

# Is the Obama Presidency Post Racial? Evidence from his First Year in Office<sup>1</sup>

Michael Tesler and David O. Sears  
University of California, Los Angeles

## Abstract

Our previous research on the 2008 election suggests that American politics could become increasingly organized by racial and ethnocentric attitudes during Obama's presidency. This study assesses how these findings from the campaign may have been altered during his first year in office. Our exposition of the evidence indicates that very little has changed since Barack Obama became president. More specifically, we show: (1) Obama's early presidential job approval ratings were influenced considerably more by racial attitudes than was the case for previous presidents, (2) support for Obama from white racial liberals had much to do with those highly racialized presidential approval ratings, (3) the effect of racial resentment on evaluations of Obama remained remarkably stable from early 2008 to November 2009, (4) President Obama continued to be evaluated not just as an African American but as someone who was distinctly "other," and (5) Obama-induced racialization spilled over into issues on which the White House took visible positions, such as health care.

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Many commentators were quick to anoint Barack Obama's presidential victory as the onset of post-racial America. Yet, the primary implication of our prior work on racial attitudes and the 2008 election is that partisan politics could become increasingly organized by racial and ethnocentric attitudes during Obama's presidency (Tesler and Sears 2010). A number of findings inform this conclusion. First, racial attitudes—as operationalized with Kinder and Sanders's (1996) racial resentment scale—had a much larger effect on general election votes in 2008 than in any other recent presidential election. These outsized effects were brought about by what we have termed “the two sides of racialization.” That is, Obama performed worse than Hillary Clinton did in trial heats against John McCain among racial conservatives, but offset that deficit by performing markedly better than she did among racial liberals.

We also found that general election vote choice in 2008 was more heavily influenced by feelings about Muslims than it was in either 2004 voting or in McCain-Clinton trial heats (Tesler and Sears 2010). Opinions about Muslims had similarly large effects even for individuals who knew Obama was not an adherent of Islam, and they held up after controlling for the significant relationship between anti-Muslim and anti-black attitudes. We concluded from these results that Obama is not just evaluated as an African-American but as someone who exemplifies the outgroup status of “otherness.”

Despite Obama's concerted efforts to deactivate white feeling of aversion towards African-Americans in the fall campaign (Ambinder 2009), both the large effects of racial attitudes on general election vote choice and Obama favorability ratings were virtually unchanged among panel respondents interviewed from March to November (Teser and Sears 2010). These results indicate that racial attitudes may be chronically accessible in evaluations of Obama. In other words, the associative link between racial predispositions and Obama's position

as the first black presidential nominee was so strong that it virtually ensured these attitudes about African-Americans would strongly influence the public's assessments of him regardless of how hard he tried to deactivate the salience of race.

The relationship between racial predispositions and feelings about Barack Obama was so strong, in fact, that it spilled over into public opinion about multiple issue dimensions during the campaign. We found that political evaluations strongly related to Obama, such as assessments of John McCain and tax policy preferences, became more racialized as the 2008 campaign intensified—meaning these evaluations were more heavily influenced by racial attitudes than they had been before the election year (Tesler and Sears 2010). That spillover of racialization from Obama to non-racial political evaluations suggests that American politics may become increasingly polarized by racial attitudes by Obama's presidency. Given the visceral and divisive history of American race relations, such polarization would likely make it especially difficult for Obama to find common ground during his tenure in office.

### **Expectations for a Post-Racial Presidency**

Whether the election of Barack Obama was, in fact, the watershed to such a hyper-racial era in partisan politics is dependent on whether *President* Obama continues to evoke racial predispositions as strongly as Candidate Obama did throughout 2008. It might seem hard to believe that he would not. After all, we found that racial resentment was readily accessible in evaluations of Barack Obama even in 2007 when he was widely depicted as the racially transcendent candidate (Tesler and Sears 2010). Similarly, despite substantial changes in both the political landscape and the salience of race in the campaign from March 2008 to October 2008, the relationship between racial resentment and McCain-Obama vote preferences was remarkably stable throughout the election year. That same stability was also evident in racial

resentment's link to Obama's favorability ratings among Cooperative Campaign Analysis Project (CCAP, Jackman and Vavreck 2009) panelists surveyed at multiple times throughout the election and in his thermometer ratings among American National Election Study (ANES) respondents interviewed in both pre- and postelection surveys.<sup>1</sup>

These results all seem to suggest that the accessibility of racial attitudes in Obama-related evaluations is difficult to deactivate. One probably would have come to a similar conclusion, though, when looking at the evidence from Tom Bradley's Los Angeles mayoral campaigns of 1969 and 1973. Indeed, symbolic racism was the prime determinant of opposition to Bradley in these two contests (Kinder and Sears 1981; Sears and Kinder 1971). Yet after Bradley became mayor he was not predominantly evaluated on the basis of prejudice. Racial predispositions, in fact, did not dominate either his successful bids for reelection as mayor or his unsuccessful gubernatorial campaign in 1982 (Hajnal 2007; Citrin et al. 1990).

It turns out that Bradley is not the only black mayor who succeeded in his efforts to have white voters judge him by his record rather than his skin color. Hajnal (2007), for instance, convincingly shows that many black mayors, though not all, became less racialized public figures as incumbents than they had been as candidates. He argues that the mechanism underlying this change is *credible* information provided by these incumbents against charges of black radicalism. "Black challengers," according to Hajnal (2007, 16) "can and usually do try to counter the uncertainty surrounding their candidacies by running 'deracialized' or pro-white campaigns, but white voters tend to ignore these candidates' campaign statements, which they perceive as having little credibility." After African American mayors have gained office, white voters could see that their earlier fears of black radicalism were largely exaggerated. Voters then

may begin to evaluate these politicians more on the basis of non-racial political factors such as their track records in office and their party affiliations and less on the basis of race.

By this account, the Obama campaign's concerted effort to deactivate "racial aversion" (Ambinder 2009) may have been unsuccessful in 2008 because Americans viewed his efforts as merely the cheap talk of campaign platitudes. By analogy to the black mayors, such fears might have been alleviated once Obama got into the White House and voters saw that he did not use his extensive presidential powers to favor blacks' interests over whites'. But the analogy may or may not hold. As Hajnal (2007, 11) states, "A black president . . . would surely be seen as much more powerful than a black mayor and would therefore present an interesting and important test case of the information model."

Despite Obama's mainstream Democratic agenda, he did not fully succeed in alleviating white fears of racial favoritism during his first year in office. If anything, he seemed to exacerbate them. An August 2009 poll by the *Economist/YouGov*, for example, revealed that 37 percent of whites and 65 percent of Republicans thought Obama's policies favored blacks over whites.<sup>2</sup> That is a three-fold *increase* from responses to similarly worded questions in October 2008 by both CBS/*New York Times* and NBC/*Wall Street Journal* about which racial group Obama's policies would favor if he became president.<sup>3</sup> These results seem to be more consistent with Moskowitz and Stoh's (1994) finding that many whites effectively "alter reality" in order to render a black candidate's message consistent with their prior expectations and racial beliefs than with the unbiased information processing in Hajnal's model. Despite not broaching any race-specific policies during his first year in office, the majority of Republicans thought Obama favored African Americans.

Perhaps more Americans believed President Obama favored African Americans than thought he would in October 2008 because the informational environment became more race-infused once he took office. Two examples from the summer of 2009 clearly illustrated President Obama's potential for elevating the salience of race in popular political discourse, even if inadvertently. In July, the prominent black scholar, Henry Louis Gates, a distinguished professor at Harvard, was arrested for disorderly conduct following an investigation by the Cambridge, Massachusetts police of a possible break-in at his home. The arrest created a storm of protest. The president was asked at a routine press conference what the controversial arrest said about American race relations. Obama's answer linked Gates's arrest to the long history of racial profiling by the police and accused the arresting officer, James Crowley, of acting "stupidly." This response, which Obama would later say was not well "calibrated," was widely condemned in the media and strongly disapproved of by white Americans—the large majority of whom thought that Gates had behaved inappropriately but that Crowley had not.<sup>4</sup>

The racial controversy touched off by Obama's comments was a great source of journalistic fodder. Gates's arrest, for instance, was the most heavily covered news story from July 23 to July 26 and was still prominently featured in American news reports throughout the following week.<sup>5</sup> As a result of that attention, 46 percent of Americans said that they heard "a lot" about Barack Obama's comments on the arrest.<sup>6</sup> The story eventually died down after Obama had Gates and Crowley over to the White House for a "Beer Summit." Yet the incident said much about the strong racial overtones that surround Obama's presidency.

That politically divisive summer also saw the rise of the "birthers" who claimed Obama was not born in the United States. It also saw the rise of the "tea party movement" with its angry protests of Obama's health care reform proposals. A South Carolina Congressman even shouted

out “You lie” during the President’s speech on health care reform before a joint session of Congress. Some liberal commentators believed that this fervent opposition to the president was rooted in racial animus.<sup>7</sup> President Jimmy Carter powerfully voiced such sentiments in September 2009 when he stated, “I think an overwhelming portion of the intensely demonstrated animosity toward President Barack Obama is based on the fact that he is a black man, that he’s African American.”<sup>8</sup>

Like the Gates incident, Carter’s controversial racial comments generated considerable media attention. Claims of race-based opposition to Obama, in fact, received more attention than any other topic in the blogosphere from September 14 to September 25.<sup>9</sup> Not surprisingly, 40 percent of respondents interviewed during this time period recalled hearing “a lot” about “charges that racism is a factor in criticisms of President Obama and his politics.”<sup>10</sup> The president immediately attempted to dampen this race-based media firestorm by telling four Sunday morning talks shows airing the week of Carter’s comments that the vitriolic opposition facing his administration stemmed primarily from his policy positions, not his race.<sup>11</sup> Whether or not these accusations of racially motivated opposition were actually true, the fact that they garnered so much press interest suggests that the Obama White House was operating in a more race-conscious atmosphere in its early months than were previous presidents.

These events from the summer of 2009 could be interpreted as suggesting that race and racial attitudes were as important in evaluations of Obama early in his presidency as they had been during the campaign. If so, why would Obama not be following the same deracialized trajectory that Hajnal (2007) has shown most black mayors had in the past? Perhaps the profound racial hopes and fears embodied by our first African American president have made racial attitudes simply more accessible than they were for local black politicians who did not

symbolize such sweeping racial changes. That chronic accessibility might make it more difficult for President Obama to deactivate racial attitudes than it had been for black mayors.

Fortunately we have considerable survey data on both racial attitudes, and public responses to the first year of the Obama presidency. We can use them to test whether or not Obama conveyed enough credible information about his nonracial approach to the presidency to put him on the same path to deracializing white voters' evaluations as that experienced by most black mayors. The data come from both a long time series of cross-sectional surveys and from panel surveys initiated before 2009. As a result, we can determine if Americans were using their racial attitudes more in evaluating Obama than previous presidents and if racial resentment's impact on Obama-related assessments changed after he became president.

Our exposition of this evidence below shows that (1) Obama's early presidential job approval ratings were influenced considerably more by racial attitudes than was the case for previous presidents, (2) support for Obama from white racial liberals had much to do with those highly racialized presidential approval ratings, (3) the effect of racial resentment on evaluations of Obama remained remarkably stable from early 2008 to November 2009, (4) President Obama continued to be evaluated not just as an African American but as someone who was distinctly "other," and (5) Obama-induced racialization spilled over into issues on which the White House took visible positions, such as health care.

### **President Obama and the Two Sides of Racialization**

We showed elsewhere that racial attitudes had a greater impact on presidential voting in 2008 than they had in any other general election contest on record (Tesler and Sears 2010). We also found that this larger role of racial resentment on McCain-Obama vote intention was brought about by the two sides of racialization: Racial conservatives were more opposed to

Obama than they probably would have been to a white Democratic candidate who was ideologically similar to him, such as Hillary Clinton; and Racial liberals were more supportive of Obama than they were of previous Democratic candidates for president.

Our cross-sectional time-series data also allows us to assess whether racial attitudes had a similarly larger impact on President Obama's approval than previous presidents. Since 1987, the Pew Research Center and its predecessor Times Mirror, in their series of surveys on American values, have regularly asked a battery of four race-related questions that approximates the content of Kinder and Sanders's (1996) racial resentment battery.<sup>12</sup> These questions gauge the extent of discrimination against African Americans, the group's societal advancement, whether we should do everything we can to help blacks and other minorities even if it means giving them special preferences, and whether the country has gone too far in pushing for equal rights (see appendix for question wordings). The items do not form quite as reliable a scale as the racial resentment battery ( $\alpha = .54$  across survey years compared to about  $.75$  for the racial resentment scale). They are also especially unreliable for African Americans ( $\alpha = .29$  across survey years), who as a result are excluded from our Pew analyses. Nevertheless, Pew's April 2009 update of their values time series provides substantial insights into how racial attitudes affected job performance evaluations of President Obama compared to those of his immediate White House predecessors.

Figure 1 shows how these racial predispositions influenced the presidential approval ratings of all five presidents going back to Ronald Reagan. The results tell a familiar story. They indicate that the effects of racial attitudes on President Obama's job approval are noticeably larger than was the case for his predecessors. All else being equal, strong racial liberals and strong racial conservatives were separated by about 70 percentage points in their Obama

approval ratings—a difference at least twice as large as the polarization of public opinion by racial attitudes produced by Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush. These effects of Pew’s racial predisposition scale on presidential approval/disapproval ratings since 1987 look strikingly similar to the greater impact of racial resentment on presidential vote intention in 2008 than in any other election since 1988 (Tesler and Sears 2010, figure 3.1).

Also paralleling the racialized voting patterns in 2008, much of President Obama’s polarization of the electorate by racial attitudes in April 2009 was driven by his staunch support from racial liberals. All else being equal, we estimate that nearly all of the most racially liberal Americans approved of Obama’s job performance in April 2009. Figure 1 indicates that President Obama continued to have the same special appeal among white racial liberals in the early months of his presidency that he did while running for president.

Obama’s particular support among white racial liberals was again on display in an informative comparison that varied race but held partisanship constant. Respondents were asked in the April 2009 Pew Values Survey how much confidence they had in President Obama, Democratic leaders in Congress, and Republican leaders in Congress to do the right thing when it came to fixing the economy. Like the above-referenced McCain-Obama and McCain-Clinton trial heats, comparing the effects of racial conservatism on confidence in Obama to its effects on confidence in congressional Democrats presumably isolates the effects of race by holding ideology and partisanship approximately constant across the two comparisons. The analogy with the March 2008 McCain trial heats is not exact, however. Both Obama and Clinton polled almost identically against John McCain, but Congress usually has much lower approval ratings than the president. In fact, about two-thirds of Pew’s respondents had “a great deal” or “a fair

amount” of confidence in Obama, but only 50 percent were similarly confident in Democratic leaders in Congress.

This greater confidence in Obama than in congressional Democrats came especially from white racial liberals; it was not spread evenly across the racial predispositions spectrum. Figure 2 shows that all else being equal, nearly all racial liberals had at least a “fair amount” of confidence in Obama to fix the economy, compared to just 60 percent who had confidence in congressional Democrats. Racial conservatives, by contrast, had equivalent levels of confidence in Obama and congressional Democrats. In other words, the much larger effect of racial attitudes on assessments of Barack Obama than Democratic leaders in Congress stemmed largely from Obama’s greater support from white racial liberals.

Assessments of Obama were almost certainly more racialized in the first year of his presidency than they would have been for a white Democratic president, therefore, as shown in figures 1 and 2. President Obama resembled Candidate Obama in drawing highly racialized evaluations. Yet, just as in the campaign, the sharp polarization in evaluations of President Obama by racial attitudes was not necessarily politically damaging because of his strong support from white racial liberals. Indeed, despite the outsized effects of racial attitudes on his approval ratings, only 26 percent of Pew’s respondents disapproved of Obama’s job performance in this April 2009 survey.

### **Chronic Accessibility of Racial Attitudes?**

Figure 1 showed that racial attitudes had a much stronger impact on assessments of President Obama’s job performance shortly after he assumed office than they generally had during other recent presidents’ incumbencies. This display, however, does not tell us how those effects might have changed later in his presidency. We can carry the story forward to the end of

his first year in office, though, because we commissioned a nationally representative panel survey in November 2009 that re-interviewed over 3,000 panelists who completed the March 2008 CCAP survey.<sup>13</sup> These reinterviews allow us to determine how the impact of racial resentment on evaluations of Candidate Obama early in 2008 compared to its effects on assessments of President Obama late in 2009.

As already noted, racial resentment's impact on Obama-McCain vote intention was remarkably stable among the CCAP panel respondents interviewed four times from March to November 2008, despite the vastly different national conditions and campaign contexts across that period (Tesler and Sears 2010). We have argued that the effect of racial resentment was likely to be constant because racial attitudes were chronically accessible in evaluations of Obama. In other words, the associative link between racial attitudes and Obama evaluations may be so strong that these predispositions were spontaneously activated even in the absence of situational cues like a racialized campaign appeal from John McCain. Such spontaneous activation would, therefore, make it difficult for new information to either deactivate *or* enhance the impact of racial resentment on assessments of Obama.

If racial attitudes are indeed readily accessible in evaluations of Barack Obama, we should find this same stability in racial resentment's effects on assessments of Obama across the three interviews of CCAP panel respondents in March 2008, November 2008, and November 2009. Figure 3 shows that this expectation is clearly borne out. The first panel in the display graphs the effects of racial resentment, as measured in March 2008, on Obama favorability at each of these three junctures. Like presidents before him (Brody 1991), Obama experienced widespread popularity after his election. The first panel of the display, for instance, shows that this "honeymoon period" made Obama more popular in November 2008 than he was either in

March of that year or in November 2009. However, regardless of whether Obama's favorability was assessed shortly after the racially charged Reverend Wright incident of March 2008, or during the period of goodwill exhibited toward Obama after his victory in November 2008, or in the midst of a long and contentious debate over health care reform in the fall of 2009, figure 3 shows that the effects of racial resentment on these evaluations of Obama are nearly identical.

That same constancy of effects over time was produced when we asked our panel respondents whether they wanted President Obama to be reelected in 2012 or if they preferred that a Republican win. The second panel of figure 3 shows that the impact of racial resentment on vote intention for Obama in this November 2009 generic reelection matchup is indistinguishable from either its effect on the Obama-McCain trial heat in March 2008 or reported general election vote decision in November 2008.

### **President Obama as "Other"**

We argued elsewhere that the large and independent effects of attitudes about Muslims on Obama vote intention stemmed from the fact that he is not simply evaluated as an African American but as someone who exemplifies the "other"—someone whose background is foreign and alien to many Americans (Tesler and Sears 2010). Despite holding the presidency, the most uniquely American position imaginable, the "otherization" of Barack Obama by his political opponents seems to have only intensified since he took office. The most visible manifestation of such "other"-based opposition to the president is the emergence of the so-called birther movement, which claims that he was not actually born in the United States. In the first year of his presidency, this mistaken belief gained even more traction than the equally erroneous contention that Obama is an adherent of Islam: About 15 percent of Americans believed he was a Muslim during the 2008 campaign, but a national poll of registered voters in September 2009

revealed that 23 percent of the public thinks Obama was born outside the United States (the exact same percentage yielded in our November 2009 CCAP reinterviews), with 42 percent of Republicans saying the president was not American born.<sup>14</sup>

With this ongoing attempt to paint Obama as alien, we expected attitudes about Muslims—which Kalkan et al. (2009) show are primarily a function of feelings about cultural out-groups—to still be strong, independent predictors of Obama evaluations a year into his presidency. Figure 4 shows that positive attitudes toward Muslims did, in fact, powerfully predict both favorable opinions of Obama in November 2009 and support for his reelection, even with racial resentment and our base-model variables held constant. Although the effects of these attitudes on Obama favorability and his reelection seem to have diminished somewhat since November 2008, the continuing sizable impact of Muslim favorability on opinions about Obama suggests that the president is still not just viewed as an African American but as someone who is inherently “other.”

Because opinions of Muslims are so strongly related to feelings about cultural out-groups more generally (Kalkan et al. 2009), we also wanted to assess their relationship with the belief that Obama was not born in the United States. One might suspect a priori that those most antagonistic to out-groups were also the ones most likely to embrace the “birther” belief that highlighted Obama’s position as “other.” To test this conjecture, figure 5 shows the effects of racial resentment, Muslim favorability, and partisanship on answering the birther question correctly. Partisan and racial attitudes had a considerably stronger influence on support for Obama’s reelection than impressions of Muslims for our CCAP panelists.<sup>15</sup> Yet the display shows that a change from having a very unfavorable impression of Muslims to rating them very favorably had just as strong an impact on rates of saying Obama was American-born as changes

from most liberal to most conservative in racial resentment and partisanship. Even with racial resentment and our base-model variables held constant, individuals with the most favorable impressions of Muslims were 45 percentage points more likely to say Obama was American-born than were those with very unfavorable feelings about Muslims. It appears from figure 5, then, as if much of the driving force behind the dogged unwillingness of so many to acknowledge that Obama was born in the United States is not just simple partisan opposition to a Democratic president but a general ethnocentric suspicion of an African American president who is also perceived as distinctly “other.”

Several liberal commentators have contended that media personalities like Glenn Beck and Rush Limbaugh in particular, and the Fox News Channel in general, have catered to these ethnocentric Americans since Obama became president.<sup>16</sup> With this in mind, we asked one-quarter of our panelists where they got most of their televised news about national and international affairs. Roughly 25 percent of respondents got most of their televised information from Fox News, both in our CCAP reinterviews and in a July 2009 Pew Poll whose question wording we replicated.<sup>17</sup> We expected most respondents to say Obama was born in the United States, even those who relied most heavily on Fox News. We were surprised, however, to find that only 21 percent of Fox viewers said that Obama was American-born. To be sure, this widespread disbelief among Fox News viewers stemmed from the fact that they are most likely to hold the same conservative predispositions shown in figure 5 that underlie such mistaken beliefs about Obama. Yet, even after controlling for Muslim favorability, racial resentment, and our base-model variables, we estimated that Fox News watchers were more than 20 percentage points less likely to say Obama was American-born in November 2009 than those who got most of their news from other television sources (see Table A.5).

Unfortunately, there is simply no way of knowing from these data whether the Fox News Channel plays an active role in casting doubt about Obama's citizenship, or whether Americans most inclined to think the worst of the president simply seek out Fox to reinforce their opinions. Either way, the reinforcing and/or persuasive role of oppositional media outlets like Fox News and conservative talk radio could make it increasingly difficult to disabuse the sizable minority of individuals disposed to accepting invalid assertions designed to paint Obama as the "other."

### **The Spillover of Racialization into the Obama Administration's Policies**

As previously discussed, our results from the campaign on the spillover of racialization are likely to have the most important implications for American politics in the age of Obama. If the highly racialized evaluations associated with President Obama spill over to people and policies strongly situated in opposition or harmony with him, as they had during the campaign, then partisan politics might become increasingly polarized by race and racial attitudes in the years ahead.

The natural extension of our discussion of Obama-induced racialization is that racial attitudes should have developed a greater impact on opinions about health care after the 2008 election because of its strong association with President Obama. Indeed, the spillover of racialization into public opinion on health care reform was a common media theme in the summer and fall of 2009. Some commentators regularly contended during that time that at least some of the uproar provoked by Obama's health care proposals was a product of race-related opposition to a black president's agenda (Krugman 2009; Dowd 2009; Hetherington and Weiler 2009; Hanania 2009; Robinson 2009).

A thorough treatment of the mechanisms underlying this suspected racialization of health care is well beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, we have some preliminary evidence

from our CCAP reinterviews suggesting that the policy's association with Barack Obama increasingly polarized Americans' health care opinions along the lines of their racial attitudes. The first panel of figure 6, for instance, shows the effects of racial resentment on saying health insurance should be voluntarily left up to individuals, among CCAP respondents interviewed in both December 2007 and November 2009.

Despite the large baseline effect of racial resentment in December 2007, attitudes about health care were considerably more racialized after Obama became the loudest spokesperson for health care reform. All else being equal, moving from least to most racially resentful increased the proportion of Americans saying that health care should be voluntary by nearly 40 percentage points in December 2007. This same change in racial resentment levels, however, increased support for private health insurance by over 60 percentage points in November 2009.

Aside from this spillover of racialization into health care opinions, the second panel of figure 6 suggests that the Obama presidency also caused what might be described as a spillover of "otherization." This display shows the effects of Muslim favorability on support for private health insurance in both December 2007 and November 2009. Consistent with our earlier evidence showing opinions about Muslims did not have much influence on partisan political decision making in the pre-Obama era (Tesler and Sears 2010), the display shows only a modest impact of these attitudes on health care opinions in December 2007. This effect, however, more than doubled for these exact same respondents in November 2009. As can be seen, those possessing the most unfavorable impressions of Muslims were now more than 30 percentage points more likely to say health care should be voluntary than those rating Muslims very favorably. Like the spillover of racialization, this result suggests that President Obama may also

make ethnocentric opinions about out-groups a more important factor of partisan political decision making in the years ahead.

Much more work is obviously needed to unpack Obama's causal role in further racializing health care. It could simply be, for instance, that racial resentment's impact increased because of its closer association with the more racially liberal political party rather than its central place in a black president's legislative agenda. Interestingly enough, though, the effects of partisanship and ideological self-placement on health care opinions hardly changed at all from December 2007 to November 2009.<sup>18</sup> This suggests that the increased effects of racial resentment during that time period were not simply the result of traditional partisan conflict over public policy.

We also witnessed a sharp increase in the effects of racial attitudes without a corresponding enhanced influence of partisanship in a fortuitous question wording experiment embedded within an August 2009 opinion poll for CNN.<sup>19</sup> The survey randomly assigned respondents to two different versions of a question on whether Sonia Sotomayor's nomination to the Supreme Court should be confirmed by the Senate. One version stated that Sotomayor had been nominated by President Obama. The other version did not provide any contextual information about who had nominated her.<sup>20</sup> We would expect from the results previously presented on the spillover of racialization that racial attitudes would more powerfully affect support for Sotomayor among respondents who were told she was Obama's nominee.

We can test this racial-spillover hypothesis because the same survey also asked how common police discrimination against African Americans is. Denial of discrimination against African Americans is a key tenet of the symbolic racism belief system (Sears and Henry 2005), and it is assessed in Kinder and Sander's (1996) racial resentment battery. As expected, figure 7

shows that the effect of this discrimination perception variable was nearly three times larger on support for Sotomayor's confirmation among respondents randomly assigned to the Obama-framed question. Among respondents not told Obama nominated her, a change from thinking discrimination against blacks by the police is "very common" to thinking it is "very rare" decreased support for Sotomayor by about 10 percentage points. Among respondents told she was appointed by President Obama, however, this same change in perceptions of discrimination decreased support for Sotomayor by roughly 30 percentage points. No such increase, however, occurred in the effects of partisanship<sup>21</sup>—again suggesting that Obama-induced racialization is not simply an artifact of an issue's increased association with a president from the more racially liberal political party.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Although these results from the first year of Obama's presidency are quite telling, the full story of racial attitudes' impact on evaluations of President Obama and partisan politics during his tenure in the White House is obviously yet to be told. A strong job performance and a race-neutral, moderate, political agenda could potentially reverse Obama's strong polarization of the electorate by racial attitudes in 2009 and put him on the same path to deracialized evaluations that Hajnal (2007) shows often occurs for black mayors. One could envision, for example, that pursuing policies more popular with racial conservatives than racial liberals, such as President Obama's escalation of the war in Afghanistan in 2009, might increase his popularity with high-resentment Americans and/or diminish his unprecedented support among individuals with low racial resentment scores. The upshot of such racially liberal movement away from the president combined with added support from racial conservatives would be the deracialization of Obama-based assessments.

The results presented, however, do not augur well for such a post-racial atmosphere. Despite all that was learned about Barack Obama, first as a long-shot primary challenger, then as the Democratic nominee for president, and finally as President of the United States, the effects of racial resentment on his evaluations were virtually unchanged throughout all of 2008 and 2009. The symbolism of Barack Obama's position as the first black president, at least one year into his tenure in the White House, still appeared to make racial attitudes one of the most important determinants of how the American public responded to him. Whether or not this novelty eventually fades away and President Obama becomes primarily evaluated on the same partisan and performance factors that served as the principal basis for past presidential assessments remains to be seen. However, there is nothing in our most recent evidence, amassed one year after Obama's victory to suggest that this would happen any time soon. If anything, these results suggests that we may well be headed into another one of America's periodic hyper-racial eras.

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### Predicted Probability of Presidential Approval/Disapproval

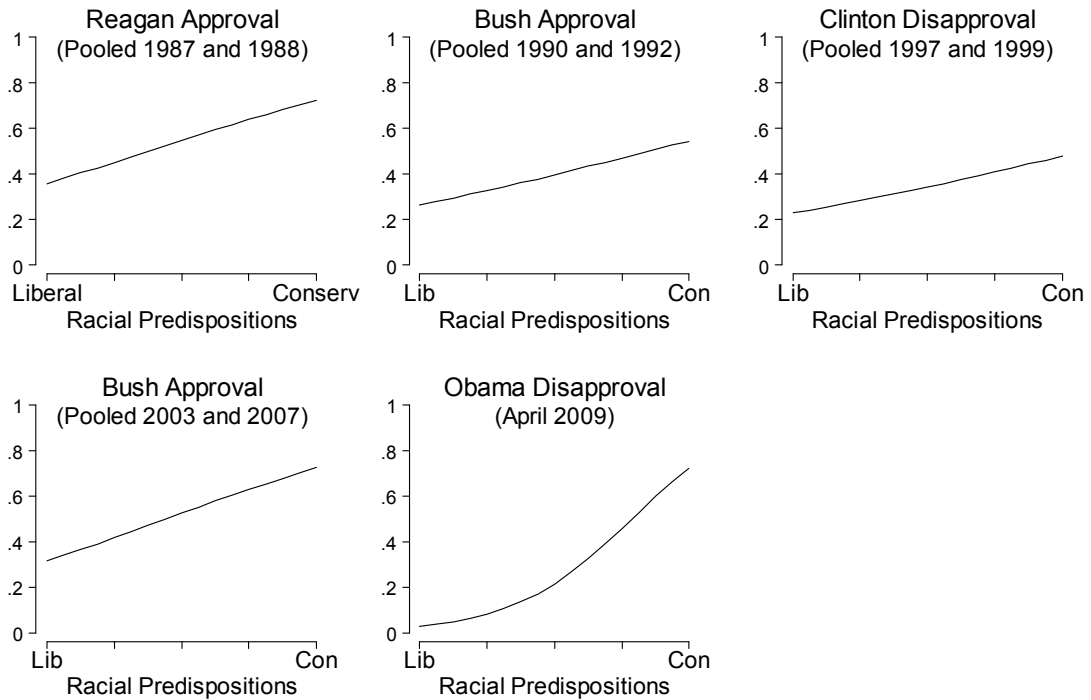
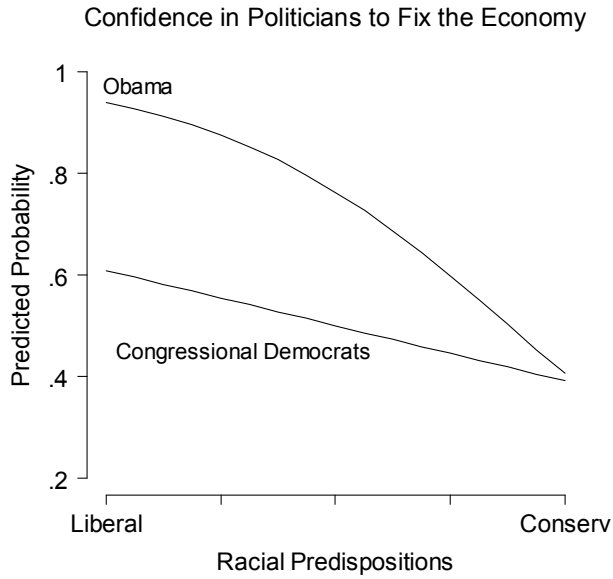
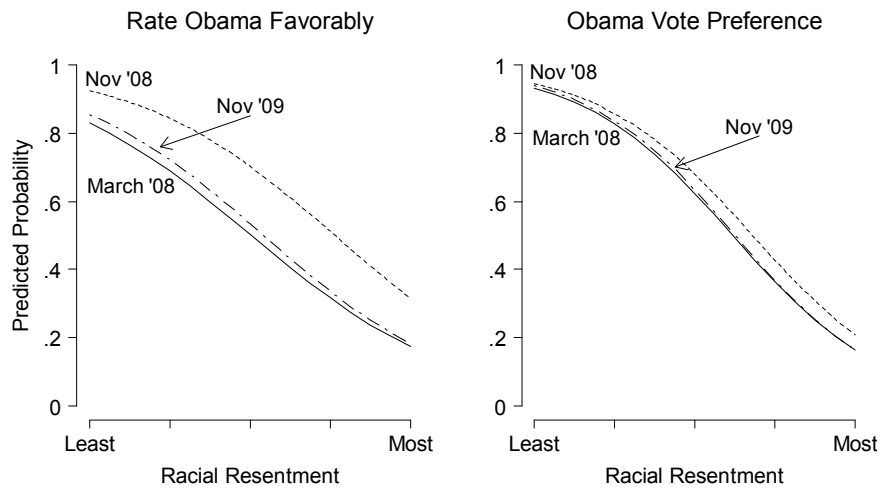


Figure 1: Approval of Republican Presidents and Disapproval of Democratic Presidents as a Function of Racial Predispositions. Probabilities are based on the logistic regression coefficients in Table A.1 of the appendix. Predicted Probabilities were calculated by setting all other variables to their respective sample means. African-Americans were excluded from the analysis. Source: Pew Values Survey Merged File.



*Figure 2: Confidence in Politicians to Fix the Economy as a Function of Racial Predispositions.* Probabilities are based on the logistic regression coefficients in Table A.2 of the appendix. Predicted Probabilities were calculated by setting all other variables to their sample means. African-Americans were excluded from the analysis. *Source:* Pew Values Survey, April 2009.



*Figure 3: Support for Obama as a Function of Racial Resentment.* Probabilities are based on the logistic regression coefficients in Table A.3 of the appendix. Predicted Probabilities were calculated by setting all other variables to their sample means. *Source:* CCAP Panelists

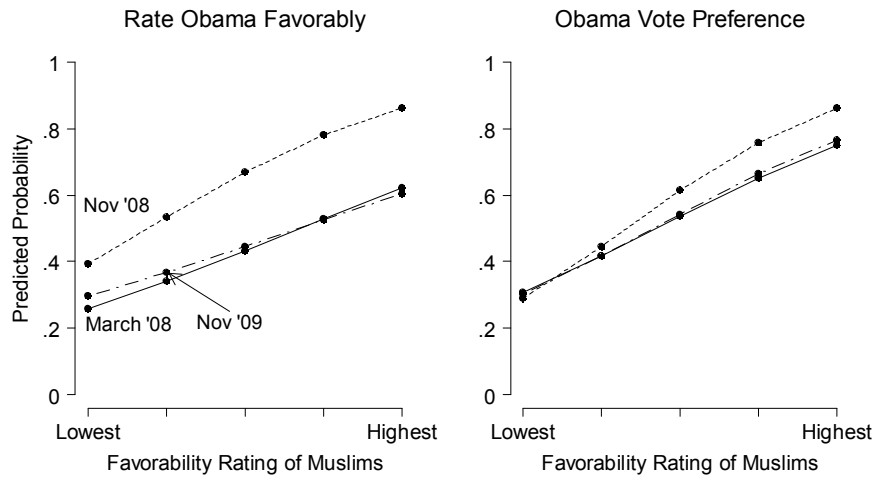


Figure 4: Support for Obama as a Function of Muslim Favorability. Probabilities are based on the logistic regression coefficients in Table A.4 of the appendix. Predicted Probabilities were calculated by setting all other variables to their sample means. Source: CCAP Panelists

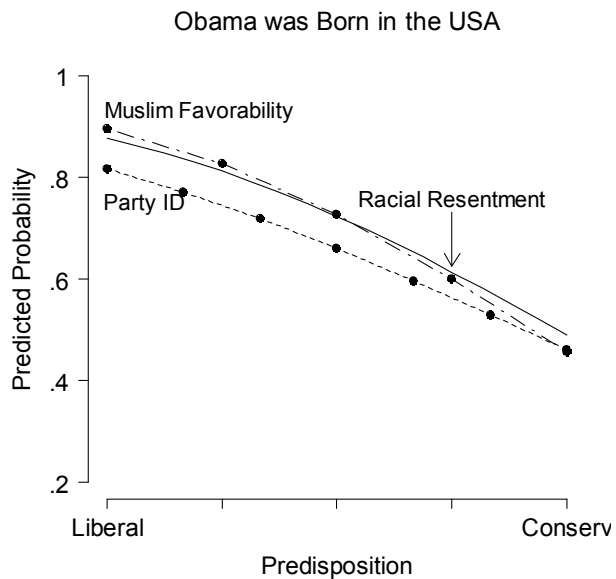
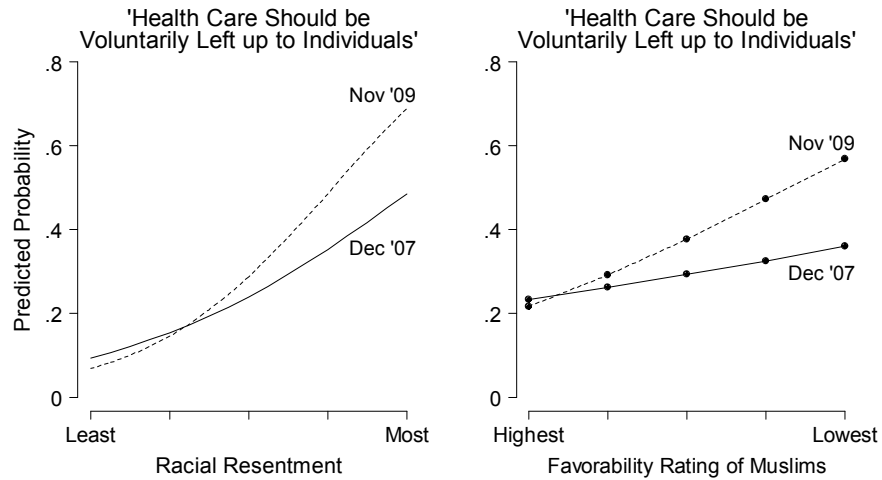
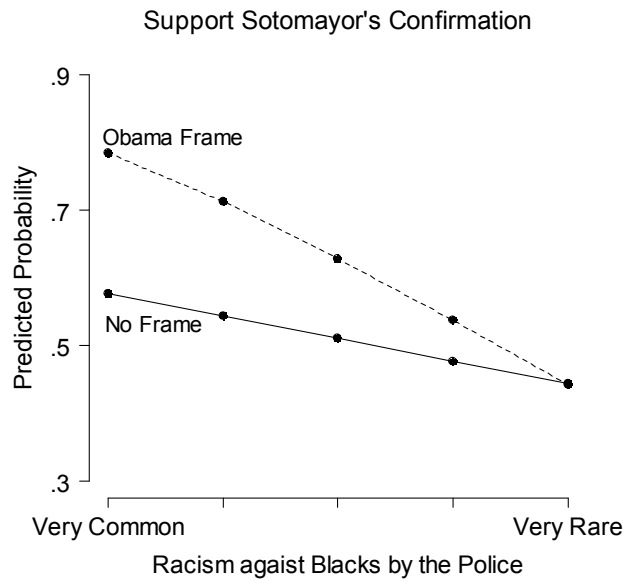


Figure 5: Beliefs about Obama's Country of Origin as Functions of Partisanship, Racial Resentment and Muslim Favorability. Probabilities are based on the logistic regression coefficients in Table A.5 of the appendix. Predicted Probabilities were calculated by setting all other variables to their sample means. Source: CCAP, November 2009 Re-interviews.



*Figure 6: Health Care Opinions as Functions of Racial Resentment and Muslim Favorability.* Probabilities are based on the logistic regression coefficients in Table A.6 of the appendix. Predicted Probabilities were calculated by setting all other variables to their sample means. *Source:* CCAP Panelists.



*Figure 7: Support for Sotomayor's Confirmation as a Function of Perceptions of Discrimination and Question Frame.* Probabilities are based on the logistic regression coefficients in Table A.7 of the online appendix. Predicted Probabilities were calculated by setting all other variables to their sample means. African-Americans were excluded from the analysis. *Source:* CNN/ORC, July 31-August 3, 2009

## Appendix

### **Explanatory Variables**

**Age:** Respondents' actual ages.

**Black:** An indicator variable taking on a value of 1 (African-American) or 0 (non-black)

**Education:** A five-category variable ranging from 0 (no high school diploma) to 1 (post-graduate studies)

**Ideology:** A five-category variable recoded from 0 (very liberal) to 1 (very conservative). Don't know responses were coded as 0.5.

**Male:** An indicator variable taking on a value of 1 (male) or 0 (female)

**Muslim Favorability:** A five category variable ranging from 0 (very unfavorable) to 1 (very favorable)

**Partisanship:** A seven-category variable ranging from 0 (strong Democrat) to 1 (strong Republican)

**Police Discrimination:** A five-category variable ranging from 0 (discrimination against blacks by the police is "very common" to 1 (discrimination is "very rare").

**Racial Predispositions:** An additive index ranging from 0 (most liberal) to 1 (most conservative): The scale was constructed from how strongly respondents agreed or disagreed with the following statements: 1) We should make every possible effort to improve the position of blacks and other minorities, even if it means giving them preferential treatment; 2) Discrimination against blacks is rare today; 3) In the past few years there hasn't been much real improvement in the position of black people in this country; 4) We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country.

**Racial Resentment:** An additive index recoded from 0 (least resentful) to 1 (most resentful): The scale was constructed from how strongly respondents agreed or disagreed with the following assertions: 1) Irish, Italian, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors. 2) Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class. 3) Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve. 4) 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.

**South:** An indicator variable taking on a value of 1 (Southern residence) or 0 (non-South)

### **Dependent Variables**

**Confidence in Politicians to Fix the Economy:** How much confidence do you have in [1) President Obama 2) Democratic Leaders in Congress] to do the right thing when it comes to fixing the economy – a great deal of confidence, a fair amount of confidence, not too much confidence, or no confidence at all? Variable is coded as a dummy taking on values of 1 (a great deal or a fair amount of confidence) or 0 (all other responses).

**Health Care Opinions:** Which comes closest to your view about providing health care in the United States? 1) The Government should provide everyone with health care and pay for it with tax dollars. 2) Companies should be required to provide health insurance for their employees and the government should

provide subsidies for those who are not working or retired 3) Health insurance should be voluntary. Individuals should either buy insurance or obtain it through their employers as they do currently. The elderly and the very poor should be covered by Medicare and Medicaid as they are currently. 4) I'm not sure, I haven't thought much about this. Variable is coded as a dummy taking on values of 1(Health care should be voluntarily left up to individuals) or 0 (all other responses).

***Obama's Country of Origin:*** Do you believe that President Obama was born in the United States of America? Variable is coded as a dummy taking on values of 1(Obama was born in the USA) or 0 (all other responses).

***Presidential Approval of Republican Presidents:*** Variable is coded as a dummy taking on a value of 1 (approve) or 0 (disapprove).

***Presidential Disapproval of Democratic Presidents:*** Variable is coded as a dummy taking on a value of 1 (disapprove) or 0 (approve)

***Rate Obama Favorably:*** Variable is coded as a dummy taking on values of 1(rate Obama "very favorable" or "somewhat favorable") or 0 (rate Obama, "very unfavorable," "somewhat unfavorable" or "neutral").

Table A8.1: (Logistic Regression): Predictors of Presidential Approval (1987-2009)

	Reagan	Bush 41	Clinton	Bush 43	Obama
Racial Predispositions	1.54 (.200)	1.20 (.226)	-1.13 (.305)	1.74 (.434)	-4.51 (.670)
Partisanship	2.77 (.097)	2.34 (.110)	-2.85 (.162)	3.68 (.216)	-3.68 (.275)
Education	-.173 (.113)	-.151 (.132)	.293 (.205)	-.566 (.257)	-.297 (.351)
Age	-.016 (.002)	-.011 (.003)	-.007 (.003)	-.013 (.005)	-.003 (.006)
Male	.246 (.074)	-.065 (.086)	.045 (.118)	-.091 (.074)	-.209 (.196)
South	.394 (.083)	.407 (.093)	-.241 (.122)	.389 (.166)	-.612 (.205)
Survey Year	.057 (.076)	-1.82 (.093)	.058 (.116)	-1.41 (.145)	
Observations	5654	4347	1705	1660	1153

*Source:* Times Mirror/Pew Values Study Merged File: 1987, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1997, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2009.

*Note:* Dependent variables are coded 1 for approval and 0 for disapproval.

Partisanship is a five-category variable ranging from 0 (Democrat) to 1 (Republican); survey year is coded as a dummy, taking on a value of 1 for the latter survey year in the pooled samples.

African-Americans are excluded from the analysis.

Table A.2: (Logistic Regression) Predictors of Confidence in President Obama and in Democratic Leaders in Congress to Fix the Economy

	Congressional Democrats	President Obama
Racial Predispositions	- .880 (.318)	-3.11 (.363)
Partisanship	-3.65 (.207)	-3.65 (.222)
Ideology	-.637 (.264)	-.894 (.299)
Education	-.035 (.184)	.198 (.205)
Age	-.014 (.003)	-.005 (.003)
Male	-.488 (.112)	-.265 (.122)
South	.106 (.121)	.308 (.133)
Observations	671	671

*Source:* Pew Values Study, April 2009.

*Note:* Dependent variables are coded 1 for having at least “a fair amount of confidence” and 0 for all other responses (see measures appendix for variable wording and codes).

Analysis excludes African-Americans.

Table A.3: (Logistic Regression) Predictors of Barack Obama Favorability and Vote Preference

	<u>Obama Favorability</u>			<u>Obama Vote Preference</u>		
	March '08	Nov '08	Nov '09	March '08	Nov '08	Nov '09
Racial Resentment	-2.96 (.235)	-3.28 (.304)	-3.29 (.280)	-3.92 (.305)	-3.97 (.367)	-3.69 (.388)
Partisanship	-2.14 (.195)	-3.25 (.227)	-4.27 (.239)	-2.81 (.232)	-4.42 (.274)	-5.14 (.313)
Ideology	-1.73 (.255)	-3.20 (.318)	-2.01 (.303)	-3.16 (.333)	-3.57 (.396)	-3.35 (.417)
Education	.732 (.194)	.097 (.234)	.672 (.228)	.444 (.239)	.815 (.284)	.425 (.308)
Age	-.010 (.003)	-.007 (.004)	-.002 (.004)	-.006 (.004)	-.019 (.005)	-.024 (.005)
Male	-.068 (.108)	.026 (.132)	-.154 (.126)	-.087 (.134)	.185 (.158)	.007 (.170)
Black	.482 (.198)	.521 (.285)	.341 (.242)	1.40 (.315)	1.79 (.409)	1.42 (.412)
South	-.267 (.114)	-.107 (.136)	.036 (.133)	-.274 (.141)	-.445 (.163)	-.177 (.175)
Observations	2692	2536	2712	2460	2468	2407

*Source:* CCAP panel respondents interviewed in March 2008, November 2008 and November 2009.

*Note:* Dependent variables for favorability ratings are coded 1 for having at least a “somewhat favorable” impression of Obama and 0 for all other responses; dependent variables for vote preference are coded 1 for Obama and 0 for McCain(2008)/generic Republican (2009).

Analyses use March 2008 measures of racial resentment, party identification and ideology.

Table A.4: (Logistic Regression) Predictors of Barack Obama Favorability and Vote Preference

	<u>Obama Favorability</u>			<u>Obama Vote Preference</u>		
	March '08	Nov '08	Nov '09	March '08	Nov '08	Nov '09
Racial Resentment	-2.56 (.267)	-2.63 (.352)	-2.92 (.317)	-3.37 (.346)	-3.19 (.411)	-3.13 (.454)
Muslim Favorability	1.74 (.244)	2.62 (.300)	1.74 (.279)	2.54 (.308)	3.04 (.351)	2.69 (.371)
Partisanship	-2.00 (.217)	-3.00 (.255)	-4.29 (.269)	-2.45 (.261)	-4.08 (.301)	-5.12 (.360)
Ideology	-1.68 (.292)	-3.58 (.386)	-1.82 (.344)	-3.59 (.392)	-3.95 (.460)	-3.58 (.493)
Education	.677 (.216)	-.177 (.270)	.563 (.254)	.185 (.271)	.628 (.316)	.488 (.354)
Age	-.006 (.004)	.000 (.005)	.000 (.005)	-.002 (.005)	-.011 (.006)	-.021 (.006)
Male	-.099 (.118)	.143 (.149)	-.116 (.138)	-.008 (.149)	.269 (.174)	.119 (.191)
Black	.365 (.219)	.935 (.350)	.304 (.271)	1.26 (.336)	1.83 (.448)	1.25 (.449)
South	-.268 (.125)	-.199 (.153)	-.011 (.146)	-.258 (.158)	-.402 (.180)	-.323 (.198)
Observations	2427	2303	2446	2228	2246	2187

*Source:* CCAP panel respondents interviewed in March 2008, October 2008, November 2008 and November 2009.

*Note:* Dependent variables for favorability ratings are coded 1 for having at least a “somewhat favorable” impression of Obama and 0 for all other responses; dependent variables for vote preference are coded 1 for Obama and 0 for McCain (2008)/generic Republican (2009).

Analyses use March 2008 measures of racial resentment, party identification and ideology, and utilize the October 2008 measure of Muslim favorability.

Table A.5: (Logistic Regression) Predictors of Saying President Obama was Born in the USA

	Model 1	Model 2
Racial Resentment	-2.01 (.279)	-1.23 (.580)
Muslim Favorability	2.30 (.229)	2.50 (.466)
Partisanship	-1.65 (.206)	-1.13 (.412)
Ideology	-1.79 (.288)	-1.77 (.580)
Education	1.22 (.208)	.525 (.429)
Age	-.014 (.004)	-.013 (.008)
Black	.009 (.246)	-.397 (.507)
Male	.364 (.113)	.085 (.227)
South	-.184 (.115)	-.082 (.238)
Fox News Watcher		-.992 (.274)
Observations	2423	620

*Source:* CCAP panel respondents interviewed in October 2008 and November 2009 (one-quarter of the participants in the November 2009 survey received the news source question).

*Note:* Dependent variables are coded 1 for saying Obama was born in the USA and 0 for all other responses.

The variable “Fox News Watcher” is coded as a dummy, taking on a value of 1 if respondents received most of their televised information about national and international affairs from the Fox News Channel and a value of 0 for all other televised news sources.

Analyses use October 2008 measures of racial resentment, Muslim favorability, partisanship and ideology.

Table A.6: (Logistic Regression) Predictors of Health Care Opinions in December 2007 and November 2009

	<u>Model 1</u>		<u>Model 2</u>	
	Dec '07	Nov '09	Dec '07	Nov '09
Racial Resentment	2.16 (.308)	3.41 (.335)		
Muslim Favorability			-.607 (.303)	-1.55 (.306)
Partisanship	2.30 (.224)	2.32 (.253)	2.68 (.247)	2.40 (.268)
Ideology	2.46 (.321)	2.34 (.330)	2.85 (.336)	3.06 (.348)
Education	.501 (.271)	.270 (.293)	.222 (.284)	.023 (.321)
Age	.018 (.005)	.018 (.005)	.017 (.005)	.012 (.005)
Black	.461 (.245)	.214 (.261)	.085 (.236)	-.456 (.261)
Male	1.04 (.137)	.495 (.145)	.993 (.142)	.409 (.150)
South	-.050 (.141)	-.028 (.147)	.064 (.149)	.163 (.157)
Observations	2497	2488	2197	2188

*Source:* CCAP panel respondents interviewed in December 2007, March 2008, and November 2009. (Model 1); CCAP panel respondents interviewed in December 2007, March 2008, October 2008, and November 2009 (Model 2)

*Note:* Dependent variables are coded 1 for saying health care should be voluntarily left up to individuals and 0 for all other responses (see measures appendix for variable wording and codes).

Analyses use March 2008 measures of racial resentment, party identification and ideology and utilize the October 2008 measure of Muslim favorability.

Table A.7: (Logistic Regression) Predictors of Supporting Sonia Sotomayor’s Confirmation by the U.S. Senate

	Stripped Version	Obama Frame
Police Discrimination	-.536 (.341)	-1.52 (.371)
Partisanship	-1.68 (.327)	-1.27 (.308)
Ideology	-2.50 (.591)	-3.18 (.618)
Education	.726 (.351)	.257 (.430)
Age	.009 (.006)	.006 (.007)
Male	-.237 (.229)	-.134 (.234)
Latino	.653 (.498)	.085 (.329)
South	.356 (.229)	-.440 (.258)
Observations	450	439

*Source:* CNN/ORC Poll, July 31-August 3, 2009.

*Note:* Dependent variables are coded 1 for supporting Sotomayor’s confirmation and 0 for all other responses.

Partisanship is a five-category variable ranging from 0 (Democrat) to 1 (Republican).

African-Americans are excluded from the analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> All else being equal, moving from least to most resentful decreased Obama's ANES thermometer ratings by 29 degrees, or 29 percent of the scale's range in the preelection interview and 30 degrees for the same respondents in the postelection survey. Similarly, the effect for the CCAP panel respondents was .381 in October and .371 in the postelection survey.

<sup>2</sup> For full poll results and crosstabs see <http://media.economist.com/media/pdf/Tabs20090819.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Of registered voters interviewed from October 19–22, 2008, for the CBS/*New York Times* poll, 11 percent believed that the policies of the Obama administration would favor blacks over whites. For full results from the CBS/*NYT* poll see <http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/politics/oct08d.trn.pdf>. Of Americans interviewed from October 17–20, 2008, for the NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll, 13 percent believed that if elected, President Obama's policies would favor blacks over whites. For full results from the NBC/*WSJ* poll see [http://s.wsj.net/public/resources/documents/WSJ\\_NBCPoll\\_102108.pdf](http://s.wsj.net/public/resources/documents/WSJ_NBCPoll_102108.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Only 22 percent of white respondents interviewed on July 27, 2009, for the Pew Research Center approved of Obama's handling of the Gates situation. Similarly 58 percent of white respondents interviewed from July 31–August 3, 2009, for CNN/ORC said that Gates "acted stupidly" compared to only 29 percent of whites who said the arresting officer, James Crowley, "acted stupidly."

<sup>5</sup> These statements about the prevalence of stories about the Gates incident in the news media are based upon weekly content analyses conducted by Pew's Project for Excellence in Journalism. See Project for Excellence in Journalism, "From Health Care to 'Skip' Gates, Obama Makes Big News." *PEJ News Coverage Index*, July 20–26, 2009, and "High-Stakes Health Care Fight Drives the News." *PEJ News Coverage Index*, July 27–August 2, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Survey by Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. Methodology: Conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International on July 27, 2009, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 480. Respondents were originally interviewed July 22–26, 2009, as part of a national adult sample of 1,506. Retrieved from the iPOLL Databank, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Krugman, for instance, wrote the following in an August 2009 op-ed for the *New York Times* about Obama's opposition: "But they're probably reacting less to what Mr. Obama is doing, or even to what they've heard about what he's doing, than to who he is. That is, the driving force behind the town hall mobs is probably the same cultural and racial anxiety that's behind the "birther" movement, which denies Mr. Obama's citizenship." See Paul Krugman, "Town Hall Mob," *New York Times*, August 6, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Carter made these comments in an interview with Brian Williams for *NBC Nightly News* on September 15, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> These statements about the prevalence of stories regarding race-based opposition to Obama are based upon weekly content analyses conducted by Pew's Project for Excellence in Journalism. See Project for Excellence in Journalism, "Bloggers Focus on Obama's Opposition." *PEJ New Media Index*, September 14–18, 2009, and "Afghanistan and a Charge of Racism Lead the Blogs." *PEJ New Media Index*, September 21–25, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Survey by Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. Methodology: Conducted by Opinion Research Corporation, September 18–September 21, 2009, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,001. Retrieved from the iPOLL Databank, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

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<sup>11</sup> Obama made similar comments about how his fervent opposition primarily stemmed from feelings about the role of government not racism on *Meet the Press*, *This Week*, *State of the Union*, and *Face the Nation*, all of which aired on September 18, 2008. For more on these interviews, see Mark Silva, “In Media Blitz, Obama Says Vitriol Isn’t Racism-Based,” *LA Times*, September 19, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> The Values Study by the Pew Research Center for the People and Press began in 1987, and has been updated thirteen times since then. The study asks respondents whether they agree or disagree with a series of approximately 80 statements covering core beliefs about government, businesses, religion, race, and several other topics. Not every one of these thirteen surveys included all four statements used in our racial predispositions scale. As such, we restrict our analyses to the surveys that contain both all four of these statements and presidential approval (1987, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1997, 1999, 2003, 2007, and 2009). These data sets were accessed from the Roper Center’s data archive.

<sup>13</sup> Sears, David O. and Michael Tesler, “Re-interview Survey of Racial Attitudes and Health Care Opinions.” November 2009. Survey conducted by YouGov-Polimetrix, Palo Alto, CA.

<sup>14</sup> Of respondents interviewed on September 21, 2009, by Public Policy Polling, 59 percent said Obama was born in the United States, with 23 percent saying he was not and 18 percent unsure. For full poll results and crosstabs see [http://www.publicpolicypolling.com/pdf/surveys/2009\\_Archives/PPP\\_Release\\_National\\_9231210.pdf](http://www.publicpolicypolling.com/pdf/surveys/2009_Archives/PPP_Release_National_9231210.pdf). Of our CCAP panelists reinterviewed in November 2009, 57 percent said Obama was born in the United States, with 23 percent saying he was not and 20 percent unsure.

<sup>15</sup> See table A.4 of the appendix.

<sup>16</sup> MSNBC’s Keith Olbermann and the liberal organization Media Matters, for instance, regularly call attention to racially insensitive comments appearing on conservative talk radio and the Fox News Channel.

<sup>17</sup> The Pew question was only asked of respondents who get most of their news from TV. Of this group, 27 percent said they get most of their information about national and international affairs from Fox News. Survey by Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. Methodology: Conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International, July 22–July 26, 2009, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,506. Of these, 1,129 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone and 377 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 114 who had no landline telephone. Percentages accessed from iPOLL. We asked what televised source respondents get most of their news from, and 26 percent of these respondents said they get most of their information about national and international affairs from Fox News.

<sup>18</sup> The coefficients on partisanship and ideology in December 2007 were 2.3 and 2.44, respectively. In November 2009, these respective coefficients were 2.32 and 2.36. See table A.6 for full results.

<sup>19</sup> Survey by CNN. Methodology: Conducted by Opinion Research Corporation, July 31–August 3, 2009, and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample, including an oversample of blacks, of 1,136. Data set accessed from the Roper Center’s data archive.

<sup>20</sup> The exact wording of these questions is as follows:

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No Frame, Form A (half of respondents): As you may know, Sonia Sotomayor is the federal judge nominated to serve on the Supreme Court. Would you like to see the Senate vote in favor of Sotomayor serving on the Supreme Court, or not?

Obama Frame, Form B (half of respondents): As you may know, Sonia Sotomayor is the federal judge who Barack Obama nominated to serve on the Supreme Court. Would you like to see the Senate vote in favor of Sotomayor serving on the Supreme Court, or not.

<sup>21</sup> The coefficient on partisanship, in fact, actually decreased in absolute magnitude from  $-1.68$  in the stripped version down to  $-1.27$  in the Obama-framed condition. See table A.7 of the appendix for full results.