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The Return of Old-Fashioned Racism to White Americans' Partisan Preferences in the Early Obama Era

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Old-fashioned racism (OFR) was unrelated to white Americans' partisan preferences throughout the post-civil rights era. This study argues OFR could return to white partisanship following decades of dormancy because of Obama's presidency. After first demonstrating that such attitudes were significantly stronger predictors of opposition to Obama than ideologically similar white Democrats, I support that spillover hypothesis with the following evidence: opposition to interracial dating was correlated with white partisanship in 2009 despite being unrelated to party identification in 12 earlier surveys; moreover, evaluations of Obama completely mediated that relationship between OFR and partisanship; old-fashioned racism predicted changes in white panelists' partisanship between 2006 and 2011; these attitudes were also a stronger determinant of midterm vote preferences in 2010 than they were in 2006, with that relationship once again mediated by President Obama; and experimentally connecting Obama to congressional candidates significantly increased the relationship between OFR and 2010 preferences.

Race occupied a prominent place in Americans' partisan preferences long before Barack Obama became the Democratic nominee for president. Carmines and Stimson (1989) convincingly argue that this organization of partisan politics around racial issues stemmed from elite-level differences in the two parties' support for 1960s civil rights initiatives. In particular, the enactment of civil rights legislation by the Democratic Kennedy and Johnson administrations, opposed by Barry Goldwater, the Republican's 1964 presidential candidate, generated a new race-based divide between the parties. These authors go on to show that mass partisan polarization along the lines of racial policy attitudes emerged in the 1970s, as older citizens who came of age before the parties diverged so sharply on racial issues were gradually replaced by incoming partisans whose attachments were formed after that racial schism.¹

Racial conservatism continued to divide Democrats from Republicans at both the elite and mass levels throughout the remainder of the twentieth century. Mayer (2002), for example, found a consistent partisan

division over race in presidential campaign appeals from 1964 to 2000 (also see Gertsle 2002; O'Reilly 1995), and others have documented the emergence of subtle appeals to antiblack stereotypes by Republican candidates in the post-civil rights era (Edsall and Edsall 1991; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Mendelberg 2001). It is not too surprising, then, that racially conservative attitudes commonly described as symbolic racism or racial resentment—attitudes that emphasize lack of black commitment to traditional American values—were central in shifting white Southerners from the Democratic to the Republican Party over the past few decades (Valentino and Sears 2005). Differences between the two parties in both their racial policy positions and their rhetoric about race relations also help explain racial resentment's significant independent impact on support for GOP presidential candidates from 1988 to 2004 (Kinder and Dale-Riddle 2012; Tesler and Sears 2010).

Yet, old-fashioned racism (OFR) all but vanished from elite political discourse during this same post-civil rights time period in which Republican campaigns

¹Financial support for this project was provided by the National Science Foundation (SES-1023942). An online appendix for this article is available at <http://journals.cambridge.org/jop> containing variable coding/distributions and supplemental analyses. Data and supporting materials necessary to reproduce the results in the article will be made available at <http://mst.michaeltesler.com/Papers.html> upon publication.

employed coded appeals to antiblack stereotypes and racial-resentment-influenced partisan attachments. In fact, the two political parties fully embraced the new norm of racial equality by the late 1960s (Mendelberg 2001). White voters, therefore, no longer encountered the straightforward appeals to segregation and racial supremacy that they frequently heard throughout the Jim Crow era (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Mendelberg 2001). The political debate over racial policies also shifted in the post-civil rights era from OFR-oriented concerns about desegregation to an equality of outcomes agenda that evoked racially resentful anxieties about black deservingness and work ethic (Virtanen and Huddy 1998, 313). These changes in the parties' racial rhetoric and policy programs left no major outlet for the expression of OFR in partisan preferences. Consequently, old-fashioned racist sentiments like opposition to intimate interracial relations and beliefs in black intellectual inferiority were unrelated to party preferences in the decades before Obama became president (Sears et al. 1997; Valentino and Sears 2005; see new results below too).

But a black man essentially became the face of the Democratic Party after the 2008 election. Could that heightened cognitive association between Democrats and African Americans open the door for a renewed role of overtly racist attitudes in white Americans' partisan attachments? Both the theoretical expectations and the empirical results presented below indicate that Barack Obama's association with the Democratic Party has indeed made OFR a significant factor in white Americans' partisan preferences after decades of quiescence.

Empirical Expectations

As just mentioned, old-fashioned racist attitudes, such as desire for social distance between the races and beliefs in racial intellectual superiority were uncorrelated with white Americans' partisan attachments (even at the bivariate level) in the decades preceding Obama's presidency. OFR's influence could still be found in other facets of public opinion throughout the pre-Obama contemporary era though. Overt measures of prejudice were significantly linked to a number of racial policy preferences during this time period—policies which included general government assistance to blacks (Bobo and Kluegel 1997; Sears et al. 1997; Virtanen and Huddy 1998), equal opportunity for African Americans (Sears et al. 1997), affirmative action (Hughes 1997), college scholarships

for black students (Virtanen and Huddy 1998), and New York housing integration laws (Huddy, Feldman, and Perkins 2009). This sizable ongoing impact of such overt forms of racism on race-oriented policy preferences recently led political psychologists, Huddy and Feldman (2009), to conclude that the political influence of OFR had been prematurely and unfairly dismissed by social science researchers.

That continued influence of old-fashioned racism on issues specifically pertaining to African Americans also has important implications for white Americans' partisan preferences in the in the age of Obama. Virtanen and Huddy's (1998) conclusion that old-fashioned racists oppose all efforts to improve the conditions of African Americans—even popular programs targeted at “deserving blacks” like college scholarships and free-enterprise zones—because they view blacks as inferior to whites should be especially relevant. We might expect OFR to similarly erode support for Barack Obama since adherents of that outdated belief system should naturally be prone to oppose the leadership of a president from a racial group whom they consider intellectually and socially inferior. My first formal hypothesis (H1), then, is that old-fashioned racist attitudes should significantly increase opposition to Barack Obama.

This contention that OFR influenced mass assessments of Barack Obama would add a new and important wrinkle to the prior research showing less blatant antiblack sentiments such as racial resentment and negative stereotypes were significantly stronger predictors of opposition to his presidential candidacy than prior Democratic nominees (Jackman and Vavreck 2010; Kam and Kinder 2012; Kinder and Dale-Riddle 2012; Piston 2010; Tesler and Sears 2010). Yet such a finding by itself does not necessarily imply that old-fashioned racism will come to influence the broader American political landscape the way these other forms of racial conservatism have for the last several decades.

There is reason to suspect, however, that the hypothesized link between OFR and white Americans' evaluations of Barack Obama's would spill over into their party identifications and 2010 party-line voting behavior. We have described this phenomenon in which the large effects of racial attitudes on the public's assessments of Barack Obama are transferred to their related political evaluations as the “the spillover of racialization.” Racial attitudes, for instance, became an increasingly strong predictor of mass assessments of John McCain as his campaign against Obama intensified in the fall of 2008 (Tesler and Sears 2010). The impact of racial resentment on

Americans' opinions about health care and tax policy also grew considerably after Barack Obama's positions on these issues received heavy scrutiny in 2008 and 2009 (Henderson and Hillygus 2011; Tesler 2012; Tesler and Sears 2010); and racial predispositions were significantly more connected to opinions about President Obama's policy proposals than they were in survey experiments that framed the exact same initiatives as President Clinton's former proposals (Knowles, Lowry, and Schaumberg 2010; Tesler 2012).

Uniting those findings with prior research on individual-level partisan change suggests that this spillover of racialization could even extend into Americans' highly stable party identifications. Green, Palmquist, and Schickler (argue that partisanship is not inherently stable; instead, "Party attachments tend to be stable because the social group imagery associated with the parties tends to change slowly over time. Once a person's party attachments take root, they are seldom disrupted by new conceptions of the partisan groups and the social coalitions that they comprise" (2002, 141). One way to alter this social group imagery, according to these authors, is to change the composition of party leadership. The Republican Party, for instance, effectively altered its public persona by putting Southerners into top party positions throughout the 1980s and 1990s, paving the way for Southern party realignment (Green et al. 2002, 13).

Spillover effects are thus not simply restricted to race (see also Tesler 2012 for a review of nonracial spillover effects). A black president might be especially likely to produce spillover effects, though, because race is a more salient cue in American political life than other social identities (e.g., Kinder and Dale-Riddle 2012). In fact, Sears, Citrin, and Kosterman (1987) show that the increased association between the Democratic Party and African Americans, which presumably resulted from Jesse Jackson's mere campaign for the presidency in 1984, *immediately* accelerated the polarization of Southern partisanship by racial attitudes.

Barack Obama's Democratic nomination and presidency should have an even greater impact on the Party's image than Jesse Jackson's failed presidential bid. If, as suspected, a black president from the Democratic Party solidified the cognitive association between Democrats and African Americans, one logical upshot might be a renewed avenue for old-fashioned racism to influence white Americans' partisan preferences. My second formal hypothesis, then, is that the negative influence of old-fashioned racist attitudes on Democratic Party identification

should increase significantly from before to after Obama was elected president (H2). Moreover, the hypothesized impact of old-fashioned racism on white Americans' assessments of Barack Obama should mediate any relationship between OFR and party identification (H3).

The spillover of old-fashioned racism into white Americans' 2010 party-line voting for congress would be even more straightforward. Mass assessments of the incumbent president powerfully influence vote choice for the House of Representatives (Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002; Jacobson 2004; Kernell 1977; Tufte 1978). The hypothesized influence of OFR on public assessments of President Obama should, therefore, spill over into their midterm vote choices, making the link between old-fashioned racism and support for Republican congressional candidates stronger in 2010 than prior elections (H4). Moreover, white Americans' assessments of the president should mediate any enhanced relationship between OFR and 2010 voting (H5). And finally, efforts aimed at connecting Obama to Democratic congressional candidates should further increase OFR's impact on 2010 preferences (H6).

Method

Data

The strength of this study resides in its use of cross-sectional data, panel reinterviews, and an original survey experiment to test those hypotheses. The first cross-sectional analyses draw upon a Pew Research Center Poll from March 2008.² That survey fortuitously asked respondents who they would vote for if the general election was between John McCain and Barack Obama and if it was between John McCain and Hillary Clinton. These hypothetical presidential matchups have been effectively exploited in other datasets to argue that racial resentment, antiblack stereotypes, and white ethnocentrism would have been significantly weaker correlates of 2008 vote choice had John McCain faced Hillary Clinton in the general election instead of Barack Obama (Jackman and Vavreck 2010; Kam and Kinder 2012; Tesler and Sears 2010). I utilize the March 2008 Pew Poll to test

²Survey by Pew Research Center. Methodology: conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International, March 19–March 22, 2008 and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1,503. This data set was accessed from the Roper Center's data archives.

whether this same argument also holds for OFR's influence on 2008 vote choice, as Hypothesis 1 suggests.

I turn to the Pew Values Study (PVS) Merger File for additional hypothesis tests. From 1987 to 2009, the PVS conducted 14 cross-sectional surveys, gauging respondents' core political and social attitudes with a series of agree-disagree statements. One of the statements asked repeatedly over that time period—"I think it is all right for blacks and whites to date each other"—taps into the old-fashioned racist belief system discussed in greater detail below. The PVS can be used, then, to determine how such desire for intimate social distance between the races correlated with white Americans' party identifications in both the 20 years prior to Obama's presidential bid and in the early months of his presidency. In other words, did the relationship between OFR and Republican Party identification grow stronger because Obama was now the face of his party, which Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3 suggested?

Even if that relationship grew stronger, we would still have no way of knowing from the PVS surveys whether white Americans were changing their partisan preferences to comport with their underlying racial attitudes because of Obama's presidency. Some of these individuals, for instance, may have changed their support for intimate interracial relationships in accordance with their preexisting partisan preferences precisely because the leader of the Democratic Party is now biracial. The PVS analyses are, therefore, augmented with data from the 2006–2008–2010 General Social Survey Panel Study. Panel reinterviews of the same respondents at two or more points in time help mitigate such concerns about reverse causality. More specifically, we can use a measure of old-fashioned racism from the 2006 GSS to determine how such pre-Obama attitudes predicted changes in white Americans' partisanship from 2006 to 2010.

I return to repeated cross-sectional surveys to test Hypothesis 4 and Hypothesis 5. The first survey comes from the December 2006–January 2007 PVS, which included a 2006 congressional vote report item. To compare that pre-Obama relationship between old-fashioned racism and congressional vote preference in 2006 to their association in 2010, I fielded two nationally representative surveys in October 2010, each of which contained 1,000 respondents and both of which were conducted by the internet polling firm YouGov. These two surveys are pooled together to enhance the efficiency of estimates. Taken together, the data from 2006 and 2010 provide insights into whether the negative relationship between OFR and Democratic vote choice for congress grew stronger because

Obama was now the face of his party, as Hypothesis 4 and Hypothesis 5 suggested.

At the same time, though, that over-time comparison cannot tell us for certain whether any increased influence of old-fashioned racism in the 2010 midterms was *caused* by Obama's presidency or another factor. So with that in mind, I randomly assigned respondents from one of the abovementioned YouGov surveys to two different survey forms. After first inquiring about how they intended to vote for the House of Representatives in the pretest,³ half of my participants were asked (whether they wanted the newly elected Congress to be more or less supportive of Obama's legislative agenda (, and they were then told that Obama had been campaigning for Democratic candidates and asked if an endorsement from the president would make them more or less likely to support the Democratic candidate in their district. Shortly thereafter, these same individuals were asked how favorably they felt toward the two major parties' congressional candidates in their district. The remaining half of the sample, meanwhile, was just asked the candidate favorability items without being primed with questions designed to tie Democrats running for congress to Obama. This experimental design, therefore, offers a direct causal test of Hypothesis 6's contention that efforts to connect Obama with Democratic candidates for congress should further increase old-fashioned racism's impact on 2010 preferences.

Finally, I employ original panel data throughout the article to replicate findings from the aforementioned surveys.⁴ In the spring of 2011 we commissioned the polling firm YouGov to recontact a nationally representative sample of 3,000 registered voters who were previously interviewed for their 2007–2008 Cooperative Campaign Analysis Project's (CCAP, Jackman and Vavreck 2009) six-wave panel study. Unfortunately, the panel did not include OFR items until the 2011 wave, so it does not mitigate reverse causality concerns to the same degree as the GSS Panel. These data, however, are the only survey available that contain all four items from Kinder and Sanders's (1996) racial resentment battery for use in multivariate analyses with OFR.

³Ideally, the experimental manipulation would have taken place prior to assessing 2010 vote intention so that the dependent variable could be vote intention instead of candidate favorability ratings. My survey experiment, however, was fielded as part of a YouGov cooperative survey that mandated vote intention be assessed prior to individual investigators' content.

⁴Tesler, Michael, David O. Sears and Lynn Vavreck. "2011 CCAP Re-Interviews." Palo Alto, CA: YouGov. Funding provided by the National Science Foundation (SES-1023942)

Old-Fashioned Racism

At the midpoint of the twentieth century a substantial majority of white Americans still openly subscribed to the ideology of white supremacy. That ideology, which researchers have variously described as old-fashioned racism, Jim Crow racism, and red-neck racism, embodied three main elements (Bobo and Kluegel, 1997; McConahay, 1986; McConahay and Hough 1976): (1) desire for social distance between the races, (2) beliefs in the biological inferiority of blacks, and (3) support public policies insuring racial segregation and formalized discrimination. For simplicity purposes, I will only use the term old-fashioned racism to describe such beliefs.

Adherence to all three components of the old-fashioned racism belief system declined dramatically during the second half of the century. By the 1990s, in fact, white Americans' beliefs in black biological inferiority and support for *de jure* segregation had all but vanished from their survey reports (Schuman et al. 1997). White desires for intimate social distance between the races were more persistent though (Schuman et al. 1997). In fact, only about half of the white respondents in the three 2007–2009 Pew Polls analyzed below completely agreed that it is okay for blacks and whites to date each other, with more than 15% still disagreeing (see distribution of OFR measures in Figure A1 of the online appendix).

For both substantive and practical purposes, then, this study utilizes just the social distance component of the old-fashioned racist belief system as its focal explanatory variable. From a substantive standpoint, there are still enough white Americans who do not completely approve of miscegenation to affect politics; and practically speaking, the PVS's long time series allows us to assess the influence of such attitudes on partisan preference both before and after the 2008 election. Not much should be lost conceptually by utilizing only this single OFR component, either, since desire for intimate social distance loaded on the same factor as beliefs in biological differences between the races and support for segregationist policies in prior OFR analyses (Bobo and Kluegel 1997; Sears and Henry 2005; Virtanen and Huddy 1998).

In addition to the PVS's black-white dating item, I also employ intimate social distance measures of old-fashioned racism from the 2006–2008–2010 GSS and the 2007–2008–2011 CCAP panel studies. The GSS variable is a difference score, which subtracts how favorable or unfavorable white respondents would react to a close relative marrying an African American from how favorable they would feel about their relatives

marrying someone of the same race (see appendix for more information on variable coding). According to this measure, over half of whites preferred their close relatives marry someone of the same race in the 2006 GSS panel wave, with about one-quarter strongly preferring in-marriage. Even more individuals scored high on the CCAP's OFR scale—a reliable two-item additive index (Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$) that includes Pew's aforementioned dating item and the following agree/disagree statement: "I prefer that my close relatives marry spouses from their same race." Indeed, over two-thirds of white respondents expressed some hesitancy about intimate interracial relations on that measure.

Old-Fashioned versus Modern Racism

New social science theories arose in the post-civil rights era to explain the decline in OFR on the one hand and continued opposition to government action to produce racial equality on the other. These theories, which are variously described as symbolic racism, modern racism, and racial resentment, suggest that a new form of racial animus best explains the influence of antiblack sentiments in contemporary American politics. Unlike OFR, this belief system does not embrace black biological and social inferiority. Instead, the new racism is characterized by "a moral feeling that blacks violate such traditional American values as individualism and self-reliance, the work ethic, obedience, and discipline" (Kinder and Sears 1981, 416).

Aside from being conceptually different, OFR and modern racism are empirically distinct. Survey questions designed to tap into old-fashioned and modern racism consistently fall out on separate dimensions in factor analyses (Hughes 1997; Sears and Henry 2005), and Banks and Valentino (2012) convincingly show that OFR measures are linked to the emotion of disgust while racial resentment is rooted in anger. To be sure, the two racial attitudes are significantly correlated and newer forms of antiblack sentiments oftentimes completely mediate the significant bivariate effects of OFR on racial policy preferences in multivariate analyses (Bobo and Kluegel 1997; Hughes 1997; Sears et al. 1997).⁵ Other studies, however, show that OFR can erode white support for race-targeted policies even after controlling for newer forms of racial animus (Banks and Valentino 2012; McClendon 1985; Virtanen and

⁵Old-fashioned racism is assumed by Bobo and Kluegel (1997, 116) to be causally prior to these new racism because of its stronger relationship with demographics (See also Hughes 1997, 69).

Huddy 1998). It is particularly important, therefore, to assess the simultaneous effects of both attitudes since this prior research offers conflicting expectations for how the hypothesized relationship between old-fashioned racism and assessments of Obama will be affected by accounting for racial resentment.

Old-Fashioned Racism and White Opposition to Barack Obama

In order for Obama's presidency to once again make old-fashioned racism a determinant of white Americans' broader partisan preferences, these attitudes must necessarily influence their assessments of Barack Obama above and beyond that of other Democratic politicians. Figure 1 indicates that old-fashioned racism was, in fact, a stronger determinant of opposition to Barack Obama in 2008 than it was for his ideologically similar white opponent for the Democratic nomination, Hillary Clinton.⁶ The first panel graphs out the relationship between aversion to intimate interracial relationships and McCain vote intention against both Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton in the March 2008 Pew Poll referenced above. With party identification and ideological self-placement held constant, the display shows that moving from completely agreeing that it's okay for blacks and whites to date each other to completely disagreeing decreased white support for Hillary Clinton against John McCain by less than 10 percentage points. All else being equal, that same change from least to most OFR decreased Obama's vote share against McCain by more than 35 percentage points—a statistically significant difference in effects between candidates ($p < .01$, see Table A3).⁷

The next panel of Figure 1 compares the relationship between OFR and vote preference for Obama against McCain in the March 2008 Pew Poll to an early trial heat in the 2003 Pew Values Study,⁸ which matched President Bush against a generic Democratic competitor. Just like the Clinton versus McCain results presented earlier, the fourth panel of the figure shows

that old-fashioned racist attitudes were virtually unrelated to support for George W. Bush's reelection bid. In fact, the solid line in that display suggests that OFR and Democratic vote choice may not have even been negatively correlated in the 2004 election.

That slightly positive relationship between old-fashioned racism and support for the white Democratic candidate for president was replicated in the CCAP after controlling for racial resentment in the analysis. The third panel shows that with partisanship, ideology, and racial resentment held constant, moving from lowest to highest on the desire-for-social-distance scale actually increased the probability of CCAP panelists voting for Clinton by .11 against McCain. That same change in OFR, however, decreased Obama's March 2008 vote share by over 25 percentage points—a significant difference in effects between the two candidates ($p = .001$).

It is not too surprising, then, that the final panel in the display shows that opposing intimate interracial relationships significantly decreased support for Obama's Democratic nomination bid against Clinton in both the Pew and CCAP surveys. The solid line in the display indicates that moving from lowest to highest in OFR was associated with a 30 percentage point decline in primary support for Obama against Clinton among Democrats in the Pew Poll without racial resentment in the model;⁹ the dashed line shows that this same change in OFR was associated with nearly a 25 point decline in the March CCAP after controlling for resentment.

All told, these results confirm what our theoretical expectations would have already led us to believe: First, in keeping with the null influence of OFR on partisan preferences found throughout the pre-Obama contemporary era (Sears et al. 1997; Valentino and Seas 2005), white Americans' desire for intimate social distance between the races would have almost certainly had little influence on their 2008 voting behavior had John McCain faced Hillary Clinton instead of Barack Obama. Second, old-fashioned racist sentiments were a significantly stronger determinant of white Americans' opposition to his candidacy than they were for Hillary Clinton, much the way prior research showed Obama's candidacy activated racial resentment in both 2008 primary and general election voting (Kinder and Dale-Riddle 2012; Tesler and Sears 2010). It is important to note that racial resentment also remained a significantly stronger predictor of Obama-McCain vote intention than general election

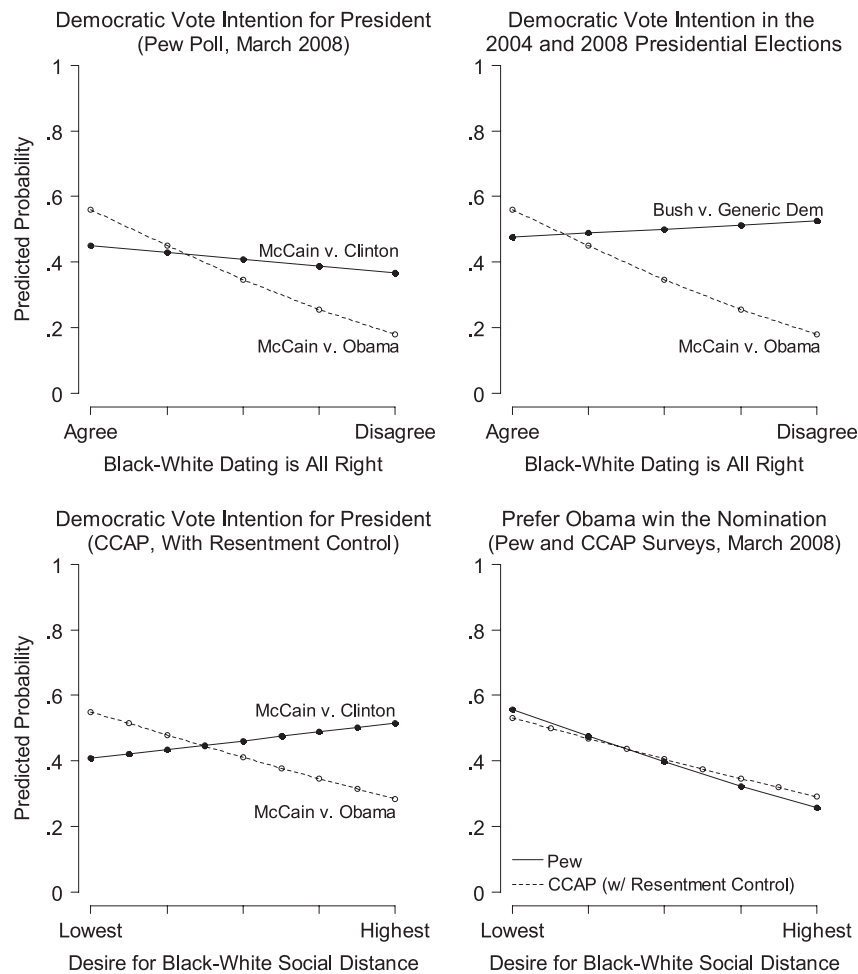
⁶Obama and Clinton had ideologically indistinguishable voting records according to their NOMINATE score (Carroll et al. 2008).

⁷The negative effect of OFR on Obama's favorability ratings was also significantly stronger than it was on white respondents' assessments of Hillary Clinton (see Table A1).

⁸Survey by Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. Methodology: conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, July 14–August 5, 2003 and based on 2,528 telephone interviews. Sample: national adult Dataset accessed from the Roper's Data Archive.

⁹Primary vote was only asked of Democrats and Democratic-leaning in the Pew Poll.

FIGURE 1 White Americans' Support for Democratic Candidates for President as a Function of Old-Fashioned Racism.



Note: Probabilities are based on logistic regression coefficients in Table A1 and Table A2 of the appendix. Probabilities were calculated by setting indicator variables for Democratic, Republican, Liberal, and Conservative self-identification, and setting racial resentment (CCAP analyses only) to their sample means.

Source: Pew Poll, March 2008; Pew Values Study, July–August, 2003; CCAP Panelists interviewed in both March 2008 and April–May 2011

support for Clinton against McCain after controlling from OFR (see Table A2). Obama’s candidacy, therefore, seems to have simultaneously activated both older and newer forms of racial conservatism in 2008 voting.

Old-Fashioned Racism and White Party Identification (1987–2011)

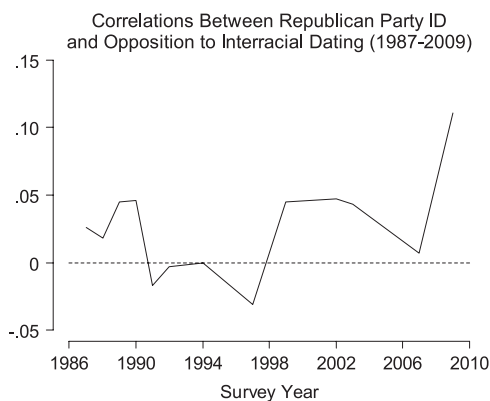
The more impactful question for American politics in the Age of Obama is whether that link between old-fashioned racist sentiments and opposition to Obama will spill over into the broader political landscape.

There is reason to suspect it might. If, for reasons discussed above, President Obama solidified the cognitive association between African-American leadership and the Democratic Party, then OFR could once again influence partisan preferences after decades of being unrelated to white Americans’ party identifications.

Bivariate Correlations between OFR and Party Identification (1987–2009)

The results in Figure 2 suggest that Obama’s presidency has indeed opened the door for old-fashioned racism to influence white partisanship. The display graphs out the bivariate correlations between party identification and white Americans’ opposition to interracial dating

FIGURE 2 Correlations between Republican Party Identification and Old-Fashioned Racism among White Americans



Note: Dependent variable is a three-category partisanship.

Source: Pew Values Study Merger File

in Pew Values Surveys conducted between 1987 and 2009.¹⁰ Figure 2 shows that this OFR measure was essentially uncorrelated with white partisanship in the surveys conducted between 1987 and 2007 (much like the null relationship in the 1996 GSS presented by Valentino and Sears 2005). The correlation between opposition to interracial dating and Republican Party identification in both the 12 pooled pre-2009 surveys and in the most recent pre-Obama PVS from 2007 was only .01. In contrast with those earlier null results, however, Figure 2 discloses a highly significant correlation ($p < .001$) between Republican partisanship and disagreeing that it is all right for blacks and whites to date each other in the April 2009 PVS.

To be sure, that significant correlation of .11 is still not especially strong. Nevertheless, these results suggest that the election of a black president from the Democratic Party—even one who has been virtually silent about racial issues during the first term of his presidency (Gillion 2012; King and Smith 2011)—has once again made old-fashioned racism a significant determinant of white partisanship after long being a dormant factor in American politics.

Obama as a Mediator of Old-Fashioned Racism

If, as just suggested, the election of Barack Obama was responsible for the significant bivariate associations

¹⁰This is 3-point partisanship because 7-point party identification was not asked in every PVS.

between old-fashioned racism and Republican Party identification found in the 2009 PVS, then we would expect mass assessments of the president to mediate that renewed relationship. Mediation occurs when an explanatory variable's influence (in this, case opposition to interracial dating) on a dependent variable (party identification) is transmitted through an intervening variable (hypothesized here to be evaluations of President Obama (; Baron and Kenny 1986). Thus, if the mediational pathway specified above is correct, then the significant relationships between party identification and old-fashioned racism should become negligible after controlling for white respondents' assessments of the president.

Consistent with that expectation, the results presented in Table 1 show that the relationship between party identification and old-fashioned racism was almost entirely mediated by evaluations of President Obama. The coefficient on OFR in the first column of the table indicates that changing from completely agreeing to completely disagreeing that it is okay for blacks and whites to date was associated with a 13% increase in the 7-point Republican identification scale's range. After controlling for white respondents' evaluations of President Obama, though, the second column of the table shows that this significant relationship between OFR and party identification was nearly reduced to zero. The results in the third and fourth columns disclose an even more dramatic mediating influence of Obama evaluations in the 2011 CCAP. In fact, the 40% increase in Republican identification associated with moving from lowest to highest on that survey's desire for intimate social distance scale was reduced to zero after controlling for white respondents' assessments of President Obama.

Taken together, then, these results suggest that the significant effects of old-fashioned racism on party identification in 2009 and 2011 were indirect, mediated by their more direct effect on mass assessments of President Obama—a finding entirely consistent with the spillover of racialization's contention that Barack Obama's presidency helped make OFR a significant determinant of white Americans' partisan attachments.

Old-Fashioned Racism and Partisan Change (2006–2011)

The cross-sectional analyses from the PVS, however, cannot tell us whether the stronger relationship between old-fashioned racism and party identification in 2009 was actually the result of white Americans'

TABLE 1 (OLS) Predictors of White Americans' Party Identifications in 2009 and 2011

	PVS [1]	PVS [2]	CAPP [1]	CCAP [2]
Old-fashioned racism	.125 (.039)	.025 (.034)	.410 (.026)	-.009 (.020)
Obama support		-.599 (.020)		-.734 (.012)
Constant	.465 (.015)	.815 (.015)	.346 (.013)	.810 (.012)
Observations	1117	1117	2276	2252

Note: The dependent variable is a 7-point partisanship, recoded from 0 (strong Democrat) to 1 (strong Republican). All explanatory variables are coded from 0 to 1, with 1 being the highest value. Regression analyses utilize poststratification weights with robust standard errors presented in parentheses.

Source: Pew Values Study, April 2009; CCAP Reinterviews, 2011 Wave.

changing their partisan attachments in accordance with their underlying racial attitudes because of Obama's rise to prominence within the Democratic Party. It could be, for instance, that some individuals changed their racial attitudes in accordance with their prior partisan preferences because Barack Obama was now the face of his party.

Table 2 therefore turns to the 2006–2008–2010 GSS Panel Study to determine the extent to which white Americans were changing their partisan attachments to comport with their preferences for racial in-marriage and vice versa. The first two columns of the table disclose the relationship between variables measured in the 2006 wave of the panel on the exact same respondents' 7-point party identifications in 2010. Those regression models include lagged dependent variables, which allow us to assess the impact of the remaining predictors on the *change in party identification* from 2006 to 2010 of the panel. In other words, this is a model of attitude change. The coefficient on in-group marriage preference in the first column of the table, therefore, indicates that white respondents who strongly preferred racial endogamy became about 7% more Republican from 2006 to 2010 than those who did not prefer their relatives marry someone of the same race—a statistically significant difference ($p < .01$).

Those modest, but significant effects of OFR on changes in white Americans' party identifications from before to after Obama became president were primarily independent of other factors too. The coefficients in the second column of Table 2, for instance, show that in-group marriage preference remained a significant predictor of partisan change after controlling for prior economic, military, religious, and racial attitudes that might have also predicted partisan change from 2006 to 2010.¹¹

¹¹Controls were limited to questions appearing on the same survey forms as the marriage items.

Moreover, the second column further discloses that racial resentment, as measured with the one item from the Kinder and Sanders battery in the GSS, was also a marginally significant ($p = .07$) predictor changes in party identification. An even more robust result was found in the CCAP reinterviews, where both old-fashioned racism and racial resentment remained highly significant ($p < .001$) and substantively important predictors of white panelists' partisan changes between December 2007 and the spring of 2011 after controlling for the other's influence (see Table A4). Much like the results from Figure 1, then, it appears that Obama simultaneously activates both older and newer forms of racial conservatism in whites' partisan preferences.

At the same time, however, the coefficients in the right-hand columns suggest that party identification, as measured in the first wave of the 2006–2008–2010 GSS panel study, did not significantly predict white respondents' changes in racial endogamy preferences between 2006 and 2010. We can therefore be more confident that the enhanced bivariate correlations between OFR and Republican Party Identification from 2007 to 2009 shown back in Figure 2 were mostly the result of white Americans changing their partisan attachments to comport with their prior racial attitudes rather than them becoming more or less supportive of interracial relationships in accordance with their preexisting partisan preferences.

In sum, the results in Figure 2, Table 1, and Table 2 all suggest that old-fashioned racism returned to white Americans' party identification in the early Obama era because the country elected an African American president from the Democratic Party. While those effects are not as large as the increased effects of racial resentment on public opinion about John McCain and health care after these evaluations were easily connected to Obama (Henderson and Hillygus 2011; Tesler 2012; Tesler and Sears 2010), these OFR results are perhaps equally impressive

TABLE 2 (OLS) Predictors of White Panelists' Party Identifications and In-Marriage Preferences in 2010

	DV: 2010 Party Identification		DV: 2010 In-Marriage Preference	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
2006 Party ID	.751 (.029)	.704 (.032)	.039 (.038)	.024 (.044)
2006 In-marriage preference	.067 (.025)	.056 (.028)	.537 (.038)	.528 (.040)
2006 Racial resentment (single item)		.063 (.034)		.066 (.045)
2006 Social spending opposition scale		.113 (.041)		.050 (.062)
2006 Defense spending support		-.030 (.027)		-.005 (.036)
2006 Bible literalism		-.000 (.030)		-.033 (.040)
Constant	.107 (.017)	.080 (.035)		.027 (.044)
Observations	635	615	634	615

Note: The dependent variable in the right columns is 7-point partisanship, recoded from 0 (strong Democrat) to 1 (strong Republican). Dependent variable on the left is a difference score, which subtracts how favorable or unfavorable white respondents would react to a close relative marrying an African American from how favorable they would feel about their relatives marrying someone of the same race, recoded from 0 (no in-marriage preference) to 1 (strongly favor relative marry a white partner and strongly oppose a black spouse). All explanatory variables are coded from 0 to 1, with 1 being the highest value. Regression analyses utilize cumulative panel weights with robust standard errors presented in parentheses.

Source: 2006–2008–2010 GSS Panel Study.

when taking into account both the well-established stability of party identification and the fact that old-fashioned racist attitudes had been unrelated to white partisanship for decades prior to Obama's rise to prominence within the Democratic Party.

Old-Fashioned Racism and White Americans' Midterm Vote Preferences (2006–2010)

Midterm vote preferences, as noted earlier, are more sensitive to short-term political dynamics like assessments of the incumbent president than mass partisanship. We might therefore expect that the spillover of OFR from Obama into white Americans' 2010 voting behavior would also have been stronger than it was for party identification.

Consistent with that expectation, Figure 3A shows that old-fashioned racism had a noticeably larger impact on white Americans' vote choices in the 2010 midterm elections than it had back in 2006. The solid line in that display graphs out the relationship between opposition to interracial dating and Democratic vote choice for the House of Representatives, as reported in the December 2006–January 2007 PVS. The display shows that desire for intimate social distance between the races had little impact on white Americans' voting behavior in the 2006 midterm elections—a result which should now be fully expected given the repeated null effects of OFR on partisan

preferences throughout the pre-Obama contemporary era. The dashed line in the figure that displays relationship between opposition to interracial dating and 2010 vote intention tells a much different story, though. That graphic shows that moving from least to most OFR decreased support for Democratic candidates by about 35 percentage points in the 2010 midterms.

If, as those results suggest, the election of Barack Obama actually activated such old-fashioned racist attitudes in the 2010 midterms, then we would once again expect mass assessments of the president to mediate the effects of OFR. Much like the mediational results presented for party identification back in Table 1, Figure 3b shows that most of the impact of opposition to interracial dating on 2010 partisan preferences was indirect, mediated by OFR's more direct effects on white Americans' assessments of Barack Obama. In fact, the strong bivariate relationship between opposition to interracial dating and 2010 midterm vote preferences was reduced back down to its 2006 levels after accounting for the significant correlation between OFR and opposition to Obama.

An Experimental Test of Obama's Activating Influence

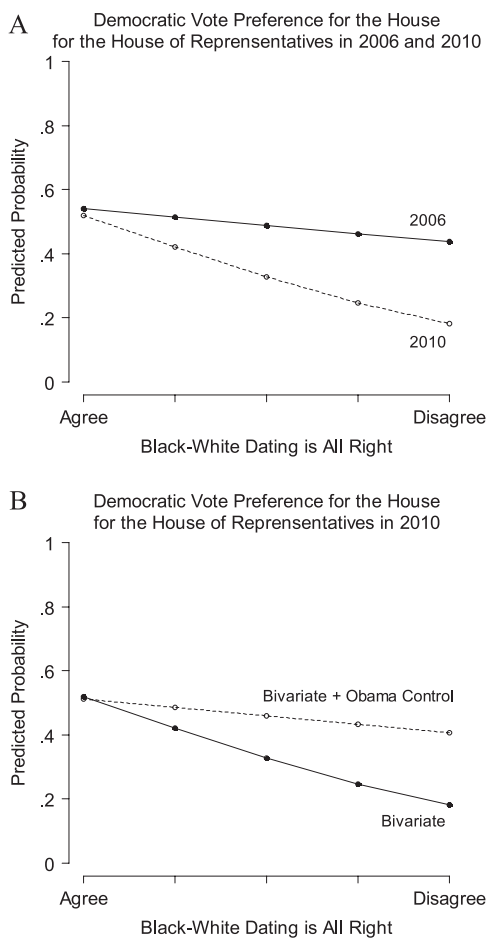
Mediational analyses, however, run the risk of overstating the causal effects if the designated mediating variable is not independent of omitted factors that also affect the dependent variable (Green, Ha, and Bulluck 2010). It is important to augment those

results, then, with an experimental test of the spill-over of racialization in order to further interrogate the causal role of public reactions to Obama's racial background in activating old-fashioned racist attitudes. As discussed above, this experiment connected candidates for congress to President Obama by telling one-half of the survey respondents that Obama had been campaigning for many Democrats and asking if a presidential endorsement would make them more or less likely to support their district's Democratic candidate for the House of Representatives. If, as Hypothesis 6 suggested, efforts aimed at connecting

Obama to political evaluations can further activate old-fashioned racist sentiments in mass opinion, then we might expect opposition to interracial dating to be a significantly stronger predictor of candidate preferences for respondents who were randomly assigned to receive this experimental manipulation.

The results in Table 3 confirm that expectation. The OLS coefficients on opposition to interracial dating in the first column indicate that moving from least to most OFR had a nonsignificant, *positive* effect on Democratic minus Republican candidate evaluations in the baseline condition after controlling for house vote intention (asked pretreatment), party identification, and ideological self-placement. In contrast with that null effect, the interaction term, Interracial Dating*Obama Prime, discloses that the same movement in OFR was associated with a 13% decrease in Democratic-Republican candidate evaluations—a

FIGURE 3 Democratic Vote Preference for the House of Representatives in 2006 and 2010 as a Function of Old-Fashioned Racism



Note: Predicted probabilities are based on logistic regression coefficients in Table A5 of the appendix. Probabilities in the bivariate + Obama control model were calculated by setting evaluations of President Obama to their sample means.
Source: Pew Values Study, December 2006-January 2007; Pooled YouGov Surveys, October 2010.

TABLE 3 (OLS) Predictors of White Americans' Democratic-Republican Congressional Candidate Favorability Ratings

	Model 1	Model 2
Opposition to interracial dating	.027 (.027)	.057 (.026)
Opposition to interracial dating* Obama Prime	-.158 (.038)	-.166 (.038)
Party identification	-.143 (.039)	-.143 (.040)
Party identification* Obama Prime	-.073 (.059)	-.067 (.060)
Ideology	-.300 (.048)	-.252 (.057)
Ideology*Obama Prime	.179 (.074)	.162 (.080)
House vote intention	-.357 (.035)	-.353 (.034)
House vote intention* Obama Prime	.044 (.051)	.065 (.051)
Racial resentment		-.118 (.038)
Racial resentment* Obama Prime		-.005 (.056)
Obama Prime	-.055 (.034)	-.058 (.036)
Constant	.893 (.020)	.929 (.023)
Observations	659	654

Note: Dependent variable is difference between Democratic-Republican congressional candidate favorability ratings, recoded from 0 (rate Republican candidate very favorable and Democrat very unfavorable) to 1 (rate Democratic candidate very favorable and Republican very unfavorable). All explanatory variables are coded from 0 to 1, with 1 taking on the highest value and/or most conservative value. Regression analyses utilize poststratification weights with robust standard errors presented in parentheses.
Source: YouGov Survey, October 2010.

highly significant difference in effects between experimental conditions ($p < .001$). The coefficients in the table's second column further show that including racial resentment in the model did not alter this significant interactive effect between OFR and the Obama prime. These experimental results, therefore, provide our clearest evidence that connecting political evaluations to President Obama can enhance the influence of OFR in white Americans' partisan preferences.

Concluding Remarks

Old-fashioned racist attitudes, as shown above, were a significant predictor of white Americans' partisan preferences—2008 presidential vote intention, 2009–2011 partisanship, and 2010 congressional vote choice—in the early Obama era after neither affecting their party identifications nor their partisan voting behavior for at least a generation prior to the 2008 election. These results obtain in spite of the fact that President Obama was substantially less likely to address issues of race during his first two years in office than his predecessors (Gillion 2012). It appears, then, that Obama's rise to prominence, rather than anything he or his party did politically, is primarily responsible for the renewed effects of OFR on partisan preferences.

These significant results persist in large part after controlling for the correlation between old-fashioned and newer forms of racial animus too. In fact, the evidence suggests that Obama simultaneously activates both OFR and racial resentment. The most plausible explanation for that dual activation is that Obama independently taps into both the classic symbolic racism theme that blacks have too much influence in politics (Sears and Henry 2005) and old-fashioned racists' concerns about the leadership of a president from a racial group whom they consider to be intellectually and socially inferior. Regardless of the reasons, though, these independent effects of both old-fashioned and newer forms of racial animus suggest that the rapidly expanding social science literature testing race-based reactions to his presidency with less blatant antiblack attitudes overlooks important information about the nature of racialized responses to his presidency.

To be sure, neither the effects of old-fashioned racist attitudes on White Americans' assessments of Barack Obama nor the spillover of OFR into related

political evaluations were as pronounced as the effects of racial resentment have been in previous research (Henderson and Hillygus 2011; Tesler 2012; Tesler and Sears 2010). The results presented in this study may still be more important, nonetheless. For, as mentioned earlier, the social group imagery associated with the parties tends to change slowly over time once it takes roots (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). *The Party of Lincoln*, perhaps most notably, retained overwhelming black support long after Republicans abandoned their Reconstruction efforts in the late nineteenth century (Weiss 1983). The enhanced polarization of white partisanship by OFR in response to Democrats becoming the *Party of Obama* could therefore leave a lasting mark on American politics that endures after he leaves office. Old-fashioned racism's influence on white Americans' 2008 and 2010 vote choices also has the potential to affect political outcomes. Indeed, Highton (2011) suggests that OFR, as measured at the state level with the PVS Merger File's interracial dating item, cost Obama between 35 and 134 electoral votes in 2008.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the election of the country's first black president had the ironic upshot of opening the door for old-fashioned racism to influence partisan preferences after OFR was long thought to be a spent force in American politics. This renewed relationship could have important implications too. We may, for instance, see an increase in racist political rhetoric since such messages should be more relevant and resonant now that OFR factors into partisan preferences. The inherently divisive nature of OFR sentiments also likely contributes to the especially rancorous atmosphere surrounding Obama's presidency.

More work, of course, is needed to understand just how this activation of old-fashioned racism will manifest itself in both elite and mass political behavior during Obama's presidency and beyond. For the time being, though, it appears that opposition to an African American president from the Democratic Party will continue providing a veritable avenue for the expression of old-fashioned racism in white Americans' partisan preferences.

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