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Old Friends and New Alliances

How the 2004 Illinois Senate Race Complicates the Study of Race and Religion

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Barack Obama won the 2004 U.S. Senate race in Illinois, becoming the only current Black senator and only the fifth in history. This election generated particular interest in the study of race and elections because Obama's challenger, Alan Keyes, is also Black. The race was the first involving two Black men representing the major political parties in a Senate election. The election provides an opportunity to pursue the dynamics of race, religion, identity, and electoral choice. The authors ask how various racial and religious cues framing Obama and Keyes influenced voters' perceptions and assessments. They analyze data from embedded experiments in a survey of Black and White voters in Illinois and examine the significance of stimuli framing the candidates by race and religion and the effect those treatments had in eliciting racial group consciousness and altering candidate evaluations. They present the results of models estimating the effects of various influences on attitudes and behaviors in the race.

Keywords: *Barack Obama; race and elections; Alan Keyes; African American politics; religion and politics; U.S. Senate elections*

Barack Obama won the 2004 U.S. Senate race in Illinois to become the only Black U.S. senator and the fifth African American elected to office in the history of the U.S. Senate. Although historic in its own right, the election generates particular interest for the study of race and elections because Obama's challenger was another African American: conservative talk show host Alan Keyes (a Maryland native). Keyes was chosen by the Illinois Republican party to replace Jack Ryan, who after winning the Republican primary withdrew from the general election following the disclosure of

damaging information about his personal life. The Obama–Keyes race was the first in which two Black men represented the major political parties in a U.S. Senate election. There was substantial coverage by the popular press of this election, but surprisingly little systematic data were collected by political scientists. The dynamics of this race provide a unique opportunity to pursue the dynamics of race, religion, identity, and electoral choice. In this article, we ask how the various racial and religious cues used by Obama and Keyes likely influenced the ways Illinois voters perceived and assessed these candidates.

In this article, we present a preliminary analysis of a set of embedded experiments in a survey of African American and White voters in Illinois. We analyze the significance of stimuli framing Obama and Keyes in terms of race and religion and the effect those treatments had in eliciting racial group consciousness and altering evaluations of the candidates. A random sample of Illinois residents was interviewed in October 2004, and African Americans were oversampled.¹ This is a first cut at the analysis, and the results, although illuminating, are nevertheless preliminary. We begin with an explanation of the experimental manipulations embedded in the survey instrument, along with a description of our hypotheses. In the next section, we discuss the effect of the treatments portraying Obama as an African American compared with a race-neutral frame on measures of racial identification and consciousness. In the third section, we examine the influence of the various race and religion stimuli measures of candidate evaluation for both Obama and Keyes.

Racial Identity and Consciousness

Although there is fast-growing interest in the significance of identity to politics, particularly that of racial identification and group consciousness to political behavior, there are correspondingly few studies with systematic empirical measures of the underlying concepts. In a comprehensive and wide-ranging review of research in political psychology on group identity, Leonie Huddy (2003) described the study of identity as “a research area that has been troubled by a lack of consistent measurement, divergent measurement approaches between psychologists and political scientists, and relatively few studies that have attempted to cross validate measures” (p. 522). Identity is a very tricky subject, and much of the literature on identity and politics in political science has come from work on ethnic and national identity in comparative politics and international relations (see, e.g., Gibson

& Gouws, 2000; Laitin, 1998; Wendt, 1994). Perhaps the best indicator of the complexity of racial identity is a comparison of the number of monikers with the quantity of instrumentation developed for empirical measurement. Terms for racial group identification outnumber well-tested survey questions attempting to measure the underlying concept. Brubaker and Cooper (2000) made the most radical suggestion: to banish the term *identity* from the study of identity because it is hopelessly vague and, worse, because it has spawned equally ambiguous conclusions.² Alternatively, a group of interdisciplinary scholars behind the Harvard Identity Project encouraged an increase in the systematic study of identity, proposing instead a set of types of “collective” or “social” identity, including constitutive norms, social purposes, relational comparisons with other social categories, and cognitive models (Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, & McDermott, 2006). Furthermore, they emphasized the importance of accounting for contestation within the terms.³

Six distinctive measures of racial identification and consciousness were included in the survey fielded during the 2004 U.S. Senate election in Illinois, including several widely used questions tapping group identity, along with some new instrumentation. Of the former, the first is the classic “close to” questions, most familiar from the American National Election Study. These items are the most common measures of group identity in the study of political behavior, as measures of racial, gender, or other group affinity (see, e.g., Conover, 1984; Leighley & Vedlitz, 1999; Miller, Gurin, Gurin, & Malanchuk, 1981; Tolleson Rinehart, 1992). In addition, the “linked fate” question developed in the study of African American political behavior was also included on the survey. Complementing these two standard measures was a new question asking Black respondents how important their race is to their ideas about politics and a question asking which racial descriptor it is most important to be—*Black*, both *Black* and *American*, or *American*—requiring a forced choice between the terms. In addition, a series of questions on the importance of cultural homogeneity was included on requiring children to study an African language, the importance of marrying others of the same racial group, and the importance of learning about the history and culture of one’s race. Marginal distributions for these items by racial group for African Americans and Whites in Illinois are presented in Table 1.

Compared with Whites, African American respondents were much more strongly identified with their racial group on all of the measures. Eighty-three percent of Blacks said that they felt close to other African Americans, compared with 59% of Whites who said that they felt close to members of

Table 1
Racial Group Identification Measures (%)

	Whites (<i>n</i> = 420)	African Americans (<i>n</i> = 108)
1. Close to		
Latinos	5	12
African Americans	8	83
Asian Americans	5	4
Whites	59	5
2. Linked fate		
Strongly agree	5	30
Agree	16	41
Neither	56	24
Disagree	18	3
Strongly disagree	6	3
Summary linked fate:		
strongly agree plus agree	21	71
3. Racial political identity: importance of being [race] to ideas about politics		
Very important	3	57
Somewhat important	21	30
Not at all important	76	13
4. Most important to be		
Black		7
Both Black and American		63
American		31
5. Racial cultural identity		
Black children should study African language		33
Blacks should marry other Blacks		29
Important to learn Black history/culture		94
6. Racial background enumeration		
100% own race	85	48
Some White	—	29
Some Black	3	—
Some Latino	3	11
Some Asian	3	9

Source: 2004 Illinois U.S. Senate Study.

their racial group. Similarly, 71% of Blacks either agreed or agreed strongly with the statement “As things get better for blacks in general, things get better for me.” The new question on racial political identity asked respondents to say, when thinking about their political identities, how important

was being their race to their ideas about politics. More than half of Blacks said that being Black was very important to their political identities, whereas only 3% of Whites responded similarly. In the forced-choice format, nearly two thirds of Blacks said that it was most important to be both Black and American, with 31% indicating that it was most important to be American. The one set of questions for which the data went in the opposite direction from the other items on racial identification was the question asking people to describe their racial backgrounds by assigning points to categories. Whites were the most likely to allocate all 10 points to “White or Anglo,” with 85% of the sample replying that they were 100% White. In contrast, fewer than half of Blacks (48%), the strongest racial identifiers on the measures of linked fate and politicized racial identity, called themselves 100% Black. Nearly a third of Blacks (29%) allocated at least 1 or more points of White in their race.

When should group identification—and more specifically, being part of a group defined by race—matter for politics? The existing scholarship in political science provides some guidance, though the data are not entirely consistent, and one is hard-pressed to find a clear articulation of a theory addressing the susceptibility of racial identification and consciousness to political mobilization. Rather, the conventional wisdom seems to assume the existence of a relationship, resulting in the expectation (often erroneous) that race can easily activate political behavior. Of particular interest is the notion that racial identification will be heightened by a minority candidacy for political office, though systematic studies testing this hypothesis are rare. In this regard, there are no studies to our knowledge investigating the extent to which racial identification and consciousness can be elicited by framing in short-term communications.

In this experiment, we tested a group-pride explanation for variation in racial identity. Group pride is the notion that shared characteristics—race, language, native homeland, history, religion, culture, economic status, colonial domination, phenotypic features—invite feelings of solidarity, familiarity, and self-esteem. Described in this way, group pride sounds almost subconscious and primordial. In many ways it is, operating as a powerful heuristic in processing information about people and leaving much to assumptions of similarity embedded in the shortcuts. The notion of descriptive or symbolic representation by legislators (or agents) in terms of racial identity is consistent with this notion. Indeed, the data presented above demonstrate how deep racial identities run for African Americans. The family of empirical claims emanating from the group-pride hypothesis are among the more current and controversial issues in the study of race and

politics, including research on the impact of descriptive representation in terms of race on political behavior and attitudes, with the work of Bobo and Gilliam (1990); Gay (2001, 2004); Baretto, Segura, and Woods (2004); and Swain (1995) among prominent attempts to uncover the dynamics of racial group identification in participation and public opinion.⁴

To test the group-pride motivation for racial identification, a set of experimental stimuli were developed. One half of the African American and White Illinois samples were shown a photograph of Barack Obama, accompanied by the following text:

Barack Obama is running for the U.S. Senate. He was a community organizer on Chicago's south side, and was the first black president of the Harvard Law Review. If elected, he would be only the 5th black Senator in U.S. history.

This treatment was intended to prime viewers to think of Obama as a Black man. Alternatively, one half of the samples received a race-neutral description of Obama, with a photograph of the Illinois state house. The caption under the image read, "Barack Obama is running for the U.S. Senate. He is currently an Illinois State Senator. He is a graduate of Harvard Law School, and on the faculty of the University of Chicago Law School." This stimulus was intended to deracialize Obama, emphasizing instead his credentials as a political representative in the Illinois legislature and his credentials in the legal profession. The objective of the manipulation was to observe whether brief exposure to visual images would prime racial group identification and consciousness.

If racial identity is a long-term disposition, one would expect that it would be hard to move with primes such as these. In this regard, groups with strong and deeply held racial consciousness and those with low levels of racial identity should be the least likely to demonstrate change as a function of the stimuli. Alternatively, groups in the middle may be more susceptible to the frames. Groups may also differ in terms of the efficacy of the group-pride prime as a function of the degree of internal perceptions of racial homogeneity. Thus, although African Americans exhibited the strongest degree of racial consciousness, the already high degree of racial group identification among African Americans may mean relatively small magnitudes of changes as a function of the stimulus. Conversely, Whites should exhibit greater affinity for Whites, but to a smaller degree.

What difference did racialized or neutral frames of Barack Obama have on the extent to which African American and White respondents expressed racial group identifications? The results are presented in Table 2, pairing the

marginal distributions for the measures of racial identification for the two treatment groups. Any differences can be attributed to the stimuli. Overall, the results from the experimental manipulations of group pride were modest.

Among Whites, who were asked only the three items of closeness to groups, linked fate, and racial political identity, viewing the racialized stimulus muted the sense of racial identification with Whites on all three of the measures. The strongest effects were in the measure of racial political identity, asking the respondents to say how important being White was to their ideas about politics. When preceded by the image of Obama combined with the description highlighting the candidate's African American background, White respondents were more likely to say that being White was not at all important to their ideas about politics. Although not statistically significant, the racialized frame worked in similar ways to attenuate White racial consciousness for the other two measures of closeness to Whites and linked fate. Results for the Black sample conformed to our expectations of the importance of symbolic frames of group pride for two of the measures of racial group identification. Blacks viewing the photo of Obama accompanied by a description of him as a Black man were more likely to say that they felt close to other Blacks, and this difference was statistically significant. Stronger feelings of linked fate, on the other hand, were elicited among African Americans when they viewed the race-neutral frame of Obama. Although not statistically significant, the relationship is nevertheless surprising and requires greater scrutiny. The measure of racial political identity showed no systematic differences between the two treatment groups. Interestingly, Black respondents viewing the racialized portrayal of Obama were more likely to say that it was most important to be American than those viewing the race-neutral frame. In terms of racial cultural identity, the racialized frame produced greater agreement with the questions asking whether Black children should study an African language and learn about Black history and culture compared with the race-neutral frame.

The Illinois Context

Presumably, voters use their senses of connectedness with other members of their racial groups to guide electoral choices. Racial group identification can operate as a heuristic, or cognitive-processing shortcut, changing the calculus of the political choice for those who share group identification relative to those who lack a sense of politicized racial identity. For the most part, researchers have thought about this process in only two contexts. First,

Table 2
Racial Identification Measures With Group-Pride Prime (%)

Prime (Neutral or Racialized)	Whites		African Americans	
	(<i>n</i> = 223)	(<i>n</i> = 197)	(<i>n</i> = 51)	(<i>n</i> = 55)
	Neutral	Racialized	Neutral	Racialized
1. Close to				
Own racial group	61	56	77	89
2. Linked fate				
Strongly agree	6	3	37	23
Agree	18	14	36	45
Neither	52	61	23	25
Disagree	18	18	4	2
Strongly disagree	7	5	0	5
Summary linked fate:				
strongly agree plus agree	24	17	73	68
3. Racial political identity				
Very important	4	2	57	56
Somewhat important	23	18	29	31
Not at all important	72	80	14	13
4. Most important to be				
Black			10	4
Both Black and American			65	61
American			25	36
5. Racial cultural identity				
Black children should study				
African language			29	38
Blacks marry other Blacks			31	27
Important to learn Black				
history/culture			90	98

Source: 2004 Illinois U.S. Senate Study.

when choosing between two White candidates, voters can translate racial group interest into policy or partisan positions and choose the candidate whose political platform most closely matches racial group interests. For example, Dawson (1994) argued that for African Americans with strong senses of linked fate, Democratic partisan affiliation can stand in for shared racial interests because the Democratic party has a 50-year history of supporting Black policy preferences.⁵ Second, when choosing between candidates of different races, voters can use the racial identities of the candidates as a proxy for political similarity and choose the candidate who matches

their racial-political preferences. In this case, racial identification informs voters that candidates who “look like” them probably share their political dispositions. When candidates’ races reinforce partisan expectations (e.g., a Black Democrat running against a White Republican), the racial heuristic makes decisions easier. When candidates’ races challenge partisan expectations (e.g., a Black Republican running against a White Democrat), the racial heuristic can complicate decisions. In this case, it is possible for some African Americans with high group identification to vote for the Black Republican candidate and some to vote for the White Democratic candidate out of the same sense of politicized racial identity.

These expectations of racial electoral choice are theoretically reasonable and empirically demonstrable in voting behavior when White candidates face one another or when White and Black candidates challenge for the same office. The 2004 Illinois Senate race offered a variation infrequently experienced in American politics: two African American candidates, both backed by major parties, in a general election running against each other in a district that is not majority African American. The 2004 Illinois Senate race provided this rare historical glimpse at the operation of racial group identity because it revealed something about what happens when two Black candidates must vie against each other not only for Black voters but for a racially heterogeneous district. This election provided an opportunity to update our understanding of racial identification processes and their influence on voting calculation.

It is worth pausing to more precisely understand the electoral context of the 2004 Senate race between Barack Obama and Alan Keyes. Obama won the primary election for the Democratic nomination in a crowded field of contenders. His strongest competitors, Blair Hull and Dan Hynes, were well financed and backed by both the powerful Daley Democratic Party machine and by many prominent African American elected officials and religious leaders in the city of Chicago. Obama began the primary season as an underfunded, only locally known state senator. Although well liked by his constituents in the 13th district of Illinois, Obama was beaten badly when he challenged incumbent Bobby Rush in the 2000 Democratic primary for the congressional seat in the predominately Black Second Congressional District of Illinois. Throughout the 2004 Senate primary season, Obama was not an obvious winner. His showing against Bobby Rush 4 years earlier suggested that he might not have a base among Black, urban voters, because in that race, Obama had faced serious racial credibility problems. In 2000, compared with Rush, he looked woefully “inauthentic” racially. His connections to the Southside seemed to be concentrated in the

Hyde Park neighborhood, which is distinct for its relative Whiteness compared with the rest of the Southside. He was not a particularly fiery public speaker and lacked access to a certain cultural narrative of defiance that Rush has used throughout his career.⁶ But in May, Obama won the Democratic primary handily, raking in 53% of the vote against six opponents. His victory was the result of aggressive campaigning, exceeding initially low expectations, and was assisted by an 11th-hour personal scandal involving his top competitor, Blair Hull.

Obama's coalition was a broad interracial coalition of voters across the state. And although he had struggled to gain African American votes against Rush in 2000, working- and middle-class Black voters formed the core of Obama's victorious 2004 primary coalition. In the general election, these voters remained his most loyal constituency. By August 2004, the *Chicago Tribune* reported "in Chicago's black community, Obama, also an African American, has ascended to super celebrity status" (Mendell, 2004, p. 1). Although Obama's meteoric rise to national prominence, precipitated by his appearance at the Democratic National Convention, created rock-star status for Obama, it also produced a largely unspoken fear among many of his core voters. Simply stated, these voters wondered, "Will he still be one of us?" This anxiety reflects the dual appreciation of Obama's broad appeal, which makes him highly electable, and a conflicting desire among Black voters to hold Obama accountable to particular racial interests that he has a unique capacity to voice as the only Black senator.

This tension was heightened by the fact that Obama's challenger in the general election was an African American. The Republican Party in Illinois is a party in shambles. Despite the dominance of conservative political affiliations in downstate Illinois, Illinois remains the bluest state in the nation. Democrats dominate both the state house and the Senate. The governor and the mayor of Chicago are both Democrats. With Obama's election, both the junior and senior senators from the state are Democrats. Indicative of the minority status of Republicans in Illinois, Obama, although running in a crowded primary field, garnered more votes than the total number of votes cast in the Republican primary. There was good reason to believe, therefore, that Obama's primary victory nearly assured him the general election. However, Obama was initially matched against a young, charismatic newcomer on the Republican side. Jack Ryan was a successful businessman who had ties to the Black community because he had voluntarily left a high-paying job in the private sector to become a school teacher in an all-Black, all-male Southside high school. As the general election began in the summer of 2004, it was possible that Ryan's youth, energy, and moderate

views might cause real trouble for the Obama candidacy. But Ryan's campaign was quickly derailed by damaging revelations about the circumstances of his divorce. When he withdrew from the Senate race, the Illinois GOP scrambled to find someone to run against Obama, who was already ascending to national prominence as a result of his impressive primary victory.

In late July, the Illinois GOP, over the protest of its own state leader, Judy Barr Topinka, made the surprising choice to import Maryland native Alan Keyes, a conservative Black talk show host, as their candidate for the Senate. Some observers believed that the Illinois Republicans calculated from Obama's 2000 congressional defeat that a Black opponent might prove troubling for him. Others believed that the state Republican Party hoped to tap into the "morality vote" that was proving a key component of the presidential race.

Whatever the state party's motivations, the choice of Alan Keyes forced researchers of racial politics to ask some important questions:

Does race matter to Black voters if both candidates are Black, or are other identity considerations more important?

If race remains salient, which Black candidate could most effectively access tropes of racial authenticity?

What would White voters do when faced with two African American candidates?

Relevance of Racial Cues

Obama's victory in November 2004 was so complete that it may seem to border on ridiculous to question the basis on which Keyes might have appealed to Illinois voters. Although Obama's massive relative appeal among both Black and White voters is now a historical fact, there are still reasons one might have imagined that Keyes should have made a stronger opponent among Black voters. Both Keyes and Obama are Harvard-educated, married fathers. Neither is a native of Illinois. Although Keyes was a latecomer (moving to Illinois in July 2004), Congressman Rush had been able to effectively paint Obama as a Chicago outsider just 4 years earlier. Keyes uses a rhetorical style far more consistent with Black political leaders from Black church traditions (e.g., Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton). Keyes, like most Blacks in Illinois, is the descendant of Africans enslaved in the American South, whereas Obama is the child of a White woman and an African immigrant. Keyes, again like most Blacks in Illinois, was raised within a traditional, conservative religious tradition, although Obama became a churchgoer only after marrying his relatively more religious wife.

Obama often actively deracialized his political positions, pitching his policies as good for the state in general. Keyes, on the other hand, actively discussed his political views in the context of race. He publicly advocated reparations for American slavery and even explained his antiabortion stance as motivated by the idea that abortion is racial genocide: "So the people who are supporting that position [prochoice] as actually supporting the systematic extermination of Black America" (Mendell, 2004, p. 1). In many ways, it was Keyes who had access to important racial tropes and political cultural practices. But at every step, Obama was embraced as the candidate of choice among Black voters in Illinois.

Table 3 demonstrates that contrary to expectations derived from earlier Black identity research, Obama was perceived more positively by Black voters when he was framed as a multiracial candidate than when he was framed as a Black candidate.

The results presented in Table 3 are modest but consistent. The experimental prompt made no difference to White respondents. White respondents had the same overall assessment of Obama regardless of whether he was framed primarily as a multiracial candidate or as a Black candidate. However, African American respondents did respond consistently on some dimensions to the prompt. When Obama was framed as a multiracial candidate, he was assessed more positively than when he was framed as Black. Initially, the result that Obama was seen as being "more like people I know" when he was framed as multiracial surprised us. However, recall from Table 1 that fewer than half of Black respondents reported their own racial identities as 100% Black. Most Black respondents understand themselves as being multiracial in some sense. Thus, Obama's multiracial identity may be attractive not only to White voters but also to Black voters, whose senses of racial identity may be more complicated than previous survey research has revealed. In this context, Keyes found himself unable to trump Obama on race.

We hypothesize that several factors kept Keyes from being able to trump Obama on racial identity. First, Keyes was running as a Republican. Partisan identification is a significant political cue for Black voters, who are the most loyal bloc remaining in the Democratic coalition. Black voters were tremendously suspicious of Keyes for choosing to ally with the reviled Republican Party. Second, Keyes's candidacy was seen by many Black voters as a ploy to split the Black vote. African Americans felt that the Illinois GOP underestimated them and believed that they would vote for any Black candidate offered. This estimation of the Black vote as easily manipulated angered many Blacks in Illinois. *Chicago Sun-Times* columnist Mary Mitchell (2004) captured this sentiment, writing,

Table 3
Mean Assessments of Barack Obama by Illinois Respondents, by
Experimental Condition and Race

Variable	Black Illinois Respondents			White Illinois Respondents		
	Multiracial Prompt	Black Prompt	<i>t</i>	Multiracial Prompt	Black Prompt	<i>t</i>
Make a good senator	.86	.82	1.04	.72	.70	1.18
Has qualities I look for in elected official	.87	.83	1.22*	.71	.70	1.04
Seems qualified for office	.87	.85	0.85	.75	.74	0.74
Would understand my concerns	.85	.82	0.93	.67	.65	1.06
Reminds me of people I know	.82	.74	2.39**	.63	.62	0.64
Total assessment: additive scale of all measures	.86	.82	1.33*	.70	.68	1.00

Source: 2004 Illinois U.S. Senate Study.

p* < .10. *p* < .05.

In making this desperate play, the Republican Party has once again shown why it is not a reasonable alternative for African Americans. That’s why I’m disappointed in Keyes. He knows full well that he is being used, yet he has put his own self-interest over the interests of black people. . . . For those of us who have argued consistently that black conservatives have something worthwhile to contribute, Keyes’ presence in the Senate race represents a step backward, not a step forward. (p. 14)

Relevance of Religious Cues

Despite the obvious preference among both Black and White voters for Obama over Keyes, we hypothesized that when two Black candidates challenge each other, it is possible that other important political identities come to the fore. In the context of the 2004 Illinois Senate race, religion seemed a likely candidate. Faced with two Black candidates, would Illinois voters respond to cues about the religious commitments and preferences of the candidates? To test this hypothesis, respondents were presented with differing frames of Alan Keyes. In the first, Keyes’s position on abortion was framed as a matter of Christian commitment: “Alan Keyes says that as a Christian he opposes abortion, and says that he chose to run for the U.S. Senate representing Illinois to support this position.” In the second frame, Keyes’s position on abortion was framed as a matter of Catholic doctrine:

Table 4
Mean Assessments of Alan Keyes by Illinois Respondents, by
Experimental Condition and Race

Variable	Black Illinois Respondents			White Illinois Respondents		
	Christian Prompt	Catholic Prompt	<i>t</i>	Christian Prompt	Catholic Prompt	<i>t</i>
Make a good senator	.40	.36	0.89	.46	.46	0.14
Has qualities I look for in elected official	.41	.38	0.59	.46	.44	0.62
Seems qualified for office	.49	.41	1.67**	.50	.50	0.22
Would understand my concerns	.38	.34	1.07	.45	.44	0.97
Reminds me of people I know	.42	.39	1.08*	.46	.48	-1.32
Total assessment: additive scale of all measures	.42	.38	1.17	.47	.46	0.86

Source: 2004 Illinois U.S. Senate Study.

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$.

“Alan Keyes says that as a Catholic he opposes abortion, and says that he chose to run for the U.S. Senate representing Illinois to support this position.” Just as in the racialized frames for Obama, respondents were then asked to rate Keyes on a number of politically relevant dimensions. The results of the religious frames on Black and White respondents are reported in Table 4.

This experimental manipulation made no difference across race. Neither Black voters nor White voters as a group were more positive toward Keyes when he was framed as either Christian or Catholic. Black respondents were somewhat more likely to perceive Keyes as more qualified for office when reminded that he was a Christian, running in Illinois to support his religious views, but no other dimension of assessing Keyes was influenced by the manipulation.

Although religion made no difference among Black or White voters as a group, religious cues did influence religious respondents. In Table 5, we reassess the effect of the religious frames manipulations around Keyes by splitting the sample between more and less religious respondents. More religious respondents were those whose scores on a three-item religiosity scale were above the mean, and less religious respondents were those whose scores on a three-item religiosity scale were below the mean.

Table 5
Mean Assessments of Alan Keyes by Illinois Respondents

Variable	More Religious Illinois Respondents			Less Religious Illinois Respondents		
	Christian Prompt	Catholic Prompt	<i>t</i>	Christian Prompt	Catholic Prompt	<i>t</i>
Make a good senator	.51	.47	1.90*	.38	.40	-1.18
Has qualities I look for in elected official	.51	.48	2.11**	.37	.37	-0.08
Seems qualified for office	.55	.51	1.52*	.42	.44	-0.87
Would understand my concerns	.50	.45	2.45**	.37	.37	-0.36
Reminds me of people I know	.51	.49	0.91	.39	.42	-0.163*
Total assessment: additive scale of all measures	.52	.48	2.04**	.38	.40	-1.03

Source: 2004 Illinois U.S. Senate Study.

p* < .10. *p* < .05.

Table 5 shows modest but consistent results for the religious cues among more religious respondents. Those who reported that they were more religious had statistically significantly higher assessments of Keyes when his abortion position was framed as a matter of Christian belief.⁷ It is worth noting that the only time that appraisals of Keyes rose above the 0.5 mid-point on the scale was among more religious respondents who received the Christian frame.

As in the case of Obama, it would be a mistake to overanalyze such modest results. However, there is some evidence here that when faced with two African American candidates, the relevant dividing line for understanding the electorate’s response to the candidates may not be race. By framing Keyes as a committed Christian politician, we were able to elicit more positive assessments of him as a candidate. This cue made no difference to Blacks relative to Whites, but it did matter to more religious respondents compared with less religious respondents.

Modeling Attitudes and Behavior in the 2004 Senate Race

This final empirical section of this article sketches an overall picture of the factors underlying both attitudinal and behavioral support for both

Obama and Keyes among Illinois respondents. Table 6 reports results from an ordinary least squares estimation of a model of the overall assessment of candidates Obama and Keyes. The dependent variable was an additive scale of the five items reported in Tables 3 to 5. The assessment of each candidate was modeled as a function of (a) the experimental context; (b) three enduring political identity factors: partisan identification (with higher scores indicating more Democratic), the relevance of the respondent's racial identity for making political decisions, and the importance of religion as a factor in guiding daily life; (c) two measures of information context: how much attention the respondent reported spending on the Senate race and whether the respondent lived in a predominately White community; and (d) a number of standard demographic characteristics: race, sex, income, education, and age. By considering these variables together in a single model, we aimed to learn something about the relevance of each in determining the attitudes that Illinois respondents held for the Senate candidates.

Several results are clear from the data presented in Table 6. First, the experimental manipulations had no independent explanatory power once we accounted for the other reasonable influences in the model. This probably indicates that the attitudes we hoped to influence with the experiment are relatively sticky and difficult to influence with a single brief cue in the context of a survey instrument. Also unsurprising is the result that partisan identification is the single most important factor in the model. Strong Democrats had significantly higher opinions of Obama and strong Republicans significantly higher opinions of Keyes. Perhaps more interesting are the results on racial and religious identity. Appraisals of Obama were unaffected by the belief that one's race is politically important, but those who turn to religion for personal guidance in daily life found him marginally less attractive. Conversely, the political salience of racial identification worked against support for Keyes, whereas religiosity as a matter of daily guidance bolstered opinions of Keyes. Religiosity was second only to Republican Party identification as a variable of importance in explaining appraisals of Keyes. Although all the media coverage of the Obama–Keyes race focused on the historic consequences of race in the campaign, most missed this undercurrent of religiosity, which seems to explain why some (although admittedly few) Illinois residents were willing to think positively of Keyes.

The final analysis we undertook was a model of the likelihood of reporting an intention to vote for Obama or Keyes. The data in Table 7 are results from a maximum likelihood logit analysis that modeled the dependent variable of response to the question "If the election for U.S. Senate in Illinois were held today, who would you vote for?" In the first equation, the response

Table 6
Model of Overall Assessment of Candidates Barack Obama and Alan
Keyes Among Illinois Respondents

	Obama		Keyes	
	Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE
Experimental Manipulation				
Obama is "Black" frame/Keyes is "Christian" frame	-0.01	0.02	0.01	0.02
Enduring factors				
Partisan identification	0.21***	0.03	-0.30***	0.03
Race is politically important	0.03	0.04	-0.09**	0.04
Religious guidance important	-0.09***	0.03	0.26***	0.03
Information context				
Attention to Senate race	0.19***	0.03	-0.09**	0.04
Live in White community	-0.01	0.02	-0.01	0.01
Demographics				
Race (Black = 1)	0.06**	0.03	-0.002	0.03
Income	-0.003	0.04	-0.06	0.04
Education	0.11**	0.05	-0.11***	0.05
Female	0.07***	0.01	-0.07***	0.02
Age	-0.0002	0.001	-0.002***	0.0005
Constant	0.41	0.06	0.79	0.05

Note: $r^2 = .22$.

Source: 2004 Illinois U.S. Senate Study.

** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

“Barack Obama” was coded 1, and all other responses were coded 0. In the second equation, the response “Alan Keyes” was coded 1, and all other responses were coded 0. The likelihood of voting for each of the candidates was modeled as a function of the same variables in the analysis above and the five-item scale of the overall assessment of the candidate.

The results of this estimation were similarly modest and unsurprising. Respondents were more likely to report an intention to vote for a candidate if they shared partisan identification and if they assessed the candidate positively. Consistent with earlier results, those who were more religious were less likely to report an intention to vote for Obama. Of importance, respondents who lived in White communities were more likely to report an intention to vote for Keyes, even after controlling for the partisanship and race of respondents. The final interesting result in this table is that the experimental manipulation for framing Obama took on statistical significance in this model. Once all other enduring political commitments and personal

Table 7
Model of Likelihood of Intention to Vote for
Barack Obama and Alan Keyes (logit)

	Obama		Keyes	
	Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE
Experimental Manipulation				
Obama is "Black" frame/Keyes is "Christian" frame	0.59**	0.26	-0.01	0.36
Overall assessment of Obama	6.9***	0.73	10.7***	1.38
Enduring factors				
Partisan identification	2.81***	0.53	-3.53***	0.85
Race is politically important	0.05	0.64	1.47	0.94
Religious guidance important	-1.2**	0.19	0.25	0.74
Information context				
Attention to Senate race	2.87***	0.70	-0.66	0.89
Live in White community	0.08	0.27	0.87**	0.44
Demographics				
Race (Black = 1)	0.58	0.48	-0.91	0.75
Income	0.86	0.65	-0.59	1.05
Education	1.6**	0.79	1.19	1.12
Female	0.53	0.27	-0.26	0.39
Age	0.01	0.01	0.04**	0.01
Constant	-8.97	1.12	-8.66	1.64

Source: 2004 Illinois U.S. Senate Study.

** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

demographics were accounted for, those who were exposed to a "Black" Obama were more likely to declare an intention to vote for him than those who were exposed to a "multiracial" Obama. When running against a Black opponent, emphasizing racial qualifications did not negatively affect Obama's likelihood of gaining potential supporters. However, Keyes was unable to reasonably portray himself as the authentic racial candidate. Instead, Keyes was able to gain some ground among religious voters, who used religiosity rather than race as the central decision heuristic.

Postscript: Does Race Matter Now That Obama Has Won?

One of us spent much of the fall of 2004 following Barrack Obama's and Alan Keyes's public appearances in Black communities. In early October,

the two candidates held a community forum in downtown Chicago. The candidates each had an hour to speak to and field questions from the audience. Obama spent most of his hour in what was largely a love fest of call and response with the mostly Black audience as he expertly fielded questions from the panel and press. Then the audience had a chance to ask questions, and something changed. Men and women implored Obama to remember the harsh realities of their experiences in public housing, poor communities, and prisons. They wanted him to visit them, to acknowledge the difficulty of their lives, and to bring his political resources to bear on the state of their communities. One group of men demanding answers about Obama's prison policy became particularly disruptive and largely halted the progress of the meeting for several minutes. As other members of the audience attempted to silence the speakers, one man shouted, "He's Black, I'm Black, and I have a right to ask him Black questions."

That statement reflected much of the unspoken and unreported tension that underlay the overwhelming electoral support of the Black community for Obama's candidacy. Obama is not just an elected official representing an economically and racially diverse state, he is also the electoral hope for all of Black America, and he will be called to task on a dizzying array of competing interests. To prove his authenticity and shore up his core constituency, he will be called on by many Black Chicagoans to react to every aldermanic-level issue of Black communities. To maintain his broad appeal to Illinois voters, he will rarely be able to frame his positions as matters of racial justice. And he will have to face the reality that many African Americans all around the country will share the assessment that "I am Black, he is Black, and I can ask him Black questions."

Obama will find that for many of his colleagues in the Senate, "all politics is local." For this Black superstar of the Democratic Party, all politics is racial. He will have to find a way to react to a national constituency of Black voters who will look to him for leadership, courage, and progressive positions on issues of racial and economic justice. It is not perfectly clear how he will balance these expectations with the reasonable demands of non-Black Illinois voters to focus on state issues.

African Americans are vulnerable because of their social, political, and economic marginality. Representation is difficult to achieve in a political system that so thoroughly disenfranchises racially underrepresented groups as the American electoral system does. In this context, Barack Obama is much more than a senator. He is the hope of a diverse and frequently silenced people. This community forum was only a glimpse of the difficult racial and local terrain that Obama will have to negotiate over the next several years.

Notes

1. This data collection was part of a larger survey, the 2004 Ethnic Politics Pre-Election Study, in which a U.S. sample including equal numbers of Whites, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans was interviewed. The data were collected by Knowledge Networks of Menlo Park, California. Surveys were self-administered via the Internet, and respondents were selected for the Knowledge Networks panel using standard methods of random-digit dialing. Hence, the resulting interview samples were random probability samples. Respondents were selected for the study on the basis of a series of racial self-classification questions collected by Knowledge Networks in a demographic profile. In addition to the U.S. and Illinois samples, a Florida study was also fielded to capture the dynamics of the U.S. Senate race between Betty Castor and Mel Martinez.

2. Brubaker and Cooper (2000) suggested replacing *identity* with a family of three alternative terms: *identification* or *categorization*; *individual self-understanding*; and *commonality*, *connectedness*, or *groupness*.

3. Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, and McDermott (2006) included a comprehensive analysis of the use of "identity as a variable" in social science research, along with links to a very useful set of working papers related to the Harvard Identity Project (Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, 2004-2005).

4. Much of the newest work in this area is concentrated on the use of ethnic and racial heuristics in vote choice (see, e.g., Baretto, et al., 2004; DeFrancesco, 2004; Ramakrishnan, 2005). Also, see Michelson (2003) for a fascinating study of the efficacy of coethnic get-out-the-vote mobilization efforts.

5. Similarly, a single policy position, such as support for affirmative action, can be used by voters as a proxy to discern if a candidate supports their political-racial interests.

6. Rush has regularly used his youthful involvement with the Chicago Black Panther Party as a badge of racial authenticity. His confrontations with the police in the 1960s certify him as a defiant and race-oriented politician. See Harris-Lacewell (2004) for a full treatment of the political relevance of defiance in Black political culture.

7. There was no effect for Catholics being more supportive of Keyes when he was framed as a Catholic. When creating the manipulations, we hypothesized that Chicago's White ethnic, largely Catholic constituency might find a salient identification with Keyes on Catholic framing, but no effect was discernable given the small number of Catholics in the sample.

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