

THE RACIAL DOUBLE STANDARD ATTRIBUTING RACIAL MOTIVATIONS IN VOTING BEHAVIOR

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Abstract In the wake of the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections, political observers were quick to assert that Barack Obama won the African American vote because he was Black, and more generally, that African Americans were motivated by race above all other considerations. As this racial reductionist stereotype has the potential to trivialize African Americans' voting behavior and diminish the significance of the election of Barack Obama, this research examined how much support exists for the stereotype. We also examined whether a racial double standard motivates the application of this stereotype, and if so, the degree to which it is grounded in a broader antipathy toward Blacks. Several experiments embedded in two large national public opinion surveys show that there is indeed a racial double standard in the application of the racial reductionist stereotype; moreover, the attribution is connected to racial resentment.

As no other event in recent memory, the election of Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012 revealed the depth and breadth of racialized thinking in American

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society—particularly in many subtle and not-so-subtle racially derogatory views and stereotypes employed to account for electoral results and voting patterns. This paper focuses in particular on explanations that seem to diminish African Americans' support for Barack Obama to strictly racial motivations, which we refer to as the *racial reductionist stereotype*. Ignoring the variety of factors that contributed to the election of Obama, such as partisanship, the economic recession, two unpopular wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, or a weak opponent, some asserted that Barack Obama won the African American vote for no other reason than that “he was Black.” Thus, pundits and opponents of Obama derisively trivialized an ostensibly complex voting decision—in which most individuals rationally weigh candidates' positions on the issues, party platforms, personalities, and qualities of the opposing candidate—to a single factor on the part of African Americans. In other words, while African Americans voted overwhelmingly for Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012, it is the extent to which their vote was *perceived to be based on race or skin color* that is the focus of this research.

References to the overpowering influence of skin color and pro-Black bias were exemplified by conservative talk radio host Rush Limbaugh (2011) speculating that former Secretary of State Colin Powell would cross party lines again to endorse Barack Obama in 2012 because “melanin is thicker than water.” Similar use of the racial reductionist stereotype came from former Republican Governor of New Hampshire, and Chief of Staff for President George W. Bush, John Sununu, when he remarked, “When you take a look at Colin Powell, you have to look at whether [endorsing Obama is] an endorsement based on issues or he's got a slightly different reason for endorsing President Obama.” Sununu added, “I think when you have somebody of your own race that you're proud of being president of the United States, I applaud Colin for standing with him” (Madison 2012). The reductionist stereotype apparently surfaced again in Mitt Romney's concession telephone call to Barack Obama when he suggested that the only reason Obama won was because Blacks voted for him because he was Black (Breitman 2015). Have these thinly veiled racial reductionist explanations crept into the minds of American voters? If so, the resulting narratives would trivialize both the election of Obama and the political decision-making of African Americans in general.¹ Valentino and Brader (2011) suggest that the extent to which individuals saw the election of Barack Obama as the waning of racial prejudice increased the license to express racially derogatory views toward African Americans, like the reductionist stereotype.

1. African Americans may plausibly admit to voting for Barack Obama because of his race, although such an assertion likely reflects a heuristic or mental shortcut in assuming a common identity, cultural perspectives, and as a result, policy positions that will benefit Blacks.

In this research, we assess the extent to which the racial reductionist stereotype exists among Whites, whether it is discriminately applied, and to what extent it is driven by racial resentment.² We then assess whether a reductionist stereotype is also attributed to other groups, such as Whites, women, and Latinos, or whether it is reserved especially for African Americans' political behavior. Unlike most other racial stereotypes, the danger in this reductionist stereotype is that it appears benign and objective, but it has the potential to diminish African Americans' political behavior and, in the process, trivialize the election of the first African American president. Our point of contention is not whether Whites think African Americans support African American candidates (this in itself is not racist and may actually reflect a confluence of partisanship and race), but whether racial antipathy toward African Americans motivates the trivialization of Obama and African Americans' political behavior. We argue that a racial double standard exists when Whites fail to apply ingroup favoritism bias (the reductionist stereotype) to other groups.

Development of the Racial Reductionist Stereotype

Because a limited cognitive system is incapable of simultaneously processing all available information in one's social environment, "the human mind must think with the aid of categories" (Allport 1954, p. 20). One of the most basic forms of categorization is to partition individuals into ingroups and outgroups based on shared traits (Tajfel and Turner 1979, 1986). While this simplifies a great deal of information for the individual, ingroup/outgroup partitioning can harm those who are different. Individuals seek positive distinctiveness or a positive self-concept (or identity) that is usually strengthened by the derogation of outgroups (Brewer 1991; Brewer and Brown 1998). Herein lies the connection to a racial reductionist stereotype.

Individuals view members of their ingroup as more complex, heterogeneous, and multidimensional than those who are different. While they attribute their ingroup's successes to internal factors such as intelligence and hard work, they ascribe their ingroup's failures to external factors and bad luck. In contrast, outgroup members are not perceived as nearly as complex, heterogeneous, or individualistic. Individuals tend to view outgroup members negatively, and as stereotypically similar, with outgroup achievement attributed to external factors and failure attributed to internal factors such as one's abilities or personal traits. When individuals perceive outgroup members as more similar to each

2. Our basis for defining racial reductionist as a stereotype is based on Schneider's (2004, p. 24) definition: "qualities perceived to be associated with particular groups or categories of people" without regard to "traits, expected behavior, physical features, roles, attitudes, beliefs or almost any other qualities."

other than they actually are, stereotypes are likely to follow without having to consider whether the ascriptions are actually true. As this mostly automatic process of stereotyping creates more differentiation between ingroups and outgroups, ingroups are motivated to enhance their positive distinctiveness, making comparisons that facilitate more positive (or less negative) perceptions of one's own group, and less positive (or more negative) perceptions of outgroup members. As a result, ingroup members adopt outgroup stereotypes that positively distinguish their group from others, especially when they view the outgroup as competitive and negative.³

In theory, any outgroup might be the target of negative stereotypes and reductionism. However, racist beliefs may amplify reductionism through the positive distinctiveness process. Those who are racially resentful or hold antipathy toward African Americans marginalize African Americans' behavior, and racialize accomplishments like the election of Barack Obama. Racially resentful Whites are less likely to perceive positive qualities in Barack Obama or consider him to have been the best candidate for president. Ultimately, racial resentment leads Whites to view African American political behavior as unsophisticated, racially reflexive, and consistent with other racial stereotypes.

RACISM REFLECTED THROUGH THE RACIAL DOUBLE STANDARD

One important empirical implication of our racial reductionist argument is that we expect to observe a double standard whereby common stereotypes (e.g., being lazy, violent, and unintelligent) are applied to African Americans far more than to other groups. The reluctance to attribute a reductionist stereotype equally across groups in balance with a readiness to attribute it to African Americans is *prima facie* evidence of racial bias. Singling out a racial group for derogatory statements is the clearest and strongest indicator of racial bias. Another important point here is that while the use of heuristics is seen as necessary to comprehend and navigate information-rich elections (Rahn 1993; Huckfeldt et al. 1999; Lau and Redlawsk 2001), the use of a racial heuristic seems less valid or acceptable than partisan or ideological labels. It follows that a double standard exists not only in attributing the reductionist stereotype to African Americans, but also in how racial labels or racial heuristics are used.

Further, our argument presumes that the application of a racial double standard is inspired by a broader racial belief system. Negative racial attitudes support the information-filtering process by promoting discriminatory

3. The vast majority of African Americans do not support voting for Black candidates simply because they are Black. Data from the National Black Election Study (NBES) show low support for ingroup voting preferences. When asked whether "Blacks should always vote for Black candidates when they run," overwhelming majorities disagreed (82 percent in 1984, 75 percent in 1988).

information use and connecting emotional weight to selective facts (Brewer 1999; Taber and Lodge 2006). If so, the use of the reductionist stereotype should be connected to a broader range of negative racial attitudes.

Data and Research Design

We utilized two sets of experiments embedded in two different national public opinion surveys to explore the endorsement of the racial reductionist stereotype. Our data come from the 2010 and 2012 waves of the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES), which included, respectively, 1,366 and 1,125 self-reported non-Hispanic White respondents.⁴ Both CCES studies were conducted during the fall election periods (September, October, and November). Details about the study design and question wording are available in the [online appendix](#). Survey experiments have the advantages of external (generalizability) and internal validity—the ability to establish causality—and, whereas traditional experimental analyses rely on convenience samples, the CCES data afford us the advantage of a national adult population.

The CCES employed a matched random sample technique to survey members of an opt-in panel managed by YouGov Polimetrix. YouGov collected the CCES data online, using computational algorithms to collect demographically representative samples within each state and congressional district. Respondents first completed a questionnaire with “core content” administered to all participants, and then YouGov randomized questionnaires containing “team content” to respondents created by groups of scholars.

GROUP VOTING BEHAVIOR EXPERIMENT

Our first experiment captured attributed motivations for voting for ingroup and outgroup candidates. The 2010 and 2012 studies randomly assigned “reference groups” to the following question:

Which of these statements comes closest to describing your feelings about [*Reference Group*’s] voting behavior, even if neither is exactly right? In political elections, [*Reference Group*] mainly vote for [*Reference Group*] candidates, or in political elections, [*Reference Groups*] mostly vote for whom they feel is the best candidate.

Randomized reference groups included “African Americans,” “Whites,” and “women” in both 2010 and 2012, and the 2012 survey included “Hispanics” as a reference group.

4. The CCES included too few African Americans to allow for rigorous testing of our hypotheses.

This setup contrasts a normatively valued approach to voting—voters weigh the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates to judge who is best qualified or best serves their interests—with the less admirable approach of voting based primarily on common group membership. Attributing this latter motivation to outgroup members is reductionism, and differentially attributing this to one group more than others is evidence of racial reductionism.

RESULTS: GROUP VOTING BEHAVIOR

Results from both 2010 and 2012 show consistent evidence that many Whites hold racially reductionist stereotypes. As shown in [Figure 1](#), only 24 percent of Whites surveyed in 2010 perceived African Americans as voting mainly for the best candidate; 28 percent were unsure, and 48 percent believed that Blacks vote mainly for other Blacks. These percentages are considerably different when the reference group changed to Whites and women. A vast majority of Whites (69 percent) perceived their ingroup (i.e., Whites) as mainly voting for the best candidate, while only 11 percent perceived them as mainly voting for White candidates. Similarly, women were perceived as mainly voting for the best-qualified candidate (74 percent) rather than mainly voting for female candidates (8 percent). While the percentages do not show overwhelming majorities of respondents reflecting a racial double standard, the evidence is quite clear that African Americans were perceived as supporting race over the best candidate, and Whites and women are not perceived in this fashion. Whites were four times more likely to attribute reductionist motives when judging Black voters than when judging White voters.

The 2012 survey included "Hispanics" as a new reference group, and the results, reported in [Figure 2](#), are consistent with those from 2010. For instance, Whites perceived African Americans as mainly voting for their ingroup (66 percent), while 20 percent perceived them as mainly voting for the best

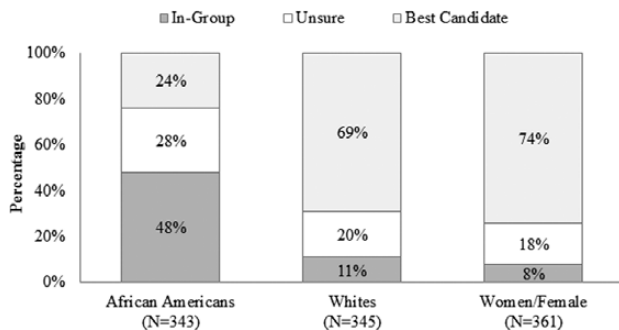


Figure 1. Perceptions of groups voting for ingroups vs. best candidate—2010.

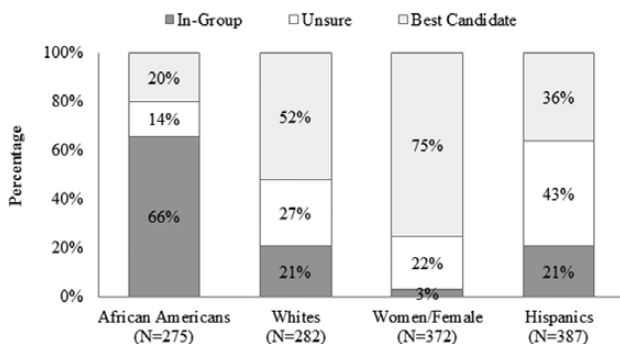


Figure 2. Perceptions of groups voting for ingroup vs. best candidate—2012.

candidate. Also mirroring the 2010 results, a relatively small percentage of respondents perceived other groups through a reductionist lens. Whites were perceived as mainly voting for the best candidate (52 percent), and only 21 percent were perceived as mainly voting for the ingroup candidate. Women were perceived as mainly voting for the best candidate (75 percent), while fewer women were perceived as voting mainly for the female candidate (3 percent). Respondents were mostly unsure (43 percent) about how Hispanics vote, but 21 percent indicated that Hispanics mainly vote for their ingroup, and 36 percent opted for the best candidate choice. Clearly, while respondents perceived that Whites and women vote mainly for the best candidates, they perceived that African Americans vote mainly for their ingroup candidate. Results from these two surveys support our contention that African Americans indeed suffer a double standard in the perceptions of the racial reductionist stereotype. The perception that African Americans are motivated by the racial makeup of the candidate over candidate quality while failing to apply this motivation to other groups is consistent with [Citrin and Sears’s \(2014\)](#) assertion of “black exceptionalism” or that African Americans remain subject to uniquely high levels of prejudice and negative stereotypes.

GROUP VOTING BEHAVIOR FOR OBAMA EXPERIMENT

The previous experiment utilized a hypothetical ingroup candidate, which does not allow us to know who respondents call to mind or if their candidate prototypes are equivalent across respondents. Using a similar format, our second, more contextualized experiment examined the perceived reductionist stereotype in the willingness to vote for Barack Obama.⁵ In 2010, we randomly assigned respondents to four different versions the following question:

5. The two experiments were not adjacent questions in the surveys, but in both data sets the Obama experiment came after the group vote experiment.

“Which of these statements comes closer to your own personal view about why [*Reference Group*] voted for Barack Obama—even if neither is exactly right? [*Reference Group*] voted for Barack Obama in the 2008 Presidential Election because he was African American or [*Reference Group*] voted for Barack Obama in the 2008 Presidential Election because he was the better candidate?”

The reference groups included “people,” “a majority of Americans,” “African Americans,” and “Whites.” In 2012, the reference groups included two partisan categories (Democrats and Republicans), two racial groups (Whites and African Americans), and the “people” control group. In addition, since the 2010 CCES collected data two years after the 2008 election, the question referenced the prior election with past-tense wording (“voted for”). The 2012 CCES collected its data prior to the 2012 election, and as a result, its wording references the 2012 presidential election with future tense (“might vote”). An additional layer to the 2012 experiment is a check for a double standard based on valence. One version asked respondents to consider why the reference group “might vote FOR” Obama [...because he is African American or the best candidate], and the other asked why they “might vote AGAINST” Obama [...because he is African American or the worst candidate].

Adding the Barack Obama reference slightly alters the question and the responses. Following the previous experimental results, a similarly high percentage of respondents should believe that African Americans voted for Barack Obama because of his race and not because he was the best candidate. Moreover, a big difference now is that race should be attributed as the likely explanation for “all groups” who supported Barack Obama. African American candidates are likely to be perceived in simplistic racial terms. Race becomes more reasonable motivation than qualifications, especially among the more racially resentful.

RESULTS: GROUP VOTING FOR OBAMA

The experimental results for the racial reductionist stereotype referencing the vote for Barack Obama are illustrated in [Figure 3](#). Here, too, consistency appears to be the norm. The results parallel the first experiment in which Whites perceive African Americans, more than any other group, as voting for Obama because he was Black (68 percent) rather than because he was the best-qualified candidate. Among respondents evaluating “a majority of Americans” and “people,” 47 and 51 percent, respectively, perceived that the Black vote for Obama was race based, compared to 27 percent feeling that Whites voted for Obama due to his race. A racial effect clearly emerged in this experiment, and notably at least a plurality applied the reductionist stereotype to every reference group except for Whites.

The 2012 CCES version of the experiment contained two alterations. We included partisan groups, with one version of the question asking about a “vote for Obama because he is African American or the best candidate” and another version asking about a “vote against Obama because he is African American or the worst candidate.” The intent of the additional split was to assess the extent to which Whites attribute race in consistent ways. The racial double standard could reverse itself when the question has a different valence—when the wording changed from positive to negative—particularly as it relates to attributions of Obama’s success and failure in the context of race.

Figure 4 shows the results of the racial reductionist stereotype applied to the vote “for” Barack Obama using the 2012 CCES data, which mirror the 2010 results. African Americans were perceived as voting for Obama because of

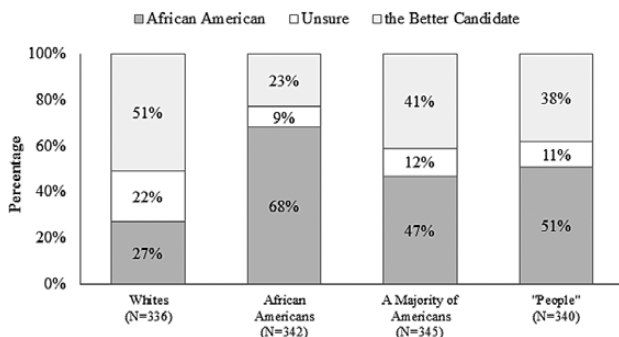


Figure 3. Perceptions of groups voting for Barack Obama vs. best candidate—2010.

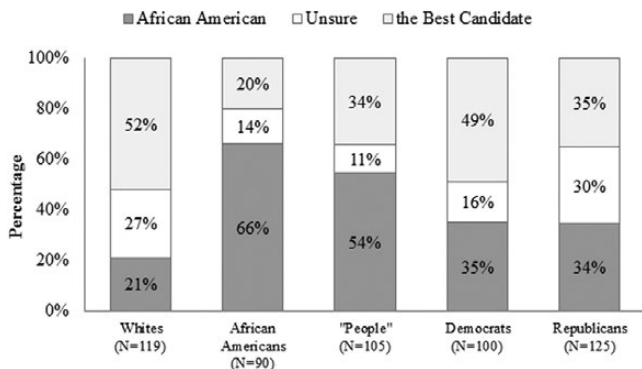


Figure 4. Perceptions of groups “voting for” Barack Obama vs. best candidate—2012.

his race (66 percent) as opposed to the better candidate (20 percent), while 14 percent were unsure. Whites were perceived as voting for Obama because he was the best (52 percent), and 21 percent perceived Whites' vote for Obama as unrelated to race. With regard to partisan groups, respondents were equally likely to believe that Democrats (35 percent) and Republicans (34 percent) voted for Obama because of his race, but they are far more likely to believe that Democrats (49 percent) voted for Obama because he is the better candidate than Republicans (35 percent). Tapping an unbiased reference group, 54 percent of respondents believe "people" voted for Obama because of his race while 34 percent perceived "people" voted for Obama because he was the best candidate. It appears that Whites anchor Obama's success more to his race or skin color than to his merits except when they appraise the voting practices of Whites.⁶

When the question was phrased in terms of "voting against Obama" because of his race or because he was "the worst candidate," respondents perceived that African Americans (4 percent) are less likely to vote against Obama because of his race compared to Whites (27 percent), "people" (34 percent), Democrats (18 percent), and Republicans (24 percent) (see Figure 5). These results, once again, show that African Americans were biased by race more than the other reference groups, though there is also greater uncertainty (58 percent) as to

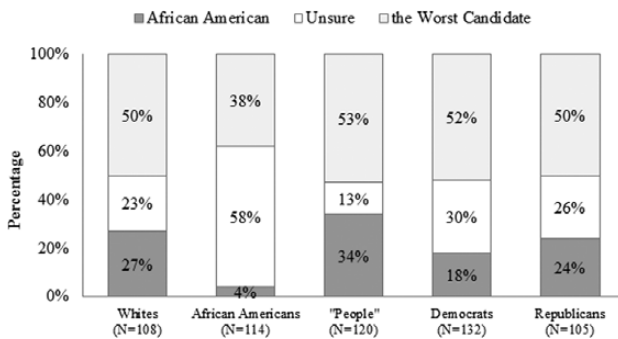


Figure 5. Perceptions of groups "voting against" Barack Obama vs. best candidate—2012.

6. There are likely downstream consequences to believing that African Americans, more than any other group, are motivated by ingroup preferences over candidate quality. Whites who believe that African Americans' voting decisions are motivated by race believe that the election process contains more irregularities and are more likely to support limits on civil rights. Further analyses of the 2010 CCES data reveal that Whites who believe that African Americans prefer ingroup members over the best candidate are more likely to support restrictions on voting rights, such as limiting the voting rights of felons.

why African Americans would vote against Obama.⁷ As expected, this result is a startling reversal of opinions about the effects of Obama's race; Whites are more likely to believe that all reference groups, except their own, will vote for him because of his race than against him because of it. Thus, Whites view race, but not merit, as the basis for Obama's support, but see merit, and not race, as the reason for opposition to him.

This second set of experiments about Obama allowed us to test multiple layers of the reductionist stereotype. First, we were able to test for double standards applied to racial and political groups voting specifically for (and against) Obama. Second, we were able to see if respondents were more or less willing to say bias exists when framing the question in the negative (vote against) versus positive (vote for). If respondents believed groups vote for Obama on racial grounds, but do not vote against him because of his race, then one inference might be that people attributed his success to race rather than merit, but his failures to impartial matters rather than race. Such an outcome is consistent with correspondence bias and attributional errors (Pettigrew 1979; Krull 2001).

A THEORY OF RACIAL RESENTMENT

Given the evidence for a racial double standard in the attribution of the reductionist stereotype, a critical question remains: To what extent is the attribution of racial motives to African Americans associated with racial resentment or antipathy toward African Americans? This question is of paramount importance, as it establishes the motivation underlying support for the stereotype, and application of a racial double standard. Racial stereotypes can emanate from many sources, which do not necessarily have to be grounded in antipathy toward African Americans, but racial resentment is likely to inspire defamatory beliefs and stereotypes.

For all intents and purposes, racial resentment motivates group marginalization, especially when it is subtle and justifiable on nonracial grounds. For example, Gaertner and Dovidio (1986) found that "aversive racists" feel no guilt or shame from expressing racist attitudes if they can do so in a subtle and easily rationalizable fashion. Similar to other coded racial stereotypes, the application of the racial reductionist stereotype is likely connected to a broader racial belief system that views Blacks as a threat to the "rules of the game" or the values upon which American society functions. According to Kinder and Sanders (1996, p. 108), "the problem of race is not the threat that blacks might pose to whites' personal safety or to their material well-being,

7. When African American respondents were asked whether they voted for Obama because he is African American or the better candidate, 19 percent (in 2010) and 22 percent (in 2012) selected the former.

but to their sense of civic virtue.” Further, [Wilson and Davis \(2011\)](#) argue that Whites’ resentment toward Blacks stems from the perception that Blacks have received certain unearned privileges and advantages that have come at the expense of Whites, creating a sense of injustice or unfairness. This ultimately leads to perceptions of threat to the civic values (e.g., justice and fairness) identified by [Kinder and Sanders \(1996\)](#), where Whites perceive they are ostensibly playing by the rules but receiving little recognition, while African Americans appear to be rewarded and celebrated merely for their racial background, but not held accountable for their actions. Thus, for racially resentful Whites, racial marginalization, through restrictions on voting rights ([Wilson, Owens, and Davis 2015](#)), opposition to ameliorative racial policies ([Feldman and Huddy 2005](#)), and even trivializing Blacks’ political behavior ([Wilson and King-Meadows 2016](#)), become manifest expressions of Whites’ frustrations with Blacks, and race in general. By contrast, Whites who are not racially resentful are better able to appreciate the nuances of both racial difference and African Americans’ voting behavior.

Thus, we expect that Whites, particularly those who are racially resentful, are likely to believe that Obama’s race gave him an undeserved political advantage. Racially resentful Whites should not be willing to concede that Barack Obama was the best candidate, but likely to believe that people voted for Barack Obama out of pressure to prove they were not racist. Theoretically, those with higher racial resentment are likely to perceive the world in terms of unfair racial advantage—and it would be inconsistent with this worldview to admit that Barack Obama was elected because he was the better-qualified candidate. Therefore, in addition to an attribution of the reductionist stereotype to African Americans’ support for Barack Obama, we expect the effects of racial resentment to be consistent across all the reference groups. This simply suggests that racially resentful Whites believe that race is the primary reason anyone would vote for Barack Obama, and that he certainly could not have won because he was the best candidate.

The 2010 and 2012 CCES data contained the [Wilson and Davis \(2011\)](#) scale of explicit racial resentment.⁸ This measure has several desirable properties, including high scale reliability and high correlation with traditional outcomes of racial resentment (e.g., anti-egalitarianism, authoritarianism, racial stereotypes), and it has been powerful in predicting attitudes toward other ostensibly nonracial issues ([Wilson and Brewer 2013](#); [Wilson, Owens, and Davis 2015](#)). Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a list of assertions emphasizing the explicit sources of resentment. The five items were: “Racial discrimination is no different from other everyday problems people have to deal with”; “I resent any

8. Because the 2012 CCES only asked a random half of White respondents to answer racial resentment items, the sample sizes are much smaller that year.

special considerations that Africans Americans receive because it's unfair to other Americans"; "For African Americans to succeed they need to stop using racism and slavery as excuses"; "Special considerations for African Americans place me at an unfair disadvantage because I have done nothing to harm them"; and "African Americans bring up race only when they need to make an excuse for their failure." The scales have excellent reliability ($\alpha_{2010} = .910$; $\alpha_{2012} = .874$), and factor analyses revealed a single factor with 74 and 67 percent explained variance in 2010 and 2012, respectively. The values on the scale range from 0 (lowest resentment) to 1 (highest resentment), and scores for 2010 ($M = .73$, $SD = .20$) and 2012 ($M = .61$, $SD = .24$) reveal above-average resentment.⁹

IDEOLOGY, PARTISANSHIP, AND CONTROL VARIABLES

In addition to racial resentment, our analyses included a standard set of control measures intended to account for different reactions to the reference groups. The standard measure of political ideology was a five-point self-report measure ranging from "very liberal" to "very conservative." Partisan identity was included, and collapsed into dichotomous measures for Republicans and Independents, with Democrats as the excluded category. Demographic measures captured age (in years); a six-point ordinal variable for education (1 = less than high school, 2 = high school graduate, 3 = some college, 4 = two-year college graduate, 5 = four-year college graduate, and 6 = postgraduate education); a 14-point ordinal measure of family income (ranging from less than \$15,000 [coded 1] to \$100,000 or more [coded 14]); and a dichotomous measure of "deep South" residence (coded 1) (i.e., South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas) or not (coded 0).

We estimated multivariate models using these independent variables to predict attributions of voting behavior for each reference group used in the previous analyses.

Results

Because of the three mutually exclusive choices in the racial reductionist stereotypes, we used multinomial logistic regressions (MLR) to examine predictors of support for the racial reductionist stereotype. We draw several

9. The theoretical import, measurement properties, and consequentiality of our measure of racial resentment are well documented in extant research (e.g., [Wilson and Davis 2011](#)). Among other things, the measure predicts Whites' support for voting restrictions on felons ([Wilson, Owens, and Davis 2015](#)) and restrictive voter ID laws ([Wilson and Brewer 2013](#)), anger toward President Obama and his actions as president ([Wilson 2015](#)), and Whites' beliefs about voter fraud ([Wilson and King-Meadows 2016](#)).

conclusions from the analyses. Presented in Table 1, the first MLR indicates that racial resentment is the most powerful variable shaping perceptions of how reference groups vote. The coefficient for racial resentment in the African American reference group is positive and statistically significant. Respondents who score higher on the racial resentment scale are more likely than respondents who score lower on the racial resentment scale to perceive that Africans Americans vote for their ingroup candidate rather than the best candidate.

Table 1. Multinomial logistic regression predicting perceived voting of reference groups—2010

Independent variables	Reference groups					
	African Americans		Whites		Women	
	Vote for ingroup	Unsure	Vote for ingroup	Unsure	Vote for ingroup	Unsure
Constant	-6.63** (1.61)	-.38 (1.32)	3.75* (1.63)	1.48 (1.27)	-2.67 (1.59)	.98 (1.11)
Age	-.03 (.01)	-.03* (.01)	-.02 (.02)	.00 (.01)	-.02 (.02)	-.03* (.01)
Education	.19 (.15)	.07 (.14)	-.06 (.18)	-.22 (.14)	-.10 (.17)	-.09 (.13)
Income	.06 (.07)	-.05 (.06)	-.05 (.08)	-.00 (.06)	.02 (.07)	-.01 (.05)
South	-.42 (.48)	-.03 (.45)	1.13* (.56)	.30 (.49)	.95* (.45)	-.06 (.39)
Ideology	.37 (.27)	-.05 (.26)	.10 (.29)	-.25 (.24)	.07 (.26)	-.01 (.05)
Female	-.21 (.40)	.19 (.39)	-.83 (.49)	.88* (.38)	-1.80** (.52)	-1.04** (.35)
Republican	1.71** (.59)	1.44** (.57)	-2.26** (.86)	-.64 (.57)	-.19 (.61)	.70 (.52)
Independent	.45 (.68)	1.55** (.60)	-.98 (.92)	-.11 (.69)	-.48 (.92)	.68 (.70)
Racial resentment	7.88** (1.35)	2.45* (1.17)	-5.02** (1.45)	-2.30* (1.10)	2.78 (1.51)	-1.02 (1.03)
<i>N</i>	298		287		312	
-2LL	457.9**		362.2**		414.9**	
Nagelkerke pseudo R ²	.481		.334		.149	

NOTE.—* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. Results are for White respondents, with standard errors in parentheses. The reference category for the dependent variable is “Vote for whom they feel is the best candidate.”

Second, across the reference groups, the coefficient for racial resentment is negative and significant for Whites (see last row), which suggests that respondents who score higher on the racial resentment scale perceive that Whites are less likely to vote for their ingroup candidate. Whites believed that they are more likely to vote for the best candidate over their ingroup candidate. Thus, while racial resentment toward Blacks compels Whites to see Blacks as biased toward Black candidates, it has the opposite effect for Whites' perceptions of their group. The significant negative coefficient for Republican Party identity indicates that partisanship is tainted by racial antipathy, independent of racial resentment, in the application of the racial reductionist stereotype. Republican identifiers were less likely to perceive Whites as mainly voting for their ingroup candidate over the best candidate. These results complement the racial double standard revealed through the experimental main effects; racial resentful Whites, especially Republicans, perceived the political motivations of African Americans very differently than they perceived their own group.¹⁰

Last, the major predictor of whether women were perceived to vote mainly for female candidates is gender. Representing a dichotomous measure, the significant coefficient for gender indicates that men and women differ on the application of the reductionist stereotype for women. Perhaps connected to broader gender stereotypes, men are probably more likely than women to think of women as narrow-mindedly voting for their ingroup than the best candidate.

Another test of the underlying motivations of the racial reductionist stereotype utilizes the 2012 CCES data in which Hispanics were included as a reference group. As shown in [Table 2](#), MLR analyses parallel the previous results regarding the influence of racial resentment on the racial reductionist stereotype. Racial resentment is positive and significant for perceptions of African Americans' and Hispanics' voting behaviors, negative and significant for perceptions of Whites, and nonsignificant for perceptions of Women. The interpretation is the same as in the 2010 CCES data; respondents high on racial resentment were more likely than respondents low on racial resentment to perceive Blacks and Hispanics as voting for their ingroup candidates than voting for the best candidate. The effects of Republican Party identity and gender are not evident in this analysis. Nonetheless, combined with the results of the 2010 CCES data, the findings unequivocally support the role of racial resentment in trivializing Blacks' political behavior.

10. [Parker and Barreto \(2013\)](#) suggest that race was an important component among supporters of the Tea Party. Including a measure of Tea Party support might capture a component of the racial context not reflected in our measures of racial resentment, partisanship, and ideology. We explored this possibility using the 2010 CCES data, and found that including a measure of favorability toward the Tea Party did not alter the substantive effects of racial resentment on the belief that African Americans are driven by race.

Table 2. Multinomial logistic regression predicting perceived voting of reference groups—2012

Independent variables	Reference groups							
	African Americans		Whites		Hispanics		Women	
	Vote for ingroup	Unsure	Vote for ingroup	Unsure	Vote for ingroup	Unsure	Vote for ingroup	Unsure
Constant	-2.71 (2.02)	.53 (1.81)	4.14 (2.62)	1.37 (1.72)	-4.74** (1.82)	-2.69* (1.29)	2.14 (2.67)	-7.59** (2.95)
Age	-.02 (.02)	-.03 (.02)	-.04 (.03)	-.00 (.02)	.05* (.02)	.02 (.01)	-.06 (.03)	.06 (.03)
Education	.21 (.21)	-.09 (.20)	-.32 (.41)	-.08 (.24)	.22 (.22)	.06 (.16)	-.11 (.39)	.01 (.25)
Income	.11 (.11)	.11 (.10)	-.01 (.15)	-.13 (.11)	-.26* (.12)	-.01 (.08)	-.06 (.17)	.02 (.13)
South	.80 (.77)	-.43 (.84)	1.35 (1.05)	1.05 (.72)	-1.27 (.72)	-.77 (.54)	.93 (1.09)	.47 (.86)
Ideology	-.14 (.27)	.03 (.25)	-.08 (.51)	-.04 (.25)	.08 (.25)	.05 (.20)	-.19 (.39)	.33 (.38)
Female	-.07 (.67)	-.09 (.62)	-.43 (.93)	-.92 (.61)	.23 (.61)	.47 (.47)	.26 (.94)	-1.71* (.75)
Republican	3.68** (1.51)	1.54 (1.12)	2.90 (2.11)	-.00 (.99)	-.32 (.95)	-.02 (.74)	.86 (1.36)	-.63 (1.12)
Independent	1.97* (.98)	.04 (1.60)	3.38 (2.12)	-.68 (1.26)	.42 (1.04)	.56 (.85)	1.90 (1.65)	2.48* (1.08)

(Continued)

Table 2. Continued

Independent variables	Reference groups							
	African Americans		Whites		Hispanics		Women	
	Vote for ingroup	Unsure	Vote for ingroup	Unsure	Vote for ingroup	Unsure	Vote for ingroup	Unsure
Racial resentment	3.54** (1.68)	.55 (1.61)	-10.16** (3.46)	-2.63 (1.66)	4.25** (1.59)	2.30* (1.17)	-1.93 (2.40)	1.78 (2.26)
N	120		130		127		100	
-2LL	182.0**		129.9		235.7**		104.1**	
Nagelkerke pseudo R ²	.484		.251		.246		.416	

NOTE.—* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. Results are for White respondents, with standard errors in parentheses. The reference category for the dependent variable is “Vote for whom they feel is the best candidate.”

We illustrate the conditional effects of racial resentment on perceptions of ingroup voting in the two line graphs shown in Figures 6 and 7. Both graphs plot the predicted probability of respondents believing a reference group votes for its own group on the vertical axis, racial resentment on the horizontal axis, and separate lines for different experimental reference groups. These figures indicate that where respondents fall on the racial resentment scale matters a great deal for how they attribute the reductionist stereotype to African Americans. That is, respondents who score low on racial resentment are less likely to endorse the racial reductionist stereotype than those who score moderate or high on racial resentment. Respondents who score high

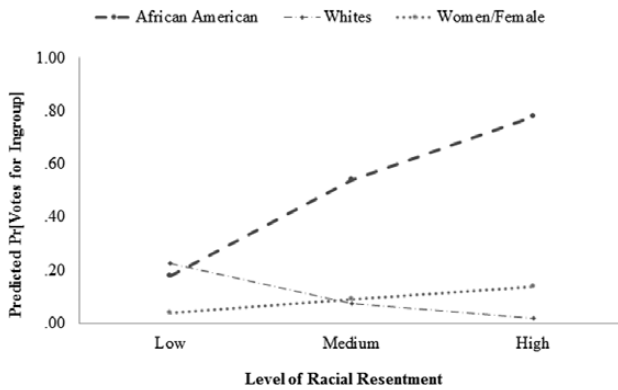


Figure 6. Predicted probabilities for perceived group voting vs. vote for best candidate—2010.

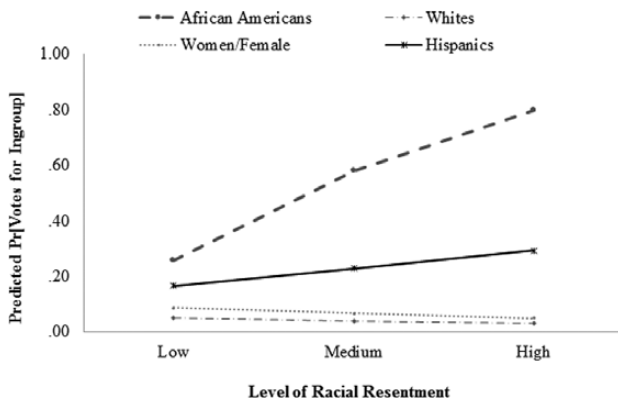


Figure 7. Predicted probabilities for perceived group vote vs. vote for best candidate—2012.

on racial resentment are more likely to endorse the racial reductionist stereotype than those who are moderate on the racial resentment scale. These results hold for both years. It is important to note that, given that racial resentment is intended to capture a sense of antipathy toward African Americans, it should be less related to perceptions of the other reference groups, as indicated by their essentially flat slopes.

We examined the racial reductionist stereotype applied to voting for Barack Obama using the same MLR model to explore the group voting experiments. Our analysis is limited to 2010 data due to the 5 (reference groups) x 2 (valence) design in 2012, and because the racial resentment items were only asked to a random half of the sample, the sample sizes were too small for multivariate analyses for that year's data.

Table 3 provides the results of the 2010 MLR models. As expected, racial resentment predicts voting for Obama because he was Black. No interaction terms between racial resentment and group were significant in this analysis. This means that more racially resentful Whites attribute support from all groups (African Americans, Whites, a majority of Americans, and people) to race. The racial reductionist stereotype appears to be inspired by Barack Obama's success as well as the unwillingness of racially resentful Whites to accept that others might see qualities beyond his race. That is, holding racially resentful beliefs about African Americans motivates a perception that race is the only legitimate motive for voting for Barack Obama.

The roles of ideology and Republican identity function in a similar fashion, limiting the motivation for voting for Barack Obama to race. The coefficients for ideology (conservatism) and Republican identity are statistically significant and positive across all experimental conditions. Beyond the effects of racial resentment, conservatives and Republicans have been shown to possess jaundiced racial beliefs. These results seem to confirm that such views are also connected to the racial reductionist stereotype in the context of the Obama experiment.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this research has been to examine the racial reductionist stereotype, the belief on the part of Whites that African Americans base their political and voting decisions on race or skin color to the exclusion of other considerations. Growing out of psychological processes related to social categorization, social identity, and positive distinctiveness, the racial reductionist stereotype has been used to trivialize African Americans' voting behaviors and to diminish the significance of the election of Barack Obama. We designed two sets of experiments and replicated both in two different national public opinion surveys to examine the extent to which the racial reductionist stereotype represented a double standard for African

Table 3. Multinomial logistic regression predicting perceived reference groups voting for Barack Obama—2010

Independent variables	Reference groups							
	African Americans		Whites		Majority of Americans		People	
	Vote for ingroup	Unsure	Vote for ingroup	Unsure	Vote for ingroup	Unsure	Vote for ingroup	Unsure
Constant	-5.11** (1.46)	-1.41 (1.75)	-8.33** (1.89)	-1.92 (1.67)	-5.19** (1.42)	-1.64 (1.96)	-9.72** (1.92)	-5.08* (2.03)
Age	-.01 (.01)	-.03 (.02)	.05** (.01)	.00 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.03 (.02)	-.00 (.02)	.00 (.02)
Education	-.02 (.15)	-.18 (.19)	-.13 (.17)	-.25 (.18)	-.15 (.14)	-.08 (.21)	.02 (.18)	-.08 (.21)
Income	.01 (.07)	.05 (.08)	-.16* (.08)	-.24** (.08)	.02 (.06)	-.07 (.09)	.06 (.08)	-.04 (.09)
South	.75 (.56)	.76 (.69)	-.27 (.47)	-.13 (.49)	.99* (.45)	.86 (.64)	.02 (.54)	.37 (.61)
Ideology	.67** (.26)	.54 (.31)	.63** (.28)	.58* (.28)	.55** (.22)	.60 (.32)	1.18** (.30)	.64 (.34)
Female	-.18 (.42)	.16 (.54)	-.62 (.43)	-.58 (.28)	.03 (.38)	-.27 (.55)	.64 (.46)	.13 (.55)
Republican	1.37* (.62)	.88 (.81)	2.46** (.61)	2.18** (.62)	2.42** (.51)	1.76* (.79)	2.48** (.62)	2.10** (.75)
Independent	.77 (.86)	.16 (1.33)	1.82** (.71)	.62 (.77)	1.02 (.60)	-18.8 (.00)	1.42* (.64)	.87 (.84)

(Continued)

Table 3. *Continued*

Independent variables	Reference groups							
	African Americans		Whites		Majority of Americans		People	
	Vote for ingroup	Unsure	Vote for ingroup	Unsure	Vote for ingroup	Unsure	Vote for ingroup	Unsure
Racial resentment	6.19** (1.36)	.53 (1.59)	4.57** (1.39)	.79 (1.29)	3.73** (1.17)	-.95 (1.73)	5.31** (1.54)	1.97 (1.75)
<i>N</i>	269		264		258		258	
-2LL	289.3**		369.1**		306.6		268.9**	
Nagelkerke pseudo R ²	.53		.54		.55		.66	

NOTE.—**p* < .05, ***p* < .01. Results are for White respondents, with standard errors in parentheses. The reference category for the dependent variable is “Vote for whom they feel is the best candidate.”

Americans, and if so, the extent to which it was connected to racial resentment or antipathy toward African Americans. All evidence supports the same conclusion: Whites perceive that African Americans are motivated by race to the exclusion of other considerations, and such perceptions are most likely among Whites scoring high on the racial resentment scale. Moreover, the racial reductionist stereotype is more likely to be applied to African Americans, and in the case of the 2008 and 2012 elections, trivialized African American political behaviors and diminished the significance of the election of Barack Obama.

The racial reductionist stereotype in reality carries its own contradictions. African American Republican candidates who do not share the same partisan identity as the vast majority of African Americans have emerged recently, but they have received only meager support from African Americans. Yet, this has not prevented expectations that such candidates would draw substantial support from African Americans. African American candidates in national politics, such as Alan Keyes in 1999, Herman Cain in 2011, and Ben Carson in 2015, polled well and seemed competitive at one point or another to pursue the Republican Party presidential nomination, presumably because of their appeal to Whites. However, African American support never materialized, despite expectations that a shared racial identity would outweigh partisanship and racially antagonistic messages. The contradiction is that evidence abounds that African Americans are not reflexively biased toward race.

Although the racial reductionist stereotype may be more noticeable in political commentary, we have tapped a broader racial stereotype that encompasses everyday life. Racial assumptions extend to perceptions regarding African Americans cheering for a Black quarterback or a Black coach, seeing Black physicians or dentists, or attending a historically Black college simply because they are Black. Blacks' choices are perceived as neither nuanced nor sophisticated. Such perceptions are important not so much because Blacks are perceived as supporting their own group, but the sting of racism lies in why they are perceived to "choose" to do so. Blacks may choose to cheer for the Black quarterback because of a higher passer rating, visit a Black physician or dentist because he or she is more trustworthy, and attend a historically Black college because of the faculty or residential proximity. In the end, social perceptions remain pervasive and continue to offer great opportunities for the study of social and political public opinion.

Supplementary Data

Supplementary data are freely available at *Public Opinion Quarterly* online.

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