

Subconscious prejudice does not influence white opinion about Obama, policies benefitting blacks

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A subconscious prejudice against blacks may not have an effect on how whites feel about President Obama or policies intended to benefit blacks, a new study indicates.

"These findings differ from previous research, which suggested that subconscious [negative attitudes](#) toward blacks—also referred to as "implicit prejudice"—eroded the white vote for Obama during the 2008 presidential elections.

Researchers reinterpreted and extended the [statistical analyses](#) of previous studies, analyzing data from three national election studies that looked at voting behavior, candidate evaluations and racial policy attitudes in 2008 and 2009. Across the three datasets, implicit prejudice was not associated with either views of Obama or policy opinion after taking "explicit" prejudice, also known as conscious prejudice, into account.

"These results—taken together with the findings of other recent research projects—cast doubt on the contention that implicit prejudice has political consequences," said Spencer Piston, a [doctoral student](#) in the Department of Political Science at the University of Michigan. He co-authored the study with Nathan Kalmoe, a post-doctoral researcher at George Washington University.

In contrast, explicit prejudice has harmful and powerful effects, Piston said.

"For example, surveys indicate that over 50 percent of white Americans consider blacks to be lazier than whites," he said. "These prejudiced whites are less likely than non-prejudiced whites to support Obama, and they are also less likely to support policies intended to benefit African-Americans."

The results appear in *Public Opinion Quarterly*.

More information: poq.oxfordjournals.org/content/77/1.toc

Provided by University of Michigan

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