The Power of Post-Racial:
An Exploration of Post-Racial Rhetoric’s Influence on Candidate Evaluations

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Abstract

While there has been much discussion amongst scholars and pundits about whether American society has become post-racial since 2008, the conversation is yet to delve into how politicians who call for citizens to move past racial divisions are evaluated relative to those who use other kinds of racial language. We offer a theoretical framework that explains how and why post-racial language is an effective rhetorical tool for any politician, and establish how it compares to previously researched forms of political language about race. Using an experimental test, we establish that post-racial language influences candidate evaluations in meaningful ways that differ from racial language styles that emphasize compassion or derision towards black people, and find that calling for society to move beyond race leads to higher candidate evaluations. We discuss the implications of these findings as they relate to the ongoing discussion about political stereotypes and racial discussions.

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Since the election of Barack Obama in 2008, questions of whether the United States has become post-racial as dominated the socio-political discourse. Indeed, political pundits and politicians alike have debated about whether the election of the nation’s first African American president symbolizes a meaningful shift in American society towards a “post-racial era.”¹ This important question has been examined through numerous lenses, but despite the thorough investigations, we know very little about why becoming a post-racial society is the goal of some Americans. Furthermore, we know even less about the effect post-racial language², or language that calls society to “move beyond race,” has when used by politicians to discuss contemporary race relations. What contemporary research has told us is that the effects of racially compassionate and racially derogatory language styles lead to variation on how a politician or political candidate is seen by white voters, and tends to be constrained by a politician’s racial identity and/or partisan affiliation.

Despite the growing body of literature within political science on whether or not America has become a post-racial society (Tesler and Sears 2008; Gillespie 2010; Piston 2010), there has been very little investigation into the leverage political figures gain by asserting that society should move beyond racial divisions. Using literature on post-raciality and an experimental test, this paper

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¹ One of the earliest discussions of Barack Obama as the first “post-racial” politician was during his 2004 senatorial campaign. The New Republic asserted that the power of Obama’s background and elite education made him, “...an African American candidate who was not stereotypically African American.” https://newrepublic.com/article/67604/race-against-history-0

² While a candidate may not explicitly call for the end of racial categories, we contend post-racial rhetoric does imply that getting past these racial distinctions will lead to a broader and more inclusive identity in society.
explores how assertions from politicians that American society should move beyond race fits into our current understandings of racialized language, and what differences in candidate evaluations, if any, post-racial rhetoric offers politicians compared to these other forms of political language about race.

Being “post-racial” has been used to describe the background of the candidate, their appeal across a diverse set of racial audiences, or rhetoric used by a candidate. This kind of rhetoric has made its way into the public discourse in various ways from numerous sources. While discussing President Obama’s 2nd State of the Union address, Chris Matthews of MSNBC had this to say, “…[race] wasn’t there tonight, and it takes leadership on his part to get us beyond these divisions… I hope what I saw is true, that we’ve gotten beyond it…. I think he’s taken us beyond black and white in our politics, wonderfully so, in just a year” (Matthews 2010). 2016 Republican Presidential candidate Dr. Ben Carson voiced a similar assertion when, during the first Republican debate, he said “…skin doesn’t make them who they are. The hair doesn’t make them who they are. And it’s time for us to move beyond that…” In fact, ABC News reported that their tweet using that statement was, according to Twitter, “the most retweeted media tweet from the first GOP debate” (Struyk and Faulders 2015).

We investigate the influence and effect of statements like those made by Carson and Matthews on attitudes of white individuals. We begin this investigation by reviewing the literature

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3 Our decision to focus on white individuals is borne out of the precedent set by existing literature on responses to racialized rhetoric. Very few scholars use non-white individuals in their analyses, and we seek to both respond and contribute to this existing work. Given that this paper’s goal is to understand how post-racial rhetoric works compared to the finds of previous work on racialized rhetoric we thought it prudent to focus our investigation on the same group as past scholars.
on the political stereotypes, which reveals that, for many whites, politicians are evaluated differently based on their partisanship and/or racial identity. We then provide a theoretical framework for how post-racial language works differently than other forms of racialized language by building on the works of Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Sherrow Pinder. We contend that post-racial language gives politicians, regardless of their race or partisanship, the ability to speak on racial issues in an explicit way without being perceived as being biased in favor for or against blacks. We test this argument with an experimental test similar to that of Stephens (2013) that varies the kinds of racial messages and the race of the candidate speaking the message. Additionally, we test to see if, as put forth by the extant literature, the partisanship of the candidate matters in how the racialized language impacts the favorability of the political candidate (Mendelberg 2001, Valentino et al 2002; Hutchings and Valentino 2003; Hutchings and Jardina 2009; Stephens 2013). Ultimately, we find that regardless of the identity of the candidate (e.g., his partisan affiliation and race), the use of post-racial language leads to consistently positive affective evaluations from white voters. We conclude with a discussion of the power of post-racial language and the implications that this research has for our understanding of racial dialogues within the contemporary political space.

The Effect of Racial Priming

In order to properly situate this paper in literature on who can and cannot discuss racial issues, we turn our focus to existing work on racial priming, which provides numerous answers as to who, within the ranks of politicians, can speak on issues of race. Most notably, Mendelberg (2001) shows that whites tend to be conflicted between the “norm of equality,” which she defines as “the

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4 We recognize that Donald Trump managed to defy the conventional norms of racial discourse, and argue that his ability to do stems from his constant questioning and critique of the idea of political correctness.
social prohibition against making racist statements in public acts,” and their negative feelings toward blacks for their perceived failure to “pull themselves up by their bootstraps” (17). Furthermore, when whites recognize the racialized nature of a message most will reject it out of fear of being in violation of the norm of equality.

Scholars have elaborated on Mendelberg’s theoretical assertions by both pinpointing accessibility as the underlying mechanism of racial priming and identifying racialized language and imagery as working together to prime racial attitudes (Valentino et al. 2002; 88). Hutchings and Valentino (2003) go on to provide additional answers to the question about who can discuss race by questioning whether explicit racial appeals are truly ineffective. They seek to understand how explicitly racial language that focuses on policy disputes is accepted and evaluated by whites, and ultimately find support for their expectations that an explicit appeal can be effective if the appeal highlights policy disputes.

Huber and Lapinski (2006) address the effects of implicit and explicit appeals in a different way by seeking to understand who, amongst voters, is more likely to recognize the messages in political issue advertisements. Moreover, they contend that certain subpopulations of Americans are more susceptible to the effects of priming. In particular, the authors assert that those who have lower levels of education are more likely to be primed than those with higher education levels. Indeed, their results reveal that low-education respondents are receptive to priming, but make no distinction between implicit and explicit messages, and are slightly receptive to both types of messages. Despite Mendelberg (2008) calling into question the reliability of Huber and Lapinski’s study, the authors hold fast to their assertion that implicit appeals are not more effective than explicit appeals at priming racial attitudes for certain individuals.

Overall, most of the racial priming studies conclude that implicit appeals prime racial attitudes, while explicit messages, because they violate norms of racial egalitarianism, are less likely to
evoke these sorts racialized evaluations (Nelson and Kinder 1996, Mendelberg 2001, Valentino et al 2002; White 2007; Hurwitz and Peffley 2007). These findings show that implicit racial appeals serve as useful tools for white politicians to discuss race without being in violation of the norm of equality.

**Stereotypes and Candidate Evaluations**

Similar to the way white politicians are constrained by a need to stay in line with the norm of racial equality, black politicians are forced to navigate the stereotypes about their ideological and partisan leanings, and consider the impact it has on their ability to operate within the political arena. We contend that it is important to know what informs white individuals’ perceptions of language calling for society to move beyond race in relation to other forms of racial rhetoric.

**Stereotypes Based on Candidate Race**

Much of the existing research reveals that white attitudes are influenced by the race of a politician. Within many of these works we see the power and influence of stereotypes about minorities, particularly black politicians, has on white voter attitudes. Those black politicians who seek to gain support from white voters must navigate the various stereotypes that white voters tend to place upon them because of their race. White voters tend to view black politicians as more liberal, more Democratic, and more likely to support policies that provide support for minority groups.

These stereotypes are activated by skin color where the darker a candidate is, the more negative their evaluations (Terkildsen 1993). Voter turnout amongst white voters decreases based on levels of racial prejudice even amongst those who claim to be strong partisans and share the same party as the black politician (Krupnikov and Piston 2014). For some white voters, black politicians are seen as a subtype of blacks, and thus white voters apply a different set of stereotypes to black politicians that are more consistent with those that are common for politicians or black professionals. These stereotypes about black politicians differ from blacks broadly as they are seen as more successful, more liberal and more Democratic (Schneider and Bos 2011). Conversely, Hajnal
(2006) finds that, for many whites, having a black incumbent mayor leads to greater acceptance of not only the politician herself, but also the black community broadly (166).

Jacobsmeier (2015) seeks to understand the influence that a political candidate’s ideology has on the way in which candidates of different races are evaluated. He finds that his results are in line with Sigelman et al’s (1995) conclusion that the race of the candidate is not a direct mechanism to alter white voters’ political attitude and choices. But Jacobsmeier (2015) pushes beyond past work by uncovering that “the indirect effect of race on voting decisions outweigh any direct forms of prejudice” (618). In other words, it is not racial prejudice that keeps black politicians from gaining white support, but rather the perception that blacks tend to be more ideologically liberal and thus less likely to be able to represent whites that leads to a decrease in support.

**Stereotypes Based on Candidate Partisanship**

Partisanship serves as a strong lens for how many voters view the political world, and works as the means by which political information is processed (Rahn 1993). In the same way that some voters use the race of a candidate as a shortcut to determine what the candidate represents, voters also use stereotypes based on partisanship to evaluate candidates (Lodge and Hamill 1986; Rahn 1993; Petrocik 1996; Goren 2002; Hayes 2005). As such, we contend that a candidate’s partisan affiliation in conjunction with the kind of racial language they employ will lead to differences in their candidate evaluations. Indeed, Republicans and Democrats are viewed differently by voters based on the ways they handle particular political issues. Republicans are regarded as being stronger on issues surrounding defense, taxes, and social issues. While Democrats are seen as more adept on social welfare and social group relations (Petrocik 1996; Hayes 2005). These perceptions and stereotypes affect how candidates from each of these parties are viewed based on how they discuss issues of race. In fact, Lodge and Hamill (1986) conclude, “[t]he ‘simple act’ of labeling a congressman as a
Republican or Democrat systematically affects what information about the candidate will be stored in memory about what information will later be available for informing one's evaluations” (518).

Some scholars have investigated the intersection of party and race and find a compound effect of the stereotypes that exist for a candidate’s race and their partisan affiliation. In particular, white voters’ acceptance of black incumbents is conditioned on the partisan affiliation of the white voter. Those whites who identify as Independent or are affiliated with the Democratic Party are more likely to experience changes in their racial attitudes, while white Republicans’ views are less pliable and are thus unaffected by the presence of a black incumbent (Hajnal 2002). Furthermore, Jones (2015) reveals that even when a politician of color presents policy preferences that are conservative or more oriented towards the Republican Party, they are still seen as more liberal and Democratic than their white counterparts.

**Stephens’s Theory of Racial Signaling**

LaFleur Stephens (2013) sitsuates herself in the midst of both the literature on influence of racial stereotypes and racial priming by developing a theory on racial signaling, and examines how whites evaluate candidates based on their race and use of racialized rhetoric in order to understand how the norm of equality is applied when the source of explicit racial language varies. In her experimental design, those respondents in the experimental treatment conditions are randomly placed into a condition where they read an article with either a black or white Democratic candidate (indicated by a picture) who offers either implicit, explicit, deracialized, or racially liberal language about academic achievement. She finds that whites lend more support to the black candidate who offers the racially inflammatory and potentially offensive rhetoric about black parents needing to

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5 This is a chapter from Stephens’s dissertation. For the purpose of this paper, we focus on this particular chapter.
help their children achieve more than when a white candidate says it. She goes on to establish that these findings are consistent even when the respondent’s level of racial resentment is accounted for. She concludes that when appealing to whites, black politicians are rewarded for their use of strong, racially inflammatory language while their white counterparts are punished for the same. These findings lead her to conclude that Mendelberg’s norm of equality (2001) is, for white voters, conditioned based on the race of the individual using the language (102). Ultimately, Stephens’s (2013) conclusion offers an answer to what happens when blacks deliver racially inflammatory messages, and the power and influence of these messages on white political attitudes.

Although we find Stephens’s theoretical and methodological approach convincing, and her results persuasive, we deviate from her work in a few ways. First, we theorize that post-racial language provides a suitable alternative for individuals seeking to discuss race in a non-complimentary or offensive way, and thus added the post-racial language as a test to how it relates to other language styles that are discussed in previous literature. We argue that the efficacy of post-racial language exists because, for many, a post-racial society represents the ideal of what racial equality would look like were it achieved. Second, we investigate candidate evaluations through an analysis of several affective measures: feeling thermometer ratings, perceived trustworthiness, and ability to represent interests. Using multiple affective measures allows for a broader understanding of candidate assessment, which we believe has broader political implications (Lodge et al 1995). Third, we stratify by partisanship based on the discussions found in existing literature about the stereotypes about party and the influence of perceptions of out-group party members. No study to date has investigated the power of post-racial rhetoric and its potential effect on political attitudes and behaviors. In fact, the prevalence of this language suggests that there is potency to this rhetoric that requires further examination as move forward in the study of racial rhetoric.
The Power of Post-Racial

While past literature offers some answers to the questions- who within the political ranks can discuss issues of race? And how does the way in which one discusses race affect how they are perceived and subsequently evaluated? Existing conclusions on the impact of stereotypes and racialized rhetoric on the evaluations leveraged by white individuals do not account for the growing use of language that calls for society to move beyond race and unite on the grounds of a joint American identity, in contemporary political discourse.

The growing prevalence of post-racial language within the ranks of both Democratic and Republican parties makes it clear that understanding its influence on political behavior is an important and necessary step in the ongoing discussion of racialized language. What remains undisussed is- What impact this post-racial rhetoric has on white attitudes and evaluations? To what extent the language is more or less effective based on the race and/or party of the candidate who employs it? Moreover, we are unable to explain how the outcomes of particular rhetorical tactic compares with those found in extant literature (i.e., non-racial, racially inflammatory, racially compassionate, etc.). To address these concerns, we offer a theoretical argument for the importance and impact of post-racial language on white attitudes and candidate evaluations.

What Post-Racial is and What it is Not

There are numerous ways in which scholars discuss racialized language, but there are some terms that tend to be used to explain the same phenomenon. De-racialized language is often referenced in the same way as race neutral language because both are strategies in which politicians do not discuss issues surrounding race at all. An example of this is when Obama focused his attention on discussing the Iraq War instead of engaging racial policies (Cho 2010). Existing literature on strategies employed by black politicians put forth the deracialized method, which is generally characterized by the absence of racialized language from a politician’s rhetoric altogether as
an approach that black politicians can use in order to gain support from whites (Hamilton 1973; Gillespie 2010). Black politicians who use deracialize, or neutralize race from, their rhetoric is not able to actively combat the numerous stereotypes whites hold against them in the same way they would were they to use racially conservative language. While this political choice is seen in political discourse, it is not synonymous with post-racial rhetoric. This distinction comes from the fact that the use of post-racial language allows black candidates to show that they are not as bound to an identity that is often understood to be salient to them as it is to others in the racial group. The use of deracialized rhetorical strategies does not have the same impact for white candidates because they are not combatting stereotypes based on their race.

Additionally, within popular discourse there has been some conflation of the terms colorblindness and post-racial, and while they do have commonalities, we draw on a particular definition of post-racial, and want to point out three important distinctions between colorblindness and post-raciality. In our discussion of post-raciality and the influence of post-racial rhetoric we draw on Sherrow Pinder’s definition that the concept of post-raciality is the “move beyond race,” and contend that post-raciality “promotes the idea that the election of the first black man, Barack Obama, as president of the United States proves that the United States has moved beyond race” (63). This latter sentiment points to the first and arguably most important difference between post-raciality and colorblindness, and that is that one’s belief that society has become post-racial and thus transcended racial divisions is informed by a moment in time or a specific event (Cho 2010). That is to say that the desire for post-raciality is borne out of a particular time in which individuals feel that racial divisions are no longer necessary.

As discussed by Pinder (2015), the moment generally pointed to by scholars tends to be the election of President Barack Obama in 2008. Indeed, once elected, many prominent pundits and periodicals began to question whether his election signaled that the United States had become post-
racial. With the election of President Obama, individuals are able to claim that race should no longer be considered a salient factor. Colorblindness, on the other hand does not have a moment or event to point to as a turning point in society, and thus is more aspirational in nature (Cho 2010). Post-raciality has a moment or an event that one can point to as a reason for why society’s ability to move beyond race has been attained. That reason is the perception that because the majority of the American public voted for a black man to be president, which suggests a level of progress that show race is no longer a salient factor in American society. The second distinction between colorblindness and post-raciality is who is more likely to subscribe to these concepts. The belief that American society has transcended the issue of race leads more liberals and young people to prefer the notion of moving beyond race while those who are older are more inclined to subscribe to colorblindness (Cho 2010). The third distinction between colorblindness and post-raciality is how these concepts deal with the state of racism in the United States. Post-raciality, unlike colorblindness, does not ignore that past racial discrimination, but instead points to a moment in which one can believes the significance of race is in decline and with it the prevalence of racism in the United States. Some might ask how post-raciality can lead an individual to recognize racism’s role in America’s history but ignore the importance of contemporary racial issues. We posit that one’s perception of Obama’s presidency as the moment of immense societal progress and as such believe issues of race should no longer be a priority in the public discourse as they did prior to his election.

Post-Racial Language

We acknowledge that, like there other kinds of racialized rhetoric, post-racial rhetoric takes many different forms some subtle and some explicit. For the purposes of this paper, our focus is on language that explicitly calls for society to move beyond racial or skin color differences. The example used at the beginning of this paper in which Ben Carson claims that “…skin doesn’t make them who they are. The hair doesn’t make them who they are. And it’s time for us to move beyond that…”
serves as an example of the kind of post-racial rhetoric we are examining. An additional example can be found in the decision of *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*, 551 U.S. 701 (2007), in which Chief Justice Roberts says “the way to stop discrimination on the bases of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race”. Both of these examples embody the kind of post-racial rhetoric that we seek to better understand in this paper because they explicitly call for society to end the distinctions based on racial dimension.

In existing literature, there was two kinds of explicitly racial language that are discussed—racially inflammatory language, which is categorized as explicitly negative language about minorities and racially compassionate language, language that speaks of minorities in a positive way (Mendelberg 2001; Valentino et al 2002; Stephens 2013). We posit that post-racial rhetoric differs from both these rhetorical tactics because of its moderate approach to discussing racial issues. By moderate we mean that when a politician uses post-racial language she shows no explicit preference or animosity toward any racial group. We argue further that post-racial language’s moderate approach works on two dimensions. The first dimension is one on which post-racial language suggests that society has moved beyond race because of a moment, which shows that we, as a society, has progressed. The second dimension builds off the first by showing that because the specific moment promotes a sense of progress, it also allows politicians and individuals to ignore the systematic nature of racism in the country by promoting a sense of equality that comes from Obama’s election.

This understanding of post-racial rhetoric comes from Eduardo Bonilla-Silva who discusses the complicated nature with which certain kinds of rhetoric can alter white individuals’ attitudes. He asserts,

“[t]he frame of abstract liberalism involves using ideas associated with political liberalism and economic liberalism in an abstract manner to explain racial matters. By framing race-related issues in the language of liberalism, whites can appear
“reasonable” and even “moral” while opposing almost all practical approaches to deal with de facto racial inequality” (28).

While Bonilla-Silva’s discussion of abstract liberalism is within the context of colorblind racism, we argue that this concept is one that can be applied to the rhetoric that purports post-raciality based on the particular context in which it is used. Indeed, Cho (2010) discusses a similar dynamic within the realm of post-raciality.

Both the Dr. Ben Carson and Chief Justice Roberts examples reflect abstract liberalism because they both suggest that society move beyond skin color because individuals’ minds make them who they are, or because racial discrimination will decrease once society stops discrimination on the grounds of race. These assertions encourage the idea that society no longer requires making racial distinctions salient. However, both of these sentiments ignore the systematic racism, and overlooks the ways in which people of color have a variety of experiences different from their white counterparts on the grounds of their racial or ethnic identity. It is our position that the post-racial language like that put for by Dr. Ben Carson or Chief Justice Roberts makes some white individuals feel more positive because of the focus on egalitarianism and unity that is associated with certain facets of post-racial language. Moreover, given the election of the nation’s first black president many white individuals have a historical moment to reference as a turning point in race relations which supports the idea that society has become more egalitarian and issues of race are no longer salient.

According to Bonilla-Silva, this language is used quite pervasively among some white individuals to discuss issues of race without being explicitly racist. As it stands, contemporary literature within political science provides little insight into how this kind of language resonates with white voters when used by politicians. Moreover, we know even less about how the post-racial rhetoric’s influence on politician evaluations compares to evaluations given to politicians who use other forms of racialized rhetoric, or how the race of the individual using this rhetoric might impact the way he or she is perceived by white individuals.
Post-Racial Language and Candidate Race

Our claim is that post-racial rhetoric offers politicians, regardless of race, a suitable alternative to the use of strong racially offensive language or racially compassionate rhetoric. By advocating for moving beyond race, the post-racial rhetoric allows politicians to speak on issues of race without being derogatory or preferential towards any particular racial group. Additionally, in the same way that past literature argues that racially conservative language validates the racial attitudes of some whites, we argue that post-racial language also validates the ideas of whites by highlighting the problems with the strong societal focus placed on racial distinctions, and calling for those for whom these distinctions are perceived as particularly salient (often perceived to be minorities) to relinquish them for a broader, more inclusive American identity.

The effects of this language, while beneficial for both black and white politicians, are effective in different ways based on the race of the politician. For black politicians, this kind of language allows them to show white voters that they are not confined to the stereotypes that are often leveraged against them because of their racial identity. Through utilization of post-racial language, black politicians are able to not only affirm the racial attitudes of some whites by suggesting that racial divisions are a thing of the past, but also show that, because of this view, they have the capacity to represent the interests of nonblack voters. Additionally, black politicians who employ this rhetorical strategy are able to assuage concerns of white voters who may not subscribe to the strong racially inflammatory language but still subscribe to stereotypes about black politicians.

For white candidates, literature shows us that using racially offensive language leads to them being punished by white voters for violating the norm of equality, or coming off as being overtly racist in their critiques of blacks. However, they are also punished for showing some compassion or understanding of the socio-political plight that some blacks face thus leaving them in a paradoxical space where their ability to speak on issues of race is constrained for fear of being seen as racially
insensitive or too racially understanding. The use of post-racial language allows white candidates to speak about race without being in violation of either of those constraints. By calling for society to move beyond race, white candidates are able to criticize the concept of race and its salience in society, often citing its more divisive than unifying, without appearing to be too biased for or against blacks.

We push this argument a step further and claim that post-racial language serves an effective alternative for both black and white politicians because by focusing on egalitarianism and suggesting that racism is no longer a salient issue, politicians implicitly place the burden of behavioral and attitudinal change on those minorities for whom race is salient, while allowing whites to maintain their attitudes and behaviors because their racial identity is not as salient (Helms 1997). In other words, the sentiment put forth in post-racial language is beneficial to politicians interested in appealing to white voters because by calling for “moving beyond race,” candidates are in effect putting the weight on minorities to do away with an aspect of their identity that is more salient to them than it is to their white counterparts.

Methods

Experiment Description

In order to gain some understanding about the role that post-racial rhetoric we use an experimental design similar to Stephens (2013). The sample of 1,019 white partisans for this experiment was collected using Qualtrics, a company that provides a quota sample for surveys and experiments. In total, we have 515 non-Hispanic white Republicans and 504 non-Hispanic white Democrats. This sample was collected over three weeks in March 2016. We stratified this sample by party to avoid the likelihood that being presented with a candidate of another party would lead a participant to disregard the message and evaluate the candidate based on his partisan affiliation. This concern stems from work that shows partisanship has become more of an identity for many
individuals, which leads to strong out-group sentiment across party lines (Huddy et al. 2015; Mason 2015).

Prior to the experimental conditions, each respondent will be asked a series of demographic questions, and randomly assigned to view a fictitious Congressional candidate’s biography on his website. The race of the candidate will either be black or white, and this will be indicated by a photograph of the candidate. Subsequently, those who are randomly assigned to the control will be directed to a series of standard survey questions about candidate evaluations, racial attitudes, and racial policies directly following the biography. However, those who are randomly assigned to treatment conditions will be exposed to a fictional news article to examine the impact of racial rhetoric on evaluations of the candidate. The article will also contain a photo of the candidate, and will be race matched based on the race of the candidate in the biography they were exposed to previously. After exposure to the treatment is over, they will be directed to the same questions of those from the control condition.
Table 1: Text from Experimental Conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article Title</th>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Racial Animus</th>
<th>Racial Compassion</th>
<th>Post-Racial</th>
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<td>Republican Congress hopeful weighs in on Foreign Policy</td>
<td>Republican Congress hopeful calls for an end to “coddling blacks”</td>
<td>Republican Congress hopeful calls for recognition of hardships Blacks face</td>
<td>Republican Congress hopeful calls for Moving Beyond Race</td>
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| Article Text | It is imperative that countries come to learn that there will be grave serious consequences if they decide to engage in explicit aggression against the United States and its citizens. We will not allow any foreign power or head a state to intimidate or terrorize us. It is my firm belief that all options of engagement should remain on the table when dealing with international aggressors. | We must stop coddling Black communities who consistently break the law, are unemployed, and do not seem to appreciate the importance of working hard to be successful. We cannot simply give people handouts because of the past. Our success as a nation was born out of hard work, determination, and perseverance, which are the American values that make us great. | We should have some compassion and recognize the hardships that many within African American community face because of past discrimination. As a nation, we are only as strong when we acknowledge our problems and work together to solve them. We still have a way to go before we assuage the concerns of communities of color. | The color of our skin does not make us who we are, and it is time to move beyond the divisions that skin color creates. It is my firm belief that we have progressed enough as a society to do away with these artificial divisions and move forward. Our strength as a nation is in our unity. We are United States of America, not the divided states. |

The policy condition language for Democrats is different than the one given to Republicans. The topics of the policy condition are the same (Foreign Powers and the Security of the United States) but, we wanted to make sure that rhetoric aligned with the positions that parties have taken on this issue. In order to do this, we used real rhetoric from campaign websites of Ben Carson and Bernie Sanders for the Republican and Democratic policy statement, respectively. See appendix for the policy condition language for Democrats.
Figure 1: Experimental Treatment Controls and Conditions

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<th></th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Non-Racial</th>
<th>Racial Animus</th>
<th>Racial Compassion</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Black Candidate</strong></td>
<td>Black Candidate Bio &amp; Non-Racial Black Candidate</td>
<td>Black Candidate Bio &amp; Non-Racial Black Candidate</td>
<td>Black Candidate Bio &amp; Racial Animus Black Candidate</td>
<td>Black Candidate Bio &amp; Racial Compassion Black Candidate</td>
<td>Black Candidate Bio &amp; Post-Racial Black Candidate</td>
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<td>White Candidate Bio &amp; Non-Racial White Candidate</td>
<td>White Candidate Bio &amp; Non-Racial White Candidate</td>
<td>White Candidate Bio &amp; Racial Animus White Candidate</td>
<td>White Candidate Bio &amp; Racial Compassion White Candidate</td>
<td>White Candidate Bio &amp; Post-Racial White Candidate</td>
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Procedure

Upon clicking a link to the survey the subject is presented with a statement that explains that they have been randomly selected to participate in a study for a campaign. The statement outlines what the study will look like, and asks the subjects for their consent, and assures them that any and all information they provide will be kept confidential to the best of my ability. Subjects will be asked to identify their age, education level, gender, what region of the country they live in, and what they identify as. Once they have answered these questions the respondents will be randomly placed into a condition where they will see a biography of Robert Perkins, the fictional candidate. Some respondents will see Perkins as a black man, while others will see him as a white man.

Figure 1 outlines the layout of each of the experimental conditions and the control. After reading the biography, respondents directed to questions about Robert Perkins’s race, political party
affiliation, whether he is a good representative of their interest, trustworthiness, his perceived ideological leaning, and asked to rate him on a scale of 0-100. Those subjects in the treatment conditions will be shown an article that uses a specific kind of racialized language. The subjects will be matched with the same race of the candidate they saw in the biography, but the randomly placed in 1 of 4 article treatments where the rhetoric on race is different (non-racial, racial animus, racial compassion, and post-racial). Table 1 details the racialized rhetoric in the conditions.

When the subject has completed the study, they were thanked for their time, debriefed, and provided with the contact information of the primary investigator should they have any problems, questions, or concerns.

Measures

 Voters very rarely use facts of a political campaign to inform their decision to support a political candidate. Indeed, many rely on affective evaluations to influence their candidate-support decision making (Lodge et al 1995). With these findings in mind, we focus on three different affective measures of candidate evaluation. First, we examine feeling thermometer ratings, which measures the broad affective attachment the respondent has to the candidate by having them assess their “warmth” or “coolness” towards the candidate on a scale from 0 to 100 where 0 is extremely cool or strongly dislike and 100 is “extremely warm” or strongly like. We then measure how trustworthy respondents think the candidate is by having them place how trustworthy they believe the candidate to be on a scale 0 to 10 where 0 is “Not at All Trustworthy” and 10 is “Very Trustworthy.” Finally, we investigate how, based on the experimental condition into which they are randomly placed, participants perceive Robert Perkins’s ability to represent their interest through the use of a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from “Very Unlikely” to “Very Likely.”
Hypotheses

Based on past literature we know that the evaluations of white candidates and politicians are not conditioned by stereotypes and prejudices like those of their black counterparts. Despite not being hindered by perceptions based on stereotypes Mendelberg (2001) and Stephens (2013) do show that those white politicians who violate the norm of equality get lower evaluations from individuals.

Based on these findings, and our theoretical assertion that post-racial rhetoric is neutral in its valence thus not violating the norm of equality, we expect that white candidates will receive more positive evaluations relative to the control when they use post-racial language than when they use racially inflammatory language (H1). Conversely, we expect that black candidates who use post-racial language will garner evaluations that are equally as positive as a candidate who uses racially derogatory language about black people relative to the control (H2). As discussed earlier, the use of post-racial language is absent any stereotype individuals might have about the Republican or Democratic Party. As such, we expect that a politicians or participants’ partisan affiliation will not alter the evaluations of either the black or the white candidate when they use the post-racial language (H3). Consistent with the literature on partisan and racial stereotypes, we expect that the race or party of the candidate will condition respondents’ evaluations based on their use of racially inflammatory or racially compassionate language (H4).
Results

The subsequent analysis (Figures 2-7) present the average treatment effects in the form of coefficient estimates for each of the experimental conditions relative to a zero-centered control, which is indicated by a red vertical line. The controls in each figure are the controls specific to the model, and thus the controls within each figure not the same.

Partisanship

Figure 2

Note: Each point on the difference-in-means plots is the difference between one of the conditions and the control (red vertical line). The conditions and corresponding points are listed below each plot.

The main effects of the treatments (pooling both the black and the white candidate of the same party) on respondents feeling thermometer evaluations are presented in Figure 2, and show that Robert Perkins is rewarded significantly by co-partisans who were randomized into the post-
racial rhetoric condition (H3). Democrat Robert Perkins has a significant 10-point increase in his feeling thermometer rating in the post-racial treatment ($p \leq .01$) relative to the control. Republican Robert Perkins also experiences a 10-point increase in his feeling thermometer rating in the post-racial condition ($p \leq .01$) relative to the control. Republicans rate Perkins equally as favorably when he uses racially inflammatory language (8.92). Democrats rate Perkins more favorably in the post-racial condition relative to the control condition (10.17, $p \leq .01$) while we see a decrease in evaluations in the racial animus condition (-4.69) relative to the control, although it is not statistically significant (H2). Generally, partisan stereotypes would predict that the compassionate appeals would favor the feeling thermometer ratings for the Democratic candidate yet they are not statistically different the control. For the Republican candidate, we see a decrease in thermometer ratings for compassionate rhetoric, but again, it is not significant (H4).

---

For Figures 2-4 the sample sizes for each condition for the Democratic candidate are:

Control=106, Policy=98, Racial Animus=100, Compassionate=100, and Post-Racial=100. The sample sizes for each condition for the Republican Candidate are: Control=105, Policy=106, Racial Animus=105, Compassionate=97, and Post-Racial=102.
Figure 3

Note: Each point on the difference-in-means plots is the difference between one of the conditions and the control (red vertical line). The conditions and corresponding points are listed below each plot.

In Figure 3, co-partisans give higher assessments of trustworthiness in the post-racial condition (Democrats .70, p≤.01; Republicans .59, p≤.05) compared to their respective controls (H3). Republican evaluations of trustworthiness also drop significantly relative to the control in the racially compassionate condition (-.73, p≤.05). Assessments of trustworthiness are also higher in the post-racial condition for Republicans and Democrats relative to their respective racial animus conditions (.11 and -.67, respectively) (H2). Racially compassionate language is consistent with our expectations based on partisan stereotypes (H4) in which the Republican candidate received a decrease in their evaluations of trustworthiness (-.67, p≤.05) while the Democratic experienced a decrease in their evaluations, but it wasn’t statistically different from the control.
Figure 4

Note: Each point on the difference-in-means plots is the difference between one of the conditions and the control (red vertical line). The conditions and corresponding points are listed below each plot.

Figure 4 presents respondents’ perception Robert Perkins’s ability to represent their political interests. Similar to the previous dependent variables, post-racial rhetoric leads to a .26-point increase \( (p \leq .05) \) in evaluations of representation for Democrats and .22-point increase for Republicans \( (p \leq .05) \) relative to the Republican control \( (H3) \). Co-partisans also assess the ability for the candidates to represent their interest at levels equal to the racial animus condition or higher \( (\text{Republican } .12; \text{Democrats } .07) \) \( (H2) \). The racially compassionate condition results offer some confirmation for \( H4 \). Regardless of party, both candidates receive lower representation evaluations from using compassionate rhetoric, but the decrease relative to the control is larger for the Republican \( (-.50, p \leq .01) \) than the Democrat \( (-.18, p \leq .10) \).

The data examining partisanship demonstrates that Whites view candidates who call for society to move beyond race more favorably than when a candidate uses any other kind of racialized
rhetoric. The exception being for Republicans who rate Robert Perkins as equally favorable when he uses racially inflammatory language. We argue that white individuals see getting past racial division as a societal good and evaluate those candidates who promote this sentiment favorably. We contend that the favorability towards post-racial rhetoric is due to the political context in which the first black president has been elected and, at the time of this study, was still serving in office. Akin to Pinder (2016), we think that the election of President Obama is a significant moment where whites are able to look at the political environment and conclude that race relations have improved enough that society no longer needs to give deference to racial distinctions and the issues often associated with race.

The race of the candidate should also have significant effects on their evaluations of co-partisan candidates based on their rhetoric. In particular, candidate stereotypes based on race should play a significant role in respondent’s evaluations of the candidate, however, post-racial rhetoric will lead to high evaluations for the candidate, regardless of their race.
Race of Candidate

Figure 5

Note: Each point on the difference-in-means plots is the difference between one of the conditions and the control (red vertical line). The conditions and corresponding points are listed below each plot.

In this analysis, we pooled the data based on race of the candidate regardless of partisanship. Again, the vertical red line indicates the relative control for the black and white feeling thermometer models. We observe that once again, post-racial rhetoric is an effective alternative to other types of politically racial rhetoric. Similar to our partisan analysis the feeling thermometer ratings for both the black and white candidates increase by approximately 10-point in the post-racial treatment (H3). Consistent with Stephens (2013), when Robert Perkins is black and defies racial stereotypes by

8 For Figures 5-7 the sample sizes for each condition for the black candidate are: Control=103, Policy=103, Racial Animus=96, Compassionate=99, and Post-Racial=100. The sample size for each condition for the white candidate are: Control=108, Policy=101, Racial Animus=109, Compassionate=98, and Post-Racial=102.
invoking racial animus he receives a higher feeling thermometer evaluation (9.78, p ≤.01). Furthermore, our results provide strong support for H2, and reveal that respondents in the condition where Perkins is black and uses post-racial language yields roughly the same evaluation that he receives from those participants in the racial animus condition. We also see that the white candidate’s usage of racially animus rhetoric results in a decrease in their feeling thermometer evaluations (-4.30), but is not statistically significant compared to the control (H1). This difference between the evaluations of black and white Robert Perkins when he invokes racially inflammatory language in the racial animus condition is an indication that whites do not see violations of the norm of equality by white candidates very positively. However, the promotion of the same rhetoric by a black candidate helps to alleviate stereotypes that whites may have about the candidate based on their race like the candidate being too liberal or more likely to align with their racial group interest. The high evaluations for Robert Perkins when he is black and using racially offensive language is consistent with the findings of Stephens (2013), and suggests that the application of the norm of equality is contingent upon the source of the racialized rhetoric. We see consistency in this finding on our two other indicators of candidate evaluation: trustworthiness and representation of interest.
Figure 6

Note: Each point on the difference-in-means plots is the difference between one of the conditions and the control (red vertical line). The conditions and corresponding points are listed below each plot.

Our expectations are supported by the analysis of the candidate’s trustworthiness based on the race of the candidate. Post-racial rhetoric performs equally as well, if not better, than other types of racial rhetoric relative to the control. The black candidate experiences approximately a full point increase in their evaluation of trustworthiness in the post-racial condition (0.85, p≤.01) relative to the control (H3). The rating in the post-racial condition is also comparable, and twice as large as, the racial animus condition (0.46) (H2). Although the difference between the control and racial animus does not reach conventional levels of significance, we think that this finding is another indication that black candidates make similar gains in their evaluations if they use either racial animus rhetoric or post-racial rhetoric. Post-racial rhetoric is an alternative for black candidates to explicitly engage racial politics without having to disparage their co-racial group members. Instead, they can speak to
the progress that society has made where it is now acceptable to “move beyond race.” This finding provides some evidence for why Dr. Ben Carson garnered so much online support after making his post-racial assertion during the Republican Primary debate.

The white candidate is also perceived to be more trustworthy in the post-racial condition relative to the control (.46, p≤.12) (H1). However, the perception of trustworthiness in the racial animus condition (-.92, p≤.01) and the racially compassionate condition (-.82, p≤.01) suffer a significant decrease compared to the control (H3 & H4). The use of racial insensitive rhetoric in the “Racial Animus” condition is, as expected, violating the norm of equality. However, it appears that racially compassionate language also seems to violate expectations that whites have about white candidates. This result stems from the perception that a white candidate who shows compassion for black individuals is working against the group’s interests and thus is not positively evaluated by co-racial voters. We also find that in the absence of any racialized rhetoric the black candidate has a lower baseline evaluation than the white candidate suggesting that whites are more inclined to trust a co-racial candidate than a candidate from the outgroup. White respondents could be using stereotypes about the black candidate against him by assuming that he will work harder for minorities than for whites, and thus white are less inclined to find him to be trustworthy. This finding confirms that the hurdle for black candidates is higher when they are trying to gain the support of white voters.
Note: Each point on the difference-in-means plots is the difference between one of the conditions and the control (red vertical line). The conditions and corresponding points are listed below each plot.

Post-racial rhetoric and evaluations of the candidate’s ability to represent the respondent’s interest leads to the same racial pattern that we have observed with our other dependent variables. The black candidate receives a higher rating in the post-racial condition (.30, p≤.05) relative to the control (H2 & H3). Consistent with our expectations (H4), this rating is comparable to, and just as significant as the racial animus condition (.30). When the black candidate invokes racially compassionate rhetoric (-.29, p≤.01) they receive a significantly lower rating compared to the control (H4). In the case of the compassionate condition, the black candidate is demonstrating behavior that is consistent with black stereotypes and they are punished for it in their evaluations. The white candidate receives favorable evaluations in the post-racial condition (.18, p≤.10) relative to the control (H3). The size of this difference is not as large as it is for black candidate, but it does
shows that post-racial rhetoric is a reasonable alternative for discussing race without violating the norm of equality or showing compassion to communities of color. We observe that the white candidate suffers a significant decline in their evaluations of representation in the racial animus condition (\( -.22, p \leq .05 \)) (H1) and the compassionate condition (\( -.38, p \leq .01 \)) compared to the control (H4).

To this point we have shown that post-racial rhetoric serves as a viable and comparable form of racialized rhetoric for both black and white candidates as well as Democrat and Republican candidates. As the goal of this paper is not only to show the post-racial rhetoric’s effect on candidate evaluations, but also understand how this type of racialized rhetoric compares to other ways in which we see politicians discussing race, we the next section of analysis will investigate the relationship post-racial rhetoric has with racial resentment.

**Racial Resentment and Race of Candidate**

Existing literature has provided substantial proof on the significant influence racial resentment has on white racial attitudes and evaluations of candidates of color (Stephens 2013; Krupnikov and Piston 2014). As our exploration into the how power of post-racial rhetoric fits into the extant knowledge on racialized rhetoric and white attitudes, we, following the lead of other scholars in this area, examine the effect of the interaction of feelings of racial resentment and the type of racialized rhetoric. The theoretical argument we offer posits that post-racial rhetoric operates differently than other racialized language strategies in that it purports feelings of equality and progress as opposed to resentment and disdain. Thus, we expect that racial resentment should not affect the evaluations of a candidate that promotes the notion of “moving beyond race.”
### Table 2. Candidate Evaluations by Experimental Condition (Baseline= Control Condition)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Feeling Thermometer Rating (OLS)</th>
<th>Perceived Candidate Trustworthiness (OLS)</th>
<th>Represent Interest (Ordered Logit)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.24*</td>
<td>1.81*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.09)</td>
<td>(.10)</td>
<td>(.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Condition</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.07)</td>
<td>(.08)</td>
<td>(.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-.33**</td>
<td>-3.73**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.07)</td>
<td>(.08)</td>
<td>(.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate Condition</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>1.73*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.07)</td>
<td>(.08)</td>
<td>(.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Racial Condition</td>
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<td>.20*</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.08)</td>
<td>(.08)</td>
<td>(.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment x</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.26*</td>
<td>-.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>(.13)</td>
<td>(.13)</td>
<td>(1.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment x</td>
<td>-.27*</td>
<td>-.47**</td>
<td>-4.50**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate</td>
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<td>(.13)</td>
<td>(1.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment x</td>
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<td>.52**</td>
<td>6.73**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Animus</td>
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<td>(.13)</td>
<td>(1.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment x</td>
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<td>-.22*</td>
<td>-.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Racial</td>
<td>(.13)</td>
<td>(.14)</td>
<td>(1.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.49**</td>
<td>.48**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.07)</td>
<td>(.08)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cut 1                   | -2.48                            |                                          |                                  |
|                         | (.72)                            |                                          |                                  |
| Cut 2                   | -.68                             |                                          |                                  |
|                         | (.70)                            |                                          |                                  |
| Cut 3                   | 2.40                             |                                          |                                  |
|                         | (.71)                            |                                          |                                  |
| Log Likelihood          | 207.40                           |                                          |                                  |
| R²                      | .14                              | .14                                      | .09                              |
| N                       | 1,019                            | 1,019                                    | 1,019                            |

Note. Standard errors in parentheses. This model includes standardized controls for education, gender, income, partisan identification, and residing in the South. Age is also included as a control. +p<.10; * p<.05; ** p<.01. The R² for the model 3 is the pseudo R² from the ordered logit.
To test this expectation, we run a pooled OLS regression and ordered logit to analyze the relationship between candidate rhetoric and our three indicators of candidate evaluation (feeling thermometer, trustworthiness, and ability to represent political interests). We expect that in the post-racial condition there will be no interaction effect with racial resentment because “moving beyond race” taps into a different set of emotions than does racial resentment. One can be resentful of other groups, but still desire the idea of the “racial progress” being referenced in the post-racial rhetoric. This appreciation for progress and equality, we argue, is what informs the evaluations of those candidates who use post-racial language as opposed to a resentment for perceived sociopolitical benefits, which tends to drive feelings of racial resentment. The notion of being post-racial suggests a certain level of equality that leads whites to believe that the need for policies that benefit people of color are no longer necessary because of the progress society has made. These directional effects should occur regardless of the race of the candidate.

Table 2 shows the results of two pooled OLS models where the baseline condition is the control. As expected, we observe that higher levels of racial resentment lead an increase in feeling thermometer ratings (p≤.01) relative to the control in model 1. The interaction of the compassionate rhetoric and racial resentment results in a substantial decrease in candidate favorability (p≤.05) compared to the baseline. The interaction of the post-racial condition and racial resentment does not lead to a statistically significant effect on feeling thermometer ratings, which is consistent with our expectations. In model 2, the perceived trustworthiness of the candidate is evaluated and we observe a heightened assessment of trust in the racial animus interaction (p≤.01) and a significant decline in trust in the compassionate interaction (p≤.01). We also have a significant decline in candidate trustworthiness when the post-racial condition is interacted with racial resentment (p≤.10). This somewhat consistent with our expectations as the relationship with racial resentment and post-racial rhetoric, we think that this effect is driven by the race of the candidate.
and in further analysis we examine the racial differences to understand the effect. Model 3 shows the pooled results in which high levels of racial resentment in the compassionate condition causes a decrease in perceptions of the candidate’s ability to represent the respondent’s interest (p≤.01). Respondents with high racial resentment in the racial animus condition have an increase in their assessment that the candidate can represent their interest. The post-racial interaction does not yield any significant effects. These findings are consistent with our expectations and the findings of extant work that examines racial resentments impact on white racial attitudes.

The results presented in Table 2 provide strong evidence for the fact that post-racial rhetoric works in a fundamentally different way from racial animus and racial compassion. While the findings for the interactions between those two forms of racialized rhetoric are significant and consistent with past work, post-racial rhetoric, when interacted with racial resentment, does not lead to high evaluations like racially inflammatory language, or significantly decreases evaluations like racially compassionate language. Instead, when interacted with racially resentment it is situated in the middle leaning towards a more negative relationship, which provides some support for our theoretical claim that post-racial language offers a moderate appeal that white individuals can support. These findings also show that, despite not being moderated by racial resentment in the same way as racially offensive language, for black candidates, post-racial language offers a strong alternative to language that invokes racial animus on a number of meaningful political measures. This finding shows that politicians do not have to tap into racial resentment in order to garner support.

Conclusion & Implications

Current literature has yet to explore how the growing calls for society to “move beyond race” fits into our understanding of racialized rhetoric and candidate evaluations. This paper sought to expand our understanding of racialized rhetoric by including language this brand of language and gain insight into how it compares to what has been discussed in previous work about racialized
rhetorical strategies. Through the use of an experimental test, and across multiple affective measures, we find that post racial language operates differently than compassionate or derogatory forms of racialized language both because it leads to positive evaluations for candidates regardless of their partisanship or race, and has a minimal if not negative relationship with racial resentment.

The major finding from this paper is that post racial language, unlike compassionate or racially inflammatory language, is not affected by partisan or racial stereotypes. Indeed, post-racial rhetoric works for candidates in a way that is comparable or better than racial animus, compassionate, or even race neutral across numerous affective measures (candidate feeling thermometer, perceptions of trustworthiness and a candidate’s ability to represent). We contend that, the sense of progress that post-racial rhetoric elicits is not contingent upon who says it, which is not the case for other racialized forms of language. Moreover, some scholars have argued that politicians of color, in particular, could rely on race neutral messages in order to gain support from white voters. The results from this study reveal that while race neutral language does not lead to any decrease in evaluations relative to when no message from the candidate is shown, it does not lead to the increase that comes when a politician’s calls for society to move beyond racial boundaries.

Post-racial language is not affected by one’s sense of racial resentment, which provides more evidence of its difference from compassion and racial animus. Extant literature has shown us that those individuals who are high in racial resentment, or feel that blacks receive unfair advantages in society, support racialized language that is more inflammatory and dislike language that is more compassionate. However, our findings suggest that post-racial language has a minimal and sometimes negative relationship with racial resentment. Again, we believe it to be the perception of progress and desire for equality that is found in post-racial concept is at work. We suggest that the promotion of equality, which scholars have said is put forth in post-racial language, washes away the sense of resentment that some may experience when politicians use language that shows compassion
to black individuals. The sense that society progressed enough to move beyond race purports the notion that everyone is equal, and as such does not necessitate resentment towards an out-group.

In this paper, we have provided both theoretical and empirical evidence of the power of post-racial language by showing that this brand of racial rhetoric is distinct both in appeal to white voters, but also in its ability to yield high evaluations regardless of candidate partisanship or race. While much is known about the ways strongly positive and strongly negative forms of language about race are received by white voters, we are able to show that post-racial’s moderate approach is just as, if not more effective than these more extreme forms of rhetoric. Additionally, considering how racialized rhetoric relies on feelings progress and equality instead of racial resentment provides a new avenue of research for scholars.

Finally, we would be remiss not to consider how post-racial language fits into this present political and racial landscapes. Scholars and pundits alike have found that the time of implicit racial attitudes is fading as explicitly racial language becomes more prominent in public discourse. How then should we expect post-racial rhetoric to work? We believe this brand of racialized rhetoric will remain effective despite President Obama’s departure from office and the societal changes in race relations because of the fact that he was elected in the first place. The perceived societal progress his election symbolized will remain despite his no longer being in office because it will lead people to believe that equality is attainable, and provides a moment in time that can be pointed to as a tangible example of America’s capacity to “move beyond race.” Additionally, as the ascendance of politicians of color to higher positions with the potential to run for national office continues, it is not unreasonable to expect the post-racial conversation to continue, which we believe will lead white individuals to push for a post-racial society all the more not only because of what has happened in the past, but also for the equality they hope the future can bring.
Works Cited


Appendix

Dependent Variables

Feeling Thermometer: We would like to get your feelings about some groups and public figures in American society. When you see the name of a person or group, please rate it with what we call a feeling thermometer by moving the mouse pointer and clicking on the thermometer on a number from 0 to 100. Ratings between 0 and 49 degrees mean that you don't feel favorably toward the person or group and that you don't care too much for that person or group; ratings between 51 and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorably and warm toward the person or group. If you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward a person or group you would rate them at 50 degrees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Robert Perkins</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>50</th>
<th>60</th>
<th>70</th>
<th>80</th>
<th>90</th>
<th>100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Perceptions of Candidate's Ability to Represent Interest: How likely are you to believe that Robert Perkins can represent your political interests?

- Very Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Likely
- Very Likely

Trustworthiness: On a scale of 1-10 where 1 is not at all trustworthy and 10 is very trustworthy, how trustworthy is Robert Perkins?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all Trustworthy</th>
<th>Very Trustworthy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Independent Variables

Racial Resentment (4 item index):

Generations of discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Blacks to work their way out of the lower class.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree
It is 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.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Over the past few years, Blacks have gotten less than they deserve.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Education: Please indicate the highest level of education you have completed.

- No formal education
- 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th grade
- 5th or 6th grade
- 7th or 8th grade
- 9th grade
- 10th grade
- 11th grade
- 12th grade NO DIPLOMA
- High School Graduate - High school diploma
- Some college, no degree
- Associate Degree
- Bachelors Degree
- Masters Degree
- Professional or Doctorate Degree

Age: What is your age?

Gender: Please indicate your sex.

- Male
- Female
Income: Please indicate your yearly household income.
- Less than $5,000
- $5,000 to $7,000
- $7,500 to $9,999
- $10,000 to $12,499
- $12,500 to $14,999
- $15,000 to $19,999
- $20,000 to $24,999
- $25,000 to $29,999
- $30,000 to $34,999
- $35,000 to $39,999
- $40,000 to $49,999
- $50,000 to $59,999
- $60,000 to $74,999
- $75,000 to $84,999
- $85,000 to $99,999
- $100,000 to $124,999
- $125,000 to $149,999
- $150,000 to $174,999
- $175,000 or more

Partisanship: Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a DEMOCRAT, a REPUBLICAN, an INDEPENDENT, or what?
- Democrat
- Republican
- Independent
- Other party: please specify

If Republican:
Would you call yourself a STRONG Republican or a NOT VERY STRONG Republican?
- Strong
- Not very strong

If Democrat:
Would you call yourself a STRONG Republican or a NOT VERY STRONG Republican?
- Strong
- Not very strong

If Independent:
Do you think of yourself as CLOSER to the Republican Party or the Democratic Party?
- Closer to the Republican
- Closer to the Democratic
- Neither
Ideology: Based on what you have seen and read, would say that Robert Perkins is:

• Extremely liberal
• Liberal
• Slightly liberal
• Moderate, middle of the road
• Slightly conservative
• Conservative
• Extremely conservative

Reside in the South: Which region of the country do you live in?
Midwest - IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI
Northeast - CT, DC, DE, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT
Southeast - AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV
Southwest - AZ, NM, OK, TX
West - AK, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY

Race (The study used a white quota sample but we also included a racial identification question):
Do you consider yourself primarily White or Caucasian, Black or African American, American Indian, Asian, Hispanic or Latino or something else?

• White or Caucasian
• Black or African American
• American Indian
• Asian
• Hispanic or Latino/a
• Other

Word for Democratic Policy Experimental Condition: We must move away from policies that favor unilateral military action and preemptive war, and that make the United States the de facto policeman of the world. It is my firm belief that we should protect America, defend our interests and values, embrace our commitments to defend freedom and support human rights, and be relentless in combating terrorists who would do us harm.
Below is how each of the treatments appeared to subjects. See Table 1 in the document for wording and titles for each treatment.

Figure A1: White Candidate Biography-Republican (Partisanship for the candidate was matched with partisanship of the respondent)

Robert T. Perkins, Jr.

Robert was born to a working class family in 1952, and grew up one of five children.

He is the owner of an independent accounting business, proud father of three children (Edward, Alyssa, and David), grandfather of two (Charles and Olivia), and had been married to his beautiful and supportive wife Barbara for over 30 years.

Robert has grown increasingly dissatisfied with the state of politics in the United States, and sees the foundation of this great country is being eroded with ever passing day.

In order to sure-up the conservative values that serve as this great nation's firm foundation, Robert believes it's time for new leadership, and a fresh start.

Figure A2: Black Candidate Biography-Republican

Robert T. Perkins, Jr.

Robert was born to a working class family in 1952, and grew up one of five children.

He is the owner of an independent accounting business, proud father of three children (Edward, Alyssa, and David), grandfather of two (Charles and Olivia), and had been married to his beautiful and supportive wife Barbara for over 30 years.

Robert has grown increasingly dissatisfied with the state of politics in the United States, and sees the foundation of this great country is being eroded with ever passing day.

In order to sure-up the conservative values that serve as this great nation's firm foundation, Robert believes it's time for new leadership, and a fresh start.
Figure A3: Democrat/Black Post-Racial Condition

Democratic Congress hopeful calls for Moving Beyond Race

By Cooper Allen October 10, 2015 7:50 am ET

Democrat and House of Representatives hopeful, Robert Perkins was asked about his take on the growing racial divisions in the United States had this to say:

“The color of our skin does not make us who we are, and it is time to move beyond the divisions that skin color creates. It is my firm belief that we have progressed enough as a society to do away with these artificial divisions and move forward. Our strength as a nation is in our unity. We are the United States of America, not the divided states.”

Figure A4: Republican/White Post-Racial Condition

Republican Congress hopeful calls for Moving Beyond Race

By Cooper Allen October 10, 2015 7:50 am ET

Republican and House of Representatives hopeful, Robert Perkins was asked about his take on the growing racial divisions in the United States had this to say:

“The color of our skin does not make us who we are, and it is time to move beyond the divisions that skin color creates. It is my firm belief that we have progressed enough as a society to do away with these artificial divisions and move forward. Our strength as a nation is in our unity. We are the United States of America, not the divided states.”

Robert Perkins
Table A1. Candidate Evaluations for by Experimental Condition and Candidate Race  
(Baseline= Control Condition)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Feeling Thermometer Rating</th>
<th>Perceived Candidate Trustworthiness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black Candidate (1)</td>
<td>White Candidate (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black Candidate (3)</td>
<td>White Candidate (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment</td>
<td>-.05 (12)</td>
<td>.20 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.09 (12)</td>
<td>.38 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Condition</td>
<td>-.02 (09)</td>
<td>.05 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.12 (10)</td>
<td>.24 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Animus Condition</td>
<td>-.28** (.10)</td>
<td>-.43** (.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.26* (.10)</td>
<td>-.33 (.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate Condition</td>
<td>.05 (.10)</td>
<td>.22+ (.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.18+ (.10)</td>
<td>.28 (.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Racial Condition</td>
<td>-.02 (.10)</td>
<td>.12 (.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.13 (.11)</td>
<td>.28 (.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment x Policy</td>
<td>.15 (.16)</td>
<td>-.04 (.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.13 (.16)</td>
<td>-.38 (.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment x Compassionate</td>
<td>-.42* (.19)</td>
<td>-.35* (.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.63** (.20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment x Racial Animus</td>
<td>.63** (.17)</td>
<td>.68** (.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.51** (.18)</td>
<td>.43* (.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment x Post-Racial</td>
<td>.21 (.17)</td>
<td>-.04 (.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.06 (.18)</td>
<td>-.39+ (.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.57** (.10)</td>
<td>.42** (.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.61** (.10)</td>
<td>.40** (.12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R²  | .13 (10) | .16 (10) | .12 (10) | .15 (10) |
N   | 501      | 518      | 501      | 518      |

Note. Standard errors in parentheses. This model includes standardized controls for education, gender, income, partisan identification, ideology and residing in the South. Age is also included as a control. * p<.10; ** p<.05; *** p<.01
### Table A2. The Conditional Effect of Racial Resentment on Evaluations of Robert Perkins by Experimental Condition & Candidate Race (Baseline= Control Condition)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Black Candidate Represent Interest</th>
<th>White Candidate Represent Interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>3.60**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.32)</td>
<td>(1.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Condition</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.01)</td>
<td>(1.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Animus Condition</td>
<td>-2.79*</td>
<td>-4.07**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.10)</td>
<td>(1.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate Condition</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>3.10**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.04)</td>
<td>(1.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Racial Condition</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.08)</td>
<td>(1.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment x Policy</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>-.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.74)</td>
<td>(1.90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment x Compassionate</td>
<td>-1.97</td>
<td>-7.03**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.77)</td>
<td>(1.82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment x Racial Animus</td>
<td>6.24**</td>
<td>6.57**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.83)</td>
<td>(1.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment x Post-Racial</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>-.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.84)</td>
<td>(1.74)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cut 1</td>
<td>-3.76</td>
<td>-1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.07)</td>
<td>(.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut 2</td>
<td>-1.97</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.06)</td>
<td>(.96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut 3</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.05)</td>
<td>(.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R²</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Likelihood</td>
<td>91.53</td>
<td>142.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>518</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Standard errors in parentheses. This model includes standardized controls for education, gender, income, partisan identification, and residing in the South. Age is also included as a control. + p<.10; * p<.05; ** p<.01

The results in Table A1 are the disaggregated by the race of the candidate. The same OLS regression models from Table 2 are conducted, but the sample for each model is limited to respondents who either got the black or the white candidate. Models 1 and 2 reports the feeling thermometer evaluations based on the race of the candidates. In both models, the thermometer rating significantly

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increases when respondents are high in racial resentment and in the racial animus condition \((p \leq 0.01)\). The magnitude of this increase is sizable for both the black and white candidate (0.63 and 0.68 respectively). The feeling thermometer evaluation is not statistically significant for the black candidate in the compassionate rhetoric interaction or the post-racial interaction with racial resentment. The post-racial interaction result is consistent with our expectations. Models 3 and 4 estimate evaluations of trustworthiness based on the race of the candidate. We find that for both the black and the white candidate the interactions of racial resentment and compassionate rhetoric results in a decrease in trustworthiness \((p \leq 0.05)\). The size of the decrease is substantially larger for the white candidate (-0.63) relative to the black candidate (-0.35). The interaction of racial resentment and racial animus leads to increase in trustworthiness evaluations for the black and the white candidate \((p \leq 0.05)\). We can also see that the post-racial interaction effect observed in model 2 is largely driven by the white candidate \((p \leq 0.10)\). The trustworthiness assessments for the black candidate are as expected.

In Table A2, we estimate perceptions of the candidate’s ability to represent the respondent’s interest by disaggregating the pooled data based on the candidate’s race. Model 5 shows an increase in the candidate evaluation for individuals in the racial animus condition with high racial resentment \((p \leq 0.01)\). The compassionate interaction is not significant indicating that for the black candidate, however that direction of the coefficient (-1.97) is consistent with our expectation. Compassionate rhetoric should lead to a decrease in candidate evaluations for individuals that are high in racial resentment. As expected, high racial resentment in the post-racial condition is not statistically significant for the black candidate. For the white candidate (model 6) high racial resentment in compassionate condition decreases candidate evaluations of interest representation while high racial resentment in the racial animus condition increases the perception of interest representation. The post-racial interaction has not significant effect. Once again, these results are in line with our expectations.
Below is the disaggregated analysis looking at the intersection of race and party. The approximate sample size for each experimental condition is 50.

*Figure A5*

![Graph showing effects of experimental treatments on feeling thermometer ratings by partisanship & candidate race](image)

*Figure A6*

![Graph showing effects of experimental treatments on perceptions of ability to represent by partisanship & candidate race](image)
Figure A9

Effects of the Experimental Treatments on Feeling Thermometer Ratings By Partisanship and Candidate Race (Baseline- Control)

White Democrat

White Republican

Difference In Means (95% CIs)

Experimental Conditions
- Policy
- Racial Animus
- Compassionate
- Post Racial

Figure A10

Effects of the Experimental Treatments on Perceptions of Trustworthiness By Partisanship & Candidate Race (Baseline- Control)

White Democrat

White Republican

Difference In Means (95% CIs)

Experimental Conditions
- Policy
- Racial Animus
- Compassionate
- Post Racial