

CHAPTER 1

The Impact of the Obama Campaign on White Racial Attitudes

Frederick Douglass, who escaped from slavery in 1838 to become a leading abolitionist, said that he had less than one chance in 60 million of becoming president.¹ One hundred and seventy years later, on November 4, 2008, Barack Hussein Obama became the first African American to win a presidential election. As one resident of New Orleans said, “I never dreamed in my lifetime that I would see a black man as President of the United States. I was a kid growing up under Jim Crow. We couldn’t drink out of the same water faucet—but now it seems that America has changed.”² Civil rights leader and U.S. representative John Lewis concurred: “This is unreal, it’s unbelievable. But I tell you, the struggle, the suffering, the pain and everything that we tried to do to create a more perfect union, it was worth it.”³

Obama’s election in 2008 seemingly represented a breakthrough; he was the first African American to win a major party’s presidential nomination, even before going on to win the presidency. As Harvard law professor Randall Kennedy put it, “Never before has a candidate so fully challenged the many inhibitions that have prevented people of all races, including African Americans, from seriously envisioning presidential power in the hands of someone other than a white American.”⁴ For white Americans, this book suggests, the effects of exposure to Obama during the campaign went well beyond a new capacity to envision a black man in the White House: white Americans’ ongoing exposure to a heavily counterstereotypical black individual changed what came to mind when they

thought about African Americans more generally. The event itself—Obama’s campaign and subsequent election—changed white racial attitudes even as it was transpiring. The aim of this book is to look at how and why white racial attitudes changed during this period.

Despite the groundbreaking nature of Obama’s election, a veritable cottage industry of academic research on this topic has focused almost exclusively on an old theme in the study of racial politics: the influence of white racial prejudice on vote choice. For example, the central conclusion in *Obama’s Race: The 2008 Election and the Dream of a Post-Racial America* by Michael Tesler and David Sears is that the 2008 election was more polarized by racial attitudes than any other presidential election on record.⁵ Likewise, the central point of Donald Kinder and Allison Dale-Riddle’s *The End of Race?* is that racism was an important factor in the 2008 vote.⁶

Indeed, evidence consistently shows that prejudice cost Obama votes among white Americans. Combining various estimates from the studies just mentioned suggests that in a color-blind America Obama would have won about five percentage points more of the popular vote. This is politically consequential, to be sure, but is it really surprising that prejudice stopped some whites from voting for a black man? Would anyone have predicted otherwise?

After the election, many scholars suggested that it was indeed surprising that Obama’s race influenced vote choice and cited a “conventional wisdom” that Obama transcended race—that his election signaled “the end of race” or a “postracial” America. If these terms are taken to mean that race is no longer a significant or important influence in American society, then such claims appear to be largely contrived and of dubious origin. We suggest that this thesis is one to which few, if any, ever actually subscribed at the time Obama was elected, and one that is far too easily blown away by the facts. As one observer, David Hollinger, commented, “What were those prophets of post-ethnicity and post-raciality smoking when they started talking in those terms? The gap between what is being refuted and what is being affirmed is a discursive Grand Canyon.”⁷ Precisely because this argument is so easy to refute, Hollinger suggests, it obscures other important questions.

Thus far, this “straw man” has garnered the bulk of attention in research regarding the Obama election. And the repeated decimation of this thesis has been taken to mean that there is little about the Obama campaign and election that is meaningful with respect to understanding race relations. Obviously, his campaign alone could not miraculously change the disadvantaged status of

black Americans. Nor could it suddenly make all Americans color-blind. But in a “competition to show just how bad racism still is,” as Hollinger describes it, scholars may have overlooked what may be a more surprising, and ultimately more practical, observation: during the course of the 2008 campaign, whites systematically declined in the extent to which they thought more highly of their own white in-group over African Americans.⁸ This significant decline occurred during the brief period of only a few months when Barack Obama was campaigning to become president of the United States.

No one will be surprised to hear that our own study was not designed with this particular hypothesis in mind. Six months after this panel survey was launched in October 2007, it was still unclear whether Obama would even be the Democratic Party’s nominee for president. Moreover, the dominant assumption among many social scientists has been that racial attitudes are highly stable, only changing slowly over the course of many years, if at all.⁹ A growing body of research portrays intergroup conflict as a fundamental human characteristic that is passed down genetically, hardwiring people to separate the world into “us” and “them.”¹⁰ Nevertheless, over the course of only six months, white racial attitudes clearly changed in a systematic direction during the 2008 presidential campaign.

For some, Barack Obama’s history-making nomination for president and ultimate victory on November 7, 2008, were powerful symbols of progress in American race relations. Yet the Obama campaign not only reflected change but was itself a contributing factor in reducing white racial prejudice. Our panel data allow us to show that the same individuals who were most exposed to the Obama campaign also exhibited the largest declines in racial prejudice.

This central finding was the impetus for our exploration of changes in racial attitudes. Our study draws on the 2008 National Annenberg Election Study’s (NAES) large, nationally representative, five-wave panel survey to understand the beneficial effects of exposure to Obama during the campaign on racial prejudice. We started with an unusually large sample of 20,000 people and tried to interview them up to five times over the course of just over a year; thus, it was possible to analyze which people actually changed their views in a systematic direction during the course of a single campaign. Furthermore, our data allow us to link change in specific independent variables to individual change in racial attitudes.

Most research on the causes of racial attitudes has relied on cross-sectional samples rather than over-time panel evidence. As a result, we know a lot about the correlates of negative attitudes toward blacks, but relatively little about

what changes racial attitudes over time. Experiments have done much better at helping us understand change, but this approach cannot be used to observe spontaneously occurring changes in racial attitudes as events naturally unfold.

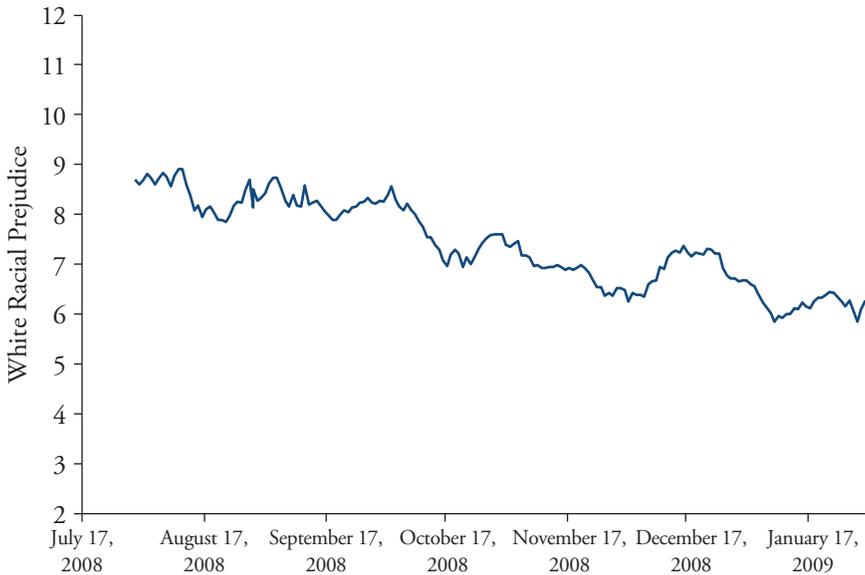
In addition to panel analyses, this study was also designed to track gradual change in smaller aggregates from week to week. Continuous tracking was made possible by randomizing the date of each respondent's interview within each of the panel waves. In this fashion, each week's interviews could be treated as a separate random sample for purposes of tracking change during shorter periods of time within each wave. Although the week-to-week tracking of aggregates lacks the statistical power and explanatory capabilities of the individual-level panel data, it is extremely useful for confirming that the time of a particular data collection was not an abnormal, unrepresentative snapshot of what was actually transpiring over time. In short, we have benefited from a wealth of data on changes in racial attitudes during this period of time and have been able to marshal this evidence toward an understanding of why the campaign affected white Americans as it did.

Figure 1.1 provides an overview of the trend that initially caught our attention. We plot levels of white racial prejudice from the summer of 2008 through Obama's inauguration in the winter of 2009. There is a gradual, but nonetheless clear, trend toward lower levels of white prejudice against blacks. Notably, this downward trend begins long before Obama is elected, and continues up to his inauguration.

In chapter 2, we discuss further the many difficulties of measuring prejudice. But here, consistent with many previous measures of racial prejudice, non-Hispanic whites were asked to rate both blacks and whites on a variety of different characteristics, including scales that tapped "hardworking" to "lazy," "intelligent" to "unintelligent," and "trustworthy" to "untrustworthy." At different points in the survey, and in a randomized order, whites were asked to rate their own racial group (their in-group) and blacks (their relative out-group). We calculated whites' level of "in-group favoritism," or racial prejudice, by looking at the difference between how positively individuals regarded their own racial group relative to African Americans. This is a standard and widely used measure of racial prejudice—one with demonstrable consequences for evaluations of race-related public policies and black political leaders.¹¹

As seen in the past when this technique has been used to tap ethnocentrism more generally¹² or white-black prejudice more specifically,¹³ overwhelmingly most people rate their own in-group more favorably than they do out-groups.

Figure 1.1 Aggregate Change in White Racial Prejudice During the 2008 Presidential Campaign



Source: 2008 NAES Panel Survey.

Note: Range is 0 to 100, where 0 indicates an absence of prejudice and higher positive values indicate higher levels of prejudice, although within each wave 95 percent or more of the values fall within a range of 0 to 40. Data are smoothed by fourteen-day prior moving average and are unweighted. For statistical tests of whether whites changed their racial attitudes significantly, we analyzed the data as a three-wave panel in a fixed-effects model of within-person change. The model predicts change in white racial prejudice based on time—that is, dummy variables for waves 4 and 5, with wave 3 as the excluded reference category—and controls for the order in which the racial groups (in-group and out-group) were asked about. The model shows significant within-person change from wave 3 to wave 4 ($-1.07, p < 0.001$) and from wave 3 to wave 5 ($-2.08, p < 0.001$) ($N = 2,636$). The means and standard deviations for waves 3, 4, and 5 are 8.16 (15.01), 7.10 (14.57), and 6.09 (13.20) ($N = 2,636$).

This was the case for whites' evaluations of themselves relative to blacks as well, so the average aggregate scores for all dates are positive. In other words, by our measure most white Americans exhibited racial prejudice before, during, and after the 2008 campaign. Nonetheless, a quick glance at figure 1.1 makes it clear that something happened, and it happened gradually over the course of a single campaign rather than over years or generations. The extent to which

whites evaluated themselves more highly than African Americans changed in a consistently less prejudiced direction throughout the 2008 campaign.

The finding in figure 1.1 is the central puzzle motivating this book. Fortunately, we have an unusually rich compendium of data with which to explore this trend. First, we benefit from a large sample of panelists, each of whom provided three or more waves of panel data for most analyses. In addition, because the same people were surveyed multiple times during the course of the campaign, our analyses benefit from tremendous statistical power. Not only can we evaluate which kinds of people changed the most, but we also can assess change at the level of the individual in relation to change over time in potential causes. Although the overall trend is toward less prejudice, it inevitably masks the fact that some individuals became more negative toward blacks and others changed little, if at all. This individual-level variance is ultimately very useful in understanding what drives these changes over time.

In addition to measures of racial prejudice, our study also includes indicators of related concepts that aid us in understanding this trend, such as perceptions of race relations. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, our study includes unusually extensive means by which we can measure individual levels of exposure to the campaign itself so as to test a variety of competing theories that might explain this phenomenon.

We are not the first to suggest such an effect from the Obama campaign and election. In a recent article, Susan Welch and Lee Sigelman noted that white attitudes toward blacks were more positive in 2008 than in 2004, after little change during the preceding decade.¹⁴ This observation prompted them to posit an “Obama Effect,” whereby exposure to Obama’s campaign reduced white racial prejudice. Because the data they had to work with were sparse—only one assessment every four years—and because there was some decline already visible since 1992, it was difficult for them to draw strong conclusions about whether this was a continuation of an earlier trend or an effect of Obama’s emergence as an important figure in American politics. Moreover, the aggregate snapshots from every four years left open many plausible alternative interpretations. Nonetheless, Welch and Sigelman made a strong case that, at the very least, Obama’s campaign accelerated the previous trend.¹⁵

Unfortunately, the current understanding of what moves racial attitudes is limited at best. Nonetheless, we think Welch and Sigelman’s general idea is probably spot-on. The huge amount of media attention garnered by Obama during the campaign made him, at least for a period of time, by far the most

prominent African American in the United States. As they suggest, “No other black elected official in the United States has been nearly as visible or salient as Obama has become.”¹⁶ During the campaign itself, Obama’s image enjoyed greater prominence than that of any other African American—from any walk of life, political or otherwise. Although they could not pinpoint when these changes occurred or by what process, Welch and Sigelman concluded that between 2004 and 2008 whites’ views of blacks became more positive, even more so than expected given the earlier trend.

Our study picks up where theirs left off. We posit a specific theoretical framework for understanding an “Obama Effect,” drawing on social psychological research on the impact of prominent exemplars in changing attitudes toward out-groups. While some Americans liked Obama’s politics and others did not, he was uniformly perceived to be an example of a highly successful, intelligent, and charismatic black American. As part of a highly accomplished and intact nuclear family, he directly contradicted many of the negative stereotypes held by white Americans about black men in particular. In experimental settings, exposure to counterstereotypical examples of African Americans has caused white subjects to express more positive views of blacks. For example, in one study, treatment subjects filled out a questionnaire that surreptitiously exposed them to likable and extremely successful African Americans such as Oprah Winfrey and Michael Jordan. In a later, seemingly unrelated questionnaire, these respondents who had been exposed to the counterstereotypical exemplars expressed less stereotypical views of African Americans. Either their stereotypes of blacks were improved through this exposure or their negative stereotypes were simply made less salient than more positive associations, thus leading to more positive overall evaluations.¹⁷

The flooding of white Americans’ television screens with positive black exemplars is only one of several potential processes of influence that we explore. Most importantly, we suggest that instead of dismissing Obama’s campaign as a “non-event” because it did not end racism, it is important for scholars to understand the change that did occur and how it was related to Obama’s campaign and election. Particularly because ongoing racism is undoubtedly important, we need a better understanding of how and why racial attitudes change when they do. Experimental studies have given us some insight into this process, primarily into very short-term changes in laboratory settings, but predicting and documenting changes in racial attitudes as they occur naturally in the real world is no easy feat. In this case, because the trend was part of a

well-documented, large-scale panel study surrounding the 2008 election, we have the opportunity to study a shift in racial attitudes more decisively than is usually possible. We also explore, using individual-level data, the probable causes of this change. Understanding the causes of change in racial attitudes provides the leverage needed to engineer still further change.

As a recent review of research on prejudice reduction noted, “It is ironic but not coincidental that the largest empirical literature on the subject of prejudice—namely, public opinion research on the subject of race and politics—has little, if any connection to the subject of prejudice reduction.”¹⁸ Despite the fact that public opinion research is central to our understanding of prejudice, as well as the source of most of our theories of prejudice, it treats prejudice as a stable attribute of individuals caused by long-term social forces beyond virtually anyone’s control.

There are some notable exceptions to this generalization. For example, Zoltan Hajnal studied the effect of black mayors on white racial attitudes.¹⁹ He suggests that the election of blacks to public office has consequential effects on whites’ attitudes. These beneficial outcomes include reducing white fears about blacks and black leaders, improving race relations, and increasing the likelihood that they will subsequently vote for a black candidate. According to his theory, these changes occur because after a black mayor is elected, whites learn from this experience that their interests will not suffer under black leadership, and thus they become more positive in their attitudes toward blacks more generally: “The contrast between their fears and the reality is so stark,” Hajnal notes, “that whites are forced to reevaluate blacks and black leadership.”²⁰

Of course, in the case of our evidence, it cannot have been the experience of having a black president serving in office that produced the benefits we documented. As we have seen, the beneficial effects occurred long before Obama had a chance to serve as president. Moreover, those benefits could not have derived from a lessening sense of economic competition between blacks and whites: this decline in negative out-group attitudes occurred at the same time that the economy was plunging into the Great Recession. By the time of the 2008 election, the severity of the economic decline was well known and could hardly be overlooked. This downward trend should have produced, if anything, increasing interracial tensions, according to realistic group conflict theory.²¹ Given these issues, we turned to alternative theories that were a better fit to the timing and circumstances of this change.

As we describe at greater length in chapter 4, the theory that best explains this systematic trend is what we call mediated intergroup contact, operating by means of a process of exemplification.²² In a nutshell, what this means is that during this period of time people were being exposed to unusually large amounts of media coverage of Obama, coverage that countered negative racial stereotypes. This mediated exposure served as a surrogate form of positive intergroup contact: when whites thought about African Americans, what came to mind was a highly salient positive exemplar, Barack Obama, as opposed to the many negative exemplars often seen on television.²³

Although prejudice was certainly not eliminated during this short period of time leading up to the 2008 presidential election, many people—especially those with more negative initial views of African Americans—changed their attitudes in a more positive direction as a result of mediated exposure. Importantly, we think that these changes occurred largely without people’s conscious awareness and independently of partisan politics as traditionally understood. In other words, it did not matter if people liked Obama-the-candidate or his policies. Instead, a far more subtle process of influence was at work. As Obama became increasingly prominent in the media, what came to people’s minds when they thought of African Americans changed for the better.

Although mediated intergroup contact is certainly not the same as face-to-face contact, psychologists point out that it has many of the same advantages without some of the key drawbacks. In general, positive intergroup contact has been found to have beneficial effects for racial attitudes.²⁴ But one of the central impediments to the kind of contact that is beneficial is the anxiety that people experience in face-to-face interracial contexts. Anxiety and feelings of threat are known barriers to achieving the benefits of intergroup contact.²⁵ Moreover, those with high levels of anxiety are likely to avoid face-to-face intergroup encounters.²⁶

In this respect, mediated intergroup contact is particularly advantageous because it provides opportunities for “contact” without the anxiety often characterizing face-to-face intergroup interactions. Other forms of “indirect” or “extended” contact have also been shown to improve out-group attitudes, such as learning that an in-group friend is friends with an out-group member.²⁷ Even imagining having face-to-face contact with an out-group member can improve attitudes toward the out-group as a whole, thus making the idea of mediated intergroup contact less far-fetched.²⁸

If our theory is correct—if mediated exposure to Obama during the campaign did help to reduce racial prejudice—then we should expect to see a

number of clear patterns in our results. First, the decline in white in-group favoritism should have occurred primarily because whites' attitudes toward blacks improved, not because whites' attitudes toward their own in-group became more critical. Second, the amount of change that occurred during the campaign should be large relative to what recent historical fluctuations suggest is typical for a six-month period. Third, if the process of influence operates irrespective of people's politics and partisanship, as exemplification theory suggests, then racial attitudes should improve even among Obama's political opponents. In fact, because conservatives, on average, typically have more negative views of blacks than liberals do, the Obama exemplar ought to contrast with their preexisting views the most, thus producing far more change than among those for whom a positive black exemplar is less unexpected. Fourth, and most importantly, whites who experienced the most exposure to Obama through the media should exhibit the largest improvements in their views of African Americans. We test these hypotheses in the chapters that follow.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The remainder of the book carefully evaluates our central finding and several related patterns, while evaluating theoretical explanations as to why, under what conditions, and for what reasons positive change in racial attitudes appears to have occurred during the 2008 presidential campaign. In part I, we outline this puzzle in considerable depth: how is it that after decades of seeming stagnation in white racial attitudes in America, racial attitudes changed systematically and significantly during such a brief period of time? Chapter 2 explores the thorny issue of measuring racial attitudes in public opinion surveys. How can we be sure that the trends we observed are not an artifact of the way in which in-group and out-group attitudes were measured? Did people give more socially desirable answers in the context of increased attention to race? Looking for evidence of social desirability, assimilation, and contrast effects, we took advantage of the fact that fresh samples of respondents were added throughout the panel study, enabling us to examine possible panel conditioning effects and the impact of attrition on the representativeness of the sample. We were ultimately reassured that the change occurred, that it is worthy of our attention, and that it is sizable in historical perspective.

Part I also examines the extent to which other race-related attitudes changed during the 2008 campaign. Specifically, in chapter 3 we assess change over time in perceptions of race relations. Did whites also change their perceptions

of how well whites and blacks are getting along with one another in American society? We examine trends in perceptions of past, present, and future race relations as the Obama campaign unfolded. Consistent with the trend in figure 1.1, chapter 3 shows that white perceptions of race relations became increasingly positive during the campaign, and that this was true whether people were asked retrospectively or prospectively about race relations. Thus, a sense of interracial optimism was clearly pervasive even before Obama's victory.

While documenting the changes that took place during this period of time, part I is largely descriptive in scope. In part II, we draw on a larger body of data to investigate a range of possible theoretical explanations for the trends described in part I. It is virtually certain that whatever it was about the campaign that influenced racial attitudes reached white Americans via mass media; whatever the impetus, only mass media could have brought something to mass public attention in this fashion. In chapter 4, we elaborate on the theory of mediated intergroup contact, arguing that extensive, mass mediated exposure to counterstereotypical images of Obama changed the kinds of associations that were most salient in whites' minds when they thought about African Americans. By using repeated measures of both exposure and racial attitudes, we explain change over time in white racial attitudes as a function of changes in the quality and quantity of media coverage. The innumerable images of Obama and his family, who sharply countered negative racial stereotypes, changed the balance of positive and negative black exemplars portrayed in mass media from mostly negative to mostly positive. Whereas the usual exemplars of blacks in mass media associate blacks with criminality, scandal, and poverty, Obama and his family looked like they were "out of central casting," as one broadcaster put it.²⁹ Consistent with this theory, whites who initially held the most negative stereotypes of blacks experienced the greatest improvement in racial prejudice during the campaign, and those who were likely to see Obama and his family as deviations from expectations were most affected.

Because we used a large-scale, multi-wave panel of whites for these analyses, we are able to make much stronger causal arguments than are allowed by most observational studies. Thus, we can establish that the changes were systematic rather than random fluctuations, and that they were tied to changes in media exposure. Nonetheless, mediated intergroup contact is not the only possible theoretical explanation. In chapter 5, we explore several plausible alternative interpretations by focusing greater attention on the specific kinds of media coverage about race that were prominent during this period. We use

a large-scale analysis of media content to describe the major kinds of coverage that Obama's campaign received, focusing on key aspects of coverage that might change racial attitudes. Interestingly, we find that race and racism were at best minor themes during the campaign itself, and thus the capacity of the coverage of these themes to trigger widespread change in racial attitudes was limited. We rule out several rival theoretical explanations represented by other types of campaign coverage, such as discussion involving themes of racial unity between whites and blacks.

Finally, part III skips ahead from 2008 to 2010 shortly before the midterm elections. One of the key questions posed by our findings is whether the change in racial attitudes that we have outlined persisted. Thus, two years after the initial study, we went back into the field and recontacted a representative subsample of the initial panel participants. The central question we wanted to address was whether and to what extent the changes we observed during the campaign were sustained as both coverage of Obama and citizens' interest in politics waned after the election. Chapter 6 outlines the results of this examination and what they suggest about the long-term potential for prejudice reduction.

In the concluding chapter, we take a step back and consider the malleability of out-group attitudes and the ability of mass media to both reduce and encourage prejudice toward social out-groups. Ultimately, our findings underscore the modest pliability of racial attitudes and the ability of mass media to be a positive as well as a negative force for change. Because mass media are the primary source of ongoing exposure that many people have to those of different races, how they portray minorities matters a great deal.

Barack Obama's candidacy as the first black nominee of a major political party and his subsequent election as president of the United States represented important firsts in the history of the United States. Yet to date, most research on the 2008 presidential campaign supports a strictly pessimistic view, focusing on how white racial prejudice cost Obama votes. This perspective does not contradict any of our central findings. But on its own, it neglects the equally important effects of the Obama campaign *on* white racial attitudes. As evidenced by the civil rights movement in the 1960s, major national events have moved white racial attitudes in a more tolerant direction in the past. The 2008 Obama campaign may be merely the most recent such event. Our study lends a deeper understanding as to how such change comes about, how it might be sustained, and how it may revert without reinforcement.

Our approach to the study of racial attitudes in the 2008 election is very different from that of others who have focused on racial attitudes purely as an independent variable that influenced support for Obama. By contrast, we focus on racial attitudes strictly as a dependent variable that is susceptible to change as a result of this historic event. Importantly, we do not refute any arguments of previous scholars about whether America is “postracial,” but neither do we consider this a serious question. By emphasizing change over time in racial attitudes, we do offer a somewhat less pessimistic assessment of the current and future state of race relations in the United States.

This study involves numerous methodological advantages in its examination of change over time. First and foremost is the fact that it is not just a time series reflecting similar aggregates over time, but a large, representative panel sample reflecting the views of over 2,500 white Americans over a six-month period. In addition, our novel statistical approach is uniquely well suited to studying change over time. Fixed-effects analyses of within-person change compare each person to himself or herself; this is useful because stable individual differences obviously cannot explain change over time that occurs within persons.³⁰ Thus, all potentially spurious causes of association that are due to unchanging characteristics of individuals—whether known or unknown—are accounted for by design and drop out of the model.³¹ By contrast, the validity of most observational designs rests on the dubious assumption that one has perfectly measured, and explicitly controlled for, all potentially confounding characteristics.

Our approach also represents a substantial improvement over the older approach to panel analyses of employing lagged dependent variables.³² Because lagged variables represent the stability of individual differences rather than a lack of change, their results can be misleading.³³ To be sure, fixed-effects models still leave open the possibility of spuriousness due to other variables that change over time and are not included in the model. By including a variable for each survey wave to represent the sheer passage of time, however, we are able to control for the sum total of all else that changed during the campaign.³⁴ This makes it unnecessary to include each and every time-varying variable in our models. Using three waves of panel data, we are able to provide the strongest possible causal evidence outside of a randomized experiment.³⁵

On the one hand, no one doubts that the 2008 election was atypical in many respects. That the amount of coverage devoted to a single counter-stereotypical African American male by the American media was unprecedented

may suggest that what we document in this book is sufficiently unusual that it is unlikely to ever happen again. On the other hand, by demonstrating that under these unusual circumstances whites' perceptions of blacks systematically changed, even in a relatively short period of time, our findings suggest that groups' perceptions of one another may be more malleable than previously thought. The fact that these perceptions became more positive during a time when economic conditions were clearly worsening only makes these changes more impressive. Negative white attitudes toward blacks may have less to do with any real-world competition than with the associations reinforced by what we see and hear every day.