influence the preferred traits for children are race and gender.

### **Literature Review**

Using George Lakoff's publication of *Moral Politics: What Conservatives Know That Liberals Don't* in 1996 as a base, many political scientists have gone on to investigate the relationship between partisanship and parenting. Lakoff argues that partisanship is the result of two distinct parenting styles, the 'Strict Father' and 'Nurturant Parent'. In this model the 'Strict Father' coincides with conservative values and the 'Nurturant Parent' represents liberal values. He finds that those that are raised according to the values of the 'Strict Father' are more likely to support a government that operates in a similar fashion, while the same is true for those conditioned by the 'Nurturant Parent'. This transmission of values is argued to cycle across generations, as those with conservative views will adopt a 'Strict Father' parenting style which will cause their children to have conservative values making the children more likely to raise their children with that same style of parenting. In essence, the partisanship of parents changes their parenting style which influences the values of their children, which impacts the parenting style of the children when they become adults, forming a cycle that continues on for generations.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> George Lakoff, *Moral Politics: What Conservatives Know That Liberals Don't* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

Encompassing similar themes, Lakoff's publication was part of a movement of research regarding this passing of values across generations and the impact of parenting styles on a child's partisanship. It is argued that the transmission of a parent's values to their children has varying level of success based on different variables concerning the familial structure.<sup>4</sup> The foremost factor in determining the likelihood of children adopting their parents' beliefs is argued to be the household climate, where those with more positive family dynamics are more likely to have values that mirror those of their parents than those with less favorable family dynamics.<sup>5</sup> Considering the different factors within a household that impact the method in which values are transferred from parents to their children supplements Lakoff's work.

Furthermore, it has been found that morality is an intermediate step in the influence of parenting styles on a child's partisanship.<sup>6</sup> Mirroring the 'Strict Father'/'Nurturant Parent' model of Lakoff, this branch of research argues that the different parenting styles are a result of the proscriptive morality, teaching of morality by punishment, favored by conservatives, and prescriptive morality, teaching of morality by reward, favored by liberals. The distinction between proscriptive and prescriptive morality as a part of parenting style supports the notion that party affiliation has some influence on how a child is raised. Although this distinction indicates a variation in parenting styles based on the preference of proscriptive or prescriptive

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<sup>4</sup> Joan E. Grusec and Jacqueline J. Goodnow, "Impact of Parental Discipline Methods on the Child's Internalization of Values: A Reconceptualization of Current Points of View.," *Developmental Psychology* 30, no. 1 (1994): , doi:10.1037//0012-1649.30.1.4.; Jeffrey Lyons, "The Family and Partisan Socialization in Red and Blue America," *Political Psychology* 38, no. 2 (2016): , doi:10.1111/pops.12336.

; Gregg R. Murray and Matthew K. Mulvaney, "Parenting Styles, Socialization, and the Transmission of Political Ideology and Partisanship," *Politics & Policy* 40, no. 6 (2012): , doi:10.1111/j.1747-1346.2012.00395.x.

<sup>5</sup> Joan E. Grusec and Jacqueline J. Goodnow, "Impact of Parental Discipline Methods on the Child's Internalization of Values: A Reconceptualization of Current Points of View.," *Developmental Psychology* 30, no. 1 (1994): , doi:10.1037//0012-1649.30.1.4.

<sup>6</sup> Ronnie Janoff-Bulman, Nate C. Carnes, and Sana Sheikh, "Parenting and Politics: Exploring Early Moral Bases of Political Orientation," *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 2, no. 1 (2014): , doi:10.5964/jsp.p.v2i1.243.; Kristen Renwick Monroe, "Morality and a Sense of Self: The Importance of Identity and Categorization for Moral Action," *American Journal of Political Science* 45, no. 3 (2001): , doi:10.2307/2669234. ;

morality, it does not directly address whether there is also a discrepancy among individuals about the value of different traits in a child.

Along with this research discussing the influence of morality on an individual's parenting style, additional research has been published suggesting why parenting style has such a sizable impact on a child's view of the world. It is argued that the formative nature of childhood is the reason for this lasting impact on a child's opinions.<sup>7</sup> As a result of humans being most impressionable at young ages, the values imposed on them as a child has a strong impact on their values later in life. These values contribute to a larger part of a person's identity, specifically their political identification. This connection between increased impressionability during childhood and future partisanship is significant to understanding the importance of parenting styles. This research reinforces the validity of Lakoff's 'Strict Father'/'Nurturant Parent' model.

It appears to be a common assertion across the field of political science research that familial structure impacts an individual's understanding of the world and how authority should act.<sup>8</sup> This same notion has been applied to the correlation between the support of certain traits in children with the support of those same traits in citizens, further supporting the presence of a connection between a person's partisanship and the traits that they value for children.

In the context of political ideology and different parenting values, it is also important to consider how the personality traits of individuals influences their partisanship. As concluded by

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<sup>7</sup> Matthew Feinberg and Elisabeth Wehling, "A Moral House Divided: How Idealized Family Models Impact Political Cognition," *Plos One* 13, no. 4 (2018): , doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0193347.; Gregg R. Murray and Matthew K. Mulvaney, "Parenting Styles, Socialization, and the Transmission of Political Ideology and Partisanship," *Politics & Policy* 40, no. 6 (2012): , doi:10.1111/j.1747-1346.2012.00395.x.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew Feinberg and Elisabeth Wehling, "A Moral House Divided: How Idealized Family Models Impact Political Cognition," *Plos One* 13, no. 4 (2018): , doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0193347.; Jeffrey Lyons, "The Family and Partisan Socialization in Red and Blue America," *Political Psychology* 38, no. 2 (2016): , doi:10.1111/pops.12336.; Gregg R. Murray and Matthew K. Mulvaney, "Parenting Styles, Socialization, and the Transmission of Political Ideology and Partisanship," *Politics & Policy* 40, no. 6 (2012): , doi:10.1111/j.1747-1346.2012.00395.x.

the research cited above, partisanship and parenting style have a close relationship. Assuming this to be true, it is important to factor in the impact other variables may have on party affiliation.

Personality is a factor that influences both party identification and parenting style.<sup>9</sup> In a study testing this link between personality and political identification it was found that, “‘openness to experience’ significantly predicts a higher self-reported score on liberal ideology and that ‘conscientiousness’ significantly predicts a more conservative ideology”.<sup>10</sup> This finding supports the influence of personality on partisanship, primarily distinguishing between openness and conscientiousness, or in other words, inquisitiveness and diligence. These are two traits that relate to an individual’s perception of the value of self-reliance versus obedience and independence versus respect.

Other factors that may impact an individual’s party affiliation are race and gender. Unlike the variables discussed above, race and gender are not subjective traits and cannot be influenced by experiences. Race and gender seem to influence party identification for similar reasons that morality and personality do. Those across different races are raised in varying ways and individual’s face different forms of socialization based on their gender. This contributes to contrasting beliefs dependent on the race and gender of an individual.<sup>11</sup>

### **Causal Explanation**

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<sup>9</sup> Bitra Bahrami et al., "Comparison of Personality among Mothers with Different Parenting Styles.," *Iranian Journal of Psychiatry* 13, no. 3 (July 2018): , <http://ezpro.cc.gettysburg.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=130238102&site=ehost-live&scope=site.>; Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, "Personality, Childhood Experience, and Political Ideology," *Political Psychology* 36, no. 1 (2013): , doi:10.1111/pops.12075.

<sup>10</sup> Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, "Personality, Childhood Experience, and Political Ideology," *Political Psychology* 36, no. 1 (2013): , doi:10.1111/pops.12075.

<sup>11</sup> David J. Ciuk, "Democratic Values? A Racial Group-Based Analysis of Core Political Values, Partisanship, and Ideology," *Political Behavior* 39, no. 2 (2016): , doi:10.1007/s11109-016-9365-5.; Margaret C. Trevor, "Political Socialization, Party Identification, and the Gender Gap," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (1999): , doi:10.1086/297703.

Different political ideologies are the result of a combination of less observable features, such as personality traits and childhood experiences, along with more concrete factors, such as race and gender. This multifaceted process and underlying significance in determining partisanship causes those with certain party identifications to have an aversion to some traits in children and to favor others.

Partisanship is indicative of an individual's core values. Thus, party identification is a way of representing a group of people that share those values. This emphasis on values within someone's political affiliation likely coincides with each party having similar beliefs on matters that do not factor into partisanship.

The most important traits for a child to have are subjective and do not contribute to an individual's partisanship, but rather they function as a result of that partisanship. The discrepancy in values causing certain people to identify as a Republican and others to identify as a Democrat correspond with beliefs regarding other realms of life, including parenting style. Different parenting styles operate to have different outcomes; individual's employ parenting styles based on their preferred traits for children. Thus, the influence of partisanship on parenting style signifies the tendency for members of specific political parties to prefer some traits in children to others. Some additional factors that may contribute to the preferred traits in children are also gender and race of an individual.

I hypothesize that, in a comparison of individuals, those that identify as a Republican will be more likely to value obedience over self-reliance in children than those that identify as a Democrat. Additionally, those that identify as a Republican will be more likely to value respect over independence in children than those that identify as a Democrat.

### **Research Design**



### *Introduction*

I will be using data from the National Election Survey (NES 2012) in order to test this hypothesis. These data include responses from 2012 and over 5,000 respondents from the United States. I selected these data because this survey includes the fitting variables to test my hypothesis. A limit of this dataset is that respondents are limited to the United States, thus the hypothesis test focuses on this population.

### *Variable Measurements*

The variables within the NES are measured in responses of individuals. In order to test my hypothesis, I will focus on `auth_ind` and `auth_obed` as my two dependent variables with `white` and `pid_3` as my independent variable. I will test the impact of these independent variables on my dependent variables.

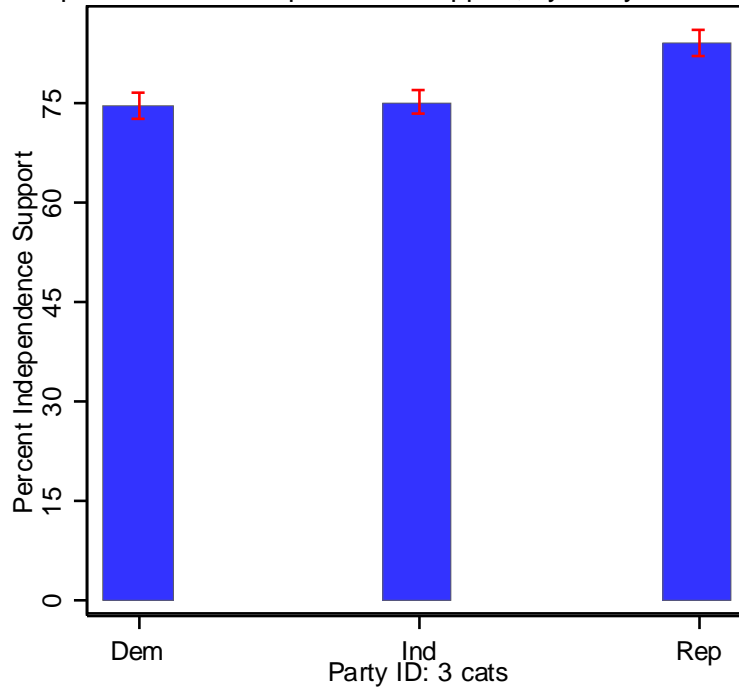
`Auth_obed` and `auth_ind` are both nominal, two-category variables used to measure authoritarianism, specifically focusing on the preferred traits of children. `Auth_obed` asks the respondent to choose whether obedience or self-reliance is more important in children. In total `auth_obed` has 5,263 substantive responses. Similarly, `auth_ind` poses the question of whether independence or respect for elders is more important. `Auth_ind` has 5,277 substantive responses. For both of these variables, respondents are classified as 1 or 0. In `auth_obed` respondents that prefer obedience are coded as 1 and respondents that prefer self-reliance are coded as 0. In `auth_ind` respondents that prefer independence are coded as 1 and respondents that prefer respect for elders are coded as 0. `Auth_obed` has a mode of obedience, with 55.33% of respondents choosing obedience. `Auth_ind` has a mode of independence, with 77.02% of respondents choosing independence.

Additionally, my primary independent variable pertains to an individual's party identification, for this I use the pid\_3 variable. Both of these variables ask individuals to select a political identification of either Democrat, Independent or Republican. Pid\_3 codes Democrat as 1, Independent as 2 and Republican as 3. Pid\_3 has a mode of Democrat, representing 40.02% of respondents. Lastly, to measure race, I will be using the white variable. This variable categorizes respondents into white and non-white. White are represented with a 1 and non-white are 0. 59.37% of respondents are white, making white the mode for this variable.

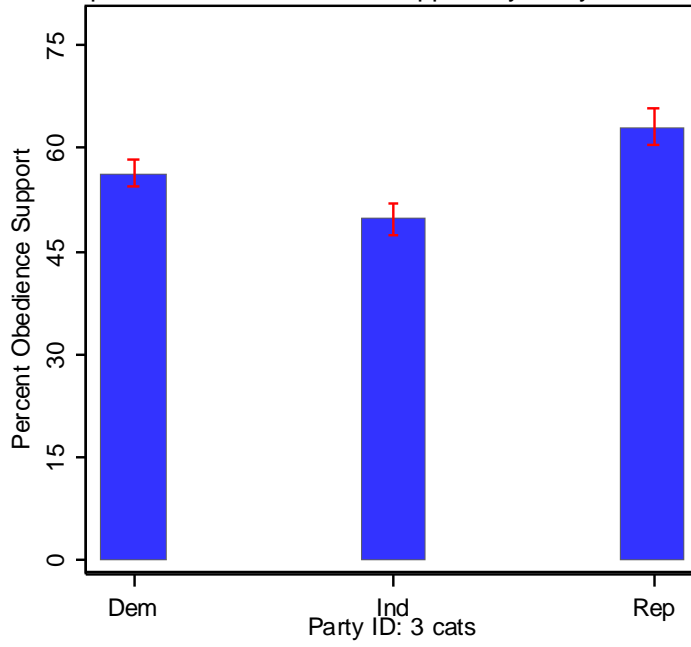
Descriptive Statistics					
Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
auth_obed	5,494	.5553331	.496974	0	1
auth_ind	5,500	.7701818	.4207541	0	1
pid_3	5,892	1.834861	.7798079	1	3
white	5,887	.593681	.4911872	0	1
Data source: 2012 National Election Survey					

In Graph 1, I have included a representation of the mean response to the auth\_ind variable by pid\_3. Graph 2 shows a similar comparison, but instead between auth\_obed and pid\_3. Both of these graphs include a 95% confidence interval.

Graph 1: Percent Independence Support, by Party Affiliation



Graph 2: Percent Obedience Support, by Party Affiliation



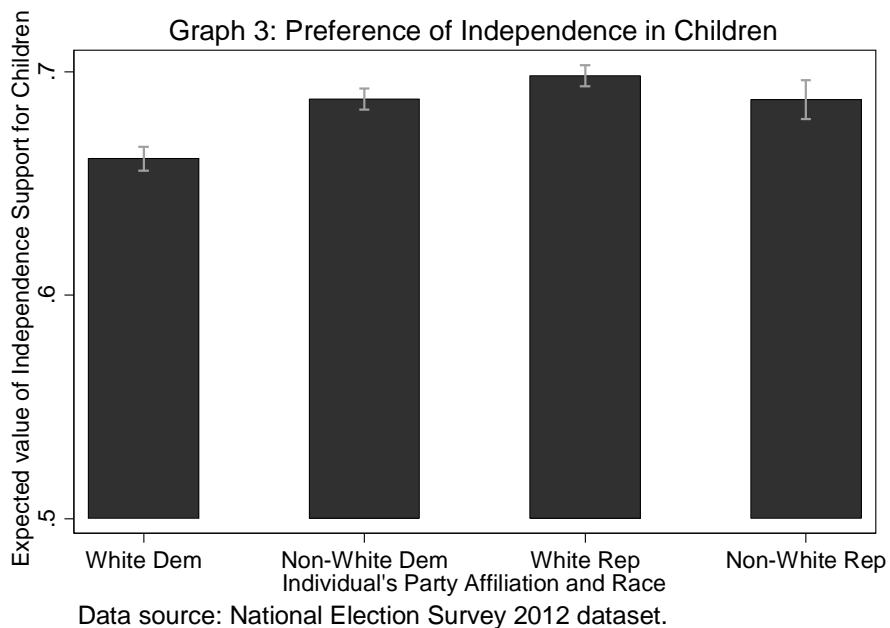
The lack of overlap of the confidence intervals on these graphs show that on average there is a 95% probability that there is a difference for the parenting values, specifically for obedience and independence, among individuals that identify as republicans and those that identify as democrats.

### *Model Estimation*

The aforementioned variables are all nominal level measurements. In order to compare the relationship between parenting values and party identification I ran a logistic regression with a 95% confidence interval. I chose to include this model, because it shows the relationship between my dependent and independent variable.

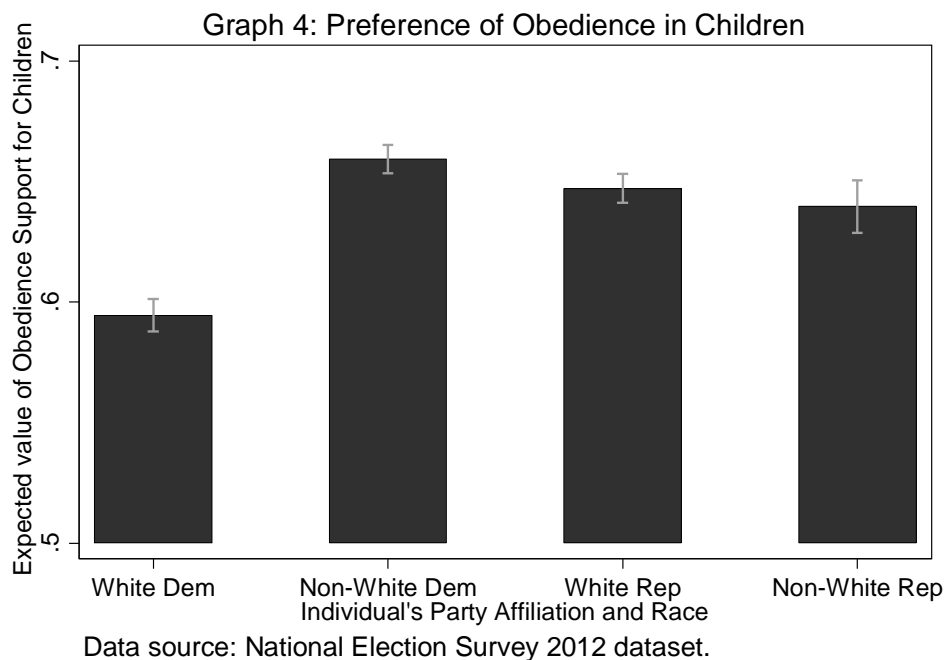
Additionally, I have included a bar graph comparing auth\_obed with pid\_3 while holding race constant by using the white variable. A similar graph with auth\_ind instead of auth\_obed is included as well. These graphs isolate the relationship of my dependent variables and political identification by controlling for race.

### *Results*



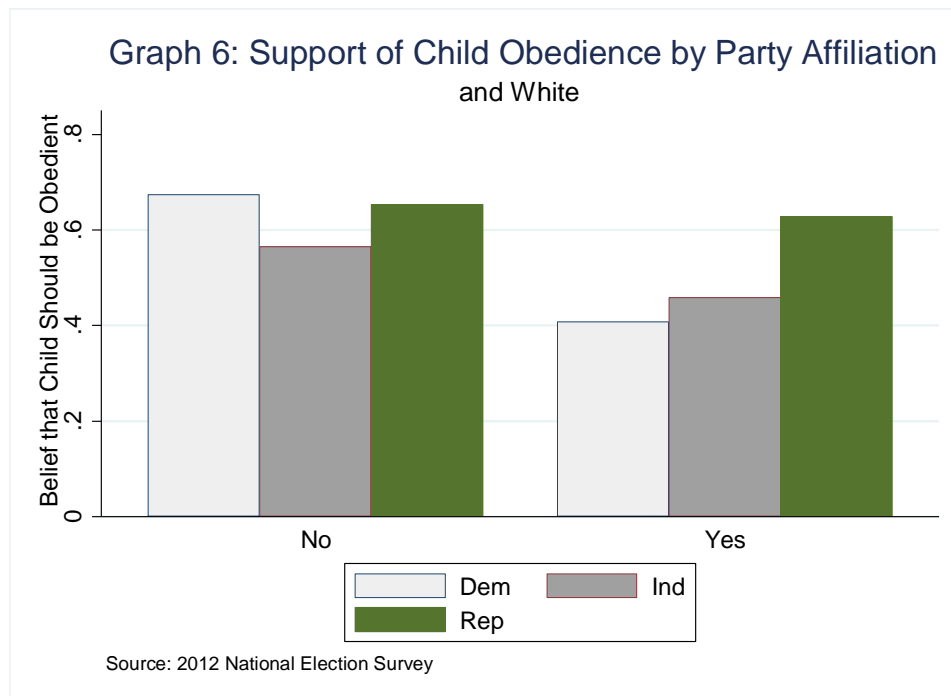
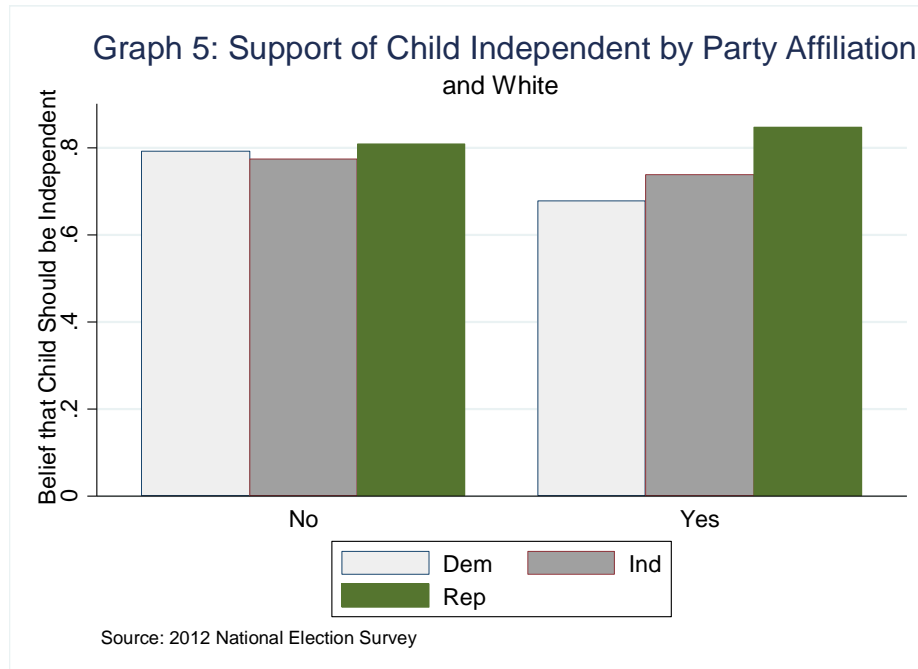
VARIABLES	(1) auth_ind
pid_3	-0.000940 (0.0132)
white	-0.207*** (0.0301)
whitedem	0.0862*** (0.0162)
Constant	0.790*** (0.0219)
Observations	5,458
R-squared	0.016

This model shows there is a higher likelihood that white democrats will prefer respect for elders over independence in children compared to non-white democrats and both subsets of republicans. This contradicts my hypothesis. Another significant finding of this regression is that white republicans are the most likely to believe independence is more important in children. Non-white democrats and non-white republicans are indistinguishable at the 5% level.



VARIABLES	(1) auth_obed
pid_3	-0.0435*** (0.0154)
white	-0.432*** (0.0352)
whitedem	0.155*** (0.0189)
Constant	0.703*** (0.0256)
Observations	5,452
R-squared	0.038

This model shows that white democrats are the least likely to prefer obedience in children. This comparison of white democrats to white republicans is consistent with my hypothesis. However, the comparison of non-white democrats and non-white republicans is both significant and contradicts my hypothesis. In this regression, there is a significant difference between white democrats and non-white democrats, but there is not a significant difference between white republicans and non-white republicans.



Graph 5 and graph 6 hold race constant in place of being part of a political identification-race interaction term as seen in graphs 3 and 4. Although interpreting different dependent variables, graphs 5 and 6 show a similar trend. For both `auth_ind` and `auth_obed` white respondents have an increasing support of the variable, independence or obedience, across the

political identification spectrum of democrat to republican. Additionally, both of these graphs demonstrate a similar response rating among non-white democrats and republicans, while non-white independents rank lower.

### *Discussion and Conclusion*

Overall, I found that white democrats are the least likely to prefer independence in children and the least likely to prefer obedience in children. Furthermore, non-white respondents are widely indistinguishable in their parenting ideals regarding independence and obedience. Due to the differing responses between those of the same political identification, but of different races, the hypothesis cannot be rejected for either variable. Despite this, the findings that race creates a large distinction is important, because they suggest there is a wider difference between whites based on partisanship than between non-whites. This creates the question of how race impacts the political polarization within the United States.

In conversation with the current literature that suggests a connection between partisanship and parenting values<sup>12</sup>, my research emphasizes the additional significance of race. Specifically, my findings suggest the notion that partisanship is a much larger factor for white respondents than it is for non-white respondents. Future research with additional control variables is necessary to limit potential omitted variable bias. Some of these variables may include age of respondent and where the respondent is from. This study inspires the additional research question of— to what extent are confounding factors responsible for a connection between parental values and party identification? This additional research is important in assessing the validity of a connection between these two variables.

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<sup>12</sup> Joan E. Grusec and Jacqueline J. Goodnow, "Impact of Parental Discipline Methods on the Child's Internalization of Values: A Reconceptualization of Current Points of View.," *Developmental Psychology* 30, no. 1 (1994): , doi:10.1037//0012-1649.30.1.4.; Jeffrey Lyons, "The Family and Partisan Socialization in Red and Blue



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