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Latino Race Cards: Negative Racial Appeals in Contemporary Campaigns and the Bounds of Racial Priming Theory

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Latino Race Cards: Negative Racial Appeals in Contemporary Campaigns and the
Bounds of Racial Priming Theory

A Dissertation Presented

by

REBECCA LISI

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
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Political Science

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Bounds of Racial Priming Theory

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DEDICATION

To Damian and Lucien,

who, for years, patiently and generously shared me with both this graduate program and
the City of Holyoke

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As a non-traditional student, living off-campus, and with numerous competing obligations between family, studies, teaching, and public service, my progress through this doctoral program was long and winding. I started the doctoral program several years after my undergraduate education in a different field. I was inspired by my work on the ground as a political organizer for the citizen's lobby group, Clean Water Action, and wanted to study politics and public policy academically in the (naive) hopes of gleaning insights for how we might make our politics more effective and democratic. In 2008, I started my first year as an elected official on the Holyoke City Council and began my graduate career at the same time. That same year I got married to my husband, Damian, who started his own graduate program in a different state. A few years later, Damian and I welcomed our son, Lucien, who presented us with new joys and challenges for keeping up with this balancing act. Over my many years in the program, areas of scholarly interest waxed and waned; methodological and epistemological commitments matured; and an identity as a scholar-practitioner developed. I am grateful for my experience as a doctoral student in the University of Massachusetts, Amherst's Department of Political Science and many have contributed to my progress and success there.

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Disclaimer: Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

ABSTRACT

LATINO RACE CARDS: NEGATIVE RACIAL APPEALS IN CONTEMPORARY CAMPAIGNS AND THE BOUNDS OF RACIAL PRIMING THEORY

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The Implicit Explicit (IE) model of racial priming (Mendelberg 2001) continues to be the dominant theoretical model for understanding the impact of negative racial campaign appeals on white voter mobilization despite significant demographic change in the United States. The theoretical underpinnings of the IE model rest upon a norm of racial equality which emerged in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement. Given the specific racial and historical context in which this racial norm developed it is unclear whether the IE model can account for the impact of non-Black racial appeals on white voter mobilization. I apply the concept of “foreigner positionality” to argue that this egalitarian racial norm does not extend to account for behaviors directed toward Latinos in contemporary politics. Additionally, the hyper-partisan and hyper-racialized context in which contemporary campaigns take place may have altered the perception of what constitutes a racial appeal. Using a nationally representative sample of non-Hispanic, white adults from the 2016 CCES, I employ a comparative survey experiment to test whether similar rhetorical-visual constructions of anti-Black and anti-Latino appeals have differential impacts on white

voters' candidate favorability ratings. The results demonstrate that the norm of racial equality does not extend beyond African Americans; that there appears to be partisan bifurcation around the adherence and maintenance of a norm of 'African American' equality; and raise significant questions about the assumption that the decision to express primed racial thinking occurs at an unconscious level.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANES	American National Elections Study
CCES	Cooperative Congressional Election Study
DDRIG	Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant
ID	Identification
IE	Implicit-Explicit
NSF	National Science Foundation
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares
PFP	Persistent Foreigner Positionality
PMR	Partisan Motivated Reasoning

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"[Trump] here is one of the most racist presidents we've had in modern history. He pours fuel on every single racist fire ... This guy has a dog whistle as big as a foghorn."

—Vice President Biden during the first presidential debate, October 2020

"In Trump's rhetoric, only people who speak of racial obligation are beholden to such judgments."

—Casey Ryan Kelly, "Donald J. Trump and the Rhetoric of White Ambivalence"

Donald Trump's presidential campaign was marked by numerous inflammatory statements about racial and ethnic minorities. The most infamous of these remarks was the explicitly racist comments regarding Mexican immigrants he made during his 2015 presidential campaign announcement:

"When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best... They're sending people that have lots of problems and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists..." (<https://time.com/3923128/donald-trump-announcement-speech/>).

Political scholars and pundits alike were stunned—not only by the fact that Trump dared to defy conventional norms of racial equality and political correctness by making explicitly racial appeals, but also by the extent to which he was able to make such remarks on a national platform without suffering significant electoral consequences. In an

NPR *Morning Edition* broadcast, Jason Stanley, professor of political speech at Yale University said that Trump's ability to break rules, and get away with it, is an expression of power. "He's communicating, 'I'm not held to the norms that anyone else is,'" said Stanley (McCammon 2016).

Many critics on the political left indeed railed against Trump and decried his remarks as racist. In response to this outcry, media outlets on such as Univision and NBCUniversal among other smaller networks cut ties with Trump and pulled any programming or ad space associated with the presidential candidate (Boguhn, López, and Calvert 2015). Though, many "leading Republicans were slow to condemn his remarks... hoping that inattention would help him fade from the headlines" (Peoples 2015). When condemnation from the right was finally forthcoming, it was coupled with statements of support as Fox News and individual Republican elites defended Trump's remarks.

Fox News host, Sean Hannity, declared that Trump's remarks were not racist and pointed to immigration from Mexico and Latin America and drug trafficking as serious issues facing the nation: "Floor-to-ceiling drugs confiscated by people crossing our southern border. You want to talk about crime?" said Hannity (Boguhn, López, and Calvert 2015). Other Republican presidential candidates also denied Trump's racism and expressed that there was some truth to what he was saying. Senator Ted Cruz offered praise to Trump for highlighting important border issues, "'I salute Donald Trump for focusing on the need to address illegal immigration,' Cruz told host Chuck Todd on NBC's 'Meet The Press.' 'I like Donald Trump. He is bold, he is brash.'" (Bolton 2015).

Trump for his part refused to back down, claiming that his remarks were in fact, "totally accurate" (Landy 2015). As a result, much of the electorate seemed unfazed by,

or at least unsure, about how to respond to Trump's rhetoric. President Trump continued to peddle racist tropes throughout his presidency, e.g.: nicknaming the COVID-19 coronavirus, the "China-virus;" using "Pocahontas" as slur to address Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren; and calling white, armed protestors in Charlottesville, Virginia "very fine people." A pattern of divided responses to these sorts of racial appeals among political elites, and the contestation of what even constitutes a racial appeal, has sparked a renewed interest in the research questions that are most central to the debate on racial priming in the political science literature.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This example of Trump's embolden racial rhetoric about Mexicans in the United States flies in the face of what political scientists have established as the normative practices surrounding racial campaign communications over the past twenty years. The implicit-explicit (IE) model of racial priming (Mendelberg 2001) states that since the Civil Rights era, a norm of racial equality has been established that precludes candidates from making explicitly racial appeals without suffering significant electoral consequences. Instead, successful racial campaign appeals must be implicit, "dog whistles" that tangentially or incidentally reference race and activate racial considerations outside of the voters' awareness. Trump's racist rhetoric challenges key assumptions regarding the successful construction and acceptance of campaign appeals made by a candidate for elected office, especially one with a national presence. As a result, this seemingly anomalous campaign rhetoric has sparked a renewed interest in the research questions that are most central to the debate on racial priming in political science.

This study takes up several questions related to the challenge that Trump’s rhetoric presents to the standards within the racial priming literature and its implications for egalitarian racial norms in the United States: 1) Do voters continue to punish candidates who make explicitly racist remarks? And does the racial group targeted by the racist remark influence how strongly a candidate is penalized? 2) What makes implicit appeals successful—do they work at a conscious or subconscious level? 3) In the context of extreme partisan polarization, do Republicans and Democrats respond differently to explicit and/or implicit racial appeals? I address each of these questions through a multi-disciplinary approach that reviews the extant political science literature on racial priming while also weaving in insights from sociology and communications. I develop my own theory of Persistent Foreigner Positionality (PFP) to explain why Latinos¹ and other non-Black minorities are not encompassed by the norm of racial equality and how as a result, the normative constraints that would otherwise stem whites’ racialized thinking are not established.

Major demographic shifts have increased the salience of other racial groups alongside Blacks in American politics. In particular, the Latino population surpassed 60 million in 2019 and has accounted for more than half (52%) of the United States’ population growth since 2010 (Noe-Bustamante, Lopez, and Krogstad 2020). This begs the question as to whether the IE model works to mobilize white political opinion when Latinos, or non-Black minority groups as opposed to Blacks are featured in negative racial campaign appeals?

¹ The term “Latino” is typically understood as a pan-ethnic identifier. However, I argue here that this ethnic group has been racialized in the U.S. context in such a way that flattens out the various national origin and citizenship distinctions held by individuals within the homogenous, ascriptive identifier “Latino.”

Additionally, since the election of President Obama, race and racial identities are increasingly discussed in an explicit manner by political campaigns and the media (Achen and Bartels 2016; Goldman and Mutz 2014; Parker and Barreto 2013; Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018; Tesler 2012, 2016; Tesler and Sears 2010; Valentino, Newburg, and Neuner 2019). Recent research on anti-Black appeals fails to confirm the findings of the IE model (Valentino et al 2018; Reny et al 2019). However, it is unclear theoretically why these studies find empirically undistinguished impacts for implicit and explicit appeals. Valentino and colleagues (2017) argue that this is due to an increased tolerance for explicit, anti-Black appeals among the electorate and especially so in “safe” Republican districts. While Reny and co-authors (2019) argue that implicit appeals have lost their power to prime and are performing more like explicit appeals due to the electorate’s familiarity with race and racial tropes in the hyper-polarized and hyper-racialized context of contemporary racial appeals.

The answers to these questions have profound implications; not only for the maintenance of racial egalitarian norms and beliefs, but also for the status and lived experiences of Black Americans and/or other non-Black minorities in the United States. A waning norm of racial equality would allow explicitly racist and derogatory language to go unchecked in public discourse and media reports. Such rhetoric could quickly lead to a resurgence of beliefs that Blacks or other racial groups are intrinsically inferior. A proliferation of such negative stereotypical beliefs and their reification by the rhetoric of political elites could be used to justify the exclusion of Blacks or other minorities from education, housing, employment, or any number of opportunities that they would otherwise be entitled to as citizens.

Understanding whether people respond in a conscious or unconscious manner to racial appeals is important when considering how to combat racism and in developing effective anti-racist interventions. If people are moved to act on racial animus because priming occurs unconsciously through coded appeals as described in the IE model, then Mendelberg's (2001) remedy to combat the appeal by making it explicit should be sufficient (see also Nteta, Lisi, and Tarsi 2016; Mendelberg and Tokeshi 2015). However, over the course of a campaign, how can one ensure that the same individuals who received the initial subconscious prime are later exposed to the explicit corrective (before a primed expressive act takes place)? Conversely, if the expression of primed racial thinking is a conscious act, then what information are message recipients using to decide when it is safe or appropriate to register negative racial sentiments? There continues to be much to unpack regarding the mechanism by which priming occurs, the answers to which would have implications for the development, strength, and maintenance of norms.

Relatedly, given the partisan polarization around race and racial issues, it is possible that partisan attachments may trump normative considerations in this issue arena. Presently, it appears as though the norm of racial equality is bifurcated along party lines. The racial egalitarianism is in retrenchment among Republicans, allowing them to evade its normative constraints, while racially liberal Democrats continue to adhere to the norm. What does it mean for electoral politics if only one party alone is bound to the norms of racial egalitarianism? What rhetorical strategies worked to undermine the norm of racial equality among Republicans? Given the electoral incentives associated with abandoning the norm, are there rhetorical strategies that could fortify or reassert the norm from the political/racial left?

In undertaking the first question regarding the IE model's contemporary relevance for Blacks and Latinos, I develop a theory called Persistent Foreigner Positionality. The first premise of my theory of PFP rests on the claim that what has become known in the racial priming literature as the "norm of racial equality" (Mendelberg 2001) is actually a misnomer. According to Mendelberg (2001, p. 17-18) the dominance of norm of racial equality is born out of the Civil Rights era which was marked by unprecedented support for federal legislation, judicial rulings, and unified elite rhetoric that advanced the notion of *African American* equality. While these legislative and judicial outcomes had legal implications for all racial, ethnic, and gender groups, the normative and legal changes were ushered in by what was ostensibly a Black movement and it is not clear whether the established norms of equality extend beyond Blacks to encompass other racial groups.

In addition to the problems with assuming that an overarching norm of *racial* equality was established in the wake of the civil rights movement, there is further reason to believe that the IE fails to extend to explain the impact of racial appeals featuring non-Blacks. The theory of racial triangulation (Kim 1999) describes the ways in which minority groups are racialized relative to one another in the United States and thus occupy unique racial positions. The racial triangulation of Latinos, in particular, casts the group in a "foreigner" position that is socially constructed as undeserving of the treatment, protections, and benefits citizens receive as members of the body politic. Therefore, my theory of Persistent Foreigner Positionality asserts that explicit negative references to Latinos that play up perceptions of a cultural threat are deemed legitimate by majority of white Americans as opposed to violations of an egalitarian racial norm that warrant rejection. In the view of PFP then, political elites who leverage campaign

strategies that make use of explicit negative rhetoric featuring Latinos, are rewarded with positive favorability ratings and electoral support.

At the heart of the second question is an interest in better understanding the priming mechanism that gives implicit appeals their power which is a heretofore underexplored area within the priming literature. According to the IE model, implicit, or coded, appeals are successful because they subconsciously prime racial animus that is then expressed through political opinion and behavior. However, recent studies attribute the failure to replicate the IE model findings to competing causes. On the one hand, Valentino and colleagues (2018) argue that the electorate has become more tolerant of *explicit* appeals. On the other hand, Reny and colleagues (2019) argue that *implicit* appeals are perceived as explicit in the hyper-racialized political context in which contemporary campaign communications take place. In either case, there is an indication that voters are consciously evaluating the racial appeal content and making calculated decisions about how to respond.

Digging deeper into Mendelberg's (2001) psychology of implicit appeals, I work to understand whether and how its four axioms—ambivalence, awareness, accessibility, and ambiguity—are expressed in a “most racial” (Tesler 2016) political context. If code words are more easily understood in a hyper-racialized political information environment, then the ambiguity of the implicit appeals is lost, and it would not work at a subconscious level. I develop a novel treatment manipulation I call a tacit appeal, that seeks to preserve the ambiguity of a racial appeal, by priming racialized thinking with images alone. If tacit appeals are more successful than implicit appeals, it may help

reinforce the notion that the subconscious activation of racial considerations contribute to the success of racial appeals.

Also, I link the concept of racial resentment to individual levels of ambivalence. According to the IE model, white voters are susceptible to racialized thinking because negative racial stereotypes are maintained alongside the norm of racial equality. The presence of both positive and negative attributes in a racial schema causes a tension that can be exploited by racially coded candidate appeals. This tension presupposes that the positive and negative attributes that make up a racial schema are roughly on balance with one another and that subconscious racial cues will shift the balance only in a negative direction. However, we know that through the range of possible racial resentment scores, an individual's racial schema may be weighted either in the direction of negative attributes (racial conservatism), positive attributes (racial liberalism), or even equally positive and negative attributes (racial ambivalence). The direction of the weight of attitude objects associated with one's racial schema will make racially resentful individuals more predisposed to priming effects, whereas others will be more resistant.

Likewise, individual levels of racial resentment can only reflect a unique constellation of the group-specific stereotypes and attitude objects available in the socio-political information environment. In the case of Black Americans, the Civil Rights Movement successfully created a new norm of racial egalitarianism that is available for individuals to draw from when developing an individual-level Black racial schema. Meaning, that Black ambivalence is at least a possibility because the negative stereotyping sits alongside racial egalitarianism at a societal level, though individuals may assign different magnitudes and/or valences to those oppositional attributes to arrive

at different levels of racial resentment. For Latinos however, it is not clear whether ambivalence is as strong a possibility for individual-level racial schemas given the absence of well-established Latino norm of equality. As a result, I expect that there will be less tension among countervailing attitude objects and therefore, less variation among the various Latino appeal conditions.

Finally, the distinct pattern of partisan reactions in disavowing Trump's racist rhetoric and the polarization of racial attitudes across party lines, I inquire as to whether Republican and Democratic voters are equally committed to egalitarian racial norms. Valentino and colleagues' (2018) work suggests that redistricting and an increased awareness of white racial identity has ushered in the "end of racial priming" for contemporary campaigns in which explicit anti-Black appeals are no longer disavowed. Likewise, this study takes seriously the notion that both social norms and electoral coalitions may change over time, but also considers that they may do so unevenly across geographic space (voting districts) and/or party coalitions.

Furthermore, Partisan Motivated Reasoning (PMR) and the IE model each purport that voter commitments to their partisan identification and to the norm of racial equality, respectively, supersede other information in expressing political attitudes and behaviors. What should we expect when voters must process information that creates a tension or disagreement out of those commitments? By disaggregating candidate appeals by partisanship, I glean important insights into the ways that co- and cross-partisan appeals impact voter motivation to adhere to one's partisan attachments or to the norm of racial equality.

NOTES ON THE SURVEY EXPERIMENT DESIGN

Survey experiments are well established in the literature on racial priming as a method for understanding the impact of racial appeals on respondent attitudes, opinions, and behavior. When fielded with large, representative samples, survey experiment research designs can establish generalizable causal effects. The random assignment of respondents to control and treatment conditions affords researchers a high degree of confidence that the individual manipulations embedded in the treatments are responsible for observed changes in the sample's responses. Following the conventions of the literature and insights gleaned over time to improve experimental design, I take numerous steps to increase the external validity of the results of the survey instrument.

In this study, I utilize a survey experiment design embedded in the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Elections Survey (CCES) administered by YouGov through an online survey platform². This survey experiment directly and comparatively assesses the impact of various Black and Latino racial appeals on candidate favorability. It *directly* assesses the impact of exposure of various racial campaign appeals on respondent candidate favorability scores as opposed to elite interpretations of an appeal's racial content. In recent years, the racial priming literature has drifted toward an interest in respondent reactions to elite opinions on racial appeals. My study refocuses attention on reactions to the campaign appeals themselves. The survey experiment is also designed with parallel conditions for each Black and Latino appeal which allows for a *comparative* assessment of how particular rhetorical-visual constructions work across racial groups.

² Participation in the 2016 CCES was made possible by a Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant (DDRIG) funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF, Award Number: 1560648).

Recently, some scholars have raised concerns about the ways in which the racial intent of implicit appeals may be more easily perceived by voters in the hyper-racialized political context of contemporary political media and campaigns (Reny, Valenzuela, and Collingwood 2019; Tesler 2016). According to the IE model, the power of implicit appeals rests in their ability to go undetected and unconsciously activate negative racial predispositions (Mendelberg 2001; Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002). While my study, in part, challenges the notion that implicit appeals are effective because their racial content remains beneath conscious awareness, I do take care to offer a treatment condition that contains more a more subtle racial prime than even the implicit appeal in order to achieve a high degree of ambiguity. My survey experiment includes an original concept that I call a “tacit” appeal which aims to prime racial predispositions with racial images alone and is paired with race-neutral rhetoric that refers to the visually featured group only as “people” (in both the Black and Latino conditions). The tacit condition is an attempt to deal with the increased salience of race and racial identities in politics and the media, especially since the Obama presidency (Tesler 2016) while also acknowledging the requirement of “ambiguity” and “plausible deniability” (Mendelberg 2001) that undergirds the rhetorical-visual construction of implicit appeals.

In this survey experiment, I expose respondents to a series of mailers from a fictional member of Congress, Don Williams, campaigning for re-election in his fictional Indiana district. The two issue mailers are presented sequentially, in order to closely replicate the multiple-mailer information environment experienced in real-world campaigns and enhance the experiment’s external validity. The first mailer communicates visual information about the fictional candidate (white, middle-aged man), identifies his

district, and basic Election Day information. The second, is the Voter ID issue mailer that contains the rhetorical-visual treatment manipulations. Candidate party affiliation is randomized by presenting a preamble text on the screen preceding the mailer sequence. The presentation of multiple mailers helps to obscure the location of the treatment stimuli whose impacts I am interested in measuring.

When this survey was fielded in 2016 voter ID laws had been pursued in multiple state legislatures, received a lot of media attention throughout that presidential campaign year, and was thought to enjoy bi-partisan support.³ Although voter identification campaigns were often advanced with race-neutral imagery and rhetoric, research has demonstrated that support for voter ID laws is responsive to racialized thinking (Wilson et al. 2014) and that the proposal and passage of state-level legislation is correlated to the state's racial composition (Bentele and O'Brien 2013). Another important value presented by the voter ID issue is that it possesses a degree of both "issue parity" and "issue congruence" (Reny, Valenzuela, Collingwood 2019) for both Blacks and Latinos. It is an issue that can be applied rather evenly to both groups and that support for the issue and the sponsoring candidate will be highly responsive to racial priming effects. It is also a more contemporary debate that steps away from highly charged issues of crime or welfare spending for Blacks and immigration for Latinos.

Finally, it is important to note that racial appeals are likely to be perceived differently by different racial groups and that this study is limited to an inquiry of the impact of Black and Latino appeals on non-Hispanic, white Americans. The study of

³Recent research suggests that elite opinions on the voter ID issue bifurcated along party lines as early as 2008 (Gronke et al. 2019). However, public opinion polling (i.e: PBS NewsHour/NPR 2021; Monmouth University Polling Institute 2021) continues to register high levels of bi-partisan support for voter identification laws.

political opinion and behavior in the United States has begun to forge a systematic approach to understanding the diversity of perspectives held among different racial and ethnic groups (see for example, Masuoka and Junn 2013; Nteta 2013). For example, within the priming literature, White (2007) takes up the question of how Black and white voters respond to negative racial appeals that target African Americans. White (2007) finds that contrary to whites, whose anti-Black affect is primed only by implicit appeals, for Blacks, in-group identity is primed only by explicit references to the group. There is value in studying an array of respondent group-target group pairings which the racial priming literature has not taken up very regularly. However, I am focused on white Americans as group for two reasons. First, because they are most susceptible to negative racial appeals. Also, white Americans' reactions to racial appeals are deeply important to understand as the group continues to enjoy a structural position of power in U.S. society and from this privileged position their political opinions and behaviors can have tremendous impacts on the access other groups have to an array of opportunities and benefits.

DISSERTATION OVERVIEW

Chapter 2 presents my theory of Persistent Foreigner Positionality (PFP) to explain why Latinos (and other non-Black minorities) are not encompassed by the norm of racial equality and how, as a result, the normative constraints that would otherwise stem whites' racialized thinking are not established for Latinos. My theory of PFP builds directly upon Claire Jean Kim's (1999) theory of racial triangulation and weaves together various, disparate literatures that provides a scaffolding for new

perspectives and syntheses related to the implicit-explicit model of racial priming. In doing so, Persistent Foreigner Positionality articulates the ways in which Latinos occupy a racial position that is distinct from Black Americans and explains why the normative and psychological requisites of the IE model are not present when the theory of racial priming is applied to Latinos.

In Chapter 3, I introduce the foundation of the survey experiment that focuses on the relevance of the IE model using a comparative design that focuses on implicit and explicit, Black and Latino appeals. Drawing on racial priming studies and the theory of racial triangulation (Claire Jean Kim 2001) my theory of permanent foreigner positionality (PFP) asserts that racial priming has been predicated upon notion of racial equality that has been mistakenly conflated with “African American equality.” As a result, I hold a deep skepticism about the ability of the IE model to extend beyond African Americans to non-Black racial and ethnic groups. In this study, I focus on Latinos whose political salience has increased over the past decade alongside demographic shifts (Abrajano & Hajnal, 2015; Collingwood et al. 2014). The Latino population in the United States has grown to nearly 61 million in 2019 (Noe-Bustamante, Lopez, and Krogstad 2019). Additionally, My findings clearly demonstrate that the IE model is still very much relevant for understanding the impact of racial appeals featuring Blacks, but that it does not travel to account for racist appeals that feature Latinos.

Chapter 4 is an extension to the foundational experiment presented in Chapter Three that introduces an original concept I call “tacit” appeals. Tacit appeals seek to increase the “implicitness” or subtlety of the rhetorical-visual construction of a racial appeal by encoding the racial content in images alone. Increasing the ambiguity of the

appeal helps assess whether respondents in the hyper-racialized contemporary political context are more sensitive to and aware of the meaning of traditionally coded implicit appeals that prime racial resentment with images and code words. This additional variation on racial appeal construction attempts to help arrive at a better understanding the priming mechanism that undergirds the psychology of implicit communication and whether acting on racial animus is a conscious or unconscious act.

This chapter also seeks to understand how the social-psychological construction of political attitudes towards Blacks and Latinos as disparate racial group yields variations in ambivalence. Ambivalence, or the presence of conflicting racial attitudes, is a key feature of IE's models theoretical foundation that produces a tension that can be exploited to mobilize white voters exposed to implicit, or ambiguous appeals. If the egalitarian norms that counterbalance the continued negative stereotyping of racial groups is underdeveloped for the Latino population in the United States, then there is no real motivation for candidates to embed their anti-Latino appeals in an implicit rhetorical construction; explicit appeals would not be strongly disavowed in a political context in which norms of Latino equality are not widely, or strongly held by voters. Additionally, I point to the ways that racial resentment can be conceptualized as a measure of individual level variation in the placement of one's racial attitudes within the range of affective assessments available from the socio-political environment. As a result of a greater range of affective attitudes towards Blacks, there will likely be more variation in the responses to the anti-Black appeals compared to those featuring anti-Latino messages.

In Chapter 5, I perform a categorical examination of the ways in which partisanship conditions racial message reception. Here, I work to adjudicate between the

competing theoretical claims of the IE model and Partisan Motivated Reasoning, both of which purport a superseding adherence to a single affective commitment. For the IE model, adherence to the norm of racial equality is primary, whereas PMR suggests that affective party attachments supplant all other values or substantive positions in the expression of political opinions. My analyses demonstrate that in the “most racial” (Tessler 2016) contemporary political context, there is a deep partisan divide regarding the disavowal of explicit-Black appeals for both partisan voters and candidates. Explicit-Black appeals made by Republican candidates are far more widely accepted by the electorate than when Democratic candidates make those same appeals. However, Democratic voters can be lured into acting on anti-Black affect when the appeals are very subtle (tacit) and delivered by a co-partisan candidate. Overall, the results disaggregated by partisanship further show that Democratic voters are the group within the electorate that is working to patrol and maintain the normative boundaries against explicitly racist appeals that feature Black Americans.

Finally, the Conclusion chapter of this dissertation will summarize the empirical findings of previous chapters and suggest ways that future research can support a deeper understanding of racial appeals across racial groups and political contexts. I also include some thoughts on the practical application of a bounded implicit-explicit model in contemporary politics.

Overall, I find that the implicit-explicit model of racial priming is a useful paradigm through which we can understand racial appeals in contemporary politics and my work points to the ways in which its application to a particular racial group must first be qualified against the theory’s underlying assumptions. Partisan Motivated Reasoning

appears to be a stronger predictor of Republican political behavior than adherence to a norm of racial equality. Democrats are also motivated by partisan attachments in the face of nearly all racial appeals, but will strongly disavow explicit-Black appeals and punish the sponsoring candidate accordingly. As such, partisan polarization around issues of race and the maintenance of the norm of “African American” equality point to the ways in which the IE model continues to hold theoretical relevance for racially liberal Democrats, but loses predictive power among racially conservative, Republicans. Persistent Foreigner Positionality presently locates Latinos beyond an egalitarian racial norm without which the IE model cannot be appropriately applied to understanding negative racial appeals that feature the group. However, once that norm is established in the United States, the IE model should present useful theoretical predictions for Latinos just as it has for Blacks.

CHAPTER 2

PERSISTENT FOREIGNER POSITIONALITY: UNDERSTANDING RACIAL PRIMING THEORY AND ITS (IN)APPLICABILITY TO APPEALS THAT NEGATIVELY FEATURE LATINOS

INTRODUCTION

In the two decades since the publication of *The Race Card* (Mendelberg 2001) the implicit-explicit (IE) model of racial priming has been paramount in helping political scientists and political pundits understand the form and impact of racial appeals. The IE model was developed in the wake of the Civil Rights movement with a Black-white understanding of racial dynamics. While the Black-white paradigm remains a significant lens for understanding and interpreting racial dynamics in the United States today (Carter 2019), it may have limited utility in understanding whether and how theories developed to explain Black-white racial dynamics translate to account for those among whites and non-Black racial and ethnic groups. This study takes up the call for theorizing “beyond Black and white” (Segura and Rodrigues 2006) to comparatively assess the extent to which the IE model holds relevance when applied to racial appeals featuring Latinos.

Major demographic shifts have increased the salience of other racial groups alongside Blacks in American politics. In particular, the Latino population surpassed sixty million in 2019 and has accounted for more than half (52%) of the United States’ population growth since 2010 (Noe-Bustamante, Lopez, and Krogstad 2020). This begs the question as to whether the IE model works to mobilize white political opinion when Latinos, or non-Black minority groups as opposed to Blacks are featured in negative racial campaign appeals? Given the particular dimensions of the social construction and

racialization of Blacks compared to Latinos, there is reason to believe that the norms governing racism, ethnocentrism, or nativism are distinct and not developed equally among the body politic of the United States. As a result, the political opinions and behaviors of white Americans may vary significantly, depending on the normative behaviors that are primed when different racial and ethnic groups are encountered in political media and campaign appeals.

I develop a theory of Persistent Foreigner Positionality⁴ (PFP) to explain why Latinos (and other non-Black minorities) are not encompassed by the norm of racial equality and how, as a result, the normative constraints that would otherwise stem whites' racialized thinking are not established for Latinos. My theory of PFP is a synthesis of Claire Jean Kim's (1999) theory of racial triangulation and application to the IE model of racial priming. It takes the historical racial context of the civil rights movement into account and argues that Latinos are a poor fit for the model as a result. Persistent Foreigner Positionality highly resonates with Iris Marion Young's argument that Hispanics/Latinos in the United States are "uniquely positioned as permanently foreign immigrants in the imagination of Anglo Americans" (2000, p. 159).

In effect, the theory of Persistent Foreigner Positionality articulates the ways in which Latinos occupy a racial position that is distinct from Black Americans and explains

⁴ My theory of Persistent Foreigner Positionality was developed independently from political theorist Iris Marion Young's argument that Hispanics/Latinos in the United States are "uniquely positioned as permanently foreign immigrants in the imagination of Anglo Americans" (Young 2000, p. 159). While my theory of PFP shares many of the same tenets as Young's argument, I came across her argument years after the development of my theory and research design. Also, I find it important to note that in earlier versions of this paper, I called my theory of PFP "Permanent Foreigner Positionality," but changed it because I did not want my writing to reify the notion that Hispanics/Latinos must only occupy a "foreigner" positionality. Shifting the language to "persistent" creates possibilities for Hispanics/Latinos to occupy a more "insider" position within either the socio-political structure of the United States or in the "imagination" of white Americans. Finally, the novelty of my theory of PFP does not rest upon its theoretical construction so much as its *application* to the IE model of racial priming.

why the normative and psychological requisites of the IE model are not present when the theory of racial priming is applied to Latinos. By pointing out the present failure of fit of the IE model for Latinos, PFP also highlights the egalitarian normative conditions that must be created in order to make use of the model at some future moment. More importantly, PFP elucidates how establishing a norm of Latino equality is a key step that must be taken to advance the position of Latinos in the U.S.

THE IE MODEL OF RACIAL PRIMING

The implicit-explicit (IE) model of racial priming is articulated most fully by Tali Mendelberg in *The Race Card* (2001) where she argues that that race was still used in late 20th century political advertisements, but unlike in pre-Civil Rights campaigns, these racial appeals were designed to subconsciously prime latent negative racial predispositions and do so in an implicit, rather than explicit, manner. This change in strategy employed by politicians reflects the ubiquity and power of the norm of racial equality in the U.S.; a norm that developed in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement.

According to Mendelberg, the power of the norm of racial equality precludes contemporary politicians from using explicit racial appeals (those that contain racial nouns or adjectives) to express anti-Black sentiment in their campaign advertisements. Explicit appeals are viewed by large swaths of the American public as the product of a bygone era, and more importantly, are seen as violations of the norm of racial equality. Thus, explicit appeals became a precarious campaign tactic for political candidates. Despite this development, Mendelberg argues that race has not disappeared from campaign communications, but instead a rhetorical shift has occurred in which race is now communicated to voters using implicit messages. Implicit messages are appeals that

employ “code words” that are stereotypically associated with particular racial communities and are paired with visual depictions of the minority group targeted in the campaign ad.

Due to the tension between egalitarian racial norms and the continued negative stereotyping of African Americans in the media, non-Hispanic, white Americans hold ambivalent racial sentiments regarding African Americans (Mendelberg 2001, p. 20). This tension can be exploited by politicians who choose strategic campaign messages that covertly activate anti-Black affect by reinforcing the salience of negative racial sentiments without seemingly violating the prevailing egalitarian racial norms. Thus, the effectiveness of an implicit appeal is a function of its ability to subconsciously prime negative racial predispositions. Mendelberg uncovers that implicit appeals had largely replaced explicit appeals in post-civil rights campaign advertisements, that implicit messages better primed racial resentment, and that exposure to implicit appeals led respondents to more strongly support restrictive welfare policies (see also, Hutchings et al. 2010; Valentino et al. 2002; White 2007). Implicit appeals that avoided the appearance of violating the norm of racial equality for African Americans successfully primed racial resentment and mobilize white voters’ support for the sponsoring candidate. To the contrary, explicit appeals were perceived as violating the racial norm of equality for African Americans. They were subsequently, disavowed by voters who rejected the message and “punished” the candidate sponsoring the ad by withdrawing their support.

Despite the primacy of the IE model, there are significant and emerging debates within the literature. Huber and Lapinski’s (2006) findings failed to replicate the disparate effects for implicit compared to explicit appeals with a nationally representative

sample. Instead, they found that racial resentment was the most powerful predictor for welfare policy support regardless of whether the policy appeal was made in an implicit or explicit manner. Huber and Lapinski (2006; 2008) argue that the unique priming effects of implicit appeals are exaggerated due to Mendelberg's (2001) regionally specific sample and the absence of a race-neutral control condition in the survey design.

Mendelberg (2008a; 2008b) counters these claims by arguing that there are several methodological concerns with Huber and Lapinski's (2006) experimental design. First, she questions whether there was "failure to treat" the respondents in the Huber and Lapinski study, given that no manipulation check was used to ensure that respondents received and understood the treatment conditions. Second, Mendelberg argues that racial schema would be called to mind across all conditions since racial attitudes were primed prior to treatment exposure, thereby moving all treatments to the same baseline. Lastly, Mendelberg notes that racial attitudes in the Huber and Lapinski study were measured with a 2-question battery that has been found to be less reliable than the standard 4-question racial resentment scale.

More recently however, Valentino et al. (2017) suggest that the combination of an increase in white racial identity and safe partisan districts has contributed to a political environment in which candidates are no longer constrained in articulating explicitly racist rhetoric. Using a series of four, nationally representative samples, Valentino and colleagues introduce variation to their survey methods and measurements in order to give careful attention to the methodological debate that transpired between Mendelberg (2008a; 2008b) and Huber and Lapinski (2006; 2008). In the end, Valentino and colleagues find "strong circumstantial evidence that explicit racial rhetoric may no longer

be rejected by many Whites” (2017, p. 27). Their work calls attention to whether the relevancy of the IE model has expired completely or simply lost potency in the current political moment.

Reny and colleagues’ (2019) study also fails to confirm the results expected of the IE model. However, they attribute their null results to an increased ability of voters to recognize the racial content of implicit appeal. These scholars argue that the historical shifts noted above have contributed to the hyper-racialized context in which political communication takes place. As a result, the racial content of an implicit appeal is just as easily perceived and salient as the racial content of an explicit appeal, for group-issue pairings that are highly congruent. Thus, the differential abilities of implicit and explicit racial appeals to mobilize racial attitudes are neutralized when they are perceived as interchangeable equivalents to one another.

The recent failures to confirm the outcomes anticipated by the IE model raise important questions about the model’s contemporary applicability to anti-Black and anti-Latino campaign appeals. The empirical anomalies presented by these recent studies beg for a review of the model’s theoretical underpinnings. The new contextual terrain presented by contemporary politics calls into question the way that we understand the IE model and whether the constitution of its components has changed over time or has shifted in meaning and impact in relation to other political dynamics. While the IE model has been well theorized and empirically tested for anti-Black appeals, neither is true for anti-Latino appeals that seek to mobilize white voter opinion and turnout. Additionally, as the theoretical predictions of the IE model fail to be met, it is worth understanding the conditions and mediating factors that contribute to model’s success and limitations.

THE UNIQUE RACIALIZATION OF LATINOS

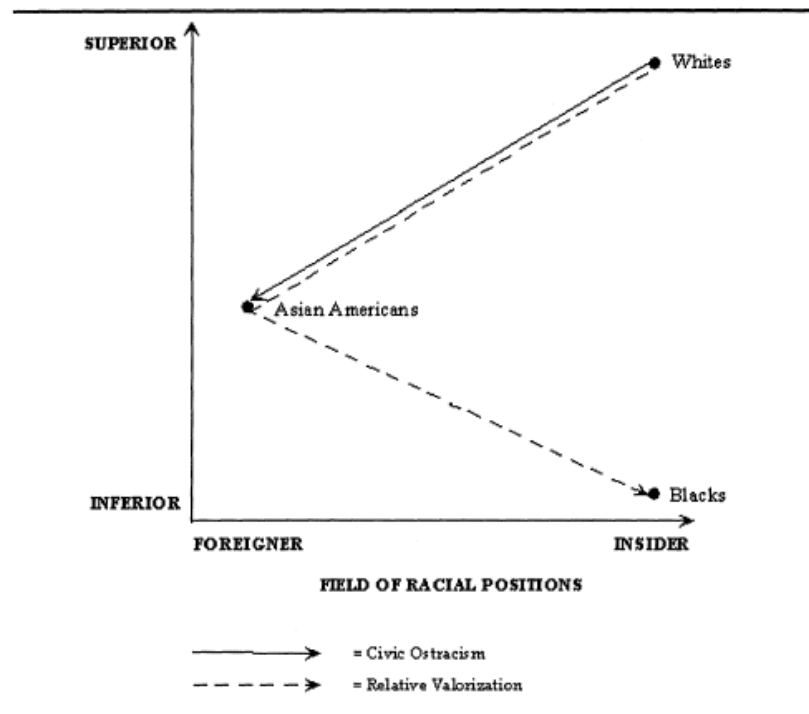
Despite the many perceived similarities between African Americans and Latinos, Latinos are racialized in a manner distinct from Blacks in the United States context. A failure to recognize the racialized differences among minority groups may collapse important racial group distinctions into an oversimplified white-nonwhite dichotomy (Kim 1999) that provides little theoretical insights into the different racial attitudes that develop toward those groups and the contexts within which those attitudes may be exploited by political elites. Here, I advance a theory of Persistent Foreigner Positionality to explain how racial construction of Latinos leaves the group outside of the body politic and creates a limited social perception of the rights to which many are entitled as citizens.

Claire Jean Kim's (1999) theory of racial triangulation describes the ways in which minority groups are racialized relative to one another in the United States and thus occupy unique racial positions. According to Kim, racial triangulation takes place in a contextual field defined by two axes: a superior-inferior axis and an insider-foreigner axis. Through the narrative content of largely white opinionmakers such as political elites and the media, racial groups acquire ranked positions according to the dual processes of "relative valorization" and "civic ostracism" (see Figure 2.1). The groups' racial positions set the normative benefits, opportunities, and constraints to which each group is entitled and ultimately works to reinforce the power and privilege of whites.

The superior-inferior axis is defined by colorism with Blacks positioned at the bottom and whites toward the top. Following the civil rights movement however, this axis became "coded" in colorblind references to traditional American values such as work ethic, respect for the law, and family values. Using Asians Americans to articulate

her theory, Kim demonstrates that on the superior-inferior axis Asian Americans are “relatively valorized” to occupy a higher position as the “model minority” compared to African Americans. However, through a process of “civic ostracism” Asian Americans are constructed as “alien” outsiders who are not entitled to the full membership and benefits of incorporation into the American body politic.

Figure 2.1: Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans



From Kim (1999; p 108) “The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans.”

When the theory of racial triangulation is applied to Latinos to highlight the ways in which the group is socially constructed to occupy a unique racialized position in the United States context. Latinos’ racial position creates a discrete set of normative interactions that determines the benefits and constraints that the group is subjected to and

that may be reinforced through stereotypes and discrimination. Positive stereotypes about Latinos being “hard working,” “family oriented,” and “religious” (Reny and Manzano 2016) may help to elevate the group’s positionality vis-à-vis African Americans on the superior-inferior axis.

However, processes of “civic ostracism” are used to essentialize Latinos as foreigners who cannot be assimilated into white culture. Civic ostracism, in the case of Latinos, can include legal barriers to naturalization (i.e. repeated failure to pass the DREAM Act), a hyperbolic notion of group members’ dual-loyalties to the United States and their Latin-American nations of origin, and consequently, the exaggerated perception of “threat” that the foreign language and cultural these “unassimilable aliens” pose to the identity of the United States (see for example Huntington 2009). This social construction of Latinos by mainstream media, nativist legislators, and white opinion leaders casts a persistent outsider status upon the group. Latinos’ position as “foreigners” along the insider-foreigner axis in the field of racial triangulation leaves Latinos without full membership into the American polity, thereby allowing white, non-Hispanic Americans to circumvent the normative rights and benefits afforded to “insiders.”

This insider-outsider dimension presents an interesting and dynamic rendering of the U.S. racial order. As Blacks are typically positioned at the bottom of the superior-inferior axis that is defined by white supremacy, Blacks have faced some of the most significant challenges and disadvantages in securing the material outcomes that could be used to advance their position. Latinos, stereotypically associated with Brown skin, would be located at a slightly higher position than Blacks on the colorism scale of this superior-inferior axis. However, Latinos’ exclusion from full membership in the U.S.

body politic as “outsiders” means that in some contexts, they may occupy a position that is effectively *more* disadvantaged than Blacks and have more limited access to advancement opportunities as a group. Additionally, colorism could impact an individual Latinos’ racial positionality given the significant racial variation among group members. According to racial positionality, Latinos with darker skin will accumulate multiple burdens and positional disadvantages, while those with lighter skin may be able to unload burdens as they “pass” for whites and gain access to venues which they would otherwise be excluded⁵.

PERSISTENT FOREIGNER POSITIONALITY AND THE LIMITED UTILITY OF THE IE MODEL FOR LATINO APPEALS

To date, the scholarship on racial priming theory has not yet adequately addressed whether the predictions of the implicit explicit model of racial priming explain how white respondents react to negative advertisements that feature Latinos (Sears and Savalei 2003). It remains to be seen whether the IE model is bounded to the particular history and racialization of Blacks in the United States, or whether it can be applied more universally to other racial or ethnic minority groups. I argue that given the unique racialization of Latinos, along with the specificity of both the origins and definition of the norm of racial equality, it is unlikely that the associated predictions of the IE model extend to Latinos in the United States.

As noted in the previous section, I am advancing a theory of Persistent Foreigner Positionality which asserts that Latinos are socially constructed in the United States as a

⁵ Class could be an additional dimension that adds to the dynamic racial positionality of individual group members, where wealth can have a “lightening” effect along the superior-inferior axis.

pan-ethnic racial group that is cast *en mass* as “foreigners” with no legitimate claim to the political rights and social benefits of citizens, regardless of their individual citizenship status. The unique processes of racialization involved in the group’s social construction likewise position Latinos beyond the normative rights afforded to citizens and leave them vulnerable to rhetorical attacks and unfair treatment. As a result, I hypothesize that these distinct processes of racialization have significant theoretical and applied implications for how we identify and understand the incidence and impact of negative campaign advertisements with racial appeals targeting Latinos.

Additionally, I argue that the egalitarian racial norms that developed in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States do not extend beyond African Americans to encompass Latinos given the specific historical and racial context in which the norm was developed. In the absence of nationally salient landmark legislation, critical judicial rulings and sociocultural signals that would undergird the applicability of egalitarian norms to Latinos, it puts into question whether the “norm of racial equality” has been conflated with what may be more appropriately named a “norm of African American equality.” Without an egalitarian norm that extends to include Latinos, there is no countervailing force to stem white opinion and behavior in the face of racialized, anti-Latino rhetoric and messaging.

Therefore, there are two distinct phenomena by which Latinos may be excluded from the racial norm of equality in the United States. Latinos are either excluded from the norm of racial equality because the norm that developed in the wake of the civil rights movement did not fully extend beyond Blacks to other racial(ized) groups. Or, Latinos are excluded from the norm of racial equality because they are racialized with a

“foreigner” positionality that limits or eliminates their claims the rights and benefits afforded to citizens (regardless of individual citizenship status). In my theory of PFP I am agnostic about which of the two is responsible for Latinos’ exclusion from the norm, or whether both phenomena play a part. What is at the core of my theory of Persistent Foreigner Positionality is simply that Latinos are racialized to occupy a racial position distinct from Blacks, and that position is not tethered to a norm of racial (Latino) equality that would serve as a countervailing force on anti-Latino opinions and behaviors. As such, it is ineffectual to apply the implicit-explicit model of racial priming to any group for which a norm of equality does not exist.

The Ambivalence and Ambiguity Axioms

The success of implicit racial communication depends on four theoretical axioms: *Ambivalence*, *Accessibility*, *Ambiguity*, *Awareness* (Mendelberg 2001, Chapter Four). *Ambivalence* refers to the presence of conflicting racial attitudes. For ambivalence to be present, a racial schema must be composed of both positive and negative racial affects that are relatively in balance with one another. *Accessibility* is the ease with which racial predispositions are brought to bear on political decisions, either latent or primed. *Awareness*, refer to the conscious or unconscious position of a primed racial schema in the mind of the message recipient. Finally, *Ambiguity* is the quality of plausible deniability of the racial content embedded in an appeal. While *Accessibility* and *Awareness* are features of individual cognition, the remaining axioms are established through an interaction of individual cognition with the contextual information environment (*Ambivalence*) and the message form and content (*Ambiguity*). I will focus

on these interactive axioms to demonstrate the gaps in translating the IE model to Latino targets.

Ambivalent racial attitudes are fundamental to the proper functioning of the IE model. Egalitarian racial norms concomitantly running alongside negative racial stereotyping create a condition in which negative racial appeals will be accepted so long as they avoid an appearance of violating racial norms. When racial appeals explicitly violate egalitarian racial norms, the appeal will be rejected and reduce favorability toward message sponsor. If Latinos are socially constructed outside the bounds and benefits of egalitarian racial norms, then political rhetoric will be untethered to social desirability biases. The effect is that Latinos open to explicitly negative rhetorical attacks. In the absence of ambivalent racial attitudes regarding Latinos it may be easier for both candidates and white, non-Hispanic voters to outwardly express racial resentment toward the group without fear of social repercussions.

Additionally, the success of implicit appeals vis-à-vis the failure of explicit appeals is contingent upon message ambiguity within an environment in which egalitarian norms are present. The racial content must go undetected, or at least retain a degree of plausible deniability, for the appeal to prime racialized thinking that goes unattended and then subsequently expressed. However, if the egalitarian norms that stem racialized thinking are not sufficiently robust, elites do not have to rely on a set of “code words” within which anti-Latino sentiments must be couched. The need for ambiguity is thus reduced, allowing elite communication with white, non-Hispanic audiences to take on more explicitly negative and racial forms when featuring Latinos.

Therefore, the axioms upon which the implicit explicit model rests begin to quickly unfurl when the unique racialization and Persistent Foreigner Positionality of Latinos are taken into consideration. Whether the norm of racial equality is indeed merely a norm of African American equality, or Latinos are independently constructed as a social group with no claim to the egalitarian norms or rights of citizens, there is no countervailing force for the negative stereotyping and discrimination directed toward Latinos in the contemporary U.S. political communications. The implication is that there is neither normative pressure to conceal anti-Latino racist rhetoric, nor to disavow such sentiments when they are encountered in the public sphere.

CHAPTER 3

MAIN EFFECTS: COMPARING IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT APPEALS FOR BLACK AND LATINO CAMPAIGN AD TARGETS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter concerns the research questions that are most central to the current racial priming debate. The first question is whether Tali Mendelberg's Implicit-Explicit model (2001) continues to have relevance for negative campaign appeals featuring African Americans. The second, is whether the model extends to account for the impact of anti-Latino campaign appeals on white voters. I employ a survey experiment designed to directly and comparatively assess the impacts of anti-Black and anti-Latino campaign appeals on candidate favorability. The comparative design allows me to 1) adjudicate between Mendelberg's (2001) IE model and the recent priming literature that fails to replicate the model in the contemporary political context (for anti-Black appeals) and 2) adjudicate between Mendelberg (2001) and my own theory of Persistent Foreigner Positionality (PFP, for anti-Latino appeals).

This direct examination of the impact of racial campaign communications (rather than the elite opinions on racial appeals to white voters) is an important contribution to the racial priming literature for several reasons. Most importantly, my study re-centers the literature on the impact of implicit-explicit racial *campaign appeals* on white voter political opinion and behavior. Over time, the focus of racial priming studies has drifted away from examining the impact of the form and content of racialized campaign ads on white voters' political decisions. Instead, racial priming inquiries have taken up an

examination of elite-mass communications that identify and interpret the racial content of campaign messages. In other words, these studies are no longer focused on the impact of implicit and explicit racial appeals on voters' political preferences but are instead interested in how *elite opinions* on racial campaign appeals impact voter preferences. For example, several studies have taken up the question of whether revealing the racial content of an implicit appeal is an effective counterstrategy in undermining the power of racial primes (Nteta et al. 2016; Tokeshi and Mendelberg 2016). Other studies have investigated the abilities of implicit and explicit media reports to prime racial resentment and mobilize white electoral support (Reny et al. 2019; Valentino et al. 2018). Elite counterstrategies for "rendering the implicit explicit" is an important aspect of the racial priming theory Mendelberg explores in *The Race Card* (2001), however it is not central to the IE model in and of itself. If we are to be serious about understanding the impact of racial appeals on white voter preferences then it is to focus on the campaign appeals themselves, rather than just the elite interpretations of those appeals. This present study returns the inquiry into implicit-explicit appeals back to its roots in order to assess the model's contemporary relevance.

Second, the application of the IE model to campaign ads featuring Latino or other minority groups in the United States is an emerging, yet still underexplored area within racial priming theory (though see Junn and Masuoka 2013; Hopkins and Ostfeld 2016; Reny et al. 2019). *The Race Card* (Mendelberg 2001) and subsequent racial priming studies have been almost exclusively on anti-Black appeals and, consequently, not kept pace with the country's changing demographics. Latinos have supplanted the African American population as this country's largest minority group (US Census 2010) and the

political salience of the Latino population in the United States has grown since Mendelberg's writing (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015; Collingwood, Barreto, and Garcia-Rios 2014). Starting in the late 1990's, anecdotal evidence suggests that candidates for elected office have increasingly used Latino targets in campaign appeals aimed at mobilizing white voter support. As different minority groups are racialized in ways that are distinct from, and in relation to, one another (Kim 1999), it would be false to assume that all non-Black minority groups fit into a model that was used to describe anti-Black racial rhetoric. In particular, it is not clear that the requisite conditions of the IE model are met when the rhetorical targets of campaign appeals are Latino or other non-Black minorities. My study contributes to a longstanding lacuna in the literature on non-Black racial priming and racial appeals.

ANTI-BLACK APPEALS, THE IE MODEL, AND FAILURES TO REPLICATE

As I noted in Chapter Two, recent research suggests that contemporary U.S. politics has reached the limits of racial priming theory because implicit and explicit appeals are no longer distinguished by voters or lead to disparate outcomes. This research suggests that a pair of historical shifts have occurred that have rendered the IE Model obsolete in the United States' contemporary political communications environment. These shifts include a secular partisan realignment (Tesler 2016) and increased perceptions of whites as a racial group that is under threat (Jardina 2014). For Valentino et al. (2018) these shifts have resulted in an increased tolerance of explicitly anti-Black appeals among white voters. Valentino and colleagues claim that anti-Black appeals are no longer strongly disavowed by large swaths of white Americans due to the combination

of the historical shifts noted above. White perceptions of racial group threat boost the acceptability of explicit expressions discrimination and prejudice (Effron and Knowles 2015). This secular, partisan realignment has resulted in safe Republican districts that have shifted the vote calculus more favorably toward candidates who wish to use racial messages as a campaign tactic.

Reny and colleagues (2019) attribute these null differences between implicit and explicit appeals to an increased ability of voters to recognize the racial content of implicit appeal. These scholars argue that the historical shifts noted above have contributed to the hyper-racialized context in which political communication takes place. As a result, the racial content of an implicit appeal is just as easily perceived and salient as the racial content of an explicit appeal, for group-issue pairings that are highly congruent. Thus, the different abilities of implicit and explicit racial to mobilize racial attitudes are neutralized as they are read as interchangeable equivalents to one another.

It is interesting that although the Valentino et al. (2018) and Reny et al. (2019) share the same theoretical foundations regarding the historical shifts that are underpinning the failure of the IE model, the theoretical implications of their studies move in opposite directions. On the one hand, if Valentino and colleagues argue that explicit appeals are no longer disavowed by white voters, then we should see both implicit and explicit appeals *successfully mobilize* candidate support. On the other hand, if Reny and colleagues assert that the racial content of implicit appeals is more easily recognized, then implicit appeals should be treated as if they were explicit appeals and *disavowed* along with the explicit appeals. The theoretical implications contradict one another; both cannot be expressions of the same theoretical claims. While both the Reny

and Valentino studies find null differences between the implicit and explicit versions of their anti-Black campaign appeals, it is not enough to evaluate the ability of implicit vis-à-vis explicit messages to prime racial considerations and mobilize white voter political preferences. There are distinct hypotheses for the direction of the impact of implicit and explicit appeals and we should evaluate each of them independently.

In fact, the null findings of the Reny et al. (2019) study conceal an equally interesting, albeit overlooked result: exposure to implicit and explicit appeals generated positive respondent support ratings for their fictional candidate. This is counter to what the IE Model would anticipate for a campaign appeal whose racial content is apparent—that explicitly racial ads, or ads whose racial content is understood, should be disavowed by white voters who then withdraw their support from the sponsoring candidate.

Alternatively, explicit appeals in the Valentino et al study (2018) mobilize respondent support for healthcare policy and political leaders as the IE model predicts for implicit appeals. Though this finding is theoretically congruous with the IE model hypotheses, it is a violation of the psychological mechanisms involved in racial priming and activating adherence to the norm of African American equality. The authors suggest that the aforementioned historical shifts have altered the norms of racial discourse that govern contemporary political campaigns.

Hypotheses

Is this true? Is the norm of African American equality waning in the contemporary political landscape? Or, are the null findings of the recent literature an artifact of negative elite opinions leading respondents to feel negatively about African

American ad targets regardless of the form of the racial appeal? If the IE model continues to have relevance for campaign appeals that negatively target African Americans, then we should see voters disavow those messages and distance themselves from the sponsoring candidate. We would then predict that *explicit-Black* appeals *reduce* candidate favorability ratings relative to the nonracial control (H1a). Likewise, the ambiguity of implicit appeals in combination with ambivalent racial attitudes that maintain the value of African American equality, alongside continued negative Black stereotyping, would mean that implicit appeals continue to powerfully mobilize the preferences of white voters. In keeping with the IE model, we would predict that *implicit-Black* appeals *increase* candidate favorability ratings relative to the nonracial control (H1b).

ANTI-LATINO APPEALS, THE IE MODEL, AND PERSISTENT FOREIGNER POSITIONALITY

We can only understand the extent to which the IE model applies to Latino appeals in contemporary political context. It is difficult to claim that there has been movement in a particular direction when it has not previously been measured. Without a prior baseline we cannot state either that America's tolerance of explicit racial appeals or that recognition of implicit appeals has grown for Latino and other non-Black minority groups. There are a limited number of published works that explore non-Black racial appeals. For those studies that have featured Latino groups, the focus was not the application and extension of the IE model to Latino appeals. Instead, these authors focus on how racial group membership in the United States mediates the reception of racialized messages (Masuoka and Junn 2016) or how racial cues mediate immigration attitudes

specifically (Brader, Valentino, Suhay 2008, see also unpublished manuscript by Hopkins and Ostfeld 2016). Yet, anecdotal evidence points clearly to an increase in the use of negative Latino appeals as a campaign strategy which merits scholarly inquiry.

Newer work by Reny and colleagues (2019) takes on the question of whether implicit and explicit anti-Latino appeals follow the same predictions that the IE model holds for African American appeals. Their research found no distinction between implicit and explicit appeals for highly congruous issue-group pairings. Meaning, for issue-group pairings that are highly salient due to their frequent coupling in the media, respondents can read into the racial content of an implicit appeal. As a result, the explicit and implicit in their study appeals have the same impact on respondents.

However, the Reny et al. (2019) study has two methodological weaknesses in its research design. To start with, the design suffers from the same methodological concerns I noted above regarding the overall slippage in the literature away from directly testing the impact of campaign appeals. Instead, Reny et al.'s (2019) examines the impact of elite opinions of the racial content. The experimental design employed uses an implicit storyboard appeal for three issue-group pairings, followed by either an implicit or explicit opinion editorial regarding the content of the ad. Therefore, the implicit and explicit manipulations are encased in the opinion editorials that *follow* the exposure to the various racially implicit campaign ads, as opposed to the campaign ads themselves. While this is an appropriate design for studying how elite opinions might mediate the reception of racial content—and subsequent political decisions—it does not, however, fundamentally examine how an implicit or explicit racial campaign ad impacts white vote choice or candidate favorability.

Additionally, utilizing the term “illegal aliens” as the referent code word in an implicit-Latino group treatment on immigration is problematic as it places the target group outside of the United States’ body politic. The rhetorical placement of Latinos outside the body politic renders the group undeserving of political benefits and protections. Previous research has noted the ways in which the social construction of the term, “illegal alien,” has been both racialized as non-white and criminalized by the United States’ “color-blind” immigration policies (Masuoka and Junn 2016; Perez 2010). The modifier implies that there is a legitimate reason to withhold the political rights and social benefits to which many Latinos would otherwise be entitled. As a result, it creates a socially acceptable and race-neutral context for discussing immigration violations and justifying social policy restrictions (Masuoka and Junn 2016; Ono and Sloop 2002; Santa Ana 1999). Furthermore, the use of the word “alien” is associated with concepts such as “enemy invaders” or “harmful outsiders,” the type of phrases used to describe groups that have been perceived to resist American assimilation or those who pose a threat to American identity and way of life (Flores 2003; Nuñez 2013). Even if a norm of racial equality should exist for individuals of Latino origin, it does not hold that said norm would extend to “illegal aliens” because that term casts the group as outsiders and rationalizes the denial of benefits and protections to the group due to their “foreigner” positionality. Therefore, the rhetorical construction of “illegal alien” for an implicit-Latino appeal does not satisfy the necessary prerequisites of the IE model—principally that a norm of equality is present and that the message recipients hold ambivalent attitudes toward the target group. The use of the term, “illegal alien” thereby greatly

diminishes any chance of observing manipulation effects that would be associated with an implicit appeal.

Recall from Chapter Two that while the African American norm of racial equality has long been substantiated by a host of national legislative reforms and survey data that demonstrates a wide rejection of biological inferiority (Kinder and Sanders 1996), Persistent Foreigner Positionality questions whether the norm of racial equality extends beyond African Americans. PFP asserts that the political and academic focus on the Black-white paradigm for understanding race relations in the US has inadvertently conflated African American equality with (all) “racial” equality. To isolate whether egalitarian norms extend to Latino people—and by extension whether the IE model can be applied to Latino racial appeals—the research design must make a best effort to place the target group within the United States’ body politic. In doing so, the group is positioned as reasonably deserving of political inclusion eligible for egalitarian treatment should such norms exist.

Hypotheses.

If the norm of racial equality subsumes Latino groups within its umbrella, then the IE model should account for the differential impact of implicit and explicit Latino appeals on white voters. This model would predict that anti-Latino appeals both play out in the same ways that they would for anti-Black appeals (H3.1a,b): explicit Latino appeals reduce candidate favorability ratings relative to the control (H3.2a), while implicit Latino appeals increase candidate favorability ratings relative to the control (H3.2b). However, if the norm of racial equality does not extend to include Latino

members of the American polity, then the theory of Persistent Foreigner Positionality would be better able to account for the responses of white voters who are exposed to anti-Latino campaign appeals. Absent a norm of racial equality, explicit racial rhetoric could effectively prime racialized thinking and circumvent respondent adherence to values of racial egalitarianism. In turn, without the constraint of a potential norm violation, explicit-Latino appeals would successfully mobilize candidate support in the same way as implicit Latino appeals. Following this logic, I predict that explicit Latino appeals would increase candidate favorability ratings relative to the control (H3.3a) and that explicit Latino appeals are not less effective than implicit Latino appeals at increasing candidate favorability ratings (H3.3b).

DESIGN

The experimental design I employ provides a direct assessment of the differential impacts of implicit and explicit, anti-Black & anti-Latino appeals on white respondents' political evaluations. The foundation survey experiment⁶ takes on the form of a 2 x 2 comparative design: racial group (Black or Latino) and racial appeal (explicit or implicit), alongside a control that had no racial image or racial rhetoric. All respondents viewed a series of two campaign mailer images that were sponsored by a fictitious Congressman, "Don Williams." The first was an "Election Day" mailer (Figure 3.1) and the second was a "Voter ID" issue mailer (Table 3.1) which contained the treatment manipulations (control, Black-explicit, Black-implicit, Latino explicit, and Latino-implicit).

⁶ The full survey experiment included two other conditions: Black-tacit and Latino-tacit conditions which included the racial image of voters at the polls (Black and Latino voters, respectively) along with the race-neutral rhetoric employed in the control. I introduce these conditions in Chapter Four.

I took several measures to ensure that respondents' experience of the campaign mailers contained a high degree of external validity. Multiple mailers were employed in the treatment conditions in order to avoid the treatment manipulations appearing too blunt (Hersh and Schaffner 2013). I contracted a professional graphic designer with extensive experience in electoral campaigns to design each mailer. Taken together, these measures created the illusion of a real-world candidate with real campaign materials for respondents to consider and respond to *directly*. This is an important feature to highlight; many studies in the racial priming literature have taken a turn in their methodology and now measure the impact of *elite opinions* of a racial appeal (Valentino et al. 2018; Reny et al. 2019), as opposed to the impact of the racial campaign ad itself.

In order to control for partisanship effects, the partisan affiliation of Congressman Williams was randomized in each of the five conditions by showing respondents a preamble to the mailer image series that read,

“On the next page, you will see some campaign materials from Democratic [Republican] Congressman, Don Williams, that will be followed by a short set of questions. Please take your time to look over each of the campaign mailers carefully.”⁷

All respondents in the survey module began the experiment with the preamble message. Then, all respondents viewed the same “Election Day” mailer (Figure 3.1) and were then randomly exposed to one of five “Voter ID” mailer conditions: control, Black-explicit, Black-implicit, Latino-explicit, or Latino-implicit (Table 3.1), followed by a post-treatment questionnaire.

The “Election Day” mailer provided the candidate’s name, district information (also fictitious), the date of the upcoming election, and included a photo of Congressman

⁷ The co-partisan and cross-partisan effects of implicit-explicit elite messaging is taken up in Chapter Five.

Williams standing in front of a blurred Capitol Hill in the background (Figure 3.1). The “Voter ID” issue mailer, which showcased the candidate’s support for restrictive voter identification laws, housed the treatment manipulations which varied among racial targets (images of Black or Latino voters) and racial message content (explicit or implicit, see Table 3.1).

Figure 3.1: Mailer 1, Election Day Mailer



The “Voter ID” issue mailers showed an image of the Capitol Building with an American flag in the foreground overlaid with a text banner on top that read, “*VOTER ID PREVENTS FRAUD*”, along with another, smaller text banner in the middle of the mailer that read, “*Congressman Williams supports Voter ID laws.*” The visual and rhetorical

manipulations were overlaid in the area between these two text banners. An image of members of the target racial group (Black or Latino) voting at an election polling location was placed on the left between the text banners and a text box with a racial narrative (implicit or explicit) was placed to the right. The racial narrative was matched to the race of the voters at the polls' image and was a variant of the following message: *“Thousands of [people] are registered to vote in multiple states, violating our election laws.”* The word “people” was altered according to the various conditions.

Figure 3.2: Mailer 2, Voter ID Issue Mailer- Control



The control condition (Figure 3.2) utilized the race-neutral message above where the appeal targets are referred to only as “people” and did not include any image of voters at the polls (instead, the Capitol Building was in full view). All of the treatment

conditions are visually and rhetorically identical to the control, except that the image of the featured racial group, and the racial rhetoric describing the featured racial group had been systematically altered. In keeping with the standard definition of implicit and explicit racial appeal, (Mendelberg, 2001; Hutchings et al., 2010; Valentino et al., 2002; White, 2007) the two explicit treatments in my survey experiment (Black-explicit and Latino-explicit) contained a racial narrative that used the racial nouns “Blacks” and “Latinos” to identify the target group directly: *“Thousands of Blacks [“Latinos”] are registered to vote in multiple states, violating our election laws.”* The two implicit appeals used the code words “criminals” (Black-implicit) or “immigrants” (Latino-implicit) to identify the target population: *“Thousands of criminals [immigrants] are registered to vote in multiple states, violating our election laws.”*

Careful consideration was given to the language used for the code words used in the implicit appeals. I specifically avoided using the terms “illegal immigrant” or “illegal alien” in describing Latinos in order to maximize the probability that respondents could conceptualize the group as a part of the American polity. As I previously noted, the modifier “illegal” has been used as a rhetorical justification for circumventing egalitarian racial norms and in applying negative evaluations to Latinos, in particular (Cardona-Arroyo, 2017; Pérez, 2016; Sidanius and Pratto 1999). Likewise, the term “alien” brings up imagery of “threatening outsiders,” placing the group outside of the US body politic. The language within which the implicit-Latino appeal is encoded is an important consideration given the theoretical assumptions about the norm of racial equality embedded in both the IE model and my theory of Persistent Foreigner Positionality. One

could only reasonably expect egalitarian racial norms to extend to individuals perceived to be legitimate (legal) members of the polity.

Table 3.1: Foundation Experiment Conditions

	Explicit Narrative	Implicit Narrative	Race-Neutral Narrative
Control			
Black Conditions			
Latino Conditions			

Full sized images of all treatment conditions can be found in Appendix B.

I selected group-issue pairings in which the code words employed would bring to mind appropriate group-based considerations while still providing the rhetorical ambiguity, and plausible deniability, required of an implicit appeal (Mendelberg, 2001). Media portrayals of Blacks disproportionately associated with issues of welfare, crime (Gilens 1999; Gilliam and Iyengar 2000; Hurwitz and Peffley 2005; Peffley et al. 1997), and for Latinos immigration (Santa Ana 2002; Valentino et al. 2013), respectively. Therefore, “criminals” (for Blacks) and “immigrants” (for Latinos) were chosen to

represent the racial groups in the implicit conditions. Literary corpus research has shown that the term “immigrant” carries with it far more positive connotations such as ‘family’ and ‘vulnerability’ than the term “alien” (Nunez 2013). While “immigrant” is certainly conceptualized as a group of “others”—who do not enjoy the full rights and benefits afforded to “citizens”—it carries with it far more humanistic considerations than “alien.” The word “immigrant” also forms a neat parallel to the use of the word “criminal” that has been used extensively in the IE literature to refer to Blacks in implicit treatment manipulations as these groups both may not enjoy their full rights of citizenship at times.

Likewise, there are many advantages in the selection of voter identification laws as the issue domain in which the experimental manipulations were embedded. First, using voter ID laws is a novel approach to studying racial appeals (Wilson and Brewer, 2013). It moves the racial priming research away from highly charged issues such as welfare and crime (for Blacks) or immigration (for Latinos) that are stereotypically associated with these particular racial/racialized groups. Respondents have been shown to “fill in the gaps” for implicit messages with highly congruent issue-group pairings (Reny et al. 2019). For these implicit appeals, respondents understand the racial content, processing the information consciously rather than unconsciously (as the IE model would require of a successful implicit appeal). Endogenous priming effects may result from highly congruous issue-group pairings in which it is unclear if the target group or the issue in the appeal is responsible for any observed treatment effects. Voter identification laws are proposed as ostensible efforts to curb voter fraud perpetrated by ineligible voters such as felons or non-citizens (Minnite 2007). Thus, the issue is salient across *both* target groups in my study without being overly congruous at the time the study was conducted.

A second advantage is that voter identification laws is a social policy that has a high degree of contemporary relevance. This evidenced by the recent surge in the number of states pursuing or enacting voter identification laws (Bentele and O'Brien 2013). Proposals that require voters to produce some form of identification before being allowed to vote have consistently drawn overwhelming public support in opinion surveys, even among Democrats and minorities (Pew Research Center, 2012; Rasmussen Reports 2015; *The Washington Post*, 2012). From this we can infer that the issue enjoys a degree of bi-partisan support among the mass public.

Finally, there is a high likelihood of observing manipulation effects within this issue area. Voter identification laws appear, on the surface, to be nonracial appeals for maintaining the integrity of our elections system by limiting opportunities for fraud. Campaign messages in support for voter identification laws are presented in a race-neutral manner and typically do not use racial imagery or racialized code words. Yet, recent research has found that racial imagery can sway support for voter identification laws among racially resentful respondents (Wilson et al., 2014) and that the proposal and passage of state-level legislation is responsive to the state's racial composition (Bentele and O'Brien 2013). The race-neutral presentation of voter ID laws, along with evidence of racialized support, makes the issue ripe for priming racial attitudes and observing manipulation effects.

Data

The data in this study come from questions I designed for a module in the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES). The CCES is an online survey of

over 64,000 American adults conducted via YouGov.com on behalf of over 50 colleges and universities. This collaborative study has been shown to produce estimates similar to telephone and mail surveys (Ansolabehere and Schaffner 2014). It gathers a nationally representative sample of “opt-in” volunteer respondents from the YouGov database. The 2016 CCES was fielded in two panels during September and October 2016 (pre-election) and in November 2016 (post-election). The total number of non-Hispanic, white adult respondents available to my module was 1,973. It was important to exclude white Hispanics from my sample because they may identify with the Latino targets in the survey experiment campaign ads and produce responses that differ from non-Hispanic, white respondents.

The dual wave panel allowed me to ask questions about racial resentment in such a way that pre-treatment priming effects, as well as any post-treatment conditioning effects, could both be avoided. Prior research suggests that asking racial resentment questions shortly in advance of the experimental treatments may prime racial considerations across all treatments and produce null results (Mendelberg, 2008). The pre-treatment questionnaire was administered six weeks prior to being exposed to the treatments. The pre-election survey to collect demographic data along with measures of respondent party identification (7-point scale, strong Democrat to strong Republican, includes leaners) and racial resentment (ANES 4-question battery). In the post-election survey, respondents were randomly exposed to the series of campaign mailer treatments sponsored by the fictitious Congressman Don Williams, followed by a post-treatment questionnaire. The post-treatment questionnaire included questions on attention to the treatment, candidate favorability, vote choice, Black and Latino racial resentment,

support for restrictive Black and Latino social policy questions (full question wording for each can be found in the Appendix). For this chapter, candidate favorability is the dependent variable of interest:⁸ “*How favorable do you feel towards the candidate?*” measured with a feeling thermometer that ranged from 0-100 (strongly oppose to strongly favor). Candidate favorability replicates the claims of Mendelberg’s (2001) study on the implicit and explicit impacts of the Willie Horton ad in the 1988 presidential election.

RESULTS

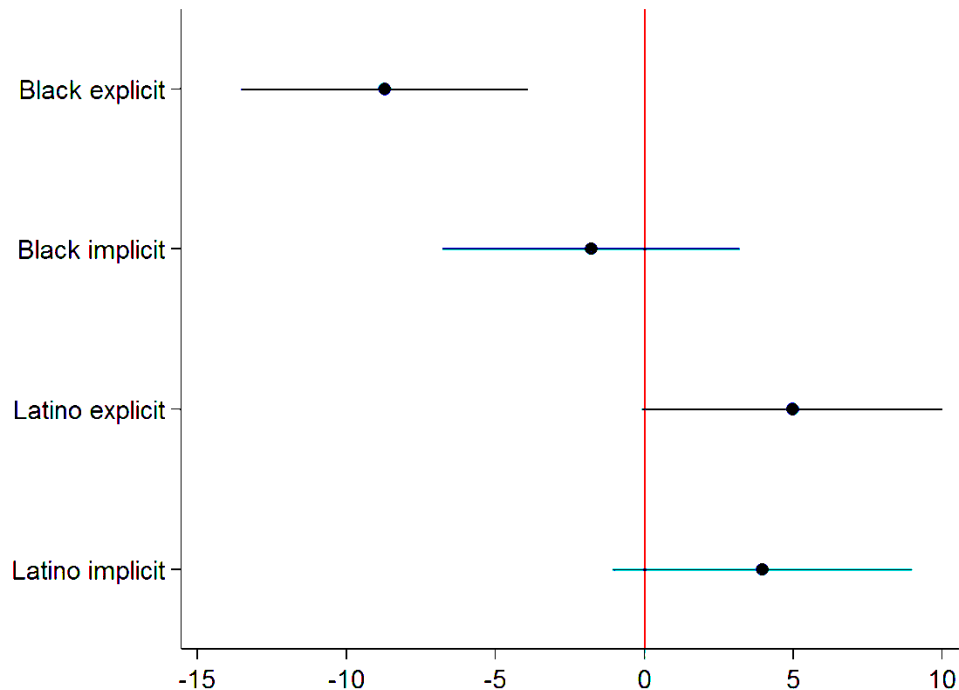
In testing the hypotheses outlined above, I first estimated a regression model that examined the impact of implicit, and explicit, Black and Latino appeals relative to the control condition. A plot of the treatment effect coefficients and 95% confidence intervals relative to the control for this model can be seen in Figure 3.3. There are several noteworthy findings here. First, there is a strong confirmation of the explicit appeal hypothesis (H3.1a) that is at the core of Mendelberg’s IE model. The explicit-Black appeal has a negative impact on candidate favorability (-9 points, $p < .001$) relative to the race-neutral appeal in the control. Explicit-Black appeals perform as the IE model would expect; appeals were largely disavowed by white respondents and we saw a corresponding drop in candidate favorability relative to the control.

Next, the implicit-Black appeals did not elicit the positive candidate evaluations relative to the control that I expected from the IE model (H3.1b). The result here is not

⁸ Vote choice was also asked: “*If you lived in Congressman Williams’ district, how likely would you be to vote for him?*” measured with a 5-point Likert scale (extremely likely to extremely unlikely). The results replicated those for candidate favorability (see Appendix for full regression analysis). Presenting the results to the favorability question was preferred mainly because the response measurement allowed for a greater range of variation to make use of in an OLS regression model.

statistically significant ($p = .485$) relative to the control. The 7-point drop in favorability for respondents exposed to the explicit rather than the implicit appeal is highly significant ($p = .009$), according to a two-tailed test of significance. According to Mendelberg (2001), implicit appeals are better at priming racial thinking and mobilizing white voters than explicit appeals. There is inconclusive support then for the implicit Black-appeal hypothesis (H3.1b). White voters punish a candidate more harshly for making an explicit-Black appeal, but the results point only to that benefit as a result of the depressed support among respondents exposed to the explicit-Black appeal. The results for implicit-Black appeals do not provide evidence of candidate favorability being mobilized by that appeal.

Figure 3.3: OLS Regression for implicit and explicit conditions with 95% confidence intervals



When turning attention to the explicit-Latino appeal, I find results contrary to the expectations of the IE model (H3.2a) and show tepid support my own theory of Persistent Foreigner Positionality (H3.3a). Explicit-Latino appeals generate a marginally significant positive increase in candidate favorability (5 points, $p=.055$) among white voters relative to the control. White voters exposed to an explicit-Latino appeal reward the candidate with slightly improved favorability ratings, rather than withdrawing their support as they would for an explicit-Black appeal. Altogether, there is a 14-point benefit in favorability ratings when the candidate uses explicit racial appeals that target Latinos compared to explicit appeals that target Blacks. A t-test shows that this increase in candidate favorability is associated with a very high degree of significance ($p<.001$). The positive coefficient and marginally significant effect of the explicit Latino treatment runs counter to the expectations of the IE model of racial priming. Explicitly racial ads that feature Latinos appear to be successful at mobilizing white voter support. and can suggest that the norm of racial equality, or at least the pressure to conform to such, does not extend to Latino appeals.

Finally, implicit-Latino appeals are not significant relative to the control ($p=.123$). A two-tailed t-test demonstrates that the responses to explicit- and implicit-Latino appeals have nearly identical means and their difference does not achieve statistical significance (diff = .84, $p = .744$). This null finding does not provide much insight into whether respondents distinguish between explicit and implicit-Latino appeals (H3.3b).

DISCUSSION

This chapter presented a direct experimental test of Mendelberg's (2001) IE model for contemporary anti-Black and anti-Latino appeals. I find partial support for the IE Model with regards to anti-Black appeals. Specifically, the respondents exposed to explicit, anti-Black appeals were significantly more likely to withdraw their electoral support from the candidate sponsoring the message. The fact that I find significant negative candidate favorability effects for explicit-Black appeals indicates that they continue to be disavowed by large swaths of white voters in contemporary US politics.

The effects for implicit-Black appeals fail to reach standard levels of statistical significance. Although the implicit-Black appeal generates higher favorability ratings relative to the explicit-Black appeal, the results suggest that that benefit is produced solely by depressed favorability ratings among respondents in the explicit-Black condition. There is no mobilizing effect observed for the implicit-Black condition as would be anticipated by the IE model. The control condition creates a baseline effect that is useful in helping to decipher the source of the relative benefit of the implicit appeal compared to the explicit appeal.

When we turn our attention to the Latino treatments, Mendelberg's hypotheses did not play out as expected. Had the IE model worked for the explicit, anti-Latino appeals, the results would show a decrease in candidate favorability relative to the race-neutral control. Instead, I found a marginally significant, positive candidate favorability effects among respondents exposed to an explicit-Latino appeal. Though modest, these results support for my theory of Persistent Foreigner Positionality which states that the norm of racial equality does not encompass the Latino population in the United States

and that a norm of Latino equality has not been fully crystalized. Without a norm of equality that includes the Latino population, candidates are not precluded from making and befitting from anti-Latino appeals.

The IE model of racial priming states that implicit appeals are successful because their ambiguity allows the message recipient to circumvent adhering to egalitarian racial norms. White voters exposed to an implicit Latino appeal do not produce statistically significant candidate favorability ratings relative to the control. However, the success of the explicit–Latino appeal suggests that there is no norm to circumvent, thereby invalidating the entire theoretical foundation upon which the IE model is predicated. Additionally, there is no statistically significant difference between the candidate favorability among respondents exposed to either implicit- or explicit-Latino appeals. These null findings point to the poor fit of the IE model for Latino appeals, but do not provide much insight as to whether candidates have *carte blanche* to use a variety anti-Latino appeals without significant electoral repercussions.

Chapter Four goes on to explore tacit appeals; a novel treatment manipulation I developed that aims to prime with racial imagery coupled with race neutral language. This novel appeal construction helps to explore the attribute of implicitness required to unconsciously prime racial thinking—especially in the hyper-racialized contemporary political environment where voters may be able to easily perceive the racial content of even coded, implicit racial messages. As a hyper-subtle appeal, the tacit treatment attempts to distinguish between implicit/unconsciousness priming and what might be

better understood as a conscious “motivation to control prejudice” (Blinder et.al 2016) or “plausible deniability.”⁹

Chapter Five examines the ways in which candidate and respondent partisanship mediates the response to implicit and explicit racial campaign communications. Given the partisan polarization that dominates contemporary politics in the United States, questions arise as to whether partisan attachments or a commitment to racial egalitarianism dominate individual responses to racial appeals—especially as the polarization runs along a partisan cleavage regarding racial attitudes and issues.

⁹ In *The Race Card* (2001) Mendelberg states that the quality of implicitness is a racial message’s “deniability.” However, I am arguing that if the power of an implicit appeal is its ability to unconsciously prime, then the appeal must not be evaluated for its racial content at all. Any consideration of whether race is or is not part of the message construction, deciding whether an appeal contains “plausible deniability,” moves the prime into the realm of conscious decision making.

CHAPTER 4

THE IMPACT OF TACIT APPEALS AND RACIAL RESENTMENT ON RACIAL MESSAGE RECEPTION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter takes a closer look at the psychological mechanisms embedded in the Implicit Explicit (IE) model of racial priming. In doing so, I will explore the interactions between appeal content, racial norms, and racial resentment. I take seriously the notion that contemporary campaign communications take place in a hyper-racialized political context (Tesler, 2016). Recent scholarship on racial priming is quick to attribute changes in the impact of implicit and explicit appeals to a retrenched norm of racial equality (Valentino et al., 2018; Reny et al. 2019). Yet, these changes might just as easily be attributed to a shift in the perception of what constitutes an implicit appeal in today's political communications environment.

Recall from previous chapters that the power of an implicit appeal is derived from its ambiguity and plausible deniability. It may be that in the contemporary communications environment, racial stereotypes and messaging are so easily perceived that implicit appeals no longer have the power they once did to “unconsciously” prime racial considerations. Instead, the code words utilized in implicit appeals bring with them the same set of race conscious considerations as would explicitly racial nouns and adjectives. My findings in Chapter 3 provide some preliminary support for this assertion; the respondents in the implicit-Black treatment registered *lower* candidate favorability

scores than those in the control. This finding suggests that respondents in this condition regarded the appeal as if it contained an explicit-Black message.

In this chapter, I will dig deeper into the psychology of priming (Mendelberg, 2001) and the ways that *ambiguity* and *ambivalence* mediate individual responses to racial appeals. In testing message ambiguity, I introduce a novel, more subtle, visual message that I call a “tacit” appeal. Tacit appeals attempt to prime racial considerations with only visual images of the group targeted in a campaign advertisement. They are “hyper-implicit” appeals that omit the code word that would typically accompany the racial imagery in an implicit appeal. By re-focusing attention onto the qualities that constitute “implicitness,” rather than replicating the rote operationalization of implicit appeals, I hope to elucidate the rhetorical and visual features that contribute to the success of contemporary racial appeals.

In testing the impact of *ambivalence* on message reception, I look closely at the conditional effects of racial resentment across Black- and Latino-treatments. Per my theory of Permanent Foreigner Positionality, I will argue that the norm of racial equality in the priming literature has been conflated with what would more appropriately be labeled a norm of African American equality. As a result, there is a strong countervailing force that checks the expression of anti-Black attitudes, even among individuals who express higher levels of racial resentment (an African American-oriented index). Conversely, the egalitarian values that would guide the normative responses to Latino appeals have not been sufficiently developed. Without egalitarian norms and positive racial attributes to populate white Americans’ Latino racial schema, a truly ambivalent

set of attitudes that can be mobilized in either a positive or negative direction is not possible.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF IMPLICIT COMMUNICATION, REVISITED

Considering the recent racial priming research that has been published with null results for implicit appeals, it is important to revisit the psychological mechanisms that undergird successful racial communication. This review is important in order to understand why the IE model seems to be failing to explain for the impacts of contemporary racial appeals. Without a theoretical understanding of how appeal content, racial norms, and racial predispositions interact to create disparate outcomes, researchers may get caught looking in the wrong places for particular outcomes, or misattributing causality. For example, null results for implicit appeals may be attributed to a waning norm of equality when it could be equally likely that the implicit appeal is no longer read as “implicit” in today’s communications environment. Likewise, I find the claim that the norm of African American equality is in retrenchment to be wholly undertheorized and under supported by empirical data. I am not ready to accept this claim—especially in light of the fact that my findings for Black appeals from Chapter Three fit neatly within the IE model as it was originally developed.

In this section, I revisit the psychology of implicit communication as described by Mendelberg in *The Race Card* (2001, Chapter Four). To date, it is the most comprehensive assessment of the psychological processes involved when an individual is exposed to racial messages. This is because Mendelberg’s theory speaks to both the individual-level psychological schema, as well as the contextual prerequisites needed to

meet for a successful racial appeal. After laying out the theoretical framework, I will go on to describe the ways that the framework should be applied to explain contemporary anti-Black and anti-Latino appeals. I will conclude this section by critiquing the ways in which the replication of implicit-explicit conventions within published scholarly research on racial priming may have concealed some of the psychological processes at play and inadvertently misattributed causality or lack of findings.

The success of implicit racial communication depends on four theoretical pillars: *Ambivalence*, *Accessibility*, *Ambiguity*, *Awareness* (Mendelberg 2001, Chapter Four). *Ambivalence* refers to the presence of conflicting racial attitudes. For conflicting racial attitudes to be present, they must consist of a constellation of positive and negative racial attitudes that are relatively on balance with one another. One set of attitudes (either positive or negative) should not dominate the racial schema an individual possesses for a particular racial group. In the priming literature, *Ambivalence* is represented by the conflict white voters feel between support for racial egalitarianism (positive valence) and continued negative stereotyping (negative valence) of African Americans as a racial group. Thus, whenever Blacks are referenced in social/political communication the full set of positive and negative attitudes that constitute a *Black* racial schema are brought to mind at once (though individuals may ascribe different weights to some set of either the positive or negative attitudes and express lower or higher levels of racial resentment, respectively).

This ability of a racial appeal to make racial predispositions more *Accessible* is the second pillar upon which the IE model is developed. While a Black racial schema may consist of ambivalent racial attitudes, the ability to prime a Black racial schema in

the mind of a message recipient is an attribute of the message itself. Racial schema may be made more or less accessible to the message recipient depending on the rhetorical-visual features of a political campaign appeal. The language, along with the images, used in a political communication may or may not activate racial considerations. When racial predispositions are activated, a racial schema is considered primed and therefore available for subsequent political decision-making. This is not to say that the racial schema is the only consideration brought to bear on political decisions, rather that it is made more accessible for the racial appeal recipient compared to when racial schema lie latent in the recipient's mind.

Next, the form of the racial appeal will determine whether a racial schema comes into the recipient's conscious or unconscious *awareness*. Priming has the greatest impact on normatively undesirable attitudes when it occurs outside of the recipient's conscious awareness. When a message recipient is aware of the racial content of an appeal, it creates an opportunity for the recipient to select which racial attitudes to attend to within a particular racial schema. In turn, it creates the potential for the recipient to *control* the expression of the racial predispositions that have been primed. In other words, when a racial schema is brought into conscious awareness, the message recipient can select which among its constitutive positive and negative racial attitudes they will attend to and/or act upon. According to Mendelberg (2001, p. 123) when the norm of racial equality is sufficiently salient, an individual's motivation to adhere to racial egalitarianism will more often supersede the negative racial stereotypes, resentments, and fear.

Conversely, negative racial stereotypes and predispositions will likely go unchecked when the message recipient is unaware of the racial content of an appeal. More recent scholarship (Blinder et al. 2013) corroborates this notion of norm-based cognitive control with a dual process model that accounts for both an individual's motivation to control prejudice, as well as the context in which their personal motivation is triggered. Automatic responses toward out-group members tend to be negative. They are only checked when individuals who have a motivation (either internal or external) to control their prejudice encounter information that signals salient egalitarian norms or clear violations of such a norm.

In the literature, this difference in cognitive control and subsequent political opinions and behavior has typically been attributed to explicit and implicit appeals. However, the key distinction is not so much the form of the appeal, but rather whether its content brings racial predispositions (both positive and negative racial attitudes) into the conscious awareness of the message recipient. Explicit and implicit appeals have been operationalized in the literature by their rhetorical-visual content; explicit appeals contain racial nouns and adjectives, whereas implicit appeals are veiled references to race that typically take on the form of a racial image paired with a code word. According to the IE model of racial priming, the success of any racial appeal to mobilize negative racial predispositions lies in its ability to have the racial content remain outside the conscious awareness of the message recipient. Outside of conscious awareness, the appeal is processed automatically, rather than reflected upon with an opportunity for a controlled response.

Finally, *Ambiguity* is the ability of a message to be perceived in more than one way. A racial appeal appears ambiguous when its racial content is veiled by rhetorical-visual cues. It is implicit to the extent that makes race seem tangential or incidental to the overall message. Because the racial content is present, but not communicated in a clear or direct manner, the racial schema is primed outside of the conscious awareness of the message recipient. As a result, ambiguous racial appeals are highly successful at mobilizing racial predispositions because they unconsciously prime racial schema and evade the attendant check to conform to the norm of racial equality. In the priming literature, this quality of ambiguity has been uniquely ascribed to implicit appeals. This is due to the way that racial appeals have been operationalized; racial images in combination with code words have been perceived as oblique references to race that operate outside of the message recipient's awareness, whereas explicit appeals make the racial content apparent.

To briefly summarize, four axioms must be present for racial appeals to impact subsequent political decision-making: *Ambivalence*, *Accessibility*, *Awareness*, and *Ambiguity*. *Ambivalence* refers to a racial schema that consists of positive and negative racial affects. It is a product of the contextual features of the socio-political communications environment in which negative racial stereotypes are simultaneously present and in competition with a prevailing norm of racial equality. *Accessibility*, whether racial predispositions are latent or primed, and awareness, whether primed racial schema are processed by the recipient's conscious or unconscious *Awareness*, refer to the position of the racial schema in the mind of the message recipient. Finally, *Ambiguity*

resides in the racial appeal itself and refers to perceptibility along with the plausible deniability of the racial content.

I want to highlight that in considering the above axioms that serve as the psychological foundation of successful racial campaign appeals, there may be a degree of variation in the axioms of *Ambivalence* and *Ambiguity*. Ambivalence and ambiguity both have several contextual attributes that are driven by and interact with factors external to an individual's cognizance. While accessibility and awareness are features of individual cognition, ambivalence and ambiguity depend on an interaction between individual cognition and the context in which it takes place. Accessibility and awareness relate to the availability of racial schema within an individual's psychological landscape. Ambivalence and ambiguity rest upon an interplay of individual psychology alongside the meaning attributed to message form and content, according to the communications environment within which the message is received. Messages need to be anchored within the context of the communications environment if they are to convey meaningful content to their recipients. The impacts of variations in individual-level attributes, message form and content, and the socio-political context in which the message is broadcast are explored in detail in the following two sections.

APPLICATION OF AMBIVALENCE IN THE EXTANT PRIMING LITERATURE

Ambivalence, from the perspective of political psychology, is the culmination of affective judgements toward an object containing both negative and positive valences. Each of the pieces of information that construct a generic knowledge structure, or schema, about an object can have a magnitude and direction (Fiske and Taylor 1991). As

racial priming theory is interested in the ways that ambivalent racial attitudes create a tension that can be exploited by elite communications, it is important to keep in mind that ambivalent racial attitudes must contain *both* positive and negative attributes. An ambivalent racial schema will consist of an array of both the positive and negative racial experiences and narratives available in the communication environment. Therefore, the *racial schema* includes all the contextual information an individual can draw from when developing or assessing their own *racial attitude(s)*. The racial attitude itself will be the summary of the valence and weight given to each piece of information that makes up the schema at any given point in-time.

The extant scholarship on racial attitude formation, impact, and change has long established racial resentment as a measure that taps individual racial attitudes (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Tesler 2016). Racial resentment is measured with a standard four-question battery of questions (see Appendix C for full question wording) from the American National Elections Survey (ANES), indexed to a 0-1 scale. The range of attitudes is determined by the conflicting narratives in the communications environment regarding the socioeconomic position of African Americans in the United States. The racially liberal responses support discrimination and structural causes for racial inequality, while the racially conservative responses point to individual failures and cultural deficiencies. Racial priming scholars have overwhelmingly used racial resentment as an independent variable that interacts with treatment assignment and polarizes responses to experimental treatments (Mendelberg 2001; Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002; Huber and Lipinski 2006; White 2007; Hutchings, Walton, and Benjamin 2010; Reny, Valenzuela, and Collingwood 2019). Across studies, high-resentment respondents are more willing

tolerate or accept racial content than their low-resentment counterparts who are, in turn, more disposed to disavow racial messages.

APPLICATION OF AMBIGUITY IN THE EXTANT PRIMING LITERATURE

In the following sections, I will cover the limited ways in which the racial priming literature has explored variations in the perception of ambiguity and offer several novel conceptual insights. Paramount of which is that I emphasize that ambiguity is not an absolute property that is internal to the form and content of an appeal. Instead, I argue that ambiguity is a *quality* of an appeal that is conditioned on an interaction among individual-level attributes, the communications context within which the message is received, and the form and content of the racial appeal itself. Recall from above that ambiguity is the ability of a message to be perceived in more than one way which helps conceal its racial content. According to the IE model of racial priming, the power of an implicit appeal is derived from its ambiguity because the obscured racial content allows the message recipient to evade a normative check on the activation of negative racial predispositions. However, the perception of message ambiguity may vary among message recipients and/or among communications contexts.

The binary operationalization of racial appeals

Within the racial priming literature, a strict binary has developed for the operationalization of explicit and implicit appeals that has been largely divorced from its perceived ambiguity. Explicit appeals are defined by the use of racial nouns or adjectives (“Blacks,” “Latinos,” Black people, etc.). Implicit appeals are defined by the combination

of a racial image paired with a racial code word that is stereotypically associated with the visual in the appeal (the Willie Horton ad, for example, used an image of a Black man with the code word “criminal”). While numerous studies recognize that implicit appeals may be communicated with visual or verbal content (Mendelberg 2001; Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002), that group-centric issues and code words without images are sufficient to prime racial attitudes (Gilens 1999; Hurwitz and Piffle 2005), and that implicit appeals may exist on a continuum rather than in a strict binary relationship to explicit appeals (Valenzuela and Reny 2020; Valentino et al 2002), the scholarship on racial priming has largely replicated the dichotomous operationalization as convention. Under this conventional operationalization, appeals achieve implicit status based on their form (racial image along with code word), rather than possessing a quality of “implicitness”—*ambiguity* or *plausible deniability*. This is particularly problematic for the study of racial appeals and maintaining the theoretical integrity of the IE model. When attention is given only to the rhetorical-visual content of an appeal and not to whether the message is ambiguous, studies in racial priming and of the IE model risk mislabeling implicit appeals and misattributing the impacts of various racial campaign messages. Furthermore, I want to emphasize that as ambiguity is not an internal property of the appeal message, consideration should be given to whom an appeal is ambiguous and in which political communication environments.

Individual-level variation in perceived message ambiguity

Racial priming scholars have demonstrated that the perception of ambiguity in campaign appeals can depend on the individual-level attributes of the message recipient

including, but not limited to, race/ethnicity (White 2007; Masuoka and Junn 2016), gender (Hutchings, Walton, and Benjamin 2010), education (Huber and Lipinski 2006), political knowledge (Huber and Lapinski 2006), partisanship (Nteta, Lisi, and Tarsi 2016, see also Chapter Five of this manuscript), and ideology (see also Valenzuela and Reny 2020 for comprehensive discussion of variation which the literature has and can explore). Therefore, the rhetorical-visual features of an ambiguous appeal that appear salient may vary based on the message recipient's intersectional identity, as well as the values, issues, and ideologies that are important to them and their communities (White 2007; Masuoka and Junn 2013).

I contend that racial appeals may be received as *either implicit or explicit* depending on their perceived ambiguity (or lack thereof) for different message recipients depending on the salience of the rhetorical-visual racial content of the appeal. Some individuals or groups may be more sensitized than others to the racial content of an appeal or better able to discern the ways in which particular rhetorical-visual features may be manipulated to conceal a racial message. Variation in the perception of what constitutes an ambiguous appeal is likely seen in the range of responses captured by the confidence intervals around the mean response to different experimental treatments throughout the literature. Experiments on racial priming have succeeded in limiting some of this variation by focusing primarily on the impact of racial appeals on white respondents' political opinions (thereby reducing, though certainly not eliminating, individual-level variation). Additionally, many priming experiments have taken an additional step in testing the perceived ambiguity of their implicit and explicit treatments by asking a set of respondents to assess whether the treatment manipulations contained

racial content (Mendelberg 2001; Valentino et al. 2018; Reny et al. 2019). These treatment assessments reveal that while impressions of the appeal content may on balance affirm the operationalization that the authors intended to convey with their manipulations, they nevertheless display a large degree of variation even when limited to only white respondents.

Communications environment impact on perceived message ambiguity

The communications environment also has an impact on the perceived ambiguity of a racial appeal. Issues and issue frames will vary in their ability to bring racial considerations to mind depending on their salience for the message recipient (White 2007). Issue salience is the strength with which an issue primes a particular set of ideas, attitudes, and predispositions. Once primed, these thoughts are more readily available for a message recipient to access in forming political opinions or making political decisions. Issue salience may wax and wane depending on the individual-level attributes noted above; it may also be the product of the socio-political and media contexts in which the appeal is made. Media coverage can impact issue salience and its priming ability (Iyengar and Kinder 1987). Through its agenda-setting capacity, the media selects which issues are newsworthy and will therefore receive coverage. This, in turn, has a priming effect which makes information about the issues covered by the news, and covered more often, more easily accessible when making decisions in relation to other issues or ideas.

Likewise, media coverage can also lead to the *racialization* of policies or issue frames. In doing so, racial attitudes are brought to bear on the evaluations of a policy or issue area. For some race-targeted policies in which there is a substantive link between

the policy and its beneficiaries, racialization may be inevitable (Sears 1993). However, racialization can also occur for genuinely non-racial policies through their issue framing (Hurwitz and Peffley 2005) or their repeated pairing with images or reports of particular racial groups (Gilliam and Iyengar 2000; Valentino, Brader, and Jardina 2013). This explains why racial attitudes influence responses to non-racial policy questions such as welfare (Gilens 1999; Mendelberg 2001), crime (Gilliam and Iyengar 2000; Hurwitz and Peffley 1997, 2005; Mendelberg 2001), social security (Winter 2007), gun control (Filindra and Kaplan 2014), and the Iraq War (White 2007). The ostensibly non-racial content of these policies is exactly what supports the notion of their ambiguity and makes them effective “code words” in racial appeals.

Reny and colleagues (2019) have developed the concept of group-issue congruence to describe the extent to which an *issue* has been racialized to prime group-specific ideas, attitudes, and predispositions. They note that highly congruent racial appeals can facilitate message recipients’ understanding of its racial content. It is easier for respondents to “read-between-the-lines” and decipher the racial content for group-issue pairings with a “high” degree of congruence compared to those with “low” congruence. Thus, high group-issue congruence *reduces* message ambiguity because the issue featured in a campaign appeal will on its own have the ability to make the message recipient *aware* of racial considerations.

While the dichotomous operationalization of implicit and explicit appeals has proved useful, it is important to acknowledge that implicit appeals may not be operating in today’s “most racial” (Tesler 2016) communications environment the way that they would be anticipated to based solely on an operationalization which was developed and

crystallized nearly two decades prior. Tesler (2016) argues that Barack Obama's presidency made race more salient for the American public, and in turn, polarized mass politics around issues of race. As a result, American political opinion is more heavily influenced by racial considerations today than it has been since the Civil Rights movement. This helped to further expedite a secular partisan realignment that had begun the 1960's by sorting the most racially conservative whites into the Republican Party (Valentino and Sears 2005; Lublin 2004).

Recent scholarship has recognized that the hyper-racialized context in which contemporary political communications take place may have altered racial message reception and perception. Some scholars suggest that this has affected the vote-calculus of political candidates in deciding whether to strategically employ implicit or explicit campaign appeals (Valentino et al 2018). For these scholars, the racialized communications context has led to the retrenchment of the norm of racial equality which has made many Americans more tolerant of explicit racial appeals. This shift, along with partisan redistricting, has created safe (Republican) districts in which candidates can deploy explicitly racial appeals with little to no negative consequences. Other scholars argue that this racialized communications environment has altered the message reception by voters who can better perceive the racial content embedded in an implicit appeal (Reny et al. 2019). While both of these claims suggest that some learning has taken place for either the candidates' campaigns or the mass public, neither of these advancements considers that a hyper-racialized communication environment may also drive changes in the form that an appeal must take in order to remain veiled.

The success of implicit communication rests on the ambiguity of the message. Therefore, if the electorate has become more racially perceptive and sensitive to coded messages they will no longer be received as “implicit.” Instead, coded appeals will often evoke responses that are more similar to those that would result from an “explicit” appeal in which the racial content is in plain sight (though, not universally perceived as “explicit” because of individual-level variation). My results from Chapter 3, which compared implicit and explicit appeals, offers preliminary evidence for this possibility. At least some portion of the electorate is reacting to implicit-Black appeals as if they were explicit-Black appeals by depressing candidate support in relation to the control. In order to test the impact of variations in the form and content of ambiguous, coded appeals, I developed a novel operationalization called tacit appeals which I discuss in greater detail below.

INTRODUCING TACIT APPEALS

For this study, I developed a novel, more subtle, implicit appeal that I call a “tacit” appeal. While implicit appeals attempt to prime racial predispositions with a message combining racial imagery with a code word stereotypically associated with the racial group visually featured in the message, the tacit appeals attempt to prime racial considerations with *only* visual images of the racial group targeted in a campaign advertisement. These are “hyper-implicit” appeals that omit the code word that would typically accompany the racial imagery in an implicit appeal. Prior scholarship has acknowledged the possibility that not all implicit appeals are equal—some may be better able to prime racial considerations better than others (Valentino 2002). The tacit

manipulation builds off this assertion and formalizes the rhetorical-visual variation among various coded appeals. Overall, my research design tests a very narrow set of rhetorical-visual manipulations which creates an opportunity to isolate variables and more accurately assign causality. By leaving nearly all aspects of the treatments consistent across conditions it creates a higher level of confidence that the movement observed in respondent reactions may be attributed to the specific rhetorical and visual features that were altered.

The race-neutral language of the tacit appeals allows for an examination of several important theoretical implications for racial priming studies. First, it moves away from the rote replication of implicit appeals as operationalized as “visual image plus code word” and refocuses attention on to the actual qualities—*ambiguity* and *plausible deniability*—that constitute implicitness. By narrowly manipulating the presence or absence of code words alongside racial imagery, I can isolate whether the visual or verbal cues are driving the racial considerations that are primed by exposure to a racial appeal. This is a significant contribution as racial priming scholars (Gilens 1999; Hurwitz and Peffley 2005; Mendelberg 2001; Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002) suggest that either words or images alone could constitute an implicit appeal if the racial meaning can be inferred, yet to my understanding this tenet has yet to be empirically tested directly.

Relatedly, the tacit appeal reveals the relative strength of visual and verbal cues. The psychological mechanism embedded in racial priming theory asserts that racial appeals are successful because they are automatically processed outside of the message recipient’s conscious *awareness*. Compared to words, images convey more information in a shorter amount of time that allows for more automatic processing (Mendelberg 2001,

127-128). The meaning of a visual image may also be perceived as more *ambiguous* than the verbal content. A more subtle appeal that uses racial imagery alone should more powerfully prime racial considerations than an implicit appeal that traditionally utilizes a verbal code word alongside a racial image.

Finally, the tacit manipulation takes seriously the “most racial” (Tesler 2016) political context in which contemporary campaign communications are taking place. It offers an opportunity to observe whether the conventional understanding of implicitness is relevant in this new hyper-racialized communications environment, or if the power of implicit appeals to mobilize racial attitudes has migrated to a more subtle form of communication. If people are better able to “read between the lines” of coded appeals, their effectiveness in mobilizing racial considerations would be reduced. Likewise, tacit appeals allow for an examination of the ways that variations in the degree of *ambivalence* within racial schema may play out within the “two sides of racialization” (Tesler 2016). High- and low-resentment individuals may respond differently to racial cues in this more racialized context.

Ambiguity—tacit appeal hypotheses

As I have designated tacit appeals as more subtle versions of implicit appeals that use only visual cues to convey their racial content, they will contain a higher degree of ambiguity. As a result, I expect tacit appeals will more powerfully prime racial resentment and do so outside of the respondent’s conscious awareness. Following Mendelberg’s (2001) IE model, tacit-Black appeals more powerfully mobilize candidate favorability compared implicit-Black appeals (H4.1). To the contrary, in the absence of a

strong countervailing norm of Latino egalitarianism, Permanent Foreigner Positionality suggests that tacit-Latino appeals are not governed by the psychology of implicit communication. Thus, tacit-Latino appeals are no more effective than implicit-Latino appeals at mobilizing candidate favorability (H4.2). It should also be noted that there is likely a limit on the ability of subtle appeals to prime racial considerations. That limit would be governed by the capacity of a subtle appeal to convey race-relevant information. Tacit appeals may be constructed in such a way that, in the absence of an accompanying code word, their racial content is *too* subtle to be perceived by message recipients and would therefore have no distinguishable effect on recipient opinion (H0).

Ambivalence—racial resentment hypotheses

Racial priming scholarship argues that across treatments, high resentment respondents are more willing to accept racial content than their low resentment counterparts who are generally unmoved by racial messages. Though, Mendelberg (2001) finds that even low resentment individuals can be mobilized by implicit appeals when they feel assured they are acting in a normatively acceptable manner. Norms are socially agreed upon notions of how to conduct oneself in a society. In order to retain their significance and ability to constrain individual behavior, they must be continuously upheld and reinforced by society, especially by authority figures such as political elites. Recent scholarship demonstrates that elite communications help signal to the mass public the normative bounds for the expression of prejudice (Crandall, Miller, and White 2018). When elite rhetoric turns more prejudiced or racist, racially conservative members of the mass public are “emboldened” to more openly express or act on their prejudicial beliefs

or racist attitudes (Scaffner 2018; Newman et al. 2020). However, taking into account the “two sides of racialization,” (Tesler 2016) we have also seen that racially liberal whites demonstrate high levels of backlash *against* racist cues and rhetoric (Luttig, Federico, and Lavine 2017; Tesler 2016).

Applying these normative considerations to my experimental treatments, explicit appeals contain the most overt expressions of negative racial attitudes and prejudice while tacit appeals are the most racially ambiguous. According to the racial resentment index, high-resentment individuals have more negative racial attitudes or prejudiced beliefs than their low-resentment counterparts. It follows then, that when receiving more overtly racist messages, high-resentment individuals will respond as though they are in a space where it is safe to express their own racist attitudes. Therefore, I expect highly resentful respondents will react most favorably to explicit racial appeals (H4.3). Additionally, low-resentment respondents will backlash most strongly against these explicit appeals and register the most negative favorability ratings for the sponsoring candidate (H4.4). Conversely, low-resentment respondents will react most favorably to tacit appeals (H4.5), whereas high-resentment respondents will give more constrained responses in the face of more ambiguous elite signals (H4.6). In the absence of explicit racial rhetoric, or even code words, tacit appeals will appear normatively acceptable when communicated by political elites.

One final note of importance is that my theory of Persistent Foreigner Positionality (PFP) calls attention to the way in which the first axiom of the IE model (*Ambivalence*) is not firmly established for the Latino population in the United States, not in the way that it has been for African Americans (Chapter 2). While broad public

support for African American equality since the Civil Rights Movement has been substantiated by numerous studies (Kinder and Sears; Kinder and Sanders 1996), I argue that the norm of racial equality has never extended in any *de facto* manner to Latino or other non-Black minorities. As a result, white voters do not hold considerably ambivalent Latino attitudes; in the absence of a strong countervailing norm of Latino equality, their Latino attitudes likely carry a more negative valence on balance. Therefore, in the absence of ambivalence, the IE model is an inappropriate theory for accounting for the impact of Latino campaign appeals. Instead, I argue on behalf of my own theory of PFP; Latino appeal construction will not have distinguishable impacts on low- or high-resentment respondent opinions (H4.7). I included all conditions in my analyses in order to articulate the difference in patterns across Black and Latino appeals.

DESIGN






Building on the design of the foundational experiment covered in Chapter Three, two additional treatment conditions were included in the survey experiment: Black-tacit and Latino-tacit. Respondents who participated in my 2016 CCES survey module were randomly exposed to one of a total seven different conditions: Black-explicit, Black-implicit, Black-tacit, Latino-explicit, Latino-implicit, Latino-tacit, or the control. The tacit treatments were visually identical to all other voter ID mailers except they paired the racial images of voters at the polls with the race-neutral language used in the control (see Table 4.1).

Recall from Chapter Three that in each condition the respondents were first exposed to a computer screen that included a text preamble for the experiment which randomized the fictitious Congressman’s partisanship:

“On the next page, you will see some campaign materials from Democratic [Republican] Congressman, Don Williams, that will be followed by a short set of questions. Please take your time to look over each of the campaign mailers carefully.”

Following the preamble message, all respondents viewed the same “Election Day” mailer as described in the foundation experiment (Figure 3.1) and were then randomly assigned to one of the seven “Voter ID” mailer conditions (Table 4.1). Exposure to the mailer treatments were followed by a post-treatment questionnaire.

Table 4.1: Full Experiment Conditions

	Explicit Narrative	Implicit Narrative	Race-neutral Narrative (Tacit)
Control			<p>VOTER ID PREVENTS FRAUD</p> 
Black Conditions	<p>VOTER ID PREVENTS FRAUD</p> 	<p>VOTER ID PREVENTS FRAUD</p> 	<p>VOTER ID PREVENTS FRAUD</p> 
Latino Conditions	<p>VOTER ID PREVENTS FRAUD</p> 	<p>VOTER ID PREVENTS FRAUD</p> 	<p>VOTER ID PREVENTS FRAUD</p> 

The “Voter ID” issue mailers showed an image of the Capitol Building with an American Flag in the foreground overlaid with a text banner on top that read, “VOTER ID PREVENTS FRAUD” along with another, smaller text banner in the middle of the mailer that read, “Congressman Williams supports Voter ID laws.” The visual and rhetorical manipulations were overlaid in the area between these two text banners. For the tacit appeals, an image of members of the target racial group (Black or Latino) voting at an election polling location was placed on the left between the text banners and a text box with the race-neutral, control narrative was placed to the right: “Thousands of *people* are registered to vote in multiple states, violating our election laws.”

Data

Recall from Chapter 3 that the dual wave panel in the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) allowed me to ask questions about racial resentment in such a way that pre-treatment priming effects as well as any post-treatment conditioning effects (Montgomery, Nyhan, and Torres 2018) could both be avoided. Prior research suggests that asking racial resentment questions shortly ahead of the experimental treatments may prime racial considerations across all treatments and produce null results (Mendelberg 2008). The pre-treatment questionnaire was administered to all respondents in the 2016 CCES (N=3,500) four to six weeks prior to when respondents in my survey model exposure to the experimental treatments were.

Racial resentment was measured with the standard ANES 4-question battery (see Appendix C for full question wording). I indexed the responses to create a dummy variable for the respondents’ racial resentment scores. Respondents who did not answer

all four questions (n=244) were dropped from the index. A linear interaction effect is not assumed between racial resentment and the treatments (Hainmueller, Mummolo, and Xu 2019), so the remaining respondents were then divided into high, medium¹⁰, and low resentment terciles according to their indexed racial resentment scores. While racial resentment was developed to measure attitudes toward African Americans, it is a relatively stable predisposition associated with outgroups prejudice (Carney and Enos 2017; Kalkan, Layman, and Uslaner 2009) and will be and correlated with anti-Latino attitudes. As a result, it is an appropriate measure to use in my analyses across both Black and Latino conditions.

RESULTS

In testing the hypotheses related to message ambiguity outlined above, I first estimated a regression model that examines the impact of implicit-, explicit-, and tacit-Black, and Latino, appeals relative to the control condition. A plot of the treatment effect coefficients and their 95% confidence intervals relative to the control can be seen in Figure 4.1. The results for implicit- and explicit- Black, and Latino, appeals were previously discussed in Chapter 3, though I include them in the models here in order to articulate the impact of tacit appeals more clearly in relation to the other conditions.

The first noteworthy finding is that neither the tacit-Black treatment (0.527-points, $p=.832$) nor the tacit-Latino treatment (3-points, $p=.222$) generated candidate favorability ratings that are statistically distinguished from the control. A t-test comparing

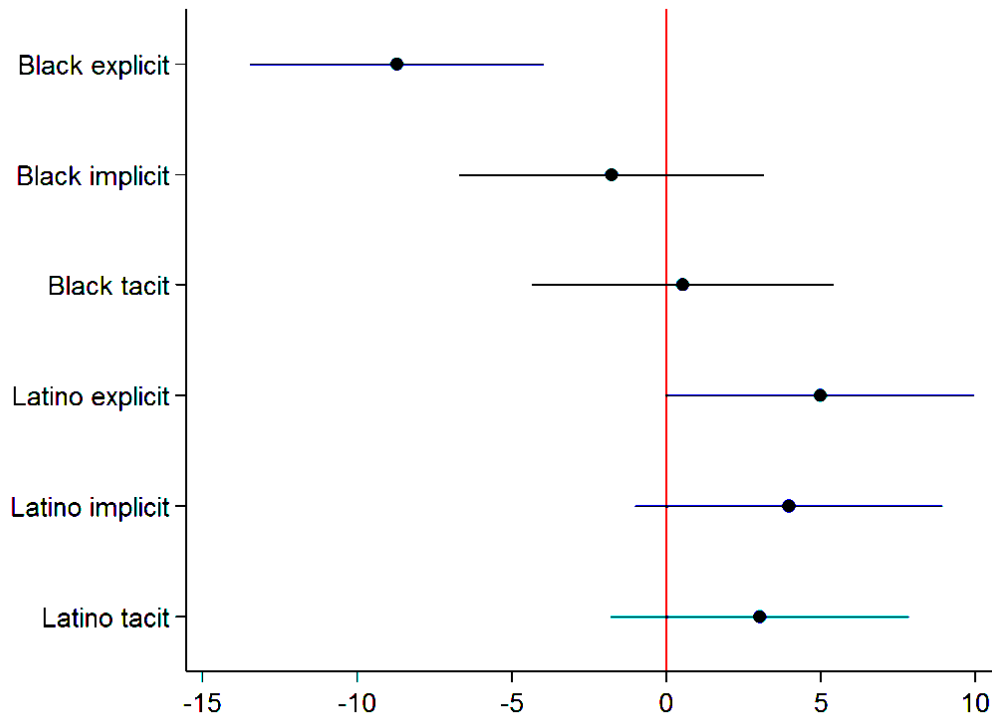
¹⁰ Following the scholarship on racial priming, I excluded from my analyses moderately resentful respondents. Mendelberg (2001, 228) demonstrates that respondents who exhibit moderately resentful racial attitudes do not change their responses when exposed to implicit or explicit appeals.

the difference in means between the control and Black-tacit condition is not statistically significant ($p=.896$) nor is the difference between the control and Latino-tacit condition ($p=.197$). As tacit appeals do not generate results statistically distinguished from the control, it is not clear whether tacit appeals are too subtle and do not communicate racial considerations with images alone. It is possible that the *voter ID issue* is racially salient for both the racial groups featured in the racial appeals and is priming racial considerations on its own. The voter ID issue may create a baseline effect that is not impacted by adding racial imagery. Including an image of African American or Latino voters at the polls does not significantly alter respondents' responses to the treatment stimulus. This interpretation is in line with the notion that group-centric issues and code words without images are sufficient enough to prime racial attitudes (Gilens 1999; Hurwitz and Peffley 2005). If the voter ID issue is in fact racialized for both of the racial groups in my study, then these null findings may also indicate that the results for the implicit- and explicit- Black, and Latino, conditions are conservative estimates relative to control. The voter ID issue may be producing a baseline measure that is already racially responsive.

When looking at the regression coefficients for the full set of African American appeals alone, the magnitude of the candidate favorability ratings moves in an increasingly positive direction from explicit to implicit and then to tacit appeals, as hypothesized. When moving from an explicit-Black appeal to a tacit-Black appeal, a t-test shows that there is a 9-point gain in mean candidate favorability ($p < .001$) compared to the 7-point gain earned from moving from an explicit- to implicit-Black appeal ($p = .009$). Overall, this trend is in line with what the IE model would predict for very subtle

implicit appeals that rely only on racial images to communicate their racial content. Tacit-Black appeals more successfully mobilize candidate support than explicit-Black appeals (H4.1). However, a two-tailed difference of means test shows that the movement from an implicit-Black appeal to a tacit-Black appeal is not statistically significant ($p=.399$).

Figure 4.1: OLS Regression Coefficients for Candidate Favorability for All Conditions with 95% Confidence Intervals



It is interesting that this trend does not appear among the regression coefficients for the Latino appeals. Relative to the control, only exposure to an explicit-Latino *increases* candidate favorability with marginal statistical significance (5-points, $p=.052$). The regression coefficients for the implicit- and tacit-Latino treatments do not achieve

standard levels of significance. Otherwise, there are no statistical differences between the mean responses among the Latino experimental conditions.

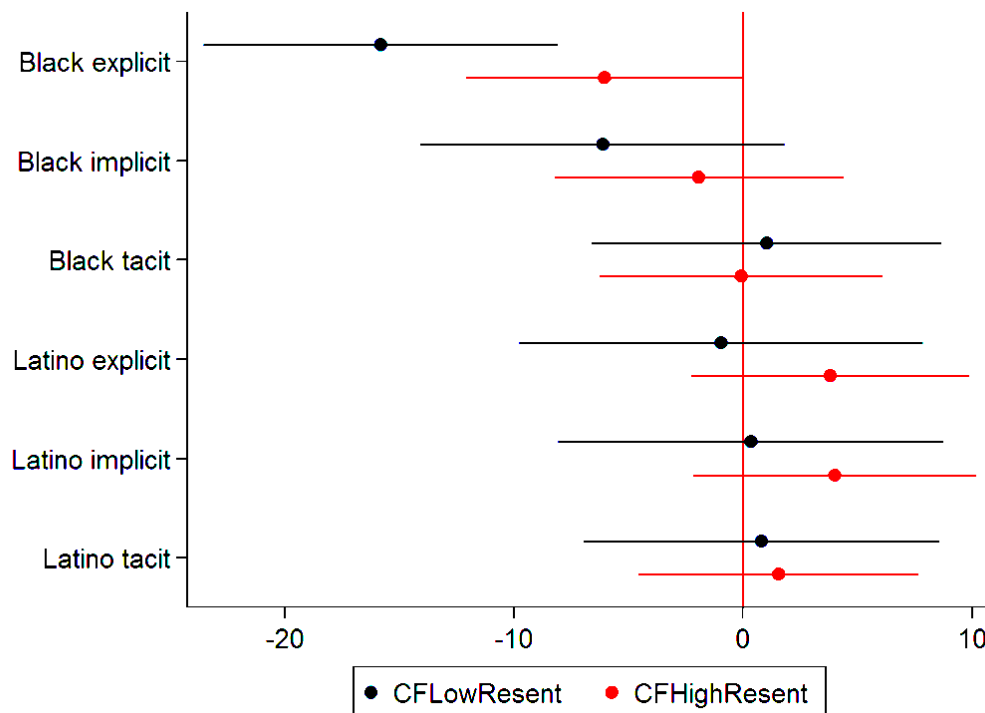
Conditional effects of racial resentment

Turning to the conditional effects of racial resentment within each of the treatments, I again ran an OLS regression on all the treatments conditioned first on low- and then on high-racial resentment. The regression coefficients with 95% confidence intervals are presented in Figure 4.2 for both the populations of low- and high-resenters. Notice first, that only the respondents (both high- and low-resentment) in the explicit-Black condition generate candidate favorability ratings that are statistically significant from the high- and low-resentment respondents in the control treatment. In line with the IE model, both high- and low-resentment respondents in the explicit-Black condition generate lower candidate favorability ratings than those in the control condition. As hypothesized (H4.4), low-resentment individuals exposed to an explicit-Black appeal depress their candidate favorability ratings by -16 points ($p < .001$). Low-resentment respondents strongly disavow the explicit anti-Black appeal and punish the ad sponsor.

Yet, contrary to my hypothesis (H4.3), highly resentful individuals exposed to the same explicit-Black treatment also depress their candidate favorability scores in relation to the control, though to a lesser extent and at a marginally standard level of significance (-6 points, $p = .058$). Despite the signaling from a political elite that anti-Black considerations are normatively acceptable, I do not observe an “emboldening effect” (Newman et al. 2020; Schaffner 2020) among the high racial resenters in my sample. Instead, respondents with high racial resentment behave very much like those with low

resentment in distancing themselves from a candidate who is making overtly anti-Black appeals. Though, a comparison of these results using a two-tailed test of significance reveals that while both high- and low-resentment respondents depress their candidate favorability scores when exposed to explicit appeals, low-resenters demonstrate a far greater magnitude of disapproval than the high-resenters at a very high level of significance (-44.24, $p < .001$, see also Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.2: OLS Regression Coefficients with 95% Confidence Intervals for Candidate favorability Conditioned on Racial Resentment



The results for low-resentment respondents exposed to the implicit-Black treatment does not reach statistical significance (-6-points, $p = .130$) relative to the low-resenters in the control. Still, the null result is a departure from the traditional

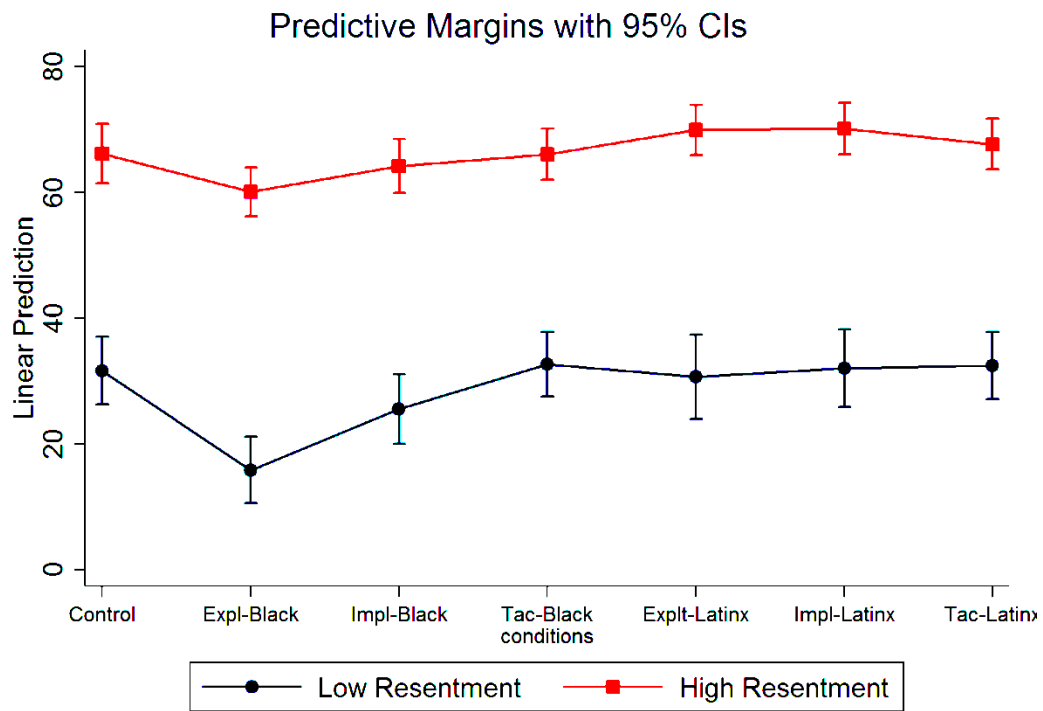
conceptualization and operationalization of implicit appeals within the priming literature. The IE model of racial appeals would anticipate that low-resentment respondents would be mobilized by implicit-Black appeals and register higher candidate favorability ratings. It is also interesting that high-resentment respondents do not show a statistically significant difference in their candidate evaluations compared to their high-resentment counterparts in the control. This null finding where the IE model would predict an increase in candidate favorability also offers modest support for the notion that implicit-Black appeals are no longer read as racially ambiguous in the hyper-racialized, contemporary communications environment.

The results for the high- and low-resenters in the explicit-Latino treatment do not attain statistical significance in relation to the control, although they certainly indicate that high- and low-resentment respondents behave in a manner that is dissimilar to their counterparts in the explicit-Black treatment (H4.7). The null results across all the Latino conditions do not lend firm support to my theory of Permanent Foreigner Positionality.

While the above regression analyses are useful for observing the different treatment effects on high- and low-resentment respondents (as two separate populations) it does not reveal much about how an individual's racial resentment impacts candidate favorability within the various treatments. When a margins plot is used to compare the mean candidate favorability scores of high- and low-resentment respondents we see consistently large and highly significant disparate results (Figure 4.3). The large and highly significant difference of means between the candidate favorability ratings of high- and low-resentment respondents in the control condition (34.48, $p < .001$) lend support to the likelihood that the voter ID issue is racialized. This issue appears to be priming racial

considerations absent of other layers of rhetorical or visual cues. However, I am open to the possibility that the results for the anti-Latino appeals could also be an artifact of racial resentment as a measure of anti-Black affect that is not oriented toward anti-Latino attitudes.

Figure 4.3: Predicted Outcomes Plots of Mean Candidate Favorability Ratings for Respondents with High- and Low-Racial Resentment Scores with 95% Confidence Intervals



DISCUSSION

This chapter presented an expanded experimental test of Mendelberg’s (2001) IE Model for contemporary Black and Latino appeals by introducing tacit appeals and variations in implicitness. Tacit appeals are hyper-implicit appeals that attempt to increase racial message ambiguity by priming racial considerations with images alone.

These tacit treatments use race-neutral rhetoric by employing the word “people” in place of naming the racial group featured in the appeal (“Black”/“Latino”) in the explicit treatments, or in place of the racial group code word (“criminals”/“immigrants”) used respectively in the implicit treatments. Overall, the very narrow set of treatment manipulations allows for the observation of respondent reactions to very specific and strategic distinctions in the rhetorical-visual content of a racial appeal.

When testing variations in message *ambiguity*, the lack of statistical significance among the regression coefficients the experimental conditions can be interpreted in one of two ways; either the control is not sufficiently distinguished from the treatment conditions, or the tacit appeal is too subtle to convey a racial message. Though, the null results for the Black-tacit and Latino-tacit appeals in particular, point to the strong likelihood of the former; that the control is priming racial considerations across both the Black and Latino conditions. Tacit appeals are distinguished from the control only in that they provide a visual image of the racial group featured in the appeal. Following the inferences Masuoka and Junn (2016) make regarding the ways that immigration policy is racialized by comparing respondent responses to the treatment and control conditions, I can assess whether voter ID laws are bringing to mind either or both racial groups targeted by the appeals in my study. As the presence, or absence, of a racial group image does not impact respondents’ candidate favorability in any significant manner, then the voter ID issue may be sufficiently racialized for both Blacks and Latino groups to prime racial thinking on its own. This interpretation is corroborated by the fact that high- and low-resentment respondents have significantly different reactions from one another in the control condition, therefore creating disparate baselines for each subgroup (Figure 4.3).

If the null findings for the tacit conditions are in fact the result of an insufficiently distinguished control for each racial group, it may also indicate that the results for the implicit and explicit appeals are conservative estimates as the voter ID issue in the control is producing a baseline measure that is already racially responsive. Previous studies have often used a non-racial stimulus in the control to generate a more accurate measure of baseline candidate or policy support (e.g.: “environmental cleanup” in the norms experiment in Mendelberg 2001, Chapter 8, 209-236; “common [household] product commercials” in Valentino et al. 2002, 78; “Get Out The Vote” appeal in Huber and Lapinski 2006, 423; “handheld electronic games” article in Hutchings, Walton, and Benjamin 2010, 1179). This is a limitation of my study design, though it supports recent research relative to the ways that media reports can entangle racial groups into political issues, to an extent that the issue can prime racialized thinking in the absence of other racial cues.

As in Chapter Three, I continue to find support for the IE model among Black appeals, but do not find support for the model among Latino appeals. Among Black appeals, the explicit appeal generates a statistically significant result that demonstrates that white voters continue to disavow overtly racist rhetoric in contemporary political campaigns and withdraw their support from the sponsoring candidate. Likewise, the implicit-Black appeals *fail* to mobilize racial attitudes in support of increased candidate favorability ratings.

I take this null finding for the effect of implicit-Black appeals as tepid support for Reny and colleague’s (2019) claim that white voters are better able to glean the racial content of highly congruent, coded, anti-Black appeals in the hyper-racial

communications environment in which contemporary campaigns take place. The results for high- and low-resentment respondents in this implicit-Black condition also lend support to the possibility that implicit-Black appeals have lost their ability to mobilize anti-Black attitudes in contemporary campaigns. One thing to note however, is that most experiments on racial priming have not included a control group. Therefore, the positive coefficients for implicit appeals would have been relative to explicit appeals. Without a control, it is unclear as to whether the difference was due to a depression of favorability among respondents exposed to explicit appeals, or whether there was a positive mobilization among respondents exposed to the implicit appeal. In all, the findings in this chapter for explicit- and implicit-Black appeals lend themselves to the notion that the norm of *African American* equality continues to be a relevant and fairly robust influence on white voter behavior in America today.

Another key finding of my study is the significant and positive regression coefficient for candidate favorability among respondents in the explicit-Latino condition. This finding stands in contrast to the results for the explicit-Black condition. Respondents exposed to an overtly racial appeal that features Latino images and rhetoric responded *positively* to the candidate sponsoring the appeal. This finding is contrary to the IE theory of racial priming and offers some support to my theory of Permanent Foreigner Positionality. The norm of racial equality has been conflated with a norm of African American equality and that Latino egalitarianism has not been embraced by the American public to a degree that would present a sufficient counterbalance to the negative Latino stereotypes held by white voters. In the absence of a truly *ambivalent* constellation of Latino attitudes, respondents did not disavow the explicit-Latino appeal because it does

not trigger a need for conformity with a norm of egalitarianism in the way that explicit Black content does.

This contrast is replicated over the full set of treatments between the Black and Latino conditions. Though the regression coefficients are not always statistically significant, we see that among the Black conditions, there is a pattern of growing candidate favorability associated with the increased *ambiguity* of the appeal. Among anti-Black appeals, respondents responded most negatively to the overtly racial, explicit appeals. Relative to these explicit-Black appeals, respondents are not as negative towards candidates leveraging either the veiled, implicit appeal or subtle, tacit appeal. This is theoretically in line with the expectations of the IE model of racial priming if we concern ourselves with the psychological mechanisms at play, rather than with the operationalized form of the appeal alone.

The results for the Latino conditions convey a different pattern: respondents reward the candidate with marginally significant, positive favorability scores when exposed to the explicit treatment and the results in the implicit and tacit treatments are statistically undistinguished from the explicit treatment. These different trends among the results for the sets of Black and Latino conditions speak to variations in ambivalence at the societal level which I attribute to the norm of *African American* equality of the one hand, and the absence of a norm of Latino equality on the other. The trends suggest that, when white voters assess their racial attitudes toward African Americans, there is more of a truly ambivalent range of positive and negative assessments embedded in their racial schema from when expressing an attitude.

These opposing trends for anti-Black and anti-Latino appeals become even more pronounced when we consider the responses for high- and low-resenters across all treatments. The results for the treatment effects conditioned on racial resentment help articulate a key finding regarding the impact of individual racial attitudes that are grounded in varying degrees of *ambivalence* within the African American and Latino racial schemas. Among the set of Black conditions, *both high- and low- resentment respondents* continued to disavow the explicit campaign appeals and depress their favorability scores relative to the control, though the low-resenters demonstrate a greater sense of displeasure with the appeals than their high-resentment counterparts. The results suggest that high- and low-resenters are both attentive to the norms environment in which they are asked to respond. In today's "most racial" communications environment, when a candidate signals anti-Black considerations in an explicit form, high- and low-resenters understand the racial content of the appeal and adhere to the norm of African American equality by distancing themselves from the sponsoring candidate. Low-resentment respondents also appeared to understand the racial content of *implicit-Black* appeals and depressed their candidate favorability ratings with near statistical significance as if they were explicit appeals. The null results for when the anti-Black appeal is more ambiguous, do not advance an understanding of whether conscious or unconscious mechanisms are at play. The results do not help distinguish whether ambiguous appeals pass as normatively acceptable or possesses a sufficient degree of *plausible deniability* to circumvent the psychological control mechanisms that awareness of the norm of African American equality would otherwise bring to bear on the expression of respondent opinion.

The pattern for high- and low-resentment respondents across the Latino conditions is similar in that low-resentment respondents lagged their high-resentment counterparts in showing support for a candidate who is making a racial appeal in any form. The consistent, and significant, gap in the mean candidate evaluations given by high- and low-resentment respondents suggests that both groups perceive the Latino candidate appeals through a racial lens and that high-resentment respondents express favorability ratings that are more than one-third the feeling thermometer scale greater than low-resentment respondents. Though, the null results among the Latino conditions suggest that variations in the form and content of the Latino appeals have no impact on candidate favorability scores registered by each group. Following my theory of PFP, the null results imply that there is less ambivalence in the range of assessments that make up a Latino schema. The lack of ambivalence contributes to more normatively negative attitudes and racial appeal content fails to activate normative egalitarian considerations. Each Latino appeal variation failed to mobilize respondents in a measurable way.

I view these results as support for Tesler's (2016) argument that in a post-Obama America there are in fact two sides of racialization. The hyper-racial communications environment makes it easier to discern racial content in even veiled appeals (Reny et al. 2019). The mass public may have grown familiar with racial code words and even the mechanics of racial dog whistles more generally. As a result, we see on the one hand that low-resenters more aggressively disavow racial content, even in coded forms, while on the other hand high-resenters may feel less encumbered in expressing their negative racial attitudes. The upshot is that among Black appeals, for which the norm of racial equality has been consistently communicated by elites and embraced by a majority of Americans

over the past half century, the norm is resilient and a sufficient deterrent to the expression of negative Black attitudes—even in the face of elite signaling that the norm of African American equality may be waning. However, the lack of treatment effects among high- and low-resenters in the Latino condition suggest that a norm of Latino equality has not been sufficiently communicated by elites or adopted as a widely held value among white voters.

CHAPTER 5

CONDITIONAL EFFECTS: COMPARING THE IMPACTS OF CANDIDATE AND VOTER PARTISANSHIP ON RACIAL MESSAGE RECEPTION

INTRODUCTION

Thus far, I have explored whether the form and content of anti-Black and anti-Latino appeals have the same impact on white voters and whether the effects of those appeals are conditioned by racial resentment. In Chapter Three, I laid out the basic research design of my survey experiment in order to compare the impacts of implicit and explicit, Black, and Latino, appeals on white voters' candidate favorability ratings. I demonstrated that the Implicit-Explicit model is relevant for explaining white Americans' responses to anti-Black appeals in contemporary campaigns. Explicit-Black appeals continue to be disavowed by white voters and result in decreased candidate favorability ratings. Though, the same cannot be said for explicit-Latino appeals. My results show that explicit-Latino appeals do not depress candidate favorability and therefore cannot be explained by the IE model. Furthermore, the effect sizes for implicit- and explicit-Latino appeals are nearly indistinguishable and lack statistical significance. These results lend support to my theory of Permanent Foreigner Positionality as they suggest that the egalitarian norms that guide the perception and reception of anti-Black appeals do not extend to anti-Latino appeals.

In Chapter Four I broadened this foundational research design by adding a tacit appeals condition. Tacit appeals allow for an examination of whether subtler rhetorical content would impact the perceived "implicitness" or ambiguity of a racial appeal and

subsequent opinion formation. For both anti-Black and anti-Latino campaign messages, I found that tacit appeals which seek to prime racial considerations with images alone are no more effective than implicit appeals. Additionally, I explored whether variations in individually held notions of racial ambivalence measured by racial resentment conditioned the treatment effects. I found that high-resentment respondents consistently and significantly evaluated the candidate sponsoring the racial campaign appeals more favorably than their low-resentment counterparts across all conditions.

In this chapter, I look more closely at partisan effects on racial message perception and reception. Partisan identity has long been argued as an enduring, affective attachment that individuals have to their political party and its constitutive elements (Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes 1960). As a result, it serves as both a heuristic which helps voters organize their thoughts about the political world as well as a perceptive filter that influences political opinion-formation and decision-making (Bartels 2000; Campbell et al. 1960; Goren 2005; Sniderman 2000; Zaller 1992). However, this notion of party influence stands in contrast to racial priming theory that expects that explicit appeals will be universally disavowed (Mendelberg 2001; Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002; Hutchings, Walton, and Benjamin 2010). It is not clear then whether the influence of party identification will supplant widely held egalitarian norms about race, or vice-versa.

My findings regarding the conditional effects of partisanship on racial message reception point to the ways in which the IE model must be grounded in the contemporary political context. The move to consider the contemporary political environment is necessary for the IE model to continue to hold relevance for anti-Black and anti-Latino

appeals. The hyper-racialized and hyper-partisan nature of contemporary politics has significant implications for how electoral incentives regarding race and racialized issues are structured across party lines. The disparate race issue platforms and electoral coalitions that make up the Republican and Democratic parties have led to partisan-based variations in the normative constraints on the expression on anti-Black and anti-Latino attitudes. As a result, I find that the “end of racial priming” (Valentino et al. 2018) may have been reached for Republican candidates using racial appeals. Neither Republican nor Democrat voters appear particularly moved by Republican candidates who use explicit racial rhetoric. I find that Republican voters consistently place party attachments above the normative considerations of racial egalitarianism and fail to disavow explicitly racist Republican appeals. Democratic voters, who very strongly disavow explicit, anti-Black appeals when the candidate is a Democrat, do not disavow Republican candidates leveraging the same racist appeal. In other words, only Democratic candidates suffer electorally for their normative commitment to racial egalitarianism. Today, explicit racist rhetoric appears to be an electoral liability only for Democratic candidates and not their Republican counterparts.

THE FORGOTTEN PARTISAN ROOTS OF RACIAL PRIMING THEORY

Since Mendelberg’s seminal work on the Implicit Explicit model in *The Race Card* (2001), an entire subfield of literature has developed in around racial priming theory (Mendelberg 2001; Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002; Hurwitz and Peffley 2005; White 2007; Hutchings, Walton, and Benjamin 2010; McIlwain and Caliendo 2011; Mendelberg and Tokeshi 2015; Nteta, Lisi, and Tarsi 2016; Valentino, Neuner, and

Vanderbroek 2018; Reny, Valenzuela, and Collingwood 2019; see also Chapter 3). The central argument of this literature states that since the Civil Rights Era, the power of the norm of racial equality has grown to an extent that precludes candidates from mobilizing white voters with explicitly racial appeals as they are perceived as violations of that norm (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Schuman et al. 1997; Mendelberg 2001). However, electoral incentives persist for candidates who can mobilize white voters' anti-Black affect with implicit messages. Implicit messages are successful when the racial content is concealed or at least seems incidental to the campaign appeal (Mendelberg 2001; Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002; Hurwitz and Peffley 2005; White 2007). Assuming the ubiquity of the norm of racial equality, the racial priming literature presents the IE model as a universal theory that can be applied to candidate appeals across the political spectrum in the post-Civil Rights United States.

Among this extensive body of work, very few studies have explored the partisan nature of racial appeals (exceptions include Mendelberg and Tokeshi 2015; Nteta, Lisi, and Tarsi 2016). The lack of interest in partisanship is especially curious given that a key contribution of the IE model is that racial rhetorical strategies are the byproducts of *racial norms* intersecting with a *party system that is aligned along the issue of race* (Mendelberg 2001, 6). Throughout the early chapters of *The Race Card*, Mendelberg gives a meticulous historical account of changing norms and party cleavages from the Antebellum Era to the late 1990's that articulate the ways that rhetorical strategies are context dependent (Mendelberg 2001, Chapters Two and Three). In these chapters, Mendelberg emphasizes that implicit and explicit racial rhetoric are not merely artifacts of racially liberal or racially conservative positions. Rather, she argues that rhetorical

strategies are decided by the socially normative and partisan contexts surrounding race in which party positions may (or may not) be communicated. When there are electoral incentives tied to mobilizing white voters on the issue of race, explicitly racist appeals are successful under a norm of racial *inequality*. However, if the norm is racial *equality*, then explicit appeals will appear as violations of that norm, and implicit appeals will become the vehicle through which racial positions are effectively communicated.

Over the last two decades the literature on racial priming has been predicated upon the axiom of racial “ambivalence.” Ambivalence is defined as the tension that results from the juxtaposition of egalitarianism racial norms with continued negative racial stereotyping and is what makes it possible for implicit appeals to remain effective mobilizers of white vote choice and political opinions (see Chapter 4). The literature’s focus on racial ambivalence as the psychological foundation underpinning the effectiveness of coded appeals rests upon several assumptions regarding the ubiquity and stability of social norms and party positions/coalitions since the Civil Rights Era. In doing so, the literature neglects to acknowledge the ways in which social norms and party cleavages can change over time altering electoral incentives and rhetorical strategies as a result. The focus on racial ambivalence has led to a universal application of the IE model when studying racial appeals to white voters across the political spectrum. With this focus, the priming literature has neglected to account for the ways that norms erode and emerge over time and that several norms may even coexist before one subsumes the other.

PARTISAN MOTIVATED REASONING

In recent years, the United States has witnessed increased partisan polarization (Tesler 2016) and in light of what appears to be an increase in explicit racist rhetoric in campaigns for national office, including the presidential campaigns of Donald Trump, some scholars have questioned whether the norm of racial equality has been pushed into retrenchment (Valentino et al 2018; Reny et al 2019). Given the recent changes in party polarization and racial norms, I take up an exploration of the partisan nature of contemporary racial appeals in order to better understand the IE model in this hyper-partisan and racialized political context. As noted above, the IE model states that when electoral incentives are present for mobilizing white voters with racial appeals and the norm of racial equality is sufficiently strong, racial appeals are driven into an implicit form in order to avoid accusations of racism. However, embedded in this model is an assumption that the norm of racial equality is ubiquitous and that both parties adhere equally to that norm. The model assumes that the electoral incentives surrounding racial appeal and for adhering to the norm of racial equality are identical across the two major parties. The IE model cannot serve as a universal theory of racial priming if the parties, their candidates and/or their voters in the electorate have different commitments to egalitarian racial norms.

As race has been a key issue for defining party cleavages in US politics since its founding, the parties—and therefore their members in the electorate—have organized themselves around competing notions of race and their contrasting messages about the role of race in politics and policymaking (Frymer 2005, 2010; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Petrocik 1989; Sundquist 1983). Given the divisiveness of race in the United States, the

universal application of the IE model to candidate appeals across the political spectrum runs counter to the central claim of elite opinion theory (Carmines and Stimson 1992; Page and Shapiro 1992; Zaller 1992). According to elite opinion theory, members of the mass public form their political opinions in relation to the discussions, opinions, and debates taking place among political elites. When elite discourse presents a unified message, public opinion reflects that uniformity. However, when political elites are divided and espouse conflicting positions on an issue, politically aware members of the public will reflect the political opinions and behaviors of the elites who represent their partisan attachments.

The conclusion that partisanship can influence individual opinions and behavior is in line with much of the literature on the origins and operation of partisan identity (Campbell et al. 1960; Miller and Shanks 1996; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). The dominant perspective of party identification is that it is an enduring, affective attachment that is developed early in life and reflects an individual's key social group memberships (Campbell et al 1960; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). It serves as both a heuristic, or information shortcut, that helps partisans make decisions about the political world more efficiently (Downs 1957; Mondak 1993; Popkin 1991; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991). It also serves as a perceptual screen that conditions and colors the way partisans take in and interpret new political information in order to reduce cognitive dissonance (Campbell et al 1960; Lavine, Johnston, and Steenbergen 2012; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002).

Along these lines, more recent literature on Partisan Motivated Reasoning (PMR) examines the ways in which partisanship biases political evaluations and creates a tension

between an individual's partisan attachments and their political values or substantive policy goals (Taber and Lodge 2006; Arceneaux 2008; Goren, Frederico, and Kittilson 2009; Lavine, Johnston, and Steenbergen 2012; Bolsen, Druckman, and Cook 2013; Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013; Leeper and Slothus 2014). These studies find that competing partisan messages impact the magnitude and direction of the expression of individual political opinions. Political messages from co-partisan elites (those who share a partisan identity with respondents) are more influential than the same message communicated by elites from the opposing party (cross-partisans), even when the messages do not reflect traditional party positions (Petrocik 1996; Cohen 2003; Slothuus and de Vreese 2010). Furthermore, these studies conclude that individuals with stronger partisan attachments respond more favorably to co-partisan cues than their weakly-attached counterparts (Redlawsk 2002; Taber and Lodge 2006; Goren, Frederico, and Kittilson 2009; Druckman, Fein, and Leeper 2012).

In examining racial priming theory in contrast to partisan motivated reasoning, I extend the debate about the extent to which values and principles shape individual political opinions in the face of partisan cues and influence. An examination of these competing theories has been taken up previously by Nteta, Lisi, and Tarsi (2015). Though, that particular research design suffers from the same sort of methodological limitations I noted in Chapter Three, principally that that racial appeal is mediated by partisan elites who communicate their interpretations of the racial appeal for respondents. Nteta and colleagues' (2015) work is a worthwhile test of Mendelberg's (2001) assertion that implicit appeals are neutralized when their racial content is exposed and laid bare by political elites with varying party affiliations. This present study however, is squarely

focused on the direct effect of the appeal itself conditioned on candidate and respondent partisanship.

Hypotheses

As noted above, this chapter seeks to adjudicate between two competing theories regarding the reception of candidate appeals on race—the Implicit-Explicit model and Partisan Motivated Reasoning. In doing so, I developed several hypotheses related to the impact of partisanship on the reception of racial appeals. First, I examine the specific impact of explicit-Black appeals on candidate favorability scores. Mendelberg’s (2001) IE model emphasizes that racial norms prevent candidates from making explicit racial appeals and those candidates who violate the norm are in turn punished by the electorate. Given the ubiquity of the “racial norm of equality,” the first hypothesis for this chapter claims that exposure to explicit appeals (both Black and Latino) will depress candidate favorability relative to the control regardless of respondent partisanship (H5.1). However, over the past few chapters I have expressed my skepticism over the even application of the “norm of racial equality” on explicit appeals that negatively target different racial groups. Under my theory of Permanent Foreigner Positionality (PFP) I differentiated between a norm of “African American” equality and Mendelberg’s more universal norm of “racial” equality to argue that explicit-Latino appeals will not be disavowed in the same way as explicit-Black appeals. As such, the second set of hypotheses states that while exposure to partisan explicit-Black appeals *will* depress candidate favorability (H5.2a), exposure to partisan explicit-Latino appeals *will not* depress candidate favorability relative to the control regardless of respondent partisanship (H5.2b).

Although Partisan Motivated Reasoning is silent on racial appeals in particular, the theory claims that a co-partisan appeal is more influential than a cross-partisan appeal. Applying the logic of PMR to racial appeals, I hypothesize that Democratic voters will respond with higher candidate favorability when exposed to Democratic appeals compared to Republican appeals, even when the appeal is explicitly racial (H5.3a). Likewise, Republicans will respond with higher candidate favorability to Republican appeals compared to Democratic appeals, even when the appeal is explicitly racial. In this way, PMR and the IE model stand in opposition to one another in regard to the impact of explicit, partisan appeals. The design of my survey experiment allows for a direct test of whether partisan motivation or racial norms will dominate racial message reception and the expression of political opinions.

Finally, Partisan Motivated Reasoning also posits that individuals with stronger party attachments will respond more affirmatively to co-partisan appeals than those individuals with weaker partisan identities. Thus, the hypotheses derived from this subgroup focus within the literature state that strong Democrats, relative to weak Democrats, exposed to co-partisan racial appeals will rate the Democratic candidate more favorably (H5.4a) and that strong Republicans will respond to co-partisan appeals with higher candidate favorability ratings than their weak Republican counterparts (H5.4b).

DESIGN

Recall from Chapters Three and Four that respondents who participated in my 2016 CCES survey module were randomly assigned to one of seven different conditions (N=1,973): Black-explicit, Black-implicit, Black-tacit, Latino-explicit, Latino-implicit,

Latino-tacit, or the control (see Table 4.1). In each condition, the fictitious congressman's partisanship was randomized with a visual-text preamble that appeared on the computer screen prior to the presentation of the experimental mailer images. The preamble read: "On the next page, you will see some campaign materials from Democratic [Republican] Congressman, Don Williams that will be followed by a short set of questions. Please take your time to look over each of the campaign mailers carefully."

Following the preamble message, all respondents viewed the same "Election Day" mailer as described in the full experiment and were then exposed to one of the seven "Voter ID" mailer conditions (Table 4.1). Exposure to the mailer treatments was followed by a post-treatment questionnaire that included candidate favorability as the dependent variable of interest, measured with a feeling thermometer (0-100 scale in which higher values reflect "warmer," more supportive positions). The randomization of candidate partisanship allows for an examination of the impact that co-and cross-partisan appeals have on racial message reception and the expression of subsequent political opinions.

Data

The data from 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) captured respondent demographics in the common-content, first wave (N=3,520) of the dual wave panel. For the following analyses, I used a 7-point Likert, party identification question that ask respondents to identify themselves as one of the following: Strong Democrat, Weak Democrat, Lean Democrat, Independent, Lean Republican, Weak Republican, and Strong Republican. For my initial analyses, which compared the responses of Democrats

and Republican voters, I eliminated the respondents who self-identified as Independents and created a dummy variable for partisanship that included all respondents who self-identified as either Republican or Democrats, regardless of partisan strength. For later analyses that are interested in the effect of partisan strength on racial message reception, I created two other dummy variables that distinguished between strong and weak/leaning partisans (strong-weak/leaning Democrats and strong-weak/leaning Republicans).

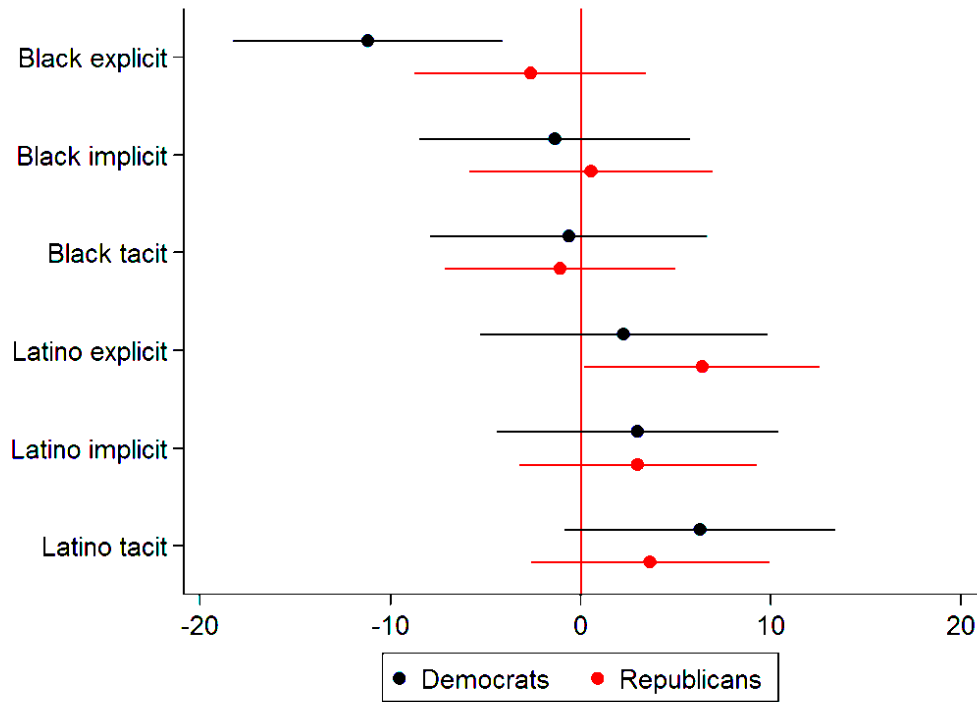
RESULTS

This chapter examines several hypotheses regarding the ways that partisanship influences the reception of racial messages and impacts candidate favorability. In testing the hypotheses related to the impact of explicit racial appeals derived from the IE model (Mendelberg 2001) and my theory of Permanent Foreigner Positionality, I first estimated two regression models. These models examine the impact of explicit-, implicit-, and tacit-Black and Latino appeals on Democratic and Republican respondents' candidate favorability scores (Figure 5.1). Recall from above that the experimental design fully randomized candidate partisanship. This allowed for a basic examination of whether *partisan voters* respond differently to the form and content of racial campaign appeals apart from the influence that candidate partisanship may have on message reception and acceptance.

Considering first the hypothesis derived from IE model (H5.1) that explicit appeals will depress candidate favorability relative to the control, I find partial support among Democrats exposed to the *explicit-Black* treatment. Only Democratic respondents strongly disavow the explicit-Black appeal and distance themselves from the candidate

with depressed favorability scores (-11-points, $p = .002$) compared to Democratic respondents in the control. Republican respondents also generate depressed favorability scores in the explicit-Black condition compared to Republican respondents in the control, though the depressed scores are not statistically significant.

Figure 5.1: OLS Regression Coefficients for Democratic and Republican Respondents' Candidate Favorability for All Conditions with 95% Confidence Intervals

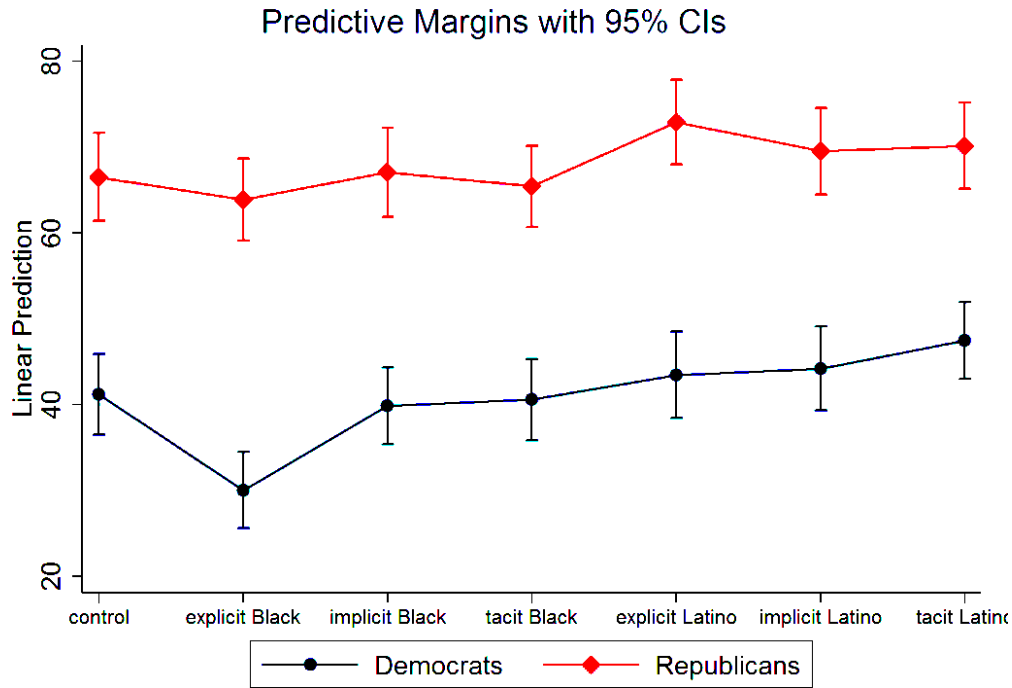


The results for the *explicit-Latino* appeal also fail to support H5.1 as neither Republican nor Democratic respondents depress their candidate favorability ratings in the face of explicitly anti-Latino appeals. Democratic respondents' candidate favorability ratings are not significant compared to Democrats in the control. Yet, fully contrary to the IE model, I find that the explicit-Latino treatment has a *positive* and statistically

significant impact on the candidate favorability ratings of Republican voters (6 points, $p=.043$) relative to Republicans in the control. The boost in candidate favorability among Republican voters exposed to an explicit-Latino appeal, along with the failure of that explicit appeal to significantly depress favorability among Democratic voters, offers support for H5.2 derived from my theory of Permanent Foreigner Positionality. The norm of racial equality fails to present a constraint on white political opinion regarding normatively anti-Latino positions.

The regression coefficients in Figure 5.1 demonstrate disparate treatment effects for the ways that partisans respond to explicit -Black and -Latino appeals when candidate partisanship is randomized. However, because the coefficient outputs for Republican and Democratic voters are relative to their partisan counterparts in the control, the plots do not articulate the magnitude of difference *between* Republican and Democratic voters in the same condition. I generated a plot of predicted outcomes with 95% confidence intervals (Figure 5.2) to show the highly disparate mean favorability scores partisan voters registered for Congressman Williams (candidate partisanship randomized) across all treatments, including the control. These results clearly demonstrate that partisan voters view the candidate and/or the Voter ID issue very differently and their favorability scores were generally unaffected by variations in the treatment appeals with the exception of the explicit appeals noted above. Similar to the results for racial resentment presented in Chapter Four, the results here suggest that the Voter ID issue may be racialized and that as a result, support for the issue and sponsoring candidate tracks along a partisan cleavage. Democratic voters consistently registered lower candidate favorability scores than their Republican counterparts in the same conditions.

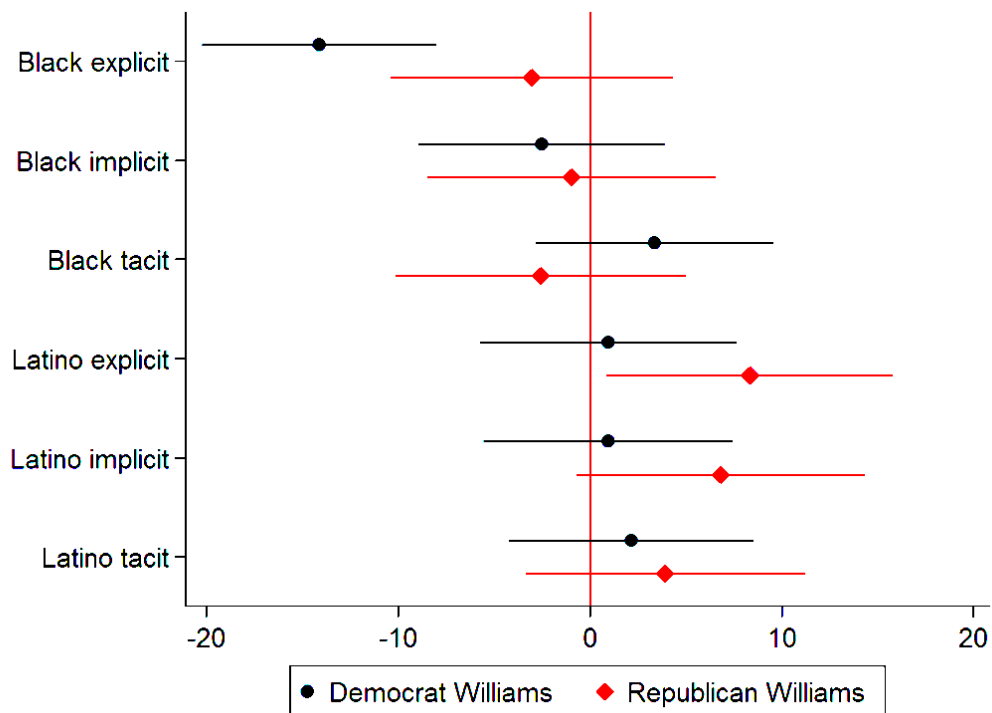
Figure 5.2: Predictive Outcomes Plot for Democratic and Republican Voters' Candidate Favorability Across All Conditions with 95% Confidence Intervals



Next, in order to assess whether *candidate partisanship* has a conditional effect on racial message reception in the broadest terms, I estimated a regression model that examines the impacts of appeals from either a Republican or Democratic Congressman Williams on respondents' candidate favorability (Figure 5.3). Interestingly, candidate partisan effects are similar, yet even more pronounced than the results above for the explicit-Black and explicit-Latino conditions disaggregated by respondent partisanship. I found null results for all partisan candidate conditions except for *explicit-Black* appeals made by *Democrat* Williams (-14-points, $p < .001$) and *explicit-Latino* appeals made by *Republican* Williams (8-points, $p=.029$). Which is to say that while Democratic

candidates are significantly punished for making an explicit-Black appeal relative to Democratic appeals in the control, the Republican candidates are tolerated when they make the same explicit-Black appeal relative to the Republican control. Furthermore, Democratic candidates see no statistically significant gain in favorability when they move from the control to an explicit-Latino appeal while Republican candidates benefit significantly. It is worth highlighting that these results indicate that only Democratic candidates are electorally constrained by the norm of African American equality.

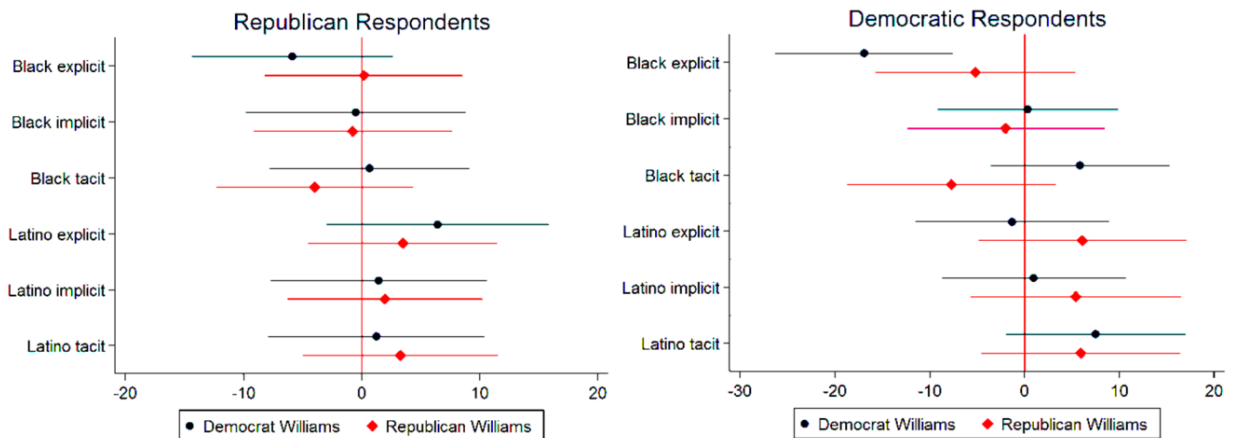
Figure 5.3: Coefficient Plot for Candidate Favorability Among All Voters for Democratic and Republican Candidate Appeals Across All Conditions with 95% Confidence Intervals



Next, I estimated several additional regression models examining the impact of *co- and cross-partisan* racial appeals on Democratic and Republican respondents’

candidate favorability scores (Figure 5.4). Among the sets of regression outputs for co- and cross-partisan appeals, represented in Figure 5.4, only the combination of Democratic appeals on Democratic voters yielded significant results relative to the control. These results offer support for H5.1. Democratic voters depress favorability scores -17-points ($p = .001$) for Democratic candidates making an explicit-Black appeal. This is a particularly significant finding given the already low baseline candidate favorability scores that Democratic voters register for candidates discussing the voter identification laws as a campaign issue (compared to the Republic baseline; Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.4: OLS Regression Coefficients for Co- and Cross-Partisan Candidate Favorability for All Conditions with 95% Confidence Intervals

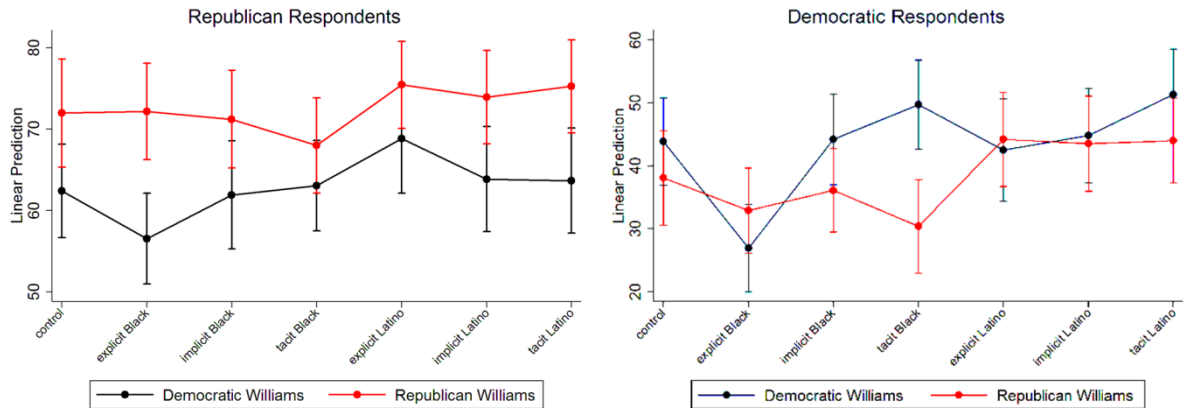


The unique impact of co-partisan, explicit-Black appeals on Democratic voters is an interesting finding for several reasons. First, since candidate campaigns typically work to reach co-partisans and independent voters in the electorate, these results likely have a high degree of external validity. Voters may not be exposed, or pay attention to, cross-partisan appeals in a manner that impacts their candidate evaluations. Second, these

results show that Democratic voters only sanction or “punish” co-partisan candidates. This suggests Democratic voters believe that either they only have the ability to make an impact on the Democratic candidate, or that they expect Republican candidates to peddle racial appeals which does not impact their evaluation of the candidate who makes such an appeal, or perhaps both. Finally, Republican voters do not significantly alter their evaluations of either Republican or Democratic candidates making racial appeals. This suggests that Republican voters accept—or, at least, are unfazed by—the use of racial appeals in any form.

By consolidating the results above and focusing on the results for explicit-Black and –Latino appeals, I can also demonstrate that there is a good deal of support for H5.2 and my theory of Permanent Foreigner Positionality. There are significant gains in candidate favorability when a candidate exchanges an explicit-Black appeal for an explicit-Latino appeal in every combination of partisan of voters and candidates, except among those Republican voters receiving a co-partisan appeal. The null result for the co-partisan Republican appeals may be an artifact of the weak disavowal of the explicit-Black appeal which appears to be driving the difference in the other pairs. Or the null result may be a false negative due to a drop in statistical power due to extending the N in my dataset to subset analyses for co- and cross-partisan appeals involving Republicans. Regardless, the increase in favorability, along with an absence of sanctions for candidates making explicit, anti-Latino appeals suggests that both Democratic and Republican voters find it normatively more acceptable to target Latino citizens with explicit racist rhetoric than they do Blacks.

Figure 5.5: Predicted Outcomes Plots for Candidate Favorability Conditioned on Co- and Cross-Partisan Appeals Across All conditions with 95% Confidence Intervals



Turning to the next set of hypotheses derived from the theory of Partisan Motivated Reasoning (H5.3), the predicted outcomes plots in Figure 5.5 best articulate the differential impacts of co- and cross-partisan appeals on Republican and Democratic voters in each condition. The left side of Figure 5.5 shows Republican voters’ mean favorability ratings when exposed to co- and cross-partisan appeals across all conditions. The margins plot for *Republican* respondents clearly demonstrates support for H5.3: co-partisan appeals better mobilize candidate support than cross-partisan appeals. Republican voters are highly responsive to co-partisan appeals. Within each condition, Republican candidate appeals generate higher favorability ratings than the same appeals made by a Democratic candidate. The deltas between the co- and cross-partisan appeals in every condition (save for Black-tacit) are all statistically significant according to two-tailed tests of significance (see Table A5.1 in the Appendix). Though it should again be noted that the statistical power for the analyses for co- and cross-partisan appeals to

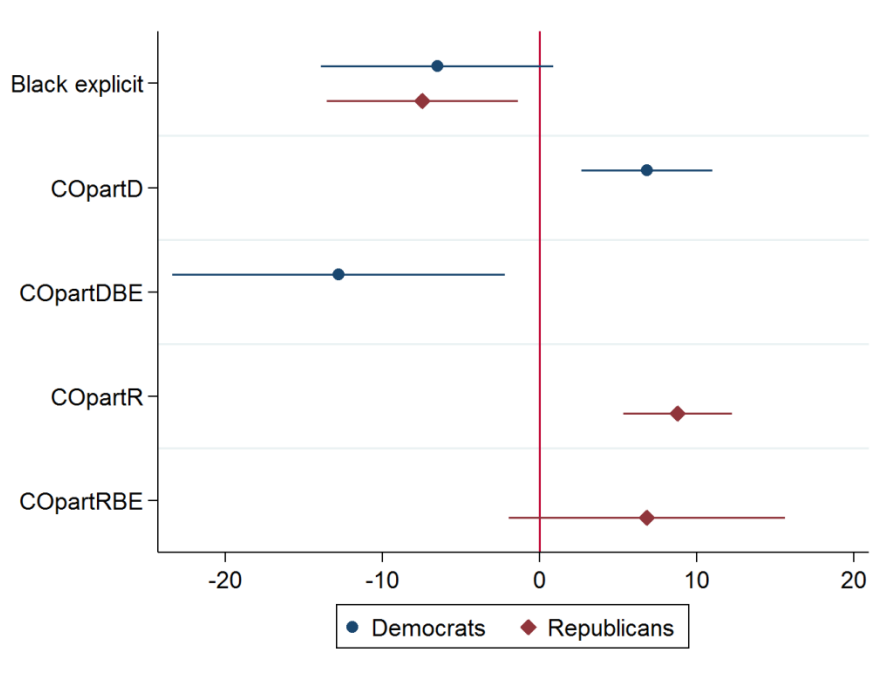
Republican voters is very weak. Low statistical power may conceal the magnitude of impact between the two different appeals.

On the right side of Figure 5.5 we can see that the predicted outcomes plot for Democrats receiving co-partisan appeals tells a very different story. Unlike Republican voters who consistently respond more favorably to co-partisan appeals across all conditions, I find very limited support for H5.3 among Democrats in that they only respond more favorably to co-partisan appeals in the *tacit-Black* condition. The *tacit-Black* condition was composed of the most subtle message composition targeting Blacks with racial imagery alone; the rhetorical reference in the *tacit* appeal is race-neutral. A two-tailed test of significance shows Democrats are 18-points ($p=.001$) more favorable toward a Democratic, *tacit-Black* appeal compared to the cross-partisan appeals in the same condition (see Table A5.2 in the Appendix).

This is a unique and important finding as it highlights my Chapter Four hypotheses regarding the perceived ambiguity of *tacit* appeals. While Democrats are highly punitive toward co-partisan candidates when they make explicit-Black appeals, we can see that Democratic voters are willing to abandon the norm of African American equality and mobilize support for co-partisans making highly coded, *tacit-Black* appeals. It may be taken as evidence in support of my claim regarding the ambiguity required for a coded appeal to be successful in the hyper-partisan and -racialized information environment in which contemporary campaigns take place. Given the two parties' divergent positions on issues of race, it may be that Democratic voters trust their co-partisan candidates to an extent that allows the race-neutral language of the *tacit* appeal to pass as only "coincidental." Similarly, the "plausible deniability" of the *tacit* appeal may

offer respondents enough cover to relax their otherwise vigilant monitoring of racial rhetoric in relation to African American egalitarian norms.

Figure 5.6: OLS Regression Coefficients for Co- and Cross-Partisan Appeals Pooled Against the Explicit-Black Condition with 95% Confidence Intervals



Still, I am cautious to not overinterpret the null results given the very small effect sizes found using Cohen's (1988) criteria. The results do not provide much clarity for the conditions in which there are no significant differences between the co- and cross-partisan favorability ratings among Democratic voters. While the randomizations built into my experimental design allow for subgroup analyses of very discrete partisan interactions, it also requires I substantially cut down the sample size to where the power generally falls below 0.50 in the conditions with null results (see Appendix A5.2). Low statistical power increases the probability of making a Type II error which suggests that

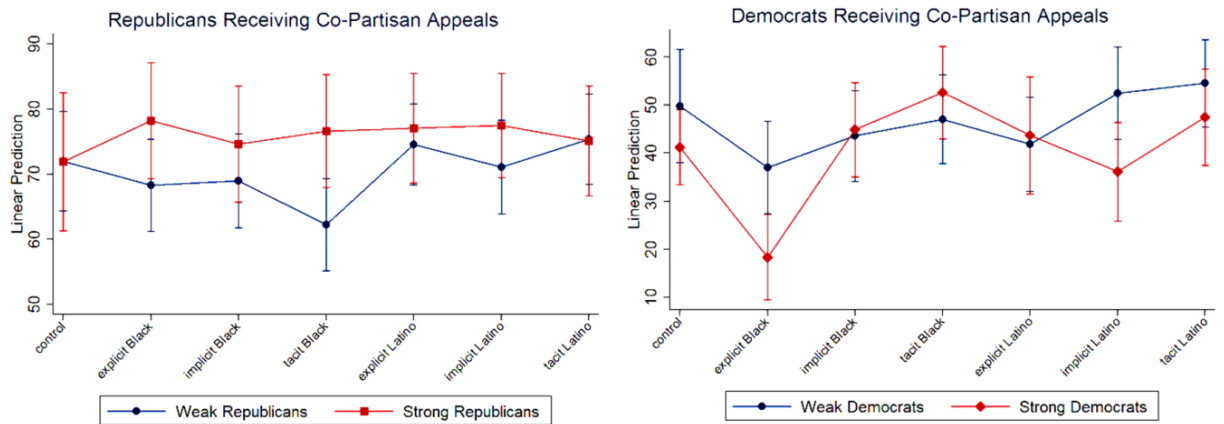
the null results may include multiple false negatives. False negatives due to small statistical power could mean that Democratic voters may very well be significantly more responsive to co-partisan appeals in more than just the tacit-Black condition.

In order to retain large statistical power, I pooled the data across conditions in order to make a generalized assessment of co- vs. cross-partisan racial appeals for Democratic voters. Given the theoretically and empirically unique outcomes of the explicit-Black condition documented in the preceding analyses, I pooled together the results for all co-partisan appeals and then all cross-partisan appeals to Democrats, excluding the explicit-Black condition in each pool. Figure 5.6 shows that pooled co-partisan appeals to Democrats (excluding the explicit-Black condition) yield candidate favorability scores that are 7-points ($p < .001$) greater than pooled, cross-partisan appeals (excluding the explicit-Black condition) and very large statistical power at .90. I find that outside of explicit-Black appeals, the impact of pooled co-partisan Democratic appeals is on par with that of pooled co-partisan Republican appeals (9-points, $p < .001$; Figure 5.6). This suggests that partisan attachments trump the normative considerations of racial egalitarianism for both Republicans and Democrats and lends overall support for Partisan Motivated Reasoning (H5.3) even in the face of racial appeals, excepting those that explicitly target Blacks.

Finally, I tested the subgroup hypothesis rooted in Partisan Motivated Reasoning. Here, PMR states that strong partisans are more strongly influenced by co-partisan appeals than their weak partisan counterparts (H5.4). A predicted outcomes plot clearly articulates the substantive differences in candidate favorability ratings among co-partisan with strong, and weak, attachment to their party (Figure 5.7). One important finding to

note between the two plots is that strong Republicans and strong Democrats behave quite differently when exposed to racial appeals from their respective co-partisan candidates. Strong Republicans are more consistently favorable toward their co-partisan candidate compared to their weak Republican counterparts, though only significantly more so in the tacit-Black condition (14-points, $p=.022$). Contrastingly, strong Democrats demonstrated a greater sensitivity to the message construction of racial appeals and exhibited greater variability in their favorability assessments of co-partisan candidates. Compared to their weak Democrat counterparts, strong Democrats were significantly more punitive toward co-partisan candidates making either *explicit-Black* (-19-points, $p=.003$) or *implicit-Latino* (-16-points, $p=.033$) racial appeals.

Figure 5.7: Predicted Outcomes Plots for Candidate Favorability Conditioned on Strong and Weak Partisans Receiving Co-Partisan Appeals Across All Conditions with 95% Confidence Intervals



However, in order to examine the impacts of co-partisan racial appeals, the dataset was even more cut down, further diminishing its statistical power. Statistical power only reached a medium range (0.57- 0.78) for the conditions in which two-tailed

tests of significance yielded significant results for the favorability scores of strong and weak co-partisans (Republican tacit-Black, Democrat explicit-Black, and Democrat implicit-Latino). A pooled analysis which compared the effects of racial appeals on strong and weak partisans unfortunately did not sufficiently increase statistical power to a level where effect sizes (0.27 for pooled, strong and weak Democrats and 0.59 for pooled, strong and weak Republicans) are meaningful inferences regarding whether Partisan Motivated Reasoning differentially influences racial message reception among these discrete partisan subgroups.

DISCUSSION

The results above demonstrate partisan differences in candidate evaluations when white voters are exposed to racial appeals. While PMR accounts for the direction of the majority of respondent movement across most conditions, there are unique partisan effects for candidates who engage in explicit-anti-Black appeals. Both Republican and Democratic voters dole out significantly harsh punishments to Democratic candidates leveraging explicit anti-Black appeals. Additionally, even in an era of “negative partisanship” (Iyengar and Krupenkin 2018; Iyengar and Westwood 2015) Democrats in the electorate punished their *own* party’s candidate more harshly than they would Republican candidates making the same explicit-Black appeal. My work highlights the often overlooked “two sides of racialization” contribution from Tesler’s *Post-Racial or Most-Racial: Race and Politics in the Obama Era* (2016). The discussion of Tesler’s widely received text tends to emphasize the anti-Black affect which emerged following the Obama presidency, neglecting the corresponding increase in racial liberalism that

developed alongside racial conservatism. In this chapter, we could clearly see the incongruous impact of racial rhetoric on Republican and Democratic candidate evaluations. Racial egalitarianism would appear to have become the exclusive responsibility of the race-conscious members of our society on the political left, while the political right seems to have reached the “end of racial priming.”

When candidate partisanship is randomized, Republican and Democratic voters had disparate candidate favorability ratings of Congressman Williams across all racial appeal variations. The favorability ratings trend higher—and somewhat more consistently—among Republican voters than Democrats (Figure 5.2). This finding is consistent with recent literature by Gronke and colleagues (2019) which demonstrates that Republican support for voter identification laws is more unified and reflects party consensus, whereas Democratic support for the reform is more variable owing to the party’s heterogeneous membership. Given that the racial appeals in this survey experiment are communicated through issue campaign mailers on voter ID laws, it is possible that the disparate favorability ratings reflect, in part, the partisan polarization on the voter ID laws as well as on the issue of race.

When candidate favorability ratings are disaggregated by *candidate partisanship*, co-partisan appeals prove to be more persuasive than cross-partisan appeals (Figures 5.5 and 5.6). There is strong evidence in support of Partisan Motivated Reasoning for candidate evaluations in the face of racial appeals. Republican voters consistently and significantly evaluate co-partisan candidates more favorably than cross-partisans making the same racial appeal. Democratic voters demonstrate more variable favorability scores for co-partisan racial appeals across conditions. Though in the aggregate, co-partisan

appeals (outside of the explicit-Black condition) prove to be significantly more persuasive than *cross*-partisan appeals. Overall, Republican would voters appear more disposed to Partisan Motivated Reasoning. In contrast, Democratic voters appear less susceptible to PMR in the voter identification issue domain, except in the most subtle, tacit-Black condition which elicited a significant positive response for candidate favorability. Democrats in the electorate also very strongly disavowed the explicit-Black appeal, punishing the sponsored co-partisan candidate. At least for Democratic voters, then, adhering to the norm of African American equality appears to outweigh the motivation to align with their party's candidate.

I find significant negative effects with large statistical power for the explicit-Black appeal among Democratic voters. Though, it is important to note that the null results for many of the difference of mean tests may be false negatives due to the small statistical power of the subset samples. Which is to say that my results are inconclusive with respect to impact of multiple treatment effects of interest, namely explicit-Black appeals on Republican voters. It is also unclear whether partisanship influences the reception of explicit, anti-Latino messages. Despite securing a large, nationally representative sample for this study, the respondents are spread over too many conditions to conduct discrete, partisan subgroup analyses. Future research could focus more exclusively on the impact of explicit racial appeals on Republican voters, as well as whether there are partisan differences in the reception of explicit-Latino appeals. By narrowing the focus, researchers could be able to limit the number of conditions, thus retaining the statistical power of the sample.

One of the more interesting findings is that *candidate partisanship* seems to drive racial message reception (Figure 5.3). Democratic candidates consistently suffer depressed favorability ratings when they deliver an explicit-Black appeal, while Republican candidates are not punished significantly by either Republicans or Democrats in the electorate. It's possible then that the candidate favorability rating may be, in part, artifacts of partisan issue ownership (Petrocik 1996) and the partisan polarization on voter identification laws (Gronke et al. 2019) and/or issues of race (Tesler 2016). According to Petrocik's (1996) theory of issue ownership, voters support candidates with better issue-handling reputations. Since the early 2000's, the Republican Party has promoted stricter voter ID requirements to ensure the integrity of in-person voting and elections (Hasen 2012; Hicks, McKee and Smith 2015). While Democrats also were initially supportive of the reform, that support waned as the party adopted an alternate issue frame that focused on voter suppression as an aspect of the voter ID requirement (Gronke et al. 2019). Therefore, the voter ID mailer in my survey experiment which emphasizes electoral integrity may very well be a framing that is interpreted as a "Republican" issue, where Republicans have a "better" issue-handling reputation. This may translate to greater voter confidence and higher favorability ratings for the Republican Congressman Williams across treatments.

Likewise, research has demonstrated that voter identification laws are "racialized" and that support for voter ID laws increases alongside racial resentment (Wilson and Brewer 2013; see also Chapter 4). Tesler (2016, 155) notes that in terms of partisanship, there has been a growing racialization of party identification. Since the Obama presidency, racially liberal whites (low-racial resentment scores) increasingly identify as

Democrats, whereas racial conservatives (high-resentment whites) increasingly identify as Republican. As anti-Black affect becomes increasingly linked to Republican party identification, white Republicans may exhibit greater tolerance of racial appeals, even in its explicit forms (Valentino et al. 2018), from candidates across the political spectrum. In contrast, Democratic candidates are severely punished by Democrats in the electorate and, to a lesser degree, by Republicans as well. This finding helps to more fully articulate Tesler's (2016) "two sides of racialization." Discussions of Tesler's widely received text tend to emphasize the anti-Black affect that emerged following the Obama presidency and overlooks the corresponding increase in racial liberalism that developed alongside racial conservatism.

Strong Democrats emerged as the constituency that is most punitive toward co-partisan candidates making an explicit-Black appeal. This finding lends support to the idea that both the voter identification issue and racial appeals are polarized along party lines. The fervent disavowal of explicitly anti-Black messages suggest that strong Democrats understand the appeal to be not only a violation of the norm of African American equality, but possibly as a violation of the Democratic Party image or platform as well. Strong partisans are typically more attached to and informed about the party platform (Redlawsk 2002; Taber and Lodge 2006; Goren, Frederico, and Kittilson 2009; Druckman, Fein, and Leeper 2012). Strong Democrats may be more punitive than weak Democrats as a means of patrolling the party label, sanctioning candidates who deviate from the party brand.

Negative partisanship (Iyengar et al. 2012; Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Mason 2015) may be able to account for the lower baseline favorability scores that cross-partisan

candidates receive from partisan voters. However, there is no evidence of negative partisanship in relation to the movement of favorability scores across racial appeal conditions. The results of my survey experiment clearly show that Democratic candidates making explicit-Black appeals are very strongly sanctioned by co-partisan Democrats in the electorate as well as by Republicans, though to a lesser extent. Meanwhile, Republican candidate favorability is not significantly impacted by an explicit-Black appeal. Neither Republican nor Democratic voters appear to take much issue with Republicans making explicit-Black appeals. If negative partisanship were at play here, the results would show a greater disavowal by cross-partisan voters of explicit-Black appeals compared to the control. Instead, we see that the negative impact on candidate favorability in light of an explicit-Black appeal *converges* upon the Democratic candidate by voters from both parties. Additionally, among the conditions in which there are significant differences between Republican and Democratic candidate favorability scores, those differences are most likely attributed to Partisan Motivated Reasoning (Figure 5.5). In those cases, the results show a positive movement of candidate evaluations (as opposed to a depression of evaluations) relative to the control. Negative baselines are generally maintained across conditions and most of the statistically significant differences in candidate favorability resulted from respondent exposure to co-partisan appeals.

These results add valuable, substantive nuance to the recent work by Valentino and colleagues (2018) regarding the “end of racial priming” by accounting for the “two sides of racialization” (Tesler 2016). It clearly articulates that the limitations of the IE model run along partisan lines. The differential responses to Democratic and Republican candidates, when making the same explicit anti-Black appeals, corroborates the central

claim in Valentino et al.'s (2018) work—that the United States has become more tolerant of explicit racial rhetoric. Yet, this work brings into relief the ways in which tolerance for explicit, anti-Black rhetoric is highly partisan and polarized. The lack of impact that explicit-Black appeals had on Republican candidate favorability suggests that explicit, anti-Black appeals have become tolerated by the mass public (Republican and Democratic voters alike) when they are delivered by Republican elites. At the same time, voters are severely punitive toward Democratic candidates who attempt to garner support with explicit-Black appeals. This polarized, partisan response to explicit-Black appeals may indicate that the mass public has come to expect racial conservatism and negative racial stereotyping from Republicans while concomitantly expecting Democrats, or those on the racial left, to bear the burdens of patrolling and enforcing racial egalitarianism.

While this study does not provide direct evidence in support of or against the psychological mechanism undergirding the IE model, it does raise questions about the assumption that coded racial appeals work “unconsciously” to activate voters’ responses to campaign appeal content. The significant and divergent candidate favorability ratings which partisan voters give to co- and cross-partisan candidates across various appeal conditions suggests that there may be a more thoughtful decision-making process at hand than a mere “unconscious” reaction to racial campaign messages. The direction and magnitude of candidate favorability scores appears contingent on multiple contextual factors such as racial appeal target (Black or Latino), racial rhetoric (explicit, implicit, or tacit), and partisanship that are weighed and evaluated in relation to one another. The evidence in this study points to a level of voter sophistication that suggests voters are at

least conscientious—if not outright strategic—about for whom and when they are willing to rebuke violations of racial norms or simply look the other way.

My findings point to the ways in which the IE model must be grounded in the contemporary political context in order to continue to hold theoretical relevance for both African American and Latino racial appeals. Theoretically, each of the axiomatic conditions must be met for the hypotheses of the IE model to have an applied relevance. A norm of equality must be sufficiently ubiquitous and robust, and voters must understand explicit, racist appeals as violations of that egalitarian racial norm. Finally, sanctions for candidates who utilize negative racist appeals must be in place. Future political science research would do well to define the criteria that undergird each of these axioms in order to understand the thresholds at which they are satisfied.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: THE NORM OF RACIAL EQUALITY AND THE BOUNDS OF THE IMPLICIT EXPLICIT MODEL OF RACIAL PRIMING

The success with which Donald Trump deployed negative racial rhetoric in his 2016 presidential campaign astounded and exasperated many members of the public and the media. Political pundits and scientists alike struggled to make sense of the apparent turn in both campaign strategy and public response to racial campaign appeals.

Frustrations surfaced not only around how Trump could “get away” with using explicitly racist language, but there was also contention about whether his racialized language was altogether *racist*. How was it possible that the American public was so divided over the form and content of Trumps racist appeals?

The growth and political salience of non-Black racial minorities in the United States, particularly Latinos, has raised important questions about the relevance of the implicit-explicit model for campaign appeals that target these groups in attempts to mobilize white public opinion and political behavior. Likewise, the hyper-polarized and hyper-racialized context in which contemporary political campaigns take place have challenged the assumptions embedded in our understanding of the implicit-explicit model of racial priming. As a result, this contemporary political context helps to elucidate where, when, and under what conditions the IE model has relevance and can be reliably applied. Therefore, far from having reached the “end of racial priming” (Valentino et al. 2018) this study demonstrates how the theoretical assumptions in the IE model must be

substantiated before it is applied to a racial(ized) group and sheds lights on the boundary conditions embedded in the model as it is currently configured.

A NORM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN EQUALITY, NOT RACIAL EQUALITY

The foundational experiment presented in Chapter Three demonstrates that the implicit-explicit model of racial priming is still very much relevant for anti-Black appeals. When the interlocutors are randomized, explicit, anti-Black appeals continue to have a negative impact on the favorability ratings of the sponsoring candidate. The priming power of implicit Black appeals seems to be diminished in comparison to prior studies, or perhaps was concealed in the absence of a control condition as a baseline for respondent attitudes. With the control condition included in the experimental design, it becomes apparent that the relative success of implicit appeals may mostly be attributed to the drop in candidate favorability ratings among respondents exposed to an explicit appeal. Therefore, the effectiveness of a Black appeal's racial content is tied more to its ability to mobilize *anti-racist* rather than racist thinking. The presence and/or strength of the egalitarian racial norm surrounding African Americans seems to govern the direction of this movement.

To the contrary, explicit, anti-Latino appeals are not disavowed by the white voters in this study. Respondents exposed to explicit-Latino appeals show some positive movement in candidate favorability ratings, but that change does not meet standard levels of statistical significance. Additionally, implicit-Latino appeals are not statistically distinguished from either the explicit-Latino appeals or the control. This may indicate either that white voters do not distinguish between implicit- and explicit anti-Latino

content, or considering the findings for African American appeals, that a norm of Latino equality has yet to be developed and fortified by political elites. Given that the African American norm of equality seemed to be tied to negative candidate favorability ratings, it follows that an absence of the same negative expressions of candidate favorability is tied to the absence of a countervailing racial norm tied to Latino equality.

Though it is beyond the scope of this present study it is worthwhile to understand whether a norm of ‘Latino (American)’ equality has yet to be established in the United States or if Latinos, racialized as persistent foreigners, are precluded from being conceptualized as equals in this context. The difference here is significant in that on the one hand, Mendelberg (2001) provides blueprint for how to establish and maintain a racial norm when look to African Americans and the formal political gains the group made toward establishing a norm of racial equality. *The Race Card* (2001) discusses the ways that norms may wax and wane over time and how landmark political decisions as well as elite rhetoric impact their movement. If on the other hand, Latinos are racialized with a persistent foreigner status that prevents them from making formal political gains, it would be more difficult to substantiate their equal treatment and establish a norm of equality (at least along the same path that was pursued to advance African American equality). Nevertheless, it is possible for new conceptualizations of citizenship or advances in Latino positionality to develop that could hold within them alternate pathways to Latino egalitarianism in the future.

RACIAL RESENTMENT CONTINUES TO BE SIGNIFICANT MEDIATOR OF POLITICAL OPINION AND BEHAVIOR

Earlier studies in racial priming consistently identified racial resentment as the main moderator of the expression of anti-Black attitudes (Huffey and Peffley 2005; Mendelberg 2001; Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002). This study continues to support the finding that racial resentment is highly correlated with racial message acceptance and high candidate favorability scores. However, high- and low-racial resentment scores correspond with high and low candidate favorability, respectively, across all conditions including the control. Recent research has demonstrated that racial resentment is highly correlated with support for voter ID laws (Wilson and Brewer 2013, 2016). The fact that high and low resenters are significantly distinguish even in the race-neutral control condition suggests that the voter identification issue, at least in part, is driving some of the effect.

However, racial resentment is a scale that measures positive and negative affect towards *Blacks* only. While research has demonstrated that racial resentment is a relatively stable predisposition associated with outgroups prejudice (Carney and Enos 2017; Kalkan, Layman, and Uslaner 2009) and will be and correlated with anti-Latino attitudes, future research may make use of newly developed measures of anti-Latino attitudes (Ramirez & Peterson 2020). The survey experiment for this study included my attempt at a Latino resentment index, but as it was included in the post-test questionnaire alone it was inappropriate to use for the preceding analyses.

The Latino resentment scale I developed (see Appendix C for full question wording) closely mirrored the ANES 4-question Likert scale battery for racial

resentment. Because Blacks and Latinos share many negative stereotypes relate, I could replace the word “Blacks” with “Latinos” and retain the integrity and relevance of most racial resent questions, i.e.: *Over the past few years, Blacks (Latinos) have gotten less than they deserve.* However, I could not make the same simple substitution for the racial resentment question that rests upon the history of generational slavery that Blacks experienced in this country as Latinos do not share that experience. Instead, I substituted “land occupation” for “slavery” to create the question: *Generations of land occupation and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Latinos to work their way out of the lower class.* I offer this Latino resentment scale here as a launching point for either scholarly critique or future research endeavors.

Additionally, in this work I attempt to provide a link between the construction of racial schemas and the expression of racial resentment. As schemas are thought to contain the full range of affective attachments about an attitude object, it will contain a variety of beliefs that each possess both a valence and magnitude. If we are to methodically unpack the social-psychological constitution of a racial schema, then we may be able to gain empirical insights into not only individual racial attitudes, but also come near to a quantitative account of a racial norm. As I discussed in Chapter Four, *all* the socially available ideas, beliefs, and stereotypes about a racial group would make up a racial schema. However, the relative direction and strength that an individual gives to any of those idea, belief, or stereotype components would determine their racial attitude.

For example, a Black racial schema would include popularly available ideas such as criminal, violent, welfare, lazy, innovative, hip hop, rap, R&B, dreadlocks, braids, Afro, Black Panthers, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., W.E.B. DuBois, Black love,

Black Lives Matter, and so on. But it is the relative value (positive, negative, neutral) and weight (more important, less important) that an individual gives to any of these ideas that will constitute an individual racial attitude.

Therefore, it should be possible to work backwards and ask survey respondents to free associate ideas or stereotypes that are associated with a particular racial group to arrive at a collective sense of a racial schema. This cumulative responses to this activity would help to demonstrate the degree to which ambivalence was embedded in the racial schema and potentially serve as an approximated measure for the presence and/or strength of a norm of equality for that racial group. The responses generated from that previous activity could then be used to create an index that asks a different set of respondents to record the extent to which they disagree or agree with those ideas and stereotypes which would be a recording of their individual racial attitudes. It seems both worthwhile and technically feasible to ask what exactly are the affective attachments that Americans have toward Blacks (and other racial groups) instead of using a somewhat arbitrarily constructed racial resentment question battery.

PARTISAN BIFURCATION OF THE NORM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN EQUALITY

This study's ability to disaggregate the impact of co- and cross-partisan appeals make a unique and previously overlooked contribution to the field. My findings related to partisanship 1) corroborate the assumptions regarding the Republican party's ongoing legacy of racial appeals, 2) identify the contextual conditions under which dog-whistle appeals have currency for Democratic candidates, and 3) emphasize that norms wax and wane over time and competing norms may exist concomitantly.

Since the Obama presidency, racial resentment has also been strongly correlated with partisanship (Tesler 2016). Racial considerations more heavily influence party identification than they did in the past. Issues of race have become the major fault line distinguishing the two major parties in the United States with more racial conservatives migrating to the Republican party (Lublin 2004; Valentino and Sears 2005). This study shows similar trends among partisanship and racial resentment in that Republicans across all conditions register higher candidate favorability ratings compared to Democrats.

Recent research demonstrates a partisan divide support for voter ID laws (Gronke et al. 2019). While the voter ID issue enjoyed bi-partisan support in the early 2000's, Democratic support for stricter voter identification policies waned during the first term of the Obama presidency. By 2012, longitudinal survey data could demonstrate that there were significant differences in partisan opinions regarding voter ID laws, but scholarly research documenting and confirming these trends was not available until after the survey experiment for this study was fielded in 2016. This is just to say that support for voter ID laws was not as universal as I originally thought when I was designing the treatment conditions for this experiment. Given the partisan divide in support, voter identification was not an ideal issue area within which to embed the experimental manipulations.

Still, some interesting findings percolated from the research design as it was crafted, particularly around partisan trends in racial message reception and its impact on subsequent political opinions. Republican voters are far more responsive to partisan motivation than to racial norms. Republican voter support for the Republican candidate remains relatively high and stable compared to co-partisan support for the Democratic

candidate which rises and falls in light of the nature of the racial appeal to which they were exposed.

In Chapter Five it became clear that the drop in candidate favorability related to exposure to an explicit-Black appeals is piled upon Democratic candidates. Democratic voters significantly punish Democratic candidates who traffic in explicitly, anti-Black appeals. While Republican support for the Democratic candidate does not drop significantly in the explicit-Black condition compared to the control, the difference in support for Republican and Democratic candidates leveraging the same explicitly, anti-Black appeal is both large and significant. Compared to the control, Republican candidates peddling explicit-Black appeals do not experience any drop in candidate favorability among Republican voters and any the negative movement among Democratic voters is not statistically significant. Again, the voter ID issue may be contributing to differential partisan baselines that dampen part of the impact of the racial appeals in different conditions.

These findings suggest that the norm of racial equality is neither universally applied nor adhered to among partisans. Among Democrats, the norm of racial (African American) equality seems intact and that it serves as a powerful constraint on both racist candidate rhetoric and the expression of racist attitudes among voters as Mendelberg originally articulated in *The Race Card* (2001). However, Republican candidates are not penalized for making explicit-Black appeals by either Republican or Democratic voters. It is as if the norm of African American equality no longer applies to Republican candidates. Contemporary Republican candidates seem to have carte blanche for making racist, anti-Black appeals without fear of voter backlash—from neither Republican nor

Democratic voters. As such, there is no need or motivation to conceal an anti-Black appeal in implicit rhetoric and accordingly there are no additional points earned for dog-whistle political campaign appeals.

It is interesting that although Democratic voters fervently disavow explicit, anti-Black appeals presented by Democratic candidates, they are not immune to expressing racialized thinking when it appears that they have sufficient political cover and/or the partisan motivation to do so. Co-partisan, tacit-Black appeals do not register significant positive favorability ratings for Democrats vis-à-vis the control. However, when exposed to a tacit-Black appeal, there is a significant difference between the favorability ratings Democratic voters assign to Republican and Democratic candidates. Even as the voter ID issue may dampen some of the impact of the effect, differences in form and content are perceived and partisans are motivated to act accordingly on subtle, anti-Black appeals. This finding also partially supports Mendelberg's (2001) hypothesis that when racial appeals are sufficiently coded and offer the message recipient a degree of plausible deniability, those messages will be able to mobilize anti-Black affect in the expression of subsequent political decisions.

Overall, this work helps to flesh out more of what Tesler (2016) refers to as the "two sides of racialization." Democrats are frequently staking out policy positions and political behaviors that reflect racial egalitarianism, while Republicans appear to be digging their heels in on racial conservatism. Democrats appear to be alone in their commitment to racial egalitarianism and are left bear the full responsibility and burden of maintaining this racial norm. This finding has significant implications for the maintenance and effectiveness of the norm of racial [sic] equality.

In *The Race Card* (2001), Mendelberg outlines the factors that help constitute a norm of equality and then goes on to explain that the norm must be actively sustained by political elites and the media. Bi-partisan, universal support a prerequisite of norm development for it to have the countervailing force that we see from the norm of African American equality. If a norm is not actively and universally upheld by the rhetoric and public discourse of political elites, its ability to effectively guide individual behavior is diminished. A potential snowball effect creates the risk of the unravelling of the norm altogether. As Republicans abandon the norm of racial equality and attempt to win votes with explicitly racist rhetoric, it puts pressure on Democrats to seek out electoral advantages by defecting to the same rhetorical strategies.

A CHALLENGE TO THE POWER OF UNCONSCIOUS AWARENESS

The fact that partisans react differently to the same messages depending on whether they were received from Democratic or Republican candidates, suggests that message reception and acceptance is not an automatic process. Throughout this study, significant differences in the reception and acceptance of the same message are apparent. Partisanship, racial resentment, and message construction all have mediating effects on the expression of candidate favorability scores. I take the differential impacts of these independent variables as evidence that some information processing and decision-making is happening in the time between primed racial considerations and subsequent expressions of political opinion or behavior.

If it is the case that the expression of a primed racial attitude is not an unconscious act as Mendelberg (2001) argues in *The Race Card*, it may be more akin to a “motivation

to control prejudice” (Blinder et al. 2013) in particular contexts. Blinder and colleagues (2013) suggest that the expression of political decisions is the outcome of an interaction between an individual’s personal motivation to control prejudice and the extent to which the decision-making context brings that motivation to mind. This dual-processing model implies that voters are actively working to determine whether they must exert some measure of norm-based cognitive control over their political expressions. It is as though individuals are actively gauging whether there is sufficient political cover to make it safe to express the racial considerations in their minds. Meaning that the function of subtlety, or “plausible deniability” in a racial appeal is not so much for the racial content to go “undetected,” but to provide a justification for opinions and behaviors that run against the grain of the prevailing egalitarian norm (where one exists).

I cannot reach a definitive statement regarding the mechanism at play here as the answers to these puzzles are beyond the scope of what is tested for in this study. As far as I understand, there is not much published research that explores the mechanism by which primed racial considerations are expressed. This would be a fruitful area of inquiry as the prime-to-expression link is a significant key to understanding the IE model, or how priming is related to expressions racial/out-group prejudice more generally.

BACK TO (METHODOLOGICAL) BASICS

A superficial replication of the components of survey experiments on racial priming can erode their methodological integrity in a way similar to how a message can get distorted during a game of telephone. In that process, we lose track of the theoretical assumptions that drive the research design and the relationships between variables and

their measurements. I call for a robust assessment of how experiments on racial priming are being designed and executed.

In my own review of the literature, I have found several design trends in survey experiment research design that should be reexamined and/or replaced. First, there is a trend of exposing respondents to racial appeals embedded in an OpEd or narrative vignette that is authored by some one other than the candidate leveraging the appeal. While there is a degree of external validity here in that it mirrors the way that voters may consume news or other information about the candidate, it muddies the waters related to the attribution of measured the effects. It is not clear which stimulus respondents are reacting to when additional context and characters are layered into the experimental manipulations.

For studies of racial appeals in campaign communications, the best practice should be to use fictional campaign literature or video ads that directly assess the impact of candidate appeals on voters' political opinions and behavior. While in the past this option may have been cost-prohibitive, today there are a number of affordable computer programs and apps that can assist lay people who do not have design expertise in content creation. This affords the researcher a greater degree of control and precision in isolating the factors that impact respondent behavior.

Second, the priming literature tends to focus on issues that are stereotypically associated with the racial groups that are being studied, ie.: "crime" or "welfare" for Blacks and "immigration" for Latinos. Of course, there is a desire for the treatment issues to be relevant and connected to the groups in question, but as recent research has suggested, "highly congruent group-issue pairings" (Reny et al. 2019) may have a

priming effect when the issue is presented alone. Variation in the issues or in the presence/absence of the paired group could be intentionally included in the treatment conditions in order to account for their impact on respondent decisions and behavior. Otherwise, it would be preferred to identify issues that are race and/or party neutral (or for which there is bi-partisan support) that are responsive to racial cues.

Finally, an effort should be made to ensure that treatment content is reflective of the definitions and operationalizations embedded in the theory. In earlier chapters, I called attention to the way that the term “implicit appeal” became operationalized as “code word and racial imagery.” This operationalization drifted until it was no longer capturing the key features of “implicitness”—namely whether it seemed tangential or incidental to race. Similarly, as racial nouns and adjectives no longer have the same negative connotations today’s most racial political context, it will be important to distinguish racial from racist appeals (Valenzuela and Reny 2020). Racial appeals may have explicitly, race-positive messages whereas racist appeals would be crafted to evoke fear and negative stereotypes or emotions.

ON RACE AND IMMIGRATION BEYOND BLACK AND WHITE

This study works to move the implicit-explicit theory of racial priming beyond the Black-white paradigm in which it was originally conceived. Due to their population growth and political salience, Latinos and other non-Black minorities are increasingly targeted by racial appeals. However, theories and models that were developed to explain Black-white dynamics cannot simply replace one minority group for another. The unique racialization and triangulation of racial groups needs to be accounted for and empirically

tested before we can make claims about a theory's ability to account for other racial group dynamics.

However, the Black-white paradigm continues to have relevance for the context in which contemporary politics takes place. Like Niambi M. Carter (2019) I believe that the Black-white paradigm is an important lens through which we can view race relations in the United States. Particularly, because whiteness and Blackness presently anchor the two poles of "relative valorization" (Kim 1999) along a racial hierarchy, it creates part of the context in which *other* racialized group dynamics play out. Scholarship must take seriously the ways in which non-Black minorities are racialized within the context of and in relation to the Black-white paradigm, in order to understand how and when theories and models developed to account for Black-white relations travel to other groups.

Relatedly, I continue to find importance in the examination of the impact of racial appeals on white political opinions and behavior. While interesting insights regarding race relations will certainly come from scholarship that centers the impact of racial appeals on non-white voters, whites continue to possess the greatest amount of political, social, and economic privilege that weights their attitudes more heavily than others in the political arena. It is therefore valuable to understand the unique or differential impacts that negative racial appeals featuring non-Black minorities have on white voters. With which constructions of racial appeals do whites double down on the boundaries of whiteness and with which constructions do they begin to demonstrate an ability to stand up on behalf of others?

By comparatively assessing the ways that parallel experimental treatments for Blacks and Latinos impact white voters, this study illuminates the similar and dissimilar

elements of the groups' social constructions as well as the assumptions embedded in implicit-explicit model. My work provides a fresh take on the theory of racial priming by a looking at the individual axioms at the foundation of the IE model and whether those assumptions are met by the groups' positionality and/or present political context surrounding that group.

The conception of Latino "foreigner positionality" clearly has little to do with individual citizenship status and yet it appears to be a significant concept in the construction of "Latino" in the imaginations of whites. It will be interesting to see whether the formal political path—national social movements, legislative victories, and judicial rulings—through which African Americans were able to achieve normative egalitarianism is available to Latinos, or if that "foreigner" status will hamper their efforts. More interesting still is whether justice claims directed at Latino *positionality* can help to advance egalitarian norms on the group's behalf.

APPENDIX A

CCES 2016 UMass Modules:

The 2016 University of Massachusetts Modules were purchased as part of the 2016 CCES. The 2016 CCES survey was conducted over the Internet by YouGov. YouGov used a matched random sample methodology. The response rate was 42% after YouGov initially contacted more than 150,000 respondents for the pool of matches in the sample. The Common Content was asked of 64,600 adults interviewed in October 2016 (for pre-election data), and in November 2016 (for post-election data).

Ansolabehere, Stephen; Schaffner, Brian F., 2017, "CCES Common Content, 2016", doi:10.7910/DVN/GDF6Z0, Harvard Dataverse, V1, UNF:6:XRWBSCTbPDuGIDvAN1TOzQ==

Lisi, Rebecca, 2017, "COOPERATIVE CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION STUDY, 2016: University of Massachusetts Amherst 1 CONTENT." Release: 2017. Amherst, MA. <http://cces.gov.harvard.edu>

Schaffner, Brian, 2017, "COOPERATIVE CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION STUDY, 2016: University of Massachusetts Amherst 2 CONTENT." Release: 2017. Amherst, MA. <http://cces.gov.harvard.edu>

APPENDIX B

Mailer Treatment Images:

A3.1: Election Day Mailer



A3.2: Voter ID Issue Mailer, Control

VOTER ID PREVENTS FRAUD

Thousands of people are registered to vote in multiple states, violating our elections laws.

Congressman Williams supports Voter ID laws



A3.3: Voter ID Issue Mailer, Explicit-Black

VOTER ID PREVENTS FRAUD

Thousands of Blacks are registered to vote in multiple states, violating our elections laws.

Congressman Williams supports Voter ID laws



A3.4: Voter ID Issue Mailer, Implicit-Black

VOTER ID PREVENTS FRAUD



Thousands of criminals are registered to vote in multiple states, violating our elections laws.

Congressman Williams supports Voter ID laws



A3.5: Voter ID Issue Mailer, Tacit-Black

VOTER ID PREVENTS FRAUD



Thousands of people are registered to vote in multiple states, violating our elections laws.

Congressman Williams supports Voter ID laws



A3.6: Voter ID Issue Mailer, Explicit-Latino

VOTER ID PREVENTS FRAUD



Thousands of Latinos are registered to vote in multiple states, violating our elections laws.

Congressman Williams supports Voter ID laws



A3.7: Voter ID Issue Mailer, Implicit-Latino

VOTER ID PREVENTS FRAUD



Thousands of immigrants are registered to vote in multiple states, violating our elections laws.

Congressman Williams supports Voter ID laws



A3.8: Voter ID Issue Mailer, Tacit-Latino

VOTER ID PREVENTS FRAUD



Thousands of people are registered to vote in multiple states, violating our elections laws.

Congressman Williams supports Voter ID laws



APPENDIX C

ANES Racial Resentment questions:

1. Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.
2. Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.
3. Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.
4. It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites.

Latino Resentment questions (asked post-test only):

1. Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Latinos should do the same without any special favors.
2. Generations of land occupation and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Latinos to work their way out of the lower class.
3. Over the past few years, Latinos have gotten less than they deserve.
4. It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if Latinos would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites.

APPENDIX D

Chapter 5 Tables:

Table A5.1: Two-tailed tests of significance for mean candidate favorability co- and cross-partisan appeals to Republican voters

Republican Voters, Co- v Cross-Partisan Appeals						
Condition	Mean Republican Favorability	Mean Democratic Favorability	t value	p=	N	power
Control	71.47	61.74	9.73	.008**	86	0.7757
Black-explicit	70.97	56.81	14.17	.007**	99	0.7865
Black-implicit	71.34	62.11	9.23	.025*	81	0.5943
Black-tacit	68	61.62	6.38	0.124	100	0.3346
Latino-explicit	75.67	67.68	7.99	.026*	94	0.6355
Latino-implicit	72.72	62.58	10.15	.033*	90	0.5594
Latino-tacit	75.53	63.68	11.85	.006**	86	0.7775

Table A5.2: Two-tailed tests of significance for mean candidate favorability co- and cross-partisan appeals to Democratic voters

Democratic Voters, Co- v Cross-Partisan Appeals						
Condition	Mean Republican Favorability	Mean Democratic Favorability	t value	p=	N	power
Control	38.11	44.16	-6.05	0.186	100	0.265
Black-explicit	33.46	26.7	6.75	0.179	111	0.2701
Black-implicit	36.96	43.84	-6.88	0.157	112	0.3024
Black-tacit	30.4	48.45	-18.05	.000***	98	0.9632
Latino-explicit	44.09	43.24	0.843	0.883	87	0.0524
Latino-implicit	42	45.63	-3.63	0.524	95	0.0967
Latino-tacit	44.04	51.37	-7.33	0.169	105	0.2802

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