Voter Affect and the 2008 U.S. Presidential Election: Hope and Race Mattered

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American National Election Studies' (ANES) 2008 national survey data were used to explore the effects of pre-election emotional responses to candidates on presidential vote. Consistent with decades of election study findings, party identification was the most influential predictor of vote choice. Nevertheless, self-reported emotional responses to Barack Obama and John McCain, specifically hope, pride, and fear, predicted reported vote choice above and beyond party identification, ideology, and other predictors. In particular, the extent to which respondents reported that Obama made them feel hopeful served as a strong and reliable predictor of voting for Obama. Additionally, implicit preference for Whites over Blacks was a significant predictor of vote choice, robust to the inclusion of standard predictive variables, although not when all of the similarly affective emotion variables were included.

Rational choice voter models (e.g., Downs, 1957) have long been influential in presidential election studies. Classical perspectives, and most likely many lay theories, presume that vote choice is an amalgam of appraisals of policy positions, governing philosophies, and competence. It is also an empirical reality that which political party voters identify with explains the lion's share of whom they vote for (Bartels, 2000; Cowden & McDermott, 2000; Miller, 1991; Stroud, Glaser, & Salovey, 2006), which can be seen as more or less rational, depending perhaps on how consistently the party's candidates represent the voter's values and preferences.

Some psychologists and political scientists, however, have turned to less coldly cognitive factors to explain preferences for candidates and voting behavior. A number of approaches have looked to voter affect (emotion, mood, and evaluation) to explain how people choose a candidate, finding that affective reactions to candidates are often more predictive of vote choice and other political preferences than are such cognitive factors as policy positions and even party identification (Abelson, Kinder, Peters, & Fiske, 1982; Conover & Feldman, 1986; Granberg & Brown, 1989; Kuklinski, Riggle, Ottati, Schwarz, & Wyer, 1991; Marcus, 1988, 1991, 2000; Marcus & MacKuen, 1993; Ragsdale, 1991; See Glaser & Salovey, 1998, for a review). It has even been demonstrated that experimental manipulations of affect (specifically, mood) can influence candidate preferences (Ottati & Wyer, 1993) because people use their affective experiences as information summarizing their preferences (Schwarz & Clore, 1983). Because affect is a core component of attitudes (Breckler, 1984; Kothandapani, 1971; Ostrom, 1969), it is not surprising that it influences political preferences. Within political science, the study of emotion's role has focused on the motivating effects of anxiety[1] and enthusiasm (e.g., Brader, 2005, study 1; Marcus, Neuman, & MacKuen, 2000), and, more recently, the effect of fear cues on political persuasion (Brader, 2005, study 2).

The 2008 U.S. presidential election was, it is now cliché to say, unprecedented. One candidate was the first African American on a major party ticket, and he won. The election also came in the context of a severe financial crisis, a deeply disliked war, and an unusually unpopular sitting president. Given the long and bitter history of racism in America, the anger and fear many Americans felt over the war and the economy, and the pervasive theme of *hope* promoted by the Obama campaign, it seems probable that emotional reactions of voters would be influential.

Roseman, Abelson, and Ewing (1986) provided experimental evidence that political appeals were especially effective when they resonated emotionally with the prevailing orientation of the audience for a particular topic. For example, happy voters respond relatively well to happy appeals. They also found that some emotions *cross-resonate* with others. Specifically, although angry voters may resonate to an angry appeal, when voters are experiencing fear, a fearful appeal will likely backfire. Instead, a hopeful appeal, perhaps serving a palliative function, will be more effective. This theory offers a promising lens through which to view the 2008 election, which occurred in a climate of considerable fear (over the economic crisis) and anger (over the Iraq war and political corruption), and entailed a salient *hope* theme.

We took advantage of the American National Election Studies' (ANES) inclusion of measures of affective reactions to major party presidential candidates

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[1] Marcus and colleagues argue that anxiety has indirect effects on political judgments by motivating more careful search for and processing of information. Ladd and Lenz (2008) have put forward evidence that emotions, including anxiety, have direct effects on candidate evaluations that better and more parsimoniously explain the relations than do information processing accounts.

to investigate the effects of emotion on voting for Obama and McCain, controlling for potentially influential variables like party identification, ideology, and voter race. In their extensive, nationally representative surveys, ANES includes questions asking respondents about the extent to which candidates made them feel afraid, angry, hopeful, and proud. Although these measures do not appear to have been widely utilized in the scientific literature, we are not the first to investigate their effects on candidate preferences. Abelson et al. (1982; see also Ottati, Steenbergen, & Riggle, 1992), using 1980 ANES data, examined the predictive efficacy of the affect measures compared with the more "cognitive" measures like candidate trait attributions (e.g., moral, dishonest, weak, knowledgeable) for the 1980 presidential election. They found that respondents' self-reported emotional reactions were comparably reliable predictors of candidate preferences, and that the negative and positive affective ratings of a given candidate were more independent of each other than were the negative and positive trait ascriptions.

Adopting an econometric approach, and controlling for other major electoral predictors like race, income, sex, age, education, and ideology, Kamhon and Yang (2001) found fear to reliably predict turnout, and all four emotions to reliably predict vote choice in the 1988 election. While respondents no doubt vary considerably in how they interpret the affect-related questions, and in the influence of affective reactions on their voter preferences, it seems that these measures have effectively explained significant portions of candidate preference variance across a number of elections, and with some variability in analytic methods.

One emotion, *hope*, is of particular interest because of the explicit emphasis placed on it by the Obama campaign. Barack Obama used it in the title of and as a prominent theme in his memoir *The Audacity of Hope* (Obama, 2006), and one of the common campaign posters featured a picture of the candidate with the single word "hope" underneath. The election took place in the context of two wars, continuing fears of terrorism, and a rapidly deteriorating economic outlook. Yet it remains an empirical question as to whether hope played a role in voters' decisions.

Not being included in the typical lists of "basic" emotions like anger, fear, sadness, and joy, hope enjoys a relatively small psychological literature, consisting mostly of work by C.R. Snyder and colleagues (e.g., Snyder, 1995, 2002; Snyder et al., 1996). With an eye toward clinical interventions, Snyder defined hope as "the perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals, and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways" (2002, p. 249). Thus, hope is seen in the scientific literature as having two crucial components, *expectation* and *agency* (Peterson, 2000). This strikes us as perhaps more complex than lay conceptions of hope, which may have more to do with expectation, and in the context of an election, this may especially be the case. On the other hand, given that another major rhetorical theme of the Obama campaign was "Yes we can," it seems that perceptions of individual and collective agency may play a role as well. The single item measure of hope used in the ANES survey cannot make this distinction.

Nevertheless, *hope* is not a particularly obscure or esoteric construct, and we think it is reasonable to assume that respondents generally have similar conceptions of it.

We also utilized data from a new indirect measure of implicit intergroup affect (i.e., prejudice) that ANES has employed, the Affect Misattribution Procedure (AMP; Payne, Cheng, Govorun, & Stewart, 2005). The AMP involves a series of trials with the rapid presentation of attitude objects (Black or White faces in the case of the ANES survey), followed by a neutral stimulus that is then evaluated. Inferences about the implicit preference for the attitude objects are drawn from the differential tendency to like or dislike the neutral stimuli that are paired with them. The AMP is one type of implicit measure, like semantic priming procedures and the Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998) that have been shown to predict discriminatory behaviors that may not be predicted by more explicit, reactive measures (e.g., questionnaires) (Dovidio, Kawakami, Johnson, Johnson, & Howard, 1997; Fazio, Jackson, Dunton, & Williams, 1995; Greenwald, Poehlman, Uhlmann, & Banaji, 2009; Hofmann, Gawronski, Gschwendner, Le, & Schmitt, 2005; Jost et al., 2009; Nosek & Smyth, 2007). Using the 2008 ANES data, Payne et al. (in press) have found that, controlling for a host of other known vote choice predictors, respondents high in an implicit preference for Whites, as indexed by the AMP, were less likely to vote for Obama. Similarly, Arcuri, Castelli, Galdi, Zogmaister, and Amadori (2008) found that an IAT measure of implicit candidate preference predicted future voting behaviors among undecided voters in an Italian election. Like the IAT, the AMP affords an opportunity to account for variance in voting attributable to implicit, generalized (positive vs. negative) affect.

Methods

Overview

Using a national sample of eligible voters, we examined the relations among self-reported emotional reactions to the two major party candidates for U.S. president in 2008, party identification, political ideology, voter race, and explicit and implicit preference for Whites over Blacks. In order to isolate the unique effects on vote choice of particular voter emotions, specifically hope, pride, anger, and fear, we tested several models using multivariate probit regressions on voting for Obama and voting for McCain, separately.

Sample

We used the Advance Release data of the 2008–2009 American National Election Studies' (ANES) Panel Study.[2] The 2008–2009 Panel Study was designed

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[2] Specifically, we used the January 31, 2009, version of the Advance Release data.

to represent those eligible to vote in the November 2008 general election—U.S. citizens who would be age 18 or older as of November 4, 2008. The sample was recruited among eligible individuals residing in a U.S. household with a landline telephone (DeBell, Krosnick, Lupia, & Roberts, 2009). The full sample consisted of 3,049 cases, and included two cohorts—one starting in January 2008, the other in September 2008. In order to include voter race in the models, we excluded respondents who did not report race as either White or Black. We treated the data as cross-sectional, using observations for the relevant independent variables from the particular wave in which the variables were included closest to, yet still prior to, the November election. Not all questions were asked in each wave of the panel; including observations for which values were available for all variables in the model resulted in a sample size of 1,623.

Variables

Dependent variables: Vote for candidate. Rather than simply predicting the choice between Obama and McCain, thereby dropping nonvoters, we followed Payne et al. (2009) in using two separate dichotomous dependent variables, wherein the score 1 represented a vote for the candidate in question, as reported post-election, and 0 represented either a vote for a different candidate or no vote at all. In this manner, one can better capture the effects of predictors on the choice *for* a candidate.[3]

Independent variables. Our independent variables included party identification, ideology, emotional responses (hope, pride, anger, fear) to each major candidate, respondent race, and both a direct and an indirect measure of racial affect. Given that our dependent variable is structured so as to incorporate voter turnout, we also tested additional models with variables traditionally used to predict turnout, including age, gender, income, educational attainment, and marital status.

Party identification, as reported by respondents in the October wave of the ANES survey, is coded 1 for Democratic and 0 for Republican. We included in this category those respondents who answered either that they identified with one of the two parties or that they identified as being closer to one party than the other (leaners).

Ideology is coded on a 7-point scale, with 1 corresponding to "extremely conservative" and 7 corresponding to "extremely liberal," also from the October assessment.

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[3] Analyses using a dichotomous Obama/McCain vote choice among those who voted for one or the other yielded similar results.

The eight emotional response variables were taken from the September wave, the last wave prior to the election in which they were measured. Each question, asked with regard to being afraid, angry, hopeful, and proud, is presented as follows: "When you think about [candidate], how [emotion] does he make you feel? Not [emotion] at all, slightly [emotion], moderately [emotion], very [emotion], or extremely [emotion]?"

Respondent race is coded 1 for Black and 0 for White.

The direct measure for racial affect (or bias) is calculated by subtracting the score on a "feeling thermometer" (warm = 1, cool = −1, neither warm nor cool = 0) toward Blacks from the same feeling thermometer toward Whites, as reported in the October wave. Possible scores for the overall measure can therefore range from −2 to 2, where higher scores reflect self-reported feelings that are relatively warm (cool) toward Whites (Blacks).

The indirect measure for implicit racial affect (or bias) is a relatively new measure ANES employed called the Affect Misattribution Procedure (AMP) (Murphy & Zajonc, 1993; Payne et al., 2005). Respondents were each shown a series of 48 Chinese characters and asked to characterize each one in succession as either more or less pleasant than a previously established average baseline. Just prior to the exposure to each character, a photograph of either a young White man's face or a young Black man's face was flashed on the screen briefly, for 75 milliseconds. Respondents were explicitly instructed to try to not let the faces influence their responses to the characters. The procedure, like other measures of implicit attitudes, has been shown to be resistant to self-presentation bias (Payne, Burkley, & Stokes, 2008). The AMP implicit racial bias variable is operationalized in the following analyses as the proportion of characters categorized as less pleasant conditioned on having been preceded by a Black face minus the proportion characterized as more pleasant conditioned on having been preceded by a Black face minus the same difference conditioned on having been preceded by White faces.[4] In this manner, the AMP captures the extent to which barely perceptible Black (more than White) faces elicit unintended negative evaluations. Respondents were presented with two separate sets of AMP stimuli—one in September and the other in October. The order was randomly assigned, with half the respondents in the September wave being presented with nonfamous Black or White faces and the other half with photographs of Barack Obama or John McCain. Respondents were presented with the alternate set in October. For each respondent, we used the wave in which they were presented the generic Black/White stimuli.

Additional demographic variables (gender, income, age, education, and marital status) were included in more saturated models analyzed. However, they did

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[4] We eliminated data from AMP trials taking more than two seconds because they very likely reflect invalid responses. We also eliminated data for those who returned the same response for all images. This had no discernable effect on the subsequent analyses.

not discernibly alter the findings and, in the interest of parsimony and clarity, are not included in the reported results.

Probit Regression

In order to test the effects of multiple variables and classes of variables on the probability of voting for a candidate, we employed multivariate probit regression. We ran three models for each candidate, adding clusters of conceptually related variables.[5] All models included party identification and ideology because these are historically influential variables and we are interested in the effects of the emotions above and beyond them. We looked first at the effects of party identification and ideology with the eight emotion questions (Model 1). Model 2 included all the variables, and Model 3 included party identification, ideology, and the AMP measure, as well as the explicit (thermometer) racial preference measure and respondent race, to determine the effect of implicit racial bias without controlling for the affect measures.[6] The continuous variables (all independent variables other than party identification and respondent race) were standardized so that the coefficients represent the marginal change in likelihood of voting for the respective candidate as a result of an increase of one standard deviation.

Results[7]

Bivariate Relations

First, we examined the simple, bivariate correlations among the variables (Table 1).[8] Due in part to the large sample size, the large sample ($n = 1623$), all of these correlations are highly statistically significant. More reassuring is the degree of coherence in the full set of correlations. All signs are in the predicted directions (i.e., variables favorable to Obama or McCain are positively related with each other and with voting for Obama or McCain, respectively). The largest correlations are between Obama vote and McCain vote, between party identification and vote

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[5] We tested 21 models in all, with no substantial difference in findings. The three reported here best describe the relevant findings.

[6] Models with Thermometer ratings or respondent race alone with party identification and ideology revealed no significant effects of the former variables.

[7] Our results are based on analyses using the Advance Release of the 2008–2009 ANES Panel Study. The Full Release data, due out December 2009, will mainly include formatting and labeling changes; though due to minor changes, replications may not be exact.

[8] Vote for Obama, Vote for McCain, party identification, and respondent race are all dichotomous variables. Correlation coefficients are not the optimal manner to present relations including such variables, but for the sake of a succinct, comprehensive presentation of all the interrelations in the model, we have adopted this method, recognizing that inferences about these bivariate relations should be made with some caution.

Table 1. Bivariate Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1 Vote for Obama	1.00													
2 Vote for McCain	−0.83	1.00												
3 Party identification	0.75	−0.75	1.00											
4 Ideology	0.65	−0.65	0.68	1.00										
5 Obama hopeful	0.73	−0.69	0.66	0.62	1.00									
6 Obama proud	0.65	−0.62	0.60	0.57	0.86	1.00								
7 Obama angry	−0.47	0.48	−0.44	−0.44	−0.53	−0.50	1.00							
8 Obama afraid	−0.58	0.60	−0.54	−0.55	−0.65	−0.60	0.72	1.00						
9 McCain hopeful	−0.62	0.64	−0.61	−0.58	−0.58	−0.51	0.48	0.58	1.00					
10 McCain proud	−0.53	0.58	−0.54	−0.49	−0.47	−0.38	0.41	0.50	0.79	1.00				
11 McCain angry	0.47	−0.45	0.45	0.44	0.52	0.50	−0.22	−0.33	−0.50	−0.46	1.00			
12 McCain afraid	0.56	−0.54	0.54	0.51	0.60	0.55	−0.28	−0.34	−0.58	−0.51	0.77	1.00		
13 Implicit bias	−0.21	0.18	−0.16	−0.19	−0.22	−0.22	0.19	0.22	0.21	0.17	−0.17	−0.17	1.00	
14 Explicit bias	−0.22	0.20	−0.19	−0.20	−0.24	−0.25	0.23	0.21	0.17	0.18	−0.17	−0.16	0.23	1.00
15 Respondent race	0.26	−0.26	0.28	0.16	0.36	0.40	−0.17	−0.22	−0.25	−0.27	0.20	0.20	−0.17	−0.18
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14

Note: All correlations in the table are statistically significant (p's $< .0001$). Vote for Obama, Vote for McCain, Party Identification, and Respondent Race are all dichotomous variables. For Party Identification, 0 = Republican, 1 = Democrat. For Ideology, high scores represent more liberal. Implicit Bias was indexed with the AMP, wherein higher scores represent preference for Whites. Explicit Bias was indexed using "thermometer" ratings wherein higher scores represent preference for Whites. For Respondent Race, 0 = White, 1 = Black.

choice, among positive and negative emotions toward the candidates separately (e.g., Obama hopeful with Obama proud), and between Obama hopeful and vote for Obama. With the exception of the Obama–McCain vote correlation ($-.83$), these are all positive correlations ranging from .72 to .86.

Multivariate Relations

Because voting decisions are determined by many factors, particularly party identification, our exploration of the effects of candidate-inspired emotions on vote choice would be more informative if we looked at the unique effects of our variables controlling for each other.

Party identification and ideology. The probit analyses on voting for Obama (Table 2, left columns) and McCain (Table 2, right columns) reveal that, consistent with decades of voting research, party identification is not only consistently significant, but is by far the most robust predictor of vote choice. The bivariate effect of ideology was much more substantially attenuated by the addition of other predictors, particularly in the Obama vote.

Specific emotions. With regard to respondents' specific emotions toward the candidates, the degree to which people report that Obama makes them feel hopeful appears to be the most influential, across all models that include it, for both candidates. Feeling hopeful because of McCain has a consistently significant negative effect on voting for Obama, but no effect on voting for McCain. Being made to feel afraid by John McCain affects both candidates in the expected direction, as does being made to feel afraid by Obama. Being made to feel angry by Obama has a marginally significant negative effect on voting for Obama, but no effect on voting for McCain. Finally, pride in McCain appears to have boosted support for him, while pride in either candidate did not affect voting for Obama. Overall, in terms of respondents' self-reports of emotional responses to the candidates, Obama appears to have had an edge, benefiting much more greatly from hope inspired by him, while McCain benefited, but to a lesser extent, from pride he inspired. Fear had comparably negative effects for both candidates.

Race and racial attitudes. It is possible that in this election, self-reported affect toward candidates is at least partly a reflection of racial preference. To control for this, we included respondent race (analyzing data from Black and White respondents only) and two measures of racial bias (indexed such that positive scores reflect preference for Whites) in the models, one explicit (a differential cool-warm, "thermometer" rating) and one implicit (the racial Affect Misattribution Procedure—AMP; Payne et al., 2005). Respondent race correlates predictably, although modestly, with vote choice (see Table 1). It also predicts vote choice for

Table 2. Marginal Change in Likelihood of Vote for Obama and Vote for McCain

	Model					
	Obama (1)	Obama (2)	Obama (3)	McCain (1)	McCain (2)	McCain (3)
Party ID	0.413***	0.434***	0.605***	−0.335***	−0.330***	−0.547***
(1 = Democrat)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.027)	(0.039)	(0.040)	(0.029)
Ideology	0.075**	0.060*	0.197***	−0.116***	−0.116***	−0.233***
	(0.024)	(0.025)	(0.021)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.021)
Obama hopeful	0.234***	0.238***		−0.197***	−0.196***	
	(0.037)	(0.037)		(0.036)	(0.036)	
Obama proud	0.002	0.023		−0.048	−0.044	
	(0.034)	(0.036)		(0.035)	(0.035)	
Obama angry	−0.075*	−0.062†		−0.018	−0.018	
	(0.037)	(0.038)		(0.024)	(0.025)	
Obama afraid	−0.081*	−0.077*		0.084**	0.084**	
	(0.034)	(0.035)		(0.028)	(0.028)	
McCain hopeful	−0.103**	−0.105**		0.031	0.032	
	(0.035)	(0.035)		(0.030)	(0.031)	
McCain proud	−0.024	−0.036		0.133***	0.131***	
	(0.030)	(0.031)		(0.028)	(0.028)	
McCain angry	−0.027	−0.029		−0.019	−0.018	
	(0.030)	(0.030)		(0.037)	(0.037)	
McCain afraid	0.089**	0.086**		−0.102**	−0.103**	
	(0.031)	(0.031)		(0.035)	(0.035)	
Implicit Bias		−0.033	−0.065***		−0.007	0.038*
(AMP)		(0.021)	(0.018)		(0.018)	(0.016)
Explicit Bias		−0.023	−0.046*		0.008	0.023
(Thermometer)		(0.021)	(0.018)		(0.018)	(0.016)
Respondent		−0.181**	0.133*		−0.051	−0.329***
Race (1 = Black)		(0.056)	(0.065)		(0.116)	(0.049)
Observations	1623	1623	1623	1623	1623	1623

***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$, †$p < 0.10$. Standard errors in parentheses.
Note: Including age, gender, education, income, and marital status did not discernibly alter the results.

Obama in the reduced multivariate model, though it has no effect on vote choice for McCain. Both pride and hope inspired by Obama individually mediate the effect of race on vote choice, and including either in a model with race significantly reduces the effect of race to the point of reversing the sign.[9] Explicit and implicit racial bias also correlate predictably with vote choice to a lesser degree. Explicit bias is not a consistently significant predictor of vote choice. Implicit bias predicts vote choice even when controlling for party ID, ideology, explicit bias, and respondent race, but not when all of the emotion variables are included. Mediational analyses reveal

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[9] The negative and significant coefficient on race in models including the emotion variables is due to our operationalization of the dependent variable, in that a 0 value represents voting for any opposing candidate *or not voting at all*. Running the same model with a dependent variable that reflects either a vote for Obama or a vote for McCain does not produce this result.

that, after accounting for the effects of party ID and ideology, none of the emotion variables alone mediate partially or fully the effect of implicit race preference on vote choice, but combined they weaken the effect to nonsignificance ($p < .121$, two-tailed, for Obama vote).

Discussion

Although the widespread discontent with John McCain's party and its standard-bearer, the deeply unpopular sitting president, may well have been the decisive factor in the election, Barack Obama had to overcome anti-Black stereotypes and attitudes that are evident in implicit (e.g., Greenwald et al., 2009) and explicit (e.g., Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Krysan, 1997) measures, as well as large audit studies of racial discrimination (e.g., Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). The AMP effects, revealing that those with stronger implicit preference for Whites were less likely to vote for Obama and more likely to vote for McCain, indicate that Obama's race was an electoral handicap, making his effective *hope appeal* all the more essential. Roseman et al.'s (1986) finding that hopeful political messages are the most effective for fearful audiences offers a promising mechanism with which to explain at least part of Obama's success.

The finding that an implicit measure of racial bias predicts something as deliberative as presidential vote choice (in this unique case where there was a Black candidate) contributes to a growing literature demonstrating predictive validity of implicit measures for real world behaviors (see Jost et al., 2009, for a review). The AMP employs rapid presentation of pictures of Blacks and Whites that respondents are instructed to ignore, so any evaluative bias detected by it is one that operates largely unintentionally. That the AMP measure explained significant variance, even when controlling for voter race, ideology, party identification, explicit racial attitude, and standard demographic variables, provides further evidence that implicit bias is related to consequential outcomes. The reduction in the AMP effects when all the emotion variables were included perhaps reflects the shared affective, even gut-level nature of both types of variables.

It is interesting that the explicit thermometer rating race-preference measure has no unique effects on something as deliberative as vote choice, while the implicit AMP measure does. It is not that the questionnaire measure is too taboo and reactive to elicit any meaningful variance—it correlates reliably and predictably with other measures and vote choice in the bivariate analyses. It is probable that the AMP, measuring a disposition that is likely outside of conscious awareness and control, and therefore immune to self-presentation bias, is tapping a very different source of variance in racial attitudes, one that is nevertheless predictive of vote choice.

The present study found hope, fear, and pride to explain unique variance in presidential vote choice in 2008. Future research should compare the magnitude

of the effects of emotional reactions toward candidates across elections to determine, for example, if hope played an unusually large role in the 2008 election. Such comparisons would not necessarily be able to determine definitively whether spontaneous hopeful reactions to Obama were influential. It is alternatively possible that his campaign's emphatic message of hope found a more receptive audience among those positively disposed toward him anyway, although the robust effects of hopefulness when controlling for party identification, ideology, and the other emotions in this study indicate otherwise.

This study is not intended as an omnibus vote choice model. There were many other variables not explored here, including the multitudinous attitudes people hold toward policy positions and governing philosophies on which the candidates differed, although much of that variance is no doubt captured by the party identification and ideology variables. Nevertheless, whether merely a cunning campaign strategy, a politically fortuitous natural personality trait, or some combination of the two, Obama's optimistic, positive demeanor appears to have been an influential ingredient in a successful electoral recipe, in spite of the challenge posed by continuing racial bias.

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