

Obama's Economy: Conditional Racial Spillover Into Evaluations of the Economy

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Abstract

Barack Obama possesses the proverbial “Midas Touch” when it comes to race in American politics: everything he touches becomes racialized. We demonstrate this phenomenon using evaluations of the subjective performance of the economy. President Obama’s 2012 reelection campaign served as a subtle prime connecting the president to the economy, resulting in racial attitudes altering economic evaluations in 2012 to an extent never before seen. Racial attitudes influenced retrospective economic evaluations, but the effect of racial animosity was contingent on both partisanship and the presence or absence of positive information. While economic evaluations in 2012 were racialized, these effects depend on the political predispositions of the voter as well as the composition of the information environment surrounding the issue.

Does race truly define the American political experience? In particular, does the election (and reelection) of the nation’s first African American president signal a new era of “post-racial” politics or one where race is even more politically important? While Barack Obama’s race undoubtedly influenced voters (Lewis-Beck, Tien, & Nadeau, 2010) in the past two presidential elections, we examine whether racial animosity altered voters’ reliance on electoral “fundamentals” and, if so, whether this influence is constrained in some way by partisan identities or media portrayals. Tesler and Sears (2010) claim that “any issue Obama takes a public stance on might soon become polarized according to racial predispositions” (p. 92). Tesler (2012) reinforces these claims by showing that health-care policy, among other issues, became racialized under President Obama but not under President Bill Clinton. At several points in their analysis, Tesler and Sears (2010) make explicit reference to voting fundamentals, including “such *nonracial* factors as gross domestic

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product growth, presidential approval ratings, consumer satisfaction, jobs creation, terms in office, and *economic expectations*” (p. 57, emphasis added). Without diminishing the findings of Tesler and Sears, we claim that even these voting fundamentals may not be as nonracial as the authors claim.

Using observational data from the American National Election Study and experimental data, which manipulates the presence of information about economic performance, we demonstrate that retrospective economic evaluations, a key component of many economic voting models (Hopkins, 2012; Lewis-Beck & Paldam, 2000; Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier, 2000), became racialized during Obama’s presidency. Furthermore, we show that this racialization can be attenuated by the presence of positive economic information for some partisan groups.

These results raise normative questions regarding the ability of voters to form important political or economic evaluations free of influence from politically irrelevant predispositions such as racial animosity. In presidential elections before 2012, voters showed little proclivity toward relying on racial attitudes when evaluating the U.S. economy. However, our findings show that President Obama became so intricately tied to economic performance that voters could not form economic opinions without thinking of race. The result is a hidden racialization, with a diminished direct effect of racial attitudes (compared with 2008) but a previously unrealized influence of race through economic evaluations. These findings are troubling, as they suggest that subjective economic opinions may be partially informed by immaterial racial attitudes.

Relying on a similar theoretical framework as Tesler and Sears (Tesler, 2012; Tesler & Sears, 2010), we believe that Obama’s close association with and campaigning on the economy primed voters to associate Obama (an already racialized figure) with their economic evaluations, leading to racialization of economic evaluations. However, we find that presenting individuals with positive information about the economy can lead to a reduction in reliance on racial attitudes when evaluating economic performance in some cases.¹

Racial Animosity and Spillover

As the blatant, “old school” racism of the 19th century faded from American culture, scholars argued that a new type of racism took its place. This “new” racism was defined not by a belief in biological differences between the races but on the belief that Blacks do not deserve assistance from the government because they are lazy, demanding, or undeserving of help (Kinder & Sanders, 1996; Kinder & Sears, 1981). The measures of this new “symbolic” racism, deemed racial resentment, paired racial antipathy with beliefs about individualism, ostensibly forming the link between these two concepts. Gilens’s (1996) work on

¹Data for replication are available from the corresponding author.

welfare policies demonstrated the influence of these racial attitudes on policy preferences and other scholars followed suit, showing that individuals with negative attitudes toward Blacks are less supportive of spending on social welfare (Gilens, 1999; Goren, 2003, 2008; Kinder & Sanders, 1996).

Recently, scholars began to examine whether racial attitudes influence beliefs beyond the traditional policy realms of social welfare spending. While some scholars offer qualifications to the extent that race can influence policy attitudes (Goren, 2008), the idea of racial spillover entered political science with the election of President Obama. The theory claims that when Obama is closely associated with a policy, the association leads racial attitudes to influence beliefs about the policy *even when the policy itself has no racial component* (Tesler, 2012). This leads to an enhanced use of racial attitudes when voters evaluate him (Kinder & Dale-Riddle, 2012; Tesler & Sears, 2010). Spillover, however, posits a second-order effect: when Obama is closely associated with a policy, this association leads racial attitudes to influence attitudes about that policy even if the policy itself has no racial component. During Obama's first term, Tesler (2012) showed that this occurred during the health-care debate, while Tesler and Sears (2010) demonstrated this across a multitude of attitudes and behaviors.

Although Tesler (2012, 2015) argues that Obama's association with a policy, namely, health care, serves as enough of a cue to racialize the policy, the foundation of his argument rests in the racial priming literature (Mendelberg, 1997, 2001, 2008). While Tesler and Sears (2010) argue their case with evidence on voting behavior and attitudes about candidates and issue positions, we believe the effects extend further, ultimately altering one of the fundamental indicators used by scholars to predict presidential elections: economic evaluations.

We argue that Obama's close association with the national economy led to a similarly constant prime during his presidency. This relationship between racial attitudes and economic evaluations should exist to some extent for all individuals, regardless of political predispositions. We claim, however, that boundary conditions exist, which can attenuate the influence of racial attitudes. We experimentally test one possible condition (the presence of positive economic information) and demonstrate that the effects of racial predispositions can indeed be reduced, if not completely alleviated, at times.

Racial Spillover Boundary Conditions

Although racial spillover into economic evaluations should occur for all individuals, research suggests that this relationship should be conditional. We explore two possible contingencies in this article: an individual's partisan identity and the presence of positive economic information. Beginning with party identification, we adopt a view of partisanship as a social identity as advocated by Green, Palmquist, and Schickler (2002). In essence, partisanship acts as a

countervailing force for some individuals (namely, Democrats during Obama's presidency) against the influence of racial animosity on economic evaluations.

We argue that partisans are motivated to hold attitudes that confirm their identity, so Democrats should be motivated to hold positive views of the economy, while Republicans should be motivated to hold negative views (Kunda, 1990; Lodge & Taber, 2013; Taber & Lodge, 2006). For (non-Black) Democrats, President Obama represents two competing social groups: a shared in-group based on partisanship and a non-shared out-group based on race. The desire to support an in-group partisan should reduce the influence of out-group animosity based on race. Republicans, on the other hand, lack the in-group partisan affinity. This results in greater reliance on racial animus when evaluating the economy, with Republicans relying more on race, Democrats less, and Independents falling somewhere in the middle.

In addition to the potential moderating role of party identification, we test for the possibility that positive economic information reduces the influence of race on economic information. While partisan bias plays an important role in driving public opinion, conditions do exist when information cues can override these partisan beliefs (Boudreau & MacKenzie, 2014; Bullock, 2011). While these studies demonstrate the ability to overcome partisanship, we believe a similar mechanism exists to override racial attitudes as well. To the extent that racial animosity is a convenient heuristic for voters (a la heuristic and systematic processing, see Eagly & Chaiken, 1993), then positive economic policy information about the influence of President Obama should activate systematic processes and reduce reliance on heuristic cues like racial resentment.

As Bullock (2011) acknowledges, heuristics, while generally recognized as powerful drivers of public opinion, are not hegemonic. Just as partisanship can be overcome, so too can racial animosity under the correct conditions. We propose that one potential path to a reduction in reliance on racial cues is through the provision of "substantial" (in the words of Bullock) economic information that unambiguously states the facts surrounding the information. Prior research demonstrates that systematic processing is more likely to occur when messages are strong and unambiguous, especially when the task is particularly important (Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994).

Therefore, we experimentally test whether positive economic information, attributing economic gains to either President Obama or the European Central Bank, can serve as strong and unambiguous information, leading to systematic processing and a reduction in reliance on racial heuristics. Our expectation is that this positive information should reduce reliance, especially in the Obama attribution condition, as this is the least ambiguous information available to respondents. Furthermore, we expect the task of economic evaluation to be viewed as important in the context of a pending presidential election. Thus, while voters may rely on racial attitudes throughout Obama's presidency, they

should be more likely to reduce that reliance and focus on alternative policy information when the task of economic evaluation is seen as important, as it likely is during the presidential election process.

Conceptual and Operational Definitions

We define symbolic racism as prior scholars have, seeing it as a belief that Blacks are undeserving of government assistance and that they should be able to overcome challenges without additional help (Kinder & Sears, 1981). Following Tesler and Sears (Tesler, 2012, 2015; Tesler & Sears, 2010), we measure racial attitudes with the racial resentment scale commonly included on the American National Election Study (ANES). In the 2012 ANES, the racial resentment scale was asked in the postelection wave of the survey. We recognize that this scale is problematic as a measure of only racial attitudes, as it also taps individualism (Sniderman, Crosby, & Howell, 2000) and may measure different concepts depending on the ideology of the respondent (Feldman & Huddy, 2005). Nonetheless, we use this measure of racial attitudes because prior work on racial spillover effects relies almost exclusively on the racial resentment measure and because the theoretical underpinning of racial spillover relies on underlying racial animosity, *not* in-group preference (which could be captured with a measure of respondent race). However, to alleviate concerns about the potential issues with the racial resentment scale, we replicate our experimental findings using the racial attribution scale developed by Huddy and Feldman (2006, 2009).

We focus on national economic evaluations because scholars make a strong case that, to the extent that economic voting exists, voters rely on national (sociotropic) evaluations more than pocketbook (egocentric) evaluations (Kinder & Kiewiet, 1981; Lewis-Beck & Paldam, 2000; MacKuen, Erikson, & Stimson, 1992). These economic attitudes can be thought of as an individual's subjective views about the performance of the national economy. While some research has examined partisan influences on objective economic or political knowledge (Bartels, 2002; Bullock, Gerber, Hill, & Huber, 2013), we believe that the effects of racial attitudes are contained in subjective evaluations, which are thought of as an important predictor of presidential vote choice (Hopkins, 2012; Lewis-Beck & Paldam, 2000; Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier, 2000). Thus, while it may be normatively concerning for a variety of reasons if racial attitudes affected egocentric economic evaluations, to the extent that race alters sociotropic evaluations, these evaluations are likely to exert an effect on political decision-making.

Following much of the economic voting literature, we measure national economic evaluations with a question asking about economic improvement over a specified time period. For these analyses, national retrospective evaluations are measured using the 1-year retrospective question "now thinking about the

economy in the country as a whole, would you say that over the past year the nation's economy has gotten better or gotten worse?" Response options were "much better," "somewhat better," "somewhat worse," and "much worse," with higher scores coded to represent more positive evaluations of the economy. These questions were asked in the preelection wave of the 2012 ANES.

While the racial spillover hypothesis claims that Obama's association with the economy should lead voters to rely on racial resentment when evaluating the economy, this relationship could be moderated by information and/or partisanship. This moderated effect arises from a desire to avoid dissonance between economic evaluations and party identification (Aronson, 1968; Festinger, 1957; Steele & Liu, 1983), especially as individuals are directionally motivated to hold economic evaluations that confirm their partisan priors while also relying on subtle racial cues (Kunda, 1990; Lebo & Cassino, 2007; Lodge & Taber, 2013; Taber & Lodge, 2006). For Republicans, this fails to create conflict, leading to reliance on racial animosity, while for Democrats the conflict between negative racial and positive partisan associations reduces reliance on racial attitudes.² Information plays a similar role, essentially "switching off" racial influences on economic evaluations.

These concepts combine to form our theory of racial spillover into the economic realm. Obama's association with the national economic situation primes race for voters, leading to increased reliance on racial attitudes when evaluating the economy. However, both positive information and partisanship can reduce reliance on these attitudes. Of course, an alternative hypothesis exists. If racial attitudes are so pervasive and powerful as to override information and partisanship, then Obama's association with the economy should lead to universal reliance on racial animosity when evaluating the economy, regardless of the presence of informational cues or partisan loyalties.

This produces the following set of hypotheses, broadly categorized as the *unconditional* and *conditional racial spillover* hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1 (unconditional racial spillover): Individuals will rely on racial animosity when evaluating the performance of the economy under all conditions. The effects of race on economic evaluations will not be moderated by partisanship or economic information.

Hypothesis 2 (conditional racial spillover-partisanship): Individuals will rely on racial animosity when evaluating the performance of the economy, but Democrats will be less affected by racial stereotypes than Republicans and Independents.

²We note that our theory currently predicts that Democrats will be less reliant on racial resentment than Republicans, because of the potential conflict between party identification and negative racial attitudes. Importantly, there is nothing particularly consequential about the direction of party identification to this theory. That is, if President Obama was a Republican, we would predict, *ceteris paribus*, a reduction in reliance on racial resentment among Republicans, but not among Democrats or Independents. This prediction, however, could be complicated by an electorate that is increasingly sorted according to partisan and racial lines. That is, post-Obama, Democrats are more likely to be racially liberal, and Republicans are more likely to be racially conservative.

Hypothesis 3 (conditional racial spillover-information): Individuals will rely on racial animosity when evaluating the performance of the economy, but the presence of positive information about the economy will attenuate the effects of racial stereotypes.

On the other hand, racial resentment may exert no effect on economic evaluations. Economic evaluations may be so fundamental to vote choice and so tied to objective economic performance that race fails to exert any influence whatsoever on the evaluations. Alternatively, Obama's connection to the economy could have failed to be cued consistently enough to create a constant racial prime. Either situation would lead racial attitudes to not be associated with economic evaluations. This leads to the *no racial spillover* hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4 (No Racial Spillover): Individuals will not rely on racial resentment when evaluating the performance of the economy.

Methods and Results

Observational Data

We begin by adjudicating between *Hypotheses 1, 3, and 4* using data from the 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012 American National Election Studies. We predict retrospective economic evaluations with racial resentment as well as several control variables. Following the convention of past racial priming studies (Gilens, 1999; Tesler, 2012, 2015; Tesler & Sears, 2010), we restrict our analyses to White respondents only. If the *no racial spillover* hypothesis holds, we should see no effect for racial resentment in any of the years. Meanwhile, a significant effect for racial resentment in the 2012 model with a nonsignificant effect in all other models would offer support for both *Hypotheses 1 and 3*. The results from these regressions appear in [Table 1](#).³

³Close examination of [Tables 1 and 2](#) would note a significantly larger sample size in the 2012 ANES study as compared with the 2008, 2004, and 2000 studies. This is a function of the larger scale of the 2012 ANES, which included both a face-to-face and Internet sample. While the increased sample size should increase the precision of effect estimates, we note that our results are driven primarily by larger coefficients in 2012 compared with previous years, as opposed to similarly sized coefficients with smaller standard errors. Therefore, while our results in 2012 may be more precise than otherwise expected with a sample size similar to previous studies, we are confident that the results are not simply a statistical artifact. Furthermore, readers may notice larger model fit statistics in the 2004 and 2012 models than the 2000 and 2008 models. We believe this is driven by two forces. First, in 2012, as we argue, racial resentment is a stronger predictor of economic evaluations than in previous years. Thus, some of the increased explanatory weight comes from this. However, the larger influence comes from the fact that 2012 and 2004 were elections with an incumbent president. Thus, the series of control variables are predictors both of economic evaluations as well as presidential evaluations. In 2004 and 2012, presidential evaluations likely exerted a stronger influence on economic evaluations than when the incumbent was not running. Thus, we believe that the increased explanatory value comes from both the effect of presidential incumbency and the increased role of racial resentment in 2012.

Table 1
Effect of Racial Resentment on 1-Year Retrospective Economic Evaluations

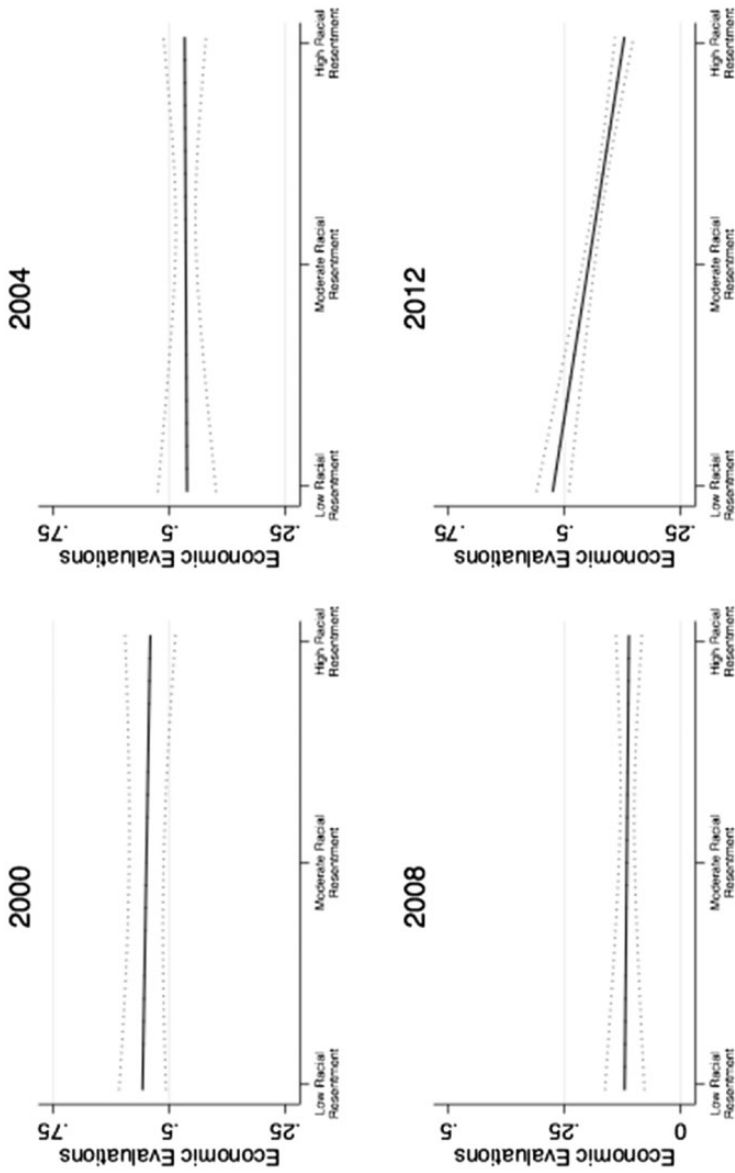
Predictors	2000 ANES	2004 ANES	2008 ANES	2012 ANES
Racial resentment	-0.02 (0.04)	0.00 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.15*** (0.03)
Party identification	-0.16*** (0.04)	0.29*** (0.04)	0.09** (0.04)	-0.16*** (0.02)
Ideology	-0.01 (0.06)	0.09 (0.06)	0.06 (0.04)	-0.23*** (0.03)
Political knowledge	0.00 (0.02)	0.02 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.09*** (0.03)
Income	-0.00 (0.12)	0.11** (0.05)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.04** (0.02)
Age	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Sex (male)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
Education	-0.01 (0.08)	0.10* (0.05)	-0.08** (0.04)	0.05** (0.02)
Unemployed	-0.02 (0.09)	-0.06 (0.07)	0.00 (0.03)	-0.00 (0.03)
Retired	0.03 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.00 (0.03)	0.00 (0.02)
Other employment	0.04 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	-0.00 (0.02)
Personal Retrospection	0.20*** (0.05)	0.17*** (0.04)	0.11*** (0.03)	0.27*** (0.02)
Constant	0.47*** (0.05)	-0.03 (0.06)	0.03 (0.05)	0.49*** (0.04)
<i>N</i>	925	642	911	2,920
<i>R</i> ²	0.09	0.32	0.11	0.39

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors in parentheses * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

As these results show, racial resentment did, in fact, exert a strong and significant influence on economic evaluations during the 2012 election, even after controlling for political and sociodemographic factors and personal economic experiences. In the previous three presidential elections, racial resentment had no influence over subjective, retrospective economic evaluations.⁴ However, in 2012,

⁴While our concern in this article is primarily with the influence of racial attitudes on subjective economic evaluations during the course of presidential elections, we recognize that these effects are not driven by the election, but rather are present as a matter of course because of President Obama's election and subsequent association with the economy. This effect can be seen in the Supplementary appendix, with Supplementary Table A1 showing that implicit racial attitudes influenced subjective evaluations in the May 2009 wave of the 2008–2009 ANES panel study and Supplementary Table A2 showing that racial resentment influenced subjective evaluations in the 2010–2012 ANES Evaluations of Government and Society study.

Figure 1
Effect of racial resentment on predicted economic evaluations, 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012.



Source: 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012 American National Election Studies.
Note: Economic evaluations run from 0 (Much Worse) to 1 (Much Better); Racial resentment runs from the lowest possible score (Low) to the highest possible score (High) on the variable, coded to run from 0 to 1.

the effect was statistically significant ($p < .001$) and substantively strong. As [Figure 1](#) shows, the effect of racial resentment in previous elections was small and insignificant, but in 2012, movement across the full range of racial resentment results in a 0.15-point decrease (on a 0–1 scale) in retrospective economic evaluations.⁵ Even a move of one *SD* more racially resentful results in a 0.04-point decrease in economic evaluations. These results offer convincing evidence that economic evaluations were racialized for the 2012 presidential election.

Substantively, an individual at the lowest end of the racial resentment scale exhibits a predicted score on the dependent variables of 0.53. This is slightly above the scale point (0.50) that corresponds to believing the economy “stayed about the same.” On the other hand, an individual at the high end of racial resentment has a predicted score of 0.37, closer to the scale point (0.25) corresponding to believing the economy is “somewhat worse” than the “stayed about the same” point.⁶

Furthermore, we can test for whether the effects are conditional on party identification. There is good reason to expect that Democrats may have competing attitudes when faced with evaluating an in-party president’s economic performance combined with their racial attitudes, which could reduce the influence of racial resentment on economic evaluations. Conversely, Republicans could experience similar motivations to negatively evaluate economic performance, which could lead to a strengthening of the influence of racial resentment.

As [Table 2](#) shows, the effect of racial resentment in 2012 is, in fact, conditional on party identification. While Democrats still rely on racial resentment when forming their economic evaluations in 2012, the significant interaction term for Republicans demonstrates that individuals who do not share the president’s party identification relied even more heavily on their racial attitudes when evaluating the economy. Movement across the range of racial resentment drove down economic evaluations among Democrats by 0.10 points, while the same movement decreased evaluations by 0.24 and 0.19 points for Independents and Republicans, respectively (although the interaction between Democrats and Independents was not statistically significant). A shift of a *SD* on racial resentment brought about changes of 0.03, 0.06, and 0.05 points for Democrats, Independents, and Republicans.

⁵ All variables except age have been scaled to run from 0 to 1, including the dependent variable.

⁶ We note that, while Hypothesis 3 predicts an interaction between information and racial resentment, we lack the ability to test this hypothesis against Hypothesis 1 in the observational data. In particular, [Bullock \(2011\)](#) uses the language of unambiguous and strong information, meaning we lack a good proxy in the ANES. While political knowledge would normally be a useful proxy for information, in this case, we do not believe that knowledge is likely to capture the underlying concept as described by Bullock. Instead, we rely on our experimental results to adjudicate between these hypotheses, where we are able to directly manipulate the presence of unambiguous, strong, and clear information.

Table 2

Effect of Racial Resentment (Conditional on Party Identification) on 1-Year Retrospective Economic Evaluations

Predictors	2000 ANES	2004 ANES	2008 ANES	2012 ANES
Racial resentment	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.06)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.10*** (0.03)
Independents	-0.19* (0.11)	0.14 (0.23)	0.06 (0.08)	0.02 (0.07)
Republicans	-0.12** (0.05)	0.13** (0.05)	0.00 (0.06)	-0.06 (0.04)
Independents × racial resentment	0.12 (0.12)	-0.15 (0.35)	0.06 (0.13)	-0.14 (0.09)
Republicans × racial resentment	0.01 (0.09)	0.07 (0.09)	0.07 (0.07)	-0.09* (0.05)
Ideology	-0.02 (0.05)	0.15** (0.06)	0.08** (0.04)	-0.25*** (0.03)
Political knowledge	-0.01 (0.02)	0.00 (0.05)	-0.00 (0.02)	0.09*** (0.03)
Income	-0.01 (0.12)	0.13*** (0.04)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.05** (0.02)
Age	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Sex (male)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)	0.02 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Education	-0.00 (0.07)	0.10** (0.05)	-0.08** (0.04)	0.05*** (0.02)
Unemployed	-0.03 (0.08)	-0.06 (0.07)	0.01 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)
Retired	0.04 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)	0.00 (0.01)
Other employment	0.04 (0.04)	0.00 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	-0.00 (0.02)
Personal Retrospection	0.20*** (0.05)	0.17*** (0.04)	0.11*** (0.03)	0.26*** (0.02)
Constant	0.47*** (0.05)	0.03 (0.07)	0.04 (0.05)	0.45*** (0.04)
<i>N</i>	925	642	911	2,920
<i>R</i> ²	0.09	0.30	0.12	0.39

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors in parentheses * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

These results demonstrate that the effect of racial resentment on economic evaluation in 2012 was conditional on party identification. Additionally, the pattern of results provides further evidence for the claims made by Tesler and Sears (Tesler, 2012, 2015; Tesler & Sears, 2010) that the effect of racial

Table 3
Effect of Racial Resentment on Candidate Vote Choice

Predictors	2000 ANES	2004 ANES	2008 ANES	2012 ANES
Racial resentment	0.22 (0.68)	-3.64*** (1.05)	-4.21*** (0.76)	-2.53*** (0.56)
Retrospective evaluations	1.31*** (0.41)	-3.48*** (1.08)	-1.48** (0.69)	3.64*** (0.49)
Personal retrospection	-1.01** (0.46)	-2.43** (1.08)	-0.11 (0.50)	0.30 (0.42)
Party identification	-6.62*** (0.85)	-5.36*** (1.07)	-4.70*** (0.68)	-5.30*** (0.46)
Ideology	-2.39** (0.97)	-3.64*** (1.20)	-3.70*** (0.97)	-4.94*** (0.58)
Political knowledge	-0.54 (0.50)	0.17 (0.61)	-0.89** (0.44)	0.43 (0.63)
Income	0.25 (1.23)	0.99 (0.92)	-0.25 (0.69)	-0.66 (0.45)
Age	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.03*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Sex (male)	-0.05 (0.24)	0.49 (0.42)	-0.05 (0.26)	-0.03 (0.23)
Education	2.66*** (0.68)	-0.63 (0.81)	-0.89 (0.65)	-0.10 (0.43)
Unemployed	1.52** (0.68)	-0.49 (0.98)	2.33*** (0.60)	0.28 (0.46)
Retired	0.01 (0.47)	0.99* (0.54)	1.03* (0.57)	-0.25 (0.34)
Other employment	0.26 (0.34)	-0.35 (0.40)	-0.48 (0.54)	0.35 (0.30)
Constant	2.24* (1.23)	9.44*** (1.61)	9.76*** (1.04)	4.73*** (0.82)
<i>N</i>	698	554	749	2,128
<i>F</i> -statistic	28.07	8.42	19.54	31.80
<i>Prob</i> (<i>F</i>)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001

Note. Unstandardized logistic regression coefficients, standard errors in parentheses * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

spillover is not simply a matter of highly racially resentful individuals becoming more negative toward an African American president. On the contrary, while we would expect partisan differences to reduce evaluations of economic performance among Republicans and Independents, regardless of levels of racial resentment, we find that Independents and Republicans are statistically indistinguishable from Democrats at the low end of the racial resentment scale (difference of +0.02 points, $p = .78$ for Independents; difference of -0.06 points, $p = .11$ for Republicans). This suggests that racial attitudes work in both directions, reducing support among those high in racial resentment and increasing support among the less racially resentful (Tesler & Sears, 2010).

The question remains, however, as to whether these retrospective national evaluations affected vote choice in these elections. Decades of

economic voting research suggest they should, but these models do not include a measure of symbolic racism, which could alter the usefulness of economic evaluations (Hopkins, 2012; Lewis-Beck & Paldam, 2000; Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier, 2000). Table 3, therefore, presents a series of logistic regressions predicting support for the Democratic presidential nominee in the past four elections. As Table 3 shows, racial resentment played an important role in vote choice in the past three elections, perhaps not entirely surprising given the Democratic Party's close connection with racialized policies such as welfare and the presence of an African American candidate on the ballot in 2008 and 2012.⁷

However, when we compare the effects of racial resentment and retrospective evaluations in 2008 and 2012, an interesting pattern emerges. Racial resentment exerts a stronger influence in 2008 than in 2012 (movement from low to high reduces likelihood of voting for Obama by 1.02 points in 2008 and only 0.62 points in 2012), but retrospective evaluations are a stronger predictor of vote choice in 2012 (0.91 points) versus 2008 (0.36 points).⁸ Of course, the difference in the effects of retrospective evaluations is partially explained by Obama's incumbency status in 2012. These results also suggest, however, that retrospective evaluations may mediate the effect of racial resentment on candidate choice.

To examine the potential for mediation, we ran a series of structural equation models to obtain estimates of the direct and indirect effect of racial resentment on vote choice through economic evaluations. Table 4 explicitly tests the potential mediation effect of racial resentment through retrospective evaluations. While the estimates are obtained through a structural equation model, we are sensitive to concerns about the more informal nonlinear combination testing under the Baron and Kenny (1986) approach (Hayes, 2009; MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002). Therefore, we use a joint significance test of the product of the causal paths (Sobel, 1982, 1986). In addition, as we have no strong assumptions about the distribution of the indirect effect, we use bootstrapped standard errors in the calculation of

⁷ While we are confident in our reliance on racial resentment as a measure of symbolic racism, scholars have raised concerns about potential confounding traits, such as individualism, egalitarianism, and support for limited government (Feldman & Huddy, 2005). In light of these concerns, we replicated the 2012 ANES analyses (the direct and interactive retrospective evaluation and Obama vote choice models) with the six-point ANES egalitarianism measure and an index of the eight federal spending items. While we lacked a direct measure of individualism, we did include the single-item obedience versus self-reliance measure from the child-rearing authoritarianism scale as a proxy for individualism. While all three produced significant effects in some of the models, the effect of racial resentment remained strong. The only exception to this was that the interaction term between racial resentment and Independents no longer achieves statistical significance, indicating that Independents are not statistically different from Democrats in their reliance on racial resentment in evaluations of the economy.

⁸ All predicted probabilities calculated for a White, female, employed, moderate, independent voter with mean levels of political knowledge, income, age, and education.

Table 4

Effect of Racial Resentment on Candidate Vote Choice, Mediated by Retrospective Evaluations

Predictors	2000 ANES	2004 ANES	2008 ANES	2012 ANES
Retrospective evaluations				
Racial resentment	-0.00 (0.04)	0.04 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.19*** (0.03)
Party identification	-0.17*** (0.03)	0.26*** (0.04)	0.11** (0.04)	-0.19*** (0.02)
Ideology	-0.01 (0.03)	0.17** (0.07)	0.09 (0.06)	-0.26*** (0.04)
Political knowledge	-0.03 (0.03)	0.05 (0.06)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.10*** (0.03)
Income	-0.01 (0.11)	0.12*** (0.04)	-0.04 (0.03)	0.08*** (0.03)
Age	0.00*** (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Sex (male)	-0.06*** (0.02)	0.04 (0.02)	0.02 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
Education	0.05 (0.06)	0.06 (0.04)	-0.06* (0.03)	0.10*** (0.02)
Unemployed	-0.01 (0.11)	-0.25** (0.10)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.01 (0.04)
Retired	0.01 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)
Other employment	0.01 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.04)	0.01 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.02)
Constant	0.55*** (0.06)	0.04 (0.07)	0.09* (0.06)	0.67*** (0.04)
Vote choice				
Retrospective evaluations	0.12*** (0.04)	-0.28*** (0.10)	-0.09 (0.06)	0.35*** (0.04)
Racial resentment	0.02 (0.07)	-0.22** (0.08)	-0.39*** (0.08)	-0.19*** (0.04)
Party identification	-0.90*** (0.04)	-0.74*** (0.12)	-0.69*** (0.07)	-0.67*** (0.04)
Ideology	-0.24*** (0.09)	-0.30** (0.12)	-0.35*** (0.09)	-0.38*** (0.05)
Political knowledge	-0.05 (0.05)	0.02 (0.05)	-0.10* (0.05)	0.02 (0.05)
Income	0.03 (0.10)	0.03 (0.07)	-0.03 (0.06)	-0.06* (0.03)
Age	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00** (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Sex (male)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.03 (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)

(continued)

Table 4
Continued

Predictors	2000 ANES	2004 ANES	2008 ANES	2012 ANES
Education	0.22*** (0.06)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.12** (0.06)	-0.02 (0.03)
Unemployed	0.14*** (0.05)	0.08 (0.13)	0.17** (0.08)	0.00 (0.04)
Retired	-0.00 (0.04)	0.06 (0.04)	0.06 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.02)
Other employment	0.02 (0.04)	0.00 (0.04)	-0.05 (0.04)	0.01 (0.02)
Constant	0.80*** (0.13)	1.29*** (0.12)	1.55*** (0.08)	1.01*** (0.06)
<i>N</i>	700	555	751	2,144

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors in parentheses * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

the indirect and direct effects (Preacher & Hayes, 2004, 2008; Shrout & Bolger, 2002).

As expected, the effect of racial resentment on vote choice in partially mediated through economic evaluation in 2012, while the effect is direct on vote choice in 2008 and 2004, with no partial mediation (and there is no direct or indirect effect of racial resentment in the 2000 data). After constructing the indirect effects of racial resentment in 2012, we find that the indirect effect of racial resentment though economic evaluations is -0.07 ($p < .001$), with a direct effect of -0.19 ($p < .001$), for a total effect of racial resentment of -0.26 . These results contrast sharply with the results from previous years. In 2008, the indirect effect of racial resentment is 0.00 ($p = .47$), while the direct effect is -0.39 ($p < .001$), with a total effect of -0.39 . In 2004, the indirect effect is again nonsignificant (-0.01 ; $p = .46$), but the direct effect is significant at -0.22 ($p = .01$). As noted above, in 2000, both the indirect (-0.00 , $p = .97$) and direct (0.02 , $p = .78$) effects are nonsignificant. In 2008, racial resentment appeared to play a slightly larger role than in 2004 or 2012 (with a larger direct effect), but the total effect size is roughly comparable across the three elections. Importantly, the effect of racial resentment is partially mediated by retrospective evaluations in 2012 (in line with our theory), while the effect in unmediated in 2008 and 2004.

Evidence from the ANES suggests an important role for racial attitudes in the 2012 election; one where racial animosity not only influences candidate evaluations and policy support but also electoral “fundamentals” such as economic evaluations, which in turn influenced vote choice. Furthermore, these effects are conditional on political predispositions, suggesting that conflicting attitudes can reduce or exacerbate the influence of racial attitudes.

Experimental Design

Observational evidence, however, only gets us so far. Therefore, we conducted an experiment in the fall of 2012 to understand the roles that information and frames play in conditioning the effects of racial resentment. We test all four hypotheses with an experiment embedded in a three-wave panel study fielded during October and November of 2012 (Chen et al., 2014). Respondents were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) online workplace. We recruited 1,800 subjects for the first wave of the panel and then recontacted respondents for participation in a second, preelection wave and a third, postelection wave. As is fairly typical of MTurk samples, our participants were generally Democratic (951 Democrats; 450 Republicans; 220 Independents) and young (the mean age was 34 years). The sample differed from the general population, as it was White (84%), skewed female (927 women; 788 men), and was fairly well educated (59% hold a college degree).⁹

Despite the fact that the MTurk sample is a convenience sample that is unrepresentative of the general population, the respondents offer a more accurate picture of the American electorate than many other experimental subject options (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012). Student samples present their own set of problems when dealing with political attitudes (Sears, 1986), and MTurk provides quicker and cheaper access to subjects than traditional representative survey experiments (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Mason & Suri, 2012). Furthermore, recent research on the quality of data obtained through MTurk suggests that the platform is appropriate for almost all experimental research that does not require a representative sample and results in high-quality data for researchers (Daly & Natarajan, 2015; Paolacci & Chandler, 2014).

While MTurk offers several benefits to researchers, the data are not without their own set of problems. As Paolacci and Chandler (2014) note, the composition of the MTurk workforce is far from representative. They tend to be younger, more educated, and, most importantly for political science studies, more liberal than the general population. These population characteristics must be considered with any analysis of MTurk data, and this study is no exception. We exercise caution, therefore, in our analysis of partisan differences in reliance on racial resentment, as partisanship is correlated with ideology. As we cannot randomly assign individuals to a particular partisan identity, these results should be viewed as merely confirmatory of the results from the previous observational analysis.

When examining the presence of positive economic information, however, we can randomly assign individuals to a specific condition (or control condition). This type of random assignment is common in psychological and political science experiments, and an experiment of this form does not require a

⁹ For more information about sample construction and survey design, see Chen et al. (2014).

representative sample. Unlike the partisanship analyses, we do not expect the underlying psychological mechanisms that drive responses to positive information to be influenced by the unique characteristics of the MTurk sample. Previous scholars have used MTurk to examine various psychological traits such as racial resentment (Hopkins, 2015), social dominance orientation, and right-wing authoritarianism (Craig & Richeson, 2014; Crawford, Brady, Pilanski, & Erny, 2013; Crawford & Pilanski, 2013). Therefore, while a liberal participant pool could alter the influence of partisanship on racial animosity, none of the demographic differences between the MTurk and general population should alter the influence of positive information on racial animosity. Thus, we express more confidence in our findings regarding information presence than we do with our experimental partisanship findings.

We note, however, that because the MTurk sample is a convenience sample populated by younger, better educated, and more liberal individuals than the general population, racial attitudes may not be distributed similarly as with the ANES. While racial resentment is roughly normally distributed in the MTurk sample, this does not reflect the negative skew of the racial resentment measure in the ANES. However, while the ANES data exhibit significant negative skew ($p < .001$), both the racial resentment and racial attribution measures in the MTurk data have significant positive skew ($p = .02$ for both measures). These significant differences on our key independent variables cannot be ignored, but they need not be detrimental to the study either. The distribution of racial resentment provides additional power to detect results among those low in racial resentment than the ANES data provide. Results from the racial attribution measure, however, should be viewed with a critical eye, as there is a distinct lack of individuals at the high end of the scale. Nonetheless, the distribution of racial attitudes in the MTurk sample demonstrates that, while more racially liberal than the general population, MTurk respondents exhibit variance, especially on measures of racial resentment.

Our experiment was embedded in the second wave of the panel and featured four different manipulations along with a control condition. In two of the conditions, participants read a short news story containing positive economic news and attributing the changes in the economy to actions taken by President Obama. The first condition conveyed positive news about the stock market and the second condition conveyed positive news about unemployment. The second two conditions contained the same positive economic information, but attributed the changes in the economy to actions taken by the European Central Bank.¹⁰ In the control condition, respondents simply

¹⁰We used the ECB in this condition because we were concerned with the potential for conflation between U.S. federal agencies and President Obama, leading to racialized evaluations of the agency (see Sheagley, Chen, and Farhart (2017) for evidence around the Federal Emergency Management Agency). We sought a financial institution that could believably influence the world economy but that would have no potential connection to President Obama and, by extension, racial attitudes associated with Obama.

answered the economic questions without reading any information about the economy. For the purpose of this analysis, we collapse the treatment groups into two conditions (Obama or European Central Bank (ECB) receiving credit for an improving economy). We collapse the treatment conditions because we are unconcerned with the segment of the economy being discussed, but rather whether the respondent received positive information about the economy. The wording of the treatments appears in the Supplementary Appendix. After reading the article, respondents were asked several questions, including the economic evaluation question referenced earlier.

We begin by replicating the observational analyses using MTurk data, with both racial resentment and racial attribution as measures of racial attitudes. We then proceed to assess the effects of our experimental treatments on economic evaluations. Again, we control for ideology, party identification, political knowledge, and income.

Experimental Results

The results from the experimental replication appear in Table 5. As Columns 1 and 4 show, racial attitudes, whether measured using the racial resentment or racial attribution measures, continue to exert a negative influence on retrospective economic evaluations. Thus, these results replicate the findings from the ANES studies, with racial resentment and racial attribution producing more negative economic evaluations.

Confident that the racial spillover into economic evaluations appears in the MTurk sample, we turn to our experimental test of *Hypothesis 3*, the *conditional racial spillover-information* hypothesis. We regress retrospective economic evaluations on racial attitudes, condition assignment, the interaction of condition and racial attitudes, and a set of control variables, which appear in Columns 2 and 5 of Table 5.¹¹ In addition, to test for the contingent effects of racial resentment on party identification and condition assignment, Columns 3 and 6 show models with a three-way interaction between condition, party identification, and racial resentment.

Owing to the difficulty in interpreting coefficients in three-way interactions, we calculated the marginal effect of racial resentment for different conditions and voter characteristics using the models in Columns 3 and 6. In support of the *conditional racial spillover-information* hypothesis, we find a significant effect for racial resentment in the control condition (-0.09 , $p = .09$) but no significant marginal effect with either positive information condition (-0.03 for the Obama condition, -0.03 for the ECB condition, both nonsignificant). The results are similar when we use the racial attribution

¹¹ We use OLS regression to run these analyses for ease of interpretation. Models were replicated using ordered logistic regression, and results do not change substantively.

Table 5
Effect of Racial Attitudes on Economic Evaluations, by Condition and Partisanship

Predictors	Racial resentment			Racial attribution		
Racial attitude	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.10** (0.05)	-0.01 (0.07)	-0.11*** (0.04)	-0.25*** (0.06)	-0.18** (0.08)
Obama condition	0.05*** (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)	0.05*** (0.02)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)
ECB condition	0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	0.03 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)
Independents	-0.13*** (0.03)	-0.13*** (0.03)	-0.11 (0.08)	-0.14*** (0.03)	-0.14*** (0.03)	-0.14 (0.09)
Republicans	-0.17*** (0.03)	-0.17*** (0.03)	-0.06 (0.08)	-0.17*** (0.03)	-0.17*** (0.03)	-0.09 (0.09)
Obama × racial attitude		0.08 (0.06)	0.09 (0.09)		0.22*** (0.08)	0.23** (0.10)
ECB × racial attitude		0.09 (0.06)	-0.02 (0.08)		0.17** (0.08)	0.12 (0.09)
Independents × racial attitude			-0.09 (0.15)			-0.03 (0.21)
Republicans × racial attitude			-0.24* (0.12)			-0.22 (0.18)
Obama × Independents			0.11 (0.15)			0.12 (0.14)
Obama × Republicans			0.01 (0.12)			-0.07 (0.12)
ECB × Independents			-0.13 (0.16)			0.02 (0.17)
ECB × Republicans			-0.01 (0.12)			-0.00 (0.11)
Obama × Independents × Racial Attribution (R.A.)			-0.22 (0.26)			-0.32 (0.32)
Obama × Republicans × R.A.			0.00 (0.19)			0.15 (0.24)
ECB × Independents × R.A.			0.34 (0.25)			0.03 (0.37)
ECB × Republicans × R.A.			0.11 (0.18)			0.09 (0.23)
Constant	0.74*** (0.05)	0.77*** (0.05)	0.72*** (0.05)	0.78*** (0.05)	0.83*** (0.05)	0.81*** (0.05)
<i>N</i>	748	748	748	759	759	759
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	0.29	0.29	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.30

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors in parentheses. Table excludes coefficients for ideology, income, age, gender, education, political knowledge, and employment status. The full model appears in the Supplementary Appendix. * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

measure, where we find a significant, negative effect for racial attribution in the control condition (-0.25 , $p < .001$), with a weaker and nonsignificant effect in the ECB condition (-0.10 , $p = .12$) and the Obama condition (-0.01 , $p = .85$). These results suggest that unambiguous and strong

information holds the potential to reduce or eliminate the influence of racial attitudes on economic evaluations, especially when that differentiating information is directly connected to a racializing figure (in this case, President Obama). However, as we note below, the lack of significant interaction terms should temper our interpretation of the effects of the manipulations.

We also found support for the *conditional racial spillover-partisanship* hypothesis after calculating marginal effects. For Republicans, economic attitudes are based on racial attitudes whether measured with racial resentment or racial attribution. The effect of racial attitudes on economic attitudes was strong and significant for both measures when examining Republicans (-0.18 , $p = .01$ for resentment; -0.20 , $p = .02$ for attribution). For Independents and Democrats, neither racial resentment nor racial attribution influence economic evaluations, but racial attribution does, although the effect is diminished for Democrats. Following the pattern in the ANES, Republicans rely more heavily on racial attitudes when evaluating the economy than Democrats or, in the case of our experimental sample, Independents. Finally, our experiment allows for a three-way test of the effects of racial attitudes. Importantly, racial attitudes fail to influence economic evaluations in the Obama condition, regardless of partisan identification (marginal effects range from 0.08 to -0.29 , all non-significant). This provides the strongest support for the *conditional racial spillover-information* hypothesis, as unambiguous economic information appears to alleviate the racial spillover effect for all respondents.¹²

The same cannot be said for the ECB and control condition. While positive information appears to attenuate the effects of racial resentment, the same is not completely true for racial attribution. In particular, respondents still rely on racial attribution when forming economic evaluations in the control condition. The effect sizes, however, are reduced, with Democrats showing stronger reliance on racial attribution in the control condition (-0.18 , $p = .03$) than the ECB condition (-0.06 , $p = .22$). The same pattern holds for Republicans, who exhibit stronger reliance in the control (-0.40 , $p = .01$) than in the ECB condition (-0.19 , $p = .15$).

We would be remiss, however, if we failed to note a lack of significant interaction terms in our models. In the fully specified racial resentment model, the only significant interaction occurs between Republican identification and racial resentment, suggesting that racial resentment exerts a stronger effect for Republicans than for Independents or Democrats (in the control condition, which is the base category). More interactions appear significant for racial attribution, with a main effect of racial attribution, as well as a significant two-way interaction between the Obama condition and racial attribution (showing a reduction in the effect of racial attribution in the Obama condition

¹² While our expectation is that the experimental treatments only influence the reliance on racial attitudes, we include a replication and discussion of a fully interactive model in the Supplementary Appendix.

for Democrats, the base category). While the three-way interactions do complicate the interpretations of the coefficients, we believe these results should be interpreted with the marginal effects that were calculated, though caution should be exercised when making claims about treatment effects.¹³

Our results demonstrate not only that racial attitudes correlated with economic perceptions during the 2012 election but also that these effects were conditional on the partisanship of the respondent as well as the presence or absence of positive economic information. Taken together, the observational and experimental results provide support for the *conditional racial spillover* hypotheses. In the ANES, racial attitudes in the 2012 election were strongly related to economic evaluations, especially among Independents and Republicans. However, the experimental results suggest that, given positive economic information, some individuals may reduce their reliance on racial animosity when evaluating the economy. President Obama's close association with the U.S. economy in 2012 primed individuals to associate their racial attitudes with their economic evaluations. We experimentally demonstrate, however, that positive information can, at times, lead individuals to reduce their reliance on racial predispositions.

Discussion and Conclusions

Our results point to two key findings. First, we confirm the findings of Tesler and Sears (Tesler, 2012, 2015; Tesler & Sears, 2010) by extending their analyses to the 2012 presidential election and show that, contrary to 2008, Obama's association with the economy racialized evaluations of an electoral fundamental (subjective economic evaluations). Second, we demonstrate the ability of positive information to reduce reliance on racial attitudes and deracialize economic evaluations.

Race continues to exert a strong influence in American politics, even over seemingly race-neutral evaluations such as subjective economic performance. Scholars of American political economy should be, especially careful when using subjective economic evaluations from the Obama presidency, as our findings suggest that race played a much more important role in the formation of these attitudes than it may have before Obama taking office. Our results imply that Obama's presidency represents a unique time of racialization of

¹³Based on the marginal effects, we can say that racial attitudes exert an influence in the control condition but do not do so in the Obama or ECB conditions with any regularity. However, because of a lack of significant three-way interactions, we cannot confidently say that the *size* of the effects in these conditions is meaningfully different from each other. Thus, the interpretation of the marginal effects tells us whether the effect of racial attitudes differs significantly from zero in that condition with the specified respondent characteristics. What it does not tell us, however, is whether that effect is significantly different from the effect in other conditions or characteristics. This is an important distinction and implies that our experimental results should be viewed as indicative of our theory. Future research should continue to investigate the potential for information to reduce reliance on race-based heuristics.

economic evaluations, and future economic voting work should account for these effects in their analyses.

While racialized economic evaluations are clearly normatively disheartening, our experimental results show that increasing access to information about the economy may reduce the influence of racial attitudes on economic evaluations at times. The presence of positive information alone was enough to eliminate the influence of racial animosity on economic evaluations under some conditions and was especially effective when that information tied economic success to the sitting president.

Subjective economic evaluations represent a significant influence on an individual's evaluations of the president's performance and are often used to predict candidate support and aggregate vote totals. This nuanced picture of the influence of race demonstrates the need to consider how information is received and used by voters as well as how Obama can racialize public opinion. Obama's race mattered greatly to individuals, as they formed their evaluations of the economy in 2012. While it mattered more for some (Republicans and Independents) than others (Democrats), racially conservative individuals exhibited lower evaluations of economic performance over the course of Obama's first term than racially liberal individuals.

The silver lining is that unambiguously positive economic information appears to reduce the influence of racial attribution on economic evaluations. When presented with this information, individuals exhibited less reliance on racial predispositions when evaluating the economy. These results imply that information can override racial predispositions and lead individuals to update their attitudes without regard for race.

Race retains its critically important role in structuring political attitudes since President Obama won the presidency in 2008. Racial attitudes influence policy attitudes and candidate preferences and, as we show, evaluations of the performance of the economy. The influence of racial attitudes, however, is conditional on party identification and can be influenced by the presence (or absence) of economic information. The influence of race can be overcome at times by simply providing people with information about the positive performance of the economy. This simple act can reduce or eliminate the influence of racial attitudes on economic evaluations. As we reflect on Obama's tenure as president, scholars would be wise to consider the broad, but conditional, reach of race on a wide variety of political attitudes and evaluations.

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Supplementary Data

Supplementary Data are available at IJPOR online.

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