

University of Dayton eCommons

Political Science Faculty Publications

Department of Political Science

12-2010

Racial Attitude Effects in the 2008 Presidential Election: Examining the Unconventional Factors Shaping Vote Choice in a Most Unconventional Election

Herbert F. Weisberg
Ohio State University - Main Campus

Christopher J. Devine
University of Dayton, cdevine1@udayton.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/pol_fac_pub

 Part of the [American Politics Commons](#), [Civic and Community Engagement Commons](#), and the [Demography, Population, and Ecology Commons](#)

eCommons Citation

Weisberg, Herbert F. and Devine, Christopher J., "Racial Attitude Effects in the 2008 Presidential Election: Examining the Unconventional Factors Shaping Vote Choice in a Most Unconventional Election" (2010). *Political Science Faculty Publications*. 93.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/pol_fac_pub/93

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Political Science at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Political Science Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact frice1@udayton.edu, mschlangen1@udayton.edu.

**Racial Attitude Effects on Voting in the 2008 Presidential Election:
Examining the Unconventional Factors Shaping Vote Choice in a Most Unconventional Election**

Herbert F. Weisberg and Christopher J. Devine
The Ohio State University

This is a revision of a paper presented at the Mershon Conference on the Transformative Election of 2008, Columbus, Ohio, Oct. 1-4, 2009. We are appreciative of the suggestions by Paul Beck and the other participants at the conference.

Racial Attitude Effects on Voting in the 2008 Presidential Election:
Herbert F. Weisberg and Christopher J. Devine

Every election has unique elements, but the 2008 U.S. presidential race had it all: an African-American presidential candidate who won his party's nomination by defeating a former first lady, an historically unpopular outgoing president, two ongoing wars, a failing economy, and a war hero running for president with a female vice-presidential running mate. With so many unique elements to account for, disentangling their independent effects to identify the dominant factors shaping the 2008 election is a tremendous challenge. This paper explores a wide variety of factors potentially influencing the 2008 vote, but it devotes particular attention to two exceptionally relevant factors: racial attitudes and succession effects.

We begin this paper with a discussion of racial attitudes and succession effects' relevance to vote choice. Then we test the effects of racial attitudes and succession effects, as well as other important factors, on vote choice in 2008, by analyzing the 2008 American National Election Studies (ANES) traditional September-October pre-election survey and November-December post-election survey.¹ Finally, we test whether the racial attitude effects found in our 2008 results are unique to the Obama candidacy, or if similar results would be obtained by comparable analysis of the two most recent elections not contested by an incumbent president, the elections of 1988 and 2000, or in the preceding election of 2004.

Stated concisely, our analysis shows that, of all the unusual factors shaping vote choice in 2008, two particularly important ones were racial attitudes and dissatisfaction with the Bush Administration. The comparison with 1988 and 2000 shows that attitudes toward the previous administration generally affect voting even when the incumbent is not running, and regardless of whether the incumbent party's presidential candidate was a member of the outgoing presidential administration. The comparison with previous elections, including 2004, also provides an important demonstration that the racial attitudes effect in 2008 was specific to that election, not due to a general inclination of racial liberals to vote Democratic and racial conservatives to vote Republican. Clearly, the historic nomination of an African-American for the presidency made racial attitudes more important in voting than they had been in analogous elections.

Racial Attitudes and Voting

¹ As usual, this report owes considerable gratitude to the American National Election Studies. The target population for the survey consisted of English- and Spanish-speaking U.S. citizens of voting age living in the contiguous 48 states and the District of Columbia, with the sample chosen through a multi-stage probability-based procedure. RTI International interviewed a total of 2,323 respondents in face-to-face CAPI interviews, with 2,102 re-interviewed successfully after the election, including intentional oversamples of African-Americans and Hispanics. The weighted number of respondents who said they voted for one of the major party candidates for President is 1,559, including 1,258 non-Hispanic whites who form the core of the analysis in this paper. The pre- and post-election surveys have been weighted by the post-election weight (v080102) to adjust for the intentional oversample of African-Americans and Hispanics in the survey design, using pweights in STATA.

Race emerged as a central feature of the 2008 election when Barack Obama became the first African-American major party nominee in American history. Compared to the emphasis on religion in the campaigns against Al Smith in 1928 and against John Kennedy in 1960, race was emphasized less explicitly in the campaign against Barack Obama. Yet the fact that John McCain and most of his supporters did not portray Obama's race as a legitimate electoral issue does not mean that racial attitudes were irrelevant to vote choice.

The provocative sermons of Obama's long-time minister, Rev. Jeremiah Wright, led Obama to give a major speech on race relations while campaigning for the Democratic Party nomination, in March 2008. During the general election campaign, the Republican ticket and its surrogates attempted to portray Obama as a radical based on his association with former Weather Underground fugitive Bill Ayers, potentially leading voters to infer that Obama's alleged radicalism extended to his racial attitudes. Apart from the official Republican campaign, many of Obama's opponents used his ethnic background to spread doubts about the candidate's citizenship, religious affiliation, and allegiance to the United States. While such attacks rarely made direct reference to Obama's being an African-American, undoubtedly they drew attention to his racial and ethnic unorthodoxies as a presidential candidate and facilitated, intentionally or unintentionally, the activation of racial stereotypes and fears.

Historically, race has been one of the most important factors in American politics (Myrdal 1944). While a non-white candidate never had been nominated for president by a major party before 2008, race certainly has played a significant role in elections throughout American history. Slavery was a dominant issue in elections up through the Civil War, and the role of the newly freed slaves was a major issue in the South for years afterwards. The Solid South of the first half of the 20th century largely was a legacy of the Civil War (Key 1949). The Democratic Party split on civil rights in the 1948 presidential election, with several southern states leaving the Democratic presidential ticket off the ballot and including the segregationist States' Rights ticket in its place.

Passage of landmark civil rights legislation in the mid-1960s led to party polarization on racial issues, with Republicans adopting a solidly conservative stance and Democrats adopting a solidly liberal stance. Mass polarization on racial issues followed elite polarization, with the result that southerners began supporting the Republican Party reliably in subsequent years, first at the presidential level and later at the congressional level (Carmines and Stimson 1989; but see Abramowitz 1994). While Republican candidates typically did not engage in the direct racial appeals previously used by Southern Democrats, they gained electoral benefits by focusing on issues with strong racial components; Richard Nixon emphasized law and order in 1968 as a response to urban unrest, and Ronald Reagan attacked social welfare programs disproportionately benefiting African-Americans in his 1980 and 1984 presidential campaigns. George H.W. Bush's 1988 presidential campaign also tapped into racial attitudes with its controversial "Willie Horton" ad, which depicted Democratic presidential candidate Michael Dukakis as soft on crime for supporting a program that enabled an African-American inmate to commit armed robbery, assault, and rape, while out of prison on furlough (Mendelberg 1997, 2001).

For many years, overt racism has been considered to be socially unacceptable (Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, and Krysan 1997; Sears 1988). To the extent that racial attitudes

still motivate political behavior in today's society, then, researchers must rely upon more subtle, rather than overt, measures to detect their effects.

The first, and perhaps the most influential, such theory was symbolic racism (Sears and Kinder 1971; Kinder and Sears 1981; Sears 1988), in recent years recast, with slight conceptual and methodological modifications, as racial resentment (Kinder and Sanders 1996).² Racial resentment is conceptualized as a coherent belief system reflecting negative affect toward African-Americans, based on the perception that they violate core values of American society such as hard work and self-reliance. Specifically, individuals are presumed to have high levels of racial resentment to the extent that they believe racial discrimination is no longer a major force in American society, African-Americans have failed to take appropriate initiative to improve their circumstances, and government efforts to remedy past discrimination are unnecessary and unjustified, as are African-Americans' feelings of anger toward their treatment in American society.

Empirical evidence indicates that racial resentment is a statistically significant predictor of several social and political attitudes and behaviors, including racial policy attitudes (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Sears et al. 1997) and candidate preferences (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Kinder and Sears 1981; Sears and Kinder 1971; Sears, van Laar, Carrillo, and Kosterman 1997). Early analysis of the 2008 election also indicates that racial resentment was a powerful predictor of vote choice in that election, as well as other recent elections (Tesler and Sears 2009).

However, some scholars have disputed the conceptual and methodological merits of racial resentment. Advocates of the "principled conservatism" view of racial attitudes argue that the symbolic racism measures miscategorize as racist many individuals whose opposition to social programs aimed at helping African-Americans is grounded in their philosophical opposition to government intervention (Fazio, Jackson, Dunton, and Williams 1995; Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Sniderman and Tetlock 1986). Additionally, these scholars argue that the symbolic racism scales are methodologically suspect, because they fuse together conceptually distinct attitudes and they tend to be inconsistently measured (Sniderman and Tetlock 1986).

In addition to racial resentment, many other theories of modern racial attitudes have been proposed in recent years. Modern racism (McConahay, Hardee, and Batts 1981), for one, depicts opposition to post-Civil Rights Era policies aimed at achieving greater racial equality as motivated by anti-African-American affect acquired during childhood socialization. That many of these issues also implicate ideological beliefs about the appropriateness and effectiveness of government intervention in public and private life allows modern racists to justify their attitudes in nonracial terms, however. Among the items used to measure modern racism are questions asking respondents to report their level of agreement or disagreement with statements regarding the appropriateness of African-Americans' anger toward society, the appropriateness of African-Americans' political influence, and whether African-Americans deserve the levels of aid and respect from the government that they have received.

The theory of racial ambivalence (Katz and Hass 1988; Katz, Wackenhut, and Hass 1986) echoes racial resentment in depicting many whites as negatively disposed toward African-Americans due to the perception that African-Americans often violate

² The terms symbolic racism and racial resentment are used interchangeably in this paper, as they have been in other works (e.g. Tesler and Sears 2009).

core American values associated with the Protestant work ethic. However, racial ambivalence differs in that it depicts these individuals as motivated by principles of humanitarianism and egalitarianism to embrace the abstract concept of racial equality. As a result, according to racial ambivalence theory, many whites' attitudes are not wholly unfavorable or favorable toward African-Americans, but deeply conflicted. Typically, the racial ambivalence literature tests these hypotheses using respondents' level of agreement or disagreement with items designed to measure "pro-black" attitudes, "anti-black" attitudes, and attitudes toward the Protestant work ethic and humanitarianism/egalitarianism.

Much like racial ambivalence theory, aversive racism theory (Dovidio and Gaertner 2000) argues that many whites value the abstract concept of racial equality, but they also hold negative attitudes toward African-Americans that inevitably, if unintentionally, color their opinions about social or political issues implicating race. While aversive racists, according to this theory, do not use race explicitly as a basis for their attitudes and behaviors, they will support actions disadvantageous to African-Americans when sensing that nonracial justifications are available to them. Aversive racism typically is measured by respondents' self-reported discomfort at the prospect of social interaction with African-Americans and their concerns about African-Americans' assertiveness in seeking social and political advancement.

Subtle racism (Pettigrew and Meertens 1995, Meertens and Pettigrew 1997) differs conceptually from the other theories in depicting negative racial or ethnic attitudes as a withholding of positive attitudes toward the target group, rather than a direct expression of negative attitudes. For example, people who do not feel any sympathy or admiration for blacks would be considered to exhibit subtle racism. Subtle racism also posits that individuals scoring high on its measures believe the target group threatens traditional cultural values by not adhering to them, and that the individual's group adheres more to those values. Empirically, subtle racism improves upon previous measures of racial attitudes with its demonstrated applicability to a range of nations and target groups beyond African-Americans (Pettigrew 2000).

Another way to think about racial attitudes involves stereotyping (Bobo and Kluegel 1993). There are old stereotypes of racial groups, and some people still adhere to these stereotypes. Viewing African-Americans as lazy would be an example of this stereotyping. This can be viewed as an old-fashioned, blatant, form of prejudice, rather than the more modern type tapped by the previous theories.

Clearly, no scholarly consensus exists as to which theory best captures modern racial attitudes and their effects on political attitudes and behaviors. While similar in their distinction between overt racism and the more subtle, perhaps unconscious, negative racial attitudes that, according to such research, many white Americans hold, these theories differ in terms of conceptualizing modern racial attitudes and how best to measure them. Since there is no consensus in favor of one of these theories, we will not focus our analysis exclusively on the relationship between a single measure of racial attitudes and vote choice; instead, we make use of the full range of appropriate racial attitude measures available in the ANES datasets. We focus particularly on racial resentment and subtle racism because those are the theories that can be tested most clearly and directly with the measures available in the ANES datasets. Also, racial

resentment and subtle racism are two of the most prominent and influential theories in the racial attitudes literature.

In testing the effects of racial attitudes on vote choice, it is important to recognize that there were three separate race effects in the 2008 election. Some whites would have voted against Obama because of his race; media accounts from the primary and general election campaigns sometimes featured white Americans who directly stated that they were not voting for Obama because they could never support a black candidate. However, it is likely that more subtle expressions of negative racial attitudes had a much greater effect than overt racism. The second race effect is that at least some white voters might have decided to vote for Obama precisely because of his race; racial moderates could have seen Obama's election as a way to heal the nation's enduring racial divide. The third race effect was African-Americans' near-unanimous support for Obama, 95% according to the exit polls. McCain received the votes of only 3 of the 412 blacks in the 2008 ANES survey who reported voting that year (including here the over-sample of African-Americans, unweighted). This virtual unanimity means that the vote of African-Americans can be predicted almost perfectly by their race. At the same time, there is no reason to expect racial attitudes would have affected Hispanics the same way as non-Hispanic whites, and Barreto and Segura (2009) show that racial attitudes did not have a significant effect on their voting in 2008.³ Therefore, the multivariate analyses of vote presented in this paper focus on the voting of whites.⁴

Succession Effects and Voting

Any analysis of vote choice in the 2008 election would be incomplete were it not to account for the effects of George W. Bush's unpopular presidency. Bush's popularity plummeted in the months and years following his successful bid for a second term in 2004, owing primarily to an unsuccessful push for major Social Security reform, a federal response to Hurricane Katrina that most Americans viewed disapprovingly, and deteriorating conditions in Iraq, among other problems. Democrats retook both houses of Congress in the 2006 midterm elections, in large part due to their successful efforts to tie Congressional Republicans to the Bush Administration's policies. Barack Obama and his campaign used a similar strategy of guilt by association to attack Republican nominee John McCain during the 2008 general election, despite McCain's well-publicized differences with Bush and the Republican leadership in Congress. Given past evidence that evaluations of incumbent presidents significantly affect the performances of presidential candidates from their own party, there is ample reason to suspect that Bush's unpopularity was a major factor affecting vote choice in 2008.

The voting behavior literature long has emphasized the importance of the candidates in elections. While that literature usually focuses on the actual candidates, a retiring president also can be relevant. Mattei and Weisberg (1994) refer to this as a "succession effect" in their demonstration that attitudes toward Ronald Reagan were important to George H. W. Bush's election in 1988. They hypothesize that this effect should be strongest when a sitting vice-president tries to succeed the incumbent

³ Racial attitudes also proved insignificant when we applied the models in this paper to the Hispanic part of the ANES sample.

⁴ Our analysis is actually based on ANES respondents who are non-black non-Hispanic, but for convenience we shall term them "whites."

president, but will be weaker when the connections are more tenuous, as when ex-vice president Walter Mondale ran against incumbent President Reagan in 1984. Mattei and Weisberg also recognize that the succession effect can hurt the vice-president when the incumbent president is unpopular. However, the 2000 election showed that an incumbent president does not necessarily transfer his popularity to his vice-president when the vice-president avoids running on the successes of the incumbent administration (Weisberg and Hill 2004).

While previous studies of succession effects have dealt with vice-presidents, the concept is more generally applicable. When neither the sitting president nor vice-president run as their party's presidential candidate, the party nominee inevitably is affected by attitudes toward the incumbent administration. The connections still are relatively close when a cabinet secretary is nominated for president, as was the case when Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover ran successfully as the heir apparent to incumbent President Calvin Coolidge in 1928. The relationship is more distant when the presidential candidate is not even part of the outgoing administration. However, even that does not allow a candidate to disassociate himself from the administration, as Governor Stevenson found in 1952.

The 2008 situation most closely resembles 1952 in that the Republican candidate was not part of the incumbent administration. John McCain had been Bush's main opponent for the 2000 Republican presidential nomination, and Bush won the nomination that year due in large part to an aggressive, and many would argue vicious, campaign against McCain in the South Carolina primary. However, McCain became closer to Bush over the course of Bush's presidency, and Bush's trademark surge policy in the Iraq War was directly based on McCain's proposal. Given Bush's unpopularity, though, McCain tried his best to keep his distance from the President during the campaign, a strategy greatly complicated by Democratic efforts to portray McCain as identical ideologically to Bush. Still, it might be inevitable for the incumbent president to be tied in the public's mind to the presidential nominee of his party. Since McCain was not part of the administration and was not a consistent ally of Bush, the 2008 election constitutes a difficult test for succession effects.

The succession effect is a generalization of the retrospective voting concept (Fiorina 1981), capturing attitudes toward the incumbent president as well as policy evaluations of his administration. The usual sociotropic economic voting concept measures the extent to which an individual perceives that the economy has improved or deteriorated in recent years, without reference to the incumbent president or his administration. The succession effect concept is broader, recognizing that general attitudes toward the incumbent president can carry over to his party's presidential nominee, as would be the case if McCain were seen as a continuation of the Bush administration. In the present context, succession effects tap broad attitudes toward President Bush as well as his handling of specific national problems, such as the economy and foreign policy.

A Model of Voting in 2008

In order to measure the impact of racial attitudes and succession effects on the 2008 vote, we need to develop a standard vote choice model. Additionally, in order to determine whether any racial attitude effect we find in 2008 is unique to the Obama

candidacy, we need a model that we can test also in comparable elections. This also allows us to compare the strength of succession effects in 2008 with earlier instances when the heir had been part of the previous administration. We describe in this section the variables included in our 2008 vote choice model; the variables used in comparable analyses for earlier years are described in the appendix.

Long-term predispositions. We begin by including two standard long-term predispositions. Party identification is included in the equation, as it is perhaps the most powerful and consistent vote choice predictor, particularly in recent years (Bartels 2000; Lewis-Beck, Jacoby, Norpoth, and Weisberg 2008). Second, we include ideology, in the form of self-placement on a 7-point liberal-conservative scale, because it also is an exceptionally powerful and consistent predictor of vote choice (Jost 2006). Including ideological self-location in our models also is valuable because it allows us to isolate racial attitudes' effects from those of general ideological principles. One could reasonably imagine, for example, that voters who are more liberal on racial matters normally vote Democratic and that voters who are more conservative on racial matters normally vote Republican, especially if racial attitudes really just monitor general liberal-conservative views. Controlling on ideology helps ensure that any racial effects we might find extend beyond those that might be attribute to general liberal-conservative views. This should help respond to the argument that so-called racial attitude effects often represent nonracial ideological positions instead.

Issue attitudes. Economic issues dominated the 2008 campaign. At the most critical juncture of the fall presidential campaign, economic conditions worsened dramatically and the federal government began to take sweeping, and costly, action. Economic concerns were so dire that John McCain took the unprecedented step of suspending his presidential campaign temporarily in order to work with the President and the Congress on a controversial financial industry bailout package. Economic conditions and related issues regularly impact presidential voting, particularly in terms of voters' perceptions of national economic conditions (Kiewiet 1983). The retrospective economy question is an old standard, but the economy had weakened so unmistakably by the fall of 2008 as to trivialize the question: only 2.3% of non-Hispanic white voters believed the national economy had improved in the previous year. The variance is so slight that we cannot use the retrospective evaluation question. Instead, we use evaluation of the president's handling of the economy, a variable that we discuss below in the section on succession effects. While the vast majority of respondents also evaluated President Bush's handling of the economy negatively, the variance on this variable is greater, with 22.6% of non-Hispanic white voters approving of his performance.

Of course, economic issues were not the only issues that might have influenced voting in the 2008 election. Obama and McCain also sparred over foreign policy issues, including the Iraq War and the War on Terrorism; social issues, such as abortion, gay marriage, and gun control; and social welfare issues, such as healthcare and federal entitlement programs. Many of these issues have been shown to influence presidential voting significantly in recent elections. For example, voters' attitudes toward the Iraq War and the Afghanistan War significantly influenced presidential vote choice in the 2004 election (Weisberg and Christenson 2007). Social issues, particularly gay marriage, also garnered a great deal of attention in analyses of the 2004 election (Guth, Kellstedt, Smidt, and Green 2006; Hillygus and Shields 2005).

As often has been the case with ANES surveys, none of the available issue questions are ideal. While the bailout, gay marriage, and gun control items seem perfectly reasonable, for example, both candidates voted for the bailout bill in the Senate, both opposed gay marriage, and both accepted the Supreme Court's ruling that the Second Amendment guarantees individuals the right to bear arms. The Republican Party generally is seen as the more fiscally conservative as regards government spending and the deficit, but both actually ballooned during the Bush Administration. The Iraq War question asked about the government's handling of the war, not whether the U.S. should have become involved and not whether there should have been a surge, which were the points on which the candidates' positions differed most. At best, then, the issue questions should be seen as tapping general issue dimensions, like social and foreign policy issues, rather than being crafted carefully to capture the candidates' stances and debates of the 2008 campaign.

We include in our model one issue from each of three domains. Health care was an important issue throughout the campaign, and it was the most relevant social welfare issue in 2008. Gay marriage was not as important an issue in 2008 as it had been in 2004, but it remains a good indicator of social issue attitudes. We use the War on Terrorism rather than the Iraq War as our measure of foreign policy attitudes because it is a more comprehensive measure, bringing in civil liberties issues and extending also to the War in Afghanistan and, in the view of some Americans, the War in Iraq. Certainly, these are not the only issues that could be used to measure attitudes on each domain, but they are reasonable measures that represent different issue domains.

Candidate traits. In addition to long-term forces and contemporary issues, the presidential nominees and the quality of their campaigns are major factors influencing the outcome of presidential elections (Holbrook 1996; Johnston, Hagen, and Jamieson 2004; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). Indeed, the candidates' personal qualities figured prominently in the 2008 campaign. Barack Obama drew enormous crowds along the campaign trail, in large part due to his personal likeability and rhetorical skill, while also using the theme of "hope and change" to convey a sense of optimism and empathy to voters struggling through challenging economic times. Meanwhile, John McCain's campaign went to great lengths to highlight his leadership skills and history of military heroism, as a way of contrasting with the relatively inexperienced Obama, while also trumpeting his reputation as a Republican "maverick" in order to distance McCain from President Bush and congressional Republicans.

The candidate trait questions provide a useful perspective on how the public evaluated the 2008 candidates and compared them with one another. The traits have been combined, where appropriate, into broader trait categories; honesty and morality are combined to represent integrity, and knowledge and intelligence are combined to represent competence (Kinder 1986). Also, McCain's scores were subtracted from Obama's scores on each of the five trait categories, in order to capture the relative impact of each category on vote choice. The literature consistently finds leadership and empathy to affect voting across presidential elections (e.g., Weisberg and Hill 2004, Weisberg and Christenson 2007), whereas competence is rarely found to be significant in fully-developed multivariate models and integrity only sometimes is found significant.

Succession effects. We include two variables that are designed to measure the impact of the preceding administration on the 2008 vote. The first variable measures

feelings about President Bush, as measured by the feeling thermometer score given to him. Mattei and Weisberg (1994) demonstrate the importance of “succession effects” in the George H. W. Bush victory in 1988, so it is a relevant variable to include in the 2008 analysis. Second, we include evaluations of Bush’s handling of the economy. This variable not only taps succession effects, but it provides a measure of economic effects on the ballot which can be used regardless of the lack of variance on retrospective evaluations in 2008 and for which there are comparable measures in earlier election studies.

Racial attitudes. The 2008 ANES allows us to test several, but not all, of the racial attitude theories discussed earlier in this paper. First, we use the racial resentment scale, as constructed by Kinder and Sanders (1996). The racial resentment scale captures the central tenets of racial resentment, including beliefs about African-Americans’ work ethic, the impact of past discrimination on African-Americans’ present circumstances, and the extent to which African-Americans deserve better treatment by society. Following previous studies of racial resentment, we sum responses to the four relevant scale items included in the 2008 ANES, each of which are described in this paper’s appendix, to calculate respondents’ mean level of racial resentment. Respondents scoring relatively high on the racial resentment scale are expected to be less likely to have voted for Obama.

The 2008 ANES also measures respondents’ feelings of admiration and sympathy for African-Americans, the two measures comprising the affective prejudice component of the subtle racism scale; unfortunately, the other two components of subtle racism, traditional values and cultural differences, cannot be tested appropriately using the available ANES measures. We combine and then average respondents’ reported feelings of admiration and sympathy for African-Americans to form a partial measure of subtle racism. People who feel admiration and sympathy for African-Americans are expected to be more likely to have voted for Obama than those who do not.

Racial stereotyping is measured by combining and then averaging respondents’ placement of African-Americans on scales ranging from hardworking to lazy and intelligent to unintelligent, two of the most prominent measures of stereotyping used in that literature. Respondents who described blacks as lazy and unintelligent are expected to be less likely to have voted for Obama.

The final two measures of racial attitudes do not follow directly from racial attitude theories, but they are useful indicators of racial attitudes. Our fourth measure of racial attitudes subtracts the feeling thermometer score given to blacks from the thermometer score given to whites, to provide a measure of relative affect toward racial groups. Respondents rating whites much higher than blacks are expected to be less likely to have voted for Obama.

Finally, to test racial policy preferences’ relevance to vote choice, even when controlling for respondent ideology, we constructed a measure of attitudes toward two issues implicating race: respondents’ attitudes toward government provision of aid to African-Americans and toward preferential hiring and promotion for African-Americans. Whereas the principled conservatism perspective would predict that these policy preferences have no impact on vote choice when controlling for ideology, the other racial attitude theories described above would predict a significant relationship, because they argue that these policy preferences are motivated, at least in large part, by racial attitudes.

Summary. Our interest, once again, is in analyzing the effects of racial attitudes and feelings about the incumbent presidential administration on the 2008 vote, with comparison to other recent elections to check whether they had comparable effects in similar elections. But to measure these effects across elections, first we must develop a model that includes relevant factors influencing the 2008 vote. We choose for this purpose to employ one variable from each of the standard set of predictors: party identification, ideology (liberal-conservative self-placement), a foreign policy issue (handling of terrorism), a social issue (gay marriage), a social welfare issue (health care), and candidate traits (leadership, integrity, empathy, and competence). To measure succession effects, we also include respondents' views of the departing president (feeling thermometer) and an economic evaluation (evaluation of the president's stewardship of the economy).

Recognizing scholars' disagreements about how best to capture racial attitudes in today's society, we conduct separate logit analyses of vote choice for each of the five available measures of racial attitudes: racial resentment, subtle racism, racial stereotyping, the difference in the respondent's feeling thermometer scores for whites and blacks, and racial policy attitudes. Comparing the results of these models allows us to check whether significant findings are due to the choice of racial attitudes measure or whether there were general racial attitude effects on voting in 2008.

To gauge the relative impact of racial attitudes and succession effects on vote choice in previous relevant elections, we perform similar analyses for the two other most recent elections in which the incumbent president was not a candidate for reelection: the Bush-Gore race of 2000 and the Bush-Dukakis race of 1988. Unfortunately, the 1988 and 2000 ANES do not include all of the racial attitude measures included in the 2008 ANES; as a result, we cannot test the impact of subtle racism on vote choice in 1988 and 2000 and the impact of racial stereotyping on vote choice in 1988. With respect to the other independent variables included in our 2008 vote choice model, identical measures are available across ANES datasets in several cases (e.g. health care, evaluations of the president's economic performance). However, in others cases (e.g. gay marriage, government handling of terrorism) we had to use the most similar measures available to closely approximate those variables' effects in 1988 and 2000. Finally, since African-American respondents' near-unanimous support for Obama necessitates excluding them from our 2008 analysis and since racial dynamics are different for Hispanics than non-Hispanic whites, we also exclude African-American and Hispanic respondents from our analyses of earlier elections. In doing so, we maximize the comparability of our analyses across election years.

It is worth noting that we do not include demographic variables in the subsequent analyses. We expect that demographic variables would affect several of the predictors in our model, such as party identification. We also recognize that demographics such as age and education are likely to affect racial attitudes, with younger people and those with college education likely to have more liberal racial attitudes. However, we expect that nearly all of the effects of demographic variables would work through the variables already in the model, rather than having effects independent of these variables.⁵ That is,

⁵ Because of their potential relationship to racial attitudes, we have tested whether age and education have significant effects if they were added to the models in this paper, and in nearly every case they were not significant.

we expect that demographics will have indirect effects, through their impact on party identification and also on racial attitudes, but there is little reason to clutter the model to test for direct effects that are not of theoretical interest to this paper.

Results

Whereas the construction of our empirical models might seem complex, the results are very simple to summarize: racial attitudes affected voting in 2008, but not in 2000 or 1988, and this conclusion holds for multiple measures of racial attitudes employed in our analyses. Also, validating our emphasis on the importance of succession effects, the models that include evaluations of the departing president have better predictive power than the models not including those evaluations. Synthesizing these results, we find a clear, albeit imperfect, pattern indicating that racial attitudes strongly influenced voting in 2008, whereas they had no such independent impact on the vote in the two most recent elections not featuring an incumbent presidential candidate. Recognizing that racial attitudes could be affecting some of the other variables in these models, particularly the candidate traits but also party identification and ideology, it would seem that our analysis constitutes a hard test of racial attitudes' impact on the vote. As such, the strong performance of racial attitudes should be seen as all the more impressive.

Table 1 presents the logit analysis of the major-party vote in 2008.⁶ To demonstrate the importance of racial attitude and succession effects in the 2008 election, we present equations with and without these variables. This analytic strategy highlights the predictive accuracy gained by adding measures of racial attitude and succession effects to our vote choice model, while also demonstrating how omitting these variables might impact substantive interpretations of other independent variables typically included in vote choice models.

[Table 1 about here]

Model 1 is a standard logit equation without racial attitude or succession effects. This model correctly predicts the vote in 91.8 percent of all cases. Several of the variables achieve statistical significance in this model, including party identification, ideology, leadership, and integrity.

The addition of succession effects to Model 2 increases the model's predictive accuracy from 91.8 percent of all cases to 93.9 percent, a substantial increase given the limited potential for improvement due to measurement error and ceiling effects. Both the Bush thermometer and evaluations of his handling of the economy are significant, while ideology no longer is significant.

Models 3a-3e add separately each measure of racial attitudes to what is included in Model 2. The predictive accuracy of these models varies from the same as Model 2 (for the racial thermometer difference score) to a slight decrease to 93.5 percent (subtle racism scale). Racial resentment ($p=.000$) and subtle racism ($p=.003$) are significant predictors of vote choice, while racial stereotyping ($p=.109$), racial thermometer difference score ($p=.051$), and racial policy ($p=.087$) are not significant.

Turning to the other variables in the models, party identification, candidate leadership and integrity, Bush thermometer, and Bush economic evaluations, are always

⁶ The analysis was performed in STATA. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses so as to provide a conservative test of significance.

significant, while ideology loses significance once succession and racial attitude effects are added and candidate empathy is significant only in Model 3b. While the inability to increase the predictive success of the Model 2 is noticeable, one must consider that only 6.1 percent of observations remained to be predicted accurately before adding the racial attitude variables to this model. Clearly there is an upper limit to the potential predictive accuracy of any model due to measurement error (due to respondent errors as well as survey instrument effects) being inevitable in any survey. Comparing the results of these equations reveals that racial attitude and succession effects, two predictors not included in conventional vote choice models but highly relevant to the 2008 election, belong in models of the 2008 vote.

Long-term predispositions. Not surprisingly, party identification is statistically significant across all models. Ideology is significant in the standard model, but it loses significance when succession and racial attitudes effects are added to the equation.

Issues. Issue effects are not evident in this many-predictor model. None of the issues included in our models – gay marriage, health care, and the government’s handling of terrorism – are significant predictors of vote choice in any of our equations, though they might have some indirect effects through other variables in our model.

Candidate traits. The candidate trait variables partially follow the pattern of previous elections: leadership and integrity are always significant, while competence is never found to be significant. That candidate competence is not significant attests to Obama’s success in refuting the claims of his opponents that he was too inexperienced to be President. While empathy was significant in studies of other recent elections, it is significant only in Model 3b.

Succession effects. Evaluations of President Bush’s handling of the economy are always significant, as is Bush’s thermometer rating. Bush’s average popularity in the pre-election survey for white voters was 44.6. Given Bush’s low thermometer rating, the succession effect clearly hurt McCain’s election chances even though McCain was not part of the Bush administration. President Bush’s handling of the economy also affected the vote, with public reactions being quite negative, as noted earlier in this paper. This analysis implies that reactions to President Bush were relevant to voting in 2008, even after controlling for partisanship and the trait evaluations of the actual nominees. Bush’s handling of the economy helped keep his party from retaining the White House, and this is evident even though we could not use the usual retrospective economic voting question due to its minimal variance. More importantly, personal affect toward Bush directly impacted the vote, despite the fact that he was not a candidate for president and his party’s nominee was not a clear ally.

Racial attitudes. Racial attitudes prove to be significant when measured in terms of racial resentment and subtle racism. Respondents scoring relatively high on the racial resentment and subtle racism scales were significantly less likely to have voted for Obama. Including these and other racial attitudes measures generally does not add to the percentage of votes correctly predicted by our models, although the baseline models already correctly predict such a high percentage of cases that there is little space for predictive accuracy to be improved. However, the statistics provided at the bottom of Table 1 show that the decrease in the -2 Log Likelihood value always is significant when racial resentment and subtle racism measures are added to our equations.

To gain a more precise estimate of the independent variables' relative impact on vote choice, we calculate effect sizes for each variable.⁷ We focus primarily upon Model 3a, including racial resentment as our measure of racial attitudes, here and in the analyses that follow because racial resentment arguably is the most influential racial attitudes theory measured in the ANES and because it is better measured in ANES than are other theories.

The final column of Table 1 provides effect sizes for each of the independent variables in Model 3a; specifically, these numbers represent the change in predicted probability of a vote for Obama when moving from one half standard deviation below that variable's mean value to one half standard deviation above that variable's mean value, holding all other independent variables at their mean values. The Bush thermometer and racial resentment scale are tied with evaluations of candidate leadership for the third largest effect sizes in the model, trailing only party identification and candidate integrity. The 0.49 predicted probability of voting for Obama when respondents rate President Bush one-half standard deviation below the mean is 0.16 higher than the 0.32 probability of voting for Obama when respondents rate President Bush one-half standard deviation above the mean. Identically, the 0.49 predicted probability of voting for Obama when respondents score one-half standard deviation below the mean on the racial resentment scale is 0.16 higher than the 0.32 probability of voting for Obama when respondents score one-half standard deviation above the mean on the racial resentment scale. The effect sizes are shown only for Model 3a, but they are close to those values for most of the variables in Models 3b, 3c, and 3e, with the important exception of the racial attitude variables, whose effects vary considerably between these different models (see bottom row of Table 1 for the racial attitude variable effects for the different models).

Also provided in Table 1 are the mean values for each of the independent variables included in the vote models. Using these values, we can gain a sense of how the significant predictors of vote choice combined to shape the election's outcome. McCain benefited from white voters' tendency to view him as a stronger leader than Obama, and as the candidate possessing greater integrity. Additionally, he benefited from a modest tendency toward Republican Party identification among white voters. However, McCain lost votes due to the negative net view of President Bush and his handling of the economy, as indicated by the negative mean values for those variables.

Table 2 shows the joint effects of the racial resentment and Bush thermometer variables on the predicted probability of voting for Obama, when all other variables are held at their means. The Obama vote probability is a good deal lower when a respondent scores at the high point of racial resentment but rates Bush zero on the feeling thermometer than when a respondent scores at the low end of racial resentment but rates Bush 100 on the thermometer, again emphasizing the importance of racial attitudes. Note also that a respondent scoring at the neutral points on both variables has a 0.46 probability of voting for Obama. However, the average white voting respondent scored above the midpoint on racial resentment and well below the midpoint on the Bush thermometer.

⁷ These estimates were obtained using the SPOST procedure available in STATA.

The effects of subtle racism, racial stereotyping and racial policy preferences are smaller than those of racial resentment. Attitudes toward President Bush made much more difference than respondents' positions on these scales.

[Table 2 about here]

Racial Attitude Effects in 1988, 2000, and 2004

What we cannot tell from this analysis is whether racial attitudes always are significant in presidential voting or whether our findings are unique to Obama's candidacy. The voting behavior literature does not usually include tests of whether racial attitudes have had independent effects in multivariate analysis of voting in previous elections because most analysts have not seen a reason to include racial attitudes as a separate vote predictor. However, individuals whose attitudes toward African-Americans are relatively positive could be more likely to favor Democratic candidates in general, even when an African-American is not on the ballot, and individuals whose attitudes toward African-Americans are relatively negative could be more likely to favor Republican candidates in general, regardless of the candidates in a particular election. Therefore, understanding the importance of racial attitudes in 2008 requires performing a comparable analysis for previous election years.

To test whether racial attitudes have independent effects on presidential voting more generally, we ran similar models for 1988 and 2000, the two most recent elections in which a sitting president did not run for reelection. Fortunately, there are questions in the ANES surveys from those years that are identical to, or that reasonably approximate, the measures we include in our analysis of the 2008 data.

The third and fourth columns of Table 3 show the logit coefficients for the succession and racial attitude variables in 2000 and 1988, derived from equations similar to those in Table 1. Racial attitudes did not have a significant effect on vote choice in the Bush-Gore race of 2000. The Clinton thermometer was significant, attesting to the importance of succession effects (Weisberg and Hill 2004). However, evaluations of the economy during the Clinton administration were not significant, reflecting Gore's choice not to run on the record of the incumbent administration because of Clinton's moral problems. The rest of the equation (not shown) indicates that, as usual, party identification is a powerful predictor in 2000, as are candidate leadership and empathy. The gay policy item also is significant, while ideology, candidate competence, candidate integrity, health care, and U.S. security all are not significant in most models.

[Table 3 about here]

Given the notorious Willie Horton ad, one might expect racial attitudes to have had a substantial direct effect on voting in the 1988 election, but Table 3 shows that was not the case. None of the racial attitude variables were significant. The important influences were party identification and evaluations of the candidates' leadership and empathy, as well as a succession effect that is represented by the Reagan feeling thermometer (Mattei and Weisberg 1994). To be clear, this analysis is just showing that racial attitudes did not have an independent direct effect on the 1988 vote in addition to the other variables in this analysis. It is certainly possible – and likely – that racial attitudes would have affected party identification, the evaluation of the candidates' traits, and/or ratings of the president.

Comparison across the 2008, 2000, and 1988 columns of Table 3 also affords an opportunity to discuss the relative importance of succession effects in the three most recent presidential elections in which the incumbent was not on the ballot. The incumbent's thermometer had a significant effect on the vote in every model in every election year we analyzed. While we have attempted to use similar predictors for all three elections, it is still hazardous to compare coefficients across the elections. However, it would appear that the greatest effect was in 1988, when George H. W. Bush was seen as the direct heir to the president he served with, albeit promising "a gentler and kinder" administration. The succession effect, as captured by the feeling thermometer, was present, but weaker, when Gore tried distancing himself from Clinton in 2000 and when McCain tried distancing himself from Bush in 2008. Yet there was an additional succession effect in 2008, not evident in the other elections analyzed, whereby Bush's handling of the economy negatively impacted the vote for McCain.

While the results presented so far demonstrate that there was no direct racial attitude effect on presidential voting in the succession elections of 1988 and 2000, this does not demonstrate that the effect found for 2008 is novel since there could have been a similar effect in 2004. Testing for a racial attitudes effect in 2004 requires an important change in our modeling, in that 2004 was not a succession election. We still employ the same variables, including approval of Bush's handling of the economy and his thermometer rating, but these are now evaluations of one of the candidates rather than of the departing president. While imperfect, this is the closest we can come to testing a similar model for the election just prior to 2008. The racial attitude effect is not significant in our tests of the 2004 data. Indeed, the logit equation (not shown) finds that the only significant predictors of presidential voting in that year are party identification, ideology, candidate empathy ratings, and thermometer ratings of President Bush.

Conclusions

Racial attitudes and evaluations of President Bush greatly influenced voting in 2008. Even in a model with predictor variables that include long-term predispositions, candidate traits, and issue effects, reactions to President Bush and his administration and racial attitudes are found to have significant effects on vote choice among whites.

Voting in the 2008 election became historic when the majority of voters cast their ballot for an African-American candidate. However historic the election results, that does not mean that race was irrelevant to voting. Racial attitudes had important effects on voting, which is not surprising given the history of race in America. Indeed, racial attitudes had more direct effects on voting in 2008 than in comparable elections when any effect they had worked through party identification and attitudes toward the candidates.

In looking at the effects of racial attitudes, it is very important to be clear that our intention is not to describe individuals at the conservative end of these scales as "racist." When one looks at the individual items in some of these scales, one immediately recognizes that ideological conservatives might agree with them without being racist at all. That is why using multiple racial attitude measures in Table 1 is so important. While one can argue that conservative positions on racial resentment are not necessarily racist, it would be harder to argue that describing blacks as lazy and unintelligent is not a sign of prejudice if racial stereotyping had been significant. As a result, phrases like "racial resentment" and "racial anxiety" are much more appropriate in summarizing the results

of Models 3a and 3b in Table 1 than would be describing these effects as evidence of racism. What is important for our analysis is simply that racial attitudes had an independent effect on the vote in 2008. Indeed, one could equally argue that people on the liberal end of these scales are racist, if they were voting for Barack Obama because of his race rather than because of other factors in the election. Table 1 shows that racial attitudes were relevant to the 2008 vote, not that people on one side (or the other) were racist in their voting behavior.

The evidence indicates, then, that racial attitudes posed a significant threat to Obama's candidacy, despite Obama's efforts to run a "post-racial" campaign and the McCain campaign's decision not to address explicitly Obama's race as a campaign issue. Racial anxiety, however, was not powerful enough to overcome the countervailing effects of an unpopular outgoing Republican president, increasing identification with the Democratic Party and near-unanimous voting among energized African-Americans. Had electoral and economic conditions not been so unusually favorable to the Democratic candidate, though, one must wonder whether the prevalence of negative racial attitudes among the white electorate might have tipped the balance against Obama and cost him the election.

In an election in which race rarely was evoked explicitly, race appears as an important factor in our analysis in two important respects. First, the African-American vote was so overwhelmingly favorable to the Democratic ticket, and racial attitude effects were so lacking among Hispanics, that our modeling attempts must focus on non-Hispanic whites exclusively. Second, racial attitudes had a clear effect on the election – not enough to deprive Barack Obama of victory, but perhaps only because of personal and political conditions quite favorable to Obama's candidacy. The 2008 election showed that Americans could go beyond race in electing a president, but that does not mean that race has become unimportant in voting.

In the end, racial attitudes and President Bush's unpopularity were important influences on presidential voting. That means that Obama's victory came from combining his exceptionally solid support among newly-energized African-Americans and Hispanics with his minimizing of McCain's advantages on party identification, leadership, and integrity, among white voters.

The implications of race's electoral significance in 2008 for the future will become apparent only after the Obama Administration passes into the history books. It remains to be seen whether the African-American vote will become less monolithic after Obama's historic election, as the Catholic vote became after the Kennedy presidency. After all, Obama will have to advance policies that satisfy the electorate as a whole, which might mean not directly satisfying the policy desires of African-Americans. An equally important question is whether racial attitudes will affect voting less after the country experiences a black president for at least four years. A post-racial election did not transcend race, but it remains to be seen how much the 2008 election and the Obama presidency affect the importance of race in future American elections.

References

- Abramowitz, Alan I. 1994. "Issue Evolution Reconsidered: Racial Attitudes and Partisanship in the U.S. Electorate." *American Journal of Political Science* 38: 1-24.
- Barreto, Matt A., and Gary M. Segura. 2009. "Estimating the Effects of Traditional Predictors, Group Specific Forces, and Anti-Black Affect on 2008 Presidential Voting among Latinos and Non-Hispanic Whites." Paper presented at the Mershon Conference on the Transformative Election of 2008, Columbus, Ohio.
- Bartels, Larry M. 2000. "Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952-1996." *American Journal of Political Science* 44: 35-50.
- Bobo, Lawrence, and James R. Kluegel. 1993. "Opposition to Race-Targeting." *American Sociological Review* 58: 443-64.
- Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. New York: John Wiley.
- Carmines, Edward G., and James A. Stimson. 1989. *Issue Evolution*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Dovidio, John F., and Samuel L. Gaertner. 2000. "Aversive Racism and Selection Decisions: 1989 and 1999." *Psychological Science*: 11: 315-19.
- Fazio, Russell H., Joni R. Jackson, Bridget C. Dunton, and Carol J. Williams. 1995. "Variability in Automatic Activation as an Unobtrusive Measure of Racial Attitudes." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 69: 1013-27.
- Fiorina, Morris P. 1981. *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Guth, James L., Lyman A. Kellstedt, Corwin E. Smidt, and John C. Green. 2006. "Religious Influences in the 2004 Presidential Election." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36 (2): 223-42.
- Hillygus, Sunshine, and Todd G. Shields. 2005. "Moral Issues and Voter Decision Making in the 2004 Presidential Election." *P.S.: Political Science and Politics* 38 (2): 201-09.
- Holbrook, Thomas M. 1996. *Do Campaigns Matter?* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Johnston, Richard, Michael G. Hagen, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. 2004. *The 2000 Presidential Election and the Foundations of Party Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Jost, John T. 2006. "The End of the End of Ideology." *American Psychologist* 61: 651-70.
- Katz, Irwin, and R. Glen Hass. 1988. "Racial Ambivalence and American Value Conflict: Correlational and Priming Studies of Dual Cognitive Structures." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 55: 893-905.
- Katz, Irwin, Joyce Wackenhut, and R. Glen Hass. 1986. "Racial Ambivalence, Value Duality, and Behavior." In John F. Dovidio and Samuel L. Gaertner, eds., *Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism* (pp. 35-60). New York: Academic Press.
- Key, V. O., Jr., 1949. *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. New York: Alfred Knopf.
- Kiewiet, D. Roderick. 1983. *Macroeconomics and Micropolitics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kinder, Donald R. 1986. "Presidential Character Revisited." In *Political Cognition*, ed. Richard R. Lau and David O. Sears. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.

- Kinder, Donald R., and Lynn M. Sanders. 1996. *Divided by Color*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kinder, Donald R., and David O. Sears. 1981. "Prejudice and Politics." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 40: 414-31.
- Lewis-Beck, Michael, William Jacoby, Helmut Norpoth, and Herbert F. Weisberg. 2008. *The American Voter Revisited*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Mattei, Franco, and Herbert F. Weisberg. 1994. "Presidential Succession Effects in Voting," *British Journal of Political Science*, 24: 269-90.
- McConahay, John B., Betty B. Hardee, and Valerie Batts. 1981. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 25: 563-79.
- Meertens, Roel W., and Thomas F. Pettigrew. 1997. "Is Subtle Prejudice Really Prejudice?" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 61: 54-71.
- Mendelberg, Tali. 1997. "Executing Hortons: Racial Crime in the 1988 Presidential Campaign." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 61: 134-57.
- Mendelberg, Tali. 2001. *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Myrdal, Gunnar. 1944. *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. New York: Harper and Brothers.
- Pettigrew, Thomas F., and Roel W. Meertens. 1995. "Subtle and Blatant Prejudice in Western Europe." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 25: 57-75.
- Schuman, Howard, Charlotte Steeh, Lawrence Bobo, and Maria Krysan. 1997. *Racial Attitudes in America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Sears, David O. 1988. "Symbolic Racism." In P. Katz and D. Taylor, eds., *Eliminating Racism*. New York: Plenum, pp. 53-84.
- Sears, David O., and Donald R. Kinder. 1971. "Racial Tensions and Voting in Los Angeles." In W. Z. Hirsch, ed., *Los Angeles: Viability and Prospects for Metropolitan Leadership*. New York: Praeger, pp. 51-88.
- Sears, Donald O. Colette van Laar, Mary Carrillo, and Rick Kosterman. 1997. "Is It Really Racism? The Origins of White Americans' Opposition to Race-Targeted Policies." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 61: 16-53.
- Sniderman, Paul M., and Thomas Piazza. 1993. *The Scar of Race*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Sniderman, Paul M., and Philip Tetlock. 1986. "Symbolic Racism: Problems of Motive Attribution in Empirical Analysis." *Journal of Social Issues*. 42: 129-50.
- Tesler, Michael, and David O. Sears. 2009. "Barack Obama and the Two Sides of Symbolic Racism: Explaining the Effects of Racial Resentment in the Primaries and Beyond." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago.
- Weisberg, Herbert F., and Dino P. Christenson. 2007. "Changing Horses in Wartime? The 2004 Presidential Election." *Political Behavior* 29: 279-304.
- Weisberg, Herbert F., and Christopher J. Devine. 2009. "Partisanship and Voting in the 2008 U.S. Election." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago.
- Weisberg, Herbert F., and Timothy Hill. 2004. "The Succession Presidential Election of 2000: The Battle of the Legacies," in Weisberg and Wilcox, *Models of Voting in Presidential Elections*, Stanford University Press, pp. 27-48.

APPENDIX

Coding the Key Variables of the 2008 Presidential Election

All variables were taken from the 2008 American National Election Study (<http://www.electionstudies.org/>). We have weighted the data by the post-election survey weight (V080102). The independent variables are rescaled on a scale of -1 to +1, with positive values for conservative positions and negative values for liberal positions, to permit easy comparisons across variables.

Vote Choice: V085055a, rescaled: +1 for Obama and 0 for McCain, with all other responses discarded.

Black & Hispanic: V08251a.

Party Identification: V083098x, rescaled from -1 for strong Democrats to +1 for strong Republicans.

Ideology: V083069, rescaled: -1 for extremely liberal to +1 for extremely conservative, with “don’t know” and “refused” responses recoded to 0 and nonresponses discarded.

Health care: Half of the ANES sample were asked their opinion about health insurance using the traditional seven-point scale format (V083119) and the other half of the sample were asked their opinion about health insurance using a branching format (V083124x). Responses to the two versions were combined into a single measure, coded -1 for respondents most strongly favoring government health insurance and +1 for respondents most strongly favoring private health insurance, with “don’t know” or “refuse” responses recoded to 0.

Terrorism: V085211x, measuring approval “of the way the U.S. federal government has handled the effort to reduce the risk of terrorist attacks in the United States during the last four years,” rescaled -1 for “Disapprove extremely strongly,” +1 for “Approve extremely strongly,” 0 for “don’t know” or “refused,” and nonresponses discarded.

Gay Marriage: “Should same-sex couples be ALLOWED to marry, or do you think they should NOT BE ALLOWED to marry?” (-1 for “should be allowed,” +1 for “should not be allowed,” 0 for “should not be allowed to marry but should be allowed to legally form a civil union” (volunteered), “don’t know,” or “refused,” and nonresponses discarded.)

Candidate Traits: These scales are additive measures of evaluations of Obama minus those of McCain in each category: leadership, competence, integrity, and empathy. Each trait was measured originally on a four- or five-point scale, varying due to a question wording experiment in the ANES survey. Traits captured by a single question, including leadership and empathy, were rescaled from -4 to +4, with higher scores indicating a more positive rating of the candidate on that trait. For traits captured by two underlying traits, including integrity and competence, the underlying traits were rescaled from -2 to +2, with higher scores indicating a more positive rating of the candidate, and summed to create single measures of integrity and competence. Since each candidate trait was measured on a scale ranging from -4 to +4, the difference of the Obama score minus the McCain score is between -8 and +8; dividing the measures by 8 yields a scale ranging from -1 (pro-McCain) to +1 (pro-Obama).

Bush Thermometer: V083036, pre-election thermometer, rescaled: -1 for scores of 0, +1 for scores of 100, 0 for scores of 50, and nonresponses discarded.

Approval of Bush Handling of Economy: V083029x, rescaled: -1 for strong disapproval, +1 for strong approval, 0 for “don’t know” or “refused,” and nonresponses discarded.

Racial Thermometer Difference: Additive measure of respondents’ 0 to 100 feeling thermometer ratings of “blacks” (V085064y) minus those of “whites” (V085065c). Thermometer difference scores were rescaled to equal -1 for responses most favorable to African-Americans and +1 for responses most unfavorable to African-Americans.

Racial Resentment: Summary measure of four strongly agree to strongly disagree items: V085143, V085144, V085145, and V085146. V085143 reads: “Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.” V085144 reads: “Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.” V085145 reads: “Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.” V085146 reads: “It’s really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites.”

Responses to each question first were rescaled to equal -1 for responses most favorable to African-Americans, +1 for responses most unfavorable to African-Americans, and 0 for middle, “don’t know,” or “refused” responses. The four measures then were summed and recoded -1 for response totals most favorable to African-Americans and +1 for response totals most unfavorable to African-Americans. [This same rescaling procedure was used for the Subtle Racism, Racial Stereotyping, and Racial Policy scales below.]

Subtle Racism: Summary measure of how often respondents reported feeling sympathy (V085115) and admiration (V085116) for African-Americans.

Racial Stereotyping: Summary measure of respondents’ placements of African-Americans on scales ranging from hard-working to lazy (V083207b) and intelligent to unintelligent (V083208b).

Racial Policy Scale: Summary measure of two scale self-placement items: V083137 and V085157. V083137 reads: “Some people feel that the government in Washington should make every effort to improve the social and economic position of blacks. (Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1.) Others feel that the government should not make any special effort to help blacks because they should help themselves. (Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7.) And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6. Where would you place YOURSELF on this scale, or haven’t you thought much about this?” V085157 reads: “Some people say that because of past discrimination, blacks should be given preference in hiring and promotion. Others say that such preference in hiring and promotion of blacks is wrong because it gives blacks advantages they haven’t earned. What about your opinion – are you FOR or AGAINST preferential hiring and promotion of blacks?”

Variable information for 1988, 2000, and 2004 models is given below.

Variable	2004	2000	1988
Vote Choice	V045026	V001249	V880763
Minority	V043299	V001006a	V880412
Party Identification	V043116	V000523	V880274
Ideology	V045117	V000446	V880228
Dem Candidate: Leader	V043125	V000527	V880288
GOP Candidate: Leader	V043118	V000534	V880279
Dem Candidate: Moral	V043124	V000524	V880286
GOP Candidate: Moral	V043117	V000531	V880277
Dem Candidate: Honest	V043129	V000528	V880292
GOP Candidate: Honest	V043122	V000535	V880283
Dem Candidate: Knowledgeable	V043127	V000526	V880291
GOP Candidate: Knowledgeable	V043120	V000533	V880282
Dem Candidate: Intelligent	V043128	V000529	V880284
GOP Candidate: Intelligent	V043121	V000536	V880275
Dem Candidate: Empathy/Cares	V043126	V000525	V880290
GOP Candidate: Empathy/Cares	V043119	V000532	V880281
Health care	V043150	V000614	V880318
Terrorism/Retrospective U.S. Security	V043033	V001608a	V881035
Gay marriage/gays: military, adoption, job discrimination	V043210	V000727/V007048/V001481	V880853
Incumbent Thermometer	V045043	V000359	V880158
Incumbent Economy	V043027	V000500	V880227
Racial Resentment #1	V045193	V001508	V880961
Racial Resentment #2	V045194	V001511	V880964
Racial Resentment #3	V045195	V001509	V880962
Racial Resentment #4	V045196	V001510	V880963
Subtle Racism: Sympathy	NA	NA	NA
Subtle Racism: Admiration	NA	NA	NA
Stereotype: Hardworking/Lazy	V045223	V001575	NA
Stereotype: Intelligent/Unintelligent	V045227	V001579	NA
White Thermometer	V045086	V001309	V880614
Black Thermometer	V045077	V001308	V880613
Racial Policy: Aid to Blacks	V043158	V000645	V880332
Racial Policy: Job Preference	V045207	V000806	V880857

Table 1.
Logit Analysis of Obama Vote, 2008

	Mean	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3a	Model 3b	Model 3c	Model 3d	Model 3e	Effect Size 3a
Constant		.23 ns (.18)	-.54 ns (.28)	-.24 ns (.30)	-.47 ns (.28)	-.56 * (.28)	-.40 ns (.29)	-.26 ns (.30)	
Party ID	.06	-1.95 *** (.27)	-1.60 *** (.28)	-1.63 *** (.28)	-1.57 *** (.28)	-1.58 *** (.28)	-1.63 *** (.29)	-1.56 *** (.28)	-0.28
Ideology	.09	-.91 * (.42)	-.79 ns (.44)	-.82 ns (.46)	-.78 ns (.44)	-.74 ns (.43)	-.79 ns (.46)	-.82 ns (.45)	-0.10
Leadership	-.10	1.50 * (.59)	1.44 * (.57)	1.32 * (.58)	1.42 * (.60)	1.37 * (.58)	1.54 ** (.59)	1.35 * (.58)	0.16
Integrity	-.09	2.30 ** (.82)	2.41 ** (.86)	2.40 ** (.88)	2.64 ** (.94)	2.47 ** (.89)	2.30 ** (.88)	2.31 ** (.86)	0.26
Empathy	.05	.85 ns (.58)	.51 ns (.62)	.38 ns (.64)	.36 * (.67)	.46 ns (.64)	.36 ns (.63)	.52 ns (.63)	0.05
Competence	.01	.77 ns (.93)	.30 ns (.90)	.24 ns (.91)	.37 ns (.91)	.34 ns (.90)	.34 ns (.93)	.34 ns (.91)	0.02
Healthcare	-.01	-.38 ns (.22)	-.36 ns (.23)	-.30 ns (.23)	-.33 ns (.23)	-.35 ns (.23)	-.36 ns (.23)	-.30 ns (.22)	-0.05
Terrorism	.31	-.36 ns (.30)	.01 ns (.30)	.08 ns (.29)	-.01 ns (.30)	-.03 ns (.31)	.04 ns (.30)	-.01 ns (.30)	0.01
Gay Marriage	-.03	-.33 ns (.19)	-.30 ns (.19)	-.26 ns (.19)	-.28 ns (.19)	-.26 ns (.19)	-.25 ns (.20)	-.26 ns (.20)	-0.05
Bush Therm	-.11		-1.08 *** (.32)	-1.07 ** (.34)	-1.12 *** (.33)	-1.17 *** (.34)	-1.11 *** (.33)	-1.10 *** (.32)	-0.16
Bush Economy	-.49		-.73 * (.35)	-.85 * (.38)	-.79 * (.37)	-.75 * (.35)	-.74 * (.36)	-.80 * (.36)	-0.15
Racial Resentment	.27			-1.39 *** (.36)					-0.16
Subtle Racism	.03				-.84 ** (.28)				
Racial	-.05					-.76 ns			

Stereotyping						(.47)			
Racial Diff Score	.06						-2.12 ns (1.09)		
Racial Policy	.50							-58 ns (.34)	
Racial Attitude Effect				-.16	-.11	-.07	-.09	-.07	
N		1243	1242	1242	1242	1242	1205	1242	
% correct		91.8%	93.9%	93.7%	93.5%	93.6%	93.9%	93.7%	
-2LL		554.93	516.71	493.75	502.81	510.80	496.11	513.33	
d.f.		9	11	12	12	12	12	12	
LR v Model 1			38.22	61.18	52.12	44.13	-	41.60	
d.f.			2	3	3	3		3	
p			<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	
LR v Model 2				22.96	13.90	5.91	-	3.38	
d.f.				1	1	1		1	
p				<.001	<.001	<.05		n.s.	

Notes: Predictors are coded so that positive coefficients represent Republican party identification, conservative ideology, higher ratings for the Democratic candidate than the Republican on leadership traits, taking more conservative positions on political issues, positive feelings about the incumbent administration and its economic policies, and more racial attitudes less favorable to African-Americans.

The Likelihood Ratio tests were not computed for Model 3d since its N was not sufficiently close to those of the comparison models.

Effect sizes are shown only for Model 3a; the effects for the other models are generally within .02 of these values.

Table 2.
 Predicted Probabilities of Vote for Obama, by Racial Resentment and Bush Thermometer Scores*

<u>Bush</u> <u>Thermometer</u>	<u>Racial Resentment</u>				
	-1.00	-0.50	0	0.50	1.00
0	0.91	0.83	0.71	0.55	0.38
25	0.85	0.75	0.59	0.42	0.27
50	0.78	0.63	0.46	0.30	0.18
75	0.67	0.50	0.33	0.20	0.11
100	0.54	0.37	0.23	0.13	0.07

*Predicted probabilities calculated from logit analysis of Model 3a, holding all other variables at their mean values.

Table 3.
Logit Analysis of Vote for Democratic Presidential Candidates*

	2008	2004	2000	1988
President's Thermometer	-1.08 *** (.32)	-3.88 *** (.94)	1.47 *** (.33)	-1.83 *** (.35)
President's Handling of the Economy	-.73 * (.35)	-.12 ns (.47)	.27 ns (.28)	-.20 ns (.18)
Racial Resentment	-1.39 *** (.36)	-.64 ns (.70)	-.66 ns (.35)	-.45 ns (.29)
Subtle Racism	-.84 ** (.28)		-	-
Racial Stereotyping	-.76 ns (.47)	-.92 ns (.79)	-.42 ns (.57)	-
Racial Difference Score	-2.12 ns (1.09)	-1.15 ns (1.95)	.86 ns (.93)	-1.02 ns (.54)
Racial Policy	-.58 ns (.34)	-.79 ns (.73)	-.07 ns (.36)	-.35 ns (.34)

Notes:

Significance levels : *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; ns = not significant
Standard errors are in parentheses

*The table shows the logit coefficients for the president's thermometer in model 2 and the racial attitude variables for the equivalents of models 3a-3e. The equations estimated in each instance also include party identification, ideology, candidate traits, healthcare, a foreign policy issue, and gay rights.