

A PARTY OF A DIFFERENT COLOR? RACE, CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATION, AND PARTY POLITICS

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Although studies have examined the contents of party images and the impact of those images on candidate evaluations, we do not have an understanding of the conditions that lead to party image change. In this article, I examine the impact of racialized campaigns on perceptions of individuals' party images. Moreover, I explore the factors that mediate the campaigns' effects. I argue that the success of a strategy's ability to alter party images depends on the strength of the individuals' extant party images. Using the 2000 Republican National Convention as a case study, I find that party images are indeed malleable. Further, I find that race, party identification, and education mediate party image change.

Key words: party images; race; public opinion; political symbols; elections.

In 2000, the Republican Party, led by presidential candidate George W. Bush, developed a campaign to soften its image with respect to race. The high point of this campaign strategy occurred during the Republican Party's national convention in Philadelphia. One of the prominent themes of the 2000 Republican National Convention focused on the inclusiveness and diversity of the Republican Party. For instance, the number of black convention delegates increased from 52 in 1996 to 85 in 2000. The convention also featured important appearances by Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice. In fact, there were more black speakers and entertainers featured during the first night of the 2000 convention than there had been in all 4 days of the 1996 convention. At the same time, however, the Republican Party maintained its traditional

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conservative ideals and did not alter its position on racial issues such as affirmative action. This political event poses some interesting research questions: Do parties' strategic efforts to alter their images among the electorate work? If so, do parties face barriers on the road to their success?

The existing work on party image leaves these questions unanswered. While the importance and study of party identification has been duly noted, the study of party images has been given significantly less attention. Beginning in the 1960s, the study of party image has sporadically emerged and reemerged in the political science literature. The extant literature can be divided into two categories: those that examine the contents of party image (Matthews and Prothro, 1964; Sanders, 1988; Trilling, 1976) and those that examine the impact of party image on candidate evaluation (Rahn, 1993). Less explored are the conditions under which individuals' party images can be altered. Studies (e.g., Campbell, 1977; Carmines and Stimson, 1989) have observed changes in party behavior and attempted to link similar changes in partisan alignment. Scholars, however, have not examined changes in party image at the individual level. In other words, scholars have not incorporated party strategy into models of party image. As a result, we do not know which party strategies succeed in altering party images and what circumstances moderate the strategies' impact. Using the 2000 Republican National Convention as an example, I begin to fill this void.

POLITICAL SYMBOLS AND PARTY IMAGES

Each of the two major parties¹ are associated with political symbols—policies, candidates, and constituencies—that give meaning to these organizations for members of the American electorate.² Sears (2001) explains, “[w]hen presented to us, these political symbols rivet our attention and evoke strong emotion. These emotions are dominated by a simple good–bad, like–dislike evaluative dimension” (Sears, 2001, 15). Since affective evaluations of the parties are a function of their symbolic components, political parties manipulate the symbols with which they are connected in order to gain favorable evaluations and ultimately electoral victory. Parties not only seek to manipulate which symbols get associated with their party, but also the meaning individuals assign to these symbols.

The totality of the political symbols one associates with a political party is known as a *party image*. Party images form because, at some point, political parties become synonymous with certain policy positions and groups in society (Feldman and Conover, 1983; Hamill et al., 1985; Lodge and Hamill, 1986; Petrocik, 1996). Petrocik (1996) suggests:

...parties have sociologically distinctive constituencies and the linkage between a party's issue agenda and the social characteristics of its supporters is quite strong,

even in the United States. It is a completely recursive linkage: groups support a party because it attempts to use government to alter or protect a social or economic status quo which harms or benefits them; the party promotes such policies because it draws supporters, activists, and candidates from the groups. Issue handling reputations emerge from this history, which, by the dynamics of political conflict, is regularly tested and reinforced (828).

These reputations develop into an individual's party image or the "voter's picture of the party" and guide subsequent evaluations of a party (Matthews and Prothro, 1964). Party image is not the same as party identification. While the two concepts are related, party image is different in that "two people may identify with the same party but have very different mental pictures of it and evaluate these pictures in different ways" (Matthews and Prothro, 1964, 82). Trillings argues that "an individual's party image not surprisingly is likely to be related to his party identification, but his party image will consist less of purely psychological, affective components and more of substantive components" (Trilling, 1976).³ Milne and MacKenzie (1955) describe party images as "symbols; the party is often supported because it is believed to stand for something dear to the elector. It matters little that the 'something' may be an issue no longer of topical importance; the attachment to the symbol, and the party, persists" (Milne and MacKenzie, 1955, 130). Symbols in this case do not simply denote mascots and insignias but also candidates, issue positions, and historical events that exemplify a political party. Thus, one's party image consists of all the substantive components he associates with a given political party. The symbols and the meaning assigned to these symbols by an individual can potentially be used in evaluations of party activity. Consequently, evaluations of a party are not only dependent on what exists in an individual's party image, but also what is absent. Note, however, that party images are subjective in that they can vary from individual to individual.

Citizens develop their partisan images (also referred to as partisan stereotypes) through socialization and through their (direct and indirect) encounters and experiences with party members (Fiske and Taylor, 1991; Rahn, 1993; Hamilton and Sherman, 1994). Information used to form party images can come from the parties themselves or from competing sources of political information such as the media or other political organizations. Moreover, the information is filtered through the individual's political predispositions. Interactions with political parties shape not only the political symbols people associate with a given party, but also the interpretation people lend to those symbols. Further, an individual's experiential knowledge also guides the affective weight an individual places on those political symbols. The affective valence, the salience, and the interpretation individuals assign to the symbols (i.e., the frames individuals use to make sense of the symbols) then guide party preferences.

Understanding party images is important because of the role these images play in the political process. Party images shape how individuals perceive political parties. They can affect not only how people vote, but also whether they choose to engage in the political process at all. As a result, party images can affect who wins and loses elections, which ultimately affects which interests are represented in the political arena.

It is no wonder then that political elites often attempt to reshape party images when seeking electoral success. After all, they must keep up with the changing face of the political landscape. First, the nature of political competition changes from election to election. Second, the electorate experiences demographic changes. Finally, issues rise and fall in importance. Thus, political parties must adapt to their changing environment. This includes altering the way they are perceived by different groups in the electorate.

When attempting to reshape a party's image, however, political elites face a dilemma—they must attract new voters while maintaining their current support base. One way a political party might reshape its image is by adopting new issue positions. But as scholars note, doing so will likely upset its current constituents and confuse potential voters (Popkin, 1994). The alternative is to reshape the party's image in a more symbolic way. Specifically, a party can use different symbols to convey to voters that they have changed without making any substantive changes to the party's platform.

This was the apparent motivation for the 2000 Republican race strategy. A shift in racial attitudes in the United States has made the use of overtly racist imagery unappealing and alienating to large populations of the American electorate (Mendelberg, 2001). Consequently, the Republican Party adopted a racial strategy during the 2000 election cycle that sought to associate positive racial images with the conservative Republican platform. In essence, the GOP tried to use positive racial imagery to repackage the Party. Keeping the same political symbols ensures that the party's core constituents will not be threatened. Repackaging these symbols potentially alters the symbolic meaning voters may place on the party's policy positions and may counter existing negative reputations. But does this strategy work?

While the party image literature does not currently address this question specifically, we can glean some insight from research on stereotypes in social psychology and political science. If we consider a party image a kind of stereotype, then social psychology research suggests that party images may be updated in the face of inconsistent information. Partisan stereotypes, as well as stereotypes in general, can be thought of as a schematic structure (Fiske, 1998). A *schema* is "a cognitive structure that organizes prior information and experience around a central value or idea, and guides the interpretation of new information and experience" (Zaller, 1992, 37). Thus,

schemata allow us to interpret what is ambiguous, uncertain, or unknown by applying it to a standing, known framework that exists in our heads (Brewer and Kramer, 1985; Messick and Mackie, 1989; Duckitt, 2003). Schemata can be used in making inferences about events, other people, and ourselves. For instance, when we encounter new people, we use either ascribed (e.g., age, race, sex) or achieved (e.g., experience or training) characteristics about that person to activate a set of role-based expectations about that person (Fiske and Taylor, 1991). Fiske and Taylor (1991) assert that “one way to think about stereotypes is as a particular type of role schema that organizes one’s prior knowledge and expectations about other people who fall into certain socially defined categories” (Fiske and Taylor, 1991, 160). A political party stereotype, then, would be “those cognitive structures that contain citizens’ knowledge, beliefs, and expectancies about the two major political parties” (Rahn, 1993, 474).

Accordingly, once an individual has associated an event, issue, or person with a particular stereotype, he then ascribes the stereotypic content to that situation, regardless of how much or how little the situation may actually resemble the stereotype (Fiske and Taylor, 1991, 160). “The main principle of schematic memory is that the usual case overrides details of the specific instance” (Fiske and Taylor, 1991, 162). For instance, when an individual has identified a candidate as a Republican in the absence of additional information, he will attribute all the features of what he imagines to be a Republican to that candidate, regardless of whether that candidate is a moderate or ideologically at the extreme right.

When an individual receives new information, updating the stereotype depends on whether or not the newly presented information conflicts with existing knowledge. If the information presented in the stimulus is consistent with an individual’s existing schematic information, he will encode that information and store it in his memory with the rest of the relevant considerations. Fiske and Taylor (1991) explain, “well-developed schemas generally resist change and can even persist in the face of disconfirming evidence” (Fiske and Taylor, 1991, 150).

This process of absorbing consistent information more readily than inconsistent information has a reinforcing effect on stereotypes in general (Fiske and Taylor, 1991; Hamilton and Sherman, 1994), but partisan stereotypes in particular (Rahn, 1993). As a result, partisan stereotypes or images are not easily altered. This is due to the fact that party images “are not created *de novo*” each time voters receive new information about the parties as they would during a campaign. Current party images are the starting point from which new evaluations begin (Rapoport, 1997, 188). Hence, when individuals encounter inconsistent information, they must weigh that information against

all previously received information. In a sense, their prior beliefs have an anchoring effect on how they encode new information.

This is not to say that party images or stereotypes cannot be altered. Rahn (1993) examined under what conditions people abandon their use of partisan stereotypes when evaluating a candidate. Using an experimental design, Rahn tested to see whether people would incorporate policy information into their candidate evaluations when the policy information associated with a candidate was incongruent with the candidate's party affiliation.⁴ Rahn's results show that voters "neglect policy information in reaching evaluation; they use the label rather than policy attributes in drawing inferences; and they are perceptually less responsive to inconsistent information" (Rahn, 1993, 492). Furthermore, she found that even when voters faced extreme inconsistency, people still relied on their partisan stereotypes to make candidate evaluations. But at the same time, she admits that her results are not absolute. For example, Rahn speculates that voters may abandon their partisan stereotypes when the inconsistency is even more extreme or the inconsistency involves an issue that is particularly salient to the voter (Rahn, 1993, 487).⁵ In other words, stereotypes should break down when people are able to substitute an equally salient alternative means of categorization (Fiske and Taylor, 1991; Hamilton and Sherman, 1994).

In summary, the social psychology and political science literatures suggest that party images will be updated when voters face inconsistent information and attempt to realign their preferences with their perceptions. Updating party images, however, will be contingent on the perceived level of inconsistency. The greater the perceived inconsistency, the more likely an individual is to update his party image.

HYPOTHESES

Although party images can have many components, I focus only on the segment of a party image that relates to race. Why examine race? One of the most (if not the most) persistent cleavages between the two major parties has been race. Carmines and Stimson (1986) argue:

Race has deep symbolic meaning in American political history and has touched a raw nerve in the body politic. It has also been an issue on which the parties have taken relatively clear and distinct stands, at least since the mid-1960s. Finally, the issue has had a long political life cycle. It has been a recurring theme in American politics as long as there has been an American politics and conflict over race has been especially intense since the New Deal (903).

In fact, scholars have posited race as the underlying determinant of partisan division (Campbell, 1977; Carmines and Stimson, 1989; Huckfeldt and Kohfeld, 1989; Frymer, 1999). Because of the highly salient cleavages

surrounding race, it provides an interesting backdrop for the examination of how elites can use symbolic images to reshape party images. Moreover, if we can identify conditions under which a party succeeds in changing the racial component of a party image, we may also apply it to other less salient issues.

If claims about the role of race in party politics are correct, citizens support political parties in large part (although not necessarily exclusively) based on their perception of a party's *racial symbolism* or the party's reputation with respect to race. Racial symbolism, as it is used in this study, is the interpretation an individual assigns to a political party's activities based on all of the racial, political, and social symbols that have come to be associated with that party. It is the frame individuals use to give meaning to a party's race-related activities. Racial symbolism is the product of the symbols in a party's image, the racial valence of those symbols, and the weight of each symbol.

From the existing research on stereotypes, we know that partisan images are not fixed. When faced with extreme inconsistency, citizens will update their party images to incorporate new information. In the case of the 2000 Republican National Convention, we would expect the inclusion of black speakers and entertainers in the convention line-up to be inconsistent with prior knowledge of the Republican Party and therefore reshape party images. Looking at survey data collected before the convention, we find support for the proposition that a racially diverse Republican Party was inconsistent with previous perceptions of the Republican Party. Six months prior to the convention, 79.0% of blacks and 49.2% of whites believed that the Democratic Party better represented the interests of blacks. In contrast, only 12.3% of whites and 4.2% of blacks believed the Republican Party could better represent African Americans. In general, 72.5% of blacks and 48.6% of whites believed that the Democratic Party was better able to improve race relations, compared to 18.9% of whites and 6.5% of blacks who believed the Republican Party would do a better job.⁶ These figures indicate that, shortly before to the convention, the Republican Party was not perceived as racially liberal, at least relative to the Democratic Party.

When attempting to reshape party images, we also know there is a balancing act between what individuals already know and the new information being presented. The stronger the existing information, the harder it will be to incorporate new information. In the case of race, I expect African Americans to be the least resistant to party image change since they have been the targets (either real or rhetorically) of racialized policies. As an illustration, support for this claim can be found in national survey data.

Table 1 presents summary statistics from the 1996 American National Election Study. What this table shows is that relative to whites, African Americans are more likely to believe that racialized issues such as social spending and government aid to blacks are extremely important. Also relative

to whites, African Americans are more likely to see a difference between themselves and the Republican Party on the same issues. Because of the importance African Americans place on racialized issues and the relative distance from the GOP on these issues, the Republican Party's attempt to use racial images to reshape party images will be less effective among blacks than whites. Similar to blacks, white Democrats should be somewhat resistant to the Republican campaign inasmuch as they are Democrats (Berelson et al., 1954; Campbell et al., 1960). Relative to African Americans, however, white Democrats should be less resistant since they have not been the subjects of such racial campaigns.

Finally, Zaller (1992), Miller and Krosnick (2000), and others have identified political sophistication as a moderator of campaign effects. The exact relationship between political sophistication and campaign effects, however, is somewhat ambiguous. For instance, Zaller argues that the less politically sophisticated are less susceptible to political messages because they are unable to connect the message to their own values. Others, such as Pollock et al. (1993) argue that the connection between political sophistication and campaign communication is contingent on the issue being discussed. When the issue is one that most people have knowledge of, the impact of political sophistication is reduced. Still others believe that political sophisticates have more developed candidate and issue preferences, which renders them *less* susceptible to influence (Miller and Krosnick, 1999). Support for this theory, however, is mixed (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987; Miller and Krosnick, 1999, 2000). In summary, there is substantial support for the theory that sophistication moderates campaign effects, but it seems that the relationship varies across circumstances. The effect of sophistication is intricate and highly

TABLE 1. Blacks and Racialized Issues

	Importance of Racialized Issues (in percent)			
	Social spending		Government aid to blacks	
African Americans	36		53	
Whites	25		18	
	Placement on Racialized Issues Relative to the Republican Party (in percent)			
	Social spending		Government aid to blacks	
	No Difference	More Liberal	No Difference	More Liberal
African Americans	23	75	17	62
Whites	40	50	28	25

Source: 1996 American National Election Study.

provisional. Nevertheless, I argue that the impact of the Republican race strategy will be moderated by political sophistication. Consistent with the theoretical framework discussed in the present study, I hypothesize that the incorporation of new information into one's party image is contingent on the strength of the individual's prior knowledge. Since political sophisticates have more crystallized beliefs about political parties, they should be more resistant to the Republican race strategy.

Stated more formally, the hypotheses are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Given the inconsistent nature of the 2000 Republican race strategy, exposure to the convention will improve perceptions of the GOP's racial symbolism.

Hypothesis 2: Exposure to the convention will be less effective among blacks relative to whites.

Hypothesis 3: Exposure to the convention will be less effective among white Democrats relative to white Republicans.

Hypothesis 4: Exposure to the convention will be less effective among the more politically sophisticated relative to those less sophisticated.

DATA AND METHODS

I am primarily interested in whether watching the convention affected people's perception of the racial symbolism of the Republican Party. Ideally, gauging the impact of watching the convention should be tested experimentally. In an experiment, we could expose some people to the convention and measure whether these people had significantly different perceptions of the Republican Party than those who were not exposed. While experimental data was not available at the time of the present study, I do have access to people's self-reports of convention exposure and their subsequent evaluations of the Republican Party. Specifically, I use secondary analysis of the Gallup Organization's *Post-GOP Convention Poll*.⁷ The Post-GOP Convention Poll was conducted by telephone August 4–6, 2000, only a few days after the close of the Republican Convention. The polling sample included a national probability sample of 1,051 adults. In addition, the poll also included an over-sample of 319 African American adults, resulting in a total *N* of 1,370. Respondents were asked a series of questions about politics including their level of attentiveness to the convention and evaluations of the Republican Party on a number of dimensions.

This poll seems particularly well suited to test the above hypotheses. First, the Gallup poll was conducted almost immediately after the convention. Second, if other events occurred between the convention and the survey, it would mute the effect, not amplify it. Third, there is no reason to believe that convention watchers and non-convention watchers would be affected

differently to a possible outside event. Still, using survey data rather than experimental data potentially poses a measurement problem. In an experiment, the researcher controls who is exposed to the treatment (in this case the convention) and who is not. In the real world, people self-select themselves into watching the convention. As a result, there is the potential for other unmeasured motivating factors to influence both convention watching and evaluations of the Republican Party.

To overcome this problem inherent to using survey data, I address the issue of selection bias using a bivariate probit selection model where dependent variable one was perceptions of the Republican Party's racial symbolism and dependent variable two was watching the convention. In this analysis, the racial symbolism of the GOP is captured using the responses to the question, "Would you say the Republican Party is generally doing a good job or a bad job these days, of reaching out to blacks, Hispanics, and other minorities?" Responses were coded 1 if respondents believed the Republican Party did a good job and 0 if they did not. The amount of exposure to the convention a respondent received is represented by the responses to the following question: "How much, if any, of the Republican convention did you watch on TV this week?" Responses were coded zero if the respondent had little to no exposure and 1 if a respondent received a great deal of exposure. I modeled Republican racial symbolism (the outcome equation) as a function of watching the 2000 Republican National Convention, as well as the respondents' political predispositions and demographic characteristics. First, I include the respondents' party identification and ideology as measures of political predispositions. Party identification was coded using a two-part question, resulting in a five-point scale running from Republican (1) to Democrat (5). Ideology is measured using a five-point scale running from Very Conservative (1) to Very Liberal (5). I also include demographic variables that measure gender, race, income, education, and age. In the selection model estimating watching the convention, I included a measure of political engagement, respondents' education and political predispositions (see Appendix A for coding procedures). In this model, selection bias is present if the correlation between the two equations (ρ) is significant, even after controlling for other factors. Likewise, if ρ is zero, then any omitted variables which influence perceptions of the Republican Party's racial symbolism is unrelated to predictors of convention watching. In this case, using a regular probit model will yield unbiased estimates (Berinsky, 1999; Greene, 2000). The proceeding analysis presents the results of both the bivariate probit and the probit estimates.

RESULTS

The results presented in Table 2 confirm Hypothesis 1. Watching a great deal of the 2000 Republican National Convention did have a statistically

TABLE 2. Perceptions of Republican Racial Symbolism

	Probit	Bivariate probit
<i>Outcome equation</i>		
Watching the convention	.278 (.11)	1.174 (.45)
Party Identification	– .281 (.03)	– .239 (.04)
Ideology	– .107 (.05)	– .084 (.05)
Gender	.062 (.08)	.055 (.08)
Age	– .005 (.00)	– .006 (.00)
Black	– .318 (.10)	– .304 (.10)
Education	– .020 (.03)	– .035 (.03)
Income	– .080 (.03)	– .078 (.03)
Constant	1.837 (.26)	1.596 (.32)
<i>Selection equation</i>		
Political engagement		.220 (.04)
Party identification		– .108 (.03)
Ideology		– .028 (.05)
Education		.041 (.03)
Constant		– 1.430 (.26)
ρ		– .594 (.37)
N	1148	1145
Log likelihood	–668.96	–1178.30

Notes: Bolded coefficients are significant at the $p < .05$ level. Standard errors appear in parentheses next to coefficient estimates. See appendix for coding details.

Source: 2000 Post-GOP Convention Poll.

significant effect on the perception of the Republican Party's racial symbolism. This is true in both the probit and bivariate probit models. Specifically, respondents who watched a great deal of the convention were more likely to indicate that the Republican Party did a good job reaching out to minorities than those respondents who had less exposure to the convention.

Also statistically significant are age, race, income, ideology and party identification. The negative coefficient on the race variable indicates that African Americans' perceptions of the Republican Party's effort to reach out to minorities are less favorable than the opinions of whites. In other words, blacks are less likely than whites to think the GOP does a good job of reaching out to minorities. Similarly, the results indicate that as income and age increase the likelihood that an individual believes that the Republican Party is doing a good job reaching out to minorities decreases. Finally, Republicans and conservatives are more likely than Democrats and liberals to approve of the Republican Party's outreach efforts.

Table 1 also illustrates that selection bias is not present. With a coefficient of $-.594$ and a standard error of $.37$, ρ fails to reach significance at the $p < .10$ level. Moreover, when comparing the probit model to the bivariate probit model, we notice that there is no difference in the significance and sign of the

coefficient estimates. In terms of magnitude, however, we see that the bivariate probit inflates the magnitude of the effect of watching the convention. Nevertheless, both models indicate that watching the convention improved perceptions of Republican racial symbolism.⁸

I hypothesize that the effect of watching the convention would be contingent on the connection individuals had with the other racialized political symbols associated with that party. As suggested in Hypothesis 2, I use race as a proxy measure of this symbolic attachment. In the case of the Republican Party attempting to redefine its image with respect to race, I expect African Americans to reject the recent Republican campaign, given that the Republican Party is perceived by most blacks as unsympathetic to their interests.

To test for a race effect, I re-estimate the model separately for African Americans and whites. Given that the bivariate probit model indicated that there were no selection effects, I estimate the models using probit, rather than the full bivariate probit selection model. The results presented in Table 3 indicate that, among whites, watching a great deal of the convention is a statistically significant predictor of how people perceived the GOP on minority outreach—whites who watched a great deal of the convention were more likely to indicate that the Republican Party did a good job reaching out to minorities than whites who watched less of the convention. Also among whites, age, ideology and party identification are statistically significant predictors of the perception of the Republican Party's efforts to reach out to minorities. Specifically, Republicans, conservatives, and younger respondents were more likely to perceive the Republican Party as doing a good job of reaching out to blacks, Hispanics, and other minorities than Democrats, liberals, and older respondents.

TABLE 3. Perceptions of Republican Racial Symbolism, by Race

	Blacks	Whites
Watching the convention	.123 (.21)	.323 (.13)
Party Identification	-.446 (.07)	-.222 (.03)
Ideology	.015 (.08)	-.209 (.06)
Gender	-.049 (.18)	.108 (.10)
Age	-.001 (.01)	-.007 (.00)
Education	.001 (.06)	-.033 (.04)
Income	-.116 (.05)	-.052 (.03)
Constant	1.787 (.49)	1.967 (.33)
N	335	775
Log likelihood	-167.24	-472.74

Notes: Coefficients are probit estimates. Bolded coefficients are significant at the $p < .05$ level. Standard errors appear in parentheses next to coefficient estimates. See Appendix A for coding details.

Source: 2000 Post-GOP Convention Poll.

Among African Americans, however, watching a great deal of the convention was not a statistically significant determinant of the perception of Republicans on minority outreach.⁹ The results presented in Table 1 suggest that among African Americans, the only statistically significant predictors of the perception of the Republican Party's outreach efforts are party identification and income. Namely, black Republicans are more likely to indicate that the GOP does a good job reaching out to minorities. As their income increases, however, African Americans are less likely to believe that the Republican Party does a good job reaching out to blacks and other minorities.

To get a sense of the relative magnitude of the effect of watching the convention on perceptions of Republican racial symbolism, I calculated the predicted probability of having a positive perception of the GOP, holding gender at its mode and all other variables at their means. These values are presented in Figure 1. In general, convention exposure increases the probability of indicating the Republican Party does a good job reaching out to minorities by 11 percentage points, from .45 to .56. Among whites, the increase is slightly larger. The probability of having a positive perception of Republican racial symbolism increases from .48 among the less exposed to .61 among those who watched a great deal of the convention. In contrast, moving from watching little or none of the convention to watching a great deal of the convention among blacks increases the probability of indicating the Republican Party does a good job on minority outreach by .04 percentage points. The findings confirm Hypothesis 2; watching the convention had less of an impact among blacks than it did among whites.

I argue that the effect of watching the convention should also be contingent on party identification. To test this, I examine the effect of watching the convention among white Democrats and white Republicans. Among white Republicans, watching the convention had a relatively large impact on whether respondents indicated that the GOP did a good job reaching out to minorities. Also significant was gender. White Republican women were more likely to have positive perceptions of Republican Party's racial symbolism than their male counterparts. The results presented in Table 4 also indicate that white Democrats and African Americans reacted quite similarly to watching the 2000 Republican National Convention. Among white Democrats, the effect of watching the convention is statistically indistinguishable from zero. Substantively, the magnitude of the effect of watching the convention is significantly smaller among white Democrats compared to other whites and blacks. Furthermore, a difference of means test confirms that the difference in the size of the impact of watching the 2000 Republican National Convention found between white Democrats and the rest of the white respondents in the sample is statistically significant, confirming Hypothesis 3.

To get a sense of what these findings mean substantively, the relative probabilities of having a positive perception of Republican racial symbolism

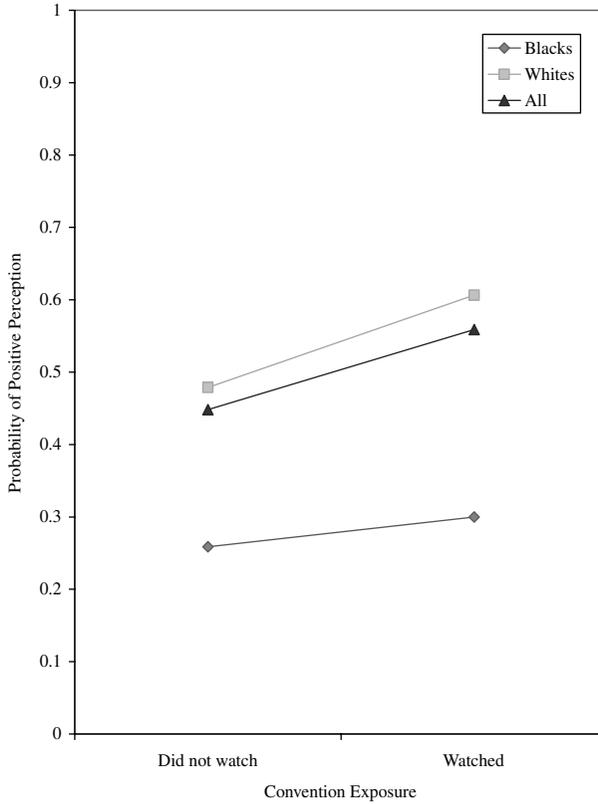


FIG. 1. Perceptions of Republican racial symbolism, by race.

based on convention watching were calculated for white Democrats and white Republicans. As illustrated in Figure 2, the impact among white Democrats is essentially zero (.002). Among white Republicans not exposed to a great deal of the convention, the probability of having a positive perception of Republican racial symbolism was .63. This increased to .77 when exposed to the Republican convention.

Finally, Hypothesis 4 predicts that more educated people will be less susceptible to the Republican Party’s racial campaign since their views about the Party are more crystallized. The results presented in Table 4 indicate the opposite. In general, college educated and non-college educated Republicans and conservatives were more likely to have positive perceptions of Republican Party minority outreach. Among college graduates, younger respondents held more favorable opinions about the GOP. College graduates, however, were *more* susceptible to the Republican convention than non-college graduates.

TABLE 4. Perceptions of Republican Racial Symbolism, by Party Identification and Education (whites only)

	Democrats	Republicans	College grads	Non-college grads
Watching the convention	.005 (.25)	.419 (.19)	.744 (.21)	.021 (.16)
Party identification			-.223 (.06)	-.228 (.04)
Ideology	-.457 (.12)	-.023 (.11)	-.224 (.11)	-.187 (.07)
Gender	.009 (.18)	.381 (.17)	.017 (.16)	.156 (.13)
Age	-.011 (.01)	-.003 (.00)	-.011 (.00)	-.003 (.00)
Education	.009 (.07)	.063 (.06)		
Income	-.060 (.06)	-.048 (.06)	-.099 (.06)	-.030 (.04)
Constant	1.796 (.62)	.356 (.58)	2.156 (.56)	1.262 (.45)
N	229	296	299	476
Log likelihood	-136.24	-167.22	-172.80	-293.69

Notes: Coefficients are probit estimates. Bolded coefficients are significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. Standard errors appear in parentheses below coefficient estimates. See Appendix A for coding details.

Source: 2000 Post-GOP Convention Poll.

The difference between college graduates and non-college graduates was substantively large. Moving from watching little or none of the convention to watching a great deal of the convention increased the probability of having positive perceptions of Republican racial symbolism by .01 among non-college graduates and .21 among college graduates. Non-college graduates not exposed to the convention start at .54 and moved to .55 as convention exposure increased. In contrast, college graduates not exposed to a great deal of the convention have a probability of .39 of indicating the GOP does a good job reaching out to blacks and other minorities. This probability increases to .68 after watching the convention (see Figure 2).

While seemingly counterintuitive, this finding is consistent with scholars who argue that media effects are most effective among those who have enough knowledge and sophistication to recognize and understand political messages. Zaller (1992) argues that persuasion is a function of the *ability* to receive the message, as well as *willingness* to accept the message. Controlling for one's willingness to accept a Republican campaign message (as measured by race and party identification), the crystallization of one's beliefs helped facilitate the reception of the message in a positive way, not negative as originally hypothesized. Arguably, the presentation of minority Republicans at the 2000 convention was a subtle message. One would have to have prior knowledge of the Republican Party and past conventions to recognize a change in the Party. The ability to decipher the Republican message was contingent on one's education. Zaller also argues that the relationship between willingness to accept a message and ability to receive the message is an interactive one. From this standpoint, we can imagine that the most educated, least resistant (e.g.

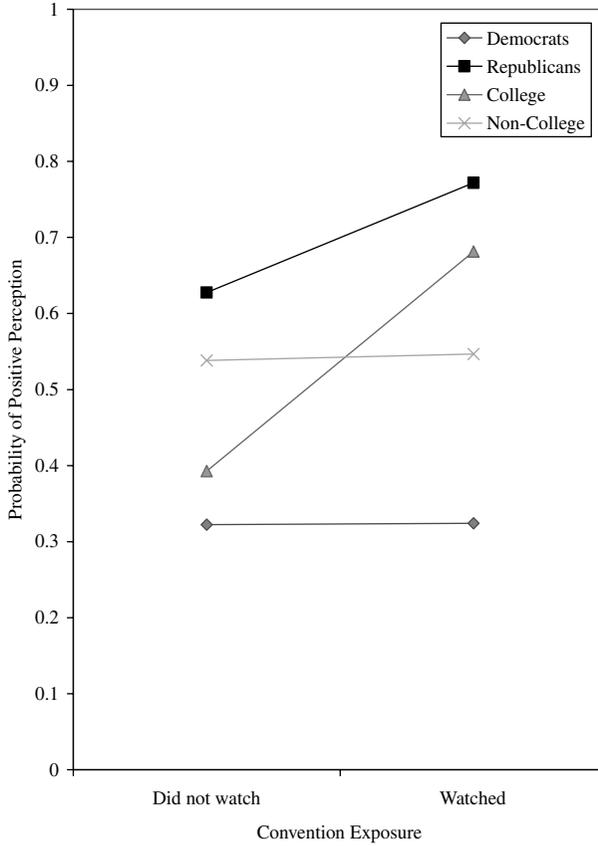


FIG. 2. Perceptions of Republican racial symbolism, by party identification and education (whites only).

college educated Republicans) are the most persuadable while the less educated, most resistant (e.g. non-college educated Democrats) have the least susceptibility to the Republican strategy. This interaction would reconcile the theoretical framework outlined above and the findings with respect to education.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Do parties' strategic efforts to alter their images among the electorate work? The answer is yes. Party images can be reshaped, even when a party does not alter its issue positions. Using the 2000 Republican National Convention as an example of this strategy, I find that convention watching apparently did have

an effect on people's perceptions of the racial symbolism associated with the Republican Party. Not everyone who watched the convention, however, was affected the same way. Namely, susceptibility to campaign effects was contingent on race, partisanship and education of the individual. As posited earlier, African Americans' perceptions of the GOP's racial symbolism were largely unaffected by watching the 2000 Republican convention. Perhaps this is because African Americans' preexisting party images were so strongly rooted that the Republican Party's recent attempt to appeal to minority voters was not enough to override the numerous other incidences of racial conservatism. Again, I argue that the lack of effect is in large part due to the ties blacks have towards the policy-oriented political symbols that currently drive their interpretations of the GOP's race-related activities.

White Democrats were also largely unaffected by the 2000 Republican National Convention. Consistent with early research on campaign effects, Democrats were not persuaded by a Republican campaign message (Berelson et al., 1954; Campbell et al., 1960). Unfortunately, the data do not allow us to test whether susceptibility decreased as strength of partisanship increased. It is quite possible that convention watching had a greater impact on weaker Democrats. Nevertheless, white Democrats and blacks reacted similar to the 2000 convention.

The impact of convention watching was also contingent on education. On the one hand, we would expect, given the theory provided in the above paragraphs, that the more educated would be less susceptible to the Republican convention. The more crystallized one's perceptions of a political party, the harder it should be to alter those perceptions. On the other hand, in order to recognize that there is an inconsistency and therefore update perceptions, one must have prior knowledge of the political party. The findings suggest that the latter is correct. Non-college educated respondents were largely unaffected by watching the convention. Having less formulated perceptions of the Republican Party did not allow non-college educated respondents to distinguish between the "old" and "new" Republican Party.

Thinking more broadly, the results suggest that party image is malleable under certain conditions. First, individuals must have a high enough level of political expertise in order to recognize and interpret the political messages party elites are sending. In other words, individuals must have some prior knowledge of the political party in order to recognize that a change is being made. Second, the party's new projected image must be sufficient enough for voters to conclude that a "real" change has been made. Voters have mental representations of the parties which are comprised of many components, both issue oriented and non-issue oriented. Some components are more important than others. For some, changing issue positions constitutes real change. For others, a party's altering of the more cosmetic symbols associated with the party signals real change. The more importance an individual places on the

issue-relevant symbols of a party's image, the less effective a strategy that only uses imagery will be.

These findings, however, are not definitive. The data and methods employed in this study cannot conclusively confirm the causal assertion. Because this study relies on self-reports of convention exposure, there is no way to tell for certain what information the respondents received and how much of it they witnessed. Thus, future research in this area should concentrate on establishing the causal relationship between watching the convention and modifying one's perceptions of the Republican Party.

Also, the data do not allow us to further explore the moderating factors of campaign susceptibility. In the current study, I assume that all blacks have the same level of racial consciousness and treat them as a group. Because there are no measures of common fate or group identification in the Gallup data, I cannot delineate the boundaries of group consciousness. Future research should examine whether susceptibility increases as group consciousness among African Americans begins to break down. Similarly, the Gallup data did not include measures of racial attitudes. Future research should explore the role of racial attitudes among whites in the susceptibility of similar campaign appeals. The influence of attitudes about race on evaluations of candidates and issues is well documented (Kinder and Sanders, 1996; Gilens, 1999; Mendelberg, 2001). The same approach should be applied to examining the impact of positive racial images on evaluations of political parties.

Nevertheless, what does the present study mean for the future of race cues in campaign communication? First, the study of race cues should incorporate more than white public opinion. By focusing on only one racial group, the impact of these images on the electorate is not fully realized. Second, the examination of racial images should expand beyond the study of racial attitudes. As did the current study, future research should examine whether racial images can change the fundamental meaning of issues and parties.

In conclusion, the present study found that race cues are highly effective among white voters. This, of course, is not news given the prior research on the effectiveness of race cues in political discourse. These findings become important when we consider the motivation for the use of this particular campaign strategy. The presence of religious conservatives at the 1992 Republican National Convention off-put many moderate and liberal white voters. Although the Republican Party tried to balance its image by featuring a handful of minority politicians at the 1996 convention, many voters believed that the Republican Party was still too far to the right. By kicking this strategy up a notch at the 2000 convention, the Republican Party succeeded in softening its image on race among whites. Hence, if the Republican Party was attempting to *only* attract white voters, then it apparently succeeded. Since the 1970s, however, the Republican Party has been trying expand its electoral base by cutting into the stronghold the Democratic Party has had on African

APPENDIX A. Coding Procedure

Variable	Measure	Coding
Republican racial symbolism	Would you say the Republican Party is generally doing a good job or a bad job these days, of reaching out to blacks, Hispanics, and other minorities?	1 = Good job 0 = Not a good job
Watching the convention	How much, if any, of the Republican convention did you watch on T.V. this week?	1 = A great deal 0 = Less than a great deal
Party identification	In politics, as of today, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat or an Independent? (If Independent) As of today do you lean more to the Democratic Party or the Republican Party?	1 = Republican 2 = Indep/Republican 3 = Independent 4 = Indep/Democrat 5 = Democrat
Ideology	How would you describe your political views?	1 = Very conservative 2 = Conservative 3 = Moderate 4 = Liberal 5 = Very Liberal
Gender		1 = Female 0 = Male
Age	What is your age?	Actual number
Black	What is your race? Are you white, African-American, or some other race?	1 = Black 0 = White
Education	What is the last grade or class that you completed in school?	1 = None, or grade 1-4 2 = Grades 5, 6 or 7 3 = Grade 8 4 = Grades 9-11 5 High school graduate 6 = Technical, trade, or business after high school 7 = College/university
Income	Is your total annual household income before taxes \$20,000 or more, or is it less than \$20,000? Is it over or under \$15,000/\$10,000/\$30,000/\$50,000/\$75,000	1 = Less than \$10,000 2 = \$10,000-14,999 3 = \$15,000-19,999 4 = \$20,000-29,999 5 = \$30,000-49,999 6 = \$50,000-74,999 7 = \$75,000 and over
Political engagement	How often would you say you vote—always, nearly always, part of the time, or seldom?	0 = Never 1 = Seldom 2 = Part of the time 3 = Nearly always 4 = Always

Americans. By attracting black middle-class voters and self-identified black conservatives, the Republican Party has tried to minimize the Democratic Party's margin of victory. If this was even partially the motivation of the GOP's 2000 race strategy, it was considerably less successful. In the end, George W. Bush received less of the black vote than his predecessors.

NOTES

1. The discussion of political parties in this project is limited to the behavior of the national organizations.
2. Borrowing Sear's (2001) definition, a political symbol is "any affectively charged element in a political attitude object" (Sears, 2001). The political attitude object in this study is a political party.
3. The key difference between party image and party identification is that party image is the foundation on which party identification is built. Essentially, party image provides the basis for liking one party over another. As mentioned earlier, people can have different party images but the same party identification. Party image is how people perceive the party and party identification is the evaluative outcome of what individuals perceive.
4. To test party-issue congruence, Rahn administered a questionnaire that required 229 undergraduates to indicate the "partisan likelihood" of 30 policy statements. Students were presented with a policy statement and then asked to place the statement on a seven-point scale, with one indicating very likely a Republican statement, seven indicating very likely a Democratic statement, and four indicating equally likely Republican or Democrat.
5. For additional evidence on the abandoning of partisan stereotypes in connection with issue saliency see Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1994).
6. These estimates were obtained from the *CBS News Monthly Poll #1, February 2000*, obtained from the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research.
7. This dataset was obtained from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research.
8. This effect remains even when the watching the convention variable is not dichotomized.
9. The coefficient has a p -value greater than .50. Furthermore, a t -test indicates that the effect of watching the convention among blacks is significantly different from the effect among whites. One conclusion that can be drawn from the analyses presented in Table 3 is that the differences found between blacks and whites in the estimated impact of watching the convention on perceptions of the GOP outreach efforts stem from a difference in the number of blacks and whites within the sample. When both the different sample sizes and the standard deviations of each coefficient are taken into account, the difference between the two effects remains statistically significant at the $p < .10$ level. This difference is significant even when we assume the samples do not have equal variances.

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