*Effect of the 2008 Obama Presidential Campaign on White Racial Prejudice*

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**Starting point/RQ:** How racial prejudice influences the votes of whites? Month of campaigning portrayed Obama and his family in a way that contradicts negative stereotypes white Americans have about African-Americans. The campaign provides grounds to explore the *mediated intergroup contact,* where media works as a virtual contact point that simulates face-to-face contact*.*

**Mediated intergroup contact**

The argument that people psychologically process television portrayals as if they were fist hand observations. Media exposure is assumed to influence the levels of prejudice by altering the balance of positive and negative black exemplars. Attitudes to these groups are based on the exemplars at the top of mind. Recent and short term exposure.

During the campaign the overwhelming positive examples of Obamas family shifted the scale towards positive portrayal of African Americans. Prior research shows that Obama effect is plausible, none of the studies linked the Obama with the decline of racial prejudice nor it has definitely showed that racial prejudice declined among the general population.

Subtyping as a Rival Theoretical Framework

Subtyping predict little to no change as Obama would be viewed as an exception to the prevailing racial prejudice. This argument is contrasted with majority of research suggesting prejudice is reduced with positive exemplars, especially on those who were extreme in their initial views.

**Research design**

NAES 5 wave panel survey, 2007 through 2009. Random subsample of non-Hispanic whites in wave 3, 4, and 5 (n=2636 panel subjects across 3 waves).

**Measuring racial prejudice**

Ingroup favouritism. Rank whites and blacks on dimensions such as hardworking or lazy, intelligent or unintelligent, trustworthy or no trustworthy. The difference of scores were averaged to create a scale (Cronbach Alpha = 0.9).

**Measuring exposure to Obama**

Political interest, Self-Perceived knowledge about Obama and Number of Political Televisions shows viewed.

**Results**

Overall prejudice declined over the course of the campaign. However, we do not know why. Is it because black are viewed more favourably or whites are looked less favourably. Fixed effects shows that within person change occurred in a way that attitudes changes in a positive direction towards blacks.

Was this change large or small in historical perspective? Looking at the 6 months change with comparison to ANES and GSS data is shows a strong change. The strength of the change suggests it is more than just the overall trend of prejudice reduction.

**The Impact of Exposure to Obama**

If it is the Obama effects than changes should be more stronger among people that viewed more television programs. It does happen as such. Furthermore, if it is like that than it should be that more adds reduced prejudice, that on average prejudice reduced in states that saw more ads. Prejudice declined among whites living in states where more money was spent on marketing.

**The role of Partisanship**

Negative coverage should also reduce prejudice as long as he is not portrayed according to the racial prejudice. Racial prejudice declined more among McCain supporters, if campaign was more informative to his supporters. All three interaction effects are negative.

**Social desirability**

Exposure to whites just primed whites to give more socially desirable opinions. Large amount of whites favoured whites over blacks in the first place. Randomization order, first answer questions about blacks than whites and vice versa (no effect). Panel priming – no effects. Also, prejudice declined among those who are less affected by social norms (less educated).

**Discussion and Implication**