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The Influence of Explicit Racial Cues on Candidate Evaluation

By

Joshua Aaron Green

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

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in

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University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Jack Citrin, Chair
Professor Laura Stoker
Professor Jack Glaser

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Abstract

The Influence of Explicit Racial Cues on Candidate Evaluation

by

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Since Barack Obama's presidential campaign of 2008, media outlets have changed how race is covered and framed during political campaigns. In the so-called "post-racial" era of American politics when race is supposed to matter less, we are still very much attuned to stories that are framed by racial conflict. When the media wraps a "racial mode of interpretation" around a conflict between two candidates, there are potential electoral penalties involved for either a white or black candidate who becomes entangled in such a controversy.

This project describes this process and provides empirical evidence that individuals' political judgments of candidates can be changed when exposed to such framing. Through a series of three survey experiments that simulate the effect of race-salient media coverage on voters, I find that there are statistically significant electoral penalties—in some cases, more than 10 percentage points—when respondents learn new information about a candidate that either assigns blame for a "race play" or connects him and his opponent to racial controversy. There is also evidence that the media plays a significant role in assigning blame for playing the race card. More respondents were willing to assign blame to a particular candidate when they read news stories in which a media analyst blamed that candidate.

While past literature has focused on racial priming processes that activate white resentment through implicit or explicit cues in campaign ads, this research demonstrates that there may be an important learning process that has been overlooked. Media coverage with an explicit racial mode of interpretation may activate a broader backlash effect among respondents regardless of their racial resentment scores.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother, Ann "Honey" Green,
who provided so much love and support throughout her very full life.

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Chapter 1
The Media's Role in Race and American Politics

> But (African American) anger is real; it is powerful; and to simply wish it away, to condemn it without understanding its roots, only serves to widen the chasm of misunderstanding that exists between the races. …
>
> We have a choice in this country. We can accept a politics that breeds division, and conflict, and cynicism. ... We can pounce on some gaffe by a Hillary supporter as evidence that she's playing the race card, or we can speculate on whether white men will all flock to John McCain in the general election regardless of his policies.
>
> We can do that.
>
> But if we do, I can tell you that in the next election, we'll be talking about some other distraction. And then another one. And then another one. And nothing will change.
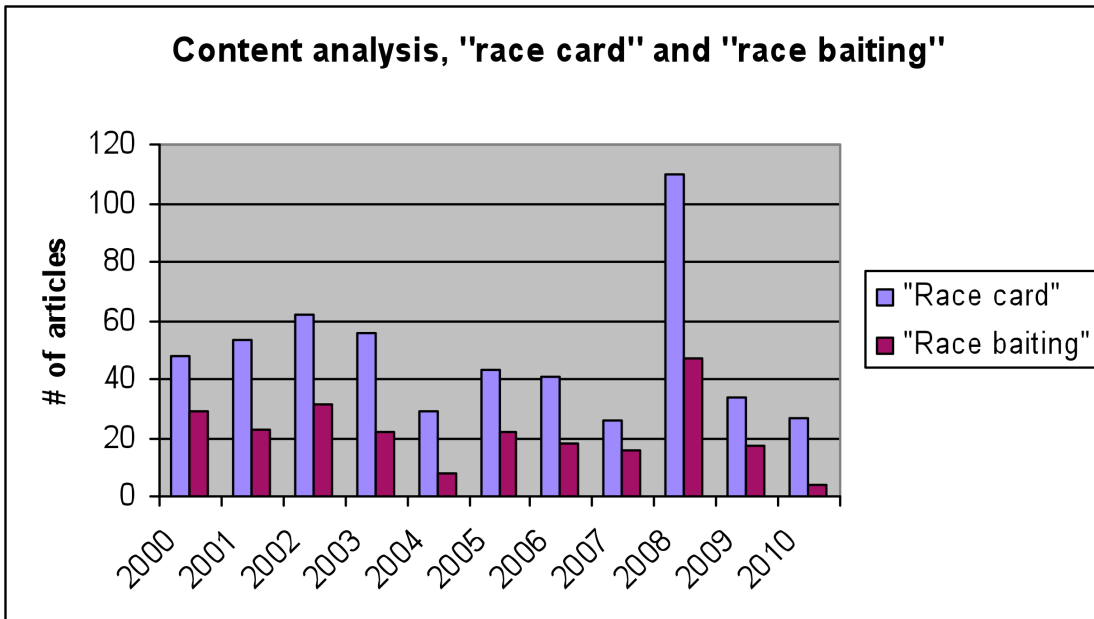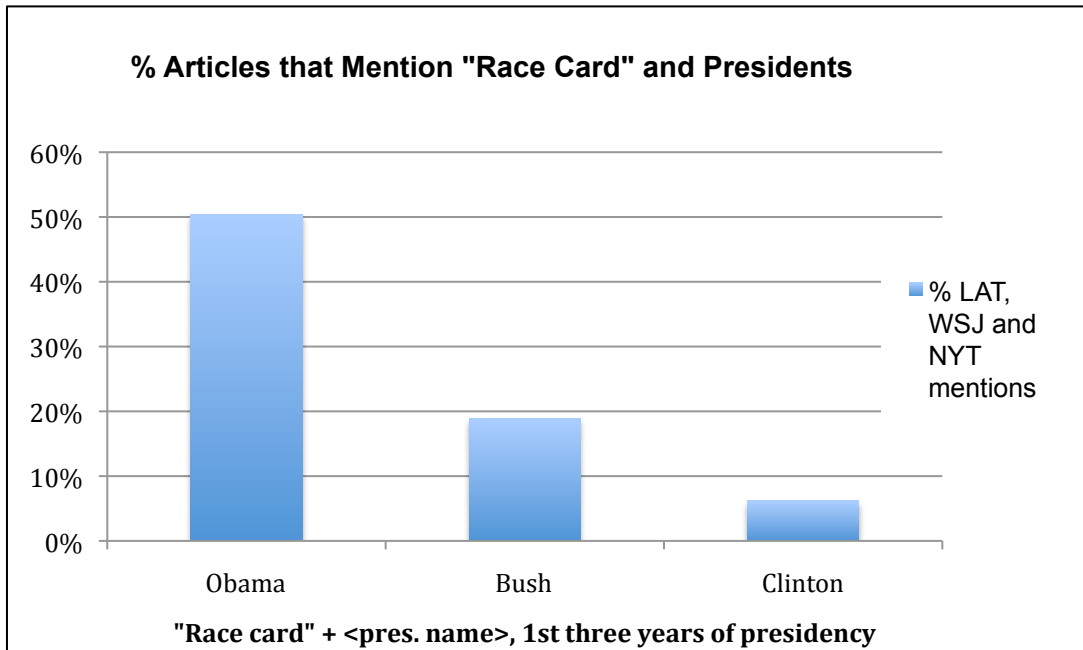>
> *—Barack Obama, as a candidate to be*
> *the Democratic presidential nominee*
> *March 18, 2008*

More than four years after President Obama's iconic speech on race in Philadelphia, his warnings ring true. Whether one believes his appeal to the nation was a sincere move toward racial reconciliation or a political maneuver by an eloquent speaker to avoid scandal, there is no doubt that the "conversation on race" that many thought would arise from that speech never materialized. Instead, Obama's first term was marked by a repeated cycle of stories on the national stage with a racial interpretation. Even political campaign messaging and non-political news have sometimes been framed by race. Obama spoke in defense of "A More Perfect Union," as his speech was titled, and many thought that the election of the nation's first African American president would bring just that. At the very least, many thought there could be an easing of racial tensions that have permeated American society since its beginning. That remains to be seen, but so far it appears that tolerance is not on the rise.[1]

Unexpectedly, the Obama era may have *increased* race salience in coverage of American political campaigns, rather than decreased it. In a search on three major newspapers in the ProQuest article database from the first two years of the last three presidents' first terms, the use of the word "race card" in media articles spiked during the Obama administration and returned more than four times the number of articles that used the same phrase during the Bush and Clinton years (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2). Obama's first election year, 2008, showed twice the number of uses of the phrases "race card" and "race bait" compared to the previous 8 years or even the following the two years.

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[1] Tesler, Michael and Sears, David O. *Obama's Race: The 2008 Election and the Dream of a Post-Racial America*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2010.

Tables 1.1 and 1.2

% Articles that Mention "Race Card" and Presidents

"Race card" + <pres. name>, 1st three years of presidency

Content analysis, "race card" and "race baiting"

Source: ProQuest Newspaper database, searching on New York Times,
Los Angeles Times and Wall Street Journal.

    Instead of Obama inspiring greater racial tolerance, which we would expect to
lower the quantity of race-related media coverage in American politics, the media's
increased scrutiny of politicians playing the race card may have raised those sensitivities.
The era of the "Willie Horton" ad, in which implicit cues are transmitted through
symbols or indirect language, is effectively over now that the media is attuned to those

symbols and can "out" them. Instead, always looking for a good story that draws "eyeballs and clicks," the media can report on stories that have a much more direct racial interpretation and do not rely on implicit cues or symbols. Some examples of those kinds of stories are the following: verbal gaffes by candidates that appear to have racial overtones, accusations that a candidate is using race or "the race card" for political advantage, or accusations of racial profiling by candidates or constituents—and the list could go on. While these stories vary greatly in their specific content, they share two common elements: they all refer to race as a point of conflict as part of campaign coverage, and they presumably raise the salience of race in the minds of those who read them.[2]

Starting from the premise that race can still be highly salient during some American political campaigns, I argue that one key source of this salience is the media's coverage of campaigns, especially those in which an African American candidate is involved. This project is inspired by a desire to understand the mechanisms behind two processes:

1. *How race salience is increased in the course of campaign coverage, and;*
2. *How that increase in salience affects the evaluation of candidates by voters exposed to that coverage.*

The project accomplishes this through a series of three survey experiments that simulate the effect of race-salient media coverage on voters. The survey data demonstrates that there are significant negative effects on voter evaluation of candidates when race is brought into a news story. A "race play," or "playing the race card," for the purposes of this project, departs from the traditional definition of a white candidate priming racial resentment in white voters for a political advantage. Some prominent examples of the old "race card" include Jesse Helms' use of the famous "Hands" ad on affirmative action in 1990, or the "Willie Horton ad" employed by George H.W. Bush against Michael Dukakis in 1988). Today's "race plays" are more complicated and can be played by a non-white candidate appealing to non-white voters. This project defines a "race play" as an accusation made by either a candidate or media commentator/reporter that race conflict or tension is being made an issue in the campaign. These "race plays" are a key priming agent for race with a news story that can quickly "go viral" and reach hundreds of thousands of people in a short amount of time. The media acts as the moderator for these explicit racial cues by either reporting on an incident or by commentators insisting on setting up a racial frame. In a media market that is hyper-competitive for eyeballs and clicks, it's no wonder that the media is willing to sensationalize race to attract them. If the survey data is any indication, a significant number of voters do pay attention when race is made salient and react by downgrading judgments of candidates.

The survey experiments are designed to expose respondents to different levels of racial priming initiated by the "race play" stories. These stories essentially act as explicit racial cues that notify readers it is "now time to think about race as an issue in the campaign."

A research agenda based on race-salient coverage

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[2] The survey experiment results in Chapter 3 will further address whether this race salience has increased and what its potential effects on candidate evaluation could be.

When President Obama gave his speech on race, his campaign staff hoped it could defuse the inflammatory remarks by Obama's former pastor, Jeremiah Wright. March 2008 news stories on Wright's sermons—especially those that showed him yelling "God damn America!" while preaching—temporarily derailed the Obama campaign. Obama's speech, in which he distanced himself from Wright, effectively directed that story away from any further controversy, but the media frenzy from that incident must have left an indelible impression. President Obama has been careful since then to avoid entangling himself in stories seen through a racial lens, but it is probably an impossible task for an African American president living today.

This project hopes to provide insight on four important scholarly fronts: connecting racial resentment with political outcomes; describing how priming occurs through explicit means in news stories; understanding how individuals resist or accept messages from the media on race; and describing the sequence and content of campaign coverage that might result in racial priming.

In another part of his 2008 speech, Obama acknowledges that white resentment of blacks has its foundation in legitimate quality of life concerns, where "opportunity comes to be seen as a zero sum game, in which your dreams come at my expense." He discusses black resentment toward white society in much the same terms, hinting that racial resentment is a two-way street and can be used in the political arena to the benefit of a candidate of either race. Political scientists can take notice of these comments and add to the scholarship on this topic by making empirically based connections between racial resentment that can be activated at key moments in a campaign and political outcomes. The survey experiments in this project are designed to make headway on that important question.

Second, political scientists can make inroads on describing exactly how this white resentment is expressed in an era that often frowns on revisiting an uncomfortable racial past. If racial resentment is truly something we cannot talk about openly and there is evidence of social desirability bias in survey questions[3], how can political scientists hope to measure it? If it is too difficult to "see" in survey questions or even through implicit measures like the Implicit Association Test, perhaps it's a good strategy to study those moments in time when priming from media messages forces resentment to the surface to become, as John Zaller might put it, a "top of the head" consideration. By creating a target (i.e. a white or black candidate) for potential resentment, this project will provide some insight on how that resentment is manifested in political, rather than cultural or sociological, terms.

Obama's speech on race expresses a normative concern that the quality of campaigns and elections are damaged by a hypersensitivity to the race of the candidates involved. Politics that "breed division, and conflict, and cynicism" and marked by media stories about race "gaffes" will only lead to a series of distractions, after which "nothing will change." His words now seem prescient. Obama's presidency, rather than being a balm of racial healing for the country, has been distracted by a series of race-linked stories. While Obama has studiously avoided issues of race in public policy issues like

[3] Abersona, Christopher L., Shoemakera, Carl, and Tomolilloa, Christina. "Implicit Bias and Contact: The Role of Interethnic Friendships," Journal of Social Psychology. 144: 3, 2004, pp. 335-347.

healthcare reform, the media news cycle often latches on to those stories in which race is a factor. A story that otherwise might be put on Page 10 of the local city newspaper—for example, Professor Henry Louis Gates mistakenly being arrested at his home in Massachusetts—becomes national news. The survey experiments described in the next few chapters will demonstrate whether respondents think the media or politicians themselves are to blame for the negative slant that race adds to political campaigns. One survey question specifically asks respondents whether they blame the media itself for introducing race into campaigns.

Finally, Obama mentions the media coverage of campaigns as mere "distractions," but that may be wishful thinking on his part. This project is based on the premise that campaigns have transitioned from traditional horserace coverage of campaigns and moved to conflict-based stories, many of which focus on race when there is an African American candidate in the mix. When coverage focuses on how candidates are using race as a campaign weapon, that coverage may be priming racial attitudes that affect candidate evaluation.

This role of the media as a moderator of racial priming is important in the current media environment because candidates can no longer get away with direct racial appeals or even implicit appeals embedded in political ads when media scrutiny on racial issues is at such a high level. A media that has covered an African American president for more than five years will immediately choose to raise the salience of a story that is even indirectly race-related. Conflict, especially racial conflict, is guaranteed to improve their bottom-line readership/viewership metrics.

In conversation with Mendelberg

Racial priming studies have attracted more interest since Tali Mendelberg developed a theoretical framework in her 2001 book, *The Race Card*. In a paper presented at the 2008 Midwest Political Science Association Conference, Mendelberg et al. presented results of an experiment testing whether Barack Obama would suffer a racial disadvantage with voters in the presidential election.[4] Using a written news analysis treatment with a photo of Barack Obama with two white women (switched with a photo of Edwards in the same position), the study ought to show differences in how news of a sexual scandal would affect an evaluation of Obama vs. Edwards. They find that whites with racial resentment predispositions (and those who see blacks as liberal) penalize Obama more than they do Edwards, suggesting that attacks on Obama will "soften" that segment of white voters and make them more likely to evaluate him negatively when those attacks happen.

A core argument in the literature centers on the varying effects of implicit vs. explicit cues, and whether those cues are most effective in visual or verbal forms (or both). Valentino, Hutchings and White (2002) use an experimental design manipulating the content of political ads to show that a wide variety of cues can prime racial attitudes,

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[4] Mendelberg, Tali, Adam Berinsky, Vince Hutchings and Nicholas Valentino. 2008. Does Barack Obama suffer racial disadvantage? Presented at the *Midwest Political Science Association Annual Conference*, April, 2008.

mediated by cognitive accessibility.[5] Their findings support Mendelberg, but they claim that implicit cues are most effective when there is a visual/narrative pairing, while Mendelberg focused mostly on embedded visual cues. In a 2005 paper co-authored with Adam Berinsky, Mendelberg shows that when exposed to stereotypes (in this case, about Jews), respondents will throw out the socially unacceptable part of the stereotype but "keep" a more palatable part (e.g. that all Jews are liberal) once racial considerations are activated. She suggests that there are indirect effects from exposure to stereotypes, even when those stereotypes violate the norm of equality.[6] Answering Mendelberg, Huber and Lapinski (2006) present results that show implicit appeals are not necessarily more effective at racial priming than explicit appeals. The mitigating effect of "outing" the meaning of implicit appeals that Mendelberg incorporates into her model does not apply to low-education respondents, they find. Education appears to moderate both the accessibility of racial considerations and message acceptance.[7]

In his own study of the impact of racial cues on African Americans' racial interpretations, Ismail White (2007) argues that implicit and explicit cues act in different ways for African Americans than they do for whites. "Contrary to accounts that would suggest racial group identification is the consistent central organizing principle of Black political opinion, the results of the study suggest that the attachment of Blacks' racial predispositions to ostensibly non-racial issues is malleable, and that racialized context can play an important role in defining the racial implications of politics for Black Americans. … Although racial cues are only effective in activating Whites' racial attitudes on ostensibly non-racial issues when they are implicit, the same is not true for Blacks. Explicit racial cues successfully activated Blacks' in-group identification across two very different ostensibly non-racial issues, while implicit racial cues did not reliably activate racial thinking among Blacks."[8]

But White also found that reaction to racial cues for both blacks and whites is moderated by ambivalence to in-group/out-group norms—in whites' case, the tension that "arises when they have to negotiate between attitudes of egalitarianism and those of racial conservatism." This type of explicit priming differs from the type of "equality norm violation" cues that Mendelberg describes because they prime race as a topic of political controversy rather than a negative stereotype of one group or another.

Mendelberg (2001) claims that a person with a predisposition toward racial resentment will activate that resentment when exposed to implicit cues embedded in campaign communication. Explicit cues, she says, have become socially unacceptable and prone to a backlash effect against campaigns that use them, and therefore explicit cues are a relic of campaigns past. However, there are several examples of explicit cues

[5] Valentino, Nicholas, Vincent L. Hutchings and Ismail K. White. 2002. Cues that matter: How political ads prime racial attitudes during campaigns. *American Political Science Review*, 101(2): 339-354.

[6] Berinsky, Adam, and Tali Mendelberg. Oct., 2005. The Indirect Effects of Discredited Stereotypes in Judgments of Jewish Leaders. *American Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 49, No. 4: 845–864.

[7] Huber, Gregory and Lapinsky, John. April, 2006. The 'race card' revisited: Assessing racial priming in policy contests. *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 50, No. 2: 421-440.

[8] White, Ismail K. May, 2007. "When race matters and when it doesn't: Racial group difference in response to racial cues." *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 101, No. 2, pp. 351-352.

contained in coverage of "racial events," detailed in Chapter 2, that show that there are other ways besides a direct racial appeal to introduce those explicit cues. For example, when the media signals to viewers or readers that there is a "race card play," it's possible that race has been primed through an explicit rather than implicit message pathway.

John Zaller argues in his well-known 1992 book that mass opinion is formed through a combination of exposure to elite cues (via the media) and the use of "considerations"—a given respondent's "top of the head" considerations vary based on political values and attention.[9] If one's "top of the head" considerations make her more likely to accept race card messages, will they also follow that media cue and assign blame to the "blame consensus" candidate?

Mendelberg's theoretical framework builds its foundation around a consensus on the norm of equality. She aptly demonstrates the history of this norm, beginning with the political reawakening of African Americans in the 1930s, followed by a reactionary rise in racist rhetoric, especially in the South. A final rejection of explicitly racist appeals doesn't occur until the civil rights movement and the 1960s. But Mendelberg claims that even as this near-universal rejection of racist rhetoric and white supremacy ideas becomes accepted by society, many whites retain negative racial predispositions that go unexpressed. This tension between racial resentment and the norm of equality creates an ambivalence that white voters must resolve, and often it is resolved by what types of messages an individual receives.

> In sum, racial messages work through racial priming. A racial message depends for its power on its ability to activate existing predispositions. But a predisposition does not always have the same weight regardless of the informational environment. The news media and political campaigns shape opinions on policies and candidates linked with matters of race by communicating messages that make negative racial predispositions more available for subsequent decisions about politics. Because of ambivalence, racial priming works well with some messages but not others.[10]

Mendelberg's "four A's" theoretical foundation—Accessibility, Ambivalence, Ambiguity and Awareness[11]—is an excellent starting point for a new study on racial priming. She argues that accessibility and priming determine whether a racial appeal is politically connected and salient to a political decision. Ambivalence—the tension between the norm of equality and racial resentment—creates a greater psychological vulnerability to messages with racial appeal. The ambiguity of the racial message—that is, whether it is implicit or explicit—also determines the success of a racial appeal, because a greater awareness of the racial appeal can allow the norm of equality to override any racial priming effects. The empirical work Mendelberg presents makes a convincing argument for all of these factors operating at once when a racial message is received.

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[9] Zaller, John. 1992. <u>The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion</u>. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
[10] Mendelberg, p. 121.
[11] Mendelberg, p. 111

However, I believe a fifth moderator of message success—and by success I mean when a racial message successfully primes racial predispositions—must be considered. Mendelberg argues that only implicit racial appeals such as the famous Willie Horton ad can be effective in today's media climate. But even implicit appeals can be outed in a post-Horton world that is sensitive to symbols and subtle cues. Instead, campaigns have turned to media interpretation as the mechanism to bring racial considerations to the "top of head." Respondents must consider the *source*, as well as the *content*, of an explicit message on race. The judgment on the content of that message is mediated by consideration of the *source*. In Mendelberg's story on explicit messages, there is an instant backlash effect when respondents are made aware of an explicit racial appeal because it represents a violation of the equality norm. But in practical terms, explicit references to race are often introduced by media coverage of political ads, gaffes or race-related incidents that are connected to politics. This coverage is not automatically seen as a violation of the norm of equality because individuals do not assume racial intentionality behind the media coverage. The media coverage offers a "permission slip" for the individual to override a natural aversion to violations of the norm of equality. Put another way, the media sends the message that "you may now think in racial terms" even when a respondent might normally avoid thinking in those terms. Blame for any norm violation, if blame can be assigned, is pinned on a player within the news story (a political candidate, for example).

This suggests that implicit appeals in the Horton model are not the only ways that a candidate is vulnerable. A candidate could also suffer political damage from a news story that directly references race and prompts a media to consumer to think in racial terms. The priming of race in this way may activate an individual's racial predispositions and, often unconsciously, they become part of the candidate evaluation equation. If more direct race cues affect candidate evaluation, then implicit racial messages are not necessarily the most effective mechanism for campaigns to influence opinion and votes. It may be a more effective strategy for campaigns to encourage journalists to cover stories with a racial tone or interpretation.

But the focus of scholarly debate could shift away from a focus on the priming process and the type of cue (implicit or explicit) that initiates that process. Instead, scholars can train their sights on the *agent* of that priming as a key component in how much priming actually occurs. The media, especially a channel chosen by the respondent, may succeed in priming where another messenger (a Willie Horton-like TV ad, a "race proxy" issue, or other traditional priming cue) might fail.

Toward a new research agenda
Social scientists working in American politics up to now have focused on race as a point of analysis in political behavior studies and a significant cleavage on policy attitudes, especially between white and black Americans. It is a regular independent variable thrown into thousands of regression analyses to indicate significant public opinion divergence between whites and blacks on issues such as welfare, abortion, affirmative action, religion and a host of others. But political scientists interested in the effects of minority candidates on voting behavior in national campaigns have been frustrated by the small "n" problem. There are simply not enough cases to do more than case study analysis on high-profile campaigns in which nonwhite candidates are

participating, limiting how far we can generalize or make statistically robust conclusions about how voters' attitudes and behavior is affected by the race of the candidate. One way around this methodological problem is for researchers to focus their energies on the richer "n" data sets of gubernatorial, mayoral and even city council campaigns, because there are so many more instances of nonwhite candidates running for these offices. But rarely do we have accurate polls or survey data to work with in small geographic areas. A second way around this methodological quandary is to construct a fictional campaign in a survey instrument, giving the researcher more leeway to manipulate experimental controls. I have chosen this method as the primary source of data for this project because designing experiments offers the most direct path to connecting media exposure to an immediate political judgment.

Media race frames as a priming agent

Ultimately the acceptance, rejection and processing of media cues during a campaign occurs at the individual level. Each individual, given a set of predispositions, salient attitudes and level of exposure to media coverage of a campaign, will react to these cues differently. But some patterns in behavior emerge when cues that prime racial considerations are embedded in stories. Getting to the bottom of how these cues can change evaluations of candidates may indicate how much influence the media has on the outcome of campaigns that have a race component (via the candidate, news event, or otherwise). Since the "minimal effects" literature of the 1960s argued that media has little impact on opinion and serves mostly to reinforce existing opinions,[12] scholars have debated how much political advertising, news coverage and televised events have changed vote outcomes.[13] I argue here that rather than persuading or altering individual attitudes on race, media messages may actually raise race salience and them and bring those messages into decision-making processes, sometimes outside of conscious thought.

In a survey paper on framing theories in political science, Durkman and Chong observe that "framing effects and what communication scholars have called priming effects share common processes, and the two terms can be used interchangeably."[14] Priming occurs "when a mass communication places attention on an issue … and (the expectation is) that the issue receives greater weight via changes in its accessibility and applicability."[15] This project has a similar expectation: as the communication, in the form of a fictional story about a campaign, places increasing attention on race by interpreting candidate comments with a race frame, respondents will place more weight on the component of candidate evaluation that includes the question: "Is this candidate running without using race unfairly as an advantage?"

A new research agenda that pursues the effect of media cues on race during campaigns should start with survey experiments like these. One challenge of measuring the media's impact on the public is the unpredictable nature and speed at which campaigns unfold and media coverage develops. The ponderous pace of survey design

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[12] Klapper, J.T. (1960). The Effects of Mass Communications. Glencoe, IL: Free Press

[13] Iyengar, S. and Kinder, D (1987). News that Matters: Television and American Opinion. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

[14] Chong, Dennis and Druckman, James N. "Framing Theory." *Annual Review of Political Science*. Vol. 10: 103-126, 2007.

[15] Ibid.

can't keep up—the best we can do to measure public opinion change is to ask questions months after events have unfolded, or track polls taken over time and draw conclusions about how media events moved those polls based on timeline coincidence. In the controlled environment of an experiment, we can precisely manipulate cues in the form of pieces of information provided in a story. The information is expected to increase race salience through priming effects, and in the final condition even direct respondents to a judgment about a candidate. By comparing treatment groups, we can measure treatment effects and their interaction with racial predispositions on vote choice.

The survey experiments in this dissertation aim to make a significant contribution in answering several lines of inquiry on media coverage of campaigns and its interaction with individual-level racial predispositions.

These questions address the effects of media coverage:
- *Does campaign coverage that either indirectly or directly references race affect evaluations of candidates, especially when candidates are connected to controversy in the article?*
- *When the media assigns blame for a controversy to a candidate, does the evaluation of that candidate suffer? Which types of respondents are most susceptible to direction on assigning blame?*
- *Does the race of the candidate (as shown by a profile photo) moderate the effects of these media cues?*

These questions address the individual-level effects of racial predispositions:
- *Is there a socially desirable "correction" on racial attitudes if the race of the respondent does not match the candidate? For example, will a white respondent moderate his/her responses if the candidate he/she is evaluating is black?*
- *Will racial predispositions measured through race stereotypes and authoritarian predispositions[16] explain how respondents accept or reject race primes?*
- *Will racial predispositions measured through the Implicit Association Test indicate implicit bias that lead to positive or negative evaluations of a black or white candidate?*

How the conversation on race has changed: Campaign strategy coverage
Few believe that race stopped being an important wedge issue in American politics, but there is a consensus that direct racial appeals in campaigns no longer pass the social desirability sniff test. Tali Mendelberg makes the claim that the disappearance of direct racial appeals, which once were commonplace (especially in the South), led to an increase in the use of implicit racial appeals such as the controversial 1988 Willie Horton ad in the presidential campaign.[17] But since Rev. Jesse Jackson broke the Willie Horton story a month after the ad had aired by outing the implicit appeal, the media has been

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[16] Stenner, Karen. The Authoritarian Dynamic. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
[17] Mendelberg, Tali. The Race Card. Princeton, University Press: Princeton, 2001.

particularly sensitive to the indirect or direct use of race in campaigns. In a ratings-driven (and click-driven) media world, it is no surprise that reporters are ready to push race-focused stories to the top of the news agenda. This means that campaigns in which a candidate is nonwhite or race becomes an issue through a news event will be have a higher incidence of racial framing or sheer number of race-related stories. We know very little about how that type of coverage moves opinion or creates backlash, and it is the intent of this project to open those research horizons by simulating racially framed media coverage in an experimental setting.

The experiment

While the complete research design will be detailed in a later chapter, it is worth noting here the basic outlines of the project's main experiment. The foundation of the experiment comes in two parts read by respondents on a computer: first is a simple profile, accompanied by a photo, of the fictional Senate candidate Bernard Wright. The profile contains simple personal facts and five pieces of legislation that the candidate, a current Congressmen, supported while in office. The profile also contains a headshot photo of the candidate, indicating that he is either black or white (as determined by a respondents' study ID number).

The second reading is fictional coverage of a news event. There are two news events, one detailing a report on crime in urban areas, and another detailing a racial profiling incident. I have chosen crime as a topic because past research has shown stories about crime can prime racial attitudes.[18][19] The second event is a racial profiling incident between a police officer and a black man mistaken for a murder suspect. This direct reference to race should prime racial attitudes even more than the indirect references made by the crime story.

In most versions of this news coverage, the candidate first presented to the respondent weighs in on the news event, making it politically relevant to the campaign. The key manipulation in this design is the headshot photo presented in the profile. Half of the respondents see a white candidate, while the other half see an African American candidate. All other conditions remain the same; this should allow me to clearly measure the effect of candidate race. The profile text is a distractor and irrelevant to the dependent variable. Respondents are led to believe that the survey is an exercise in remembering details from the profile and should focus on that rather than their answers to the questions most important to the study.

With the controlled experiment described above, I hope to create an empirical dataset that moves beyond debates about the racial bases of opinion on specific policy issues or bundled issues that revolve around race. Racial attitudes and their effects are contextually dependent on the historical era we live in. Social scientists have been hard-pressed to arrive at a parsimonious theory that explains how it works on every individual in every decade. In fact, evidence points to the assumption that with each succeeding decade, race is treated differently by the media and political worlds. Studies also show that racial considerations may not be "activated" and used in every decision—they must

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[18] Valentino, Nicholas. "Crime News and the Priming of Racial Attitudes During Evaluations of the President" in *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Volume 63:293–320, 1999.

[19] Eberhardt, Jennifer et. al. "Seeing Black: Race, Crime, and Visual Processing," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 87, No. 6, 876–893, 2004.

be made salient first before they become a factor in expressed opinion or political judgments.[20] Salience is notoriously difficult to measure, but we can measure how individuals react to specific race primes embedded in media messages. That, too, may change depending on the era and the types of media available, but this experimental design is an important empirical step forward in understanding the operation of race primes, especially those made directly through campaign coverage of race issues.

Advancing Mendelberg vs. Valentino/Hutchings

       The project detailed in the chapters to come is designed to advance the scholarly conversation on race and American politics by stepping beyond the question whether implicit or explicit cues on race are a more powerful influence on an individual.

       This project identifies the media as an important moderator in deciding the *context* of how a racial cue is received or resisted. The survey experiments will show evidence that the media can both prime racial considerations and direct blame for a "race play" compared to a baseline condition which contains no racial content. With a heightened sensitivity to race partly brought on by two consecutive national campaigns with an African American running for president, the implicit cues that Mendelberg makes the heart of her study in *The Race Card* are less likely to remain implicit.

       The experiments will also show that candidates who are connected to a political story on race are often penalized by more negative evaluations and a decrease in the likelihood that respondents will vote for that candidate. The stories that most directly refer to race (with racial profiling as the substance) have a greater impact than those that refer to race indirectly (through a crime report on urban areas).

       This suggests that rather than making traditional racial appeals via implicit cues (see the "Willie Horton ad"), candidates can gain or lose ground based on how the media frames them during a racial tete-a-tete.

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[20] Hutchings, Vincent and Jardina, Ashley. "Experiments on Racial Priming in Political Campaigns." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 2009. 12:397-402.

Chapter 2
Rationale and Experiment Design

>That's just bait, too. Jesse Jackson won South Carolina in '84 and '88.
>Jackson ran a good campaign. And Obama ran a good campaign here.
>>*—Bill Clinton, January 26, 2008, answering a question about why it "takes two of you (Clintons) to beat him (Obama)" after the South Carolina primary.*

>I think they (the Obama campaign) played the race card on me, and we now know from memos from the campaign and everything that they planned to do it all along.
>>*—Bill Clinton, April 22, 2008 in a radio interview*

By invoking the Jackson campaigns of the 1980s, Bill Clinton may have thought he was nobly defending his wife's chances at the presidency after she suffered a crippling blow in the South Carolina primary. But those covering the news didn't see it that way.

Clinton made the mistake of comparing two black candidates in South Carolina, a state where the black Democratic primary vote is essential. The implication of the comparison was obvious: Obama is the Jackson of 2008 and wouldn't stand a chance of getting the nomination because he was like every other black candidate. The sensitive issue of race became a serious headache for the Clinton campaign as it scrambled to explain why Bill Clinton would bring up Jackson without prompting. In subsequent interviews a testy Bill Clinton counterpunched with the media over what he clearly felt were unfounded accusations. But the media latched on to the racial implications of his comment because it fit the storyline of the campaign they wanted to tell that centered on the theme, "Can Obama, a black candidate, win over white America?"

This small blip in political media history is more than an amusing anecdote. Bill Clinton's tangle is emblematic of the tight corners politicians must maneuver past when talking about race in American campaigns. When a nonwhite candidate is involved, race salience becomes so high that the media is hypersensitive to stories seen through a racial lens. As a result, these stories are pushed to the top of the national news agenda when they otherwise might not be. A series of stories with what I call a *racial mode of interpretation* occurred during the 2008 campaign and the years afterward. A racial mode of interpretation is defined as a frame built around a story that uses race or racial stereotypes as its primary reference. More importantly, this type of frame is purposely constructed to take a subject that might not ordinarily have a racial context and prompt viewers/readers to believe it does have a racial context. For example, Bill Clinton's verbal gaffe quoted above was not necessarily an explicit racial cue until the media interpreted it that way, or assigned a racial mode of interpretation. These stories are distinctive from more traditional racial cues that the literature calls implicit[21] or explicit[22] because the media must make a racial interpretation (or wait for a candidate gaffe) to create a story that has the potential for racial priming. Implicit cues are more often visual

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[21] Mendelberg, 2001.
[22] Valentino, Hutchings and White, 2002.

or ambiguous, while explicit cues of the type that Valentino, Hutchings and White examine are

       To illustrate this type of story and clarify the term "racial mode of interpretation," the following are a few short summaries of recent stories with such a frame. The important aspect of each of these stories is not always the incident itself but the aftermath of its media coverage. Often political figures become engaged (willingly or not) in a way that may influence the public's evaluation of that person.

Shirley Sherrod
July 19, 2010. Shirley Sherrod, Georgia State Director of Rural Development for the United States Department of Agriculture is forced to resign after blogger Andrew Breitbart posted video excerpts of Sherrod's address to a March 2010 NAACP event. The edited remarks make it appear that Sherrod is biased against whites, but that assumption after full review is found to be incorrect.
Coverage-initiated political penalty: The Obama administration and Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack are embarrassed when the truth about the comments comes out, but Sherrod does not accept her job back.

Henry Louis Gates and the beer summit
July 30, 2009. Two weeks after an incident in which Prof. Gates, a black professor from Harvard, was mistakenly arrested at his home when he was thought to be a burglar, President Obama brings them together for a "frank conversation" called a beer summit.
Coverage-initiated political penalty: The story on Gates and the following debate was reported in almost exclusively racial terms, because Gates was black and the arresting officer was white. President Obama was asked about the story because as the first African American president he was expected to comment on a racial profiling story.

Obama and the "Dollar Bill" comment
July 30, 2008. Then-candidate Obama said, "What they're (McCain's campaign) going to try to do is make you scared of me. You know, he doesn't look like all those other presidents on the dollar bills." Despite trying to backpedal afterward, Obama admitted that the comments did have something to do with his race, and how cynical he believes the McCain campaign is in their tactics. The controversy uncovered a more explicitly racial remark Obama had made on June 21: "We know what kind of campaign they're going to run. They're going to try to make you afraid. They're going to try to make you afraid of me. He's young and inexperienced and he's got a funny name. And did I mention he's black?"
Coverage-initiated political penalty: The controversy centering on race following the comment made much more news than the comment itself, as is typical in these "attack-and-defend" campaign commentary stories.

Bill Clinton's "Jesse Jackson" comment
January 26, 2008. "That's just bait, too. Jesse Jackson won South Carolina in '84 and '88. Jackson ran a good campaign. And Obama ran a good campaign here."
Clinton's comment is widely perceived by the media as a racial comparison between Jackson and Obama rather than a political observation. Clinton is offended by even the

hint that he is prejudiced and makes matters worse for himself by responding to the criticism.

Coverage-initiated political penalty: The media transformed what Clinton thought was a simple political analogy into a statement that a black candidate can't win the big campaign. He, and by extension Hillary, appeared insensitive to black voters.

Biden's Obama assessment
Jan. 30, 2007. Even before he becomes the vice presidential candidate, Joe Biden says this about Obama: "I mean, you got the first mainstream African-American who is articulate and bright and clean and a nice-looking guy. I mean, that's a storybook, man." His comments set off a firestorm when it's perceived that "articulate" and "clean" aren't appropriate adjectives to use for a "mainstream African-American." It is perceived to be a reference to racial stereotypes (i.e. that blacks are NOT usually "articulate" and "clean").

Coverage-initiated political penalty: Politicians like Biden who speak "freely" (i.e. without thinking) are often caught using language that doesn't pass the stereotype smell test. The media is especially attuned to that kind of language in biracial campaigns.

Macaca comment
August 11, 2006. At a campaign rally in southwest Virginia during the 2006 senatorial race, Republican Sen. George Allen repeatedly called a volunteer for Democrat James Webb "macaca." He pointed to the 20-year-old man of Indian descent and said: "This fellow here, over here with the yellow shirt, macaca, or whatever his name is. He's with my opponent. He's following us around everywhere. And it's just great. … Let's give a welcome to macaca, here. Welcome to America and the real world of Virginia."

*Coverage-initiated political penalty***:** The comments were seen as demeaning and referring to an ethnic slur, though nobody knows for sure what Allen meant by "macaca." Allen lost the race, and some credit this gaffe with sinking his chances.

Harold Ford and the "Call me" Playboy mansion ad
2006 Senate campaign. GOP candidate Bob Corker ran a controversial ad against African American Democrat Harold Ford (who later lost the race). In the ad, a young white actress playing a stereotypical "dumb blonde" talks about meeting Ford, a 36-year-old bachelor at a Playboy party. At the end of the ad, she winks and says to the camera, "Harold—call me." The NAACP called the ad "a powerful innuendo that plays to pre-existing prejudices about African-American men and white women."

Coverage-initiated political penalty: There was an accusation of implicit prejudice embedded in the ad, much like the Willie Horton ad that George H.W. Bush ran against Michael Dukakis in 1988. The coverage of the ad's racial connotations eclipsed the ad itself, though in Tennessee there was not enough outrage to push the race in Ford's favor.

Individually, many of these could appear to be "small stories" given their short life spans and negligible impact on polls or campaign narratives. They could be dismissed as media frenzies that, as John Zaller once wrote, "can briefly undermine a candidate's natural level of support, but cannot permanently lower it."[23]. According to Anthony Downs' issue attention cycle, media coverage can spike sharply in the first few days after an incident, temporarily raising salience and public interest. But it is soon followed by a steep decline in salience as people lose interest or realize that a complex problem has no short-term solutions.

But taken together, these race-connected stories indicate a newly heightened sensitivity about race. The political media agenda has been altered in a subtle way that brings more stories with a racial mode of interpretation to the news agenda. If this is true, then the skin color of a candidate is more than an interesting footnote or a dummy variable social scientists throw into a regression analysis to act as a control for other, more important independent variables. Instead, we should treat the candidate's race as a potential tone-setter for campaign messages and media coverage. If we can accurately measure significant effects on voting behavior as a result of this change in tone, then these effects have serious implications for future American political campaigns where at least one candidate is non-white. Beyond the vote choice, these explicit race cues in media messages can activate the racial predispositions of individuals and bring those predispositions into the decision-making process on a host of other policy attitudes.

Learning models vs. priming models

The survey experiments described below are designed to measure how a candidate's evaluation decreases when he becomes connected to racial controversy. But the psychological process respondents go through to make that evaluation is more complex and harder to isolate. Traditional priming theory would say that racial priming occurs when a person's negative racial predispositions are activated when they are exposed to media that contains implicit or explicit text or visual cues.[24] When those predispositions are activated, they become more important to the subsequent judgment of the candidate, and you would expect the black candidate in the experiment to be punished because of the increased salience of racial resentment.

But a simpler learning model may also account for decreased candidate evaluation. As Gabriel Lenz found in reexamining four cases of apparent priming, there is significant evidence that what appears as priming is actually the outcome of "learners" who switch vote choice once they learn about candidate positions.[25] As the diagrams below illustrate, the priming model relies on the activation of negative racial predispositions to explain "electoral penalties," while the learning model relies on respondents learning new, negative information about a candidate and adjusting their evaluations downward as a result. The assumption made here is that most respondents view racial controversy and the media assigning blame for that controversy as a net negative for the candidate they are evaluating (though in Chapter 4 we will explore further how respondents can be moved to blame a candidate for a "race play.")

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[23] Zaller, p. 187.

[24] Hutchings, Jardina, p. 400.

[25] Lenz, Gabriel S. "Learning and Opinion Change, Not Priming: Reconsidering the Priming Hypothesis." American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 53, No. 4, Ocotober, 2009, pp. 821-837.

Diagram 2.1
Learning Model: Racial conflict information updates candidate evaluation
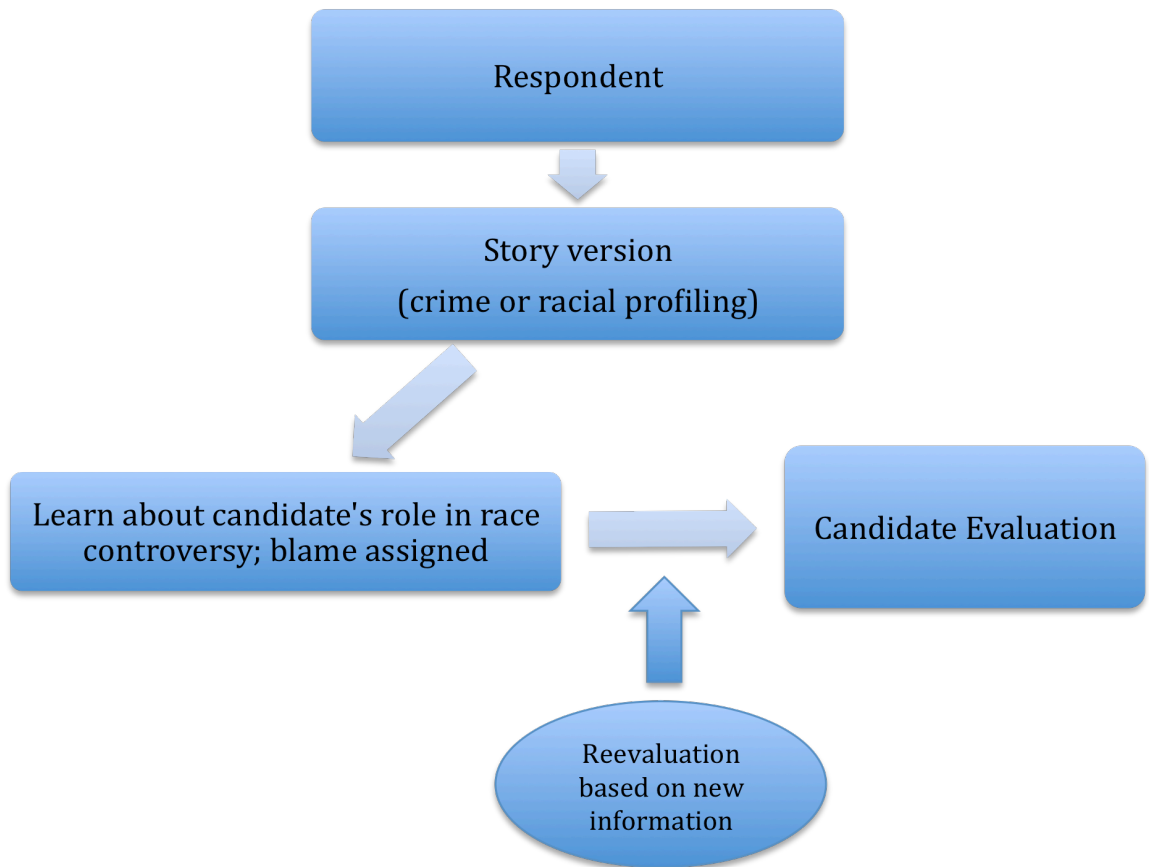
Diagram 2.2
Priming Model: Racial predispositions activated,
become more relevant in judgment of candidate
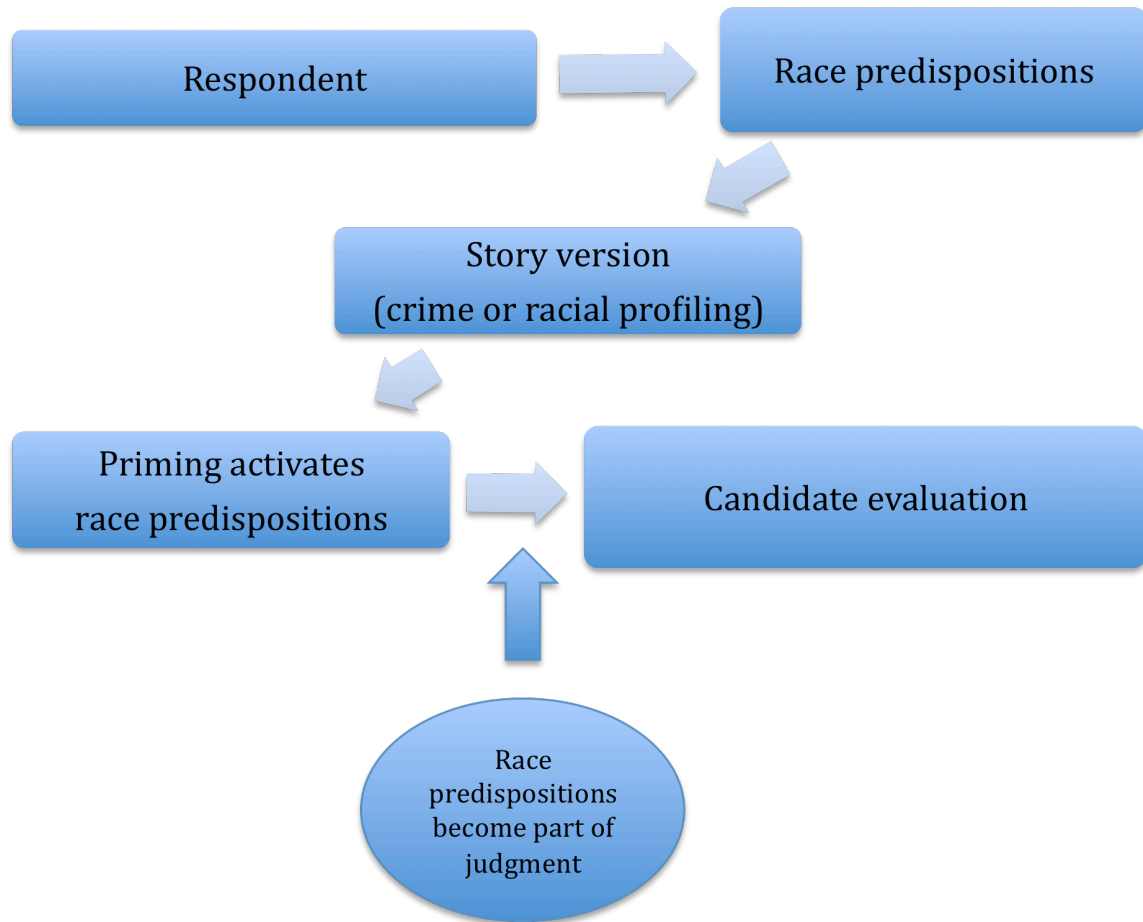
Two survey experiments—racial priming and its role in evaluation of candidates

It's a natural turn for studies that seek to establish a link between explicit cue priming effects and political choices to examine candidate evaluation. Two survey experiments were designed to yield data indicating how respondents' evaluations of a fictional Senate candidate, Bernard Wright, change given different treatment conditions. In particular, these studies are aimed at finding empirical evidence that when the media invokes the race frame in a campaign, there are significant effects on how a media consumer might interpret that frame and link its negative associations with a candidate. The first survey consists of several questions embedded in the UC Berkeley module of the 2010 Cooperative Congressional Election Study. A second survey was administered to a mixed pool of 1,069 Berkeley undergraduates and paid online respondents. While the first study, due to limited shared survey question time, does not contain pre- and post-treatment variables, it does provide several racial pre-disposition measures that may serve as indicators of who is most vulnerable to priming effects on candidate evaluation. The second study has the advantage of containing several pre- and post-treatment measures,

including racial stereotype measures that will indicate whether exposure to media frames on race can have an effect on those measures.

Testing the racial mode of interpretation

An original survey experiment was included in the 2010 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey to test whether a racial mode of interpretation in a news story can affect the evaluation of a candidate involved in that story. Respondents were all given a baseline of information on the candidate in the form of a personal profile of a moderate Democratic Senate candidate named Bernard Wright (see Appendix for full text). Each respondent was assigned to a subgroup based on two treatments: race of the candidate they were reading about (indicated through photos), and three different modes of interpretation, one baseline with no race referenced, and two others where a racial mode of interpretation was invoked. Only the headline and the first paragraph of a fictional news story were shown, but the headlines in two of the conditions clearly indicate a racial mode of interpretation compared to the baseline version of the news story. Comparing the responses of these subgroups yields several important findings about a "racial mode penalty" that candidates receive when they are covered through the lens of racial conflict. This study has a 3X3 design as described in the table below:

Race of Candidate

		No Photo	White	Black
Story Versions	No conflict	1	2	3
	Candidate accusation	4	5	6
	Media accusation	7	8	9

The simplest way to judge effects between these nine subgroups is to perform a Student's-T difference of means test between subgroups on two key dependent variables—likelihood to vote for the candidate Bernard Wright, and an evaluation of the candidate's competency (see Appendix for full question wording).

Experimental design details: list of conditions

Subjects are introduced to Bernard Wright, an ostensibly real candidate running for Senate, through a profile and (in two-thirds of the profiles) a photo. Subjects are assigned at random to see a photo of a white candidate, a black candidate, or no photo at all. The photos have the name "Bernard Wright" under the photo to clearly indicate it is the candidate in the profile. Then they are assigned at random to read one of three stories. *Story 1: No conflict*: This is a report on a speech the candidate makes on topics that have no relation to racial conflict. It acts as a baseline to test the effects of a racial accusation contained in the other two versions of the story. The headline is simply: "Candidate Makes Speech."

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Story 2: Candidate accusation: In this version two candidates are in a debate. The challenger, Bernard Wright, makes an accusation that his opponent is "playing the race card." The headline reads: "Candidate Accuses Opponent of Playing Race Card." This story version is designed to show the effects on candidate evaluation when a candidate directly brings race into campaign coverage.

Story 3: Media accusation: In this version two candidates are in a debate. However, the accusation is made by media analysts AGAINST challenger Bernard Wright that he is using the race card. This story version is designed to show the effects of an explicit media cue to readers that a candidate has wrongly brought race into campaign coverage for his own benefit.

The other three "photo-manipulation" conditions (no photo, black photo, white photo) are designed to show both whether visual cues are important in heightening or dampening the effect of the story version, and whether a white candidate or black candidate is evaluated differently depending on the story version received.

Design of the Berkeley survey instrument

An original survey experiment was administered to Berkeley undergraduates and online respondents that expanded on the design of the CCES 2010 design. While the primary manipulations to story versions was essentially the same—race of the candidate and the level of race controversy—the increased survey completion time allowed more nuanced race stereotype measures to be introduced, as well as the administration of an implicit association test (IAT) measuring race bias. The IAT code is based on the public versions of the test shared by some of the first researchers to use the IAT, Brian Nosek and Anthony Greenwald. It was administered using an online interface provided by Millisecond Software, a specialized software designed to work particularly well on timed-response experiments.

In an effort to separate the effects of indirect references and direct references to race in campaigns, I have designed a survey that exposes subjects to several different versions of a media story. One story describes a crime report that shows a national crime increase. The second story is about a man being arrested by police and later claiming he was racially profiled. These topics were chosen to show the effects of an indirect racial interpretation (stories on crime linked to urban areas often implicitly prime race considerations (Valentino, 1999), and a more direct racial interpretation (when the media makes it clear that the story is about race and involves the candidates in question). It is important to note that the stories are *not designed to prime racial stereotypes*, but to signal the media's intention to interpret the story in racial terms. The nuance between these two treatments isn't hard to distinguish if you compare the primes contained in the Willie Horton ad of 1988 and similar ads that seek to prime through implicit cues, and a news story that does not contain direct negative black stereotypes but may encourage individuals to *recall* those stereotypes through increased race salience in a news story. In "higher order" versions of the story, political candidates campaigning against each other are directly connected to the racially interpreted story. When the media, an authority figure, gives the "permission slip" to readers to bring racial considerations to

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the "top of head",[26] then those race considerations can be brought to bear on political figures entangled in that story.

Experiment design details and list of conditions

The sequence of the experiment is as follows:

1. Pre-test questions measuring standard demographics and pre-test attitudes, including feeling thermometer scores toward blacks and other minority groups.
2. Congressional profile with photo is shown (photo alternates between white and black candidate depending on subject ID).
3. Randomly assigned version of crime story is shown (control group reads a story about an iPhone that has no material that could be interpreted with a race frame). Respondents are told they must remember details about the story to distract from post-test measurements of racial attitudes.
4. Post-test questions containing candidate evaluation and trait evaluation measures (see Appendix 1 for candidate evaluation question wording).
5. Implicit Association Test administered.[27]

Candidate profiles are partly fictionalized and taken from the official Congressional Web site (http://bioguide.congress.gov/)—only centrist Democrats from states outside of California were selected. The photo accompanying the profile alternates between a black candidate and a white candidate, depending on subject number. This ensures that the pool is evenly divided between those seeing the candidate as black and those seeing the candidate as white.

List of Conditions (See Appendix for complete text of stories)

> **Condition 1: Control.** News story on iPhone (with no racial content).
> **Condition 2: Crime Report.** A crime report that serves as an implicit or indirect race cue is covered in a news story without explicit cues about race or the candidates.
> **Condition 3: Crime Report PLUS Race Controversy**. Same as Condition 2, but with an accusation by one candidate that creates a race controversy over the crime report. An additional priming agent is added with a photo of African American men (hands only) behind bars. The expectation is that the accusation and the photo will increase the salience of race in the minds of some respondents.
> **Condition 4: Crime Report PLUS Race Controversy PLUS Media Blames**. Same as Condition 3, but media analysts blame the candidate for making an unfair race play. As the controversy escalates, the priming

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[26] Zaller, 1992.
[27] Script for the Implicit Association Test was adapted from the Generic Race IAT designed by Anthony Greenwald and Brian Nosek (http://projectimplicit.net/nosek/iat/). The test is administered at the end to ensure that the tasks presented in the test do not have a racial priming effect before respondents are exposed to treatment.

effect is greater and some respondents may be directed to blame the candidate accused of making a "race play."

Conditions 5-7: Same as Conditions 2-4 above, except the subject of the story is replaced by a story about racial profiling. The visual cues are photos of a white police officer and a black suspect that was mistakenly arrested. The racial profiling story is a more direct reference to race in comparison to the crime report, so the expectation is that the increase in race salience will be more immediate and intense.

Within each condition above there are two subgroups: those who see a black candidate, and those who see a white candidate (photos of both can be found in the Appendices section). The experiment was compiled using a laptop-based and Web-based package from Millisecond Software (www.millisecond.com). The subject pools are divided into three types of respondents: Berkeley undergraduates using laptops at the XLab at the UC Berkeley Haas School of Business; Berkeley undergraduates taking the survey online in return for a frozen yogurt coupon; and Amazon Mechanical Turk (mTurk) online workers, who are paid a fee to complete the survey online.

Chapter 3
The Racial Priming Survey Experiments

Introduction – Summary of findings

The results of this experiment show a clear difference between treatment and control groups in how respondents evaluate candidates after exposure to treatment. Using OLS regression analysis to perform multiple difference in means tests,[28] a pattern of "electoral penalties" emerges as the salience of race in the story respondents read increases. The most significant results appear in the final version of the stories, when the media directly implicates a candidate as instigating a race controversy. This indicates that the media plays a key role in making a story "race salient," and this has a direct impact on the potential electoral penalty that a candidate suffers when he/she becomes embroiled in a story on race. More significantly, a white candidate suffers a greater penalty in candidate evaluation, and sooner in the process of developing campaign coverage on a racial issue, than a black candidate. A campaign strategist working for an African American candidate might read these results in this way: both candidates will take a hit, but if race must be brought up, then my candidate gets hurt the least.

This project is focused on two aspects of race's intersection with politics and media: how the media covers political campaigns when race becomes a factor; and when race becomes a factor, how voters assess candidates. An extension of that research agenda asks a basic question: is racial tension and a socially desirable aversion to race conflict an important factor in how candidates are assessed? These data make it clear that the answer is "yes." All candidates, but white candidates in particular, must do a delicate dance around race frames in the course of a campaign lest they get pegged with a "race card player" label.

Relationship of candidate evaluation to story conditions: penalty increases as race becomes salient

When comparing condition dummy variable coefficients, effects on the two main candidate evaluation measures—affect and likelihood to vote for the candidate—move in the negative direction as it becomes clearer to the reader that racial tension has been introduced to the story. Among all respondents (excluding blacks)[29] exposed to the crime report, there is a 6 percent decrease in affect and a 8 percent decrease in vote likelihood when moving from the control (no race content) to the most race salient version of the story. The effects become more pronounced for those respondents who were exposed to the story about a racial profiling incident (designed to be a more direct reference to race). There is a corresponding 7 percent (affect) and 14 percent (vote) penalty for this version of the story, which is more clearly about race from the start. When comparing the crime report and racial profiling story conditions across several different subgroups, it's clear that racial profiling has more intense and statistically significant effects on the dependent variable than the less explicitly racial crime report. This falls in line with expectations

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[28] Variables were created

[29] Unless mentioned otherwise, all results have dropped the black respondents from the regression as their responses may have other group identity drivers of candidate evaluation.

about stories that have a direct racial mode of interpretation (racial profiling) versus those that have an indirect relationship to race (crime report).

As the media and candidates "pile on" in progressive story versions with comments that turn the story toward a racial mode of interpretation, the effects on potential political judgments become significant. In the racial profiling story, the affect variable moves an additional 4 percent in the negative direction when candidates make accusations, and the vote variables moves 3 percent. Once the media also piles on, an additional -1 percent for affect and -3 percent for vote pushes the negative evaluation of the candidates even further (see Table 3.1). With the exception of the vote variable in the crime report story version, adding photos to a treatment also moves the candidate evaluation in the negative direction compared to the baseline story version. This mirrors other experiments[30] that have shown that visual cues are often powerful priming instruments.

Comparing the two candidate groups: white vs. black

Half of the respondents were exposed to a photo of a white candidate when the candidate was introduced, and half of the respondents were exposed to a photo of a black candidate. All other information presented (such as profile information) was randomly selected cross all cases. This experimental manipulation should allow us to see the isolated effect of the race of the candidate on subsequent evaluations. In nearly all cell-by-cell comparisons, those who saw the white candidate judge that candidate more harshly when race controversy arises, even though both candidates suffer the evaluative penalty described in the section above. This is especially true in the racial profiling (direct race reference) story: the white candidate was punished when racial controversy was introduced 11 percentage points on affect and 13 points on vote, compared to the baseline story version. The black candidate suffered only an 8-point (affect) and 9-point (vote) deduction for the same story version. When the media blamed the candidate for a race play, the white candidate lost 16 points on vote compared to the baseline story version, while the black candidate lost 4 fewer percentage points in the same category.

In general, respondents were not as quick to judge a black candidate negatively after being exposed to race controversy and/or visual cues that act as race primes. These differences were most noticeable in the indirect race reference (crime report) story. While there was only one statistically significant coefficient (-.06 for the media-blames-candidate story) for those who saw the black candidate, there were highly significant coefficients for the same story version for the white candidate (-.08 for affect, and -.11 for vote).

These results indicate that a black candidate actually runs a lower risk of electoral penalty when she gets involved in a story that draws a racial mode of interpretation. Given that an Implicit Association Test given to respondents indicates an overall anti-black bias (mean of -.047 on a -1 to 1 scale), it's a surprising result that black candidates are assigned less blame when race controversy arises.

Comparing white and nonwhite respondents

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[30] See Valentino and Hutchings.

The respondent pool at Berkeley is a reasonable reflection of California, with whites at 53.4 percent of 1,061 subjects, and the subgroup of nonwhites, excluding blacks, being overrepresented by Asians (44.5 percent of 456 nonwhites). Campaign strategists running a future African American candidate's campaign will want to answer a key question: when race does come up (and they will bet that it will), will "our guy" be hit hardest when there is the inevitable backlash, or will the opponent? Which constituents are likely to give us the benefit of the doubt when things get ugly (i.e. the racial mode of interpretation becomes salient?)

Comparing whites and nonwhites on the experimental condition coefficients can help these campaign strategists determine how a real-world race frame might affect different types of respondents who have had different experiences with race in society. In general, nonwhite respondents were less likely to negatively evaluate the candidates after they became engaged in racial controversy. They were particularly lenient on a black candidate, with no coefficients in the crime report story version reaching statistical significance and all staying with the range of -.03 to .04. In contrast, white respondents punished even the black candidate up to -.10 (vote variable in the media-blames-candidate condition), though this did meet the threshold of statistical significance. Even in the racial profiling story version, a more direct reference to race, nonwhites judged the black candidate less harshly than white respondents. While white respondents punished the black candidate nearly as much as the white candidate (-.15 affect, and -.13 vote in the media-blames-candidate condition), nonwhite candidates only punished the black candidate -.06 and -.10 for the same condition, and these coefficients were not statistically significant.

Table 3.1

Racial Profiling FT Results
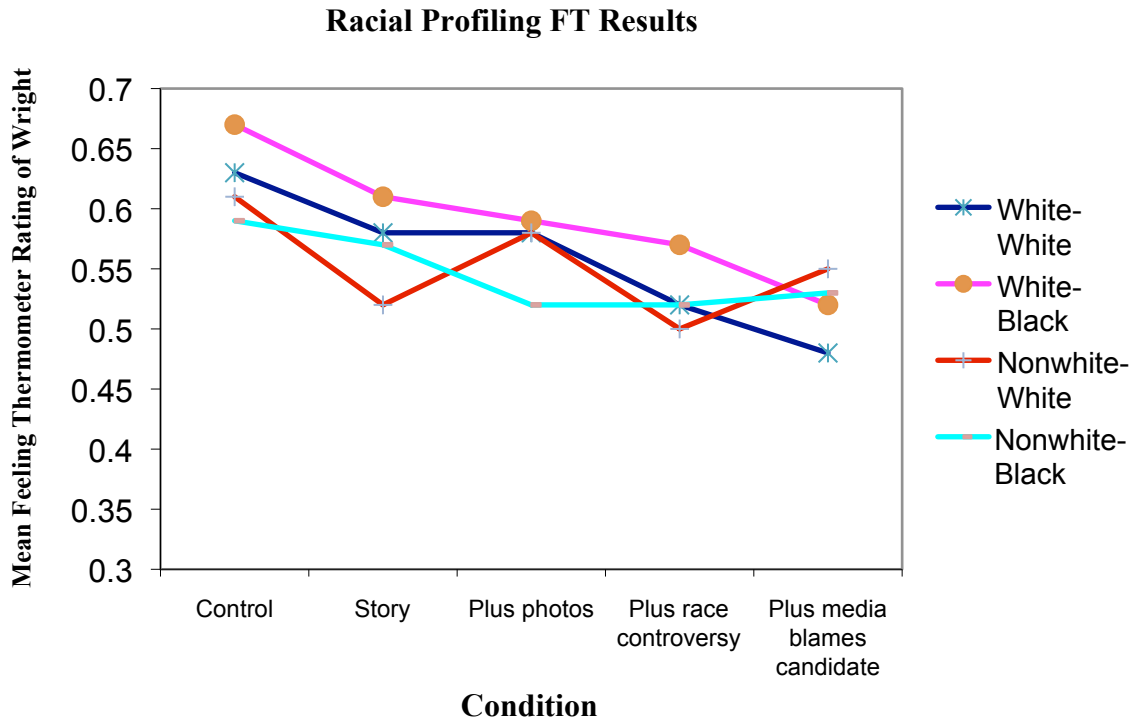
It's interesting to note that the means for baseline assessments of the candidates (the constant in the regressions) varied widely between whites and nonwhites. In all cases nonwhites assessed the candidate 2 to 8 points lower than whites did on the same variable and white-black candidate condition (see constants in Tables 3.4 and 35.) This could be one reason that nonwhites were less likely to punish—mean assessments had already started quite low and were not as vulnerable to a decrease once respondents read the stories.

Table 3.2

Crime Report FT Results
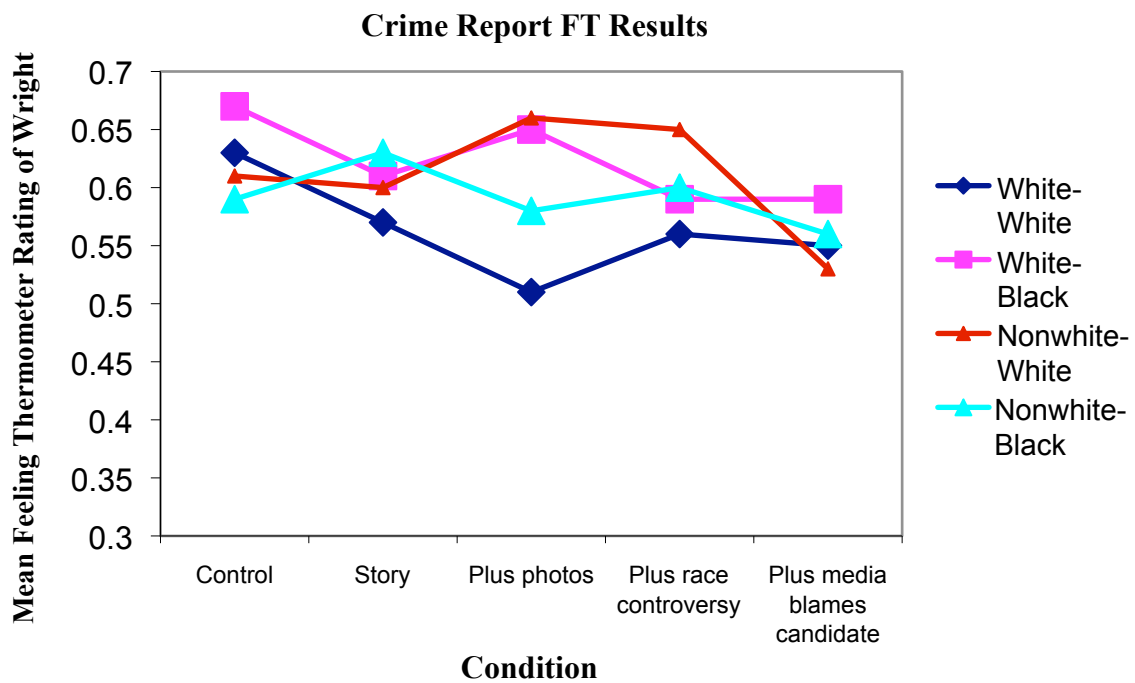
Predispositions and interaction effects: Authoritarian dynamic, IAT and media trust

Theories of racial priming often posit that the level of priming depends on the interaction between increased salience of race in the media environment and an individual's predispositions that indicate socialized or otherwise deeply ingrained attitudes on race. While there were few statistically significant interaction effects observed between independent variables and story version dummy variables, there were statistically significant relationships observed on the key dependent variables and three other variables: attitudes on affirmative action, an authoritarian dynamic measure, and opinion on media bias (this is especially relevant to the media-blames-candidate conditions). For more information on how these variables were calculated, see Appendix.

Table 3.8 illustrates the following findings on these three key independent variables:

- Respondents who do not favor affirmative action for blacks tend to penalize both the white and black candidates on the vote and affect variables. But those who saw the black candidate were 7 percent more likely to penalize that candidate vs. the white candidate (coefficients of -.17 vs. -.10).
- There were significant differences between whites and nonwhites in measuring the association between these predisposition variables and the dependent variables. Nonwhites had no statistically significant associations between race predisposition variables and the dependent variables, while whites nearly always had statistically significant coefficients, in some cases rising to as high as -.21 (Affirmative action for whites seeing the black candidate). This suggests that racial predispositions have a much stronger effect on whites than nonwhites.
- When comparing respondents by those who showed implicit anti-black bias through their performance in the Implicit Association Test, and those who showed less bias[31], significant differences between these two groups emerged. Those with pro-black IAT scores were more likely to punish the white candidate than the black candidate when they also had high authoritarian scores and believe the media to be strongly biased. Coefficients lost their statistical significance when moving from the white candidate condition to the black candidate condition. In contrast, the IAT anti-black subgroup did not significantly punish the white candidate, even those with high authoritarian and strong media bias scores. But the same subgroup did react negatively when seeing the black candidate—those who were strongly against affirmative action and in the IAT anti-black category rated the black candidate -.04 points lower than those who were for affirmative action in the same category. In general, those who were grouped in the IAT anti-black category reacted strongly against the black candidate, especially those who are against affirmative action, scored high on the authoritarian scale and believe the media is biased. One exception to this pattern appears to be those who are against affirmative action and were in the IAT anti-black group—we might expect them to soften the electoral penalty on the white candidate, but on the affect variable they actually punish the white candidate more than black candidate (-.17 compared to -.10).
- In most cases, the groups that revealed attitudes that might leave them more susceptible to racial priming—against affirmative action, high on the authoritarian scale, high on anti-black IAT sentiment and believing that the media is heavily biased—demonstrated a stronger "electoral penalty" for the candidates than their counterparts who scored lower on those measures.

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[31] The cut-off point was 0 on a scale of -1 to 1. Those scoring below zero were grouped as anti-black, those scoring above zerio were grouped as pro-black.

Table 3.3: Regression[32] of affect and vote variables on treatment conditions, scored 0 to 1, using control condition as baseline (excludes black respondents)

Conditions	N	Affect (SE)	Vote (SE)
CRIME REPORT			
Story	112	-.03 (.02)	-.03 (.03)
Plus photos	105	-.05* (.02)	-.03 (.03)
Plus race controversy	105	-.03 (.02)	.00 (.03)
Plus media blames candidate	106	-.06*** (.02)	-.08*** (.03)
Constant	428	.63	.53
RACIAL PROFILING			
Story	92	-.04* (.03)	-.07** (.03)
Plus photos	91	-.06** (.02)	-.09*** (.03)
Plus race controversy	100	-.10*** (.02)	-.11*** (.03)
Plus media blames candidate	84	-.11*** (.03)	-.14*** (.03)
Constant	367	.63	.53

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[32] Regression coefficients should be read as being equivalent to difference of means tests between conditions, as the excluded condition is the control.

Table 3.4: Regression of affect and vote variables on treatment conditions, scored 0 to 1, using control condition as baseline ("nonwhites" excludes black respondents)

	WHITE RESPONDENTS			NONWHITE RESPONDENTS		
Conditions	**N**	**Affect (SE)**	**Vote (SE)**	**N**	**Affect (SE)**	**Vote (SE)**
CRIME REPORT						
Story	52	-.06	-.07*	60	.01	.02
Plus photos	66	-.08	-.07	39	-.01	.03
Plus race controversy	56	-.08**	-.03	49	.03	.03
Plus media blames candidate	54	-.08**	-.11***	52	-.05*	-.05
Constant	228	.65	.55	200	.60	.51
RACIAL PROFILING						
Story	63	-.05	-.08*	29	-.05*	-.06
Plus photos	56	-.06**	-.09**	35	-.05*	-.09**
Plus race controversy	161	-.11***	-.12***	39	-.09***	-.12***
Plus media blames candidate	54	-.15***	-.14***	30	-.06*	-.14***
Constant	234	.65	.55	133	.60	.51

Standard errors are .04 for all coefficient cells.

Table 3.5: Regression of affect and vote variables on treatment conditions, scored 0 to 1, using control condition as baseline, sorted by those who saw the white candidate vs. those who saw a black candidate (excludes black respondents)

| Conditions | N | WHITE CANDIDATE | | N | BLACK CANDIDATE | |
		Affect (SE)	Vote (SE)		Affect (SE)	Vote (SE)
CRIME REPORT						
Story	56	-.03 (.03)	-.03 (.04)	56	-.02 (.03)	-.02 (.04)
Plus photos	57	-.07** (.03)	-.05 (.04)	48	-.01 (.03)	.00 (.04)
Plus race controversy	56	-.02 (.03)	.02 (.04)	49	-.04 (.03)	-.02 (.04)
Plus media blames candidate	57	-.08** (.03)	-.11*** (.04)	49	-.06* (.03)	-.06 (.04)
Constant	226	.62	.53	202	.63	.54
RACIAL PROFILING						
Story	41	-06 (.04)	-.09** (.05)	50	-.03 (.03)	-.05 (.04)
Plus photos	40	-.04 (.04)	-.07 (.05)	51	-.07** (.03)	-.10** (.04)
Plus race controversy	53	-.11*** (.04)	-.13*** (.04)	47	-.08** (.03)	-.09** (.04)
Plus media blames candidate	42	-.11*** (.04)	-.16*** (.05)	42	-.11*** (.04)	-.12*** (.04)
Constant	177	.62	.53	190	.63	.54

Table 3.6: Regression of affect and vote variables on treatment conditions, scored 0 to 1, using control condition as baseline, sorted by those who saw the white candidate vs. those who saw a black candidate (white respondents only)

		WHITE CANDIDATE			BLACK CANDIDATE	
Conditions	**N**	**Affect (SE)**	**Vote (SE)**	**N**	**Affect (SE)**	**Vote (SE)**
CRIME REPORT						
Story	25	-.06	-.08	27	-.06	-.07
Plus photos	43	-.12**	-.10*	23	-.02	-.01
Plus race controversy	30	-.07	-.01	26	-.08*	-.05
Plus media blames candidate	34	-.08	-12**	20	-.08	-.10
Constant	132	.63	.55	96	.67	.55
RACIAL PROFILING						
Story	29	-.05	-.10	34	-.06	-.06
Plus photos	23	-.05	-.07	33	-.08*	-.10*
Plus race controversy	36	-.11**	-.13**	25	-.10**	-.09
Plus media blames candidate	24	-.15***	-.16**	30	-.15***	-.13**
Constant	112	.63	.55	122	.67	.55

Table 3.7: Regression of affect and vote variables on treatment conditions, scored 0 to 1, using control condition as baseline, sorted by those who saw the white candidate vs. those who saw a black candidate (nonwhite respondents only)

		WHITE CANDIDATE			BLACK CANDIDATE	
Conditions	**N**	**Affect (SE)**	**Vote (SE)**	**N**	**Affect (SE)**	**Vote (SE)**
CRIME REPORT						
Story	31	-.01	.02	29	.04	.03
Plus photos	14	.05	.05	25	-.01	.01
Plus race controversy	26	.04	.05	23	.01	.01
Plus media blames candidate	23	-.08*	-.09*	29	-.03	-.02
Constant	94	.61	.50	106	.59	.51
RACIAL PROFILING						
Story	13	-.09*	-.08	16	-.02	-.03
Plus photos	17	-.03	-.07	18	-.07	-.11*
Plus race controversy	17	-.11**	-.14**	22	-.07	-.10*
Plus media blames candidate	18	-.06	-.16***	12	-.06	-.10
Constant	55	.61	.50	68	.59	.51

Table 3.8: Regression of vote variable on treatment conditions, scored 0 to 1, with key independent variables sorted by those who saw the white candidate vs. those who saw a black candidate.

Respondent subgroups	WHITE CANDIDATE			BLACK CANDIDATE		
	Aff. action	Authoritarian	Strong media bias	Aff. action	Authoritarian	Strong media bias
VOTE						
All respondents	-.09*	-.09**	-.14***	-.16***	-.08**	-.06*
Whites	-.13*	-.16***	-.16***	-.21***	-.14***	-.10**
Nonwhites	-.01	-.02	-.04	-.06	-.04	.03
IAT pro-black	-.07	-.19**	-.35***	-.24	.13	-.05
IAT anti-black	-.06	-.08	-.07	-.14**	-.08*	-.08*
AFFECT						
All respondents	-.14**	-.06*	-.09***	-.14***	-.05*	-.05
Whites	-.13**	-.12***	-.11***	-.20***	-.10**	-.10***
Nonwhites	-.11	-.02	-.01	-.06	.00	.05
IAT pro-black	-.04	-.14*	-.28***	-.16*	.08	-.04
IAT anti-black	-.17**	-.05	-.03	-.10**	-.07*	-.03

Note: All subgroups exclude black respondents: IAT pro-black is defined as scoring <=-.3 on computed D-score; IAT anti-black is scoring >.3 on the same score.

Congressional Cooperative Election Study 2010

For more details on the design and question wording for this study, refer back to Chapter 2. While the study is a smaller version of the Berkeley survey, the results are meant to confirm the results of the Berkeley survey and answer external validity questions that we may have about a mixed respondent sample of UC Berkeley undergraduates. There is no question that the CCES, with its large sample size with a balanced geographic and racial distribution, has more external validity than the Berkeley study. If we compare treatment effects across conditions and find that they do not contradict the findings of the Berkeley study, we can make a stronger argument for the Berkeley study's external validity.

Story versions for the CCES experiment were chosen specifically to test two assumptions: first, that the **source** of an accusation and the **target** of that accusation can influence candidate evaluation. Secondly, the race of the candidate making the accusation or being accused can influence levels of support once that candidate is involved in racial controversy. Specific expectations by condition are as follows:

Condition 1: No conflict/no photo. This is a baseline condition that sets the baseline mean scores for likelihood to vote for Bernard Wright and Wright's competency score.

Condition 2: No conflict/white photo. Sets a baseline score for a white candidate.

Condition 3: No conflict/black photo. Sets a baseline score for a black candidate.

Condition 4: Candidate accusation/no photo. The terms "Race Card" in the headline and the candidate making an accusation should result in a lower average mean evaluation in both likelihood to vote and competency.

Condition 5: Candidate accusation/white photo. Same as Condition 4, but the "electoral penalty" should be greater for white candidates "playing the race card."

Condition 6: Candidate accusation/black photo. Same as Condition 5, but the "electoral penalty" should be mitigated because a black candidate is making the "race card" allegation against a presumably white opponent. However, it is possible that a black candidate will suffer the same electoral penalty as the white candidate.

Condition 7: Media accusation/no photo. This story version represents the highest level of priming, lending the media's authority to the accusation that Bernard Wright wrongly played the race card. However, the term "race card" is not included in the headline (it is replaced by "race comments"), which may result in a lower "electoral penalty."

Condition 8: Media accusation/white photo.

Condition 9: Media accusation/black photo

Results—Differences between conditions
There were substantial and statistically significant differences in the mean likelihood of voting for Bernard Wright, but not necessarily in all treatment groups where differences from the baseline were expected. There was a 6.5 percent penalty (significant at the p<.01 level) assessed when a candidate was *accused by the media* of stirring racial controversy (see Table 3.9). There was a lesser penalty assigned—2.1 percent—when the candidate himself (Bernard Wright) makes an accusation that his opponent is playing racial politics, and this difference was not statistically significant. This indicates that respondents are swayed more by a simple media pronouncement on racial politics than when the source of the accusation is a candidate. Perhaps it is considered "par for the course" that candidates accuse each other of playing racial politics, but when the media makes it "official," respondents are apt to penalize the candidate.

Differences by photos shown and race of the candidate
Visual media appears to have a softening effect on respondents' views on a candidate—and surprisingly, the black candidate photo received a warmer response than either the white candidate photo or no photo at all. There was an 8 percent increase in likelihood to vote for the candidate over the no-photo condition when a black candidate was shown. There was a 3.1 percent increase over the no-photo condition when a white candidate was shown, though this difference did not reach standard levels of significance. This effect disappears in the two other story versions (when the media makes an accusation, and when the candidate makes an accusation). There are no significant differences between photo conditions in these two conditions, which suggest that as conflict enters a story, attention is diverted away from the photos and the normal effect of a positive human connection to a smiling face is negated by the racial conflict described in the text.

When comparing subgroups that all received the same photo, some interesting patterns emerge. The spread moving from the baseline story to the media accusation story is much larger for those who saw a black photo versus those who saw a white photo. In other words, the "accusation penalty" assessed *was greater when the black candidate became involved in racial controversy than it was for the white candidate*.

While the mean for the black photo/baseline story subgroup is .455, the mean drops to .321 for the black photo/media accusation story subgroup, a statistically significant difference of 13 percent. To put it another way, there was a 13 percent penalty when the media accused the black candidate of playing racial politics, while there was only a 3.3 percent penalty given to the white candidate under the same conditions (see Table 3.12).

A smaller spread was observed for the means on the competency variable, moving from .60 (black photo/baseline story) to .52 (black photo/media accusation), an 8 percent difference (see Table 3.13).

The same spread between conditions was not observed for those subgroups that saw a white photo or no photo at all. Though there was a 3 percent drop in means moving from the baseline story to the media accusation story, this did not reach standard levels of significance and pales by comparison to the 13 percent drop observed in the subgroup seeing the black candidate photo. The natural conclusion is that the black candidate suffered a greater penalty than the white candidate when he became embroiled in racial controversy.

Associations with racial resentment measures

It can be assumed that racial predispositions may be brought into the evaluation process when voters evaluate a candidate, and the race of the candidate is likely to interact with those predispositions. When that candidate is tied to racial controversy, dormant predispositions may be activated. Racial resentments that may normally be dampened by the egalitarian norm (see Mendelberg's argument in "The Race Card,") could be brought to the forefront when the media covers such a racial controversy.

Using an ordered probit model, some strong associations were observed between this survey experiment's dependent variables (likelihood to vote and competence) and two racial resentment measures, as well as an attitude measure on affirmative action.

In the "Media" version of the story where we would expect the prompt from the media to bring racial predispositions to the front, we see a particularly strong association in the subgroup that read a "media" version of the story and saw a photo of a *white candidate*. In contrast, those who saw the same version of the story but saw a photo of a *black candidate* showed either no statistically significant relationship between racial resentment and likelihood to vote, or a reversal of the sign for racial resentment coefficient (see Table 3.14).

The reversal of the sign under the first racial resentment question is particularly interesting. As we might expect, those respondents who are the most racially tolerant are more likely to vote for the black candidate. But when that candidate is white and becomes entangled in racial controversy, there is a reversal of fortune. The relationship is just as strong (.29) for the second racial resentment measure, coded in the opposite direction. Running the same model on the competence dependent variable showed similar results, with the strongest associations occurring in groups that saw the "Media" version of the story (see Table 3.15). Those seeing the "baseline" (i.e. control) version of the stories did not show any statistically significant associations between racial resentment measures and dependent variables. This follows expectations that racial predispositions do not come into play when evaluating candidates if there is no racial controversy brought into the story.

Discussion

There were several intuitive expectations debunked by these findings. First, one might expect a greater societal bias, implicit or otherwise, to exist against a black candidate versus a white candidate given the history of racism in America and its lasting effects. But in fact the black candidate in this experiment scored a **higher mean** than the white candidate (and a candidate of undetermined race) in all categories and in both dependent variables, and especially in the baseline story versions (.46 likelihood to vote

for the black candidate, .41 likelihood to vote for the white candidate, versus .37 for undetermined race).

One also might expect the white candidate to receive a higher penalty on the dependent variables when he becomes entangled in racial politics. Traditionally, a white candidate would be a more likely target for an accusation of "playing the race card," but today a candidate of any race can be attacked in that way. These data show that the black candidate actually suffered a statistically significant penalty in both likelihood to vote and competency measures, while the white candidate could not be shown to suffer a significant penalty.

A third expectation was that the use of the words "race card" might trigger a more pronounced penalty given the negative connotations that phrase carries. Instead, source cues, rather than particular content, seem to have a greater influence. When an accusation is hurled by a candidate, even using a provocative phrase like "race card," there is less effect than when the candidate becomes a target of the media rather than his opponent.

Conclusion

These results signal a shift in how the public reacts to the introduction of race into political campaigns when there is a nonwhite candidate in the mix. Rather than a black candidate taking on the automatic role of a victim of racial politics, he might actually be labeled as the *perpetrator* of unwanted racial controversy and suffer a subsequent electoral penalty. This seems especially important when the media steps in to signal that the candidate is at fault. President Obama made a point of avoiding making explicit statements about his race in the 2008 campaign (with the notable exception of the speech he made on race in response to the controversy over remarks by his former pastor, Rev. Jeremiah Wright). If we extrapolate from the results of this experiment to that real-life campaign, staying mostly silent on the race issue appears to be the right strategy, as Obama surely would have suffered more of an electoral penalty than McCain did when stories of racial controversy surfaced.

Table 3.9: Mean differences, likelihood to vote for Bernard Wright (0-1 scale)

Treatment group	N	Means (SE)	Difference of means (SE)	T-test sig.
Baseline	238	.41 (.01)		
Candidate	285	.39 (.01)	.02 (.02)	.27
Baseline	238	.41 (.01)		
Media	305	.35 (.01)	.06 (.02)	.00
Candidate	285	.39 (.01)		
Media	305	.35 (.01)	.04 (.02)	.02

Yellow cells signify a statistically significant difference of means at the p<.05 level

Table 3.10: Mean differences, evaluation of competency of Bernard Wright (0-1 scale)

Treatment group	N	Means (SE)	Difference of means (SE)	T-test sig.
Baseline	242	.54 (.01)		
Candidate	291	.53 (.01)	.01 (.02)	.62
Baseline	242	.54 (.01)		
Media	309	.50 (.01)	.04 (.02)	.04
Candidate	291	.53 (.01)		
Media	309	.50 (.01)	.03 (.02)	.12

Yellow cells signify a statistically significant difference of means at the p<.05 level

Table 3.11: Comparing photo conditions—difference of means in likelihood to vote for Wright (baseline story version)

Photo condition, for baseline story	N	Means (SE)	Difference of means (SE)	T-test sig.
No Photo	77	.37 (.02)		
Black	72	.46 (.02)	-.09 (.03)	.01
No Photo	77	.37 (.02)		
White	89	.41 (.02)	-.04 (.03)	.27
Black	72	.46 (.02)		
White	89	.41 (.02)	.05 (.03)	.07

Yellow cells signify a statistically significant difference of means at the p<.05 level

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Table 3.12: Comparing story versions—difference of means in likelihood to vote for Wright (black candidate photo condition)

Story version, for black candidate photo condition	N	Means (SE)	Difference of means (SE)	T-test sig.
Baseline	72	.46 (.02)		
Media	88	.32 (.02)	.13 (.03)	.00
Baseline	72	.46 (.02)		
Candidate	96	.38 (.02)	.08 (.03)	.03
Candidate	96	.38 (.02)		
Media	88	.32 (.02)	.06 (.03)	.05

Yellow cells signify a statistically significant difference of means at the p<.05 level

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Table 3.13: Comparing story versions—difference of means in competency of Wright (black candidate photo condition)

Story version, for black candidate photo condition	N	Means (SE)	Difference of means (SE)	T-test sig.
Baseline	73	.60 (.02)		
Media	90	.52 (.02)	.08 (.03)	.01
Baseline	73	.60 (.02)		
Candidate	98	.55 (.02)	.05 (.03)	.16
Candidate	98	.55 (.02)		
Media	90	.52 (.02)	.03 (.03)	.29

Yellow cells signify a statistically significant difference of means at the p<.05 level

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Table 3.14: Ordered Probit model, DV= Likelihood of voting for Bernard Wright

Estimated coefficients

Subgroup (Version-candidate)	N	Racial resentment A (SE)	Racial resentment B (SE)	Affirmative Action (SE)
Media-black	88	.37** (.14)	-.06 (.11)	.08 (.15)
Media-white	112	-.29* (.12)	.29** (.11)	.34* (.15
Media-none	101	.08 (.13)	.31** (.11)	.11 (.14)
Candidate-black	96	.33** (.12)	-.24* (.11)	.14 (.14)
Candidate-white	98	-.09 (.11)	.05 (.11)	.27 (.16)
Candidate-none	89	-.05 (.13)	.10 (.11)	-.12 (.13)

- = p< 05; ** = p<.01

Note: Racial resentment B is coded in the opposite direction of A (i.e., A is most tolerant as values increase, B is most tolerant as values decrease).

Table 3.15: Ordered Probit model, DV = Competence of Bernard Wright

Estimated coefficients

Subgroup (Version-candidate)	N	Racial resentment A (SE)	Racial resentment B (SE)	Affirmative Action (SE)
Media-black	90	.19 (.13)	-.10 (.11)	.12 (.14)
Media-white	113	.12 (.12)	.21* (.11)	.46** (.15)
Media-none	102	.28* (.13)	.27* (.11)	.18 (.14)
Candidate-black	98	.19 (.12)	-.35** (.11)	.30* (.15)
Candidate-white	101	-.02 (.12)	-.01 (.11)	.04 (.16)
Candidate-none	90	-.03 (.12)	-.07 (.10)	.19 (.13)

* = p< 05; ** = p<.01

Chapter 4
Can the Media Push the "Blame Frame" in a Campaign?

The survey experiments in the previous chapters showed clear effects when story versions designed as racial primes pulled candidates into racial controversy. Both black and white candidates suffered an evaluative penalty (on the vote and affect variables) when the racial mode of interpretation was activated. But the strongest effects were observed in those conditions in which a media analyst specifically blamed one candidate (Bernard Wright). This was especially true when the story was about racial profiling, containing a direct reference to race rather than any implicit or indirect references.

Based on those results, there's strong evidence that the media is an important mediator in racial priming, and that some people may be especially vulnerable to influence from the media when, inevitably, one candidate or another is blamed for bringing race into the controversy. But we can't know exactly how powerful a motivator the media could be in a race controversy story unless we test that influence in an experimental setting.

I was given the opportunity to submit several questions to the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) of 2008 that specifically asked respondents after being prompted by a short segment of a news story. The results confirm the expectation that the media can give a strong push into blaming a candidate for a "race play" (defined as using race or accusations of racism for political advantage). In this survey question respondents were given the option to blame the candidates or the media for "injecting race into the story," and in nearly half of the cases they were indeed willing to blame a less individualized entity (the media) over the candidate himself, even when the media pointed the finger at the candidate.

Does the media have the power to blame?

President Obama as a 2008 candidate worked hard to avoid characterizing himself as a traditional black candidate—yet several times, especially during the primary campaign against Hillary Clinton, race as a story frame was introduced through comments made by either Obama's associates, Clinton herself or her husband. The media jumped on these comments and gave intense coverage to stories that Obama himself probably disliked. Other black candidates—notably Harold Ford in the Tennessee senatorial race of 2006—have been forced to deal with similar story frames in their campaigns. President Obama's campaign experience demonstrated that a campaign between a white and nonwhite candidate may find it difficult to escape having a different media lens applied to news presentation. In calling out the "race card," the media or a candidate sends an explicit cue to viewers (or readers) that instantly raises race salience. This may have profound influence on candidate evaluation and vote choice, as it did in the Berkeley study and the 2010 CCES study described in Chapter 3.

The blame frame

Talking about race relations in America makes many people nervous, especially those who work in the media. Most professional journalists seek to cover race in a fair manner without being accused of bias or making racially offensive references. Invoking

the "race card" is one way the media has introduced a racial frame to stories without appearing to have a slant for or against players in the story. In the last several decades, playing the "race card" has taken on a negative connotation and the media often acts as an interpreter or "blame agent" after the race card has been "outed." In contrast to the traditional definitions of 50 years ago, today either a black or white candidate can be blamed for playing the race card. A white candidate can be blamed for using her opponent's race as a wedge to incite fear among white voters. A black candidate can be blamed for playing the race card if he falsely accuses a white candidate of using race as a wedge, then capitalizes on the backlash against his opponent. But are people moved by the media's race card "call-out" to blame one candidate or another, or does this call-out have little effect? This question can best be tested through an experiment.

The experiment

In order to measure the blame frame's effects, a single question was included in the Cooperative Congressional Election Study of 2008. This question (part of the UC Berkeley/NYU module) was administered after the election in November, 2008. A pool of 813 respondents was randomly assigned to three treatment conditions, which included a baseline control and two "blame frame" conditions. All respondents were instructed to read a short preamble about a senatorial campaign between two candidates, one white and one African American (photos of the two candidates accompanied the story).[33] A former consultant to the white candidate's campaign makes a public statement that can be interpreted as referring to the black candidate's race. Condition 1 included a statement in which media analysts blamed the white candidate's campaign, Condition 2 included the same statement blaming the black candidate for "playing the race card," while Condition 3 had no statement assigning blame at all. After exposure to treatment, respondents were asked, "Who is responsible for injecting race into this campaign?" Response options were the white candidate, the black candidate, the media or Not sure. There are two "escape" options for those respondents who don't want to blame either candidate. This serves two purposes: Results should weed out ambivalent respondents who may be unwilling to blame a candidate versus a generalized entity like "the media." Those who do pick a candidate, then, are likely to be the least ambivalent and hardest to move in blame assignment.

There are several reasonable expectations worth examining in the results of this experiment:

- Treatment, if strong enough, should be able to move someone from the "Don't know" column into the "Blame" columns. That is, treatment should overcome ambivalence. Alternatively, treatment might be able to move someone from the "media" column to a blame-the-candidate column.
- When comparing treatment and control groups, those under a "blame" condition should be more willing to blame the candidate they have been prompted to blame.
- The "blame black" condition may create a "violation of norms" backlash effect, inducing more people to resist the prompt and blame the white candidate.
- Those opposing affirmative action should be more willing to blame the black candidate under the blame black condition, and less willing to blame the white candidate under the blame white condition.

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[33] For full preamble and question text, see Appendix.

- Media consumption may change how much respondents are willing to blame the media or take a cue from the media.

Moving "Don't know" to the Blame column

Using a Student's T-test, no statistically significant difference of means among "Don't know" respondents could be detected between the control and blame conditions. This result was repeated when comparing those respondents on control vs. blame white and control vs. blame black conditions. (Table 1) One explanation for this null finding is that most of the movement from one blame category to another comes from the "media" column rather than the "Don't know" column. In other words, those who select "Don't know" either are solidly ambivalent or shy away from difficult questions about race, and cannot be moved by the treatment.

Indeed, there was a statistically significant difference of means found using the same test between "media blame" respondents[34] in the control and blame conditions. (Table 1A) This suggests that the most movement between conditions occurred from the media blame to the candidate blame columns.

Treatment effect across conditions

Comparing responses across treatment conditions, treatment does have a moderate effect on how much blame is assigned to a candidate. 13.2 percent of those in the blame black condition[35] blamed the black candidate, while only 5.8 percent of control respondents did the same. (Table 2) In the same condition, however, 27.3 percent blamed the white candidate compared to 20.1 percent in the control condition. As one might expect, this decreased the number blaming the media by 13.8 percent when comparing the control and blame black conditions. The increase in respondents blaming the black candidate is expected, but the increase in blaming the white candidate is puzzling. If we accept Mendelberg's thesis that there is a backlash effect when an explicit appeal "violates the norm of equality," then this increase might be explained by respondents recoiling from the media's assertion that a black candidate is at fault in a racial appeal. As a result, 7.2 percent more respondents rejected the media cue and were convinced to blame the white candidate instead.

There is an expected change in response between control and blame white conditions, though this condition's analysis did not reach standard levels of significance using a Chi-square test. Nevertheless, 5.8 percent of respondents blamed the black candidate in the control condition, compared to 2.8 percent in the blame white condition. 20.9 percent of respondents blamed the white candidate in the control condition, compared to 25.9 percent in the blame white condition.

Ideally I would be able to measure racial predispositions or levels of prejudice in respondents to understand how prior attitudes influence the decision to blame. The CCES survey does not include these measures, but does ask a question measuring support for affirmative action policies. One might expect that those supporting affirmative action will be more resistant to blaming the black candidate, as they might have a natural tendency to

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[34] "Don't know" cases were dropped from this analysis.

[35] For purposes of discussion I will use the terminology "blame white" for Condition 1, "blame black" for Condition 2 and "control" for Condition 3.

sympathize with a black candidate operating in a traditionally white world. In fact, both those who support and oppose affirmative action demonstrated similar shifts in blame between the blame white and blame black conditions. (Table 4) No respondents who support affirmative action blamed the black candidate in the blame white condition, but 9 percent did blame the black candidate when they were in the blame black condition. Those who opposed affirmative action blamed the black candidate 8.7 percent more when they were in the blame black condition, as opposed to the blame white condition. While affirmative action policy is by no means a proxy for racial resentment, this increase indicates that those who oppose affirmative action are more susceptible to the "blame frame" when applied to black candidates than those that support affirmative action.

Black and white respondents differed markedly on where they placed blame. Under all conditions and excluding the "Don't know" category, 48 percent of black respondents blamed the white candidate, while only 23.3 percent of white respondents did the same. (Table 5) Most of that difference appears to have come from the "Blame media" column, where 69.4 percent of white respondents blamed the media and only 48 percent of black respondents followed suit. Moving from the blame white condition to the blame black condition, there was a significant shift upward in blame for both the white and black candidates, but the small number of cases precludes making any statistically significant conclusion.

Media exposure among respondents is also a factor, especially in their decision to assign blame or not. Among those that said they had not listened to the radio, read a blog, watched TV news or read a newspaper in the last 24 hours, 36.4 percent selected "Don't know," while 22.9 percent of those who had consumed some form of media selected "Don't know." (Table 6)

Discussion

An embedded media cue that contains a blame frame, even one that is short and contains very little contextual information about candidates besides race, can influence respondents' choice of which candidate to blame in a race card scenario. Admittedly, the construction of the treatment itself in this experiment may have heavily weighted responses toward the media option. Assignment of blame in the treatment was preceded by "Media analysts… ," clearly showing the media to be the interpreter of the story. But this strong preference to blame the media may also indicate that the media is the default position for many respondents when asked which agent "injected race" into the campaign. The media is a much more impersonal and accessible scapegoat, especially on the sensitive subject of race, than any one candidate. By that logic, the one-third of respondents that did choose to blame a candidate have moved from the most cognitively "easy" choice to a more difficult one, based on very little information about the candidates' positions. These respondents should be the least ambivalent and most difficult to "move" from one blame choice to another with treatment exposure. Yet treatment was still able to have an effect—for example, the blame black condition increased respondents who blamed the black candidate by 7.6 percent, and decreased those who blamed the media by 13.8 percent.

This experiment's results are encouraging for researchers who would like to narrow the scope of media effects studies to find empirical evidence of conditions where explicit cues might have influence. The "blame frame" has many other applications

besides the race card scenario explored here. In a fast-paced media world where breaking political news often includes back-and-forth comments between candidates or their proxies, the media is relied upon as both the transmitter and interpreter of explicit cues. One might expect the blame frame to appear in other scenarios. For example, if a candidate makes a verbal gaffe that makes it sound like he's endorsing an unpopular position, the media must assign blame to either the candidate that made the gaffe or her opponent that is trying to unfairly capitalize on the gaffe.

The race card, and its call-out in media coverage, has become more common in the post-Obama world, perhaps because we are more attuned to racial attacks when the country has an African American president. It is worthwhile for political scientists to dig deeper into how voters are influenced by the race card call-out, and under what conditions explicit cues can sway evaluations of candidates or policy attitudes.

Table 4.1

Don't know respondents (DV) by control and blame conditions
Student's T (two-sample, unequal variances) difference of means

Group	N	Mean	Std. Error
Control	251	.24	.03
Blame	562	.22	.02
Difference		.02	.03

t=0.63; Pr (T>t) = 0.27, does not reach standard level of significance

Table 4.2
Media Blame respondents (DV) by control and blame conditions
Student's T (two-sample, unequal variances) difference of means

Group	N	Mean	Std. Error
Control	191	.73	.03
Blame	429	.65	.02
Difference		.08	.01

t=2.07; Pr (T>t) = 0.02, significant at the .05 level

Table 4.3
Cross-tabulation: Conditions by Blame Assignment response
Blame white up, Blame Black down, Media down

Responses

		Blame White	Blame Black	Media	Total
Conditions	Control	21.9 (40)	5.8 (11)	73.3 (140)	100 (191)
	Blame White	25.9 (55)	2.8 (6)	71.2 (151)	100 (212)
	Total	23.6 (95)	4.2 (17)	72.2 (291)	100 (403)

Pearson Chi-square = 3.1691; Pr = 0.205, does not reach standard level of significance

Table 4.4
Cross-tabulation: Condition by Blame Assignment
Blame white up, Blame black down, Media significantly down

Responses

Conditions		Blame White	Blame Black	Media	Total
	Control	20.9 (40)	5.8 (11)	73.3 (140)	100 (191)
	Blame Black	27.3 (62)	13.2 (30)	59.5 (135)	100 (227)
	Total	24.4 (102)	9.8 (41)	65.8 (275)	100 (418)

Pearson Chi-square=10.62; Pr = 0.005

Table 4.5
Cross-tabulation: Affirmative Action by Blame Assignment (subdivided by condition)

Responses

		Blame White			Blame Black			Media		
	Conditions	BW	BB	CO	BW	BB	CO	BW	BB	CO
Aff. Action	Support	46.3 (38)	39.3 (35)	29.0 (22)	0.0 (0)	9.0 (8)	5.3 (4)	53.7 (44)	51.7 (46)	65.8 (50)
	Oppose	13.1 (17)	19.7 (27)	15.7 (18)	4.6 (6)	15.3 (21)	6.1 (7)	82.3 (107)	64.7 (89)	78.3 (90)
	Total	25.9 (55)	27.4 (62)	20.9 (40)	2.8 (6)	12.8 (29)	5.8 (11)	71.2 (151)	59.7 (135)	73.3 (140)

3 Pearson Chi-square tests, for each condition
Blame White: Chi-square = 31.03; Pr = 0.000
Blame Black: Chi-square = 10.85; Pr = 0.004
Control: Chi-square=4.89; Pr = 0.087

Table 4.6
Blacks tend to blame the media less, white candidate more

Responses

Race		Blame White	Blame Black	Media	Total
	Black	48.0 (24)	4.0 (2)	48.0 (24)	100 (50)
	White	23.3 (115)	7.3 (36)	69.4 (343)	100 (494)
	Total	25.6 (139)	7.0 (38)	67.5 (367)	100 (544)

Pearson Chi-square = 14.66; Pr = 0.001, below .01 level of significance

Table 4.7
Those with no media exposure were more likely to choose "Don't know"

Responses

Media exposure (24 hours)		Blame White	Blame Black	Media	Don't know	Total
	No media	2.5 (1)	5.0 (2)	55.0 (22)	37.5 (15)	100 (40)
	Some media	20.2 (156)	5.8 (45)	52.3 (404)	21.7 (168)	100 (773)
	Total	19.3 (157)	5.8 (47)	52.4 (426)	22.5 (183)	100 (813)

Pearson Chi-square = 10.46; Pr = 0.015, below .05 level of significance

Chapter 5
How Media Call-Outs of Race May Affect Future Campaigns

I don't want us to lose sight that things are getting better. Each successive generation seems to be making progress in changing attitudes when it comes to race. It doesn't mean we're in a post-racial society. It doesn't mean that racism is eliminated. But when I talk to Malia and Sasha, and I listen to their friends and I see them interact, they're better than we are—they're better than we were—on these issues. And that's true in every community that I've visited all across the country.
—*President Obama, July 19, 2013, on the Trayvon Martin case*

Excerpt from the Midday radio show, July 15, 2013, discussing the Trayvon Martin case

Vince, caller from Brooklyn
I think it's wrong for the media to blow this up into a race situation… (Zimmerman) wasn't a racist. He was Hispanic. …. Is this a white on black thing, or Spanish on black thing, what is this, what kind of race situation does the media want to make out of this?
I think it's inappropriate to apply race to this particular case.

Dan Rodricks, radio host:
The only people who have called in today to say that they're uncomfortable with race being interjected into this case and accusing the media of doing that, are I think white people. … My opinion is it's hard to walk around race in the story of Trayvon Martin and George Zimmerman."

Sheri Parks, associate dean of the College of Arts and Humanities at the University of Maryland
The standard for what counts as racism is being raised pretty high. So that it has to be dramatic and awful. … This really reflects what's going on in polite middle class society. Bringing up, not just racism, but bringing up race, is increasingly verboten.

The outcome of Florida's Trayvon Martin case, in which George Zimmerman was exonerated in the shooting of an unarmed black teenager based on a self-defense argument, reminded all of us that race is an open wound in American culture and politics. As a culture we are caught in the contradiction that Sheri Parks mentions in the conversation quoted above: Beginning a constructive conversation on race relations—the kind of conversation President Obama asked people to engage in during a 2008 speech and again in his July 19, 2013 speech—is "increasingly verboten."

The experiments outlined in this project offer some empirical evidence on just how verboten it might be to voters. It's a sneak preview of how race may continue to

affect political campaigns—with the media playing a key role in message transmission through political coverage—for the first part of the 21st century. Race will remain a divisive element in American politics long into the future, and even Obama himself has denied that we live in a "post-racial" era. Race will enter the political fray in more ways than solely through political ads' hidden symbols acting as implicit cues to prime individual bias. In fact, it may be most likely to affect voters' perceptions of candidates and issues when the media covers a story with a racial mode of interpretation while candidates scramble to find the best way to engage with the race frame.

This period in American culture is taking place in an era of increasing minority candidates in Congress.[36] According to a report by the Congressional Research Service, minorities make up only 16 percent of the seats in Congress, which is still a long way from mirroring the 28 percent non-white population recorded in 2010. But the minority seat-holder count does represent a 4 percent increase since 2000. 160 minority candidates, the most in history, vied for seats in the 2012 election, and 87 were successful. This number is likely to go up given increasing population trends among non-whites, especially among Latinos and Asians. With more minority candidates entering politics, it is likely that scenarios very much like the ones presented in the experiments designed for this study could play out in elections to come. The experiments have natural limitations of sample size and breadth, short time for treatment exposure and measurements of individual attitudes and predispositions that are difficult to verify. But the results do point toward the overall strong impact of race controversy on voters' assessments.

Results

Spread across three different studies, the experiments' results tell a common story: candidates that are in a Congressional level campaign and either impose a race frame themselves or have one applied by the media are susceptible to an electoral penalty. The intensity of the penalty varies according to the specifics of the particular treatment condition, but there can be little doubt that the general direction of the relationship between dependent variables that evaluate candidates and the intensity of racial primes is negative.
In some cases, it is sharply negative and statistically significant compared to the baseline condition, which has no race prime.

The following specific findings outline what specific subgroups and experimental manipulations result in electoral penalties that tell us something about how a real-world media controversy over race might play out:

Berkeley study

- Respondents were exposed to two different stories in terms of substantive content. The racial profiling story contained a direct reference to race as an important element of the baseline story, while the crime report story contained only an indirect reference to race. By far, the direct references to race triggered sharper and more statistically significant electoral penalties

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[36] R. Eric Petersen. "Representatives and Senators: Trends in Member Characteristics Since 1945," *Congressional Research Service*: February 17, 2012

than the indirect references. The racial profiling story in the media-blames-candidate version dealt the candidates a 14 percent electoral penalty in likelihood to vote and an 11 percent penalty on the affect variable, or how warmly respondents felt toward the candidate.

- The black candidate was *less likely* to be punished than the white candidate when respondents were exposed to the crime report story (indirect reference to race). Once an accusation of a race play was overlaid on the crime report, the white candidate was clearly pinpointed for blame more than the black candidate.
- White respondents were overall more likely to punish candidates than nonwhite candidates. This is an interesting finding, because one might expect nonwhite candidates to be more sensitive to race frames than their white counterparts, but it appears to be the opposite.
- Nonwhite respondents were equally as likely to blame the white candidate in the racial profiling story versions as white respondents. However, the black candidate received almost no statistically significant electoral penalties among nonwhite respondents. This suggests that when race controversy arises, the advantage may swing to a black candidate in an electoral district with a high minority vote percentage.
- Some individual traits—attitudes on affirmative action, an authoritarian dynamic variable and attitudes toward the media—appear to have a strong negative relationship with the vote and affect variables, but *only* among whites. Statistically significant coefficients were rendered not significant when regressions were run separately for nonwhites. Those who were more against affirmative action, exhibited a higher authoritarian score and believed the media were strongly biased (either left or right) were more likely to punish candidates than those who did not have these predispositions.
- These key predispositions had varying effects depending on how a respondent scored on the Implicit Association Test, a measure of individuals' implicit bias toward blacks. IAT respondents were grouped into high (anti-black) and low (pro-black) subgroups. Those in the anti-black group were more likely to punish the black candidate when they also showed anti-black predispositions (affirmative action, authoritarianism and strong media bias).
- In contrast to the anti-black group, the pro-black group tended to punish the white candidate when they had high authoritarian and strong media bias scores.

CCES 2010 Study

The CCES 2010 study confirmed many of the findings in the larger Berkeley study, including the assertion that race controversy introduced to a story acts as a racial prime, and both candidates suffer a subsequent electoral penalty. Since this study's sample (n=800) covers a broader cross-section of the population racially and demographically than we can get from the Berkeley sample, the parallel results at least

partially answer some of the external validity concerns we might have over the biased Berkeley study sample.

Key findings in this study included:

The power of the media to point the finger of blame in a race controversy was made clear when comparing story versions where the candidate made an accusation, versus the media making an accusation about an unfair "race play." There was only a 2.1 percent electoral penalty in likelihood to vote in the "candidate-blames" condition (not statistically significant), while there was a 6.5 percent penalty assessed in the "media-blames" condition.

Similar to the Berkeley study, the black candidate was assessed at higher means in vote and competency than the white candidate before any racial primes. But unlike the Berkeley study, the black candidate suffered the most severe electoral penalty (13 percent) in the "media-blames" condition, compared to the 3.3 percent penalty for the white candidate in the same condition.

When respondents saw a photo of the candidate with the story, their assessments were overall higher on both vote and competency than the conditions in which no photo was seen.

Racial resentment and affirmative action measures appear to become salient (i.e. have a strong relationship with the dependent variables) only in those conditions in which race is primed ("candidate-blames" and "media-blames"). In those conditions in which the black candidate was seen, those with the most tolerant racial resentment scores rallied to his defense when racial controversy arises, giving him higher evaluation scores, and punished the white candidate.

CCES 2008 "Blame Frame" Study

The key to understanding the effects on campaign outcomes when race controversy is involved is tracking how blame is assigned during a media frenzy. Can the general public be moved from ambivalent positions to assigning blame simply by being exposed to an accusation by the media?

Evidence collected during the CCES 2008 study suggests that the media does indeed have that kind of power given the right conditions. Respondents were asked at the end of treatment whether they blamed either candidate, the media, or simply "Don't know."

Key findings in this study included:
- Across all conditions, a majority of respondents preferred to blame the media for the race card play. The percentage of respondents blaming the media ranged from 73.3 percent in the control condition to 59.5 percent in the blame-black condition, demonstrating that blame can be shifted from a faceless entity like the media to an individual if prompted by the media.
- Respondents who were prompted by the media were much more likely to blame the white candidate than the black candidate, even when the media blamed the black candidate. This "rally response" to the black candidate has been seen in the two studies described above (CCES 2010 and the Berkeley study). Only 13.2 percent of those in the blame black condition blamed the black candidate, while 27.3 percent blamed the white

candidate. This was a statistically significant increase of 6 to 7 percent compared to those in the control condition.

- Black respondents, as might be expected, were more likely to blame the white candidate than white respondents. Excluding the "Don't know" category, 48 percent of black respondents blamed the white candidate, while only 23.3 percent of white respondents did the same. Black respondents also were less likely to blame the media than white respondents.
- Counter to expectations, there was no statistically significant difference of means between the control and blame conditions in the "Don't know" category. This lack of movement from ambivalence to blame could be due to the high number of people who might have chosen "the media" as an alternative to "Don't know." The control story version also might have been too nuanced in assigning no blame but still containing comment from "media analysts."

Direction of future research

If one sentence could be written to sum up the findings of this project, it would be: "We are less comfortable talking about race, and mixing issues of race with politics, than we thought we were—there will be consequences for those attitudes in future campaigns."

Political science would do well to rethink some of the old paradigms of race relations and political psychology research. In those models, we have an increasingly racially tolerant public primed on race with a series of implicit, "Willie Horton"-esque cues contained in the media we consume. Even if we accept that explicit cues may be part of the priming process, as Valentino, Hutchings and White do in their study, [37] there is an agent other than the ones that we normally consider at the individual level—message receptiveness, education level or racial predispositions—that moderates whether a story will prime racial considerations or not. The media is just such agent, though it has become difficult in the 21st century to decide what falls under that umbrella.

Whether the media message is received from a blogger, reporter or television source, if that messenger chooses a frame that brings race into higher salience, there can be political consequences for candidates that become entangled in the controversy.

While these studies focus on the fictional case of an African-American candidate running against a white candidate, future studies can test the effects of a media-frame centered prime on Latinos, Indian, Native American and women candidates in similar fashion. Those candidates might also suffer the electoral and evaluative penalties observed in the African American candidate case—or they might even benefit from the rally effects observed in which the African American candidate gains the advantage over his white counterpart. These answers can only be uncovered by running more experiments with a more diverse set of candidates.

The project's results demonstrate that American society's desire to "to get past race" won't happen by declaring a post-racial era or pointing to the clear evidence of

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[37] Valentino, Nicholas A., Vincent L. Hutchings and Ismail K. White. 2002. "Cues That Matter: How Political Ads Prime Racial Attitudes During Campaigns." *American Political Science Review, 96*(1): 75-90.

increased tolerance in survey research. We must face up to our own bias and the realization that how the media talks about and covers race in politics may be just as important as the natural forces of opinion change like generational replacement.

What has the campaign strategist learned?

What would a campaign strategist who somehow found her way to this project's results take away from the experience? If she could get over her qualms about external validity of the treatment itself (a fictional news story is close to what is done in some political polling, though), she might take this lesson: *no candidate will be rewarded by the introduction of race into campaigns*. If you work for a white candidate who's running against an African American and the media pounces and assigns blame to your candidate, a counter-framing strategy will have to be put in place to limit the inevitable damage to public support. If you can successfully shift blame to the other side when racial controversy arises, a certain slice of the electorate—perhaps a crucial few percentage points—will move toward your candidate.

Discussion of results: Are we still worried about things implicit?

The results of the three survey experiments described in this project both confirm the findings of past studies and offer a new direction for how researchers can describe the racial priming process in a media world that looks very different from the one that Tali Mendelberg was writing about in 2001 when *The Race Card* was published. The racial priming process described in Mendelberg's and other studies—for example, implicit "symbolic politics" cues like the Willie Horton ad designed to inspire fear in whites, or more explicit cues designed to play on racial stereotypes—may only be one of several racial priming processes in today's political scene. Most of those previous instances operate in campaigns between two white candidates (see Dukakis-Bush, 1988). There may be special circumstances in the case of biracial campaigns, when the media is poised to impose a racial mode of interpretation on stories that have the potential for racial controversy. The experiments show evidence that either a black or white candidate will suffer an electoral penalty, or a downgrade in evaluation, when they are connected to race controversy. When the media blames a particular candidate for a "race play," the effect could be intensified.

This line of inquiry differs from the typical study of racial media cues in two important ways. First, there is no assumption that the primary racial influence on vote choice is simply a matter of whites' racial predispositions being activated by implicit or explicit cues embedded in persuasive media. While that may be one process that occurs, there is also a constant updating of information voters have on candidates. When they learn new information about the candidate, their evaluation is updated independent of racial predispositions. The results of this survey show that the learning and priming processes can be running side-by-side and both influence a final candidate evaluation. However, in the aggregate bringing racial controversy into a campaign (purposely or not) appears to be detrimental to a candidate's chances going forward.

Second, while past studies have focused mainly on what type of cue (implicit or explicit) is a priming agent in either campaigns ads or news stories, this study points to the media as a more active presence in determining the intensity of the cue. If a verbal gaffe or other campaign exchange is seized upon and given both a strong racial mode of

interpretation, and even some text that points a finger of blame for bringing up race in the first place, that can make a significant difference in candidate evaluation and therefore at the polls as well. Further, the survey experiments show that the blow to a candidate may depend on the demographics of the district itself, the racial predispositions of the voters and the race of the candidates,

Mass media studies, political psychology and race

Media behavior and frame usage usually falls within the purview of media scholars. Those more interested in how media messages are received or resisted are usually grouped into the political psychology realm. But in reality, the current media landscape, sending a constant stream of messages and cues to our eyeballs via our smartphones, social media tools or computer terminals every day, must be seen as one giant psychology experiment. Researchers like me who want to understand how the barrage of media messages an individual receives each day affects their political judgments must develop better techniques to monitor the changes in media framing in real time.

The traditional political survey methods—usually involving long set-up times and based around the two-year cycle of elections—are too slow for capturing how fast frames change, on race or any other topic. A technology-based method for tracking frames would make the work of the political psychologist much easier, especially if we could collect data directly form the consumer of media after an exposure to a particular frame. While currently no system of this kind exists, the technology does exist to put it in place with the proper funding.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Text of Experiment Treatments

Materials from 2010 CCES survey, UC Berkeley Module

SINGLE CHOICE SOFT REQUIRED.
{There are nine versions of the preambles to this question (with a 3X3 design). Please create two random variables: race_candidate_treat that takes a value of 1, 2 or 3 AND headline_treat that takes a value of 1, 2 and 3. These variables are used to allocate respondents to the nine preambles to UCB415.}

Bernard Wright   **Bernard Wright**

Photos (race of candidate treatment):
OR No photo is displayed

[If headline_treat=1]
Bernard Wright Personal Information:
Running for U.S. Senate
Currently a Member of House of Representatives
Was in United States Naval Reserve
Investment banker
Former city council member
Former state senator
College degrees: B.A., M.A., M.B.A. and J.D.
Unsuccessful candidate for state attorney general

The following is an excerpt from a news story that recently appeared in a nationwide publication:

CANDIDATE MAKES SPEECH
Bernard Wright, a candidate for U.S. Senate, gave a wide-ranging speech yesterday to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, covering issues such as technology, jobs and energy policy. He hopes to raise his profile at a time when polls show he is running behind incumbent Sam Waterman. ...

[If headline_treat=2]
Bernard Wright Personal Information:
Running for Senate
Currently a Member of House of Representatives
Was in United States Naval Reserve
Investment banker
Former city council member
Former state senator
College degrees: B.A., M.A., M.B.A. and J.D.
Unsuccessful candidate for state attorney general

The following is an excerpt from a news story that recently appeared in a nationwide publication:

CANDIDATE ACCUSES OPPONENT OF PLAYING RACE CARD
During a hotly contested televised debate, two candidates for an open Senate seat battled over crime rates, immigration and welfare reform. At one point during the 90-minute debate the highly sensitive issue of race was raised. Challenger Bernard Wright accused incumbent Sam Waterman of playing the race card by making comments designed to inflame racial tensions. ...

[If *headline_treat=3*]
Bernard Wright Personal Information:
Running for Senate
Currently a Member of House of Representatives
Was in United States Naval Reserve
Investment banker
Former city council member
Former state senator
College degrees: B.A., M.A., M.B.A. and J.D.
Unsuccessful candidate for state attorney general

The following is an excerpt from a news story that recently appeared in a nationwide publication:

CANDIDATE CALLED OUT FOR RACE COMMENTS
During a hotly contested televised debate, two candidates for an open Senate seat battled over crime rates, immigration and welfare reform. At one point during the 90-minute debate the highly sensitive issue of race was raised. Media analysts criticized challenger Bernard Wright for making comments designed to inflame racial tensions. ...

UC Berkeley Survey, Text of Experiment Treatments

Even Subject ID numbers see black candidate, odd Subject ID numbers see white candidate with randomized centrist Democrat profiles.

Bernard Wright   **Bernard Wright**

CONDITION 1 – CONTROL (baseline)
No race priming content

"Please read the following excerpt from a recent Associated Press story.

Feb. 1, 2010
WASHINGTON D.C. (Associated Press) -- Three years after the first rumors of an Apple cell phone began to make the rounds, the iPhone continues to garner huge buzz, long lines, and a growing share of the cell phone market.
And as we approach the third anniversary of the first model's frenzied launch day, Apple drops the newest model in our laps. The iPhone 3GS promised faster processing and network speeds, extended battery life, more memory, and additional features. It's enough to get our attention, but not enough to get us completely excited.

In many ways, the iPhone 3GS delivers on its promises. The battery, which could sometimes deplete in less than a day on the iPhone 3G, lasted longer in our preliminary tests, and the phone's software ran noticeably faster. Yet, we still have some concerns. A faster AT&T 3G network isn't going to happen overnight, and some features, like tethering and multimedia messaging, weren't scheduled until later in summer 2009. We also struggled to see any change in call quality, which, as any iPhone owner can tell you, remains far from perfect.

So should you buy it? That will depend on how much you'll have to pay for the privilege. If you don't own an iPhone yet, and you've been waiting for the right model, now is the time to go for it. The same goes for iPhone Classic owners who never made the jump to

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[38] Note: Out of 13 conditions total, four conditions were dropped from subsequent runs of the experiment (Conditions 3, 7, 10 and 13) in order to increase cell size and because of reconsideration of the priming instrument. The text of those dropped conditions are not listed here.

the iPhone 3G.

But, if you're a current iPhone 3G owner, the answer isn't so clear. If you're eligible to upgrade at the cheapest prices ($199 for the 16GB model and $299 for the 32GB model), we suggest doing so, as long as you don't mind the required two-year contract. If you own an iPhone 3G,

but are not yet eligible for the upgrade, we recommend upgrading to the new iPhone OS 3.0 operating system, and then waiting. As much as the iPhone 3GS brings, it's not worth the extra $200 that the 16GB and 32GB models cost."

CONDITION 2
Story Only, Crime Report

"Please read the following excerpt from a recent Associated Press story.

Feb. 2, 2010
WASHINGTON D.C. (Associated Press) -- Rates of violent crime and theft
are showing alarming rises in some parts of the country, especially in
urban areas, according to a new report by the Foundation for Crime
Prevention (FCP), a Washington D.C. think tank. Violent crimes,
including rape, armed robbery and murder, show an 11 percent increase
over the last five years in major cities, while non-violent crimes are
also up 12 percent over the same period.

The report called urban areas, especially the poorest neighborhoods in
the inner city, the "hot spots" for the crime increase. Some suburbs
of major metropolitan areas show slightly higher crime rates, but
remain at lower levels compared to urban areas.

"We're seeing a rapid increase that matches or exceeds any other
5-year period in the last 50 years," said FCP Director Lisa Sayles.
"Something has to be done to address this problem, and soon, before it
gets out of control."

CONDITION 3
Plus photo, Crime Report
Same as Condition 2 text, plus this photo and caption:

A recently released report from the
Foundation for Crime Prevention (FCP) links an increasing crime rate with overcrowding in the
nation's prison system.

CONDITION 5
Race Controversy, with photo, Crime Report

"Please read the following excerpt from a recent Associated Press story.

Feb. 5, 2010
WASHINGTON D.C. (Associated Press) -- Rates of violent crime and theft are showing alarming rises in some parts of the country, especially in urban areas, according to a new report by the Foundation for Crime Prevention (FCP), a Washington D.C. think tank. Violent crimes, including rape, armed robbery and murder, show an 11 percent increase over the last five years in major cities, while non-violent crimes are also up 12 percent over the same period.

The report called urban areas, especially the poorest neighborhoods in the inner city, the "hot spots" for the crime increase. Some suburbs of major metropolitan areas show slightly higher crime rates, but remain at lower levels compared to urban areas.

"We're seeing a rapid increase that matches or exceeds any other 5-year period in the last 50 years," said FCP Director Lisa Sayles. "Something has to be done to address this problem, and soon, before it gets out of control."

The report has drawn national attention and has become an issue of contention between Rep. Bernard Wright, who is taking on incumbent Sen. Sam Waterman in a November Senate election.

"This is something we can't ignore anymore," said Wright, who represents an urban district where crime rates are higher than average. "African Americans in particular are tired of seeing their neighborhoods left in a desperate state by politicians. Kids feel there is no other alternative except to get involved in drug-running, gangs and other situations that lead to violence against their own community."

Waterman said Wright is playing racial politics to turn out his electoral base. "There's no reason to bring race into this, crime hits everyone hard," said Waterman. "He's using the high crime rate to score points with voters, and it's shameful."

**A recently released report from the
Foundation for Crime Prevention (FCP) links an increasing crime rate with overcrowding in the
nation's prison system.**

CONDITION 6
Media Blames Candidate, with photo, Crime Report

"Please read the following excerpt from a recent Associated Press story.

Feb. 6, 2010
WASHINGTON D.C. (Associated Press) -- Rates of violent crime and theft
are showing alarming rises in some parts of the country, especially in
urban areas, according to a new report by the Foundation for Crime
Prevention (FCP), a Washington D.C. think tank. Violent crimes,
including rape, armed robbery and murder, show an 11 percent increase
over the last five years in major cities, while non-violent crimes are
also up 12 percent over the same period.
The report called urban areas, especially the poorest neighborhoods in
the inner city, the "hot spots" for the crime increase. Some suburbs
of major metropolitan areas show slightly higher crime rates, but
remain at lower levels compared to urban areas.
"We're seeing a rapid increase that matches or exceeds any other 5-year
period in the last 50 years," said FCP Director Lisa Sayles.
"Something has to be done to address this problem, and soon, before it gets out of
control."
The report has drawn national attention and has become an issue of contention between
Rep. Bernard Wright, who is taking on incumbent Sen. Sam Waterman in a November
Senate election.
"This is something we can't ignore anymore," said Wright, who represents an urban
district where crime rates are higher than average. "African Americans in particular are
tired of seeing their neighborhoods left in a desperate state by politicians. Kids feel there
is no other alternative except to get involved in drug-running, gangs and other situations
that lead to violence against their own community."
Waterman said Wright is playing racial politics to turn out his electoral base. "There's no
reason to bring race into this, crime hits everyone hard," said Waterman. "He's using the
high crime rate to score points with voters, and it's shameful."

Some media analysts blamed Wright's campaign for injecting the sensitive issue of race into the campaign.

"Wright is playing the race card, trying to inflame voters by making crime, an issue that affects all of us, a wedge issue," said Peter Stoker, a longtime television anchor at CBS and ABC who is now retired. "Bringing race into this just distracts from any real debate about how to solve the problem."

An official source in the Wright campaign denied that he is using race to his advantage, and said that Wright stands by all of his previous statements."

A recently released report from the Foundation for Crime Prevention (FCP) links an increasing crime rate with overcrowding in the nation's prison system.

CONDITION 8
Story Only, Racial Profiling

"Please read the following excerpt from a recent Associated Press story.

Feb. 8, 2010
CHICAGO (Associated Press) -- An electrician walking home from work late Wednesday night was mistakenly arrested as a suspect in a murder in a Chicago neighborhood.

James McPherson was stopped and questioned by Chicago police as he returned from a job because he fit the description of the murder suspect. The police had information from a witness that the murder suspect was male, of medium build wearing black pants and a white shirt.

Police say that McPherson became agitated when approached by police and began making threatening gestures before he was arrested. McPherson was charged with "disorderly conduct" after getting into a heated discussion with the arresting officer, Sgt. Jim Wurzelburg. Those charges have since been dropped, according to the district attorney's office.

Yesterday McPherson was released from custody and cleared of any involvement with the case."

CONDITION 9
Story Only with photos, Racial Profiling

Same text as Condition 8, but with these photos and captions:

James McPherson

Sgt. Jim Wurzelburg

CONDITION 11
Race Controversy with photos, Racial Profiling

"Please read the following excerpt from a recent Associated Press story.
Feb. 11, 2010
CHICAGO (Associated Press) -- An electrician walking home from work late Wednesday night was mistakenly arrested as a suspect in a murder in a Chicago neighborhood.
James McPherson was stopped and questioned by Chicago police as he returned from a job because he fit the description of the murder suspect. The police had information from a witness that the murder suspect was male, of medium build wearing black pants and a white shirt.
Police say that McPherson became agitated when approached by police and began making threatening gestures before he was arrested.
McPherson was charged with "disorderly conduct" after getting into a heated discussion with the arresting officer, Sgt. Jim Wurzelburg. Those charges have since been dropped, according to the district attorney's office.
Yesterday McPherson was released from custody and cleared of any involvement with the case.
McPherson claimed that he had been arrested only because he was African American and on the street late at night.
"It was clear to me that I was a suspect as soon as the officer approached me," McPherson said. "This has happened to me before. And I'm just tired of the same thing happening over and over."
McPherson's attorney, Stanford Hoyer, said he is deciding on whether to file a lawsuit claiming racial discrimination against the police department.
"We are investigating the incident further," said Police Chief David Tomlinson. "But after reading the initial report I see no reason to believe Officer Wurzelburg violated any department protocol."
The incident has drawn national attention and has become an issue of contention between Rep. Bernard Wright, who is taking on incumbent Sen. Sam Waterman in a November Senate election.
"Racial profiling is a serious problem that my opponent hasn't addressed while he's been in office," said Wright. "You can't arrest someone because he's black and happens to be on the street at the wrong time."
Waterman said Wright is playing racial politics to turn out his electoral base. "There's no reason to prematurely say this is about race," said Waterman. "He's using this incident to

score points with voters, and it's shameful."

James McPherson

Sgt. Jim Wurzelburg

CONDITION 12
Media Blames Candidate, with photos, Racial Profiling

"Please read the following excerpt from a recent Associated Press story.
Feb. 12, 2010
CHICAGO (Associated Press) -- An electrician walking home from work late
Wednesday night was mistakenly arrested as a suspect in a murder in a Chicago
neighborhood.
James McPherson was stopped and questioned by Chicago police as he returned from a
job because he fit the description of the murder suspect. The police had information from
a witness that the murder suspect was male, of medium build wearing black pants and a
white shirt.
Police say that McPherson became agitated when approached by police and began
making threatening gestures before he was arrested. McPherson was charged with
"disorderly conduct" after getting into a heated discussion with the arresting officer,
Sgt. Jim Wurzelburg. Those charges have since been dropped, according to the district
attorney's office.
Yesterday McPherson was released from custody and cleared of any involvement with
the case.
McPherson claimed that he had been arrested only because he was African American and
on the street late at night. "It was clear to me that I was a suspect as soon as the officer
approached me," McPherson said. "This has happened to me before. And I'm just tired of
the same thing happening over and over." McPherson's attorney, Stanford Hoyer, said he
is deciding on whether to file a lawsuit claiming racial discrimination against the police
department.
"We are investigating the incident further," said Police Chief David Tomlinson.
"But after reading the initial report I see no reason to believe Officer Wurzelburg violated
any department protocol."
The incident has drawn national attention and has become an issue of contention between
Rep. Bernard Wright, who is taking on incumbent Sen. Sam Waterman in a November
Senate election.
"Racial profiling is a serious problem that my opponent hasn't addressed while he's been
in office," said Wright. "You can't arrest someone because he's black and happens to be
on the street at the wrong time." Waterman said Wright is playing racial politics to turn
out his electoral base.
"There's no reason to prematurely say this is about race," said Waterman. "He's using this
incident to score points with voters, and it's shameful."
Some media analysts blamed Wright's campaign for injecting the sensitive issue of race
into the campaign.
"Wright is playing the race card, trying to inflame voters by jumping on the bandwagon
in this case," said Peter Stoker, a longtime television anchor at CBS and ABC who is now
retired.
"Bringing race into this is unfair until we know all the facts and hear from
all the parties involved."
An official source in the Wright campaign denied that he is using race to his
advantage, and said that Wright stands by all of his previous statements."

James McPherson

Sgt. Jim Wurzelburg

Appendix C: Question Wording for Key Variables, CCES 2010 Study

Likelihood to Vote
If you could vote in the election in which Bernard Wright is a candidate, how likely is it that you would vote for him?
1   Would definitely not vote for him
2   Not likely
3   Likely
4   Very likely
5   Would definitely vote for him

Competence
How would you rate Bernard Wright's competence to be a U.S. Senator?
1   Not competent at all
2   Below average competence
3   Average competence
4   Above average competence
5   Extremely competent

Racial Resentment and Affirmative Action questions:

Affirmative action programs give preference to racial minorities in employment and college admissions in order to correct for past discrimination. Do you support or oppose affirmative action?
1   Strongly support
2   Somewhat support
3   Somewhat oppose
4   Strongly oppose

Racial Resentment A
The Irish, Italians, Jews and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up.
Blacks should do the same without any special favors.
1   Strongly agree
2   Somewhat agree
3   Neither agree nor disagree
4   Somewhat disagree
5   Strongly disagree

Racial Resentment B
Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Blacks to work their way out of the lower class.
1   Strongly agree
2   Somewhat agree
3   Neither agree nor disagree
4   Somewhat disagree

5   Strongly disagree

Appendix C
2008 CCES Study, UC Berkeley Module
Text of Experiment Treatments

Random variable race_card_treat takes a value of 1, 2, or 3. This variable is used to allocate respondents to the three preambles below. Order of responses was rotated, keeping "not sure" fixed at the bottom.
Photos of waterman.jpg (black candidate) and kingsbury.jpg (white candidate) were displayed above the preamble text.
[If race_card_treat=1]
An Associated Press story reported that a statement by a political strategist about Congressman John Waterman, an African-American, brought race into a difficult Senate campaign between Waterman and Congressman Sam Kingsbury, who is white.

"I don't think voters are ready to vote for someone like Waterman. He just doesn't look like every other senator they have known," said George West, who had previously worked for Kingsbury.
Media analysts blamed Kingsbury's campaign for injecting the sensitive issue of how Waterman, as an African-American candidate, will be perceived by white voters.

[If race_card_treat=2]
An Associated Press story reported that a statement by a political strategist about Congressman John Waterman, an African-American, brought race into a difficult Senate campaign between Waterman and Congressman Sam Kingsbury, who is white.

"I don't think voters are ready to vote for someone like Waterman. He just doesn't look like every other senator they have known," said George West, who had previously worked for Kingsbury.
Waterman's campaign spokesman immediately accused Kingsbury of "playing the race card."
Media analysts blamed Waterman's campaign for injecting the sensitive issue of how Waterman, as an African-American candidate, will be perceived by white voters.

[If race_card_treat=3]
An Associated Press story reported that a statement by a political strategist about Congressman John Waterman, an African-American, brought race into a difficult Senate campaign between Waterman and Congressman Sam Kingsbury, who is white.

"I don't think voters are ready to vote for someone like Waterman. He just doesn't look like every other senator they have known," said George West, who had previously worked for Kingsbury.
Media analysts observed that the comment might have raised the sensitive issue of how Waterman, as an African-American candidate, will be perceived by white voters.

Question text and photos provided:

Who is responsible for injecting race into this campaign?
1   Kingsbury, the white candidate
2   Waterman, the black candidate
3   The media
4   Not sure

John Waterman   **Sam Kingsbury**

Distribution of Treatment Groups

Response	N
Blame white candidate	283
Blame black candidate	292
Media	262
Total	837

Total N for Race Card Responses

Response	Cases	Percent
Blame white candidate	157	18.7
Blame black candidate	47	5.6
Media	426	50.9
Not Sure	183	21.9
Skipped	1	0.1
Not asked	23	2.8
Total	837	100