

How Implicit is Implicit? Testing Leadership as a Racial Appeal
in Biracial Elections

A Thesis Presented

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Introduction

“He's the biggest celebrity in the world. But is he ready to lead?” In the narration from one of his television commercials, John McCain questioned Barack Obama's leadership ability by juxtaposing images of Obama with such frivolous celebrities as Paris Hilton and Britney Spears. The commercial apparently aimed to liken Obama to troubled pop stars: famous for being famous with no real accomplishments to his name. There were legitimate questions about Obama's leadership because he was young and relatively inexperienced in national politics. Still, the commercial may have been only tangentially about leadership. It has been argued that the direct relationship between the president and the public has made the perception of being a strong leader the most important judge of presidential effectiveness. This could hurt Obama “*by virtue of his being African American, given the predilection of white voters to perceive black candidates less as strong leaders*” (McIlwain 2007, 65, 69). A commercial harping on questions about Obama's leadership, then, could conceivably prime voters to frame the leadership issue around race. Obama, some may feel, would be a worse leader *because* of his race.

Whether the McCain campaign knew about the racial tinge to whites' views on leadership, and whether they attempted to exploit this fact in the commercial, is an open question that will not be answered in this study. One interesting aspect of the commercial, however, comes approximately nine seconds in, as the text “Obama: Is he ready to lead?” flashes across the screen, and the narrator asks, “But, is he ready to lead?”



In the above captured image from the commercial, there appears to be a black person coming partially into focus to the left of Obama. What is particularly interesting is that the image is only present when the narrator mentions “ready to lead” as the same text flashes across the screen. Obama and an anonymous black man, then, are associated with the term “leadership” in the television spot. Whether this is an intentional racial appeal is surely a matter of debate, but the connection is indeed plausible. If leadership could conceivably prime racial resentment in the Obama campaign, it is likely that it could also prime racial resentment in other campaigns pitting candidates of different races against each other (which I will term “biracial” elections). My thesis investigates this possibility.

Decades after blacks finally gained full voting rights, “race continues to be the most important line of conflict in American electoral politics” (Huckfeldt and Kohfeldt 1989, 1). This conflict has enabled politicians to achieve political gain by exploiting racial prejudices. This was seen perhaps most strikingly in the 1988 Willie Horton commercials attacking Michael Dukakis as soft on crime. Many scholars argue that this

appeal and other similar efforts represent attempts to activate whites' racial prejudices: the essence of the race card, also known as racial priming (Gilens 1996; Jamieson 1992; Knuckey and Orey 2000; Mendelberg 1997, 2001; Reeves 1997; Valentino 1999; Valentino et. al 2002; Wheelock and Hartman 2007). Tali Mendelberg defines racial priming as "the increased impact of negative racial predispositions on relevant candidates or policy opinions" (Mendelberg 2008b, 110). Racial priming, then, is present when a voter's racial resentment plays an increased role in determining one's favored candidate or policy.

If politicians recognize racial cleavages and wish to exploit them, they often use racial appeals in political advertisements. "Reagan Democrats" are "white and culturally conservative. They generally think of themselves as Democrats...but they often cross over to support Republicans for president" (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 228). The potential electoral benefit of playing the race card lies in the fact that Reagan Democrats, though sympathetic to ideals of racial equality, are hostile to policies intended to foster integration and equality. "Both the Democrats and the Republicans need their support – and therein lie the electoral temptations of race" (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 228). Thus, by hinting at a political opponent's support of integrative policies in a campaign ad, for example, one may be able to improve one's electoral position.

Racial cues can be either explicit or implicit. Mendelberg defines explicit racial messages as ones that use "racial nouns or adjectives to endorse white prerogatives, to express anti-black sentiment, to represent racial stereotypes, or to portray a threat from African Americans" (Mendelberg 2008b, 110). Implicit messages differ from explicit ones through a "more subtle and indirect communication style by omitting racial nouns

and adjectives such as “blacks” or “racial” (Mendelberg 2008b, 110). In the latter, then, the racial message is disguised, at least somewhat, and can seem less objectionable to viewers trained to scorn obviously racist material. This, however, has been a point of debate among scholars and will be taken up in the literature review as we discuss how playing the race card affects voters, and how it has been played in the last few decades.

Both implicit and explicit racial cues have been used in the American political arena. Scholars know that implicit cues such as “inner-city” and “crime” prime racial resentments (Hurwitz and Peffley 2005; Valentino 1999). These cues are used in a number of ways: one could allude to them in a campaign speech, an interview, or a television or radio advertisement. Importantly, racial appeals may be conveyed by actors other than the politicians themselves. A newspaper article covering an election may, by focusing on words and ideas that are associated with race, unintentionally prime racial prejudices in much the same way that politicians can. What we do not know, however, is the limit of effective racial cues. “Inner-city” works as an implicit prime, but how implicit is implicit? Could even subtler, or more implicit phrases still be associated with race in the minds of some voters? If they are, would this not mean that ostensibly race-neutral words can influence voters’ candidate or policy preferences? Perhaps specific words that *prima facie* appear race-neutral do, in fact, significantly prime racial predispositions.

Because the race card can influence people’s voting patterns, racial appeals matter as long as voting itself matters as well. While voting is an imperfect tool for responding to the will of the citizenry, the result of voting does “impart some important short-term and many critical long-term consequences for the circulation of government elites, the

representation of diverse interests, and the evolution of public policies” (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 197). Thus, the race card’s ability to affect the public’s vote for specific candidates has important implications on the policies we enact and the particular interests that are best supported in government.

There is a robust literature on the use of racial appeals in American politics. The way they have been used in the last 20 years, and their effects on voters, have been heavily discussed. However, there is serious disagreement in the field, especially regarding the relative impact of implicit and explicit racial cues. This study’s design enables a comparison of these two types of appeals, contributing to the intellectual debate. An experiment directly comparing one potential prime to another may not be able to be generalized beyond the specific word or phrase tested. Still, it would provide clear evidence of the effectiveness of specific potential primes, such as references to welfare.

There also exists an applied significance for this study. Understanding racial appeals can help to expose them as racist tactics for electoral gain. Thus, Mendelberg and others have argued that calling attention to an implicit racial prime in essence renders it explicit (Mendelberg 2001). As will be discussed later, explicit racial appeals may be less effective than implicit ones, at least among certain segments of the population. Therefore, shining a light on these appeals would eviscerate the political advantage that formerly accrued to candidates playing the race card. Candidates could be left with little choice but to focus their campaigns on substantive policy issues, facilitating the formation of a more informed electorate. Finally, if playing the race card has indeed lost

its effectiveness, we will know we have jumped one of many hurdles in a more general fight against racism in America.

The United States has an unenviable history as a violently racist nation. The shame of slavery still haunts America today. Southern states seceded prior to the Civil War in part to maintain this most racist of institutions. One hundred years later, the Civil Rights Movement would prove how far this nation has come in race relations, but it would also bring out the depths of hatred still emanating from millions of Americans. We know that politicians must gain the support of large groups of voters if they are to win competitive elections. Whites have, of course, been the largest of these broad groups in the American electorate. Thus, we also know that politicians will be fully aware of the racial resentment many whites still harbor. The chance to exploit these attitudes, then, can be seen as dangling in front of political candidates as a cheap, immoral, but potentially effective method of gaining pivotal votes. As Mendelberg aptly put it, “as long as racial appeals continue, electoral campaigns will be lost opportunities for bridging the nation’s racial chasm” (Mendelberg 1997, 153). Studying the race card in American politics, then, is far from a fruitless ambition.

Scholars have found a multitude of words that, while only indirectly related to race, successfully prime racial attitudes. In one experiment, when the phrase “inner-city” was added to a question about crime policy, respondents supported more punitive measures (Hurwitz and Peffley 2005). “Inner-city,” then, was related to race in the minds of individuals harboring racial resentment, and it impacted their policy preferences. Even the word “basketball” has been identified as a potential implicit racial prime (Wheelock

and Hartmann 2007, 333). Many people could probably predict that racial conservatives¹ would associate welfare, basketball, or the inner-city with African-Americans. That these terms impact voters' policy and candidate preferences may be surprising to some, but it is certainly plausible.

But why stop with these terms? Could one not be even more implicit and still prime racial prejudices? White voters tend to view black political candidates as relatively weaker leaders (McIlwain 2007). Does "leadership" prime racial prejudices, affecting candidate preference? Of course, "leadership" could not be used as a racial prime in exactly the same way as "welfare," for example. "Welfare" could work in a political race between two white candidates, one who supports generous welfare provisions, and one who opposes them. "Leadership," however, is a trait of the specific candidate, not the policies that candidate supports. It would thus only make sense to employ it as a racial appeal in a biracial election. Leadership is an intangible concept that is difficult to define. Still, it is conceivable that a candidate or a media outlet, in calling attention to the leadership quality of the white and black candidate, could damage the electoral chances of the black candidate. If "leadership" is indeed an effective racial prime, just how effective is it? How does it compare to other ostensibly race-neutral words? How does it compare to words shown in the established literature to be effective primes, whether implicit or explicit? In summary, then, the puzzle is whether or not a focus on leadership

¹ Consistent with the relevant literature, "racial conservatives" will refer here to relatively racially resentful individuals, while "racial liberals" will refer to individuals with relatively little racial resentment. I take issue with these terms because in using "racial liberal" to describe a white person with socially appropriate racial predispositions, it may seem to suggest that there is no way to be a conservative white person with socially appropriate racial predispositions. This is, of course, not the intended implication. The conservative and liberal labels are intended to be applied only to the single issue of race: they do not extend to political ideology. *Someone can indeed be politically conservative while at the same time being a racial liberal.* Despite these reservations, the standard practice in the literature will be upheld here.

primes racial prejudices, causing voters to bring their racial attitudes to bear on their views of a black candidate. If this is the case, what is the relative impact of this term in relation to other potential primes?

The word “leadership” or a discussion of leadership should prime racial resentment in a biracial election. Equally qualified black candidates are viewed on average as weaker leaders than whites, so when leadership is made an explicit campaign topic for discussion, whites harboring racial resentment will be pushed into holding less favorable views of the black candidate. This should directly translate into increased electoral support for the white candidate. However, the other question to answer is one of degree. In making a racial appeal, to be too oblique risks voters not catching the racial implications of the phrase. Too direct, and one risks alienating voters who want to avoid being perceived as racist (Mendelberg 2001). It seems, then, that a racial prime in between these two extremes would be the most effective. A white candidate making a speech, then, may do better to focus on “welfare” than on “race.” The first will be associated with blacks among many voters, while the latter may alienate those wishing to at least superficially identify with the “norm of equality” established in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement (Mendelberg 2001, 18). On the other hand, a word such as “honesty” should not prime racial resentment because it is, to many people, a race-neutral concept. “Leadership” may be oblique enough that some voters do not attach racial significance to the concept. This supports the hypothesis set forth here that “welfare” is a more powerful prime than “leadership.” Still, “leadership” should have its own significant priming effect in biracial elections.

To test this theory, an experiment is needed. By giving respondents an article to read about a biracial election, followed by a survey, one could measure respondents' preferences for the white and black candidates. One could change each article slightly so as to alter the theme of the article. For instance, two groups of respondents could receive nearly identical newspaper articles, except that one focuses on the leadership qualities of the candidates in one paragraph, whereas the other article uses that paragraph to focus on the candidates' perceived honesty. Differences between the two groups in terms of their propensity to bring their racial attitudes to bear on their candidate preference could then be safely attributed to the racial appeal, whether it is honesty, leadership, welfare, or race. If the rest of the article is exactly the same, only the different theme in the one variable paragraph could account for different levels of support for each candidate.

Of course, for this data to be valid, one must control for the characteristics of each of the four groups of respondents. It will be important to control for average levels of racial resentment, for gender, and for political party so as not to confound the results. With these safeguards in place, however, all the data needed to draw conclusions should be available from the survey responses. If the group given the article on leadership brings their racial attitudes to bear on candidate preference more than the group given the article discussing honesty, then we can safely conclude that "leadership" appeals can successfully prime racial resentment. Only the focus on leadership, and the resultant increased salience of race in the minds of respondents, could account for this result. What follows will be a literature review, a methods and experimental manipulation section, my results, as well as some discussion of the implications of my results in the conclusion.

Chapter 1

Literature Review: Racial Appeals in Contemporary American Politics

Huckfeldt and Kohfeld argue that “racial conflict is fundamentally a group phenomenon” that is a consequence of “aggregate social organization” (Huckfeldt and Kohfeld 1989, 44-45). Such organization occurs regularly during election campaigns as political actors aim to mobilize groups of voters for support. As Mendelberg posits, during presidential elections, “what politicians say during their campaigns for office may, on average, prompt stronger and more far-reaching public reaction than what they say during any other time of the electoral cycle” (Mendelberg 1997, 135). Thus, elections are potentially prime settings for the mobilization of racial resentment in key voting groups.

Mendelberg argues that the politics of race fundamentally changed in the 1960s. The Civil Rights Movement, and specifically the Voting Rights Act of 1965, created a “norm of equality” in which “citizens’ endorsement of basic racial equality became nearly universal. In the age of equality, neither citizens nor politicians want to be perceived or to perceive themselves as racist” (Mendelberg 2001, 18). At the same time, however, Mendelberg points out that we still have a party system that is based on racial cleavages. Therefore, she believes, politicians will employ implicit racial appeals, not explicit ones, in order to mobilize racially prejudiced white voters without violating these norms of racial equality (Mendelberg 2001). Kinder and Sanders concur, stating that implicit appeals, or racial code words, are “intended as rhetorical winks, and if they are too easily detected they lose their deniability and thus their effectiveness” (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 223). Therefore, they argue, in this post-Civil Rights Movement era, part of the influence of the racial appeal rests in its disguised, deniable form.

While convincing and supported by the way the race card has generally been played in the last twenty years, Mendelberg's theory has not always been followed strictly in practice. McIlwain and Caliendo also proscribe to Mendelberg's "thesis that racial messages will most often take the form of implicit rather than explicit verbal appeals" (McIlwain and Caliendo 2007, 2). However, by using a content analysis of televised political advertisements from biracial elections from 1990 to 2000, they found that six percent of ads contained an *explicit* racial appeal (McIlwain and Caliendo 2007). Though far less than the twenty-three percent of ads containing implicit racial cues, this illustrates that explicit racial appeals were and are still made after the norm of equality had been established.

Political scientists who have studied the mechanisms by which these appeals are made have expanded on Mendelberg's theory of implicit racial appeals. In 1988, William "Willie" Horton, a black convicted felon, escaped while on a weekend furlough from a Massachusetts prison, raping a woman and stabbing her fiancé (Mendelberg 1997). Michael Dukakis was the governor of Massachusetts at the time, and George H. W. Bush used the issue to attack Dukakis as soft on crime. Jamieson finds that a Bush ad that did not feature Horton but dealt with the related issue of prison furloughs, "by carefully juxtaposing words and pictures," invites the false inference that 268 first-degree murderers were furloughed by Dukakis to rape and kidnap (Jamieson 1992, 19). In reality, only one committed such atrocities, Willie Horton. But were these commercials about race? Were they motivating whites' racial resentment, or were they simply about color-blind crime? Jamieson illustrates the power of the Horton and furlough ads to create racially based fear by presenting the results of ten focus group sessions in 1988.

Nearly 60 percent of respondents said they remembered most of the men in the prison ads being black, when, in fact, only two were African American (Jamieson 1992).

Jamieson's methodology, then, was to show ads from the Bush-Dukakis Presidential campaign to focus group participants, and to ask them questions about what they remembered from the ads. This is a very effective format for Jamieson's purposes because when participants consistently imagine far more black men than there actually were, it seems fair to conclude that the Willie Horton advertisements increased the salience of race in voters' minds. There are limitations to this approach, however. For one, illustrating the plausibility of increased salience of race does not in itself prove that these advertisements would have any impact on the election. Yes, they made people think about blacks in the context of a prison ad, but did this necessarily cause people to vote for Bush instead of Dukakis? It may be a tempting conclusion, but it would be unwarranted to draw from Jamieson's evidence alone.

Jamieson also examines Jessie Helms' playing of the "race card" against Harvey Gantt in the 1990 North Carolina Senate race, further illustrating its pervasiveness in national politics. Helms' "white hands ad"

 Showed the plaid-shirted arms and white hands of a male...opening, presumably reading and then crumpling a rejection letter as the announcer says, "You needed that job, and you were the best qualified. But they had to give it to a minority because of a racial quota. Is that really fair?" (Jamieson 1992, 97).

This ad is more explicitly racial than the Willie Horton one, with its direct reference to minorities' "favored status." Jamieson also finds something in the ad perhaps intended to be subliminal. As the images on the television change, one can see the white hand now

“crushing Teddy Kennedy’s head and about to encircle Gantt’s” (Jamieson 1992, 98). Could this be similar to the black face that appears in the McCain television spot as the question of leadership comes on screen? Helms, who had been behind in the polls, beat Gantt in the election. Of course, there are innumerable variables in an election, and to conclude that this ad had any influence on the outcome of the election would be fundamentally unfair. Undecided voters may have been swayed to vote for Helms for any number of reasons. Again, Jamieson’s case study of this commercial does not overextend its conclusions. She limits herself to convincingly illustrating the racial motivation behind the commercial. Other methods are necessary to draw the causal link between racially charged election material and the outcome of an election. Examining other examples of implicit racial priming can help to show how these appeals have evolved over time.

In addition to television commercials, there are several other mediums through which racial priming may occur, whether intentionally or not. These include, but are not limited to: speeches, the Internet, and newspaper coverage of the given election. In the *New York Times’* coverage of the 1989 New York City mayoral race, which featured a black candidate and white candidate, “nearly three-fourths of all campaign-related stories contained an explicit reference to specific racial or ethnic groups in the New York electorate” (Reeves 1997, 53). It follows, then, that newspaper electoral coverage can increase the salience of race to readers and, by extension, voters. Whether this has an outcome on elections is left unanswered by this mere observation.

In 1994, as Wheelock and Hartmann argue, the adoption of a \$30 billion federal crime bill saw its share of symbolic racism. Although a “midnight basketball” program

made up only \$50 million dollars of the bill's cost, just 0.17 percent, over 100 references were made to it in the Congressional Record in just three weeks (Wheelock and Hartmann 2007). Because of the popular connection between basketball and African Americans, midnight basketball could serve "as a vehicle whereby it became possible to talk about race more explicitly in the context of the crime bill" (Wheelock and Hartmann 2007, 333). This type of analysis serves to identify yet another medium of transmission of potential racial priming. By using congressional debates in the knowledge that the press would report on the proceedings to the public, congressmen could perhaps stum up public opposition by flagging the implications of the crime bill for blacks. Again, though, without an experiment that controls for the myriad variables present in a vote on a bill, we are left unable to conclude that the implicit mention of race through "midnight basketball" had any effect on the vote or on voters' perceptions of the bill.

Knuckey and Orey argue that in the 1995 Louisiana gubernatorial election, playing the race card was easy. "No white candidate had to...resort to a 'Willie Horton-style' television commercial; the mere presence of a black candidate in the gubernatorial runoff election framed the campaign around race and activated white racial resentment" (Knuckey and Orey 2000, 12). Therefore, while in 1988 Bush had to create a context in which race would be an issue because he ran against another white man, in Louisiana in 1995 no such effort was needed. The media would frame the campaign as one of a white man versus a black man with its frequent reminders of the import and uniqueness of a biracial election. It seems that Knuckey and Orey are suggesting that it is easier to embed racial appeals in a biracial election than in an election between two whites. Still, the white candidate made racial appeals anyway, saying that "predominantly white

Jefferson Parish is right next to the jungle in New Orleans and it has a very low crime rate” (Knuckey and Orey 2000, 6). Knuckey and Orey, however, are too quick to conclude that racial appeals had an effect on the electoral outcome. Just because racial appeals clearly exist does not guarantee their effect. Perhaps a sizeable percentage of Louisiana voters were already racist, and the media and Foster’s oblique references to race did nothing to sway them. Additionally, the authors fail to include their survey in the paper, making it more difficult to analyze the questions they used in their analysis.

To this point, a number of studies have been examined that do a good job of identifying political communication that draws attention to race or to the candidates’ race themselves. However, what is most worrying about racial appeals is the possibility that they actually alter the outcome of elections. If talking about race changes voter preference in racially prejudiced voters, then poisoned political discourse can be more important to an election than the issues or candidates’ character and integrity. In order to be more confident that racial appeals are indeed responsible for the defeat of black candidates and white candidates associated with “black issues,” such as Dukakis, some scholars have focused on administering experiments in a lab. In fact, this approach is pivotal for discovering “the causal link between racial campaign appeals and whites’ evaluative judgments and political choices” (Reeves 1997, 32). It is an experiment that can illustrate that it is racial appeals, not other spurious factors, that are the cause of any antipathy whites may have towards a particular candidate. Of course, this method may not directly translate to how people will actually vote on Election Day. Still, it has the benefit of being able to control for confounding variables. In an experiment, the effect of

a newspaper article on voters can be measured directly, because there are not a multitude of other events going on at once that can confound one's conclusions.

Valentino, Hutchings, and White (2002) find in the experimental setting that subtle racial cues do in fact prime racial attitudes. These attitudes can affect how someone evaluates a candidate involved in policies linked to blacks by the media, such as welfare and crime (Valentino, Traugott, and Hutchings 2002). Similarly, in an experiment studying the 2000 election, it was found that men were more likely to vote for Bush if he was simply "conservative and not compassionate on race" (Hutchings et al. 2004, 533). These experiments, by controlling for potentially confounding variables, convincingly illustrate the continued effectiveness of particular racial appeals as implicit primes.

Other scholars created an experiment to test the effects of racial priming by acting under the assumption that "race-related pictures far more subtle than the Horton ad can significantly influence individuals' racial policy preferences and candidate preferences" (Hurwitz and Peffley 2005, 101). Respondents were asked a question about crime policy, and one group was given the words "violent criminals," and the other, "violent inner-city criminals." They found that this additional phrase was associated with African Americans in the minds of racial conservatives, who were easily pushed into becoming proponents of more punitive crime policy (Hurwitz and Peffley 2005). The strength - indeed the elegance - of this study lies in the simple addition of "inner-city" to the question: we know that only this phrase could be the cause of the different answers, and we see just how easy it is to subtly play the race card even today. Hurwitz and Peffley powerfully show that the phrase "inner-city" was an effective racial prime:

respondents already harboring racial resentment changed their policy preferences because of the priming effect of this phrase. Their research design effectively allows us to draw this conclusion confidently. While their study answers one important question, it raises others. True, “inner-city” has been shown to prime racial resentments, but does this conclusion extend to other words associated by some people with blacks, such as welfare? What about words that prima facie have nothing to do with race whatsoever?

Much of the research presented so far has followed a common intellectual trend. It examines the mechanism and effects on elections of implicit racial appeals, which Mendelberg argues are more effective than explicit ones. Mendelberg understood the problem of confounding variables when analyzing a historical event. The introduction of the Willie Horton ad in 1988 may or may not have primed racial resentments: how can one gauge the effect of “spurious, mood-of-the-times factors (such as a more general shift toward conservatism)” (Mendelberg 1997, 140)? In fact, Kinder and Sanders concluded that the Horton ad significantly primed racial resentment by showing that the impact of racial resentment on stated candidate preference more than doubled in the last month before the election (Kinder and Sanders 1996). While interesting, this analysis does not prove that this change was due to the impact of the Horton ad. There are too many variables in an entire month before an election. There were different ads, different speeches, different newspaper articles, and there could have been a general shift in political ideology.

To account for these variables, Mendelberg employed an experimental approach in which subjects viewed actual news segments aired during the 1988 presidential campaign (Mendelberg 1997). While the control group viewed an ad criticizing Dukakis

on the pollution of the Boston Harbor, the experimental group saw an ad criticizing Dukakis on the case of Willie Horton (Mendelberg 1997). Thus, Mendelberg could gauge the effect of the Willie Horton ad in a way that partially mimics the reality in which voters watched these advertisements from their homes. The Willie Horton ad did indeed prime subjects' racial prejudices.

Huber and Lapinski also designed an experiment in which the key variable is "opinion on race-related and other policy issues" (Huber and Lapinski 2006, 423). Their nationally representative experiments included over 6,300 respondents, allowing them to evaluate the effect of racial appeals on racial conservatives, a group generally underrepresented in other research (Huber and Lapinski 2006). In their very different, ostensibly more thorough methodology, Huber and Lapinski come to an alternative conclusion that has created one of the sharpest intellectual disagreements in the field of racial politics. They find themselves unable to replicate Mendelberg's "central claim that implicit appeals increase the importance of racial predispositions in opinion formation relative to explicit ones" (Huber and Lapinski 2008, 126). They obtained this result by differentiating between uneducated and highly educated respondents. The former could not tell the difference between implicit and explicit appeals, while the latter were mostly immune to priming anyway (Huber and Lapinski 2008). Still, while Huber and Lapinski conclude that implicit appeals are no more effective, they add the caveat that explicit appeals could anger some educated voters who may recognize the ads' incompatibilities with the norm of equality (Huber and Lapinski 2006). Their results clash with Mendelberg's, as their results actually suggest that neither implicit nor explicit racial

appeals are very effective. However, they do agree with Mendelberg that politicians have no real reason to choose an explicit racial appeal over an implicit one.

To call attention to the racial content of an implicit racial prime is, in effect, to render it explicit. The Willie Horton ad, for example, has been analyzed and deemed racist, so today it would “be recognized for its blatant racial content,” making it less effective (Hurwitz and Peffley 2005, 101). Huber and Lapinski, however, disagree. They invoke the case of Harold Ford, a black member of Congress from Tennessee who ran for Senator in 2006. His opponent’s commercial linked Ford to a white woman arguably to sway white voters away from Ford. The NAACP denounced the ad as racist, calling attention to the racial content of an implicit ad. According to Huber and Lapinski, because Ford still lost, the “problem of racial animosity is therefore likely resilient to even efforts to highlight the racist nature of many forms of campaign communication” (Huber and Lapinski 2008, 131). Mendelberg, however, points out that although Ford lost, he could have lost *despite* the NAACP’s success in illuminating the nature of this ad (Mendelberg 2008a). They fail to identify alternative factors contributing to the electoral defeat. It is crucial to consider alternate explanations, especially if the results are not derived from a controlled experiment.

Mendelberg contends that in Huber and Lapinski’s large study, “almost two-thirds of subjects supposed to get an ad probably did not get it,” and this large non-response rate may explain their null results that disagree with Mendelberg’s (Mendelberg 2008b, 116). However, Huber and Lapinski show convincingly that it is in fact highly unlikely that non-response rates were higher than 11 percent (Huber and Lapinski 2008). Mendelberg’s other criticism seems to be more significant. Huber and Lapinski, by

measuring respondents' racial attitudes right before exposure to the experimental conditions, "likely primed racial predispositions for all subjects thereby muting the effect of subsequent exposure to the racial cues (Mendelberg 2008b, 116). Respondents would already be thinking about race and the ad would have no additional effect. One would ideally design a study in which respondents had no reason to be pondering racial issues before beginning the study's experiment. Future studies are necessary to help further the Mendelberg - Huber and Lapinski debate over the relative effectiveness of implicit and explicit racial primes.

In the relevant literature, scholars have generally studied the effect of racial primes on policy preferences, candidate preferences, or both. Keith Reeves has found that framing a mock biracial election around the issue of affirmative action primes racial resentment (Reeves 1997). In general, however, the literature has not focused enough on the effect of racial priming on minority candidates (Caliendo and McIlwain 2006). There could be large differences in the priming effects for a biracial election versus an election with two white candidates. It seems plausible that a biracial election may open up the range of potential implicit primes. When there are two white candidates, racial appeals would focus on the candidates' favored policies that are perceived to affect various races differently. When there is a black candidate, however, perhaps racial appeals could extend to the candidates' personal traits, as long as some voters believe these traits differ by race. In fact, Reeves postulates that race is most important in elections in which a black and white political aspirant battle for white support. If Bush supporters were able to cast the Willie Horton commercial as really about crime, "is it not unrealistic to expect and indeed anticipate that racial appeals – whether overt or subtle – will make their way

into an election campaign in which one candidate is white and his or her challenger black” (Reeves 1997, 16-17)? It is important, then, to further examine the race card in biracial elections, because we could see different, even larger effects.

The issue of potential racial appeals was, of course, a salient one in the 2008 presidential election. It is an issue that has elicited some of the very questions being asked in this study, given the extensive campaign focus on Obama’s leadership qualities. It is a concern worth examining given the “electoral temptations of race.” Republicans are tempted to use racial codewords in order “to enlist the support of white conservatives without appearing racist” (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 198). Hence the use of words examined above by Republican campaigns and candidates, such as welfare, inner-city, and basketball. Democrats, on the other hand, are tempted to be silent and evasive regarding race, in order “to maintain the loyalty and enthusiasm of blacks without alienating conservative whites” (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 198). The latter method may be a less obvious implicit message, but is perhaps no less important or prevalent. Walters points out that although 60 percent of blacks believed that their race contributed to the slow government reaction to Hurricane Katrina, Obama framed the disastrous response as “colorblind,” and related only to class (Walters 2007). As an African American, Obama needed to respond, but he did so in a way that would not alienate white voters. It would have been arguably understandable for Obama to mention race in the context of Katrina. However, he did not, ostensibly making a positive signal to conservative white voters.

As mentioned above, some scholars argue that the perception of being a strong leader is the paramount judge of presidential effectiveness. This would disadvantage Obama, for example, for being African American, because white voters on average

perceive black candidates less as strong leaders (McIlwain 2007). Whether “leadership” can then be an implicit racial cue, used to conjure whites’ images of blacks as weaker leaders, warrants serious investigation. Perhaps “leadership” is just as much a racial cue as words like “crime” and “welfare” that play upon white Americans’ negative beliefs regarding blacks (Gilens 1996; Valentino 1999). The possibility that “leadership,” an ostensibly race-neutral word, can prime racial resentments raises additional questions. We often look at the debate over the race card as “implicit versus explicit.” Perhaps, however, this clouds more specific distinctions. Again, how implicit is implicit? It has been shown that implicit racial cues such as “crime” are effective racial primes. However, “leadership” is a potential implicit racial prime as well. One could characterize it as *more implicit* than other words and phrases identified as subtle racial primes. It will be useful to distinguish more closely between different racial appeals.

This review has mapped out much of the recent literature on racial priming in American politics. Mendelberg has posited not only that implicit racial appeals will be more effective than explicit appeals, but also why this is so. Still, Huber and Lapinski raise serious questions about the claim that people will generally reject explicit racial cues. Studies including Jamieson’s have been very useful in showing that political communication can increase the salience of race for the electorate. However, it is through experimentation that we are best able to isolate the effect of racial appeals on voters’ candidate and policy preferences. Otherwise, by merely observing an event during the actual election cycle, there are so many variables that confidently attributing a swing in the polls to a specific newspaper article or advertisement is simply wishful thinking. Experimentation has certainly done a good job of illustrating the strong effect

of implicit racial appeals on voters' electoral preferences. McIlwain's observation about whites' penchant for viewing blacks as weaker leaders, though, has led this researcher to question whether "leadership," too, is an effective racial prime. Leadership is not linked to any candidate's policy position, but rather to the capabilities of a specific office-seeker to successfully direct the jurisdiction. Some voters believe this quality varies at least somewhat by race. It follows that *this appeal should only work in biracial elections*. If it does, then the scope is that much greater for insidious political communication - for discourse that perpetuates racial inequalities.

Chapter 2

Methods and Experimental Manipulation

Methods:

As established in the literature review, experiments are useful for identifying the causal forces explaining electoral and policy preferences because they help isolate and control for different factors. In fact, “the direct manipulation of media content, coupled with random assignment of subjects to treatment and control conditions, produces strong inferences about specific elements of a message that alter citizens’ decision-making criteria” (Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002, 77). Here, media content is indeed manipulated and subjects are assigned to different conditions randomly, which will allow powerful inferences to be drawn. The inferences are twofold: first, researchers infer the size of the measured effect, and second, they infer the effects in a lab to the real world. It should be noted, of course, that these inferences are strong precisely because they are generated out of an experimental setting. Given that fact, researchers must be exceedingly modest about the inferences we draw from what we observe in the experimental setting to what actually happens at the polling place. Still, the ability to isolate several variables and to randomize treatment groups is a powerful advantage of experiments in determining causality that is missing from other techniques, such as observation.

An undergraduate student body is used here out of convenience for the researcher, but it is a subject population not unique to the racial priming discipline (Mendelberg 1997). An undergraduate student population at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor is not, of course, a representative national sample. Undergraduate students are clearly younger and better-educated than the average American voters. Additionally,

respondents from the state of Michigan make up 53% of the total subject pool, whereas Michigan residents only make up 3.34% of the national population (State of Michigan Agency of History, Arts, and Libraries). The study sample is also too Democratic (67%) and includes more females (65%) than the general population. It is also less racially resentful than a representative subject population, with racial resentment measured at .42 on a 0-1 scale. Kinder and Winter, using a very similar scale, found a value of .611 (Kinder and Winter 2001).

There should be considerable wariness, then, in extrapolating from this study to the entire nation. The external validity is clearly very low because this study is not reflective of the United States along demographic lines and by beliefs about racial policy and government. While a study using an undergraduate student population presents serious questions of external validity, it does nothing to prevent internal validity. Admittedly, this study uses a convenience sample. However, assuming the experimental design is valid, the study is internally valid and thus for the first time may provide definitive evidence of the priming ability of leadership appeals. It may also illustrate any priming ability of welfare in a biracial election. There are four conditions in this experiment: a control and three experimental conditions. By randomizing which student receives which treatment group, the results will be valid internally – within the sample population. Randomizing treatments ensures that there is no effort to decide which subject receives which condition. Effective use of the race card within a student population could conceivably also be effective among some other segments of the electorate.

Students filled out their version of the questionnaire in lecture halls and in some cases at their place of residence. The researcher contacted various professors, and four volunteered to allow their students to participate in the study. The researcher distributed the survey to two upper-level political science classes, one with 53 original subjects and one with 44. The survey was also distributed to an introductory political science class with 56 original subjects. One professor distributed the survey to an introductory statistics class, and the students were asked to return the survey at the beginning of the following class. Fifty-two students returned the survey instrument. There were, then, 205 initial subjects, though as explained below, sixteen would be removed from analysis.¹

Subjects for the study were not paid and participation was completely voluntary. Professors and the researcher both stressed that the students could abstain from the survey or stop at any time. Participants were told via a consent form that the study was about media election coverage and current events, with the purpose of the research being to study media political communication. They were not told that the study was about racial priming because this could, in itself, prime the respondents' racial attitudes. Priming racial predispositions before the actual experiment may mute the effect of the ensuing exposure to racial appeals (Mendelberg 2008b). If the knowledge of the study

¹ The introductory Statistics class was entitled "Introduction to Statistical Reasoning." The introductory Political Science class was entitled "Introduction to Comparative Politics." One of the upper-level Political Science classes was "Issues in Contemporary African Politics." The final class in which subjects were found was "Media Effects on Public Opinion." It is for this last class that there are concerns about whether or not students may have been "on the lookout" for priming and thus circumvented some of the effects. While the students had not discussed priming in the class yet, priming was indeed mentioned on the syllabus. This is not likely a big concern, but a point worth mentioning, to be sure.

already primed respondents, the experimental condition may be unable to prime them further. Alternatively, even if it does prime subjects, it will be difficult to separate the two priming effects. Thus, it was decided that the gain in the accuracy of the study by partially masking its true intent outweighed the cost of leaving respondents somewhat in the dark.

The survey instruments were five pages long. The first page was the consent form, telling respondents the nature of the study and explaining that the study was completely voluntary and anonymous. The second page was a short pre-test questionnaire, posing questions that asked about age, where the subject was from, and various questions that measured attention to politics and the media (Please see Appendix I). The third page was the variable condition: a newspaper article discussing a fictional biracial mayoral election in Seattle. Subjects received one of four different articles (Please see Appendix II for a copy of all four articles). All discussed the same election, but had minor differences that changed the tenor of the article. The control condition discussed “honesty” in the context of the election, and the experimental conditions discussed “leadership,” “welfare,” and “race.” The researcher randomly distributed the five-page packets to students in the lecture hall, so subjects received a packet with one of these four newspaper articles.

After filling out the pre-test questionnaire and reading the article, subjects moved on to pages four and five, which made up the post-test questionnaire (Please see Appendix III). The post-test questionnaire recorded subjects’ preferred candidate (if any) discussed in the mock newspaper article on the previous page. It determined this through a number of measures all reflective of a voter’s support for or antipathy towards a given

candidate. For example, there was a simple choice of which candidate one would vote for if the election were held today, if one were able to decide. Subjects were also asked to rank the candidates from 0-100 on a “feeling thermometer” that will be explained below. Respondents also answered questions asking whether or not the candidate embodied qualities such as empathy, strong leadership, and honesty: characteristics that are sure to affect one’s preference for a political candidate.

The same post-test questionnaire measured racial resentment using the six question Racial Resentment Scale (Please see Appendix III) (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Reeves 1997). This set of questions is designed to be a “rather subtle” and “roundabout” method of distinguishing between whites that are generally sympathetic toward blacks and those that generally are not (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 106). In essence, the question set is designed to measure the degree of agreement or disagreement respondents have with the contention that “blacks do not try hard enough to overcome the difficulties they face and that they take what they have not earned” (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 106). The reason for such care in making the questions appear subtle is that many people, when posed with questions that would clearly identify themselves as racist, will shy away from honest answers in order to avoid violating the “norm of equality.” Thus, these questions are designed to elicit subtle hostilities without appearing to upset the democratic values that many respondents would feel they were expected to uphold (Kinder and Sanders 1996). They should then bring forth more honest responses from racial conservatives.

The questionnaire further disguised the racial focus of the experiment by also measuring preferences for various government policies and views on government corruption. This way, subjects would not only answer questions about race and thus

would not be sure that the study centered on racial issues. Questions on gender and party identification were also included and controlled for in the subsequent statistical analysis. Finally, respondents identified themselves by racial category. Anonymity had been stressed in order to receive the most truthful answers possible regarding candidate preference and racial resentment. The entire survey took respondents approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Although there were 205 initial subjects, it was decided to only analyze non-black respondents. Implicit communication can apply to both blacks and whites (Valentino, Hutchings and White 2002). This study, though, is primarily interested in studying the impact of non-blacks' racial attitudes on candidate preference. Studying only non-blacks is a common practice in the literature that is continued here (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Mendelberg 1997, 2001; Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002). If there is a difference in the effect of the cues on whites and blacks, it may cloud the overall analysis. There were not enough black respondents to provide a study limited to black subjects, which could conceivably have then been compared to the study of white respondents. After eliminating the 16 black subjects' data, there were 189 non-black subjects left for analysis.

The Experimental Manipulation:

In studying potential racial primes in a biracial election, the 2008 presidential election is an intriguing case to study. John McCain's focus on Obama's potential leadership deficiencies was, on its face, clearly a legitimate attack. After all, Obama had spent only four years in national politics. Regardless of the motivation of the sponsor of such an attack, can such appeals have a racial priming effect? Do established racial

primes work in biracial elections as they do in elections between two white men? While these questions could potentially be addressed in an experiment regarding some aspect of the Obama-McCain campaign, there were several pitfalls to this direct approach. For one, the timing of this study fell after the November 2008 election. The test here addresses candidate preference. The outcome of the election could affect candidate preference as people choose “the winning horse.” Additionally, for such a high-profile election, many voters’ minds were already made up. The priming in a single newspaper article may not be enough to alter a voter’s chosen presidential candidate, even if the effect is still there. In this way, an experiment directly involving the 2008 election may mask the full effect of potential racial primes.

There are methods to alleviate some of these concerns, however. One could examine a fictitious biracial election to measure priming without concern over hardened opinions of the candidates themselves. Ideally, one would not want the subjects to know that the election is fictitious. Believing the campaign to be legitimate may provoke more thoughtful responses. The author, in taking these factors into consideration, chose the experimental condition to involve a discussion of a fictional mayoral race.

As mentioned before, 53% of the respondents were from the state of Michigan. Seattle, Washington was chosen as the location of the mayoral race to minimize the chance that respondents would actually be familiar with the politics of the metropolis, while still discussing a relatively high-profile area. It is unclear whether the study of a biracial mayoral election can be generalized to the 2008 presidential election or to biracial elections in general. Still, it seems unlikely that an effective racial prime in one biracial election would be utterly ineffective in another.

Like several other priming studies, news coverage was used as the stimulus (Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Mendelberg 1997, 2001; Miller and Krosnick 2000). In this fictional mayoral race, the stimulus was a mock newspaper article created from scratch. It is common for newspaper articles to cover political campaigns, so a mock newspaper article represents a believable, cost-efficient means of testing for the existence of racial primes in a biracial election. A newspaper article may be second-best to political advertisements for studying potential priming effects. Some candidates' television advertisements may be more clearly racial appeals because the candidates may have a specific priming agenda in mind, whereas the newspaper article is merely reporting the news. However, in articles the candidates are still quoted making racial appeals, so the newspaper simply communicates these appeals to the electorate. Thus, newspaper articles are useful to measure potential priming effects, but it is important to note that the effects may be different in print than they would be in a campaign commercial, for example.

The four versions of the newspaper article were identical in all respects except for the contents of the penultimate paragraph, and one word in the title of the article. Each article's first paragraph noted that the two candidates, George Douglas and Eric Rogers, were running for Seattle's vacant mayoral race in a nonpartisan election: neither candidate was running on a party ticket. This was intended to remove the automatic attachment that some respondents would have to a candidate based on whether he was categorized as a Democrat or a Republican. This automatic attachment would have clouded the study because even if a subject was primed, it may not have been enough of

an effect to override one's loyalty to a particular party.² Thus, the priming effect of the appeal would be lost as subjects still picked the candidate based on his party label. The nonpartisan election then removes a factor that may have masked the priming effects, a practice also followed by Reeves (Reeves 1997).

The second paragraph of the four conditions includes a quotation from a supposed authority on nonpartisan elections, a fictitious professor from the University of Washington. He explains the difficulty of distinguishing one's self as a candidate without the label of a political party. This paragraph serves two purposes. Firstly, in the following paragraphs it becomes clear that there are very few tangible differences between the two candidates, and this makes it clear that nonpartisan elections often include difficulties at demarcating serious candidate differences. Secondly, the paragraph serves to distract readers from the potential racial priming. The focus of the article, it appears, is its nonpartisan nature, not the candidates themselves. This may prevent readers from being "on the lookout" for racial appeals, which would then circumvent any effects they could have.

The antepenultimate paragraph explains the political background and some of the policy preferences of the two candidates. The descriptions in this paragraph are identical for both candidates. This no doubt left some respondents undecided about whom to support, as their policy positions and experience left little to distinguish the two. However, the benefit to such an approach is that differences between the experimental

² Future research should examine the effect that making the election nonpartisan has on the level of priming. For instance, if instead the black candidate were made a Democrat, would this have caused subjects to notice his blackness more?

groups in candidate preference can be more convincingly attributed to racial priming, and not to different values and positions expressed by the candidates.

The final paragraph simply wrapped up the preceding discussion. Both articles also include a picture of the white candidate, Eric Rogers, and the black candidate, George Douglas. While an offhand mention in the article of the candidates' race may seem forced and unrealistic, photographs of the subjects of an article are more likely and thus more realistic. The final common element to the four conditions is a "The Seattle Times" logo at the top of the article, intended to enhance the mock article's realism.

"Honesty" was chosen as the control because it appeared unlikely that "honesty," as an ostensibly race-neutral concept, would prime racial resentment. Reeves found that in a mock biracial election, candidates' race only primed racial resentment when race was particularly salient in the campaign, such as when affirmative action was discussed (Reeves 1997). Honesty should not make race particularly salient and thus seems an appropriate control condition. The title of the control article is "'Honesty' Becoming the Hot-button Issue in Mayoral Election." The focus on honesty does not emerge, however, until the penultimate paragraph. Here, each candidate is quoted defending their record in politics as unblemished by wrongdoing, and as characterized by fulfillment of campaign promises.

In one experimental condition, the title reads: "'Race' Becoming the Hot-button Issue in Mayoral Election." The variable section of the article focuses here on race, stating that if elected, George Douglas would be the first black mayor of Seattle. Each candidate is quoted as noting the possibly historic nature of the election, but pointing out that the campaign should be determined by the issues, not the color of one's skin.

Speaking directly about the candidates' race can certainly serve as an explicit racial cue (Mendelberg 2008b). This effect may be moderated here, however, by the pictures of the two candidates common to all four conditions. In essence, all subjects see a picture of the black candidate, so all are aware that it is a biracial election. The photographs, then, serve as an explicit prime for all four conditions. Whether couching the election in historic terms primes racial resentment further is, initially, debatable.

In the next experimental condition, the title reads “‘Leadership’ Becoming the Hot-button Issue in Mayoral Election.” Here, in the variable section, each candidate is quoted praising his own leadership abilities as essential to guiding Seattle during these challenging times. “Leadership,” of course, is not an obvious racial prime. Nevertheless, discussing the concept could potentially lead voters to bring their racial resentment to bear on their candidate choice if they view blacks as less strong leaders. The final article, “‘Welfare Becoming the Hot-button Issue in Mayoral Election,” discusses the two candidates' positions on welfare provisions. Eric Rogers, the white candidate, is quoted in opposition to welfare benefits, while George Douglas, the black candidate, is quoted in favor of them. The articles, again, are reproduced in Appendix II in their entirety.

This chapter has described the experimental design used to resolve some questions regarding racial appeals in a biracial election. Some choices, such as employing the Racial Resentment Scale, were made based on theory and are grounded in the literature. Other choices, such as using a convenience sample for the subject population, were made pragmatically. The following chapter will provide the results elicited from this experimental design.

Chapter 3

Results

This chapter will first briefly remind readers of the hypotheses tested in the experiment. Secondly, it will discuss the several dependent variables analyzed, and examine reasons for including more than one test of candidate preference. Finally, this chapter will highlight the most interesting results from the regressions run for leadership, race, and welfare. We will see that welfare was a strong racial prime for this biracial election, and that leadership and race have some more modest priming ability as well.

The hypotheses predicted that several versions of a discussion of a biracial mayoral election would prime racial resentments. Respondents in the experimental conditions, compared to the control, would be more likely to bring their racial resentment to bear in choosing a candidate. These ranged from a potential implicit prime, leadership, and a more established implicit prime, welfare, to the explicit discussion of race itself. The priming effect of the three experimental conditions in comparison to each other is also of interest. It was hypothesized that “leadership” would indeed prime racial resentments, but because it is more implicit, it would prime less effectively than a discussion of welfare. “Race,” as well, would prime less than welfare, partially because the racial nature of the campaign was made clear in all conditions by the photographs of the candidates. Secondly, this sample is relatively highly-educated. Some believe that better educated subjects respond more negatively to explicit racial appeals (such as race) than they do to implicit ones (Huber and Lapinski 2006).

The above hypotheses are tested by estimating the impact of racial attitudes on vote choice for the four conditions in this experiment. Rather than limit the analysis to

only one measure of candidate preference, however, a number of other dependent variables are also included. The benefit of this approach lies in the fact that there are weaknesses to any single measure of candidate preference. Importantly, because the information about the candidates is given in a single, short article, many respondents may (and did) choose “undecided” because they truly could not make up their minds. They needed more information to pick a candidate. Additionally, a simple choice between the two candidates may be vulnerable to a high number of respondents choosing “undecided” for other reasons. Reeves, for example, found that subtle racial appeals caused many whites to become uneasy and apprehensive, unable or unwilling to commit to the white candidate or the black candidate (Reeves 1997). Instead, they “vacated the field” and were undecideds (Reeves 1997, 87). Because this, too, is a biracial election, this effect could also contribute to a high “undecided” rate for the stated vote choice dependent variable.

Therefore, another dependent variable tested was a “feeling thermometer,” in which subjects ranked each candidate from 0 to 100, with zero representing the most antipathy to a candidate, and 100 the most possible warmth. Respondents who were unable to fully commit a “vote” to one or the other candidate, then, were given a way to express more subtle candidate preferences. Additionally, offering this continuous dependent variable, in contrast to the discrete vote choice variable, allows for a more nuanced view of the degree of support for each candidate. Reeves also used this scale, which aided him in dealing with a large number of undecideds in his vote choice variable (Reeves 1997). Other dependent variables measured feelings toward the candidates by asking whether each one “really cares about people like you,” do they “provide strong

leadership,” and whether they are dishonest. Each represents concerns that would certainly play a major role in voters’ final decisions at the voting booth. The “provides strong leadership” question is particularly interesting to examine after respondents read the article about leadership.

The dependent variable for vote choice ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater support for Eric Rogers, the white candidate, relative to George Douglas, the black candidate. The feeling thermometer, again, ranges from 0 to 100. The remaining dependent variables all range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater agreement with the given statement in the question. As discussed above, racial attitudes, the independent variable of primary interest, are measured by averaging the responses to six questions, the Racial Resentment Scale (Kinder and Sanders 96). This variable, too, is measured from 0-1, with 0 being the most racially liberal, and 1 the most racially conservative.

There is, of course, the possibility that observed response differences could in fact not be due to the racial cues, but to an uneven distribution of sociodemographic or political ideology variables across the four conditions. The surveys were randomly distributed, decreasing this chance. This randomization resulted in a good, but not perfectly even distribution. From the respondents who chose to answer the appropriate questions, the honesty condition contained too many males, the race condition too many democrats, and the leadership condition too many republicans. The breakdown by condition is shown in table A. All tables are included in Appendix IV.

[TABLE A ABOUT HERE]

Thus, it was decided that it was necessary to control for political party identification and gender in order to be more sure that it was indeed racial cues causing my results, and not because there were more males in a particular condition, for example. One unhappy consequence of this decision came about because several subjects did not answer either question gauging identification to a political party. Therefore, when party identification was initially controlled for, many data points were lost because subjects had not identified a party they supported. The fewer total subjects would, of course, increase the margin of error in the ensuing analysis. To remedy this, it was decided to employ the common practice of coding those who had not answered this question in the middle of the scale (Hutchings 2009). Whereas self-reporting Democrats were coded 0, and Republicans as 1, those that had not answered were coded 0.5. While imperfect, this choice allowed scores of data points to be included in the analysis that would otherwise have been lost. If lost, this study would have had reduced statistical power. Race, of course, was not controlled for because only non-black respondents were analyzed. The functional form of the model is dictated by the particular measure of candidate preference used. It is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Candidate Preference} &= B_0 \\ &+ B_1 (\text{Racial Resentments}) \\ &+ B_2 (\text{Leadership}) \\ &+ B_5 (\text{Leadership} * \text{Racial Resentments}) \\ &+ B_3 (\text{Welfare}) \\ &+ B_6 (\text{Welfare} * \text{Racial Resentments}) \\ &+ B_4 (\text{Race}) \end{aligned}$$

$$+ B_7 (\text{Race} * \text{Racial Resentments})$$

$$+ B_{8,9} (\text{Controls}) + u$$

The hypotheses are tested most directly by the direction and magnitude of the coefficients B_1, B_5, B_6, B_7 . Still, the coefficients B_2, B_3, B_4 are important in analyzing the effects on racial liberals.

Table B displays the results of the first three tests. Honesty, as the control condition, is excluded. In the first column, the feeling thermometer for the black candidate, George Douglas, is regressed on racial resentment for all three experimental conditions. In the second column, the same is done for the feeling thermometer for the white candidate, Eric Rogers. Finally, in the third column, the actual “vote” for one or the other candidate is also regressed upon racial resentment for the experimental conditions. Because the honesty condition is excluded, we can compare the effect of racial resentment in the baseline case with the effect of racial resentment on candidate preference when different racial appeals are present.

[TABLE B ABOUT HERE]

The predictions for the George Douglas feeling thermometer test are directional: if racial predispositions are primed, the interaction terms should be negative, showing decreased values in the feeling thermometer for the black candidate among racial conservatives. The main effects should, on the other hand, be positive, indicating increased feeling thermometer values for the black candidate among racial liberals. The main effect for welfare, with a huge coefficient of about 21, is significant at the 99% confidence level. This suggests a large gain in support for the black candidate among racial liberals after reading the welfare article. The interaction term for welfare, welfare

multiplied by racial resentments, is also statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. The coefficient on this interaction term is about -35, suggesting a net loss of 14 (-35+21) points in support of Douglas for the most racially conservative voters. The main effects and interaction terms for leadership and race are both in the expected direction, the same as for welfare. However, for neither leadership nor race do the results approach statistical significance.

It is possible that the priming effects are centered on the white candidate, Eric Rogers, as well as the black candidate, George Douglas. As a result, I also examine the effects of subtle, and not so subtle, racial appeals on the feeling thermometer for candidate Rogers. The predictions for the second column are also directional: if racial attitudes are primed, the main effects should be negative, indicating decreased values in the Eric Rogers feeling thermometer for the racially liberal respondents. The interaction terms should be positive, showing increased values in the Eric Rogers feeling thermometer for the racial conservatives. Leadership and race again both fail to prime racial resentment to a statistically significant degree. Interestingly, welfare does not this time significantly prime racial resentment for the main effect. However, the p-value is .14, so it certainly is approaching significance in the expected direction. For welfare's interaction term, on the other hand, the coefficient was approximately 25, indicating an increase in support for the white candidate of about 16 points (25+-9) for the most racially conservative subjects. It is significant at the 90% confidence interval. While welfare may have caused racial liberals' priming to focus more on feelings towards the black candidate, it appears that for racial conservatives, feelings toward both candidates changed considerably.

The predictions for the vote choice variable in the third column of Table B are that if racial resentment is primed, the main effects for this variable as well as the interaction terms should be significant. This will indicate that racial considerations figured prominently in the vote for the white candidate, Eric Rogers. Again, leadership and race fail to approach statistically significant results: there is likely no effect here on stated vote choice. For welfare, however, the main effect had a coefficient of -0.46 (for a variable running from 0 to 1), with a P-value of 0.00. A “1” represents a vote for Rogers, and a “0” a vote for Douglas. Thus, there is a high degree of confidence that racial liberals were significantly more likely to vote for Douglas after reading the welfare article. They brought their racial predisposition more to bear on their vote choice. For the interaction term for welfare, the coefficient is about .97, indicating a net gain of .51 (.97+-.46) in support of Rogers among the most racially conservative subjects. The P-value for this interaction term was 0.00, underlining the high confidence in these results. It appears, then, that both racial liberals and racial conservatives brought their racial predisposition more to bear on their choice of a candidate to vote for after being primed by the discussion of welfare.

[TABLE C ABOUT HERE]

The first column of Table C provides the results for the test of whether the experimental conditions prime racial resentment for relative agreement with the statement “George Douglas provides strong leadership.” Douglas, of course, is the black candidate. It is predicted that the main effect should be positive as racial liberals react more positively to Douglas as a leader, because perceived leadership qualities are a potential alternative measure of candidate preference. However, only for welfare are the results

even in the expected direction, with a coefficient of .14 that fails to reach statistical significance. Leadership and race are in the wrong direction, but do not even come close to statistical significance: there is likely no effect present. It is predicted that the interaction terms should be negative as racial conservatives deem the black candidate a weaker leader after priming. However, again only for welfare is the coefficient in the expected negative direction, and for all three experimental conditions the results are statistically insignificant. Interestingly, the interaction term for race has a relatively low P-value of 0.17 in the *unexpected* direction. As this would suggest that racial conservatives rank Douglas as providing stronger leadership after reading the article about race, this is a flummoxing result. One possible explanation is simply that there is no relationship: the result, after all, does not reach statistical significance. It is also conceivable that racial conservatives, while initially wary of the black candidate's leadership qualities, were more impressed after learning of his historic quest to become Seattle's first black mayor.

The second column of Table C offers the results of the test of whether or not the experimental conditions primed subjects to alter their responses to the statement "Eric Rogers (the white candidate) provides strong leadership." It is predicted that the main effects are negative. This would suggest racial liberals agreeing less with the above statement after reading the potential racial appeals. Instead, all three main effects have a positive coefficient. Additionally, the results are actually statistically significant for welfare, with a P-value of 0.09. This may suggest that at least in a mayoral candidate, "provides strong leadership" is not a very good alternative measure of candidate preference. Someone may alter their candidate preference without in turn believing that

the candidate they oppose is suddenly a worse leader. Why this trend is more significant for the welfare condition is also confusing, because it suggests that racial liberals, after reading that the white candidate opposes welfare benefits, rank him as a stronger leader. It could be the case that while they disagree with him on principle, and will vote against him, they admire his ability to express his opinion forcefully. Still, this is a peculiar result. The interaction terms, on the other hand, should be positive. This is only the case for leadership and welfare, and both have P-values over 0.5. For this dependent variable, then, strangely the only statistically significant result was that racial liberals in the welfare condition were more likely to regard the white candidate as a strong leader.

[TABLE D ABOUT HERE]

The first column of Table D provides the results of the “George Douglas really cares about people like you” dependent variable regressed on racial resentment for all three experimental conditions. The main effects should be positive, and indeed they are for leadership, race, and welfare. Leadership has a coefficient of 0.22, significant at the 90% confidence interval with a P-value of 0.10. Race has a coefficient of 0.29, statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval with a P-value of 0.02. Welfare, with a coefficient of 0.36, is actually significant at the 99% confidence interval. *Thus, leadership, welfare, and race all caused racial liberals to be primed. They brought their racial attitudes to bear to a greater degree on their feeling about whether the black candidate cared about people like them.* A voter certainly considers whether a candidate actually cares about people like the voter, so it seems safe to say that all three experimental conditions primed racial liberals to alter their opinions of a significant criteria for public office. The interaction terms, on the other hand, should be negative, as

they are for all three. Race is statistically significant at the 90% confidence interval, with a coefficient of $-.44$ indicating that the most racially conservative subjects' opinion of whether the black candidate cares about them fell $.14$ ($-.44+.30$), or 14%. For welfare the interaction term was even larger ($-.66+.36$), $-.30$, suggesting that opinions of Douglas fell 30%. For welfare this effect was significant at the 99% confidence interval. Finally, the interaction term for leadership is of only borderline statistical significance, with a P-value of $.13$, even though the interaction is larger than it is for race ($-.42+.22$), $-.20$. Therefore, welfare and race both cause racial conservatives to bring their racial resentment to bear more on their opinion of whether or not the black candidate “really cares about people like them.” Leadership, it appears, does the same thing: racial conservatives are primed and may think that as a black man, Douglas does not have the leadership qualities necessary to provide for people like them. However, this is certainly not conclusive, for even though the P-value was relatively low, it did not quite reach statistical significance.

Column 2 of Table D contains the results of the regression of “Eric Rogers really cares about people like you” on racial resentment for leadership, welfare, and race. The main effects are predicted to be negative, and the interaction terms positive. However, just the opposite was the case. Still, not a single main effect nor interaction term even came close to achieving statistical significance, with all P-values greater than 0.3. It seems then, that none of these appeals primed respondents in a way that caused them to alter their feeling about whether the white candidate cared about people like them. Interestingly, then, the priming effect on whether the candidate really cared about people like the subject was completely focused on evaluations of the black candidate, and not at all on the white candidate.

[TABLE E ABOUT HERE]

Column 1 of Table E provides results for the test of whether the experimental conditions prime respondents to bring their racial resentment to bear on evaluations of the black candidate's honesty or, rather, dishonesty. Because subjects are asked whether a candidate is dishonest, the main effects here should be negative as racial liberals deem the candidate less dishonest after the prime. The interaction terms, then, should be positive. Of the main effects, leadership is actually in the wrong direction, and whereas welfare and race are in the expected direction, none of the three are statistically significant. Again, of the interaction terms, welfare and race are in the expected direction and leadership is not, but not one comes close to approaching statistical significance. There is likely no effect of these racial appeals on the extent to which subjects bring their racial attitudes to bear on evaluations of the black candidate's perceived dishonesty.

Finally, column 2 of Table E shows the regression of "Eric Rogers (the white candidate) is dishonest." The predictions should simply be the reverse of the last table: the main effects should be positive and the interaction terms negative. Interestingly, only leadership was in the expected direction of the main effects, and it was the only one with results somewhat approaching statistical significance, with a P-value of .23. It is possible that racial liberals brought their racial predisposition to bear a greater degree on their evaluation of the white candidate's honesty, thinking he was more dishonest than the control group did. For the interaction terms, too, only leadership is in the expected direction, but none of the three approach statistical significance. These racial appeals did not have a large priming effect for the particular dependent variable of ranking the candidate's perceived dishonesty.

The regressions brought forth statistically significant results for a number of dependent variables, including the black and white candidates' feeling thermometers, vote choice, and whether the candidates really cared about people like the respondent. While the sample was, of course, unrepresentative, in many ways it erred on the side of caution: given a more representative sample, the results may have been even more robust. The specific factors that may have limited the size of the effects will be addressed in the following discussion.

Chapter 4

Discussion and Conclusions

This study was designed in an attempt to discover whether specific words and topics can prime racial resentment. Specifically, the investigation examined whether a discussion of leadership, welfare, or race would work as racial cues in a biracial election. Welfare appears to be a powerful racial prime. After reading the article on welfare, racial considerations were more likely to be brought to bear on evaluations of the black candidate, George Douglas. In the case of Eric Rogers, the white candidate, the predictive power of racial attitudes on the feeling thermometer was boosted significantly in the welfare condition as well. However, in the latter case, this effect was only significant for racial conservatives. Thus, it is conceivable that welfare's priming effect influenced racial liberals' judgment of the black candidate more than their judgment of the white candidate. For racial conservatives, however, feelings toward both candidates were altered considerably. Even if a voter only alters one's preference for one of the two candidates, that can of course be enough to change who one will choose to vote for: if one suddenly dislikes Douglas more, but the opinion of Rogers remains unchanged, Rogers will gain electoral support. This was indeed borne out in the results, because in the vote choice variable both racial liberals and racial conservatives were more likely to bring racial attitudes to bear on their choice in the election.

Subjects linked the discussion of welfare to race, embodying stereotypes about the demographics of welfare recipients. Because the political ideology of respondents was controlled for in the statistical analysis, the change in vote choice cannot simply be attributed to a general preference or antipathy towards welfare provisions. Racial liberals

were more likely to support the candidate in favor of welfare because they perceived it as disproportionately beneficial for African Americans. Racial conservatives were more likely to support the candidate opposed to welfare provisions for the same reason.

Welfare was shown to be a significant racial prime for an additional dependent variable, whether or not the African American candidate, George Douglas, “really cares about people like you.” This provides further evidence of the priming effect of the discussion of welfare, as opinions of Douglas diverged along lines of racial ideology. Why would racial liberals alter their opinion of the black candidate’s perceived care for people like them? Perhaps after associating welfare with blacks, they were impressed with his empathy in supporting welfare provisions that they believed would disproportionately benefit blacks. It is true that welfare had no significant priming effect for the dependent variables about the candidates’ perceived dishonesty, and that for the “Eric Rogers provides strong leadership” variable, the priming effect was actually statistically significant in the unexpected direction. Still, these dependent variables are far from perfect proxies for candidate preference. It is likely that voters can change their level of preference for a candidate without changing their opinion about that candidate’s level of honesty or leadership qualities. After all, it is the effect that racial appeals have on actual voting patterns that is most worrisome. If welfare primes subjects to change their vote and their stated candidate preference, that is enough to establish it as a powerful prime. Whether it also primes feelings about candidates’ honesty is interesting, but a null result does not mean that welfare is any less strong a prime in this particular biracial election.

Welfare has been shown before to be a coded issue that primes white Americans' negative views of blacks (Edsall and Edsall 1991; Gilens 1996; Jamieson 1992). However, most research on racial priming has focused on political contests between two white candidates. This choice has no doubt been made in part due to the paucity of elections involving non-white office-seekers. However, it was unclear whether racial primes that work in elections between two white men would also work in biracial ones. Perhaps the salience of race in an election amplifies or mutes the effect of established racial cues. Additionally, this particular study looks at a racial prime not emanating from a political advertisement, but from an ostensibly neutral newspaper article. These are all elements variable and not necessarily in common with alternative studies. In a mock biracial election immediately following an actual high-profile biracial election, a single very short newspaper article about welfare primed racial predispositions in those with racial resentment and those without it. Therefore, the fact that welfare is shown here to be an effective racial prime is both interesting and important.

The hypothesis that leadership would also prime racial predispositions, albeit less so than welfare, can be neither whole-heartedly accepted nor rejected. It did not significantly alter the Douglas or Rogers feeling thermometers, and it also did not alter the vote choice dependent variable. These findings seem to dictate a tentative rejection of leadership as a racial prime in biracial elections, at least among the young and highly educated subjects who participated in my study. However, the Douglas "really cares about people like you" variable had significant results for racial priming in those with very little racial resentment. Also, for those with higher levels of racial resentment, leadership appeared to prime this dependent variable, though the results were not

statistically significant. There is evidence, then, that reading the leadership article primed voters' racial attitudes. Again, why might one expect racial liberals to bring racial attitudes to bear on their characterization of the black candidate's care for people like them after reading about leadership? It is indeed a difficult question to answer. Even though some white Americans view blacks as weaker leaders, could those with no racial resentment actually view blacks as *stronger* leaders? This is certainly a worthwhile future direction of research.

It must be stressed that because the results illustrating a priming effect for racial conservatives nearly miss statistical significance at conventional levels, one cannot draw any firm conclusions that priming did indeed occur for this group. Still, with a relatively low P-value, and given the small number of cases in the study, it remains possible that a genuine effect exists and might have been uncovered if more statistical power were available. This effect would be easily explained by one of the initial hypotheses: racial conservatives were primed by leadership because they perceive blacks as less strong leaders than whites, and thus downgraded their opinion of the black candidate. Here, they did so by downgrading their agreement with whether Douglas cared about people like themselves.

Whether a candidate really cares about people like the voter is, of course, not exactly the same as candidate preference. One can probably imagine a scenario in which voters would state that one candidate cared more about people like themselves, but they were still prepared to vote for the other office-seeker. Perhaps a voter knows that a current Congressman does not entirely care for his interests all of the time, but because he is an incumbent, he can funnel funds to the home district more easily. The citizen could

conceivably still vote for him. Despite this limitation, we should certainly expect the dependent variable tested here to be highly correlated with candidate preference: it is likely that more often than not, members of the electorate will vote for the candidate they view as most empathetic to their interests. Either way, the basic result still emerges. A discussion of leadership qualities in a biracial election primed race in racial liberals by altering a significant opinion by which we measure our political candidates, and it may have primed for racial conservatives as well.

One has to remember that while leadership was only a significant prime for this single dependent variable, welfare emerged as a more powerful predictor, relative to the control, for nearly all of the dependent variables, and often for both racial liberals and racial conservatives. This difference cannot be discounted. Most likely, then, welfare is a more powerful racial prime than leadership. In fact, even for the “George Douglas really cares about people like you” variable, the welfare main effects and interaction terms were larger than leadership’s were. Therefore, even when leadership did prime racial attitudes, welfare primed them more. It seems plausible that this signifies that leadership does have a racial aspect to it in the minds of some Americans, as does welfare. Welfare is simply linked to beliefs about race more powerfully and in more individuals.

It is also interesting that for the dependent variable asking if the specific candidate “provides strong leadership,” the leadership article seemingly did not have an effect. In essence, the active discussion of each candidate’s professed leadership ability did not cause either racial liberals or racial conservatives to make their racial predispositions a more important indicator of their opinion of the candidate’s leadership qualities. This is

further evidence of the limited effect of leadership as a racial prime. Voters harboring racial resentment did not, it appears, think about leadership and in turn make race a more influential factor, potentially ranking the black candidate as a poorer leader. However, one must also remember that subjects were asked to make their decisions on the basis of a single mock newspaper article. The priming effect could have appeared larger if subjects were given more information about the candidates and could thus make a more informed decision about perceived leadership quality.

Race, too, at first glance, is neither shown to be a significant racial prime nor to be none at all. Framing the election as historically significant because of George Douglas' race does not prime racial resentment in the dependent variables directly measuring the candidates' feeling thermometers. Neither does it prime in the variable in which respondents hypothetically vote for a particular candidate. However, race, just like leadership and welfare, does have a statistically significant priming effect on racial liberals when asked if "George Douglas really cares about people like you." Like welfare, it is also significant for racial conservatives for this particular dependent variable, albeit it at a lower confidence interval. Race, like leadership, is a successful prime under some tests but not under others. *Prima facie*, this result may seem puzzling. There is no hidden meaning, no wink at the voter to try to elicit thoughts about race. It is all right there on the table: this election is historical because of race. Voters are no doubt thinking about this aspect after reading the article. Still, under several dependent variables, this race discussion does not prime racial predispositions. There are a few potential explanations for this interesting result. For one, it might be that the "rhetorical wink" is necessary for a prime to be successful. The salience of a racial stimulus may be so high that

respondents “became conscious of it and consequently suppressed racial criteria in evaluating candidates” (Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002, 87). In the spectrum of various degrees of racial cues, from subtle implicit cues to overt explicit ones, explicit racial cues may now violate the norm of equality established in the wake of the 1960’s Civil Rights Movement (Mendelberg 2001). Voters may harbor racial resentment, but they do not want to be perceived as racist. When the race of the candidates is made explicit, voters may actively feel racist if they allow this fact to contribute to their vote choice.

An alternative explanation for the somewhat limited priming effect of race in this study could be the similarities between the different experimental conditions. While the “race condition” explicitly mentions the race of the two candidates, the respondents in the honesty, leadership, and welfare conditions all know the race of the candidates, too. While not mentioned in the articles themselves, each condition had the picture of the candidates on the side, one man black, and the other white. Thus, the priming effect of race may have been partly “absorbed” by the pictures themselves. The control condition then had some explicit priming from the pictures of the candidates, limiting the extra priming shown in the article that discussed race. This should not, however, eliminate all priming effects. There is a difference between simply making the biracial nature of the election known, and framing it as a historic election because of race. It would be difficult to argue that Barack Obama’s race would have been as powerful an issue had he not been in a historic election as the potential first black president.

The above results and discussion emanated from a single experiment detailing a mock mayoral election in Seattle between a black man and a white man of similar

political experience and ideology (except, perhaps, in the welfare condition). It seems fair to expect similar effects in other biracial election experiments: this was a fake campaign that subjects had no prior knowledge of, with very few idiosyncratic details present. One may expect priming to be slightly different between mayoral elections and other electoral levels. Candidates may look at a characteristic such as leadership differently in a presidential candidate and in a mayoral candidate. Leadership is a primary judge of presidential effectiveness for many voters (McIlwain 2007). It may not be perceived as this important in a mayor, and thus would not change candidate preference as much. The effects for leadership, then, may be greater for a presidential election than a mayoral one.

This experiment is limited by the fact that it only studies one level of the political hierarchy. It is certainly an important result that priming occurs at the mayoral level in a biracial election. However, it is equally important to study whether these results are replicated in experiments using other electoral levels: a congressional or presidential race, for instance. Although this would be a noteworthy direction for further research, it should not necessarily temper the results found here. Reeves also used a single mock biracial election in an experiment, and found himself able to draw conclusions not limited to the single experimental setting (Reeves 1997).

The results from this experiment are also drawn from a sample unrepresentative of the national population. It was disproportionately Democratic and educated. Additionally, only non-black respondents were included in the sample. These results, of course, cannot be generalized to the entire population. However, they do show that, in some limited cases, leadership can prime racial attitudes with respect to a particular

candidate perception (the black candidate's care for people like the voter). Similarly, even with a mostly Democratic, young, and educated sample, even welfare references clearly prime racial attitudes. There was significant priming measured in this experiment, even though some have argued that educated voters can be immune to some racial cues (Huber and Lapinski 2006). Therefore, while certain appeals did not resonate with my subjects, they may among less-educated respondents. It is likely that the results would be more robust with a more representative sample. It would be prudent for further research to replicate this experiment with samples better representative of the US population as a whole.

Several studies have examined racial priming in political advertisements (Mendelberg 1997; Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002). This study instead used an ostensibly neutral newspaper article. Replicating the essence of this experiment with different communication mediums, such as an advertisement, will shed light on whether the medium of political communication would alter the magnitude of the priming effect. After all, one might expect the effects found here to vary if the racial appeals were transmitted in a more intentional manner. That is, whether or not a candidate is actively attempting to prime racial attitudes, or just talking about an issue on its own merits and inadvertently priming, may affect the level of the effects found. Also, the article itself was quite brief, which limited the amount of information subjects had about the candidates and thus left many unable to choose one. Replicating the experiment with a longer, more in-depth description of the candidates could also achieve more robust results.

While it is important that future research replicates this study with a more representative sample and different methods of transmitting racial appeals, there are other related areas where new research is pivotal. Even if the sample used is entirely representative of the American electorate, one cannot simply apply it to the real world. “Voting” in a lab is different than actually going to the polling place on Election Day. While variables are controlled for in an experiment, it is these very forces that may moderate or strengthen the final effect of a prime on a voter. The press, whether positive or negative, that a particular racial appeal receives may influence the effect it ends up having on the voter when he or she is choosing a candidate on Election Day. Therefore, the next crucial research discussion is the linkage between the lab and the real world. Exactly how confident can we be that laboratory results mirror the priming effects during an actual campaign? How can we, moving forward, improve this confidence?

Some of the results in this study defy straightforward conclusions. However, welfare’s priming under a number of dependent variables makes it very convincing that it is still a powerful racial prime and is in fact a prime in biracial elections. The extent of leadership and race as effective racial primes is less clear. These basic results actually, however, seem to fit nicely into recent theories about racial priming. Valentino, Hutchings, and White find Mendelberg’s distinction between implicit and explicit racial primes as too discrete. Instead, they propose thinking about racial salience in primes “as continuous: as the salience of race increases, the power of racial priming grows, until some point at which each viewer becomes conscious of the prime and begins to suppress race as a criterion” (Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002, 87). It is easy to imagine this study’s results as in accord with these scholars’ theory of racial appeals. Leadership has,

perhaps, some limited priming ability, but not very much because the salience of race is relatively low. For welfare, another implicit prime, the salience of race is greater.

Welfare, as stated earlier, is more obviously linked to race for some Americans than leadership is. In agreement with Valentino, Hutchings, and White, the power of racial priming grows moving from leadership to welfare. One can also imagine that “race” is explicit enough that when presented with it, respondents are conscious of the prime and start to suppress race as a factor in candidate preference.

The 2008 presidential election was a true landmark in the history of American race relations. The first black man was elected president in the first biracial presidential election. The electoral result was something that could not have been expected even a generation before. In certain important ways, then, America has improved its racial tolerance. One might then expect that racial priming is obsolete. Perhaps Americans’ willingness to elect a black man to the country’s highest office signals a break from the tired political machinations designed to prime racial attitudes for electoral gain. This study is one example of why this is, disappointingly, certainly not the case. Many citizens still harbor negative feelings toward blacks. Racial priming continues to poison political discourse, even in the immediate wake of a biracial election and among relatively liberal, educated subjects. Welfare serves as a racial cue in biracial elections, and it appears that leadership and race have limited priming ability in this setting as well. Politicians may be able to continue to mention welfare in order to bring race to the forefront of voters’ minds. It is possible, too, that McCain’s leadership television spot had a moderate priming effect on voters. Perhaps this, too, can eventually be examined in a way similar to Mendelberg’s study of the 1988 Willie Horton ad.

If Obama's election was not a cause or symptom of the obsolescence of the race card, then what *can* remove this dirty political trick from politicians' repertoires? If more explicit primes do tend to lose their effectiveness as voters become aware of them, the media could counteract them by calling attention to political advertisements that include potential racial primes. Additionally, they could take a proactive approach to dispelling false beliefs about the demographics of welfare recipients. The media could alert viewers to the racism inherent in believing that blacks of equal qualifications are worse leaders. Racial primes are effective in biracial elections, and it will take a concerted attack on racism itself to eventually extinguish them.

Appendix I

Pre-test Questionnaire

Distraction Questions and Selected Demographics

1. How old are you?
2. What state did you grow up in? If more than one, what state did you spend most of your childhood in?
3. Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns. How about you?
Would you say that you have been *very much interested*, *somewhat interested* or *not much interested* in the political campaigns this year?
4. How many days in the past week did you watch the news on TV?
5. How many days in the past week did you read a daily newspaper? Did you read about political campaigns in any newspaper?

Appendix II

The Control Condition and the Three Experimental Conditions



“Honesty” Becoming the Hot-button Issue in Mayoral Election

By Derrick Sedgwick
Seattle Times South King County Reporter

Seattle – Many voters are refreshed to finally find a political campaign devoid of typical Democrat and Republican party attacks. Eric Rogers and George Douglas are running for the vacant Seattle mayoral office without attaching themselves to political parties. But while a nonpartisan election is melodious to some voters, it brings unique challenges for the candidates themselves.

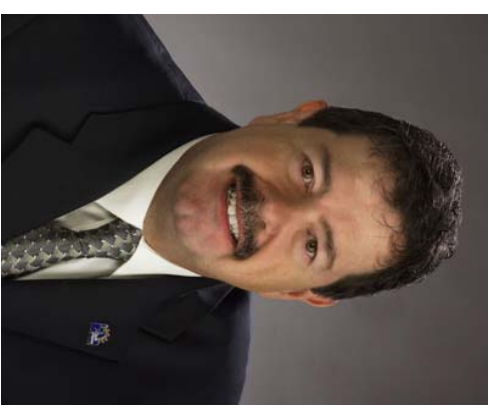
Professor Scott Nickles of the University of Washington’s Thompson Institute says “nonpartisan elections make it harder for voters to link issues with particular candidates. In effect, it makes it difficult to distance oneself from an opponent.”

In this specific election, observers note that Rogers and Douglas have similar political experience, both former City Councilmen. Additionally, they share a number of policy views. Both support greener building development to

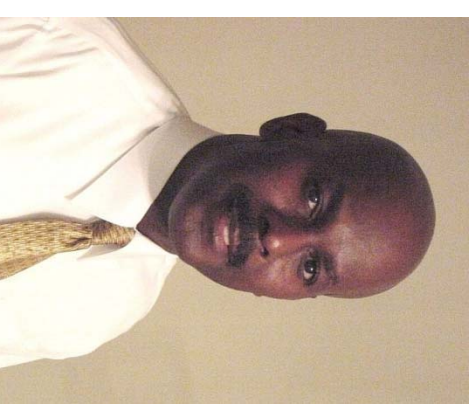
combat global warming. They also favor a simplification of the tax code and streamlining the city bureaucracy.

Honesty, however, has recently emerged as a major campaign subject. Councilman Eric Rogers recently said that “my record in politics is unblemished by even the slightest whispers of wrongdoing, and my campaign promises are always carried out.” Councilman George Douglas said that “during my time in politics, I have never engaged in any wrongdoing, and I have fulfilled my campaign commitments.”

As Election Day approaches, the attacks from both sides will likely intensify as each candidate struggles to mold a distinct message. At this point, it is still unclear who will be celebrating next fall.



Candidate Eric Rogers



Candidate George Douglas

“Race” Becoming the Hot-button Issue in Mayoral Election

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Seattle Times South King County Reporter

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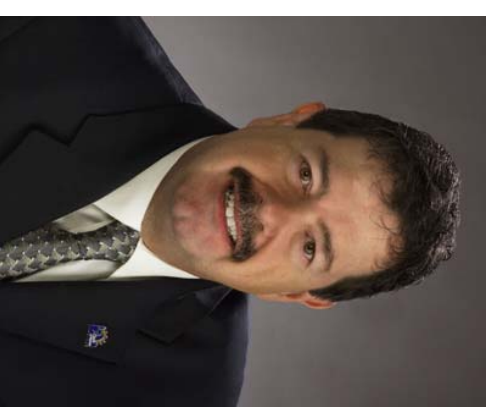
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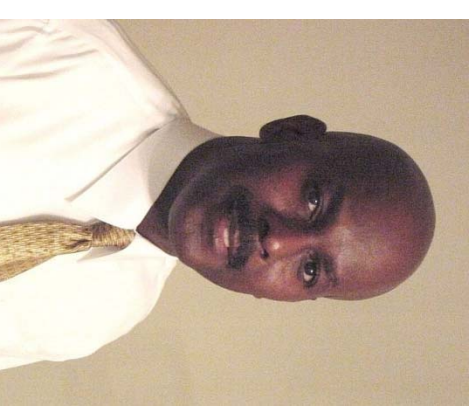
combat global warming. They also favor a simplification of the tax code and streamlining the city bureaucracy.

Race, however, has recently emerged as a major campaign subject. Councilman George Douglas, if elected, would be the first black person to ever serve as mayor of Seattle. Councilman Rogers recently said that “while my opponent’s candidacy is historic, it should not distract voters from the issues.” Douglas has called his own candidacy “historically significant, yes, but I deserve be elected on the basis of the issues, not the color of my skin.”

As Election Day approaches, the attacks from both sides will likely intensify as each candidate struggles to mold a distinct message. At this point, it is still unclear who will be celebrating next fall.



Candidate Eric Rogers



Candidate George Douglas



“Leadership” Becoming the Hot-button Issue in Mayoral Election

By Derrick Sedgwick
Seattle Times South King County Reporter

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Professor Scott Nickles of the University of Washington’s Thompson Institute says “nonpartisan elections make it harder for voters to link issues with particular candidates. In effect, it makes it difficult to distance oneself from an opponent.”

In this specific election, observers note that Rogers and Douglas have similar political experience, both former City Councilmen. Additionally, they share a number of policy views. Both support greener building development to

combat global warming. They also favor a simplification of the tax code and streamlining the city bureaucracy.

Leadership, however, has recently emerged as a major campaign subject. Councilman Eric Rogers recently said that “I have the proven leadership that a mayor needs to avert crises and to lead Seattle through these challenging times.”

Councilman Douglas recently said that “I have exhibited powerful leadership inside and outside politics, a characteristic that will allow me to lead Seattle to better times.”

As Election Day approaches, the attacks from both sides will likely intensify as each candidate struggles to mold a distinct message. At this point, it is still unclear who will be celebrating next fall.



Candidate Eric Rogers



Candidate George Douglas

Welfare Becoming the Hot-button Issue in Mayoral Election

By Derrick Sedgwick
Seattle Times South King County Reporter

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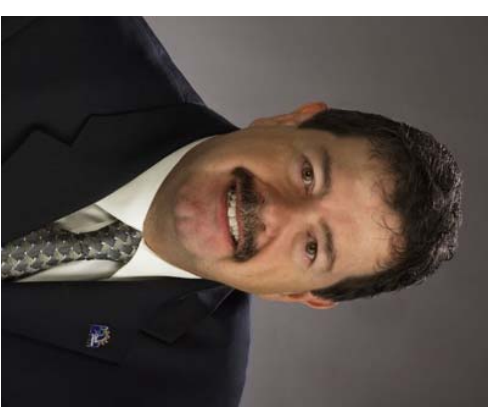
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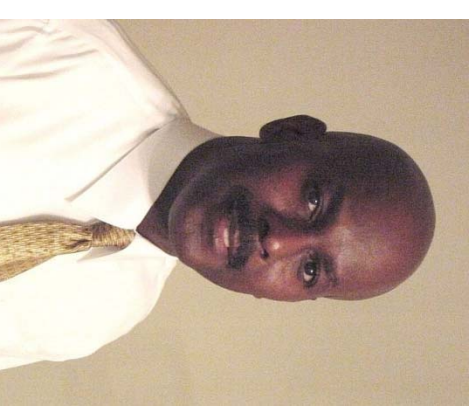
combat global warming. They also favor a simplification of the tax code and streamlining the city bureaucracy.

Welfare, however, has emerged as one issue over which the opponents contrast starkly. Eric Rogers has consistently worked towards limiting welfare benefits and has encouraged people to “really get out there and make a concerted effort to find a job.” George Douglas, on the other hand, supports generous welfare provisions because “some people simply can’t find a job, even if they’re making a genuine effort.”

As Election Day approaches, the attacks from both sides will likely intensify as each candidate struggles to mold a distinct message. At this point, it is still unclear who will be celebrating next fall.



Candidate Eric Rogers



Candidate George Douglas

Appendix III

Post-test Questionnaire

(Coding Added for Selected Questions)¹

Candidate Preference

1. We'd like to get your feelings toward the two candidates you just read about.
We'll use something called the feeling thermometer, and here's how it works:
We'd like you to rate each candidate using the feeling thermometer. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward that person. Ratings between 0 and 50 degrees mean that you don't care too much for that person. You rate the person at the 50-degree mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward the person. How would you rate George Douglas? How would you rate Eric Rogers?
2. Based upon what you read, if the election was held today and you had to choose between the two candidates, who would you vote for (George Douglas, Eric Rogers) or are you undecided? (0 = Douglas; .5 = undecided; 1 = Rogers)
3. In your opinion, does the phrase "he really cares about people like you?" describe George Douglas *extremely well (1)*, *quite well (2/3)*, *not too well (1/3)*, or *not well at all (0)*?
4. What about "he provides strong leadership?" Does this phrase describe George Douglas *extremely well (1)*, *quite well (2/3)*, *not too well (1/3)*, or *not well at all (0)*?

¹ This study and this survey were exempted from the University of Michigan's Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board on December 24, 2008 (HUM00026380).

5. What about “he is dishonest?” Does this phrase describe George Douglas *extremely well (1), quite well (2/3), not too well (1/3), or not well at all (0)?*
6. In your opinion, does the phrase “he really cares about people like you?” describe Eric Rogers *extremely well (1), quite well (2/3), not too well (1/3), or not well at all (0)?*
7. What about “he provides strong leadership?” Does this phrase describe Eric Rogers *extremely well (1), quite well (2/3), not too well (1/3), or not well at all (0)?*
8. What about “he is dishonest?” Does this phrase describe Eric Rogers *extremely well (1), quite well (2/3), not too well (1/3), or not well at all (0)?*

Racial Resentment Scale²

Questions 9-14 offer responses of:

Agree strongly; Agree somewhat; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree somewhat; Disagree strongly

9. Most blacks who receive money from welfare programs could get along without it if they tried.
10. Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.
11. Government officials usually pay less attention to a request or complaint from a black person than from a white person.
12. Irish, Italian, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.

² Questions 9-14 comprise the Racial Resentment Scale (Kinder and Sanders 1996). It is coded from 0-1, with higher values indicating higher levels of racial conservatism. Thus, for some questions, “agree strongly” = 0 and “disagree strongly” = 1, while for other questions, the opposite is the case.

13. It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites.
14. Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.

Distraction Questions

15. Do you favor an increase in the federal budget deficit in order to cut the taxes paid by ordinary Americans?
16. Do you favor cuts in spending on domestic programs like Medicare, education and highways in order to cut the taxes paid by ordinary Americans?
17. Do you think that *quite a few* of the people running the government are crooked, *not very many* are, or do you think *hardly any* of them are crooked?
18. If you had a say in making up the federal budget this year, should federal spending on environmental protection be *increased, decreased, or kept about the same*?
19. What about public schools? Should federal spending on public schools be *increased, decreased, or kept about the same*?

Party Identification and Selected Demographics

20. Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular political party? If yes, what party is that? (0 = Democrat; .5 = other; 1 = Republican)
21. If the answer to question 20 was "no," do you feel yourself a little closer to one of the political parties than the others? If yes, what party is that? (0 = Democrat; .5 = other; 1 = Republican)³

³ Responses to questions 20 and 21 were combined into one list. As discussed earlier, if a subject did not answer either question regarding party identification, they were coded as 0.5.

22. What is your gender? (0 = male; 1 = female)

23. What racial or ethnic group or groups best describes you? American Indian/
Alaska Native; Asian American; Black/ African American; Caucasian; Mexican
American (Chicano/ a); Other Hispanic; Pacific Islander; Puerto Rican; Other

Appendix IV

Table A

Gender and Party by Condition

| | Honesty | Leadership | Welfare | Race |
|------------|---------|------------|---------|------|
| Male | 19 | 14 | 14 | 14 |
| Female | 21 | 28 | 29 | 34 |
| Democrat | 23 | 21 | 24 | 30 |
| Republican | 13 | 14 | 11 | 9 |

Regression Analysis

Table B

Predicting Candidate Preference with Racial Attitudes, by Condition (Candidate preference measured with feeling thermometers and vote choice).

| | Douglas (Black Candidate) Feeling Thermometer | Rogers (White Candidate) Feeling Thermometer | Vote Choice |
|--------------------------------|---|---|-------------------|
| Racial Resentment | 2.47 (9.8) | 3.15 (10.44) | 0.22 (.22) |
| Leadership | 4.56 (5.97) | 2.69 (6.36) | -0.04 (.13) |
| Welfare | 21.11*** (6.26) | -9.78 (6.66) | -0.46*** (.14) |
| Race | 5.74 (6.34) | -0.75 (6.75) | 0.01 (.14) |
| Racial Resentment x Leadership | -7.11 (12.38) | 0.21 (13.19) | 0.1 (.28) |
| Racial Resentment x Welfare | -35.47*** (12.24) | 24.76* (13.04) | 0.97*** (.27) |
| Racial Resentment x Race | -10.16 (13.07) | 2.56 (13.92) | 0.01 (.28) |
| Gender | 3.9* (1.98) | 3.48 (2.11) | -0.01 (.04) |
| Party Identification | -1.18 (2.57) | 1.73 (2.73) | 0.06 (.06) |
| Number of Cases | 171 | 171 | 170 |
| Adjusted R-squared | (.1) | (.05) | (.24) |
| *p≤.1 | | | |
| **p≤.05 | | | |
| ***p≤.01 | | | |

Note: For “Vote Choice,” higher values are associated with a vote for Rogers, the white candidate, and lower values with Douglas, the black candidate.

Table C

Predicting Candidate Preference with Racial Attitudes, by Condition (Candidate preference measured with ranking of candidate's perceived leadership).

| | Douglas (Black Candidate) Provides Strong Leadership | Rogers (White Candidate) Provides Strong Leadership |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Racial Resentment | -0.01 (.19) | 0.14 (.2) |
| Leadership | 0 (.12) | 0.03 (.13) |
| Welfare | 0.14 (.12) | 0.21* (.12) |
| Race | -0.04 (.12) | 0.06 (.13) |
| Racial Resentment x Leadership | 0.24 (.26) | 0.16 (.27) |
| Racial Resentment x Welfare | -0.21 (.23) | -0.29 (.24) |
| Racial Resentment x Race | 0.34 (.25) | 0.16 (.26) |
| Gender | 0.05 (.04) | 0.08* (.04) |
| Party Identification | 0.02 (.05) | 0.05 (.05) |
| Number of Cases | 156 | 155 |
| Adjusted R-squared | (.04) | (.23) |
| *p≤.1 | | |
| **p≤.05 | | |
| ***p≤.01 | | |

Table D

Predicting Candidate Preference with Racial Attitudes, by Condition (Candidate preference measured with ranking of candidate's perceived care for people like the voter).

| | Douglas (Black Candidate) Really Cares About People Like You | Rogers (White Candidate) Really Cares About People Like You |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Racial Resentment | 0.49** (.2) | 0.32 (.2) |
| Leadership | 0.22* (.13) | 0.06 (.13) |
| Welfare | 0.36*** (.13) | 0.05 (.13) |
| Race | 0.3** (.13) | 0.12 (.13) |
| Racial Resentment x Leadership | -0.42 (.28) | -0.11 (.28) |
| Racial Resentment x Welfare | -0.66** (.25) | -0.04 (.25) |
| Racial Resentment x Race | -0.44* (.27) | -0.21 (.26) |
| Gender | 0.03 (.04) | 0.04 (.04) |
| Party Identification | -0.07 (.05) | 0.03 (.05) |
| Number of Cases | 157 | 157 |
| Adjusted R-squared | (.08) | (.07) |
| *p≤.1 | | |
| **p≤.05 | | |
| ***p≤.01 | | |

Table E

Predicting Candidate Preference with Racial Attitudes, by Condition (Candidate preference measured with ranking of candidate's perceived dishonesty).

| | Douglas (Black Candidate) is Dishonest | Rogers (White Candidate) is Dishonest |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Racial Resentment | 0.26 (.18) | 0.2 (.2) |
| Leadership | 0.14 (.11) | 0.16 (.13) |
| Welfare | -0.03 (.11) | -0.03 (.13) |
| Race | -0.08 (.11) | -0.07 (.13) |
| Racial Resentment x Leadership | -0.17 (.24) | -0.14 (.27) |
| Racial Resentment x Welfare | 0.04 (.22) | 0.03 (.24) |
| Racial Resentment x Race | 0.15 (.23) | 0.11 (.26) |
| Gender | -0.06* (.04) | -0.11*** (.04) |
| Party Identification | 0.01 (.05) | -0.06 (.05) |
| Number of Cases | 157 | 156 |
| Adjusted R-squared | (.13) | (.1) |
| *p≤.1 | | |
| **p≤.05 | | |
| ***p≤.01 | | |

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