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Chapter · April 2011

DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199735204.003.0004

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Obama-Nation? Implicit Beliefs about American Nationality and the Possibility of Redefining Who Counts as “Truly” American

Nilanjana Dasgupta and Kumar Yogeeswaran

The 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution defines American citizenship by stating that “*All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside.*” Although this legal definition draws a bright line separating who is American from who is not, the psychological boundary defining nationality is considerably fuzzier—driven by stereotypes, social norms, the context in which the question is asked, and who is answering the question. Indeed, psychological research suggests that Americans’ perceptions of who belongs in the country are often driven by subjective perceptions of who seems to be prototypical or representative of the country based on dimensions such as race. As such, people grant American identity to Whites more easily than to Blacks, Asians, and Latinos even if they were born and raised in the United States.

The 2008 campaign for the U.S. presidency offers an excellent illustration of this point: throughout the campaign season, many questioned Barack Obama’s patriotism as a “true” American. Newspaper and magazine articles, TV reports, and Internet blogs were agog with stories about the absence of a flag pin on his lapel, rumors about his religion, his middle name, and quotes from everyday citizens who stated, “I just don’t feel he’s a true American” (Todd, Murray & Montanaro, 2008). In other words, Obama’s hybrid ethnicity, his unusual name, Muslim middle name, internationally traveled childhood, and family tree spanning three continents were perceived by many to be far too different from the typical Anglo-Protestant American, which cast doubt on his patriotism. Using the 2008 Presidential election as the backdrop, the present chapter has four broad goals.

First, we will present social psychological evidence showing that doubts about ethnic minorities’ patriotism and national belongingness is not limited to Barack Obama. Rather, Americans hold strong implicit (and sometimes

explicit) assumptions that link authentic American identity with Whiteness while excluding other ethnic minority groups from being seen as “truly” American. These implicit beliefs exist despite the widespread societal endorsement of multiculturalism that embraces the idea that there are multiple ways of being American without having to look the same and assimilate into mainstream society.

Second, we will describe a series of studies from our laboratory showing that implicit race-based assumptions about nationality are not simply private beliefs that remain confined to people’s minds; rather they influence people’s actions, especially in contexts where national security and patriotism are salient, producing job discrimination and opposition to public policies endorsed by American minorities.

Third, we will identify what it might take to change implicit assumptions about national belonging and under what conditions these implicit beliefs become more inclusive vs. more exclusive. We will describe a series of studies revealing that people’s beliefs of who is American become more racially inclusive when they are exposed to ethnic minorities who appear ethnically assimilated and whose work benefits the national good. However, when the same individuals appear ethnically identified and their contributions only benefit their local community (e.g., work place, city, or state), people’s beliefs about nationality become racially restrictive. We apply these findings to the Presidential election by arguing that two critical ingredients may have helped Obama’s victory: his self-presentation as a fairly assimilated American who was not “too Black” and his ability to highlight his professional work as benefiting fellow Americans.

We conclude by projecting into the future and ask several questions about what might happen now that Barack Obama is the President of the United States. Will his presence change people’s perceptions of who is American and who is foreign? Will it affect people’s racial attitudes and support for social policies promoting intergroup equality?

THE IMPLICIT ASSUMPTION THAT THE AUTHENTIC AMERICAN IS WHITE

The United States has a unique history and immigration policy that has created a population that changes in demographics relatively rapidly across generations (Roberts, 2009). It is a country comprised of multiple immigrant groups (with the obvious exception of the original people of the land, Native Americans) whose national origins are various but whose commonality lies in shared belief in democracy, civic institutions, political and religious freedom, and economic opportunity. Although multi-ethnic, specific groups vary in

their length of immersion in mainstream American culture, their immigration history, their size and visibility, and socioeconomic and political power. As a result of these dimensions of difference between ethnic and racial groups that comprise the United States, the last half-century has witnessed great debate about the most appropriate way to be American. What are the qualities essential to be truly American? Is there only one way to be American, or are there multiple ways to express one's national identity? How can one balance national unity with strong allegiances to specific ethnic groups?

Some have argued that people can preserve their identification with ethnic groups and at the same time feel identified with a larger superordinate national group. Others have argued that these two types of identities are difficult to maintain simultaneously—thus, individuals should shed (or at least relegate to secondary status) their ethnic identity and prioritize their national identity as a way of fitting into mainstream American society and also of preserving national unity. These two opinions are captured by two popular sociocultural ideologies: assimilation and multiculturalism. Assimilation argues that people belonging to all ethnic or cultural groups that co-exist within a larger superordinate nation state should embrace a common set of cultural practices, values, language, ways of dressing, and so forth that represent the national group. Moreover, it posits that the only way to do so is by discarding or downplaying one's ethnic identity along with the values, cultural practices, and languages that come with it (Gordon, 1964; Hirschman, 1983; Schlesinger, 1992; Schmidt, 1997). Multiculturalism, on the other hand, eschews these expectations by assuming that ethnic identities are not disposable but, in fact, fundamental to one's self-concept (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). Multiculturalism, therefore, argues that group differences should not only be acknowledged but also celebrated so that people can preserve important aspects of their own identity while co-existing with other ethnic groups (Berry, Kalin & Taylor, 1977; Foster & Herzog, 1994; Moghaddam, 2008; Takaki, 1993; Taylor, 1991; Yinger, 1994).

Although multiculturalism has become the desired ideal in many parts of the United States and in many American institutions (e.g., schools, colleges, universities, businesses), empirical research reveals a great divide between the abstract endorsement of multiculturalism as a principle versus the actual practice of evaluating individuals of different ethnicities, deciding whether or not to include them within the national fold or trust them in positions of power. Recent research has found the image that spontaneously comes to mind when people think of someone who is American is that of individuals who are White—not Black, Asian, Latino, Native American, or multiracial (Devos & Banaji, 2005; Devos & Ma, 2008; Devos, Gavin, & Quintana, 2010; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2010; Yogeeswaran, Dasgupta & Gomez, 2010a).

This finding emerges both when people are asked to self-report who looks more American (Cheryan & Monin, 2005) and emerges even more strongly when their *implicit or unconscious* beliefs are assessed by measuring how quickly they group together images of individuals of various races with all-American symbols like the American flag, White House, Mt. Rushmore, bald eagle, and so forth. The logic is that if people automatically consider people of all races to be equally American, then they ought to be equally fast at grouping together faces of all races with American symbols. However, if they implicitly assume that Americans are White, then they ought to be faster at grouping American symbols with White faces compared to faces of any other ethnicity. Results from multiple studies confirm that most Americans automatically associate American symbols with Whites more than with any other ethnic group.

For White Americans, the stronger their national identification, the more they project their own ethnic characteristics onto the definition of the whole nation (i.e., the more they think American equals White; Devos et al., 2010). However, priming greater equality in American society reduces the tendency to define the nation exclusively in terms of one's own ethnic group, especially among Whites who feel strong national identification. In other words, when participants were made to think about the reduction of race-based status inequality in American society, their own national identification became unrelated to implicit assumptions of who is American. But when they were not made to think about social equality, Whites with stronger national identity expressed stronger implicit beliefs that the prototypical American was White.

Interestingly, members of some ethnic minority groups (Latinos and Asian-Americans) seem to have internalized the implicit belief that their ethnic ingroup isn't quite as authentically American as Whites (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Devos & Banaji, 2005; Devos et al., 2010). African-Americans are the exception here: African American individuals implicitly consider their ethnic group to be as American as Whites; however, they view other minority groups to be less American. Importantly, even ethnic minorities who have internalized the notion that their ethnic ingroup as a whole is less American than Whites consider *themselves* to be very much American (Cheryan & Monin, 2005). In fact, when their own national belongingness is questioned by others, they experience negative emotions and assert their cultural credentials to reclaim their American identity (Cheryan & Monin, 2005).

How Implicit Assumptions about National Identity Affected Public Opinion about Barack Obama

The public discourse about Barack Obama during the 2008 Presidential election is an excellent case in point that illustrates how the misperception that non-White individuals are somehow less American than their White peers

affects American politics. Before the election, Barack Obama did not fit most Americans' implicit idea of an authentic American, a true patriot in whose hands could rest the responsibility and national security of the land. Research conducted during the 2008 election season revealed Americans' doubts about Obama's patriotism and national belongingness; people found it easier to associate all-American symbols with White politicians who were American (Hillary Clinton) or even European (Tony Blair) than with Obama (Devos, Ma, & Gafud, 2008). The difference in the degree to which Americanness was automatically associated with Clinton over Obama was greater when their race difference was made salient rather than when their gender difference was made salient. Along the same lines, the perception that Obama was foreign rather than American was significantly stronger when people's attention was focused on his race rather than his individuality (Devos & Ma, 2008; Devos et al., 2008). Importantly, participants who implicitly viewed Obama as less American than Clinton were significantly less willing to say they would vote for him or support his campaign compared to others who did not distinguish the two candidates in terms of national identity.

These findings suggest that Obama's race aroused doubts about patriotism which in turn reduced support for his candidacy as president. More directly to this issue, another series of studies found that when American citizens were primed with an American flag they showed more implicit and explicit prejudice against African-Americans in general and greater reluctance to vote for Barack Obama as president compared to a condition in which the American flag was absent (Porter, Ferguson, Hassin, & Balcells, 2010). However, the presence versus absence of the flag either had no effect (or even an opposite effect) on people's willingness to vote for White presidential candidates (Porter et al., 2010). These data taken together with the finding that stronger national identification is correlated with stronger implicit assumptions that American-is-White (Devos et al., 2010) suggest that before the election, priming patriotism decreased support for Barack Obama because his race raised implicit doubts about his status as "truly" American.

We argue that doubts about "Americanness" were *not solely* caused by Obama's race but, rather, because he seemed too different from most Americans on *several dimensions*: his hybrid ethnicity, his unusual name, his Muslim middle name, his internationally traveled childhood, and his family tree spanning three continents, all of which were perceived to be too different from the typical Anglo-Protestant American. Research shows that although race is implicitly salient in people's definition of who is authentically American, religion is equally salient, both implicitly and explicitly. One of the primary characteristics that Americans view as important to their definition of American (in addition to love for one's country and civic engagement) is faith

in god, especially a Christian god (Carvalho & Butz, 2010; Citrin, Reingold & Green, 1990; Devos & Banaji, 2005; Schildkraut, 2007). Perhaps more importantly, the more people consider America to be a Christian nation the more resources they allocate to Christian organizations compared to other religious organizations on a university campus (Carvalho & Butz, 2010). Applying these findings to the 2008 Presidential election, we propose that Obama's Muslim middle name and the fact that some of his family members are Muslim cast doubt on his *Christian* faith. In fact, during the Presidential campaign, several conservative media commentators repeatedly emphasized Obama's middle name to subtly suggest he is not sufficiently American. As a case in point, in introducing John McCain during a campaign rally, Bill Cunningham, a conservative talk show host, repeatedly referred to McCain's opponent as "Barack Hussein Obama" with emphasis on the middle name (Lou, 2008) to prime the audience to think of him as Muslim and, by extension, to subtly encourage the conclusion that a Muslim Obama cannot be a loyal American.

There were many other instances during the long election season when doubts about Obama's patriotism bubbled to the surface. For example, during the primaries, a rumor circulated that Obama allegedly refused to recite the pledge of allegiance, which was not true (MacGillis, 2008; PBS, 2008; Politifact, 2007). Later, he was criticized for not putting his hand on his heart in customary pose while reciting the pledge during a campaign rally (MacGillis, 2008; Politifact, 2007). Keeping with the same theme, when most politicians were wearing lapel pins with the American flag to highlight their patriotism, Obama was not; he argued that wearing a flag pin paid lip service and was not the hallmark of true patriotism (Wright & Miller, 2007; Zeleny, 2007). When confronted with a barrage of criticism, however, Obama started to wear the obligatory flag pin and surround himself with American flags during campaign events to offset suspicion about his alleged lack of patriotism (Newton-Small, 2008). Finally, one persistent rumor that started during the Presidential campaign and continues to this day is the perception that Barack Obama was not born in the United States and thus cannot legitimately be the country's president (Associated Press, 2009; Nakaso, 2009; Stein, 2009). Even now, post-election, less than half of Republicans (42%) believe that Obama was born in the United States, as reported by a public opinion poll conducted by the liberal website Daily Kos in July 2009; 28% believe that Obama was foreign-born and the remaining 30% of Republicans said they were not sure. This false belief seems to be regionally based. In the South, only 47% of respondents believe Obama is American-born (the rest believe he is foreign-born or are not sure), whereas in the Northeast and Midwest, more than 90% of respondents believe he is American-born. These false rumors about Obama's birthplace and news stories about the flag pin and pledge of allegiance represent a constellation of

instances that question the authenticity of Obama's American identity and patriotism, and research suggests that these doubts may be driven by his race and perceived religion.

ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT RACE AND NATIONALITY PRODUCE DISCRIMINATORY BEHAVIOR

Although past research has shown that people view Whites as more authentically American than ethnic minorities, one may ask, what effect do these beliefs have on people's behaviors and decisions? Do these beliefs help preserve or even exacerbate structural inequalities? If Barack Obama is an instantiation of these biased beliefs, one might argue the fact that Obama won the election illustrates that even if people have doubts about ethnic minorities' "Americanness" in terms of their beliefs, these doubts do not translate into biased behavior (e.g., voting). In response, we propose that Obama's example suggests that he had a higher hurdle to cross compared to White presidential candidates to convince the American public of his patriotism and to encourage them to vote for him. His electoral victory depended on his ability to allay these doubts. Put differently, Obama's victory may be interpreted to mean that a Presidential candidate who is an ethnic minority has to outperform his or her White competitors *several times over* to win. Putting aside the specific example of President Obama, one might also ask how do implicit beliefs about nationality affect actions toward, and decisions about, ethnic minorities in general besides the specific case of the 2008 election? Do biases in beliefs encourage discriminatory action and decisions?

In the past decade, numerous social psychological studies have examined whether implicit attitudes and stereotypes that are not fully available to conscious awareness impact behavior and judgments. Collectively, these studies converge on a consistent message; implicit thoughts and evaluations of social groups impact a range of behaviors and judgments including resource allocation, voting preferences, nonverbal behavior, and even medical decisions made by doctors (for a review, see Greenwald, Poehlman, Uhlmann, & Banaji, 2009). For example, people's implicit attitudes toward negatively stereotyped groups (e.g., African-Americans, gay men) predict spontaneous nonverbal behavior such as smiling, eye contact, and friendliness when people interact with someone who is Black or gay (Dasgupta & Rivera, 2006; Dovidio, Kawakami & Gaertner, 2002; Fazio, Jackson, Dunton, & Williams, 1995; McConnell & Leibold, 2001). Similarly, implicit racial stereotypes affect the type of questions people ask Black compared to White job candidates during a job interview (Sekaquaptewa, Espinoza, Thompson, & Vargas, 2003). With regard to resource allocation, implicit stereotypes about Asian-Americans,

Jewish-Americans, and African-Americans influence people's willingness to allocate financial resources to Asian, Jewish, and Black cultural organizations (Rudman & Ashmore, 2007). And finally, implicit political preferences have been found to predict individuals' future voting behavior, even among voters who call themselves "undecided" before an election (Arcuri, Castelli, Galdi, Zogmaister & Amadori, 2008; Galdi, Arcuri & Gawronski, 2008).

Recent work from our lab has extended these findings to the domain of nationality to test whether implicit assumptions about the link between race and nationality translate into discriminatory actions and judgments against ethnic minorities. Our research has found that the more people implicitly envision the prototypical American as White, the less willing they are to hire qualified Americans who are ethnic minorities for a job in national security. However, these implicit beliefs do not influence people's willingness to hire the same individuals in a corporate job with an identical job title and type of work (Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2010). In other words, situations that highlight national loyalty are the ones where implicit assumptions about nationality elicit discriminatory hiring decisions, whereas situations where national loyalty is irrelevant are ones where assumptions about nationality have no effect. Our data confirmed that greater suspicion about ethnic minorities' loyalty and patriotism was the underlying reason driving the association between implicit American-White beliefs and biased hiring decisions (Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2010). These findings suggest that implicit assumptions linking American with White do not lead to generalized racial discrimination against ethnic minorities but instead lead to discrimination *only* in contexts where loyalty to the country is important.

In another study, we found that the more people implicitly envision the prototypical American to be White, the more negatively they evaluate an immigration policy when it is proposed by a policy-writer who is an ethnic minority but not when the same policy is proposed by a White American policy-writer (Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2010). Once again, this effect was found to occur because of greater suspicions about the national loyalty and patriotism of ethnic minorities. Additionally, based on recent research showing that political conservatives are more likely than liberals to place importance on ingroup loyalty and establishing group boundaries (Graham, Haidt & Nosek, 2009; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Janoff-Bulman, 2009), we tested whether individual differences in political ideology would influence the link between implicit assumptions about nationality and policy evaluations. We found that for political conservatives (but not liberals), stronger implicit assumptions that authentic Americans are White produced more negative evaluations of an immigration policy proposed by an ethnic minority but not when the same policy was proposed by a White American. Moreover, as

before, we confirmed that this effect occurred because political conservatives' implicit assumption that American-is-White influenced their doubts about non-Whites' national loyalty, and these doubts in turn fueled their opposition to an immigration policy proposed by a minority individual (Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2010). These findings suggest that although political liberals and conservatives may both possess implicit cognitions that authentic Americans are White, these thoughts are more likely to translate into action for conservatives who place more emphasis on national loyalty and the maintenance of clear group boundaries.

Mapping these findings to Barack Obama's presidency, these data suggest that people's unconscious tendency to perceive authentic Americans as White may influence the degree to which they support versus oppose Obama's policies concerning national borders. People who implicitly believe that American-is-White may be more opposed to policies proposed by the Obama Administration that have to do with national borders (e.g., immigration, terrorism) than others who don't believe American-is-White. Such opposition may be fueled, at least in part, by concerns about President Obama's patriotism.

In a very direct test of whether Obama's candidacy was hindered by people's tendencies to perceive authentic Americans as White, Devos and colleagues (2008) found that the less people implicitly and explicitly granted American identity to Barack Obama (compared to Hillary Clinton), the less willing they were to vote for Obama, donate money to his campaign, and rally for him. Interestingly, this pattern emerged even when Barack Obama was compared to a politician who was clearly not American—the former British Prime Minister Tony Blair—such that the less people implicitly and explicitly viewed Obama (compared to Blair) as American, the less willing they were to vote for Obama and support his candidacy for President of the United States. These studies demonstrate that beyond racial prejudice, which was at the center of media discussion during Obama's election and even today, people's unconscious and conscious beliefs about who counts as “truly” American (which is different from racial prejudice) may have also contributed toward people's willingness to support Barack Obama and his policies.

HOW TO OVERCOME ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT AMERICAN NATIONALITY

How might we make people's implicit beliefs about who is authentically American become more inclusive to encompass the multi-ethnic population of the United States? This question is closely related to the larger research literature in social psychology that attempts to understand when and how

implicit bias changes. Over the last decade, several studies have examined the conditions under which people's implicit stereotypes and prejudice change. These studies have identified a number of factors that are beneficial—the most relevant of which in the present context is the benefit of being exposed to admired members of stereotyped groups (for reviews, *see* Blair, 2002; Dasgupta, 2009). For example, research has shown that exposure to highly admired and counterstereotypical individuals via media exposure and real contact (i.e., admired African-Americans, female leaders, famous gay individuals) decrease implicit stereotyping and prejudice against the corresponding groups (Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001; Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004; Dasgupta & Rivera, 2008). Moreover, the benefit of such positive exposure on reduced implicit bias endures beyond the immediate experimental setting (Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001; Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004).

We have extended this line of research to the domain of nationality to identify what factors might increase the inclusion of ethnic minorities as being authentically American. Our research focused on two factors: (1) how prominent and noticeable individuals' ethnic identification is to others; and (2) how much their work contributes to the national good. In several experiments, we systematically varied these factors by presenting participants with biographies of admired Americans of various ethnic minority groups who: (1) either appeared to be strongly identified with their ethnicity or not particularly identified, and (2) either engaged in professional work that clearly benefited the national good or benefited the local good. We then measured participants' implicit and explicit beliefs about race and American nationality. Our results showed that exposing participants to highly accomplished ethnic minorities whose work benefited the national good made their implicit and explicit beliefs about who was truly American more inclusive of ethnic minorities. However, this benefit emerged *only* when the ethnic identity of individuals portrayed in the biographies was downplayed (i.e., these individuals appeared ethnically assimilated; Yogeeswaran et al., 2010a). The opposite result was obtained when ethnic minorities appeared strongly ethnically identified and their professional work was geared toward the local (not national) good; exposure to such individuals exacerbated implicit and explicit beliefs that American-is-White.

We also examined the impact of exposing people to admired individuals who were White Americans whose ethnic identity (e.g., Polish, German) was made prominent versus not prominent in biographies. Interestingly, results showed that making White individuals appear very ethnically identified did not reduce their ethnic group's inclusion as American, whereas the equivalent manipulation had a negative effect on ethnic minorities' inclusion as American (Yogeeswaran et al., 2010a).

Why does the definition of American become more inclusive when people see ethnically assimilated minorities whose admirable accomplishments benefit the national good? We tested this question and found that learning about such outstanding ethnic minorities bolstered belief in American exceptionalism (the idea that the U.S. has a special place among nations because it is an immigrant nation), which in turn expanded the boundaries of who is American to include the outstanding individuals participants saw and the ethnic groups to which they belong.

Similarly, one might ask: Why does exposure to ethnic minorities who appear ethnically identified and whose accomplishments don't focus on the national good restrict people's definition of who counts as American? Our results revealed that reading about such ethnic minorities increased people's fear that non-European cultural practices are contaminating American society and threatening the distinctiveness of what it means to be American; this fear and perceived threat was in turn responsible for people restricting the definition of who counts as American (Yogeeswaran et al., 2010a).

In the context of Barack Obama's historic race for the Presidency, our findings suggest that Obama's ability to downplay his ethnic identification while emphasizing his public service and contributions to the nation increased the likelihood that voters would view him as authentically American. During his campaign, Obama was able to present himself as a mainstream candidate who would represent the voice of every Americans and avoid a perception that he was, as an African-American candidate, representing only his ethnic group (Bobo & Dawson, 2009). Clearly, he walked a tightrope in terms of how much to discuss race. If he played up his bi-racial or Black identity, he may have appeared not American enough in the eyes of many voters, which in turn would have reduced their support. However, if he played down his Black identity too much, then he may have alienated Black voters. Moreover, he also had to address race-related issues when they erupted during the campaign (e.g., his March 18th, 2008 speech on race after the Jeremiah Wright controversy). Obama's racial dilemma was (and continues to be) real and supported by our research, which has found that public expression of one's ethnic identity is detrimental for ethnic minority individuals because it enhances Whites' perceptions that these individuals are not American enough (Yogeeswaran, Dasgupta, Adelman, Eccleston & Parker, 2010b). Our studies suggest that Americans are more accepting of ethnic identity provided it is expressed in private spaces (e.g., at home) but not when it is expressed in public spaces (e.g., at a mall, on the street) (Yogeeswaran et al., 2010b). These findings suggest that Obama's ability to present himself as a bi-racial or Black candidate who maintained a connection to his ethnic heritage privately while

emphasizing his public and national service increased his probability of being seen as authentically American and contributed to his electoral success.

WHAT THE OBAMA PRESIDENCY MIGHT MEAN FOR THE FUTURE

Based on the historical election of the 44th American President who identifies as African-American, who has an extended family that is multiracial, multireligious, and international, one might ask: Will Obama's presidency transform the definition of who counts as "truly" American to make it more racially inclusive? By extension, will his presence change people's racial attitudes and support for policies promoting equality? The psychological evidence thus far suggests that the answer is a proverbial mixed bag.

THE GOOD NEWS

On the optimistic side, there is good reason to believe that implicit biases are malleable (Blair, 2002; Dasgupta, 2009); they change when people are faced with highly admired members of disadvantaged groups who are clearly counterstereotypical (Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004; Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001; Dasgupta & Rivera, 2008). For example, we have found that exposure to media profiles of highly admired African-Americans decreases implicit anti-Black prejudice and the reduction in race bias endures for at least the 24 hours after which the testing is done (Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001). This finding has been replicated for other types of disadvantaged groups and extended to show that exposure to admired individuals from disadvantaged groups also makes people more willing to support civil rights policies that promote equality for the disadvantaged group to which they have been exposed (Dasgupta & Rivera, 2008). Applying these findings to the present situation, one can reasonably predict that prolonged positive media exposure to a counterstereotypical Black president will decrease implicit race bias against African-Americans as a group and, assuming that media exposure will continue to be positive, also promote a stable reduction in implicit prejudice.

Consistent with this prediction, Plant and colleagues (2009) recently reported that at the peak of the election season when coverage of Obama was high, American students at their institution showed no implicit race prejudice or stereotyping, although similar students at the same institution had shown considerably stronger bias a couple of years earlier. Moreover, participants who exhibited less implicit prejudice and stereotyping were significantly more likely to spontaneously generate names of admired Black individuals including Barack Obama when asked to mention the first five thoughts that

popped into mind when they thought of African-Americans. Moreover, positive qualities associated with Obama in particular (words like president, intelligent, politician, and government) generalized to his ethnic group as a whole, thereby attenuating the negative stereotypes typically associated with African-Americans as a group (e.g., lazy, criminality and violence). Finally, those who implicitly associated new presidential attributes with African-Americans as a group also showed significantly less implicit negativity against this group (Plant et al., 2009; but see Schmidt & Nosek, 2010).

Although the aforementioned research on the malleability of implicit attitudes is specifically focused on changes in global evaluations of, or stereotypes about, an ethnic group, one can reasonably generalize these findings to predict that having a Black president might also change people's implicit construals of who seems American. In support of this conjecture, data from our lab presented earlier (Yogeeswaran et al., 2010a) suggest that media exposure to members of ethnic minority groups who work for the betterment of the country expands the definition of who counts as American by increasing the inclusion of ethnic minorities in the national category compared to when such media exposure is absent. Seeing a Black president's picture in all federal buildings, courthouses, embassies, the Capitol, and so forth is likely to have an incremental effect by strengthening the link between Black and America (see Wittenbrink, Judd, & Park, 2001) and, perhaps by extension, also strengthen the link between "brown" and America. Other work has also shown that exposure to simply positive or admired ethnic minorities can increase the extent to which their ethnic group is perceived to be American. This suggests that media representations of Obama as an admired or positive role model may increase the extent to which African-Americans as a whole are perceived to be American (Rydell, Hamilton, & Devos, 2010).

THE BAD NEWS

On the pessimistic side, considerable research on subtyping indicates that people are cognitive misers; when faced with outgroup members who appear to be too counterstereotypical compared to the rest of their group, they are likely to subtype them as an "exception to the rule" and preserve their existing group-based beliefs because that requires less cognitive effort than changing their original beliefs (for a review, see Richards & Hewstone, 2001). However, the data suggest that although subtyping can prevent people's explicit beliefs about a group from changing, it does not seem to do so for their implicit beliefs (Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001; Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004). Applying these data to the present case, it is entirely possible that given Obama's personality and stature (e.g., intelligent, articulate, president, calm, upper-middle class) is

so different from negative Black stereotypes (e.g., unintelligent, lazy, criminal, aggressive, poor), he may be the textbook case of a subtype who will not change the people's conscious attitudes about African-Americans in general (see Bobo & Charles, 2009).

Other evidence points to a different pessimistic prediction: the election of Barack Obama as president may make many Americans believe that racism is now history and racial equality has been achieved; as a result, they may express less support for future public policies that seek to address injustice. Specifically, Kaiser and colleagues (2009) compared Americans' opinions about racial issues before and after the 2008 Presidential election. They found that after Obama's election, participants concluded that racism was less of a problem, that anyone can achieve success through effort and perseverance, less needs to be done to achieve racial equality, and they expressed less support for policies that address group-based inequality such as affirmative action, school desegregation, and diversity. In other words, ironically, Obama's victory may represent a setback for remedying structural racial injustice.

Relatedly, expressing support for Barack Obama gives people "moral credentials" as unbiased individuals and makes them feel comfortable favoring Whites over Blacks in subsequent decisions (Effron, Cameron, & Monin, 2009). Specifically, once people were given the opportunity to express support for Obama over his competitors, they were more willing to (1) describe a job as better suited for Whites in general than Blacks with no good reason and (2) decrease the amount of money allocated to an organization serving Blacks at the expense of another organization serving Whites (but this only occurred among high prejudiced participants). Like Kaiser and colleagues' work, these data suggest that endorsement of President Obama may have unintended negative consequences—it may increase race bias against African-Americans in general.

More evidence has found that Barack Obama's new role as American president has not erased subtle race bias. In a recent article, Knowles, Lowery, and Schaumberg (2010) reported that those who harbored implicit race bias before the Presidential election in November 2008 were significantly less willing to support Obama's health-care policy a year later in October 2009. This relation between implicit race bias and policy opposition was mediated by negative attitudes toward President Obama himself. To rule out the possibility that policy opposition may be driven by factors other than race bias (e.g. principled conservatism, etc.), the authors conducted a follow-up experiment testing whether the relation between implicit racial attitudes and support for the health-care policy would change if the policy was attributed to past President Clinton versus current President Obama. Results showed that greater implicit race bias significantly influenced policy opposition *only* when the policy was

attributed to Obama not Clinton, clearly suggesting that opposition to the current health-care proposal is, to some degree (but of course not entirely), colored by Americans' attitudes toward African-Americans.

Note that all these post-election studies focus on the impact that having President Obama in office has on Americans' attitudes toward race, tendency to discriminate or not, and support for public policies seeking racial equality. None of the post-election studies have explored whether having this president in office is changing people's perception of *American nationality* (i.e., who is seen as authentically American); whether it is shifting people's support for public policies to allow multiple ways of being American (e.g., in public schools, communities, in the workplace); and whether it is erasing doubts about the patriotism of ethnic minorities when they serve in roles critical to national security. These are the next generation of questions that beg exploration because they get to the heart of the historical promise of this country as a land of immigrants.

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