

## Perceiving a Presidency in Black (and White): Four Years Later

**Sarah E. Gaither\***

*Tufts University*

**Leigh S. Wilton and Danielle M. Young**

*Rutgers University*

*When Barack Obama became the “first Black President” of the United States in 2008, researchers examined how his election impacted Americans’ views of racial progress. When he was reelected in 2012, the minority status of the president had become less novel. In the present study, we investigated whether perceptions concerning racial progress varied: (1) before and after President Obama’s reelection; (2) by whether President Obama was labeled as biracial or Black; and (3) among White and Black individuals. We replicated past findings to demonstrate that after Obama’s reelection, White participants reported that our country had made racial progress and decreased their support for equality programs (e.g., affirmative action). Our results also revealed that labeling President Obama as either biracial or Black did not affect views of racial progress. Additionally, Black participants categorized President Obama as Black more than White participants, while White participants categorized President Obama as White more than Black participants. We discuss these results in terms of the impacts of racial beliefs that stem from exposure to a minority leader.*

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\*Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Sarah E. Gaither, Department of Psychology, Tufts University, 490 Boston Avenue, Medford, MA 02155 [e-mail: sarah.gaither@tufts.edu].

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“Tonight is a particular honor for me because, let’s face it, my presence on this stage is pretty unlikely. . . . My parents shared not only an improbable love. . . . They would give me an African name, Barack, or ‘blessed,’ believing that in a tolerant America your name is no barrier to success. . . . I stand here today, grateful for the diversity of my heritage . . .”

—Barack Obama at the 2004 Democratic National Convention

“I recognize that times have changed since I first spoke to this convention. The times have changed—and so have I. I’m no longer just a candidate. I’m the President.”

—President Barack Obama at the 2012 Democratic National Convention

The 2008 and 2012 Presidential elections were landmark election years; they marked the first time that voters voted for and then reelected a president with Black ancestry. Although Barack Obama has biracial ancestry, he was primarily described and thought of as Black by both White and Black individuals throughout the Democratic primaries and the 2008 election. Discussion of Obama’s levels of “Blackness,” or lack thereof, was part of a larger conversation during the 2008 race regarding how his election might signify the beginning of a postracial (i.e., without racial discrimination) society. The 2012 Presidential election again invoked a number of questions regarding Obama’s race and its impact on society. The present research revisits findings surrounding the 2008 election to explore whether, four years after Obama’s first successful presidential election, attitudes associated with racial progress have remained the same, whether calling attention to Obama’s biracial ancestry impacts those perceptions, and whether these perceptions vary between White and Black individuals.

### *Racial Progress in 2012?*

Due to Obama’s racial background, his 2008 election ignited a conversation about the beginning of a “post-racial America” (e.g., Gallup/USA Today, 2008; Gomstyn, 2008; Miller, 2008; Peery & Bodenhausen, 2009; Pitts, 2008; Smith, 2009). More specifically, Americans felt having a Black leader was a sign that policies addressing racial inequalities (i.e., affirmative action) were no longer needed (Kaiser, Drury, Spalding, Cheryan, & O’Brien, 2009; Valentino & Brader, 2011; Williams & Negrin, 2008). This nationwide conversation about racial progress was supported by studies demonstrating that the implicit bias of Whites toward Blacks decreased following Obama’s first election (e.g., Plant et al., 2009). Furthermore, opinion polls showed that twice as many Blacks said they felt optimistic about race relations after, in comparison to before, Obama’s 2008 election (Stolberg & Connelly, 2009).

Contradictory to these findings, after Obama’s first election, CBS News (2009) reported that racially motivated incidents, including cross burnings and occurrences of children chanting “assassinate Obama,” actually increased across the nation. Other research also presented evidence that racial prejudice still persisted and continued to negatively influence perceptions of both Obama and Blacks more

generally (Dovidio, Gaertner, Saguy, & Heman, 2011; Kaiser et al., 2009; Schmidt & Nosek, 2010). Therefore, the views of sweeping racial progress and reduced racial bias heralded by Obama's election as the nation's first Black president were not entirely accurate.

But four years later, after Obama's reelection, what is the status of America's perceptions of racial progress? Given the mixed reports concerning interracial relations following Obama's 2008 election, as well as his prominence in the American political and cultural scene for the past four years, it is not yet known whether beliefs about racial progress have continued to change, and in which direction. For example, continued exposure to the positive exemplar of a Black president may have directly improved opinions about racial progress, or even perceptions regarding the strict racial boundaries we utilize within our racially dichotomized society such as Whites always being leaders. In support of these possibilities, past instances involving the election of Black mayors have shown that experiences with a Black leader reduces racial tensions, increases racial sympathy, and increases support for Black leaders (Hajnal, 2001). Alternatively, although some of the population still associates the dismal economic situation in the United States with former President George Bush, the majority of the country largely blamed this fiscal crisis on Obama during his first term (Killough, 2011), which could have negatively colored perceptions of both racial progress and voters' willingness to identify with Obama. Therefore, it is unclear how perceptions regarding racial progress and Obama may have changed.

#### *Does It Matter if Obama Is Biracial or Black?*

Although some attention was drawn to Obama's biracial ancestry during his first election (e.g., Arana, 2008; Kristoff, 2008; Malahy, Sedlins, Plaks, & Shoda, 2010), Obama was primarily described and thought of as America's first Black President (e.g., Block Jr., 2011; Halberstadt, Sherman, & Sherman, 2011; Squires & Jackson, 2010). This cultural trend to classify Obama as our nation's first *Black* president is consistent with the prominence of hypodescent in racial categorization of biracial minorities (i.e., categorizing an individual with any minority ancestry as such; e.g., Banks & Eberhardt, 1998; Ho, Sidanius, Levin, & Banaji, 2011; Peery & Bodenhausen, 2008). Nevertheless, racial labels can significantly alter people's judgments of others (e.g., Darley & Gross, 1983; Eberhardt, Dasgupta, & Banaszynski, 2003), change the characteristics that a person thinks apply to a given target (Hilliar & Kemp, 2008; Levin & Banaji, 2006; Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000), and shift views about race, racial categories, and racial attitudes (Gaither, Babbitt, & Sommers, under review; Pauker, Weisbuch, & Ambady, in preparation; Young, Sanchez & Wilton, in press). For example, previous work has found that individuals who labeled Obama as Black implicitly perceived race as more categorical than those who labeled Obama as multiracial (Malahy et al., 2010).

However, the consequences of labeling Obama as multiracial, such as how his racial label may impact perceptions of racial progress and racial attitudes more generally, have not been explored. We argue that since mere exposure to biracial or minority stimuli of individuals who are complete strangers has caused racial attitudes and perceptions to change, exposure to a prominent and well-known political biracial or minority figure such as Obama should lead toward similar changes regarding race-related political perceptions.

In general, few studies have explicitly measured if and when people willingly apply biracial or multiracial labels. Perceivers are also less likely to use multiracial labels (see Chen & Hamilton, 2012), which further limits our ability to predict how biracial (vs. Black) labels may or may not impact perceptions of Obama. Moreover, previous work exploring the effects of racial labeling has involved only biracial individuals who were unknown to participants or computer-generated (i.e., not even real people; for an exception see Malahy et al., 2010), so we do not know whether these same effects will apply for biracial individuals who are readily recognized such as Obama. Thus, it is unclear whether changing the racial label would affect how either Whites or Blacks perceive Obama's racial identity, or issues pertaining to racial progress.

#### *How do Whites and Blacks Perceive Obama?*

Beyond the influence of racial labels, person perception is a complex process, so even if an explicit biracial label does not alter Whites' and Blacks' perceptions of racial progress, there still may be perceiver differences by race regarding opinions of Obama. Research has shown that Whites are more likely to associate positive traits with White candidates over Black candidates (Terkildsen, 1993; Williams, 1990), and are often more wary or have more fear of Black than White candidates (Fiske, Bergsieker, Russell, & Williams, 2009; Ford, Johnson, & Maxwell, 2010). Additionally, although Whites with strong egalitarian norms generally will not make racist or racially charged comments about Blacks (Devos & Banaji, 2005; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004), around the 2008 election non-Black individuals were more likely to attribute incorrect information to, or associate negative attitudes with, Obama. For example, McCain (but not Obama) supporters who were predominately White showed faster reaction times when judging Muslim-related items if they were primed with Obama's name but not with McCain's name (Kosloff, Greenberg, Schmader, Dechesne, & Weise, 2010), and Whites with higher levels of implicit prejudice evaluated healthcare plans more negatively when it was associated with Obama versus Bill Clinton (Knowles, Lowery, & Schaumber, 2010).

While Whites were expressing concern over Obama's minority status, Blacks were also debating Obama's "Blackness" (e.g., McIlwain, 2007; Walters, 2007). For example, Stanley Crouch, a Black columnist for the *New York Daily News*,

wrote, “Other than color, Obama did not—does not—share a heritage with the majority of Black Americans, who are descendants of plantation slaves” (Crouch, 2006). Moreover, a CNN poll in April 2007 showed that Hillary Clinton was favored by Black voters over Obama with 88% of Blacks believing that Clinton “understands the problems of people like me” while only 77% of Blacks expressed similar views about Obama (Poll: Presidential Races, 2007). This finding suggests that Clinton was viewed by Black voters as more attuned to the needs of Black Americans than Obama, emphasizing the question in some Black voters’ minds concerning whether Obama was “Black enough” to represent their demographic.

So what do White and Black voters think of Obama’s racial background now? In comparison to Obama’s first election four years ago, would Blacks be more inclined to include Obama in their ingroup? Moreover, would Whites be less likely to perceive Obama strictly as an outgroup member, or would they be more likely to embrace a shared (i.e., White) ingroup identity? Social identity theory (Hogg, 2005; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) contends that social group identification is an important component of the self from which the individual derives value and an important sense of belonging (Brewer, 1991; Correll & Park, 2005). It further explains how self-identification with a particular ingroup (i.e., Obama supporter) significantly affects one’s thoughts and behaviors such as how much we stereotype and categorize others (Hogg, 2005; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). However, individuals face a constant tension between a need for social connection and a need for group distinctiveness in any social group (Brewer, 1991), and an ideal social group is one that provides social belonging and connection with others but also maintains clear and distinct boundaries between ingroup and outgroup members (Brewer, 2007). For example, including biracial individuals may meet the need for social inclusivity and belonging, but excluding biracial individuals highlights that one’s ingroup is truly distinct. This contention may be heightened for perceivers in the case of Obama (or any biracial individual), as he straddles racial boundaries.

Interestingly, levels of social identification with an ingroup can also be radically altered if that particular social identity is seen either as successful or unsuccessful. This tendency, known as BIRGing (Basking in Reflected Glory; Cialdini et al., 1976), outlines that when a group is successful, people tend to more strongly identify and claim that social ingroup. For example, recent work showed that after Obama’s first election, people who supported Obama left their campaign signs up longer in their yards than those supporting his opponent (Miller, 2009; see also Boen & Vanbeselaere, 2002). Similarly, past work using the American National Election Studies data demonstrated that in general, voters of winning candidates positively increased their ratings of those candidates (Miller, 2006). Furthermore, immediately following the 2012 election, Obama’s approval and favorability ratings were the highest they had been since 2009 (Holyk, 2013; Reilly, 2013), suggesting that overall the nation viewed Obama more positively after his successful reelection than immediately before when his victory was still in question.

Therefore, after a successful reelection in 2012, perhaps both White and Black individuals may want to claim Obama as part of their racial ingroup, showing a clear shift in the racial boundaries seen within Obama's presidency.

### Overview of Research

The present research examines how perceptions of Obama's racial background (i.e., biracial or Black) may affect views of racial progress, how these views may compare to those from 2008, and whether these outlooks differed both before and after the 2012 Presidential election. Additionally, since Obama's racial background proved to be an influential factor both among White and Black voters during the 2008 election, we recruited White and Black participants to compare possible differences in views of Obama based on the racial background of voters. More specifically, this study investigated the following: (1) Would Obama's reelection produce changes in views of racial progress and need for programs such as affirmative action (e.g., Kaiser et al., 2009)?; (2) Would labeling Obama as either biracial or Black impact these perceptions?; and (3) After the second successful election, would participants shift racial categorizations to claim Obama for their racial ingroup?

### Method

#### *Participants*

A total of 324 participants were recruited via Mechanical Turk in exchange for a small payment. Participants who failed either the instructional manipulation check (4%; see Oppenheimer, Meyvis, & Davidenko, 2009) or who failed to accurately recall information from the article (6%) were removed from analysis. This left 169 White (91 female) and 121 Black (71 female) participants for analysis. Of those individuals, 89 White (48 female) and 63 Black (44 female) individuals completed the survey 1–2 weeks before the election (age range: 18–75,  $M = 34.47$ ,  $SD = 12.35$ ) and reported the following political affiliations: 90 Democrat, 26 Republican, 22 unaffiliated, 13 other, and 1 not sure. Approximately 1–2 weeks after the election, 80 White (43 female) and 58 Black (27 female) individuals completed the survey (age range: 18–71,  $M = 33.42$ ,  $SD = 12.34$ ) and reported the following political affiliations: 76 Democrat, 22 Republican, 25 unaffiliated, 14 other, and 1 not sure preelection.

#### *Procedure*

Participants thought the study was examining the role of online media communication in the presidential election and were told they would read an excerpt

of a recent article from an online source and then answer questions about the presidential election and their personal beliefs. In order to assess whether labeling Obama as either Black or biracial affected racial perceptions, upon providing informed consent, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. Participants either read an article that described President Obama as African American, an article that described President Obama as Biracial Black/White, or they read a control article about global warming that did not include any mention of Obama. Each of the two articles that manipulated President Obama's racial identity mentioned his racial identity twice (e.g., "he is the first African American [Biracial Black/White] president to hold office"), as well as described his personal background (e.g., that he was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, and graduated from Columbia University and Harvard Law School) and outcomes of his prior political elections (e.g., that he served three terms representing the 13th District in the Illinois Senate from 1997 to 2004). Politically polarizing or controversial aspects of his presidency (e.g., recent support for marriage equality) were not mentioned. All articles were matched on word length and tone. Participants were asked to recall the racial background that the article described Obama as, and participants failing this manipulation check were excluded from analyses.

After reading the online article, participants completed all of the measures described below at either 10 or fewer days prior to the 2012 presidential election or 10 or more days following this election to examine whether after Obama's second victory caused voters to shift their focus on how far we have come in relation to racial progress (Eibach & Ehrlinger, 2006). Lastly, participants were also asked to racially categorize Obama as both White and Black so that we could measure whether White or Black participants claimed Obama as more of a member of their racial ingroup (vs. outgroup) both before and after his second election. Thus, the study employed a 3 (*condition*: Black, Biracial, Control)  $\times$  2 (*time*: preelection, postelection) between subjects design. Finally, participants were fully debriefed and thanked for participating.

### *Measures*

Unless otherwise noted, all measures were completed on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly disagree*).

*U.S. racial progress* ( $\alpha = .68$ ). To determine if participants felt both during and after Obama's second election that the United States had made more racial progress, we measured participants' views on the current levels of racial progress and their perceived need for further racial progress in the United States using six-items from Kaiser et al. (2009). Example items included, "Since the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, great progress has been made toward racial equality in the United States."

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

All participants	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	1	2	3	4
1. U.S. racial progress	4.19 (.98)	–	–	–	–
3. ATAA	4.81 (1.58)	–0.47**	0.77**	–	–
4. Black categorization	5.37 (1.52)	–0.09	0.21**	0.16**	–
5. White categorization	2.28 (1.40)	0.03	0.07	0.10	–0.13*

Note. \* $p \leq .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

*Racial equality policy support* ( $\alpha = .89$ ). Relatedly, to measure racial policy support and whether these varied based on condition or pre-/postelection times, participants completed Kaiser et al.'s (2009) four-item measure of support for policies to increase racial equality, with items such as, "Businesses should increase their efforts to promote diversity in the workplace" and "Efforts should be made to promote equal access to healthcare for minorities."

*Attitudes toward affirmative action (ATAA;  $\alpha = .85$ )*. To measure attitudes and endorsement of affirmative action policies since the 2012 election was again involving a racial minority candidate, we administered four items from Kravitz and Platania's (1993) ATAA scales including statements to measure affirmative action beliefs such as "The goals of affirmative action are good."

*Racial categorization*. Lastly, to measure how both White and Black participants racially viewed or categorized Obama to see if participants' inclusion of Obama as a member of their racial ingroup varied based on pre- and postelection times, we used a scale adapted from Sanchez, Good, and Chavez (2011), to measure participants' racial categorization of Obama across four questions asking participants to indicate the extent to which they categorized Obama as Black (two items,  $\alpha = .93$ ) and as White (two items,  $\alpha = .89$ ).

## Results

See Table 1 for overall means, standard deviations, and correlations of all dependent variables. All analyses, unless otherwise stated, were conducted using individual 2 (race)  $\times$  2 (time)  $\times$  3 (condition) ANOVAs on all study dependent variables.

### *Perceptions of Racial Progress and Equality around the 2012 Election*

*U.S. racial progress*. The three-way ANOVA on racial progress revealed significant main effects for both participant race,  $F(1, 291) = 25.80, p < .001, \eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .08$ , and time,  $F(1, 291) = 5.09, p = .03, \eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .02$ . Black participants

saw less racial progress ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = .79$ ) than White participants ( $M = 4.44$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ), and participants at Time 2 believed there was more racial progress ( $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = .98$ ) than those at Time 1 ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = .96$ ). No other main effects or interactions approached significance, all  $F$ s  $< 2.06$ , all  $p$ s  $> .10$ .

*Racial equality policy support.* There was a significant main effect of participant race such that Black participants expressed more need for equality support ( $M = 5.41$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ ) than White participants ( $M = 4.33$ ,  $SD = 1.61$ ),  $F(1, 287) = 35.31$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .11$ . There was also a marginal effect of time,  $F(1, 287) = 2.80$ ,  $p = .10$ ,  $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .01$ ; support for equality policies decreased from Time 1 ( $M = 5.02$ ,  $SD = 1.61$ ) to Time 2 ( $M = 4.72$ ,  $SD = 1.65$ ). No other main effects or interactions approached significance, all  $F$ s  $< 1.56$ , all  $p$ s  $> .20$ .

*ATAA.* There were significant main effects for both race of participant,  $F(1, 287) = 26.72$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .09$ , and time,  $F(1, 287) = 5.58$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .02$ . Black participants had more support for affirmative action ( $M = 5.31$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ) than White participants ( $M = 4.40$ ,  $SD = 1.64$ ). However, regardless of race, there was less support for affirmative action at Time 2 ( $M = 4.65$ ,  $SD = 1.67$ ) than Time 1 ( $M = 5.07$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ). No other main effects or interactions approached significance, all  $F$ s  $< 1$ , all  $p$ s  $> .30$ .

### *Racial Perceptions of Obama*

*Racial categorization.* The three-way ANOVA found no significant main effect of, or interaction with, racial label condition on racial categorization of Obama as either Black or White, all  $F$ 's  $< 2.06$ , all  $p$ s  $> .28$ . These null results suggest that the racial label assigned to Obama does not impact participants' race-related perceptions, but our sample size may have precluded a sensitive test of this variable.

*Ingroup categorization.* To examine whether participants' racial categorization of Obama varied depending on their race or time relative to the election, we conducted a mixed model 2 (Participant race)  $\times$  2 (Time)  $\times$  3 (Condition)  $\times$  2 (Racial categorization: White and Black) mixed-model ANOVA. A significant main effect of racial categorization,  $F(1, 292) = 610.50$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .68$ , was qualified by a two-way interaction between race and racial categorization,  $F(1, 292) = 8.86$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .03$ . Follow-up analyses demonstrated that Black participants perceived Obama as more Black ( $M = 5.62$ ,  $SD = 1.65$ ) than White participants ( $M = 5.16$ ,  $SD = 1.39$ ),  $F(1, 292) = 6.81$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .02$ . Similarly, White participants viewed Obama as more White ( $M = 2.40$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ) than Black participants ( $M = 2.21$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ), though this effect was marginal,  $F(1, 292) = 3.29$ ,  $p = .07$ ,  $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .01$ . Overall, these results suggest

that White and Black perceivers alike included Obama within their respective racial ingroups.

### Discussion

Our results replicate those from Obama's first election in that both White and Black voters perceived the election of Obama in 2012 to be a sign of increased racial progress while simultaneously serving as a signal for a reduced need for programs designed to address racial inequalities such as affirmative action. Our findings also show four years later, that the belief persists that having a minority president offsets other pervasive racial disparities that exist in our country. That being said, that a country rife with racial tension reelected a Black president is symbolic enough to represent racial progress in some form.

Additionally, our results demonstrate that perceptions of Obama do not differ when he is labeled as either Biracial or Black. In contrast to previous research demonstrating the impact of biracial labels, categorizations of Obama in the present study did not shift in concordance with his racial label, revealing that racial labels do not always affect racial perceptions. Though previous work has demonstrated that labels affect expectancies of minority targets (Young et al., in press), these effects have only been shown with novel and unknown individuals. As Obama is not an unknown target, expectancies may not apply in the same manner. Therefore, we suggest that this result demonstrates an important limitation regarding the effect a racial label can have in social perception, while also serving as a significant contribution toward the efforts in fully exploring the effects of multiracial labels. Since previous research on label effects have found small effect sizes ( $\eta^2 \sim .1$ ) associated with these label effects, future work should recruit a larger sample to more sensitively test this hypothesis and to explore the boundary effects linked with social labeling and multiracial perceptions.

Most interestingly, despite seeing Obama generally as a "Black" president, our results suggest that both Whites and Blacks have shifted their own racial categorization of Obama in concordance with their respective racial ingroups. This unique finding could be due in part to several reconcilable theories. First, exposure to Obama as a positive exemplar of a racial minority who was elected to a position strongly associated with Whites may have served as a bridge across the majority and minority racial divide. Supporting this theory, recent work argues that positive exposure to a counter-stereotypic group member can alter implicit attitudes about race (Conrey, Sherman, Gawronski, Hugenberg, & Groom, 2005; Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006; Plant et al., 2009). Such research suggests that exposure to Obama through various media outlets which highlight positive qualities, such as being well-educated, motivated, successful, and well-spoken, could aid in combating the negative stereotypes commonly associated with Blacks (e.g., that they are unintelligent or unsuccessful; Bodenhausen, Schwarz, Bless,

& Wänke, 1995; Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001; Devine & Elliot, 1995; Fiske et al., 2009). For example, participants who were either exposed to or asked to think about positive Black exemplars (i.e., Martin Luther King Jr. and Oprah Winfrey) showed less racial bias toward that group than those exposed to or asked to think about nonrace-related exemplars (Bodenhausen et al., 1995; Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001). This work therefore implies that exposure to Obama's positive qualities may also have reduced the racial distance seen between Whites and Blacks, which may in turn have impacted racial categorization.

Relatedly, BIRGing may also have been involved in the shifting of racial boundaries surrounding Obama. As stated earlier, the 2008 election showed a lack of support among both White and Black voters for a candidate that was perceived as either "too Black" or "not Black enough." BIRGing predicts that while Obama was successful (as he was after his two election victories), individuals would be eager to share an in-group with him. Additionally, some analysts suggested that Obama's biracial heritage and his ability to call on his "Whiteness" when needed allowed him to navigate between his racial identities purposefully, giving voters the opportunity to adjust their categorizations of him as best fit for their needs at that given moment (e.g., Brown, 2011; Daniel, 2009; Ford et al., 2010; Friedman, 2008). These notions suggest that Obama's potential flexibility in racial identification enables both White and Black perceivers to categorize or claim Obama as their ingroup. Future work, however, should examine these identification shifts with minority candidates who are not viewed as successful to illuminate how BIRGing may work either to a candidate's advantage or disadvantage.

As the focus of our study was to examine perceptions of Whites and Blacks, we have no data for other racial groups. Future research should also examine non-Black and non-White participants' perceptions of racial progress as impacted by Obama. For example, it would be interesting to see if Asians as a "higher status minority" see Obama as more White than Black and if Latinos would, as a "lower status minority," view Obama as more Black than White. Additionally, the majority of our participant sample was politically liberal, limiting the generalizability of our findings toward more politically conservative individuals. Future work should examine these effects among these populations so that we can more fully understand the role that race plays within a political arena among all types of voters.

In conclusion, our results suggest that two major segments of the U.S. population now choose to identify with President Obama through racial categorization. While some contend that the mere act of electing a minority president is clear evidence of racial progress, we argue that seeing an increase in both White and Black individuals' racial identification with a minority president shows a different form of racial progress, as it signals their willingness to associate a minority president with both of their racial ingroups. In other words, Obama may symbolize a form

of racial progress regardless of the way that his racial identity is represented and perceived. However, the path toward racial progress is long and multifaceted, and electing a minority president represents only one step closer to racial equality.

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SARAH E. GAITHER is a doctoral student in the Psychology Department at Tufts University. Her research interests include intergroup relations, perceptions and experiences of biracial individuals, and the development of racial biases in children.

LEIGH S. WILTON is a doctoral student in the Psychology Department at Rutgers University. Her research interests include multiracial categorization and fostering diversity in organization contexts.

DANIELLE M. YOUNG is a post-doctoral scholar in the Psychology Department at Rutgers University. Her research interests include implicit attitudes, stereotyping and prejudice.