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Voter Perception: Skin Tone Bias and the Electability of Black American Candidates

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Running head: PERCEPTIONS OF BLACK CANDIDATES

Voter Perception:

Skin Tone Bias and the Electability of Black American Candidates

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Honors Project

Psychology 614: Independent Study

Professor Kendrick Brown

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Abstract

Skin tone bias is the inclination to perceive or behave towards members of a racial group based on the lightness or darkness of their skin. Previous research has demonstrated that the lightness or darkness of one's skin tone plays an important role in person perception. However, skin tone bias has yet to be fully explored in a political context. This study investigates the relationship between skin tone and the perception of Black political candidates. Eighty eight participants took a skin tone IAT and were asked to evaluate a newspaper article featuring a Black candidate, differing only in skin tone. The hypothesis that participants would rate the dark skinned candidate less positively than the light or medium skinned candidate was not confirmed.

Voter Perception:

Skin Tone Bias and the Electability of Black American Candidates

In the current national political scene in the United States, it would be a challenging task to have an extensive dialogue regarding the perceptions of Black American candidates without mentioning Barack Obama and his ascent to the Presidency. Being the first Black President in United States history, Obama serves as an interesting case study for exploring the perceptions and evaluations of Black candidates in political, as well as psychological, research. Since his introduction to the national political scene marked by his keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, Obama brings to the forefront numerous racial, ethnic, and cultural issues to be examined. Since that time and throughout his campaign, Obama's run for the Presidency has created enthusiasm and conversation worldwide. Perhaps the most prevalent discussion about Obama and his race and ethnicity seen in the mainstream media and reflected in academic literature is his level of Blackness. Why is this so? While electing the U.S.'s first Black President is a historical milestone sure to create an extensive discourse, the recent buzz seems to not just be about the fact that Obama is a Black man who successfully ran for President; many are quick to actually challenge Obama's Blackness. Often taking the two-fold form of a "too Black" or "not Black enough" debate, this discourse demonstrates the depth of complexity when it comes to Black candidate perception.

A vast amount of social and political psychological research has been devoted to candidate preference and perception in terms of voter behavior. Research on racial attitudes and White evaluations of Black candidates and voter preference consistently demonstrates that White constituents continue to negatively evaluate Black candidates

(Terkildsen, 1993; Abramowitz, 1994; Citrin, Green, and Sears, 1990). Results of this research point to White prejudice and discrimination toward Black candidates (Abramowitz, 1994), endorsement of racial stereotypes regarding Black candidates (Bobo, 1988), and reluctance to support and vote for Black candidates (Citrin, Green, and Sears, 1990; Sigelman, Sigelman, Walkosz, and Nitz, 1995). Thus, this work establishes that a candidate's Blackness "matters" in terms of White voter preference and electability and suggests a generally negative conception of Black candidates.

However, an important factor that has yet to be considered in this realm of research is how implicit and explicit skin tone attitudes affect the perceptions and evaluations of Black candidates. Skin tone bias is the inclination to perceive, or behave towards, members of a racial group based on the lightness or darkness of their skin (Maddox and Gray, 2002). Skin tone bias is comparable to a racial bias, but differs in that the bias stems from the skin tone of individuals within a racial group rather than racial group membership (Maddox and Gray, 2002). Skin tone is a major issue within the Black community and has been widely examined. Measured implicitly and explicitly, social psychological research shows that skin tone bias permeates numerous cultural groups, including Blacks (Keith and Herring, 1991), Latinos (Uhlmann, Dasgupta, Elgueta, Greenwald, Swanson, 2002), and several Asian cultures (Ashikari, 2003).

Much of this research has focused on skin tone bias and person perception within the Black American community. These findings consistently point to a preference for a light skin tone versus a darker complexion. Researchers define "preference" in numerous ways. For instance, a lighter skin tone among Blacks is consistently highly correlated with perceptions of physical attractiveness (Hill, 2002), self-efficacy, self-esteem,

motivation (Thompson and Keith, 2001), intelligence, satisfaction, quality of life (Robinson, 1995), and high socioeconomic status (Wade and Romano, 2004). In contrast, dark skin is associated with negative racial stereotypes, such as being unintelligent, unmotivated, even delinquent, dirty and criminal (Blair, Judd, and Chapleau, 2004). Further, literature also demonstrates that lighter skinned Black Americans complete more school, have higher paying jobs, greater occupational prestige, live in more integrated neighborhoods, and have better mental health than do darker skinned Blacks (Hunter, 2005; Hughes and Hertel, 1990).

However, what has not been confirmed by research at this point is whether or not these findings hold within other domains, such as politics. Moreover, why investigate skin tone bias in political candidates? Research has demonstrated that voter preference is often linked to physical attractiveness, to which light skin has been linked. President Obama, who is a noticeably light skinned Black man, has seen a noteworthy following and widespread support from White constituents. Working to mitigate the negative effects of racial bias, could Obama's lighter skin have played a role in his achievement of constituent support? While this divisive social phenomenon is well documented, the examination of skin tone bias in the political context has yet to be fully addressed by social and political psychological literature. Although research shows that White voters negatively evaluate Black candidates, there remains a fairly sizeable gap in the literature regarding the assessment of how White voters will evaluate Black candidates of various skin tones. The present study examines the relationship between skin tone bias and the perception of Black American political candidates.

Historical Development of Skin Tone Bias in the United States

It is evident that physical features such as skin tone have been used to drive perceptions and treatment of Black individuals today. For example, the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reported that complaints of color bias and discrimination in the workplace have tripled from the early 1990s to 2002 (Hunter, 2005). During the past Presidential election, Hillary Clinton's campaign came under fire for reportedly darkening a photograph of Obama used in a television advertisement (Ararvosis, 2008). Further, *Time* magazine purportedly attempted to digitally alter a cover photograph of O.J. Simpson to make his skin tone darker, believing this would make him appear more sinister (Hill, 2002). While it is unclear if the Clinton campaign or *Time* magazine had racist intents, it is certainly apparent that this alleged decision supports the notion that Blackness is linked to negativity (Hill, 2002). These examples demonstrate the pervasiveness of skin tone bias within modern culture as well as show how skin tone is an important issue in the Black community and a significant factor in the perception of a Black American's level of Blackness.

How did this sort of colorism develop among Blacks the United States? Rooted in a past of colonization and racial oppression, the origins of skin tone bias in the United States go back to the 1600s when White settlers brought Africans to the new American colonies for enslavement (Russell, Wilson, & Hall, 1992). It was slavery that "set the stage, ideologically and materially for systems of racism and colorism we now know" (Hunter, 2005, p. 17). Skin tone bias developed as a justification of the enslavement and inhumane treatment of people of African descent (Hunter, 2005; Hill, 2002). Through sociopolitical and cultural domination, Whites adhered to an ideology of White

supremacy that resulted in the formation of a racial hierarchy (Hunter, 2005). With

Blacks forced to the bottom and Whites on top, Whiteness soon became associated with

the positive elements of life, while Blackness represented the opposite, inferior status

(Hill, 2002).

Many factors led to the development of a lighter skin tone in Blacks, mainly racial

mixing due to the offspring of Whites and Blacks (Russell, Wilson, Hall, 1992; Hunter,

2005). Though consensual at times, a noteworthy factor to recognize in discussing the

history behind skin tone stratification in Black Americans is the sexual violence against

African women by White men during slavery (Hunter, 2005). Since a mixed-race child's

racial identity and status was always considered to be the same as that of the mother and

under the biased and "curiously inclusive" One Drop Rule, anyone with just "a drop" of

Black blood was categorized as fully Black (Russell, Wilson, Hall, 1992, p. 14; Hunter,

2005, p. 18). Regardless of a bi-racial or multi-racial identity, being classified as Black

meant that one could be legally trafficked as a slave. Thus, the rape of Black women

served as an embedded mechanism of social control that resulted in racially mixed and

often lighter skinned offspring for predestined enslavement (Hunter, 2005; Hill, 2002).

In accordance with the "Mulatto Hypothesis," which posited that light skinned

Blacks were intellectually superior to dark skinned Blacks by nature because they had

some amount of White blood, a color hierarchy developed "through the systematic

privileging of light skinned Black Americans over dark skinned Black Americans"

(Russell, Wilson, Hall, 1992; Hunter, 2005, p. 18). "Such color distinction filtered into

the Black American population during slavery, as light skinned 'Mulattos;' often the

children or other relatives of their White owners, commonly received special advantages

in comparison with darker slaves" (Hill, 2002, p. 78). Thus, a light skin tone in Blacks became associated with Whiteness and represented "civility, rationality, and beauty," while dark skin was considered savage, irrational, more sexually driven, and ugly (Hunter, 2005, p. 3). Social distinctions among Blacks were increasingly made on the basis of skin color and active discrimination against dark skinned Blacks now came from both Whites and light skinned Blacks (Russell, Wilson, Hall, 1992).

As the prevailing ideology of White supremacy progressed and as the skin color among Blacks began to vary and gradually lighten, skin tone became an important social indicator in the racialized society. It is important to note that although skin tone bias within Black Americans was first practiced by Whites, Blacks themselves eventually began to internalize this bias as well. Though once uniting Blacks, skin tone began to move beyond the between race paradigm of Black versus White and soon became a source of stigma within the Black community, as light skinned Blacks were often considered "better" than their darker skinned counterparts by other Blacks (Hill, 2002). Further historical evidence speaks to this notion by demonstrating how Blacks have used skin tone to not only establish, but to maintain a hierarchy within their racial category (Hill, 2002). For example, "believing that refinement and emotional restraint were embodied in persons most resembling the dominant White population," Black American owners of clubs and organizations throughout the 1900s used lightness tests, such as the brown paper bag test, to restrict admittance to only select Blacks (Hill, 2002, p. 75). In this particular case, a profound preference for a lighter skin tone is clear, as persons whose skin tone was darker than a brown paper bag were denied entrance (Hill, 2002).

Given the knowledge regarding historical racism in the United States and acknowledging that Whites are the majority cultural group, the minority status and negative racial stereotypes given to Blacks essentially denote "Black is bad" while equating Whiteness with the more positive and superior connotations. Thus, perhaps the main underlying basis for this preference stems from the idea that light skin is considered "more White" and dark skin is considered "more Black." Psychological literature consistently points to a preference towards lighter skin tones in Black Americans, though this research has never been expanded to specifically focus on Black candidates.

Skin Tone Bias and Person Perception

Understanding the historical background leading up to the psychological study of skin tone bias helps to reveal the gap in the literature that the present study addresses. Within the skin tone bias research, several prominent topics are evident. One facet of the research focuses on the role of skin tone in categorization and representations of Blacks, which also incorporates research on stereotypes. This aspect of the literature suggests that skin tone may interact with subcategories of an individual (e.g., clothing, speech, etc.) to help create or reinforce them (Maddox and Chase, 2004). For instance, a Black man wearing a doctor's lab coat while speaking in a Standard English dialect may seem more consistent with a perceiver's mental representation of the group (Blacks) if the doctor has light versus dark skin (Maddox and Chase, 2004). Similarly, a Black man wearing athletic clothing would likely be expected to have a darker skin tone (Maddox and Chase, 2004). Based on this research, researchers have been able to make an important statement regarding stereotypes in Blacks, suggesting skin tone plays a deeper role than past social psychological theory and research would suggest (Maddox and Gray, 2002). Maddox and

Gray (2002) conducted an experiment that illustrates this point: Black and White participants filled out a questionnaire regarding cultural and personal beliefs about ethnic groups. Each page of the questionnaire had a social group listed on the top: dark skinned Black women and men and light skinned Black women and men. The subsequent sections of the questionnaire provided spaces to list positive, negative, and neutral characteristics about each group. Results showed that participants listed more negative traits for the dark skinned groups and more positive traits were listed for the light skinned groups. A content analysis showed that participants categorized the dark skinned groups as athletic, criminal, dirty/smelly, inferior, lazy, ostentatious, poor, rhythmic, sexually aggressive, tough/aggressive, uneducated, and unintelligent, while intelligent, kind, educated, motivated, superior, and wealthy were associated with light skinned groups (Maddox and Gray, 2002).

The previous two studies provide applicable information that illuminates the degree to which skin tone is involved in our mental representations of Blacks. While in the past, skin tone has been conceived as a way to classify racial membership (e.g., if one has dark skin, they are Black; if one has light skin, they are White), this research indicates that skin tone also plays a role as a subdimension within a single racial category (Maddox and Gray, 2002). By showing that skin tone can be linked to social beliefs about a race, researchers established that there is an inclination to divide the range of phenotypic variation into distinct racial groups. This may be complemented by an additional tendency to make even "finer, socially meaningful" distinctions within racial categories using the same phenotypic features, including skin tone (Maddox and Chase, 2004). Though these results are meaningful, it is unclear the extent to which they can be

applied to specific subgroups within Black Americans, such as Black politicians, and in different contexts besides social psychology, such as political science or political psychology.

Knowing how skin color relates to the perceptions of Blacks in the United States may be helpful in understanding the perceptions of Blacks in a political context. Much of this literature focuses on the perceived attractiveness of people with varying skin tones, taking into account Afrocentric versus Eurocentric physical features, and also involving additional stereotype research. Hill (2006) examined the relationship between skin tone and level of perceived physical attractiveness. Using a Likert scale, participants evaluated images of females with varying skin tones who were said to be potential endorsers for an upcoming advertising campaign. The image of a female was manipulated to appear pale, light brown, and dark brown. Based on the previous research that there is a preference for lighter skin tones, researchers hypothesized that the lighter skinned image would positively affect perceptions of beauty. Results revealed that both Black and White participants found the light brown complexion to be perceived as the most attractive, confirming the hypothesis that there is a skin tone bias favoring light brown; interestingly, the lightest complexion (pale) was not a favored (Frisby, 2006).

Another parallel study used data from the National Survey of Black Americans (NSBA) to test the hypothesis that Blacks perceive physical attractiveness of other Blacks based on skin tone (Hill, 2002). Interviewers of the NSBA conducted face-to-face interviews with Black Americans and rated the interviewees on a series of observations, including physical attractiveness and skin tone. Based on the analysis of the perceptions of the interviewers, results revealed that skin tone influences attractiveness in women, but

less so in men. For male targets, "light brown" (the second lightest group) had the highest

mean of attractiveness, while in contrast, female targets had the highest mean of

attractiveness for "very light brown" (the lightest group). Black Americans seem to

perceive lighter skin as a "feminine" characteristic, and out of all the variables used to

determine the perceived attractiveness of the interviewee, "skin color" was the second

highest predictor considered in both males and females (Hill, 2002).

What about skin tone and the more persistent images we see of Black Americans?

An important contemporary issue regarding Black Americans is their portrayal in the

media. Aiming to investigate skin tone bias and to address the notion that the media often

misrepresents Black Americans as the perpetrators of crime against Whites, Dixon and

Maddox (2005) investigated if skin tone and race of a perpetrator could influence

viewers' emotional discomfort, perceptions, and memory. A diverse group of participants

first completed measures assessing their television news viewing habits and were then

randomly assigned to one of four conditions in which they were exposed to either a

White, light skinned Black, medium skinned Black, or dark skinned Black male

perpetrator who committed a crime. Participants responded to several filler tasks, and

were later asked about their perceptions of the perpetrator and victim. Results revealed

that heavy news watchers were more likely than light watchers to feel emotional

discomfort after being exposed to the dark skinned Black perpetrator. Heavy watchers

also had positive perceptions of the victim when the perpetrator was Black, regardless of

skin tone. Additionally, results showed that the perpetrator was most memorable when he

was dark skinned. These results suggest that skin tone among Blacks is capable of

activating racial stereotypes that frame Blacks as criminals. This experiment poses many

implications regarding the interaction between the media and racism, skin tone, social

attitudes and judgments, and potentially policy regarding criminal justice (Dixon and

Maddox, 2005).

The research on skin tone bias and person perception poses many valid assertions

about society in the racial context. Essentially positing that light is more likeable and

desirable, dark skinned Blacks may experience considerable social disadvantages (Hill,

2002). Taken in a broader meaning, these results also imply a problematic consequence

for race relations of the United States: with the inability to thoroughly observe the

personal features of members of another race, perception will be forced through a social

lens, providing great grounds for racial stereotypes and conflict (Hill, 2002). However,

how do these significant findings translate into the realm of politics? Will the preference

for lighter skin in Black American individuals remain for Black American political

candidates as well?

There have been few studies that directly examine skin tone and political

candidates.[1] Terkildsen (1993) proposed that three factors affect the electability of Black

candidates: candidate race, voter prejudice and racial attitudes, and candidate skin tone.

Consistent with previous research, Terkildsen hypothesized that White voters would

judge Black candidates with a darker skin tone more negatively than light skinned Black

candidates and White voters may monitor (censor) their racial attitudes and expressions

in order to oblige by social norms. To test this, participants read stories about a candidate

running for governor and were given a photograph of either a White male, light skinned

Black male, or dark skinned Black male. Results showed that racial prejudice negatively

influenced the evaluations of Black candidates. After controlling for self monitoring, it

was also demonstrated that the dark skinned candidate was evaluated more harshly than the lighter skinned candidate (Terkildsen, 1993).

Besides Terkilden's (1993) findings, we have seen a preference for lighter skin in Black candidates in Sigelman et al.'s (1995) Extremity Effects theory, which asserts that that Whites will evaluate attractive or competent out-group members more positively than unattractive or incompetent out-group members. Since a light skin tone in Black has been demonstrated to be considered more physically attractive than darker skin, it can be assumed that this theory would posit that light skinned Black candidates would be evaluated more positively than dark skinned Black candidates.[2]

Although these two studies have findings and theories relating to skin tone bias and the perception of Black American political candidates, the purposes of these studies were not to directly examine skin tone in Black political candidates. Thus, it is evident that there is a considerable gap in the literature regarding this topic: while it has been shown how skin tone bias operates with Black individuals, it has yet to be fully examined in the political context. Further, after reviewing the previous studies and literature, it is important to address how attitudes regarding skin tone are measured. Most researchers do not measure explicit skin tone bias in that they do not explicitly ask participants if they believe light skinned Blacks are "better than" their darker skinned counterparts. Yet, implicit attitudes are often not measured (via an implicit association task) either. This indirect measurement of skin tone bias attitudes is the most common method seen in this discourse today. The present study utilizes this standard measurement, as well as assessing implicit skin tone attitudes as well.

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In sum, skin tone bias within Black Americans is an existing social phenomenon practiced by both out-group members as well as Black Americans. It is known what the "preference" for a lighter skin color entails and how it mediates perceptions and evaluations of light and dark skinned Blacks. It is unclear however if this bias can be applied to specific groups within the Black American community, for example, politicians. Hence, the previous psychological research on skin tone bias in Black Americans lays a broad foundation for a direct study of skin tone bias that may affect Black American political candidates. I will now turn to reviewing research on racial attitudes that is pertinent to the exploration of skin tone bias and Black candidates.

Theory on Racial Attitudes toward Black Candidates: The Role of Individuating Information

Besides skin tone attitudes, a competing explanation for different ways in which light, medium, and dark skinned Black candidates may be evaluated is racial attitudes. Providing theoretical insight into the workings of racial attitudes and politics will assess the possibility that it is not necessarily skin tone bias, but racial bias that guides perceptions of Black political candidates. Studies examining this broad topic often investigate Whites' evaluations of Black candidates, racial prejudice and stereotyping, racial attitudes on policy positions, and attitudes towards Black politics. Though the racial attitudes of voters generally seem to point to a negative conception of Black candidates, the importance of individuating information in overriding negative attitudes has been shown as well.

Sigelman et al. (1995) conducted an experiment to test the likelihood that Whites would vote for a fictitious United States Senator who was either Black, White, liberal,

moderate, or conservative. Researchers tested eight competing hypotheses to predict how willing White constituents would vote for a minority candidate. Participants were asked who they would vote for based on the provided candidate description. Participants' perceptions of the candidate's ideology, compassion, competence, and the voter's probability of voting for the candidate were measured. These results do not necessarily support a single theoretical perspective (of the eight hypotheses) over another, but they are in line with the "assumed characteristic view," which considers voter evaluations to be a function of what traits racial stereotypes expect Blacks to have, what traits a Black candidate actually has, and what evaluative significance is attached to these assumed and actual traits. Specifically the assumed characteristics view uses prior assumptions about the traits that out-group members collectively possess and information about the traits of a specific member of that out-group. Researchers assert that information about a specific out-group member can contradict preconceptions that originate from stereotypes about the entire out-group (i.e. individuating information). Sigelman et al. (1995) conclude that if information about a candidate generates a large influence, voters will favor the candidate whose political views are most compatible with their own, regardless of race. If information is less influential, lingering effects of stereotypes may be experienced. Thus, voting outcomes for Whites will depend on the individuating information about Black candidates, and how much this information contradicts past stereotypes.

Sigelman et al. (1995) discovered several other interesting findings as well. First, the minority status of a Black candidate enhanced the perception that moderate and conservative candidates would be compassionate toward disadvantaged groups, but

created doubts about a candidate's competence.[3] Results also indicated that White voters

were equally likely to vote for a Black candidate or a White candidate. Researchers

speculate that this could be because the pros of being perceived compassionately were

counteracted by the cons of being stereotyped as incompetent. What is particularly

notably about this study is that the results call into question the behavioral impact of

negative attitudes (Sigelman et al., 1995). Further, these findings suggest that

individuating information is crucial in understanding how racial stereotypes are used.

This relates to the literature on skin tone bias, as it can be argued that light skin in Blacks

can be considered a type of individuating information since it is viewed as "less Black," it

may in turn counter or supersede the many racial stereotypes that Whites hold about

Blacks and Black candidates, but this idea has yet to be investigated.

In a related study, Citrin, Green, and Sears (1990) investigated the role of race in

elections where one of the candidates is Black, specifically addressing the role of

candidate race in activating negative responses from White voters. The 1982 California

gubernatorial election was analyzed as a case study, in which a Black Democrat lost to a

conservative White Republican by only 100,000 out of nearly seven and a half million

votes. This Black candidate was seen as having moderate political views and often ran a

color-blind campaign in which he appeared racially neutral. Additionally, it is relevant to

note that California's Black voting population is less than 10%. With that in mind, this

election was extremely close. Researchers hypothesized that the electoral context and the

personal attributes of the Black candidate would condition the reaction of White voters,

resulting in a reduced importance of race compared to the other political considerations

as the basis of opposition.

The results showed that the impact of a candidate's race on voting decision depended on the electoral context, which was broadly defined to include campaign strategy and personal characteristics. Although racial attitudes had a significant influence on the voting decisions of Whites, the Black candidate's race did not produce a large amount of racially motivated behavior from White voters. The researchers founds that the Black candidate's "soothing approach, reluctance to portray himself as a spokesman for the interest of Blacks, and his emphasis of his managerial abilities" deemphasized his race to White voters, causing him to be perceived as less stereotypically Black (Citrin, Green, and Sears, 1990, p. 92). Thus, White voters tended to evaluate the Black candidate as just a Democrat, rather than as a *Black* Democrat. Again we see here the strong effects of individuating information. The findings of this study also demonstrated the importance of the strategic framing of a campaign in order to maximize Black mobilization without alienating White voters or provoking racial stereotypes (Citrin, Green, and Sears, 1990).

Peffley, Hurwitz, and Sniderman (1997) conducted another study that demonstrates the importance of individuating information by exploring the perceived relationship between race, welfare, and crime, as well as political views. Specifically, researchers examined how and when the stereotypes Whites hold about Black Americans are able to bias their political evaluations of Black Americans in the contexts of welfare and crime. Researchers hypothesized that the level of Whites' endorsement of negative stereotypes regarding Blacks will be a function of the amount of bias in their judgment of who is on welfare and who is a criminal suspect. Additionally, the degree to which Whites endorse Black stereotypes will also affect how Whites respond to counter-stereotypical information about a Black individual (i.e., individuating information).

Results showed that in the context of welfare and criminal policy, Whites holding

negative stereotypes about Blacks were significantly more likely to judge Blacks more

harshly than similarly described Whites. Similar to the above studies, these results

illustrate the importance of individuating information in trumping stereotypical beliefs.

The findings indicated that even when Whites held strong negative perceptions of Blacks,

they responded favorably to Blacks when provided with individuating information that

opposes their stereotype. For example, when faced with individuating information,

Whites approved and supported Black welfare users who were able to "work their way

out of their problems" (Peffley, Hurwitz, and Sniderman, 1997, p. 52). Although this

study does not examine perceptions of Black candidates, it poses important implications

about inhibiting racial stereotypes, particularly in the realms of policy that have become

racialized in the United States, such as the welfare and criminal justice systems. Based on

the results, it seems as though White voters may suppress their racial stereotypes when

presented with individuating information. They may in fact even support a Black

American who followed the "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" mentality (Peffley,

Hurwitz, and Sniderman, 1997). If this is the case, how will these findings apply to Black

candidates? Is being a Black candidate itself a strong enough type of individuating

information to contradict a stereotype, or will Black candidates be unable to break

through racial stereotypes to garner White support?

Together, this literature regarding racial attitudes suggests numerous political

consequences. The results indicate that negative racial attitudes sand stereotypes still

permeate today's society, perhaps suggesting that there is White resistance to the

improved status of Blacks (Bobo, 1988). Whites may view Black American citizens as

threats to an existing social order that is advantageous to Whites, but disadvantageous to Blacks and other minorities (Bobo, 1988). Thus, when a Black American manages to break through the racially stratified system to become a candidate for an elected office position, White voters may not be likely to vote for him/her, which obviously limits electability (Bobo, 1988). If this is the case, this research demonstrates that Black candidates may have an upward battle to face for attaining support from White voters (Bobo, 1988). However, the research also demonstrates that negative racial attitudes and stereotypes that Whites hold about Black Americans may be overridden by individuating information (Peffley, Hurwitz, and Sniderman, 1997). Perhaps the individuating information associated with being a political candidate contradicts several components of racial stereotypes, causing voters to overlook a candidate's Blackness and to perceived the candidate as a mere representative of his/her respective political party (Sigelman et al., 1995; Citrin, Green, and Sears, 1990). Accordingly, despite positive political advancements for Black candidates, it seem as though without individuating information, Black candidates may be unable to garner White support and are thus prevented from being elected to office.

Beyond racial attitudes, what is the role of skin tone attitudes? The only relevant study that addresses this question is Terkildsen's (1993) previously described study, whose results coincide with the results of other skin tone bias research that shows a preference toward a light skin tones in Black Americans in nearly all contexts (Terkildsen, 1993). Further, in the case of President Obama, we saw a light skinned Black American gain widespread White support. Would the same dark skinned candidate have received such welcome? Looking back in political history, other darker skinned Black

Presidential candidates such as Al Sharpton or Jesse Jackson did not garner the vast amount of support that Obama did during his run for Presidency. Of course this may have been due to many factors, but considering what the literature consistently points to, it is certainly not out of the realm of possibility that skin tone played a role as well.

The above research demonstrates that candidate race and the racial attitudes of voters "matter" in that these factors may be able to limit a Black candidate's electability. However, there are numerous variables and influencing factors that go into assessing the "success" of Black candidates, it seems as though individuating information plays a key role, which skin tone could be related to. It is possible that a lighter skin tone may moderate the effects of negative racial attitudes by serving as a type of individuating information that counters racial prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination. Skin tone has been shown to override certain racial stereotypes in Blacks, but it is unclear as to how and to what extent skin tone can play a role in the perception of Blacks in a political context.

Hypothesis

The above literature suggests that the perception of Black political candidates is a complex and multifaceted issue that depends on numerous factors. Research on racial attitudes reinforces the prominence of racism by demonstrating that White evaluations and perceptions of Black candidates are mostly negative. Findings consistently show that Whites generally have prejudiced attitudes and racist stereotypes regarding Black candidates and may view Black American citizens as threats to socially accepted hierarchy that in many ways places Black Americans as second class citizens (Bobo, 1998). With Whites as the majority group in the US, this clear opposition limits the

electability of Black candidates, speaking to the notion that regardless of the increasing number of Black candidates in the United States, Black Americans are still consistently underrepresented.

Yet, the literature also validates the power of individuating information in the perceptions of Black candidates by demonstrating that stereotypes about Black candidates can be contradicted or overridden by individuating information, creating a more favorable perception and evaluation (Peffley, Hurwitz, and Sniderman, 1997). It is plausible that being a Black political candidate in itself (i.e., being perceived as educated, highly respected, motivated, etc.) can be considered individuating information, making the role of race in an election less important (Sigelman et al., 1995; Citrin, Green, and Sears, 1990). Unfortunately though, it appears as if individuating information is the main way White perceptions of Black candidates can be changed for the better. This implies that White evaluations of Black candidates, despite progress in United States race relations, are still negative compared to White candidates, which reduces the probability of winning an election.

Again, what is the role of skin tone? Research has clearly demonstrated that it is favored in many social contexts. It is arguable that a light skin tone in Blacks could be considered a form of individuating information, and thus could negate negative racial attitudes regarding Blacks. However, the extent of this is unknown, as social and political psychology have virtually ignored whether or not skin tone plays a role in Black candidates' electability.

A main conclusion that can be drawn from this research is that individuating information about Black candidates may eliminate the influence of racial bias. Thus,

negative attitudes about Blacks may not necessarily translate into voting behavior that puts Black candidates at an electoral disadvantage. Since light skin in Blacks is often considered "less Black," it is posited that it indeed does serve as a form of individuating information. Therefore, it is hypothesized that skin tone bias effects will be perceived above and beyond a negative racial bias. Thus, regardless of (or perhaps above and beyond) negative racial attitudes, voters are likely to prefer (and rate more positively) a light skinned Black candidate over a medium or dark skinned Black candidate. Further, the role of implicit skin tone attitudes will play a role in how participants perceive the light, medium, and dark skinned candidate as well.

Method

Participants

Participants in this study were 88 undergraduate students (age 17-23) from Macalester College in St. Paul, MN. Of the 88 participants, 54 were female while 34 were male. 5 participants self identified as Asian or Asian American; 5 participants self identified as Latino; 5 participants self identified as Bi/Multi-racial; 2 participants self identified as Black. The remaining 71 participants self identified as White. The majority of participants came from the Introduction to Psychology participant pool. These participants received 1 hour of course credit for their participation in this experiment. Participants were run individually to enhance anonymity so that participants would not feel inhibited in their responses.

Procedure

Using Terkildsen's (1993) study as a model, this experiment was administered in person in a laboratory environment. The researcher greeted participants at the door and

instructed them to read and sign an informed consent form. To ensure anonymity, consent

forms were removed from participant data and participants were only identifiable by their

pre-assigned participation code. After obtaining informed consent, the researcher told

participants a cover story that asserted that their time in the lab would be spent

participating in two separate studies, one titled "words, faces, and puzzles" and other

called "political rhetoric and the media." In actuality, all activities occurring during the

experimental session were designed to assess skin tone bias and the perception of Black

political candidates. The researcher told participants that the purpose of the "first study"

(words, faces, and puzzles) was to investigate how the presentation and response to

words and faces of different races affect the word problem solving abilities and reasoning

skills of college students. The researcher told participants the purpose of the "second

study" (political rhetoric and the media) was to assess how political rhetoric and the

media affect candidate preference. This cover story was explained in the informed

consent form and reiterated verbally at the start of the session.

Implicit Association Test (IAT). Participants were told that they would complete

the first study by doing two "matching tasks" on the computer. Unknown to the

participant, these matching tasks were actually a racial bias IAT and skin tone bias IAT.

These IATs were used to assess implicit attitudes regarding race and skin tone. The race

IAT was used as a control measure and was not analyzed. The IATs were given on a

computer and presented in an alternating order depending upon condition. The researcher

gave verbal instructions on how to complete the task, in addition to requiring the

participants to read written instructions and complete several practice trials before the

actual IATs.

Filler task.   Once participants completed the IATs, they were then led back to a table and completed a series of word puzzles. This test served as a filler task in between the IATs and candidate preference questionnaire. Participants were led to believe that this was the final part of the first study regarding words, faces and puzzles. This filler task consisted of three sections of word puzzles, including anagrams, fill in the blank, and cryptograms (See Appendix A). The words and puzzles presented on this task were designed to be related to race and skin tone (i.e. light, Black, diversity, etc.) in order to appear to be related to the previous matching task (IAT). The researcher explained that this was a timed test which participants were allowed 15 minutes to complete and that each problem they skipped or did not finish would be marked as incorrect. The researcher encouraged participants to complete the test to the best of their ability.

Candidate Preferences.   After 15 minutes, the word puzzles task was collected and participants were told they had just completed the first study. The researcher explained that the word puzzles task (filler task) needed to be corrected by the researcher and the data must be entered into the computer, which would take several minutes. The researcher explained to participants that they must wait for their results to be entered before they could be debriefed. The researcher then asked the participants to participate in a second, separate study while they were waiting for their word puzzles results to be entered. To participate in the second study, the researcher instructed participants to fill out a short questionnaire regarding candidate preferences after reading a brief newspaper article. The researcher led participants to believe that this second study was for a political science course in which the researcher was enrolled. In actuality, this was the final component of the experiment.

Before coming into the lab, participants were randomly assigned to one of three

conditions: light skinned condition, medium skinned condition, and dark skinned

condition. Accordingly, in each condition, participants were shown a newspaper article

that featured either a light skinned Black candidate, medium skinned Black candidate, or

dark skinned Black candidate (See Appendix C).[4] The same candidate was displayed in

each photo to control for appearance and other biases, but the image was digitally altered

to reflect a light, medium, or dark skin tone. Participants were told the individual in the

photo is a politician running for Governor of Delaware.[5] The researcher instructed

participants to read the newspaper article, which provided a brief, fabricated background

story about the candidate.[6] The researcher asked participants to read the article and then

respond to the article by rating the featured candidate on a questionnaire titled "Candidate

Preference Questionnaire" (See Appendix B). The questionnaire consisted of 17

questions designed to assess the specific qualities political candidates should have in

order to be elected to office. Participants rated the candidate on a scale from one to ten on

degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the question or statement.

Once completed, the researcher collected the experimental materials from the

participants and began the debriefing process. The debriefing process was designed to be

extensive. In addition to the debriefing form, participants received a lengthy verbal

explanation as to why deception was required for this experiment. The true nature,

purpose, and hypothesis of the experiment were revealed in detail. Further, the researcher

prompted the participants several times to not only acknowledge their understanding of

what was said during the debriefing, but they were also be encouraged to ask questions, and of course not discuss the details of this experiment with other participants.

Measures

Skin Tone and Race IAT. The IAT is used to assess strengths of associations between concepts by observing response latencies (in milliseconds) in computer administered categorization tasks (Greenwald, Nosek, and Banaji, 2003). The IAT procedure has five steps (or "blocks") in which participants must rapidly categorize two sets of stimuli: images and words. This experiment used the skin tone IAT, which was developed to assess implicit associations regarding light skinned and dark skinned individuals. During the blocks of trials in this task, images of two contrasted concepts (e.g., facial images for light skinned Blacks and dark skinned Blacks) appeared on the computer screen. Participants categorized these stimuli by pressing one of two keys (for example, the "e" key for light skinned and the "i" key for dark skinned). Similarly, participants categorized words of contrasted concepts (for example, words representing positive and negative associations) using the same two keys.

Relying on previous skin tone research that asserts that light skin is preferred over dark skin in Black Americans, the IAT considers the pairing of light skin and positive words (or dark skin and negative words) as "stereotype congruent" (Greenwald, Nosek, and Banaji, 2003). Conversely, the pairing of light skin with negative words (or dark skin with positive words) would be considered incongruent with common stereotypes (Greenwald, Nosek, and Banaji, 2003). The IAT posits that because of skin tone bias, participants will therefore be faster to pair images of light skinned images and positive words (or slower to pair dark skinned images with positive words). Thus, a bias in skin

tone was revealed if the participants matched dark skinned images with negative words (e.g., nasty, terrible, ugly, etc.) faster than they matched the light skinned photos with the same negative words. Or conversely, a bias was revealed if participant paired the light skinned images with positive words (e.g., happy, cheerful, etc.) faster than they paired the dark skinned images with the same positive words.

IAT scores were calculated using Greenwald, Nosek, and Banaji's (2003) scoring procedures.[7] The dependent variable of primary interest in an IAT is called the D score, which is the difference in average latency between the two combined tasks. In other words, the D score is a measure of the time difference between time taken to complete the "non-congruent stereotype" test (e.g., the pairing of light skin with negative words and dark skin with positive words) and the stereotype congruent test (e.g., the pairing of light skin with positive words and dark skin with negative words) (Greenwald, Nosek, and Banaji's, 2003). The D score is computed by first removing all trials that the IAT considers to be either "too fast" (less than 300 msec) or "too slow" (greater than 10,000 msec) to accurate assess an implicit attitude. Next, the mean congruent test time is subtracted from the mean non-congruent test time. If this value is positive, it means that completing the non-congruent test took longer and would suggest a bias in skin tone attitudes (e.g., a preference for light skin tones and a bias against darker skin tones). IAT scores range from -1 to 1, with 0 being considered neutral or no bias in skin tone attitudes. A score of 0.15 suggests a slight bias; a score of 0.35 suggests a moderate bias; a score of 0.65 suggests a strong bias.

The presentation order of the IATs was counterbalanced based on condition. As previously mentioned, a skin tone bias IAT was given to all participants. Similarly, a

racial bias IAT was given to all participants as a control measure. The racial bias IAT was developed to assess implicit associations regarding Black Americans. Similar to the description above, response time was measured to see how long a participant takes to match specific stimuli. A bias in race was revealed if the participants matched photos of Black Americans with negative words faster than they matched photos of White Americans with positive words.

Candidate Qualities. The researcher developed a series of 17 statements to assess candidate preference. Each question assessed to what extent the participant believed the candidate had a specific quality or trait that would be important in a politician (i.e. intelligent, motivated, strong leadership skills, etc.), as well as how the participant felt (i.e. warm, cold, satisfied, etc.) toward the candidate. Questions were created by the researcher based on previous knowledge regarding what personal and professional characteristics politicians should have in order to be perceived positively by constituents. The questions include several traits adapted from general feeling thermometers as well (Terkildsen, 1993). Participants responded to each question by rating the candidate on a Likert from one to ten, ten being the most (i.e. very intelligent, very motivated, very strong leadership skills, etc.) and one being the least (i.e. very unintelligent, very unmotivated, very poor leadership skills, etc.) amount of agreement on the corresponding question (see Appendix B).

A variable called "positivity traits" was computed that combined 14 traits of these 17 candidate qualities for analysis. These traits had a high internal reliability (□ □ □ □) The positivity traits variable excluded the traits of "fairness," "honesty," and "willingness to vote," which were assessed individually.

Results

Manipulation checks.   At the end of the study, the research asked participants seven questions that served as manipulation checks for the experiment: 1) How many studies did you participate in this project?; and 2) Do you think you could locate the article about the candidate online? Question 1 was designed to assess the extent to which participants believed the cover story that they were participating in two separate studies (one regarding "words, faces, and puzzles" and one regarding candidate preferences). Descriptive statistics revealed that the majority of participants (73%) reported that they believed the cover story. Only 9% participants accurately guessed that they had participated in a single study, with the other 14% of participants believing there were actually three, four, or five studies. An independent samples *t* test was conducted to examine the difference between those who believed they participated in a single study versus more than one study for the four main dependent variables. No significant differences were found: positivity traits: $t(86) = 0.67$, p = N.S.; honest: $t(86) = 0.74$, p = N.S.; fair: $t(86) = 0.31$, p = N.S.; or vote: $t(86) = 0.78$, p = N.S.

Question 2 was designed to assess the extent to which participants believed the newspaper article about the candidate was authentic. Similarly, the majority of participants (73%) reported that they believed they could find the article somewhere online, with the other 27% saying no. An independent samples *t* test was conducted to examine the difference between those who believed they could find the article online and those who believed they could not. No significant differences were found: positivity traits: $t(86) = 1.54$, p = N.S.; honest: $t(86) = 0.94$, p = N.S.; fair: $t(86) = 1.07$, p = N.S.; or vote: $t(86) = 1.50$, p = N.S.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to assess both the influence of skin tone (condition) and the influence of implicit skin tone attitudes (IAT) on candidate preference in the light skinned, medium skinned, and dark skinned conditions. No significant gender differences were found throughout analyses: positivity traits: $t(86) = -1.54$, p = N.S.; honest: $t(86) = -0.62$, p = N.S.; fair: $t(86) = -1.35$, p = N.S.; or vote: $t(86) = -0.01$, p = N.S.

Skin tone (condition). Results indicated that there was not a significant main effect of skin tone on the ratings of candidate qualities (positivity traits), Wilks' Lambda $= 0.93$, $F(8, 156) = 0.70$, p = N.S. The three candidate qualities that were left out of the computed positivity traits variable were analyzed separately. No significant main effects were found for "honesty" $F(2,81) = 0.25$, p = N.S., "fairness" $F(2,81) = 1.78$, p = N.S., or "willingness to vote" $F(2,81) = 2.52$, p = N.S. All 17 positivity traits were analyzed individually as well. No significant findings were found, although descriptive statistics revealed that the lighter skinned candidate was consistently rated higher than the darker skinned candidate (but surprisingly not consistently rated higher than the medium skinned candidate) (See Table 1).

IAT. A MANOVA was used to examine the influence of implicit skin tone attitudes (IAT) on candidate preference. IAT scores were treated as a categorical (rather than continuous variable) with descriptive categories including strong negative/positive bias, moderate negative/positive bias, slight negative/positive bias, or no bias. Results indicated that there was not a significant main effect of implicit skin tone bias on ratings of candidate qualities, Wilks' Lambda $= 0.93$, $F(8, 156) = 0.66$, p = N.S.

IAT x Skin Tone. Lastly, the MANOVA was used to compare the effect of implicit attitudes regarding skin tone (skin tone IAT) on candidate preference depending on condition (light, medium, or dark). Results indicated that there was not a significant interaction effect of implicit skin tone attitudes on the candidate ratings of positivity by experimental condition, Wilks' Lambda = 0.93, F (8, 156) = 0.73, p = N.S.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which skin tone bias can be found in a political context. Previous literature has found that skin tone is often used as a basis for person perception; this study examined whether skin tone is used in Black political candidate perception. The experimental hypothesis that participants would rate the light skinned candidate more positively than the medium skinned candidate and the dark skinned candidate was not found to be statistically significant. Firstly, results showed that the main effect of skin tone on candidate preference was not significant, suggesting that participants' ratings on the candidate preference questionnaire were not significantly influenced by the skin tone of the candidate. Secondly, the results demonstrated that the main effect of implicit skin tone attitudes on candidate preference was not significant, meaning that participants' implicit attitudes did not significantly affect their responses on the candidate preference questionnaire. Thirdly, the results showed that the interaction effect of skin tone and implicit skin tone attitudes did not significantly affect candidate preference. This suggests that whether or not participants had a slight, moderate, or strong implicit skin tone bias did not influence how they rated the light, medium, or dark skinned candidate on the candidate preference questionnaire.

Though the lack of significant results in this study makes it difficult to support the hypothesis, the results were in the expected direction. Although the results indicated that skin tone did not make a significant difference on the positivity traits or the three separately analyzed traits, an individual breakdown of the positivity traits showed an interesting finding. Descriptive statistics revealed that participants did consistently rate the light skinned candidate more positively than the dark skinned candidate for all 17 questions (See Table 1). This included all of the traits in the computed positivity traits variable as well as the honesty, fairness, and willingness to vote traits. On every question, the dark skinned candidate was consistently rated the lowest. Though not statistically significant, this finding is consistent with previous skin tone research that asserts a lighter skin tone is preferred over a darker complexion. Thus, this suggests that skin tone may indeed a factor in candidate perception.

Interestingly and contrary to previous research, in nine of the 17 questions, the medium skinned candidate was rated higher than both the light skinned candidate and the dark skinned candidate. Perhaps this is because the image of the medium skinned candidate was the only one that was not digitally manipulated, hence it may have appeared to be the most "real looking" of the three images. This may be unlikely however; as all three images were assessed by viewers in a pilot study prior to this experiment and were deemed appropriately "real looking." Additionally, 73% of participants stated in a manipulation check at the end of the experiment that they believed the candidate article to be authentic.

Though not evident in the statistical analyses, another interesting finding that demonstrates the pervasiveness of skin tone bias is the skin tone IAT scores. Results of

an IAT are broken down into seven categories: strong negative bias, moderate negative bias, slight negative bias, neutral (no bias in either direction), slight positive bias, moderate positive bias, and strong positive bias. A positive bias would suggest a preference for darker skin tones over lighter skin tones, while a negative bias suggests an implicit preference for light skin (i.e. a strong, moderate, or slight bias against darker skin). As seen in the literature review, most research contends that individuals have a preference for a lighter skin tone over a darker skin tone. Consistent with that notion, of the 88 participants in this study, 90% showed a slight negative bias while only 9 participants had a slight positive bias. This finding illuminates the notion that skin tone bias is indeed a prevalent phenomenon.

Additionally, this finding may help explain the lack of significant results for the interaction between implicit skin tone attitudes and ratings of positivity for the light, medium, and dark skinned candidate. It was hypothesized that participants would rate the candidates in accordance with their implicit attitudes. Thus, those who had a negative bias would rate the light skinned candidate higher than the medium or dark skinned candidate and those who had a positive bias would prefer the medium or dark skinned candidate over the light skinned candidate. While descriptive statistics do show that results seem to be in the expected direction, the lack of variance among IAT scores made it difficult to conduct an accurate comparison across skin tone attitudes, as the number of participants in each of the seven IAT scoring categories was not nearly equal.

It also may be the case that implicit skin tone bias does not influence explicit ratings of political candidates. Particularly for the "willingness to vote" question on the candidate preference questionnaire, it is arguable voting and vote decision is such an

explicit behavior that it may not be influenced by implicit attitudes. Further, it may be the case that implicit skin tone bias simply does not influence explicit ratings of political candidates. More studies are needed to fully examine how skin tone attitudes influence candidate preference and how skin tone bias itself operates in a political context.

Limitations

There were several practical limitations to this study. First, a potential limitation to this study may have been the construction and fabrication of the newspaper article. To eliminate the possibility that prior attitudes about a real-world candidate would affect participant's perceptions and ratings, it was necessary to construct a fictitious candidate. Although the manipulation checks revealed that the article was generally believed to be authentic by participants, there are a number of confounds that may have affected how participants responded to the article and rated the corresponding candidate. Though designed to be rather brief and neutral, the article contained false but realistic information about the candidate's political experience, policy stances, and personality. Thus it may be possible that other features from the article, besides candidate skin tone, played a role in the evaluations and perceptions of the candidate. Participants' prior attitudes regarding politics and politicians in general could not be controlled for as well.

Additionally, since the word puzzles filler task was designed to have puzzles relating to race and skin tone (in order to confirm the cover story), participants may be thought this study was about the effects of priming and modified their behavior and responses according. Or, it is quite possible that the effect of viewing so much race and skin tone related material may have inadvertently primed participants' responses so that the skin tone of the candidate was less salient.

Lastly, 73% of participants reported that they believed the cover story stated at the beginning of the experimental session. While this is certainly the majority, participants who questioned the cover story or who were skeptical about the true motive and hypothesis may have modified their responses to fit their perception of the study's purpose.

Directions for Future Research

Although this study offers several interesting findings that are in the expected direction as the hypotheses, improvements could be made to help ensure significant results. To find a solution for all of the previously mentioned errors would be the first step in finding fully significant results for the hypothesis. Specifically, this sample was not racially or ethnically diverse, which limited the ability to investigate the results as a function of participant race. Though skin tone bias has been found to be practiced by both Whites and Blacks, it would have been interesting to examine how the differences in positivity ratings varied according to participant racial/ethnic group membership. Additionally, what about other participants of color's perceptions of Black candidates? A larger, more racially diverse sample may have revealed interesting results about the specifics of skin tone bias in relation to certain racial or ethnic groups. Further, an issue of external validity is that this study used a convenience sample of only college students and was not by any means a random sample that accurately reflects the voting population at large. Though it may not be expected college students' evaluations of a political candidate would differ than that of the rest of the electorate, perhaps other variables such as age, occupation, income, ideology, etc. could factor into these evaluations.

Additionally, more refined research materials (newspaper articles and the candidate preference questionnaire) could be utilized. As previously mentioned, the candidate preference questionnaire given to the participants was created specifically for this experiment and had not previously been tested for validity or reliability. Although the items did indeed have a high internal validity, there are certainly more than just 17 traits that may be important in a political candidate that could be included to make the questionnaire more comprehensive.

If this study were to be replicated and yielded significant results, the next question for the field would be to specify how skin tone bias and the perception of Black candidates operates within different racial or ethnic groups. Additionally, investigating skin tone bias and other topics relevant to perception in a political context, such as political attitudes and activity or policy preferences could aid in the discovering of new findings and make a valuable contribution to political psychology.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the focus of this research was on how the lightness or darkness of one's skin may affect others' perception of that individual, specifically constituents' perception of a Black political candidate in terms of positive traits and electability. The approach taken in this study, though it had many limitations, is hopeful. Though this study did not have significant findings, the results were in the expected direction of hypotheses. In terms of candidate preference, the dark skinned candidate was rated less positively than the light skinned candidate on every question of the questionnaire. In terms of implicit attitudes regarding skin tone, the majority of participants showed a slight negative bias. We have seen from previous skin tone bias research that this bias

against darker skinned Blacks can have detrimental social consequences. Accordingly, the implications of skin tone bias permeating the realm of politics have deep consequences as well.

Voters are not color blind. If voters' perceptions and evaluations of Black candidates are significantly influenced by race and skin color differences, which are certainly not reliable measures of individual qualities and abilities, job qualifications or experiences, or political attitudes, the elective future of Black American candidates in the United States may be disappointing. However, a historical milestone in US political history was the election of President Obama, out nation's first Black president. Certainly this speaks to the progress that American voters have made regarding racial attitudes and Black-White race relations. Obama, a light skinned candidate, seemed to gain a vast amount of support from all ends of the racial spectrum. Yet, amongst this vast support were discussions of Obama's Blackness that was often framed as a complex "too Black" versus "not Black enough debate." Skin tone may be key in understanding this discourse.

Black Americans' shared experiences with historical and contemporary racial oppression has deepened racial solidarity and fostered a sense of linked fate among the Black community, regardless of appearance. However, skin tone may challenge that instilled sense of unity as it draws attention to differences within Blacks. Since slavery, these differences have become surrounded by stigma, speaking to racial hierarchy and social mobility. Knowing that skin tone bias is practiced between racial groups as well as within the Black community, it is plausible that darker skinned Black candidates may have more difficulty garnering support in an election. Further, with skin tone discrimination on the rise, it is plausible that this issue will need to be addressed at the

policy level. This present framework highlights the presence of skin tone bias and its implications for social and political perceptions. Further detailed and systematic explorations would be productive in investigating the other numerous facets of skin tone bias research in a political context.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Word Puzzles Test

Directions: After the matching tasks on the computer, please complete the following word problems to the best of your ability. The purpose of this study is to assess how the presentation and response to words and various faces of different cultures affect the word problem solving abilities and reasoning skills of college students.

You will have 15 minutes to complete this test. Some sections of this test are designed to be more difficult than other sections. You are allowed to work on the sections of this test in any order. There may be more than one correct answer. If you choose to skip a question, it will be marked as incorrect.

If you finish before the allotted 15 minutes, please alert the researcher and begin the second study.

Section I: Fill in the Blank. Please fill in the missing letter of each word.

1. Fac__s
2. __pple
3. Div__rsity
4. Teache__
5. Co__or
6. Racis__
7. T__ble
8. Researc__
9. Dictio__ary
10. Intern__t
11. Sequ__nce
12. Bla__k
13. __urtle
14. Run__ing
15. Wa__
16. B__tter
17. W__ite
18. __atching
19. Memor__
20. Ti__e
21. Compu__er
22. Cul__ure
23. __indow
24. L__ght
25. Proje__t

Section II: Cryptogram. A cryptogram is an encrypted block of text. Each letter of this message stands for a different letter. Please decode this message, an African proverb. (Hint: E=N, N=U)

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
				N									U												

```
   E          E          E   N          E E         E
_ _ _      _ _ _ _ _    _ _ _ _      _ _ _   _ _ _   _ _ _
A W N      B M T N C    F D N O      U D A   O N N   A W N

        E N        N          N E
     _ _ _ _     _ _     _ _ _     _ _ _ _
      I N U F    G U     W G O     U N B J
```

Section III: Anagrams. An anagram is a word, phrase, or sentence formed from another by rearranging its letters. Please unscramble the following words:

1. krad   _____
2. disverity   _____
3. arec   _____
4. locogypshy   _____
5. cameralets   _____
6. itchynite   _____
7. dab   _____
8. ehwit   _____
9. elzzup   _____
10. cecacapnet   _____
11. macsir   _____
12. klacb   _____
13. epace   _____
14. dogo   _____
15. cultrue   _____

Appendix B

The Media, Political Rhetoric, and Candidate Preference Study

Directions: Please read the newspaper article about David J. Williams, a candidate running for Governor of the state of Delaware. Then, please rate this candidate on the scales below for the following questions. Circle your answers. Please answer honestly and use your first impressions. Thank you for your time!

1. How warm do you feel toward the candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Very cold   Very warm

2. How much do you like the candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Not at all   Very much

3. How knowledgeable do you feel this candidate is about politics?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Very unknowledgeable   Very knowledgeable

4. How honest do you feel this candidate is?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Very dishonest   Very honest

5. How intelligent do you feel this candidate is?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Very unintelligent   Very intelligent

6. How "far" do you feel this candidate could go in the election and his career?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Will not get ahead   Will go far

7. How much do you feel this candidate has the attitudes, beliefs, and character traits that are important in a Governor?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Not at all   Very much

8. How satisfied do you feel about this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Very unsatisfied   Very satisfied

9. How responsible do you feel this candidate is?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Very irresponsible   Very responsible

10. How trustworthy do you feel this candidate is?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Very untrustworthy   Very trustworthy

11. How strong do you feel your connection could be to this candidate?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Very weak   Very strong

12. How fair do you feel this candidate is?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Very unfair   Very fair

13. How much do you feel this candidate is committed to excellence?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Very uncommitted   Very committed

14. How confident do you feel this candidate is?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Very unconfident   Very confident

15. How good-natured do you feel this candidate is?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Not at all good-natured   Very good-natured

16. How much do you feel this candidate would make a good leader?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Very poor leadership skills   Very good leadership skills

17. If I was a Delaware resident, I would vote for this candidate in the upcoming election for Governor of Delaware.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Completely disagree   Completely agree

Appendix C

(Light, medium and darked skinned conditions (newspaper articles)

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Williams steps into Delaware 2008 gubernatorial race

### New candidate says exploratory committee has been formed to raise money for race

By Megan Petrelli
Published: May 16, 2008
ASSOCIATED PRESS

David J. Williams, 36, (I-DE).

- ▣ E-Mail Article
- 🖶 Printer-Friendly

- �📖 3-Column Format
- 🔁 Translate

- 🔊 Share Article
- ─ ✧

- ᵗT Text Size

- ◁⟩ Listen to Article

In your VOICE
Read reactions to this article.
You must be logged in to leave a comment.

Delaware: City councilman David J. Williams on Tuesday took his first step into the Delaware race for Governor by opening an exploratory committee to raise money and begin building a campaign "for prosperity in Delaware." He said he would make a formal declaration 2 weeks from today at the capitol building.

"Running for Governor of this great state is a profound decision, and I am excited to announce I am ready for the challenge" Williams said in a video address e-mailed to his supporters. "I am sure that I am the right candidate for the constituents of Delaware." Williams disclosed his decision on his Web site and said he was not planning to make other statements until his formal declaration

Williams, 36, is a life-long Delaware resident who grew up in Wilmington in the Eastlake neighborhood. After graduating from St. Elizabeth's High School, Williams went on to the University of Delaware, where he played varsity baseball and earned his B.A. in political science 1993. After college, Williams interned for the Delaware State Senate and served as a community research coordinator in Dover for several years. Following his marriage to foreign services officer Betty Lindahl, Williams served as a communications director for the Mayor's office until his election to the Wilmington City Council (three years ago, after beating a fourth term incumbent). As a councilman, Williams proposed a variety of initiatives to improve the Wilmington area, including City Hall efficiency.

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
By Megan Petrelli

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David J. Williams, 36, (I-DE).

- E-Mail Article
- Printer-Friendly

- 3-Column Format
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- Share Article
- ✧

- Text Size

- Listen to Article

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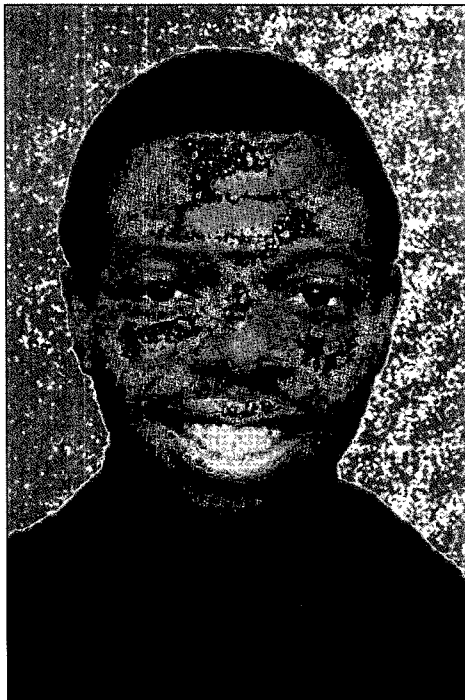
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
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
Notes

1. Of the literature of which I have had access, I have only found two studies that examine skin tone bias in a political context.

2. Sigelman et. al tested 8 competing theories to understand the racial bias in Whites' political perceptions of Black candidates. The findings of this study did not exclusively support a single theory, thus the Extremity Effects theory has not been significantly supported.

3. This finding is particularly interesting considering racial attitudes and conservative ideology have been found to often be correlated.

4. The images used in the fabricated newspaper article, as well as in the skin tone IAT have been provided by social psychologist Dr. Keith Maddox, whom I contacted last year regarding a similar project investigating skin tone bias and the perception of intelligence.

5. There were several manipulation checks at the conclusion of this study that were designed to assess the extent to which participants believed the cover story. In terms of the newspaper article about the candidate, participants were asked at the end of the study if they believed they could find the article online and how sure they were of their response, to which the majority of participants believed they could. Additionally, gubernatorial races in the United States are held every even numbered year while some are held every 4. The researcher checked to make sure no participant was from Delaware, so it is my belief that no one would strongly doubt the authenticity of the newspaper article.

6. This newspaper article was constructed and written by the experimenter. It aimed to present a fictitious political candidate and his background and qualifications for Governor. The article's content and length are kept brief and neutral in order to prevent the participant from

focusing on external factors and concentrating on the candidate's photo (i.e. skin tone) to guide perceptions.

7. Both IATs were created by the experimenter using the IAT computer program Direct RT by Empirisoft Corporation, New York (2007).

Tables

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Each Candidate Quality by Condition

	Light Skinned			Medium Skinned			Dark Skinned		
	M	SD		M	SD		M	SD	
Warm	6.82	1.44		7.28	1.31		6.51	0.99	
Like	6.70	1.45		7.00	1.54		6.52	1.34	
Knowledgeable	6.80	2.13		7.07	1.56		6.33	2.15	
Intelligent	7.76	1.38		7.55	1.21		7.26	1.39	
Far -	7.10	1.75		7.45	1.53		6.86	1.18	
Attitudes, beliefs, character traits in Governor	7.31	1.31		7.50	1.50		6.90	1.52	
Satisfied	6.62	1.68		7.00	1.56		6.50	1.46	
Responsible	7.14	1.68		7.62	1.29		7.03	1.00	
Trustworthy	6.83	1.77		7.31	1.67		6.73	1.51	
Strong connection	6.24	1.90		6.48	1.66		6.17	1.68	
Committed to excellence	7.38	1.68		8.07	1.16		7.27	1.43	
Confident	7.90	1.40		8.28	1.22		7.73	1.46	
Good natured	7.72	1.25		8.38	1.01		7.53	1.38	
Leader	7.14	1.53		7.55	1.48		6.96	1.63	
Fair	6.86	1.41		7.59	1.15		6.80	1.18	
Honest	7.20	1.69		7.34	1.34		7.00	1.18	
Would vote for in election	6.52	1.83		6.66	1.74		5.73	1.53	
Positivity traits	7.07	1.21		7.47	1.05		6.95	0.99	