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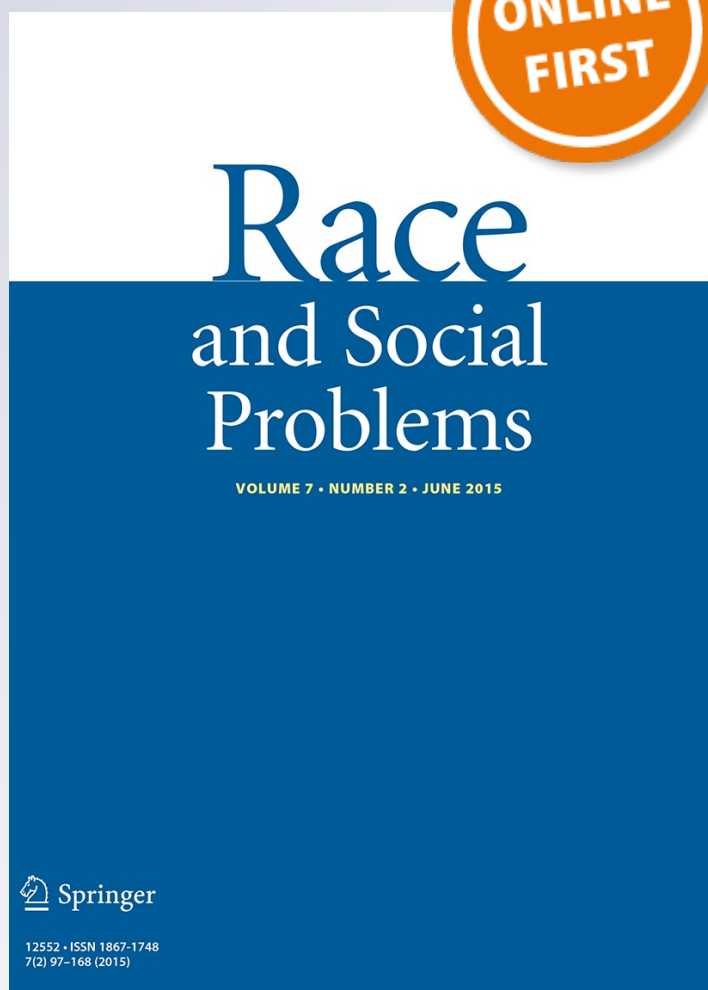
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# Do Politically Non-conservative Whites “Bend Over Backwards” to Show Preferences for Black Politicians?

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**Abstract** The current study examined whether politically non-conservative (i.e., liberal and moderate) Whites demonstrate an explicit bias in favor of Black versus White politicians on measures of political support and whether these assessments are influenced by implicit racial bias against Blacks. To address this, 671 non-conservative Whites were presented with political speeches paired with a photograph of either a Black or a White politician implied to have given the speech and were then asked to read the speech and evaluate the politician on a number of dimensions. Results showed that participants rated Black politicians more favorably than White politicians on measures of political support, including a willingness to vote for, donate money to, and report confidence in the politician. Importantly, the favorability bias observed on these measures was not influenced by implicit racial biases. When evaluating Black politicians' intelligence, however, an explicit favorability bias (higher overall ratings of Black compared to White politicians) was moderated by implicit racial bias. Implicit pro-White/anti-Black racial bias was associated with lower ratings of perceived intelligence of Black politicians, but not White politicians, such that the favorability bias was effectively eliminated for intelligence ratings. Our findings are

consistent with previous research suggesting that although White non-conservatives may go out of their way to demonstrate outward support for Blacks, deep-rooted negative attitudes about Blacks may remain, which can potentially undermine true support for Blacks in politics.

**Keywords** Race · Political candidates · Implicit racial bias · Favorability bias

## Introduction

Whites' attitudes toward Blacks often fall along political lines, with conservatives more likely to show overt racial bias against Blacks than liberals/moderates (i.e., non-conservatives; Eastwick et al. 2009; Sears and Henry 2003; Sidanius et al. 1996). Politically non-conservative Whites who may also harbor negative feelings toward Blacks tend to reveal these biases in more subtle ways (Dovidio and Gaertner 1998; Nail et al. 2003). These underlying feelings may surface in surprising ways that may not appear to reflect prejudice, but that nevertheless can have important social ramifications. For example, in situations where race is apparent and one has the ability to self-monitor—such as when interacting directly with Black individuals—White liberals tend to either treat Blacks and Whites similarly (Gaertner 1973) or show a preferential bias *in favor of* Blacks (Nail et al. 2003).

As an example of the latter, White American participants were asked to give their opinion about a fictitious court case in which a police officer, identified as either Black or White, was accused of beating up a motorist as a result of an altercation that occurred during a routine traffic stop. Participants were told that the officer was found not guilty on assault charges, but later convicted on federal civil rights charges. The main dependent variable was

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whether or not participants thought that this was a case where double jeopardy applied (i.e., a person cannot be retried for the same crime). Liberal participants were more likely to believe that double jeopardy applied when the police officer was Black (and thus show more leniency), whereas conservative participants were more likely to believe double jeopardy applied when the officer was White (Nail et al. 2003).

Such favoritism toward Blacks has been referred to as “bending over backwards,” “overcompensating,” or “reverse discrimination” (Aberson and Ettl 2004; Croft and Schmader 2012; Dutton and Lake 1973; Monin and Miller 2001) and is thought to occur when White Americans go out of their way to demonstrate—arguably to themselves as much as others—that they do not hold prejudicial attitudes (Coover and Godbold 1998; Devine 1989; Dovidio and Gaertner 1998; Gaertner and Dovidio 1986; Nail et al. 2003). Politically non-conservative Whites may be especially motivated to appear unprejudiced in order to demonstrate outward behavior consistent with their ideological or political values (Nail et al. 2003). This motivation may be magnified by pressures to adhere to social norms of equality and/or to compensate for past societal discrimination against Blacks. For example, Klandermans et al. (2008) found that White liberals were more likely to report feelings of collective guilt than White conservatives, and that this collective guilt was associated with greater support for a pro-Black policy (affirmative action in South Africa; Klandermans et al. 2008). Similarly, Baker and Fitzgerald (2012) found that racial paternalism, or the belief that Blacks need the assistance of Whites to advance, predicted greater support for foreign aid to Black African nations as opposed to poor, White Eastern European nations.

On one hand, favoritism toward Blacks may be seen as an appropriate and desirable response, in terms of attempting to compensate for past racism and further future equality. On the other hand, overcompensation may be problematic if it masks implicit biases against Blacks and creates a false sense of racial equality (Merritt et al. 2012). Such a discrepancy may be especially problematic in the political arena, where strivings for equality have the potential to make the most impact. In keeping with this, we investigated whether non-conservative Whites who hold implicit racial biases against Blacks still demonstrate apparent favoritism toward Blacks in a political context.

### **Implicit Racial Bias and Deep-Seated Racial Attitudes**

Despite valuing racial equality and wanting to compensate for past inequalities, non-conservative Whites may hold underlying or *implicit* biases against Blacks (Chambers et al. 2012; Nail et al. 2003). Implicit biases are attitudes that are

maintained outside of conscious awareness, and they can have powerful effects on behavior (Greenwald et al. 2009). Implicit measures, such as the speed with which someone makes positive and negative associations about Blacks and Whites, can reveal biases that people are unable or unwilling to report on a questionnaire (Greenwald et al. 2009). For example, in a meta-analysis, Greenwald et al. (2009) found that the implicit association test (IAT) is more predictive of behavior in domains involving White–Black interactions than are self-report measures. As non-conservative Whites may be more motivated than conservative Whites to inhibit expressions of prejudice against Blacks (Nail et al. 2003), implicit measures may be better suited than explicit measures to assess their racial attitudes.

With respect to a political context, research on the 2008 presidential election revealed that both explicit and implicit prejudice played a role in people’s decision not to vote for Barack Obama. Even after controlling for explicit prejudice (i.e., endorsement of stereotypes and feelings toward Blacks) and political party affiliation, implicit prejudice (measured via an affect misattribution procedure) was associated with opposition to Obama (Payne et al. 2009). Specifically, Payne et al. (2009) found that liberal respondents higher in implicit prejudice were more likely to either vote for a third party candidate or to abstain from voting altogether. Similarly, Greenwald et al. (2009) found that implicit racial biases measured via the IAT predicted opposition to Obama even after controlling for racial attitudes measured via the symbolic racism scale, which assesses subtly racist attitudes (e.g., endorsement of policies that would disadvantage Blacks). These results suggest that biases beyond one’s conscious control can affect the political decisions that one makes.

Although implicit racial biases may in part reflect relatively “benign” racial preferences, such as a preference for members of one’s own group (Brewer 1999), evidence suggests they also can reveal more deep-seated attitudes and behaviors. Amodio and Devine (2006) found that the IAT predicted the physical proximity with which Whites chose to be in relation to Blacks. Additionally, Nosek et al. (2007a, b) found that White respondents were more likely to implicitly associate weapons with Black people than with White people (see also Payne 2001). Further, these associations correlated with explicit racial stereotypes and attitudes including “old-fashioned racism,” such as a willingness to openly express a preference for Whites relative to Blacks.

Similarly, evidence from survey research suggests that both Whites and Blacks still endorse “biologically based” racial stereotypes to explain differences between Blacks and Whites. Plous and Williams (1995) conducted a telephone study to better understand modern support for perceived biological differences between Blacks and Whites,

notions that were most popular in the 18th and 19th centuries (e.g., biological determinism). Nearly half of all respondents endorsed at least one perceived biological difference between Blacks and Whites. Most notably, results indicated that 20 % of Whites and 32 % of Blacks endorsed the idea that Whites have more “inborn abstract thinking ability” than Blacks (Plous and Williams 1995). Thus, decades after the idea of biological determinism has been largely refuted by scholars (see Gould 1996), biases about the inherent abilities of Blacks relative to Whites persist across a large segment of today’s society. Although studies such as the one by Plous and Williams did not examine the influence of political affiliation, we suspect that even non-conservative Whites, who may show support for Blacks explicitly, may nevertheless *implicitly* hold racial stereotypes such as “Blacks are less intelligent than Whites” as a product of growing up in an American society where knowledge of historical racial stereotypes is still prevalent (Devine and Elliot 1995). In other words, despite a genuine motivation to support Blacks and demonstrate egalitarianism, non-conservatives may also still harbor deep-seated associations—particularly where intelligence is concerned.

### Current Study Overview and Hypotheses

The present study investigated whether politically non-conservative (i.e., liberal and moderate) Whites demonstrated a favorability bias toward Blacks when evaluating politicians, and whether this effect was impacted by implicit bias against Blacks. We presented politically non-conservative Whites with a political speech paired with a photograph of either a Black or a White politician. Four aspects of support for the politician in the photograph were measured: likelihood of voting for the politician, likelihood of donating money to the politician’s campaign, confidence in the politician’s ability to argue for a position in Congress, and perceived intelligence of the politician.

The current study focused only on non-conservative Whites for practical as well as theoretical reasons. Since 1900, nearly 80 % of all Black representatives to Congress have been Democrats (Ostermeier 2013). Additionally, nearly 60 % of all Americans live in congressional districts that are dominated by one party (Hirano and Snyder 2014). Thus, it is more likely that a White non-conservative voter will encounter a Black liberal politician in a primary or a general election than it is for a White conservative voter to encounter a Black conservative politician in a primary or a general election. Further, the two major political parties are more ideologically consistent today than they were 20 or 30 years ago (Abramowitz and Sounders 2008; Pew Research Center 2014), such that liberals are more likely to

vote in Democratic than Republican primaries, and vice versa for conservatives. Much of the ideological foundation of the liberal/moderate political position is to promote equality; therefore, the processes described in the present study have been unique to non-conservatives. Notably, we did include moderates in our sample, which is broader than previous studies focusing on liberals only.

Based on a surprisingly consistent literature suggesting that politically non-conservative Whites may show biases *in favor* of Blacks (Aberson and Etlin 2004; Nail et al. 2003), we predicted that non-conservative Whites would evaluate Black politicians more favorably than White politicians. For three measures of political support, namely voting for a politician, campaign donations to the politician, and confidence in the politician’s ability to argue for a position in Congress, we predicted that a favorability bias would persist even after controlling for implicit pro-White/anti-Black racial bias. In other words, we expected that participants would report being likely to support a Black politician compared to a White politician, despite any potential anti-Black implicit bias. We believe that politically non-conservative Whites are sufficiently motivated toward equality, and that this motivation “runs deep” enough that support for Black politicians would be reported even after accounting for potential implicit biases.

In contrast, for ratings of politician intelligence, we expected that the overcompensation effect would be qualified by implicit biases when participants were evaluating Black politicians, but not when evaluating White politicians. Specifically, given the strong historically-rooted prejudice toward Blacks with respect to intelligence and the fact that implicit biases are correlated with more direct or old-fashioned forms of racism, we expected that greater implicit racial bias would be associated with lower intelligence ratings for Black politicians, but would not be related to intelligence ratings for White politicians. Thus, for ratings of politicians’ perceived intelligence, in particular, implicit anti-Black racial bias was expected to “override” the overcompensation effect. We did not expect this to be the case for the other three measures of political support (voting, donating money, position advocacy) because we believe they are less likely to tap into age-old notions that Blacks are inferior intellectually, even if not in other respects.

### Method

#### Participants

Participants were 671 self-identified White Americans (439 females, 232 males) between the ages of 18 and 88 ( $M = 31.71$ ,  $SD = 13.30$ ). The sample was primarily of

non-Hispanic origin (83 %). Participants were fairly well-educated overall: 40.8 % had at least some college, 18.7 % had obtained a bachelor's degree, 29.6 % had obtained a graduate or professional degree, and 11 % had obtained a high school diploma or had less education. Thirty percent of our participants came from the Midwest, 20.1 % from the South, 18.4 % from the Mid-Atlantic, 16.1 % from Western states, 8.1 % from the Southwest, 6.4 % from New England, and 0.1 % from the military. Data on income level were not available.

Participants were recruited through the Project Implicit website (<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit>), where website visitors have the option of participating in an online demonstration of an implicit attitudes task (e.g., a race IAT) or participating in an actual research study. Participants often visit the Project Implicit website after learning about the IAT via media coverage (Greenwald et al. 2003). For example, Greenwald et al. (2003) noted that the IAT website, then hosted by Yale University, received over 150,000 visits after the IAT was featured on NBC's *Dateline* program. While the Project Implicit sample population is considered to be more diverse than a traditional college student population, it is not expected to be representative of the general population. Participants who clicked the research option (as opposed to the demonstration option) and identified themselves as (1) White American and (2) politically non-conservative—that is, either politically liberal (54.6 %) or politically moderate (45.5 %)—were randomly assigned to one of a number of different online studies, one of which was the present study. Anyone who identified as politically conservative was not routed to the present study.

## Materials and Measures

### *Political Speeches*

Participants were provided with excerpts of actual political speeches given by members of the US House of Representatives during the second session of the 110th Congress (see “Appendix 1”). Excerpts averaged 75 words in length and were obtained and modified from THOMAS (the Library of Congress online). Six speeches were used, two on each of the following content areas: (1) support for raising the minimum wage, (2) support for creating a single-payer healthcare system in America, and (3) opposition to requiring voters to present a photo ID when voting. All speeches expressed liberal positions on the issues. Multiple topics were used to ensure that results were not attributable to one particular topic.

### *Pictures of Politicians*

Along with the speeches described above, participants were presented with photographs of actual Black and White American male politicians (see “Appendix 2”). Politicians from only one sex (males) were used given that gender was not a focus of the current study. All politicians pictured were elected officials at the state house or assembly level. Photos were obtained from state house websites and represented districts around the country. All photos were portraits of politicians wearing suits taken in front of solid color backgrounds. Photographs were modified in Photoshop to be equally sized. A total of 12 different photos were used: six Black politicians and six White politicians. Multiple exemplars of stimuli were used to lessen the possibility that our results could be attributed to just one politician.

### *Politician Rating Sheet*

Participants completed a rating sheet that included a series of questions rated on 7-point Likert-type scales. Participants rated each politician on our four key questions of interest: (1) how likely they were to vote for the politician (1 = *very unlikely*, 7 = *very likely*), (2) how likely they were to donate money to the politician's campaign (1 = *very unlikely*, 7 = *very likely*), (3) how confident they were in the politician's ability to advocate his position on the issue presented in Congress (1 = *very unconfident*, 7 = *very confident*), and (4) how intelligent the politician seemed (1 = *very unintelligent*, 7 = *very intelligent*).

In addition to the primary dependent variables described above, we also included a number of other items to be used as control variables. Participants rated how much they agreed with the issue the politician described (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Participants rated the politician's attractiveness (1 = *very unattractive*, 7 = *very attractive*); this control item was included given previous research demonstrating that attractive politicians are viewed as more competent than unattractive politicians (Surawski and Ossoff 2006). Lastly, because the current study was conducted during the height of the 2008 Presidential election, an item was added to the end of the survey to assess participants' interest level in the 2008 Presidential election (1 = *very uninterested*, 7 = *very interested*). Political ideology, measured in the present study as *liberal* or *moderate*, was not assessed on the rating sheet, as it was self-reported on the demographics screening form the Project Implicit website to determine eligibility for the present study.

## Race IAT

The Race Implicit Association Test (IAT) provides a test of automatic associations people make when classifying individuals from different races. We administered a traditional Black–White race IAT, in which participants were asked to associate faces of Black and White people with evaluative attributes or categories (i.e., positive words, such as “winner,” or negative words, such as “loser”). Faster judgments (i.e., shorter response times) when associating positive words with faces of White people, and negative words with faces of Black people (versus associating positive words with Black faces and negative words with White faces) were considered to reflect a pro-White bias, or greater implicit racism (Greenwald et al. 1998). The race IAT was scored according to the guidelines of a scoring algorithm provided by Greenwald et al. (2003). The *D* measure divides the difference in latencies between congruent blocks (e.g., White paired with good) and incongruent blocks (e.g., Black paired with good) by a pooled standard deviation across all test blocks. Thus, the IAT *D* measure produces an effect size type result with larger scores reflecting a stronger pro-White/anti-Black racial bias. Notably, the IAT has demonstrated sufficient levels of reliability and validity in previous research—with split-half correlations typically ranging from 0.70 to 0.90 and a median test–retest reliability of 0.56 (Nosek et al. 2007a, b). In the area of stereotyping and prejudice, there is evidence that the IAT is more predictive than self-report measures and more reliable than other implicit attitude measures such as the go/no-go association test and the extrinsic affective simon task (Nosek et al. 2007a, b). Even though the purpose of the IAT is to reveal attitudes that individuals cannot or may not want to report, such as racial biases, it nevertheless is correlated with domain-related self-report measures such as voting behavior, indicating that it has adequate construct validity (Nosek et al. 2007a, b).

## Procedure

Participants were randomly presented, via a computer screen, with one of the six political speeches described above. Above the speech was a photograph of either a White or a Black politician, selected randomly from the politician pictures described above. Therefore, participants were randomly assigned to one of 12 conditions: one of the six speeches paired with a photo of a Black politician, or one of the six speeches paired with a photo of a White politician. Participants were instructed to read the speech on the screen, while the politician photo was also presented on the screen. Participants were not explicitly told that the politician in the picture had delivered the speech

they were reading, but this simultaneous pairing was intended to imply that the speech was delivered by the politician in the picture. Participants were also presented with the official positions of liberals and conservatives on each respective issue covered by the speeches (e.g., liberals tend to support raising the minimum wage, whereas conservatives do not). Immediately after reading the speeches, participants were asked to complete the politician rating sheet. Afterward, participants were asked to complete the race IAT, and lastly were debriefed. While researchers often counterbalance the presentation of the IAT and self-report measures, research by Greenwald et al. (2009) suggests that position of the IAT in experimental manipulations does not yield systematic effects on study results. At the end of the study, participants were debriefed; they were informed that the purpose of the study was to understand how people view politicians of different races and to see whether implicit attitudes had any influence on their judgments.

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

A full listing of descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations among the key study variables are presented in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Our race IAT data were normally distributed (see Fig. 1) and, overall, participants showed a pro-White bias on the IAT ( $M = 0.32$ ,  $SD = 0.41$ ). As a point of comparison, a sample of 17,050 participants from various racial groups recruited from a website promoting diversity (but not selected to represent a particular political ideology) yielded a Black–White IAT mean of 0.45 and a standard deviation of 0.54 (Nosek et al. 2005). Our politically non-

**Table 1** Descriptive statistics for key variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Implicit racial bias (IAT scores)	0.32	0.41
Attractiveness	2.55	0.74
Agreement with candidate's position	2.94	0.86
Politician ratings		
Likelihood of voting for politician	2.74	0.87
Likelihood of donating money to campaign	1.98	0.93
Confidence in ability to advocate	2.94	0.80
Perceived intelligence	3.17	0.59

IAT = Implicit Association Test; higher scores reflect a stronger pro-White/anti-Black racial bias. Attractiveness, agreement, and politician ratings were made on a scale from 1 to 7

**Table 2** Correlations among key variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Politician race	–							
2. Implicit racial bias	0.05	–						
3. Attractiveness	–0.16**	–0.10**	–					
4. Agreement with candidate's position	–0.05	–0.04	0.01	–				
5. Political ideology	–0.07	0.03	–0.06	0.33**	–			
6. Likelihood of voting for politician	–0.16**	–0.12**	0.22**	0.25**	0.12**	–		
7. Likelihood of donating money to campaign	–0.12**	–0.11**	0.20**	0.17**	0.10**	0.55**	–	
8. Confidence in ability to advocate	–0.23**	–0.08*	0.20**	0.08*	–0.02	0.45**	0.28**	–
9. Perceived intelligence	–0.23**	–0.11**	0.28**	0.11**	0.03	0.45**	0.28**	0.52**

\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ . Politician race coded as Black = –1, White = 1; political ideology coded as moderate = –1, liberal = 1. Correlations are bivariate ( $r$ ); the point biserial correlation between a dichotomous and a continuous variable is equivalent to Pearson's  $r$  (relevant to the two dichotomous variables)

**Table 3** Correlations among key variables for Black politicians

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Implicit racial bias	–							
2. Attractiveness	–0.15**	–						
3. Agreement with candidate's position	–0.06	–0.08	–					
4. Political ideology	–0.04	–0.05	0.33**	–				
5. Likelihood of voting for politician	–0.13*	0.22**	0.25**	0.14**	–			
6. Likelihood of donating money to campaign	–0.12*	0.26**	0.20**	0.17**	0.14**	–		
7. Confidence in ability to advocate	–0.13*	0.22**	0.17**	–0.08	–0.02	0.44**	–	
8. Perceived intelligence	–0.17**	0.28**	0.16**	0.08	0.43**	0.29**	0.50**	–

\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ . Politician race coded as Black = –1, White = 1; political ideology coded as moderate = –1, liberal = 1. Correlations are bivariate ( $r$ ); the point biserial correlation between a dichotomous and a continuous variable is equivalent to Pearson's  $r$  (relevant to the two dichotomous variables)

**Table 4** Correlations among key variables for White politicians

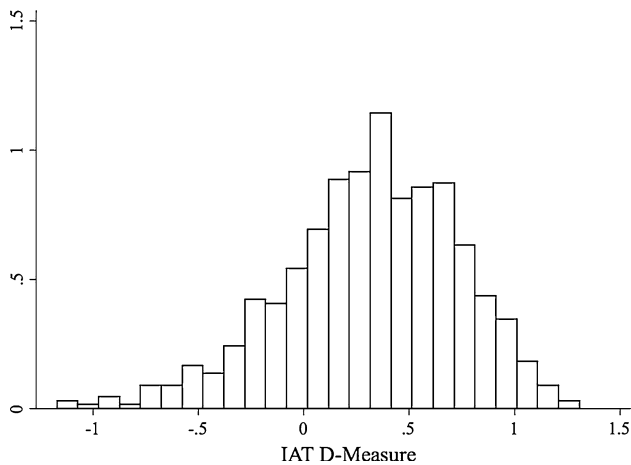
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Implicit racial bias	–							
2. Attractiveness	–0.03	–						
3. Agreement with candidate's position	–0.02	0.05	–					
4. Political ideology	0.03	–0.10	0.36**	–				
5. Likelihood of voting for politician	–0.08	0.18**	0.25**	0.06	–			
6. Likelihood of donating money to campaign	–0.09	0.09	0.16**	0.08	0.52**	–		
7. Confidence in ability to advocate	0.01	0.11	0.04	–0.08	0.41**	0.26**	–	
8. Perceived intelligence	0.01	0.21**	0.02	–0.12*	0.42**	0.21**	0.48**	–

\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ . Politician race coded as Black = –1, White = 1; political ideology coded as moderate = –1, liberal = 1. Correlations are bivariate ( $r$ ); the point biserial correlation between a dichotomous and a continuous variable is equivalent to Pearson's  $r$  (relevant to the two dichotomous variables)

conservative White sample, although slightly lower overall in implicit pro-White/anti-Black prejudice, thus appeared to be fairly comparable to previous samples.

At the bivariate level, across participants, implicit racial bias (as measured by the race IAT) was negatively correlated with the perceived attractiveness of the politician,





**Fig. 1** Distribution of the IAT *D* measure scores

$r(653) = -0.10, p < .01$ , and with our four key dependent measures: likelihood of voting for the politician,  $r(661) = -0.12, p < .01$ , likelihood of donating money to the politician,  $r(664) = -0.11, p < .01$ , confidence in the politician's ability to advocate his position,  $r(663) = -0.08, p < .05$ , and the perceived intelligence of the politician,  $r(663) = -0.11, p < .01$ . Implicit racial bias was negatively correlated with an effect-coded variable representing participants' political ideology (moderate = -1, liberal = 1;  $r(669) = -0.10, p < .01$ ), indicating that politically moderate participants demonstrated higher levels of implicit racial bias than liberals. Implicit racial bias was not correlated with agreement with the politician's position,  $r(665) = -0.04, p = .30$ . Moderately sized positive correlations were evident among our four key dependent variables ( $r$ s ranged from 0.45 to 0.55, all  $p$ s  $< .01$ ), suggesting that, although clearly related, our outcome measures also tap distinct constructs.

Bivariate correlations were also examined separately for participants rating a Black versus a White politician. Implicit racial bias corresponded with lower ratings of the perceived attractiveness of a Black politician,  $r(364) = -0.15, p < .01$ , a lower likelihood of voting for a Black politician,  $r(370) = -0.13, p < .05$ , a lower likelihood of donating money to a Black politician,  $r(372) = -0.12, p < .05$ , lower confidence in a Black politician's ability to advocate his position,  $r(370) = -0.13, p < .05$ , and lower ratings of the perceived intelligence of a Black politician,  $r(371) = -0.17, p < .01$ . In contrast, implicit racial bias was not correlated with any of these variables among participants who evaluated a White politician ( $r$ s ranged from -0.11 to 0.04,  $p$ s  $> .05$ ), suggesting that the overall pattern of correlations between implicit racial bias and candidate ratings were largely driven by participants evaluating a Black politician.

## Primary Analyses

A series of ordinary least squares regression models were tested in which politician race (-1 = Black, 1 = White), level of implicit racial bias (mean centered), and a variable representing their interaction were entered as predictors of each of the four outcome measures: (1) likelihood of voting for the politician, (2) likelihood of donating to the politician's campaign, (3) degree of confidence in the politician's ability to advocate his position, and (4) ratings of the politician's intelligence. When we present findings for these first two measures, we use the term "likelihood" to be consistent with the wording used in the original questionnaire.

To control for additional factors that might influence each of these ratings, the perceived attractiveness of the politician, participants' political ideology, level of agreement with the position advocated in the speech, and a set of dummy variables representing the speech a participant viewed were entered as covariates in each regression model. Because participants were randomly assigned to view one of six speeches (with two speeches on each of three different issues), the latter "speech" variable controlled for the speech topic (i.e., issue type), as well as the content of each specific speech. The coding scheme that we adopted utilized five dummy variables (i.e.,  $k-1$  grouping variables, where  $k$  = total number of speech conditions; see Cohen et al. 2003) that—when included in subsequent analyses—reflected the contrast between the first speech condition (arbitrarily chosen as the reference group) and each subsequent speech condition. We also examined topic of speech separately, by collapsing across the two speeches for each issue type, and also by creating dummy codes that reflected contrasts between each issue type (using the 'voter identification' topic as the reference group). In each case, the pattern of findings with respect to our key predictors was the same as presented below so we present the analyses that control for specific speech to capture potential differences between the speeches themselves. Models are presented in Table 5. As indicated in the table, there were significant main effects for several of the covariates. Importantly, the pattern of findings for all key predicted effects was comparable with and without inclusion of the covariates.

We also had considered several additional control variables that were not included in our final models. Specifically, preliminary analyses included participant gender, participant education level, the region of the country a participant was from, and interest in the 2008 election. None of these factors were found to influence the dependent measures, with the exception of a small effect of region on donating money and the finding that higher education level corresponded with lower ratings of the

**Table 5** Regression models predicting key dependent variables

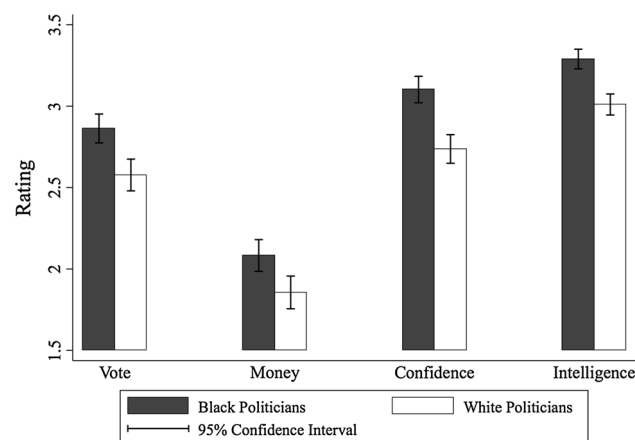
Predictors	Likelihood of voting for candidate ( <i>N</i> = 650)		Likelihood of donating money ( <i>N</i> = 650)		Confidence in candidate ( <i>N</i> = 652)		Perceived intelligence of candidate ( <i>N</i> = 651)	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>
Politician race	−0.14***	0.03	−0.10**	0.03	−0.15***	0.03	−0.12***	0.02
Implicit racial bias	−0.09	0.07	−0.13	0.08	−0.08	0.07	−0.07	0.05
Politician race × Implicit racial bias	0.04	0.07	0.02	0.08	0.09	0.07	0.11*	0.05
Covariates								
Attractiveness	0.17***	0.04	0.18***	0.05	0.17***	0.04	0.18***	0.03
Agreement with candidate's position	0.18***	0.04	0.11**	0.04	0.07	0.04	0.08**	0.03
Political ideology	0.35***	0.03	0.25***	0.03	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.02

\*\*\* *p* < .001, \*\* *p* < .01, \* *p* < .05. Politician race coded as Black = −1, White = 1; political ideology coded as moderate = −1, liberal = 1. Dummy variables coding for specific speech content were included in all regression models, with significant effects described in the text

politician's intelligence, and their inclusion did not change the pattern of findings for our key independent measures of interest. Therefore, for parsimony, these variables were excluded from the final models.

**Voting for Politician**

In the regression predicting participants' likelihood of voting for the politician, a significant main effect of politician race emerged, indicating that participants who viewed a Black politician reported a greater likelihood of voting for the politician (*M* = 2.86, *SD* = 0.88) than those who viewed a White politician (*M* = 2.58, *SD* = 0.85), *B* = −0.14, *SE* = 0.03, *t*(638) = −4.63, *p* < .0001 (see Fig. 2). Neither the main effect of implicit racial bias nor the interaction between implicit racial bias and politician race was significant (see Table 5 for coefficients and associated *p* values).



**Fig. 2** Ratings of politician on dependent measures

Although less central to hypotheses, three of the covariates—attractiveness of the politician, level of agreement with the politician's position, and political ideology—significantly predicted participants' likelihood of voting for the politician. That is, greater perceived attractiveness, greater agreement with the candidate's position, and being liberal (versus moderate) corresponded with a greater likelihood of voting for the politician (see Table 5 for coefficients and associated *p* values). Additionally, among the dummy-coded speech variables, there were two significant effects, indicating a significant contrast between two of the specific speeches and the reference speech condition. These effects appeared to stem from idiosyncratic differences between speech conditions, as there was no evidence of systematic differences in participants' likelihood of voting for the politician based on issue type.

**Donating to Politician's Campaign**

In the regression predicting participants' likelihood of donating money to the politician's campaign, a significant main effect of politician race emerged, indicating that participants who viewed a Black politician reported a greater likelihood of donating money to the politician's campaign (*M* = 2.08, *SE* = 0.96) than those who viewed a White politician (*M* = 1.86, *SD* = 0.87), *B* = −0.10, *SE* = 0.03, *t*(638) = −2.99, *p* < .005 (see Fig. 2). Neither the main effect of implicit racial bias nor the interaction between implicit racial bias and politician race was significant. Among the covariates included in the model, greater perceived attractiveness of the politician, greater agreement with the politician's position, and being liberal (versus moderate) predicted a greater likelihood of donating money to the politician's campaign (see Table 5). Once again, there were two significant contrast effects among the

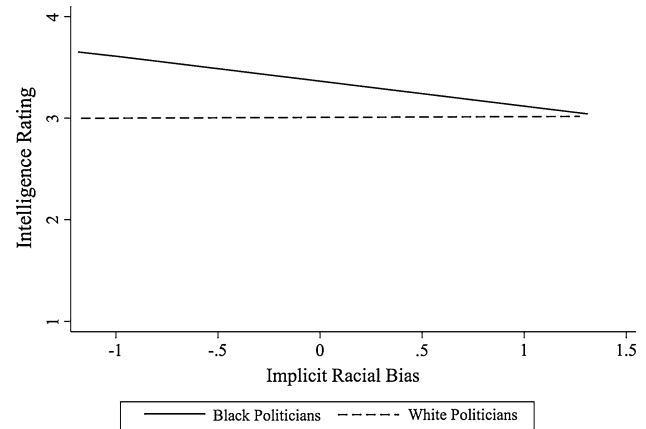
speech dummy variables that were suggestive of idiosyncratic differences between speech conditions rather than systematic differences in participants' likelihood of donating money based on issue type.

### Confidence in Politician's Advocacy for a Position in Congress

In the regression predicting participants' degree of confidence in the politician's ability to effectively advocate his position on the issue in Congress, a significant main effect of politician race emerged, such that participants who viewed a Black politician reported greater confidence in the politician ( $M = 3.10$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ) than those who viewed a White politician ( $M = 2.74$ ,  $SD = 0.77$ ),  $B = -0.15$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $t(640) = -4.98$ ,  $p < .0001$  (see Fig. 2). Neither the main effect of implicit racial bias nor the interaction between implicit racial bias and politician race was significant. Among the covariates included in the model, only attractiveness significantly predicted confidence in the politician, with greater perceived attractiveness corresponding with greater confidence (see Table 5).

### Perceived Intelligence of Politician

In the regression predicting the perceived intelligence of the politician, a significant main effect of politician race emerged, indicating that participants who viewed a Black politician rated the politician as more intelligent ( $M = 3.29$ ,  $SD = 0.60$ ) than those who viewed a White politician ( $M = 3.01$ ,  $SD = 0.56$ ),  $B = -0.12$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ ,  $t(639) = -5.29$ ,  $p < .0001$  (see Fig. 2). As predicted, this main effect was qualified by a significant Politician Race  $\times$  Implicit Racial Bias interaction,  $B = 0.11$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $t(639) = 2.08$ ,  $p < .05$ . For participants evaluating a Black politician, greater implicit racial bias predicted lower ratings of the politician's intelligence,  $B = -0.18$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ,  $t(639) = -2.59$ ,  $p < .01$ , whereas there was no relation between implicit racial bias and ratings of intelligence for participants evaluating a White politician (see Fig. 3). Importantly, among those with a stronger pro-White bias, intelligence ratings for Black politicians were equivalent to the level of intelligence ratings for White politicians. Thus, greater pro-White bias was associated with relatively lower mean levels of intelligence for Black politicians, which mitigated the bend over backwards effect but did not predict intelligence ratings that fell below those for White politicians. With respect to the covariates, greater perceived attractiveness of the politician and agreement with the politician's position correlated significantly with higher ratings of the politician's intelligence (see Table 5).



**Fig. 3** Implicit racial bias as a predictor of perceived intelligence of politician. Positive numbers indicate a stronger pro-White/anti-Black bias

### Discussion

The present study sought to determine whether politically non-conservative Whites discriminated in favor of Black politicians over White politicians, and, if so, whether this relationship varied as a function of implicit bias. We found that participants showed a bias in favor of Black politicians relative to White politicians on all four of our dependent measures: likelihood of voting for, donating money to, and having confidence in the politician, and deeming him intelligent. Further, this favorability bias persisted for the majority of these measures (the first three), even after accounting for implicit racial bias per the IAT.

Previous research shows that White liberals discriminate in favor of Blacks in non-political contexts (Nail et al. 2003); our findings extend this work by suggesting that non-conservative Whites—including both liberals and moderates—also discriminate in favor of Blacks in the domain of electoral politics. One interpretation of these findings is that non-conservative Whites genuinely prefer Black politicians over White politicians. For example, Whites may prefer Blacks shown in photographs because of facial characteristics. Indeed, computer simulation studies have found that neutral expressions posed on Black faces resemble happy and surprised expressions more so than when posed on White faces (Zebrowitz et al. 2010), which perhaps, in turn, leads to greater liking. It is also possible that both the 'bend over backwards' effect and the relationship between implicit racial biases and perceived intelligence of Black politicians reflect the view that Blacks are limited in their political resources (e.g., campaign contributions) relative to White politicians, which would not imply a view (implicit or explicit) that Blacks are inherently inferior. We believe, however, that it is not the

case that the observed pro-Black bias is a genuine preference, which is supported by our sample's overall preference for Whites relative to Blacks on the IAT (the liberals in our sample showed lower levels of implicit racial bias than the moderates, but political ideology as liberal versus moderate did not alter any of our other findings). As implicit racial biases measured on the IAT have been found to correlate with a number of interpersonal behaviors, such as how close Whites prefer to be in physical proximity to Blacks (Amodio and Devine 2006), it is possible respondents may also engage in other actions that may undermine their support for Black politicians.

For ratings of the perceived intelligence of Black versus White politicians, the bend over backwards effect was qualified by the finding that higher pro-White/anti-Black implicit bias corresponded with lower ratings of the perceived intelligence of Black politicians. Albeit not a strong effect, the juxtaposition of this finding with the more favorable ratings of Black politicians overall paints a more complex picture with respect to the role of racial bias in modern politics. On the one hand, the observed pro-Black bias on three of our four dependent measures, which held even after controlling for implicit bias, might be viewed as an encouraging sign of a shift toward a more favorable political climate for Black candidates in the US. In fact, recent research suggests that Black politicians are winning congressional races in non-majority Black districts (Voss and Lubin 2001). On the other hand, our finding that on an implicit level, racial bias predicted relatively lower ratings of Black politicians' intelligence—even for non-conservatives making judgments about politicians presenting liberal issues—is meaningful in the face of claims that we have entered a “post-racial” era in America. Thus, despite strivings to overcome racial barriers, in political spheres as well as other arenas, many Whites may still experience discomfort or cognitive dissonance with respect to how they “should” perceive Blacks (Nail et al. 2003; Gaertner and Dovidio 1986).

Additionally, the intelligence finding suggests that some gut-level feelings, even among politically moderate and liberal Whites, are in line with more old-fashioned forms of racism (McConahay 1986; McConahay and Hough 1976). Whereas historically, beliefs about racial differences in intelligence have stemmed from biologically based arguments (Plous and Williams 1995), it may be that non-conservative Whites believe that Blacks have limited societal resources, which thus contributes to perceived differences in intelligence along racial lines. Importantly, however, regardless of whether racial differences in intelligence are seen as biologically determined or environmentally determined, the end result may be harmful for Black politicians. Electing a Black politician but

continuing to implicitly question the individual's intelligence, even if in a subtle way, could lead to other decisions (e.g., withdrawal of support more readily) that make it more difficult for the politician to succeed and may reduce the chance for reelection. On a larger scale, this may create a dynamic whereby Black politicians who do become elected have to fight an uphill battle and are less likely to be successful, which in turn furthers negative stereotypes about Blacks and undermines their ability to succeed in positions of political power.

It is important to note that even though there was a statistically significant association between implicit racial bias and ratings of Black politicians' intelligence, this effect was small, and ratings of Black politicians' intelligence were still not lower than those for White politicians. Still, the bend over backwards effect was effectively eliminated for ratings of intelligence when taking implicit racial bias into account. Thus, while non-conservative Whites may “overcorrect” for potential racial bias against Black politicians on explicit measures, in some domains they may still implicitly harbor deeply rooted negative stereotypes about Black politicians, which may negate these overcompensation efforts.

While we did find that implicit biases influenced judgments of Black but not White politicians' intelligence, we did not find a similar interaction effect for our related measure of confidence in the perceived “ability” of Black politicians to advocate for a position in Congress. One possible explanation for these different effects is that intelligence taps directly into historical racism, and as Greenwald and Banaji (1995) note, implicit social cognition taps into traces of past experiences that can affect one's behavior even if an individual is unaware of the effects. Stereotypes of Blacks as unintelligent have a long history in American culture, but stereotypes about the abilities of Black politicians in a congressional setting may be less ingrained because historically there have been so few Blacks in politics.

## Limitations

There are several potential limitations of the present study. First, the hypothetical nature of the context in which participants evaluated political candidates may have influenced their responses. For instance, our outcome measures were single-item self-report ratings reflecting participants' explicit evaluations of a politician. Because our participants were asked to evaluate only a single candidate, our research design differed from the experience of voters in an actual election, who must typically evaluate and compare multiple candidates for an office. Important questions thus remain regarding how the bend over backwards effect

might map onto actual voting behaviors and/or more subtle forms of favoritism (e.g., non-verbal behaviors).

Second, the decision to include only non-conservatives, although theoretically driven in the present study, could also be considered a limitation. Should the Republican party become more racially and ethnically diverse in its leadership, it may be possible to examine how racial biases affect the way White conservatives view Black conservative politicians, and whether processes such as the bend over backwards effect apply to this group. Evidence suggests that Whites high in racial prejudice can also bend over backwards to support Blacks by responding positively when presented with counter-stereotypical information about Blacks (Peffley et al. 1997). Third, although explicit racism measures may have been less relevant in our non-conservative sample—because scores tend to be low in such samples and prior studies have found that effects of implicit biases persist even after controlling for explicit racism (Payne et al. 2009)—an explicit measure of racial bias nevertheless may have been informative to include.

Finally, our study did not examine potential interactions with a politician's gender. In light of the continued underrepresentation of women in American politics (Lawless and Fox 2012) and prevailing negative stereotypes about women's intelligence and competence in historically male-dominated domains (Eagley and Karau 2002; Heilman et al. 2004; Hill et al. 2010; Murphy et al. 2007), future research should explore the ways in which gender may further moderate explicit favoritism of Black political candidates. Although in our data there were not significant differences based on participant sex, such differences may have been more likely to emerge if both male and female politicians were included.

## Conclusions

The results of the current study can be viewed as “glass half full” with respect to race-based political judgments, in that both moderates and liberals reported political judgments in favor of Blacks. Such favorability, even if a result of compensatory behavior (e.g., attempts to appear unbiased), ultimately may promote more genuine liking and equality for Black politicians (Nail et al. 2003). Indeed, in our models implicit racial biases did not predict more negative evaluations of Black politicians for three out of four measures, and on the fourth measure where it did, the effect was small.

Nevertheless, the fact that implicit bias mattered for perceived politician intelligence is conceptually meaningful, as it likely stems from historical stereotypes about Blacks' intellectual abilities. Lower intelligence has been used as an argument to justify slavery, apartheid in the

south, and continued discrimination in education, housing, and employment (e.g., Herrnstein and Murray 1994). We underscore that in our data, even White non-conservatives relatively high in implicit racial bias did not provide low ratings of Black politicians' intelligence per se. These ratings were, however, relatively lower than other measures of political support when accounting for implicit racial bias. In this regard, we believe that even with advances in surface-level and, to a large extent, implicit evaluations of Black politicians, our data suggest that instantaneous judgments of intelligence may be harder to change. Acknowledging that such biases exist can create awareness and allow underlying notions to be counteracted directly. This, in turn, may pave the way to help Black politicians succeed, with the full explicit and implicit support of White voters.

## Appendix 1

“Photo ID 1” Madam Speaker, it is amazing to me that during the 40th Anniversary of the historic passage of the Voting Rights Act, that anyone could propose mandating nationwide photo ID requirements. Given the cost, difficulty involved in obtaining photo ID for many in our society, the idea of a national voter ID requirement amounts to nothing less than a 21st Century Poll Tax. I urge my colleagues to vote against it.

“Photo ID 2” Madam Speaker, the Federal Election Integrity Act of 2007 will disenfranchise voters. Many Americans do not have photo IDs or the means to obtain them. If this bill passes a subset of our population will not be able to vote. The Constitution guarantees all American citizens the right to vote and the right for their vote to be counted. I urge my colleagues to vote against this bill.

“Minimum wage 1” Madam Speaker, I am proud to support the Fair minimum wage Act of 2007. Today we have the opportunity to raise the wages of 13 million Americans, and we should take it. Why raise the minimum wage in America? For the simple reason that men and women in the richest nation on earth should not work full time and still be relegated to living in poverty. What does it mean for the father or mother in a family of three to live on the current minimum wage? It means an income of \$10,000 a year.

“Minimum wage 2” Madam Speaker, I am proud to support the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007. This bill provides Congress with a long-overdue opportunity to stand up for the dignity of those workers in the United States making minimum wage, or near minimum wage. The Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007 would increase the federal minimum wage greatly over 2 years. Under this

bill, sixty days after enactment, the minimum wage would rise from the current \$5.15 per hour to \$5.85 per hour.

“Healthcare 1” Madam Speaker, the biggest domestic crisis facing America today is health care. Every 30 s, an American files for bankruptcy in the aftermath of a serious health problem. So says a recent study from Harvard University. Today, the health care system is increasingly dysfunctional. America is fast becoming a nation of haves and have-nots, those wealthy enough to afford comprehensive health care coverage and the vast majority of American people struggling to maintain coverage. It is time to provide universal healthcare for every American, and the only delivery system that works is a single-payer healthcare system.

“Healthcare 2” Madam Speaker, it is long past the time since this Congress should be passing legislation to create a universal single-payer system of health care in the United States. This past week we saw companies cut \$1 billion a year in healthcare expenses for 750,000 workers and retirees. People who have worked every day of their lives and made a contribution to this society are suddenly finding their health care benefits drastically reduced. Over 40 million Americans do not have health insurance. It is time that the government stepped in dramatically to create a universal single-payer system.

## **Appendix 2**

Black politicians



White politicians



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