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THE INFLUENCE OF RACE/ETHNICITY AND POLITICAL IDENTIFICATION CUES
IN NEWS STORIES ON THE COGNITIVE PROCESSING OF AND ATTITUDES
TOWARD POLITICAL CANDIDATES AND RACIAL/ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS

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Abstract

This study explored the intersection of the cues of race/ethnicity and political party affiliation as they are presented in the news media and predict evaluations of political candidates. It predicted individuals’ responses to political candidates presented in the news media after considering the expectations of congruency theory, the heuristic systematic processing model (HSM), and cueing. It found that congruency theory is an appropriate theoretical mechanism for explaining individuals’ intentions to vote for political candidates, where individuals’ political party affiliation is the ideal moderating variable to consider. It also found that both a candidate’s political party affiliation and race/ethnicity are salient in determining voting preferences and attitudes toward the candidate. Moreover, the discrepancies between cueing and priming are presented and distinctions are suggested in terms of implicit and explicit attitudinal responses to stimuli. Using HSM and congruency theory, this study’s results indicated that cueing occurs when information is consciously consumed, which should be conceptualized and operationalized differently than priming, which occurs when information is unconsciously consumed. As part of this exploration, an HSM codebook for open-ended data was developed and is recommended for future use. This study also examined the perceptions of political candidates and potential voters affiliated with the Independent Party, an underexplored area of scholarship. It found Independent Party candidates are more implicitly preferred by individuals who range from moderate to liberal in terms of their political ideology, but can be explicitly preferred by more conservative individuals. Also, Independent Party voters showed no preference for Independent Party candidates. Finally, this study adds to the body of research examining the use of counterstereotypes in the media to promote pro-social attitudes by determining if presenting members of minority racial/ethnic groups in leadership positions can prompt the adoption of
more positive implicit and explicit attitudes toward members of these groups. The results showed that the news media’s positive portrayal of political candidates within minority racial/ethnic groups does not result in more positive attitudes toward their respective racial/ethnic groups more generally.
Table of Contents

List of Tables ........................................................................................................ ix

List of Figures ........................................................................................................ xii

Acknowledgements ................................................................................................. xiii

Introduction ............................................................................................................... 1

Cues, Stereotypes, and Political Candidate Preference

Cues and Their General Impact on Political Candidate Preference .......................... 4
The Influence of Cues on Stereotypical Perceptions of Political Candidates .......... 5
The Influence of Cues on Perceptions Based on Stereotypes about Race/Ethnicity .... 7
The Influence of Cues on Perceptions Based on Stereotypes about Race/Ethnicity and
Political Party Affiliation ....................................................................................... 9

Using Congruity Theory to Predict Attitudes

The Role of (In)congruity in Determining Attitudes toward Political Candidates ... 11
H1, H2, H3, RQ1, and RQ2 ..................................................................................... 15

Integrating Cognitive Processing into Congruity Theory

Dual-Processing Models and Their Relationship with Congruity Theory ............. 17
H4, H5, H6, H7, and RQ3 ..................................................................................... 19

Disentangling Cueing and Priming

Cues and Primes .................................................................................................... 22
Primes and Forms of Priming ................................................................................ 22
Cues and Cueing .................................................................................................... 25
The Needed Distinction Between Cueing in Priming ............................................ 25

Influences on Implicit and Explicit Attitudes
The Relationship Between Implicit and Explicit Attitudes .............................................. 27
Distinctions Among Conceptual Definitions ............................................................... 27
Distinctions Among Operational Definitions ............................................................ 28
The Implicit Association Test ....................................................................................... 28
The Affect Misattribution Procedure .......................................................................... 29
Implicit Attitude Operationalization and Structural Fit ............................................ 30

Theory Integration

The Proposed Overlap Between Theories ..................................................................... 32
Redefining Cues and Primes to Better Assess Attitudinal Responses ....................... 34
H8 and H9 .................................................................................................................. 34

The Counterstereotyping Effects of Political Leadership

The Impact of Cues on Counterstereotyping ............................................................... 36
Working Against the Counterstereotype ...................................................................... 38
H10, H11, and H12 ..................................................................................................... 40

Method

Participants .................................................................................................................... 41
Pretests ........................................................................................................................ 42
Candidate Picture Pretest .......................................................................................... 42
AMP Picture Pretest ................................................................................................... 44
News Story Pretest ...................................................................................................... 46
Beta Test and Final Study Participants ...................................................................... 55
Procedure .................................................................................................................... 57
Stimuli ......................................................................................................................... 58
Dependent Variables........................................................................................................... 59

HSM Assessment........................................................................................................... 59

Explicit Candidate Evaluations.................................................................................... 65

Explicit Attitudes toward Racial/Ethnic Minority Group Members....................... 68

Implicit Attitudes toward Racial/Ethnic Minority Group Members and Political
Candidates..................................................................................................................... 69

Moderating, Control, and Demographic Variables...................................................... 73

Manipulation Check....................................................................................................... 75

Results

H1, H2, H3, RQ1, and RQ2............................................................................................... 77

Explicit Attitudes toward Candidates with Participant Political Party
Affiliation......................................................................................................................... 77

Implicit Attitudes toward Candidates with Participant Political Party
Affiliation......................................................................................................................... 87

Explicit Attitudes toward Candidates with Participant Political Ideology....... 88

Implicit Attitudes toward Candidates with Participant Political Ideology....... 95

H4, H5, H6, H7, and RQ3............................................................................................... 100

Cognitive Processing of News Story Cues with Participant Political Party
Affiliation......................................................................................................................... 100

Cognitive Processing of News Story Cues with Participant Political Ideology. 106

H8 and H9 ....................................................................................................................... 111

Impact of Cognitive Processing on Explicit and Implicit Attitudes....................... 111

H10, H11, and H12 ......................................................................................................... 116
Counterstereotyping Effects on Explicit Attitudes............................... 116
Counterstereotyping Effects on Implicit Attitudes............................... 118

Discussion

Conclusions.......................................................................................... 119

Using Congruity Theory to Predict Attitudes........................................ 120
Explicit Attitudes toward the Candidates................................................. 120
Implicit Attitudes toward the Candidates................................................. 125
Attitudes of Independent Voters and toward Independent Candidates ....... 125
Considering Salient Attitudes................................................................. 127
Limitations and Future Research.............................................................. 128

Integrating Cognitive Processing into Congruity Theory.......................... 132
Codebook Development .......................................................................... 132
Predicting Processing with Political Party Affiliation............................ 135
Predicting Processing with Political Ideology........................................ 137
Limitations and Future Research.............................................................. 139

Theory Integration.................................................................................... 140
Limitations and Future Research.............................................................. 142

The Counterstereotyping Effects of Political Leadership.......................... 144
Limitations and Future Research.............................................................. 146

References............................................................................................... 147

Appendix A: HSM Codebook................................................................. 158
Appendix B: Stimuli Examples................................................................. 163
Appendix C: Measures............................................................................. 166
List of Tables

Table 1
Self-identifying conservative (liberal) individuals’ judgments of political candidates… 14

Table 2
Cognitive processing predictions for self-identifying conservative (liberal) individuals. 21

Table 3
PCA solution for pretest HSM scale………………………………………………………… 52

Table 4
Zero-order correlations among pretest HSM measures…………………………………… 53

Table 5
PCA solution for final HSM scale………………………………………………………… 62

Table 6
Zero-order correlations among final HSM measures…………………………………… 63

Table 7
Zero-order correlations among implicit and explicit attitudes toward political candidates……………………………………………………………………………… 77

Table 8
Descriptive statistics for voting intentions……………………………………………… 78

Table 9
Three-way ANCOVA results predicting voting intentions, controlling for age, gender, education level, and race/ethnicity……………………………………………… 78
Table 10
Estimated marginal means for three-way interaction on voting intentions, controlling for age, gender, education level, and race/ethnicity......................................................... 79

Table 11
Three-way ANCOVA results predicting candidate perceptions, controlling for age, gender, education level, and race/ethnicity................................................................. 84

Table 12
Three-way ANCOVA results predicting implicit attitudes toward candidates, controlling for age, gender, education level, and race/ethnicity...................................................... 87

Table 13
Hierarchical regression model results for voting behavior............................................. 89

Table 14
Hierarchical regression model results for overall impression of candidate................. 91

Table 15
Hierarchical regression model results for evaluative dimensions.................................. 91

Table 16
Hierarchical regression model results for political leadership and activity.................. 92

Table 17
Hierarchical regression model results for experience and ability............................... 92

Table 18
Hierarchical regression model results for ability to improve policy............................ 93

Table 19
Hierarchical regression model results for implicit attitudes toward candidates............ 95
Table 20
Partial correlations among implicit and explicit attitudes toward all candidates for all participants……………………………………………………………………… 111

Table 21
Partial correlations among implicit and explicit attitudes toward White candidates when processing heuristically……………………………………………………………………………… 112

Table 22
Partial correlations among implicit and explicit attitudes toward Black and Hispanic candidates associated with the Republican Party when processing systematically……………………………………………………………………………… 114

Table 23
Zero-order correlations among implicit and explicit attitudes toward racial/ethnic groups…………………………………………………………………………………………………………… 116
List of Figures

Figure 1

Democrats’ voting intentions................................................................. 81

Figure 2

Republicans’ voting intentions.............................................................. 81

Figure 3

Independents’ voting intentions.............................................................. 81

Figure 4

Implicit attitudes toward Hispanic candidate........................................... 96

Figure 5

Implicit attitudes toward Black candidate............................................... 97

Figure 6

Implicit attitudes toward White candidate.............................................. 97
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Dedication

To my grandmother, Virginia Hoewe, who is the most wonderful person I have ever met.
**Introduction**

Despite much research regarding the presentation of politicians in the news media as well as the influence of race/ethnicity – particularly for Black Americans – on the electability of these politicians, scholarship has yet to fully vet the relationship between the perceived race/ethnicity of a political candidate, his or her political party, and these cues’ influences on voters’ subsequent attitudes and voting intentions. That is, research has not determined how the interaction of a visual cue of race/ethnicity and a textual cue of political party identification affect the perceived capableness of the candidate. Thus, the question remains as to which cue is more salient – race/ethnicity or political party affiliation of the candidate – in determining political support as well as how these cues interact to influence attitudes and voting behavior.

Congruity theory offers a lens through which to consider how the interaction between these two cues predicts the outcome variable of evaluations of a political candidate. The theory provides an avenue for understanding and predicting how an individual will respond to information in communicative environments where that information is either in line or incompatible with the cognitions previously held by that individual. In this case, the moderating variables of the individual’s self-identified political ideology and political party affiliation are crucial for understanding how prior attitudes and their associated cognitive representations influence perceptions of political candidates when both race/ethnicity and political party affiliation are made salient in a news story.

Moreover, an incorporation of the predictions made by the heuristic systematic processing model (HSM) builds upon the expectations of congruity theory to explain the cognitive processing mechanism behind these evaluations. As such, the coupling of HSM and congruity theory may offer a way to better understand the implications of cues – and primes – in
terms of their influences on implicit and explicit attitudes following exposure to media content. Several assumptions of HSM will be tested to better situate congruity theory as well as cueing and priming within the literature on the effects of media consumption.

This study also considers perceptions of political candidates associated with the Independent Party. Since this line of study has been largely neglected in experimental research, the present analysis will offer some insights into how individuals perceive candidates of this party compared to the two dominant political parties in the United States. It will also permit a comparison regarding the impact of race/ethnicity on the perceived abilities of Independent Party candidates.

Finally, this study seeks to understand how the presentation of race/ethnicity and political party affiliation in news stories influences implicit and explicit attitudes toward other individuals of the same race/ethnicity as the candidate as well as members of other racial/ethnic groups. It is anticipated that exposure to a news portrayal of a Black or Hispanic man\(^1\) as a political candidate will evoke a counterstereotypical response in that implicit and explicit attitudes toward Black and Hispanic individuals more generally will improve. As such, this study will determine if the news media’s presentation of members of racial/ethnic minority groups in positions of potential political leadership can lead to counterstereotyping.

Given these goals, this study should offer unique contributions to the existing literature, particularly in terms of its approach to studying candidate perception as portrayed by the news media and the news media’s ability to promote more positive attitudes toward racial/ethnic minority groups. The present study offers the following scholarly contributions. First, the prior presentation of politicians and political candidates in the media is reviewed, and individuals’

\(^1\) The political candidates considered in this study are male.
reactions to these portrayals are considered. Second, congruity theory is presented and used to form hypotheses and research questions regarding the interactions of the race/ethnicity and political party affiliation cues presented in news stories. Third, the implications of dual-processing models, particularly HSM, on the expectations of congruity theory are explained and predictions regarding cognitive processing are made. Fourth, the similarities and differences between cues and primes are presented. Fifth, the relationship between implicit and explicit attitudes is examined, including measures for assessing these variables. Sixth, a critical examination of the conceptualization and operationalization of cueing and priming is undertaken that considers the role of consciousness and its effect on implicit and explicit attitudes. Seventh, the role of news media cues in facilitating counterstereotyping is explained to discern the influence of the news media’s presentation of political candidates who are members of minority racial/ethnic groups on perceptions of the larger group. The subsequent method, results, and discussion sections determine the viability of these predictions and theoretical connections for future research.
Cues and Their General Impact on Political Candidate Preference

In order to assess the attitudinal influence of the race/ethnicity of a political candidate and his or her political party affiliation as they are presented in the news media, cueing provides the appropriate theory to examine responses to the news media’s portrayal of these candidates. Individuals use cues to help them understand the myriad events they face every day. These cues activate particular thought streams, or schemas, related to that cue, permitting relatively quick associations between ideas or events that help individuals navigate new information. Bullock (2011) described a cue as “a message that people may use to infer other information and, by extension, to make decisions” (p. 497). As such, cues often provide the starting point for associations. Such cues, of course, are present in media and offer individuals – often potential voters – opportunities to make quick, sometimes stereotypic, connections between cues about a political candidate and his or her ability to serve the constituency.

Relating to political candidates in particular, Conover (1981) defined a cue as “any characteristic or attribute of the candidate which stimulates voters to form additional evaluations and cognitions about the candidate,” and “ultimately the voters determine for themselves what attributes will serve as cues” (p. 431). In this way, cues are bits of information presented in a way that they are consciously consumed by the media user.

In media and political science research in particular, cues are described as “the labels used to identify policy issues, characterize social groups, and define public figures in the news” (Cho, de Zuniga, Shah, & McLeod, 2006, p. 136). Cho et al. (2006) conceptualized cues as linguistic modifiers that define particular objects. When these cues are encountered, they spur the activation of particular thoughts or attitudes, which are associated with other thoughts or ideas connected through memory (Cho et al., 2006). Cues, then, connect current information to
established schemas – or abstract mental representations of the world often structured through experience – as the individual mindfully consumes the information.

The presentation of cues related to political candidates within various mediums has been shown to influence voters’ perceptions of those candidates. For example, Barrett and Barrington (2005) focused on cues of positivity and negativity, finding that individuals who saw a candidate pictured in a positive light (i.e., looking happy) were significantly more likely to vote for him than were those who saw the same candidate pictured negatively (i.e., looking upset and smug). The authors used their findings to argue that the visual cues in newspaper photographs are potent enough to elicit changes in opinions about and the likelihood of voting for political candidates. Similarly, Rosenberg, Bohan, McCafferty, and Harris (1986) found that individuals were more likely to vote for candidates who were depicted in a favorable way rather than an unfavorable way in campaign flyers, even after controlling for party affiliation and position on policy issues. Moreover, Rosenberg and McCafferty (1987) concluded that slight changes in photographs (e.g., smiling, camera angle) presented in campaign flyers could influence the perception of a political candidate, including competency, integrity, likeableness, and suitability for public office. These examples begin to illustrate the potential impact of the cues presented in the media regarding political candidates’ characteristics on voters’ attitudes and behavioral intentions.

The Influence of Cues on Stereotypical Perceptions of Political Candidates

The influence of various cues has inspired much research regarding attitudes and behaviors directed at political candidates. A great deal of this scholarship finds its roots in the study of stereotyping. As a form of cues specific to politics, Conover (1981) recognized both “the political cue and the political stereotype with which the cue is associated” as part of the identification process of political issues and their associations with particular candidates (p. 427).
In terms of stereotypes, this definition places the political cue as a visual or textual element that can trigger a politically oriented stereotypical association with a particular group. Thus, it is important to identify the stereotypes prevalent in politics that may be prompted by particular cues.

However, before fully considering this impact, it is necessary to define what constitutes a stereotype. Prior research has conceptualized a stereotype as a subset of beliefs about a particular group of people (e.g., Jacobs & Eccles, 1992; Judd & Park, 1993; Krueger, 1996). In particular, Weber and Crocker (1983) defined stereotypes as “beliefs about the characteristics of a specific social group” (p. 961). Some older and often-cited research on stereotypes used analogous language to describe the concept. Allport (1979) explained a stereotype as “an exaggerated belief associated with a category” (p. 191). More specifically, Rokeach (1968) described a stereotype as “a socially shared belief that describes an attitude object in an oversimplified or undifferentiated manner” (p. 125-126). As a natural extension of those definitions, stereotypes are often considered cognitive structures – or schemas – that represent connections between “a specific social group and the attributes that characterize members of the group” (Weber & Crocker, 1983, p. 961).

Importantly, particular instances may prompt individuals to rely more heavily upon these cues and their associated stereotypes when evaluating a political candidate. Potential voters may be faced with situations in which little information about the candidate is provided. For example, many mildly interested voters may possess only surface-level information about a particular candidate. In these “low-information” elections (McDermott, 1998), voters often consider cues presented in the media when selecting their candidate. When such a situation presents itself, the characteristic of the candidate that is associated with some stereotype may play an even more
crucial role in determining voters’ attitudes and behaviors. As such, it seems that situations in which little information about the candidate is known, provided, or available, potential voters will rely upon media-provided cues to determine their perceptions of the interests and capabilities of the candidate.

The Influence of Cues on Perceptions Based on Stereotypes about Race/Ethnicity

Stereotypical associations, with regard to political candidates as well as other individuals, are often connected to perceptions of race/ethnicity. Reliance upon such stereotypes may influence individuals to consider all members of a group of people to hold the same characteristic. For example, the stereotype of the Black criminal frequents media content (e.g., Dixon & Azocar, 2006; Dixon & Linz, 2000a; Dixon & Linz, 2000b; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000; Oliver, 1994) and holds negative ramifications for members of that racial/ethnic group, as they may be considered part of the stereotype. Perpetuation of the Black criminal stereotype, in particular, is problematic in terms of criminal racial profiling, discriminatory hiring practices, and biased jury decisions, to name a few.

Importantly, these stereotypes have implications in relation to the perceived political ideology of an individual and his or her association with a larger group. In fact, some scholars have asserted that the impact of political stereotypes on voters’ intentions may be influenced by stereotypes about the racial/ethnic group of the candidate. The media often stereotypically portray Black Americans as poor (Clawson & Trice, 2000; Gilens, 1996), unintelligent (Monk-Turner, Heiserman, Johnson, Cotton, & Jackson, 2010), and criminal (Dixon & Azocar, 2006; Dixon & Linz, 2000a; Dixon & Linz, 2000b; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000; Oliver, 1994). These stereotypes feed into the perception of Black individuals as being more concerned with political issues related to these stereotypical associations, including welfare, education, and equal rights.
Such issues are often attributed to more liberal politicians, frequently Democrats. Similarly, Hispanic individuals face stereotypical associations that help form their stereotypical affiliations with particular political groups. Individuals identifying as or appearing to be Hispanic are often stereotyped as lazy (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005), unintelligent (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005), and criminal (Dixon and Linz, 2000a). Again, these issues translate into policy implications in terms of welfare, education, and civil rights, which are frequently attributed to more liberal candidates, or Democrats.

Relying upon the stereotypes of racial/ethnic minority groups’ involvement in politics, voters may use the perceived race/ethnicity of political candidates as a salient cue when selecting a candidate and forming other politically related opinions about an election. For example, Terkildsen (1993) found White voters preferred White candidates over light-skinned and dark-skinned Black candidates when given the option. Clearly, the cue of race/ethnicity with regard to political candidates influences voters’ decisions, which are often shaped by stereotypical associations regarding race/ethnicity.

Research has attempted to parse out other politically-motivated stereotypes and has found, generally speaking, that racial/ethnic minority groups and women are most frequently stereotyped as liberal or Democrat (Conover, 1981; McDermott, 1998; Sigelman, Sigelman, Walkosz, & Nitz, 1995). White men, however, can fit the liberal or Democrat role as easily as the conservative or Republican role. Due to the pervasiveness and historical context of White men in politics, these individuals are not stereotyped into a particular political party or more general political ideology. Rather, White men are considered the ubiquitous group in American politics.
It is especially important to note that cues regarding race/ethnicity in political news coverage frequently appear, particularly for members of racial/ethnic minority groups. In a content analysis of news content, Major and Coleman (2008) found that non-White political candidates – Hispanics, in particular – received more attention to their race/ethnicity than did White candidates. Similarly, Eargle, Esmail, and Sullivan (2008) asserted that television news paid more attention to the race/ethnicity of candidates when those candidates were not White. This frequent attention may alert readers to the race/ethnicity of non-White political candidates and cause them to use this information in making decisions about that political candidate and possibly the larger racial/ethnic group to which they belong. That is, actual news media coverage of racial/ethnic minority political candidates may have influenced the politically interested into placing more consideration on those and subsequent candidates’ races/ethnicities.

**The Influence of Cues on Perceptions Based on Stereotypes about Race/Ethnicity and Political Party Affiliation**

Cue-related associations with regard to political candidates are not restricted to race/ethnicity. In fact, these associations can be activated by mere mention of political party affiliation. Prior research has found the inclusion of political party in the description of a political candidate to trigger heuristic processing and reliance upon that cue (Rahn, 1993; Rahn & Cramer, 1996). This research highlights the importance of the cue provided by political party affiliation in determining evaluations of that political candidate.

In addition to the lines of research examining candidate race/ethnicity and political affiliation as separate entities, the relationship between candidate race/ethnicity and political party affiliation also has been considered. Sigelman et al. (1995) analyzed White individuals’ perceptions of the interplay between these two cues. The authors concluded these individuals
preferred candidates who shared their political affiliation, and racial/ethnic minority candidates who were conservative or moderate were thought to be more sympathetic toward “disadvantaged” Americans (Sigelman et al., 1995, p. 262). The authors concluded that “voters obviously are not color-blind, but just as clearly it is not minority candidates’ race or ethnicity alone that determines their electability” (Sigelman et al., 1995, p. 263). That is, the authors found that the race/ethnicity of a political candidate is considered in accord with his or her political affiliation when both cues are present.

In contrast to the present study, Sigelman et al.’s (1995) study used first-person descriptions of the candidates. Each candidate described how he – all candidates were male – would help his constituents if elected. The study at hand will utilize a news story format in which the candidate is described by a journalist, signaling greater credibility to the reader (e.g., Flanagin & Metzger, 2007). Also, Sigelman et al. (1995) instructed participants to choose between the racial/ethnic minority candidate and a White candidate, forcing the rejection of one’s own race/ethnicity on the part of the White participants in order to vote favorably for the minority candidate. The present study will not force such a choice. Instead, participants will be asked to indicate their attitudes toward and likelihood of voting for only the candidate they read about in the news stories. Thus, the study at hand will provide a valuable contribution to existing literature on the impact of political candidates’ racial/ethnic identification and this characteristic’s interaction with political party affiliation when they are presented as cues in news stories.
The Role of (In)congruity in Determining Attitudes toward Political Candidates

The processing of cues used to trigger associations with established cognitive networks can be influenced by the congruity – or incongruity – of the information provided by the cue. Borrowing from Mandler (1982), Lee and Schumann (2004) defined the concepts in relation to advertising: “Congruity (incongruity)…is a match (or mismatch) between a stimulus element…and the existing schema that one holds” about the stimulus (p. 59-60). That is, incongruity occurs when a cue associated with some subject or idea is not in line with the schema that has been activated by the cue. Congruity itself is a theory of cognitive consistency (Taylor, 1973), where “changes in evaluation are always in the direction of increased congruity with the existing frame of reference” (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955, p. 43). That is, individuals are encouraged to grapple with the incongruity when they encounter it and seek to elevate that incongruity by making the association between the cues more cognitively consistent (i.e., creating congruity). To determine the degree of congruity or incongruity, one must understand the extent of the disparity between the cue and the previously held and related schema(s).

Some research has examined the influence of congruity and incongruity on subsequent attitudes and behaviors, revealing that cues producing congruity or incongruity can result in both positive and negative reactions to that cue and the associations the cue activates. These reactions are, in part, a result of the individual’s ability to cope with the cue, particularly if it is incongruent with the activated schema. If the cue is congruent with the existing and activated

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2 Congruity theory is strikingly similar to the idea of cue convergence presented by Cho et al. (2006), yet the authors make no mention of congruity. To the author’s knowledge, these two ideas are not dissimilar. Also, though incongruity is quite similar to the theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), attempts to disassociate the concepts have been made (e.g., Zajonc, 1960). Congruity theory focuses more on cues offered in communicative environments, such as media messages, that cause inconsistencies in cognition. That is, congruity theory is more focused on the source of the congruity than is cognitive dissonance. (Both are concerned with the effects of cognitive inconsistency.)
thought stream, the individual should report more positive attitudes toward the cue (e.g., Kamins & Gupta, 1994), since incongruity was not encountered. If the cue is inconsistent with the existing schema, the response to the incongruity generated is dependent upon the individual’s ability and motivation to handle it. That is, it depends on the degree of incongruity.

Mandler (1982) suggested four possible cognitive routes for remedying incongruent information. First, the individual could assimilate the cue, meaning he or she adds that cue to the existing schema. This process often occurs when incongruity is at a minimal degree, and it results in positive attitudinal responses toward the incongruent cue (Lee & Schumann, 2004). Second, the individual could use an alternative schema – one different from that which was initially activated – and integrate the cue into it, which also results in attitudinal shifts in favor of the cue (e.g., Meyers-Levy & Tybout, 1989). Third, the individual could successfully accommodate the cue by creating an entirely new schema to support the incongruent information. This type of cognitive processing occurs with “severe incongruity” (Lee & Schumann, 2004) and could result in evaluations in favor of the cue or a rejection of the cue due to its incongruity with the prior cognitive associations. Fourth, the individual could experience the most intense level of incongruity, prompting unsuccessful accommodation of the cue. At this stage, individuals are not able to reconcile the incongruent information, which results in negative attitudinal responses toward the cue and possibly a rejection of the cue in favor of the preexisting associated schema.

If unsuccessful accommodation occurs and the cue is rejected, it is possible that the cue spurred a threat response, or a perception of potential loss. A perception of threat would occur if, for example, self-identifying liberals or Democrats encountered a Black Republican political candidate. The threat arises in the contradiction of the existing schema and stereotype that Black
individuals should support more liberal political policies and, thus, identify with the Democratic Party. A Black or Hispanic political candidate may be seen as a threat by more liberal or Democratic individuals if he or she appears to be taking votes away from the Democratic Party (i.e., identifies with the Republican Party). Such a situation would present incongruent cues likely to prompt a response of unsuccessful accommodation since the new association (e.g., Black Republican) is too far removed from the existing schema to permit the acceptance of the cues as part of any existing or new schemas. Thus, this study predicts that more liberal or Democratic individuals who read news stories about a Black or Hispanic Republican political candidate will report more negative attitudes toward that candidate.

Importantly, the study design presented here offers what McDermott (1998) called a “low-information environment.” That is, individuals will be asked to read news stories about a political candidate who does not actually exist. Therefore, the readers will only have the information presented to them at the time of the study to use in evaluating the candidate. As such, they ought to form their judgments based on the cues proven salient in prior research. The cues provided, of course, will interact with preexisting cognitive associations and produce reactions based on the type of candidate presented in the news stories. As such, it is predicted that attitudes toward the political candidates will be influenced at different levels depending on the individual’s self-identified political ideology and political party affiliation as well as the respective experimental condition. Also, since the news story content will be held constant except for the two manipulations of interest, the communicative source – as part of the incongruity model – has been made stable (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955). Thus, the congruity or incongruity is predicted to occur in regard to the two differentiating cues presented in the news stories.
Using congruity theory, several other specific predictions can be made. Generally speaking, the race/ethnicity cue provided in news stories about Black or Hispanic political candidates will be incongruent when paired with the political party affiliation cue of Republican. However, reactions to this incongruity will be moderated by the political ideology or political party affiliation of the individual consuming the cues in the news stories. In other words, individuals who self-identify as more politically conservative (Republican) or liberal (Democrat) will have predictably different responses to the cues of race/ethnicity and political party affiliation as they relate to the political candidate. For example, it is predicted that more conservative or Republican individuals who read news stories about a Black Republican political candidate will evaluate that candidate more positively because the incongruity of the cues with existing schemas is small enough to encourage assimilation, use of other schemas, or successful accommodation. This prediction is aided by political parties’ consistent need for additional voters. A Black or Hispanic political candidate identifying as Republican provides an opportunity for the Republican Party to court voters of these racial/ethnic groups using a candidate of a similar racial/ethnic background. Such a motivation aids in more conservative or Republican individuals’ ability to settle the incongruity. More liberal or Democratic individuals, on the other hand, will be unable to reconcile the incongruity prompted by the cues presented in the news stories about the Black Republican candidate, leading to more negative evaluations of that candidate due to the aforementioned perception of threat. Table 1 illustrates each of the relationships anticipated in this portion of the study.

Table 1. Self-identifying conservative (liberal) individuals’ judgments of political candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Republican</th>
<th>Attitudes</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>Attitudes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Congruent</td>
<td>Positive (Neutral)</td>
<td>Congruent</td>
<td>Neutral (Positive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Incongruent</td>
<td>Positive (Negative)</td>
<td>Congruent</td>
<td>Neutral (Positive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Incongruent</td>
<td>Positive (Negative)</td>
<td>Congruent</td>
<td>Neutral (Positive)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The hypotheses posited in Table 1 can be formally stated as follows:

**H1:** More conservative (Republican) individuals will respond positively to a White political candidate associated with the Republican Party; more liberal (Democratic) individuals will not alter their perceptions of this candidate.

**H2:** More liberal (Democratic) individuals will respond positively to White, Black, and Hispanic political candidates associated with the Democratic Party; more conservative (Republican) individuals will not alter their perceptions of these candidates.

**H3:** More conservative (Republican) individuals and more liberal (Democratic) individuals will respond with opposite attitudinal directions to Black and Hispanic political candidates associated with the Republican Party. More conservative individuals will respond positively, while more liberal individuals will respond negatively.

This study will also take into consideration the impact of political candidates affiliated with the Independent Party and this cue’s interaction with the candidate’s race/ethnicity and the impact on subsequent attitudes toward the candidate. Research on the association of political candidates based on individual characteristics as they relate to the Independent Party has been scarce. In fact, experimental research examining perceptions of candidates associated with this political party is nearly non-existent. Some prior survey research, however, has found that less trust in the government (which the authors equate with political cynicism) leads to support of third-party candidates (Hetherington, 1999; Peterson & Wrighton, 1998). This study offers an avenue to examine the perceptions of candidates associated with the Independent Party as well as a way to assess the influence of the race/ethnicity of the candidate coupled with his association with the Independent Party on subsequent attitudes toward that candidate.
**RQ1:** How does political ideology and political party affiliation influence attitudes toward Black, Hispanic, and White political candidates associated with the Independent Party?

Importantly, one additional research question this study seeks to answer is in regard to the saliency of the cue of the candidate’s race/ethnicity versus that of his political party affiliation. This research question focuses on the main effects produced by the cues of race/ethnicity and political party affiliation.

**RQ2:** Which cue, race/ethnicity or political party affiliation, is more salient in determining attitudes toward political candidates?
Dual-Processing Models and Their Relationship with Congruity Theory

Dual-processing models may offer an avenue for better understanding the cognitive processing that occurs when congruent or incongruent information is encountered. In regard to the study at hand, these models may help illustrate the impact of congruity and incongruity on implicit and explicit attitudes toward political candidates.

Chaiken, Duckworth, and Darke (1999) contended that dual-process models were developed and have been used for the purpose of explaining a great number of psychological processes, “including attitude formation and change, attitude-behavior relations, stereotyping and prejudice, person perception and social categorization, group and individual decision making, and even basic memory mechanisms” (p. 118). Although the authors argued that differences exist among dual-process models, they concluded that all dual-process models assume that individuals process information using two different cognitive mechanisms that are qualitatively distinct. At the most basic level, one process is fast, automatic, and effortless, and one is slow, controlled, and effortful. Generally speaking, automatic processing occurs when very few cognitive resources are demanded and an unintentional response occurs that cannot be easily controlled (Gawronski & Creighton, 2013). Conversely, controlled processing occurs when a substantial amount of cognitive resources are demanded and an intentional response occurs that can be controlled (Gawronski & Creighton, 2013). Though some distinctions have been made, this central structure forms the foundation off which much research on cognitive processing is based.

The heuristic systematic processing model (HSM), in particular, presents one model of dual processing. HSM often examines individuals’ processing of media messages, particularly persuasive messages, and assumes that “social judgments can be formed on the basis of more and
less thoughtful cognition” (Chen, Duckworth, & Chaiken, 1999, p. 44). HSM identifies two
distinct processing styles – heuristic and systematic – but incorporates three levels of processing.
First, messages can be processed heuristically. Chen, Duckworth, and Chaiken (1999) explained
that heuristics are bits of learned information retained in memory that require little cognitive
effort to access. In order to be considered a heuristic, information must be available in memory,
accessible from memory, and applicable to the present judgment (Chen, Duckworth, & Chaiken,
1999). Judgments made after heuristic processing tend to have short-term effects and are less
likely to affect subsequent behavior. Second, messages can be processed systematically. When
using this process, individuals use more involved (e.g., analytic, comprehensive, in-depth)
cognitive effort when they encounter new information (Chen, Duckworth, & Chaiken, 1999).
Systematic processing tends to make subsequent judgments more enduring and predictive of
future attitudes and behaviors. Third, HSM introduced the possibility of concurrent heuristic and
systematic processing (e.g., Bohner, Chaiken, & Hunyadi, 1994; Meyers-Levy & Maheswaran,
2004; Maheswaran & Chaiken, 1991). That is, individuals can use both forms of processing to
evaluate information and use it in making subsequent judgments. For example, this co-
ocurrence of processing can take place when heuristics are present but systematic processing is
employed due to interest in or motivation regarding the content of the message. One process may
dominate the other, but both can happen simultaneously.

Beyond the distinctions between types of processing, HSM assumes that individuals
desire to create or confirm valid and accurate attitudes (Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989) and
attempt to exert the least amount of cognitive effort possible (Chen et al., 1999). They seek
attitudes that are congruent with other available and known information. That is, individuals
want to encounter and respond more positively to congruent information that enables them to
process heuristically, or with little effort. As such, heuristic processing is thought to take precedence over systematic processing unless incongruent information is present and the individual is unable to avoid mindfully processing it. Thus, when information is congruent with previously established schemas, individuals will default to heuristic processing due to the lack of conflict and the desire for easy consideration of the content of the message (referred to as the bias hypothesis). On the other hand, when an individual encounters incongruent information, particularly in the context of a hot-button topic such as politics, it is likely that he or she will process the information systematically due to the necessity of grappling with the incongruent information (referred to as the attenuation hypothesis). However, if a message is only mildly incongruent, heuristic and systematic processing may be used to understand and accommodate the message, since it is possible that both forms of processing would occur but would not conflict with one another (referred to as the additivity hypothesis) (Gawronski & Creighton, 2013).

Therefore, it is suggested here that the degree of incongruity will predict the type of cognitive processing – heuristic, systematic, or concurrent.

Given that White political candidates represent the status quo and are not thought to prompt responses associated with incongruity based on their political party affiliation, it is possible that individuals will process the cues present in news stories about these candidates heuristically, regardless of the political party associated with the candidate. That is, given that ease of processing is desirable, individuals will be able to use the path of least resistance, particularly since the information being consumed is consistent with prior cognitions.

**H4:** Consuming news stories about a White political candidate will result in heuristic processing.
Similarly, since Black and Hispanic political candidates are stereotypically associated with the Democratic Party, individuals who consume news stories with these cues will not be faced with incongruity. Thus, they will process the information heuristically.

**H5:** Consuming news stories about a Black or Hispanic political candidate associated with the Democratic Party will result in heuristic processing.

As was previously noted, individuals who self-identify as more politically conservative or Republican will encounter some degree of incongruity when reading news stories about a Black or Hispanic candidate associated with the Republican Party due to its contradiction of the commonly used stereotypes regarding political party affiliation. This incongruity should initially prompt a response of systematic processing in order to address the incongruent information. However, since the incongruent information ultimately offers an avenue that could benefit the Republican Party, more conservative individuals may experience concurrent processing in that heuristic processing will override the systematic processing once the benefit of the incongruent information being presented in the news stories is understood. That is, once more conservative individuals realize the potential benefit of the Black or Hispanic candidate’s affiliation with the Republican Party, it is possible that they will switch from systematic to heuristic processing. Thus, these individuals will experience both types of processing, beginning with systematic and most likely ending with heuristic.

**H6:** For more conservative (Republican) individuals, consuming news stories about a Black or Hispanic political candidate associated with the Republican Party will result in heuristic and systematic processing.

More liberal individuals or Democrats, on the other hand, may find a greater degree of incongruity when reading news stories about a Black or Hispanic political candidate affiliated
with the Republican Party, at least partly due to the perception of threat to the Democratic Party based on the stereotypical association of Black and Hispanic individuals with that party. Thus, these individuals will experience a high degree of incongruity and will be motivated to process the information systematically in order to reconcile it with prior cognitions.

\textbf{H7:} For more liberal (Democratic) individuals, consuming news stories about a Black or Hispanic political candidate associated with the Republican Party will result in systematic processing.

The hypotheses posited in H4-7 are presented in Table 2 for clarity.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|l|}
\hline
 & Republican & Democrat \\
\hline
Congruity & Processing Type & Congruity & Processing Type \\
\hline
White & Congruent & Heuristic (Heuristic) & Congruent & Heuristic (Heuristic) \\
Black & Incongruent & Both (Systematic) & Congruent & Heuristic (Heuristic) \\
Hispanic & Incongruent & Both (Systematic) & Congruent & Heuristic (Heuristic) \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Cognitive processing predictions for self-identifying conservative (liberal) individuals}
\end{table}

Since little research has examined the intersection of race/ethnicity with the Independent Party in terms of evaluations of political candidates, this study seeks to understand the cognitive processing undertaken when a candidate of a particular race/ethnicity who is affiliated with the Independent Party is encountered in news stories.

\textbf{RQ3:} Which route of processing is taken when Black, Hispanic, and White political candidates associated with the Independent Party are presented in news stories?
Cues and Primes

Thus far, the impact of a political candidate’s race/ethnicity and political party affiliation has been discussed in terms of the cues presented in the news media. However, these expectations should be couched in consideration of the similarities and difference between cues and primes, particularly as they influence individuals in terms of media consumption. This discussion of cues and primes will lay the more general foundation for the examination of the influence of particular aspects of news media on individuals’ attitudes toward political candidates as well as members of minority racial/ethnic groups. The analysis that follows offers a point of clarification that seeks to help inform the structure of this study’s predictions regarding the influence of news media content on its consumers.

Research commonly discusses the effects of individuals’ exposure to particular cues or primes. Certainly, individuals are influenced by exposure to particular aspects of communicative texts. Among these texts, media messages may be the most widely pervasive. However, research has not done a sufficient job of disentangling the distinctions between cueing and priming. Instead, the characteristics of each of these concepts are either left out of the literature reviewed in many studies that utilize these terms or they are conflated, adding to the confusion regarding the relationship between cues and primes. The following analysis attempts to define and explain how prior research has used these terms and also offers a critical examination of the key points of differentiation between the two concepts.

Primes and Forms of Priming

Given that it is a frequently utilized and significantly convoluted concept, primes are engaged first. Primes have maintained a steady presence in both psychology and media effects as part of the theory of priming, which attempts to examine the effects of stimuli upon subsequent
judgments and behaviors. The most straightforward definitions of primes and priming have sustained decades of research within the study of psychology and media effects; however, the models for studying them have been sources of continual debate. According to Fiske and Taylor (1991), priming encompasses “the effects of prior context on the interpretation of new information…specifically [it provides] a name for the fact that recently and frequently activated ideas come to mind more easily than ideas that have not been activated” (p. 257). More specifically, McNamara (2005) defined priming as “an improvement in performance in a perceptual or cognitive task, relative to an appropriate baseline, produced by context or prior experience” (p. 3). Roskos-Ewoldsen, Roskos-Ewoldsen, and Carpentier (2009) posited priming as an individual’s response to a stimulus reflected in his or her reaction to a subsequent event. In regard to media effects, “priming refers to the effects of the content of the media on people’s later behavior or judgments related to the content that was processed” (Roskos-Ewoldsen et al., 2009, p. 75). Of course, the emphasis in media effects research relies on the prime as part of some media stimulus.

Beyond these basic definitional similarities, two broad camps have developed with quite different operationalizations and findings related to the effects of primes. First, psychological research utilizing primes often operationalizes them as producing implicit attitudinal responses often resulting from an experimental procedure thought to stimulate schemas unconsciously. It is believed that for priming to occur, the activation of the thought triggered by the prime is a largely unconscious process. As such, it is measured using implicit attitude measures (e.g., Dovidio, Kawakami, Johnson, Johnson, & Howard, 1997; Ramasubramanian, 2007; Rydell & McConnell, 2006) or is induced through tasks aimed to mask the activation of particular thoughts.
In these studies, the effects of the primes are often short term (Althaus & Kim, 2006).

Second, in regard to political priming and news priming, priming is identified as the media’s ability to use words, phrases, pictures, etc., continuously to direct public attention to and place importance upon particular aspects of a broader topic. As one of the foundational studies of this form of priming (Althaus & Kim, 2006), Iyengar and Kinder’s (1987) work attempted to explain the phenomenon, and their definition (or hypothesis) is frequently cited in political priming research. These authors identified the priming hypothesis as the act of “calling attention to some matters while ignoring others,” which influences “the standards by which governments, presidents, policies, and candidates for public office are judged” (p. 63). Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) supported this view, stating that “mass media can also shape the considerations that people take into account when making judgments,” calling this occurrence priming (p. 11). Krosnick and Kinder (1990) even posited a theory of priming, which occurs when individuals encounter “a judgment or choice” and they “do not take all plausible considerations into account, carefully examine and weigh all their implications, and then integrate them all into a summary decision” (p. 499). Importantly, within the literature on political and news priming, the primes introduced to individuals are often presented or thought to be presented within these individuals’ conscious awareness.

Studies of political and news priming have attempted to use both surveys and experiments to study these media effects. These studies consistently use explicit attitude measures to assess the influences of the primes. Some studies integrate response latencies (e.g., Cho et al., 2006) but rely upon explicit attitudinal measures as assessments of consciously consumed information to make inferences regarding the cognitive processes incurred after
encountering a prime. In contrast with psychological priming, the effects of the prime in these studies are often reported to be longer term (Althaus & Kim, 2006).

**Cues and Cueing**

The aforementioned definitions and applications of cues and cueing rely upon the notion that these responses are often consumed within the individual’s conscious awareness (e.g., Barrett & Barrington, 2005; Rosenberg et al., 1986; Rosenberg & McCafferty, 1987). Also, many of these studies rely heavily – if not exclusively – on measures of explicit attitudes (e.g., Cho et al., 2006).

**The Needed Distinction Between Cueing in Priming**

Prior research has illustrated the need for a distinction between priming and cueing. Scholars appear to have used both labels to identify the same process and effect. Identifying priming as the key theory, Dixon and Azocar (2007) explored the moderating impact of prior television news exposure on perceptions of race/ethnicity and crime after reading news stories about a criminal suspect. The authors anticipated that exposure to a Black criminal suspect would prime thoughts about Black individuals that would be reflected in responses to explicit attitude measures about other Black individuals and the death penalty. What is unclear in this study is how priming was supposed to have occurred. It seems the authors assumed that individuals’ repeated exposure to the Black criminal stereotype in the news would permit the quicker accessibility of the stereotype. While this seems logical, it does not explain how the experiment actually employed priming. Based on the suggestion presented here, it seems the participants consciously consumed the stimulus and, therefore, may have made their subsequent attitudinal decisions based on their thoughts about the criminal suspect. In an earlier experiment, Dixon and Maddox (2005) employed a similar design and called it priming.
Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) conducted a very similar study. In their study, a news clip was shown with the race/ethnicity of the suspect manipulated, and participants were asked to evaluate the suspect and other race/ethnicity and crime-related issues. Importantly, the authors never called this process priming. Instead, the authors discussed script-based inferences and called them cues. The point of contention, then, is whether a conscious evaluation of the stimulus can be correctly identified as priming – or if cueing is the more appropriate theory.
The Relationship Between Implicit and Explicit Attitudes

Given the emphasis on implicit and explicit attitudes in the previous discussion of cues and primes, an explanation of the relationship between implicit and explicit attitudes ought to be offered. Therefore, to add to the richness of the discussion of the influence of cues and primes found in the media, this section will disentangle the relationship between implicit and explicit attitudes in hopes of providing clarity in regard to this study’s consideration of cues and primes.

Distinctions Among Conceptual Definitions

Beginning much of this now extensive line of research, Greenwald and Banaji (1995) proposed a formal conceptual distinction between implicit and explicit attitudes. The authors posited that “implicit attitudes are introspectively unidentified (or inaccurately identified) traces of past experience that mediate favorable or unfavorable feeling, thought, or action toward social objects” (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 8). Explicit attitudes, then, are those attitudes that are identifiable and produce a valence related to a particular disposition regarding an attitude object (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995).

Devine, Plant, Amodio, and Harmon-Jones (2002) attempted to make the distinction clear between implicit and explicit attitudes, where implicit attitudes entail automatic processes that “involve the unintentional or spontaneous activation of some well-learned set of associations or responses that have been developed through repeated activation in memory” (p. 6). These implicit attitudes are “inescapable” even when individuals attempt to avoid those responses (Devine et al., 2002, p. 6). On the other hand, explicit attitudes represent more controlled processes that are both intentional and flexible in that the individual holds greater control over these responses (Devine et al., 2002).
Distinctions Among Operational Definitions

In many cases, explicit attitudes are operationalized using self-report measures related to the attitude object. The items in these measures typically consist of statements about the attitude object that participants or respondents are asked to evaluate based on their level of agreement with the statement. Often, scholars do not find the operationalization of explicit attitudes contentious; instead, those attempting to solidify operational definitions of implicit attitudes remain at odds.

The Implicit Association Test. The operationalization of implicit attitudes using response latency measures experienced a significant growth after the introduction of the Implicit Association Test (IAT). Developed by Greenwald, McGhee, and Schwartz (1998), the IAT uses response latencies to determine the degree of association between particular words or pictures with other concepts. For example, one trial of an IAT might ask participants to associate pictures of Black men with the word “good” while associating pictures of White men with “bad.” A subsequent trial of the same IAT would ask participants to associate pictures of White men with “good” and pictures of Black men with “bad.” Response latencies are used to determine which associations are fastest/slowest. Faster associations with pictures of White men and “good” as well as Black men and “bad” would indicate an implicit preference for White individuals.

Scholars frequently use results from the IAT to compare implicit attitudes with self-report measures of explicit attitudes. However, despite myriad attempts to define and redefine implicit and explicit attitudes as well as their relationship, an inconsistency in correlations between these attitudes is not an uncommon finding (for a review, see Hofmann, Gawronski, Gschwendner, Le, & Schmitt, 2005). Amid these conflicting results, Payne, Burkley, and Stokes (2008) questioned the IAT’s (and other response latency-based measures’) correspondence with explicit attitude
measures. The authors argued that the use of the IAT to measure implicit attitudes was flawed if it was meant to be used as a comparative tool with traditional measures of explicit attitudes. They contended that the typical self-report measures of explicit attitudes and response latency measures, like the IAT, differ in “the stimuli presented (e.g., propositions vs. simple words of pictures), the level of abstractness of the judgments to be made (e.g., broad social opinions vs. concrete classifications), and the metric in which responses are measured (e.g., numeric scales vs. response latencies)” (Payne et al., 2008, p. 17). The authors contested that the differences between the measures are not necessarily connected with the contrast between conscious and unconscious responses. Rather, these differences were developed with the creation and promotion of the measures, leading the operationalization of implicit attitudes to determine future conceptualizations of it.

**The Affect Misattribution Procedure.** Though Payne et al. (2008) were not the first to question the relatedness of response latencies and self-report measures (e.g., Dovidio et al., 1997; Hofmann et al., 2005), Payne, Cheng, Govorun, and Stewart (2005) created a new measure of implicit attitudes that controlled for the factors that created the multitude of confounds reported between prior measures of implicit and explicit attitudes. This new measure, named the Affect Misattribution Procedure (AMP), uses misattribution – the misunderstanding of the effect on a source – and affect – a reaction with a positive or negative valence – to indirectly assess individuals’ responses to stimuli following their intentions to suppress their reactions. More specifically, the AMP asks participants to evaluate ambiguous objects following a quickly-

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3 Of course there are other measures of implicit attitudes besides the IAT and the AMP. Some of these measures include affective priming (which is closely related to the AMP), semantic priming (which inspired the IAT), the go/no-go association task, and the extrinsic affective Simon task, among others. The IAT and the AMP are focused on in this review due to their prevalence in the literature and frequent use as measures of implicit attitudes in current research.
displayed but visible stimulus (as opposed to a subliminal stimulus). This stimulus is expected to influence the evaluation of the subsequent object, despite the object’s purposeful ambiguity. These evaluations are thought to represent implicit attitudes toward the stimulus. For example, participants may be assigned to the brief presentation of a smiling face followed by the brief presentation of an ambiguous Chinese pictograph and then asked to evaluate the pictograph. The smiling face should evoke an affective implicit response of positivity, increasing the pleasantness rating of the ambiguous pictograph. The effect would be in the opposite direction after the brief presentation of a frowning face (Payne et al., 2008).

Importantly, prior to completing the AMP, participants are instructed to disregard the initial stimulus (e.g., picture of a smiling/frowning face) and evaluate the pictograph regardless of the stimulus displayed. Payne et al. (2008) asserted that due to the direct instruction to avoid influence from the stimulus, the remaining effect is the implicit attitude resulting from the stimulus that the individual is unable to restrict or avoid. That is, “any misattributions that persist despite the intended task requirements provide evidence of automatic responses…” (Payne et al., 2008, p. 18). As such, the AMP attempts to use a procedure in which individuals are unaware of the impact of the stimulus on their subsequent attitudes. It assesses participants’ unconscious responses to the stimuli, representing their implicit attitudes.

**Implicit attitude operationalization and structural fit.** To defend their argument about the measurement differences between implicit and explicit attitudes, Payne et al. (2008) analyzed how structural fit determined the relationship between implicit and explicit attitudes. The authors posited that the structural-fit hypothesis anticipates that measures constructed similarly will result in stronger correlations (Payne et al., 2008). Using four experiments to test the AMP’s ability to correlate with explicit attitude measures, the authors concluded that as structural fit
increases, the correlation between implicit and explicit measures of racial attitudes, in particular, increases as well. That is, as the AMP and the explicit measures were modified to eliminate the confounds that have deterred the consistent correlation between other measures of implicit and explicit attitudes, the correlation between the two measures increased. The authors concluded that structural fit – or the lack thereof – may be to blame for the previously reported similarities and differences between implicit and explicit attitudes. Though the authors do not preclude that differences between these attitudes can exist, particularly if motivation is taken into consideration (Payne et al., 2005), they suggest that measurement may have been inhibiting a clear presentation of the relationship between implicit and explicit attitudes in the past.

Payne et al. (2008) stated that the AMP defines “implicit evaluations as those evaluations that influence responses despite the intention to avoid that influence. In contrast, it defines explicit evaluations as those that are intentionally expressed” (p. 29). Future research is needed to further clarify the relationship between implicit and explicit attitudes, particularly when the AMP is used as a measure of implicit attitudes. Importantly, the AMP will be utilized in the study at hand due to this study’s interest in the change comparison between implicit and explicit attitudes. Moreover, the AMP provides a foundation for the distinction between implicit and explicit attitudes that fuels the subsequent proposed delineation of cues and primes.
The Proposed Overlap Between Theories

Since prior research has focused on measures of both implicit and explicit attitudes to operationalize priming and cueing, this study integrates literature on a dual-processing model as well as congruity theory in hopes of offering a method for testing the cognitive processing undertaken for both phenomena. The heuristic systematic processing model (HSM), in particular, offers a potential mechanism for further clarification in the cognitive processes represented by cues and primes and their relationships with implicit and explicit attitudes and congruity and incongruity.

Two important considerations of HSM are the amount of motivation and the ability to process information held by the individual. If the individual is more motivated and has a greater ability to process the information, he or she is predicted to process systematically (Wood, 2000). Conversely, if the individual is unmotivated and does not have the ability to process the information, he or she will process heuristically (Wood, 2000). Thus, if an individual processes systematically, he or she should be more cognizant of the information consumed given the increased motivation. It seems such motivation could be spurred by incongruity, where individuals who encounter incongruent information are more motivated to settle the discrepancy in cognitions in order to revert back to less effortful processing. Congruity, on the other hand, seems related to an inverse prompt in motivation, where individuals will be less motivated to process the information given its similarity with prior cognitions. As such, the degree of incongruity seems predictive of the level of motivation required to predict processing style.

As is noteworthy, the conceptual definition of heuristic processing, given its emphasis on the automaticity of attitudes, reads strikingly similar to the definitions of implicit attitudes commonly found in the literature. Moreover, the controlled aspect of systematic processing
appears related to common conceptual definitions of explicit attitudes. That is, measures of implicit attitudes may be more capable of capturing the automatically activated attitudes triggered through a heuristic-processing response to a message. Explicit attitudes, then, may capture the controlled attitudes prompted by a systematic processing response. Given this proposed distinction, it is important to note that it is possible that explicit attitude measures may be able to capture heuristic responses. In regard to stereotypes, in particular, if an individual is unmotivated to hide his or her belief in stereotypes, explicit measures may reflect an automatically activated attitude (Fazio & Olson, 2003). However, since it is not uncommon for individuals to self-censor when asked about judgments regarding issues of race/ethnicity in particular, it is possible that social desirability may inhibit the ability of explicit attitude measures to adequately capture automatic responses. Without first measuring the individual’s concern with the social desirability of his or her responses (e.g., motivation to self-censor), it seems problematic to assume that heuristic responses involving automatic attitudes are consistently captured with explicit attitude measures.

Thus, it is suggested here that a combination of measures used to tap explicit and implicit attitudes along with those frequently utilized to determine processing style (i.e., heuristic or systematic) may be combined to offer a better tool for understanding when heuristic processing and implicit attitudes are aligned, when systematic processing and explicit attitudes match, and when the two processing styles are overridden by a lack of motivation to self-censor and result in similar responses to both implicit and explicit attitudes. Moreover, it may offer insight into when an unconscious priming effect has occurred and when a conscious cueing effect has taken place.
**Redefining Cues and Primes to Better Assess Attitudinal Responses**

A key difference between cues and primes appears to lie in whether or not they are consciously consumed and utilized by the individual. If information is unconsciously consumed or resides outside an individual’s immediate notice, it represents a psychological prime. If the information is consciously consumed or triggers a thought that is immediately accessible for the individual, it represents a cue (or political prime).

This distinction may be better stated with the inclusion of some of the predictions made by HSM, wherein implicit and explicit responses may be connected to heuristic and systematic processing. Moreover, with regard to issues of race/ethnicity, in particular, where social desirability effects on explicit measures are of possible concern, the following fusion of implicit and explicit attitudes with the predictions of HSM may help offer better measurement for the effects of priming and cueing. To begin, if an individual consumes news stories about a White political candidate, triggering heuristic processing given the lack of incongruity, then implicit and explicit attitudes should match. That is, if the information encountered is congruent, which predicts a lack of motivation to process, individuals should not mask their explicit responses, which allows explicit attitudes to align with implicit attitudes. Thus, when heuristic processing occurs (implying a lessened motivation to self-censor) and the information encountered is congruent with prior schemas, it is possible that psychological priming could be assessed using explicit attitude measures. This reasoning leads to the following hypothesis:

**H8:** The heuristic processing of news stories about a White political candidate will result in a significant positive correlation between implicit and explicit attitudes toward that candidate.
On the other hand, if a more liberal or Democratic individual consumes news stories about a Black or Hispanic political candidate who is a member of the Republican Party, systematic processing will take place based on the level of incongruity of the information. (This response may occur with conservative or Republican individuals as well.) In this case, it is possible that the implicit and explicit evaluations of the candidate will diverge. Based on social desirability concerns, the individual may become aware that he or she is evaluating the candidate based on his race/ethnicity and attempt to mask racist explicit attitudinal responses. However, implicit attitude measures should still capture the impact of the incongruent information, since such measures assess attitudes beyond the individual’s control. That is, if the information encountered is incongruent, which predicts controlled processing (i.e., systematic), individuals should mask their unfavorable explicit responses but be unable to hide their less socially desirable implicit responses. In this way, a cue can impact both explicit and implicit attitudes. If socially sensitive information is processed systematically (i.e., it is brought into the awareness of the individual) due to incongruity, the influence of the cue should be more evident in the implicit attitudinal responses than the explicit responses.

**H9:** The systematic processing of news stories about a Black or Hispanic political candidate associated with the Republican Party will result in a non-significant correlation between implicit and explicit attitudes toward that candidate.
The Impact of Cues on Counterstereotyping

In addition to examining attitudes toward political candidates, this study seeks to analyze the influence of the news media’s portrayal of political candidates identified as members of a racial/ethnic minority group on subsequent attitudes toward other members of that racial/ethnic minority group. Cues in the media are able to evoke responses from individuals that are indicative of exposure to a counterstereotypical individual. In this way, the portrayal of political candidates who are members of racial/ethnic minority groups in the news media will be tested as an avenue for encouraging counterstereotypical responses.

The use of counterstereotypes, which are representations of groups of people – or an individual within the group – in roles that contradict a stereotype, in the media has been shown to reduce the use of stereotypical and prejudicial attitudes and behaviors. In particular, several studies have shown changes in explicit and implicit attitudes toward a racial/ethnic minority group following the presentation of a counterstereotypical stimulus. Experimental research is often used to determine the influence of media-produced counterestereotypes and frequently studies depictions of Black Americans. For example, Ramasubramanian (2011) used counterstereotypical portrayals of Black individuals to reduce White participants’ stereotypical beliefs linking Black Americans to laziness. The author’s findings were shown through the reduction in participants’ ratings of stereotypical qualities of Black Americans. More simply put, Ramasubramanian’s (2011) study provides a clear example of the positive impact of the media’s counterstereotypical portrayals of a racial/ethnic minority group on explicit attitudes about that group.

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4 Cues are used here and throughout this study because this study does not assume that individuals will process the stimuli unconsciously nor does it attempt this manipulation.
To examine the impact of media-based counterstereotypes on implicit attitudes, Ramasubramanian (2007) employed a lexical decision task, which uses response latencies related to the identification of words and non-words to measure implicit reactions to stimuli. The author found that after exposure to news stories portraying counterstereotypical Black individuals, White participants showed less implicit bias against Black Americans. Furthermore, Dasgupta and Greenwald (2001) found exposure to positive photographs of Black Americans lessened negative implicit attitudes – as measured with the Implicit Association Tests (IAT) – toward African Americans. These studies offer instances of counterstereotypical examples of commonly stereotyped groups producing less stereotypical implicit attitudes.

Such research that uses media to reduce stereotypical responses is not limited to attitudes toward Black Americans. Mastro and Tuckachinsky (2011) showed White participants a picture of a counterstereotypic Latino individual and found participants subsequently reduced their stereotypical beliefs about this group of people. Other research has found that exposure to news stories portraying Asian-Indian individuals counterstereotypically elicits less prejudicial attitudes from White participants (Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2007). Both studies used measures of explicit responses, supporting the prediction of more positive explicit attitudes toward members of racial/ethnic minority groups as a result of exposure to a counterstereotypical example of these individuals in the media.

The aforementioned stereotypes of Black and Hispanic individuals that these studies of counterstereotyping are trying to negate are quite clearly negative in nature. Thus, as might seem obvious, counterstereotypical examples of members of these groups ought to be positive. Some previously tested methods include depicting them as gentle and entrepreneurial
(Ramasubramanian, 2007; Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2007), likable (Ramasubramanian, 2011), and positive, attractive, and happy (Mastro & Tuckachinsky, 2011).

To the author’s knowledge, no studies have considered the portrayal of racial/ethnic minority individuals as political candidates to be representative of a counterstereotype. Thus, the study at hand will test whether news coverage of racial/ethnic minority political candidates can encourage counterstereotypical perceptions of members of those racial/ethnic groups. It will attempt to determine if the portrayal of racial/ethnic minority groups in potential positions of political leadership – as candidates for office – can result in more positive attitudes toward these minority racial/ethnic groups more generally. As prior research has found positive portrayals of Black and Hispanic individuals in the media to lead to more positive (or less negative) implicit and explicit attitudes toward members of these larger groups, it is anticipated that the news coverage of a Black or Hispanic political candidate also will lead to more favorable attitudes toward Black and Hispanic individuals more generally. Seeing members of these racial/ethnic minority groups in positions of potential leadership, often requiring many skills that contradict those of the predominant stereotypes (e.g., lazy, poor, unintelligent), should encourage consumers of these news stories to adopt more positive attitudes toward those groups more generally.

**Working Against the Counterstereotype**

Despite the research finding counterstereotypical examples to promote pro-social attitudes, it is possible that the presentation of a counterstereotype may not positively influence the individuals who consume it. With specific regard to media, exposure to a counterstereotype may not be particularly effective if it is not positive enough or if it is completely a-typical (Mastro & Tuckachinsky, 2011). That is, a counterstereotype must be somewhat consistent with
prior cognitions. Along these lines, Ramasubramanian and Oliver (2007) found participants who watched a media literacy video (which was meant to encourage participants to be more critical of the media and, thus, less reliant upon stereotypes) and were exposed to a counterstereotypical news stories about one group of people were unable to avoid negativity toward another group of people. They appeared to reject it in favor of long-held stereotypic associations. Possibly explaining these findings, Oliver and Fonash (2002) found individuals are capable of remembering information that coincides with their previously held stereotypes even in situations where it is clearly incorrect. This type of reliance on prior stereotypic associations presents a barrier that counterstereotypes must overcome if they are to be influential in changing media consumers’ attitudes.

As such, the study at hand will test the impact of counterstereotypical representations of Black and Hispanic individuals as political candidates on both implicit and explicit attitudes. In line with past counterstereotyping research, this study predicts positive impacts on implicit and explicit attitudes about Black and Hispanic individuals after exposure to news stories portraying members of these racial/ethnic groups as political candidates. Generally speaking, it is predicted that seeing Black and Hispanic individuals – men, in this case – in positions of potential political leadership (i.e., as political candidates) will prompt counterstereotypical responses in that individuals will report more positive implicit and explicit attitudes toward members of these racial/ethnic groups. Conversely, given that exposure to the status quo of the White male political candidate reinforces the perceived stereotypical norm, individuals exposed to news stories portraying a White male political candidate of any political party affiliation are predicted to show more negative implicit and explicit attitudes toward Black and Hispanic individuals more generally.
**H10:** Consuming news stories about a White political candidate will lead to more negative implicit and explicit attitudes toward Black and Hispanic individuals.

**H11:** Consuming news stories about a Black political candidate will lead to more positive implicit and explicit attitudes toward Black individuals.

**H12:** Consuming news stories about a Hispanic political candidate will lead to more positive implicit and explicit attitudes toward Hispanic individuals.
Method

Participants

Participants for this study’s final experiment as well as the associated pretests were recruited from and completed the study using Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk). MTurk was selected due to its ability to provide a larger, more diverse sample in comparison with the college-aged student samples often used in experimental research. Though the “workers” recruited from MTurk’s online platform are not entirely representative of the U.S. population, they offer an accessible avenue for experimental researchers to gather a more diverse sample (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Ross, Irani, Silberman, Zaldivar, & Tomlinson, 2010). Of note, individuals recruited from MTurk provide a more representative diversity in terms of age. This variation in age distribution is crucial given the intention of this study to examine potential voting behavior. As such, a traditional student sample would not be appropriate. Moreover, MTurk has been shown to be a reliable and valid tool for use in experimental research (e.g., Mason & Suri, 2012; Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010).
Pretests

**Candidate picture pretest.** The first pretest in this study assessed the pictures of the political candidates to ensure they contained similarly recognizable features and characteristics. This pretest, which was administered on MTurk, included participants in the United States ($N = 103$) whose ages ranged from 18 to 67 ($M = 34.77$, $SD = 12.42$) and who were 60% male. Participants were allowed to select more than one race/ethnicity that they thought best described them: 84 participants self-identified as White, six as Hispanic, five as Asian/Pacific Islander, five as African American, one as Native American, and one selected Other.

The images used in this pretest were located through searches of newspaper databases. All images previously appeared either in print newspapers or on newspaper websites and were selected based on several criteria. First, the images showed only one man and did not feature any other people or objects. Second, well-known or easily-recognized men were avoided to the extent possible. Third, at least four pictures of each man were available. Images that met these stipulations were resized to the same dimensions. At least four pictures of each man were presented to participants. A total of 41 pictures were randomly presented to participants during this pretest.

For each picture, participants were asked to identify the race/ethnicity of the man they saw. They chose between Asian, African American, Hispanic, and Caucasian. To begin assessment of these potential candidate pictures, the race/ethnicity identifying question was examined to ensure each candidate could be correctly attributed to his respective race/ethnicity. To accurately assess the impact of the cue of race/ethnicity, individuals needed to be able to identify the race/ethnicity of the individual. Thus, two of the potential Hispanic candidates were immediately ruled out due to the low percentage of participants who correctly identified them as
Hispanic (58% on average). The remaining potential Hispanic candidate was correctly identified as Hispanic by 72% of participants based on the five pretest pictures used to evaluate him. The pictures of the potential Black and White candidates did not present such disparities in identification. The least correctly identified picture of a potential Black candidate was correctly identified by 95% of participants. Similarly, the least correctly identified picture of a potential White candidate was correctly identified by 97% of participants. The final nine pictures – three of each race/ethnicity – that were selected for inclusion in the news stories were correctly identified by 89% of participants on average (Hispanic = 70%, Black = 98%, and White = 98%).

Prior to the race/ethnicity identification question, participants were asked to rate each picture based on several characteristics of the man in the photograph. First, participants were asked to rate the man based on how memorable and attractive they perceived him to be. Then, they rated him based on several characteristics typically assessed in studies about attitudes toward politicians, including competence, experience, and intelligence (Conover, 1981). Participants were asked to evaluate these five traits on how well they described each picture using a seven-point scale that ranged from 1 (Not at All) to 7 (Very Much).

Since perceptions of how memorable and attractive an individual is are the more common measures to assess picture similarity (e.g., Payne et al., 2008), these two traits were evaluated first. Several sets of tests were run on the various pictures of each candidate in order to determine which pictures were most similar based on how memorable and attractive the men were perceived. Using a repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA), the pictures selected to represent the Hispanic ($M = 3.65, SD = 1.03$), Black ($M = 3.71, SD = 1.10$), and White ($M = 3.53, SD = 1.17$) candidates were not significantly different in terms of how memorable they were perceived, Wilks’ $\Lambda = .97, F(2, 101) = 1.41, p = .25, \eta^2_p = .03$. With a second repeated-
ANOVA, these same pictures of the Hispanic ($M = 3.44, SD = 1.17$), Black ($M = 3.49, SD = 1.21$), and White ($M = 3.42, SD = 1.14$) candidates were not significantly different in terms of their perceived attractiveness, Wilks’ $\Lambda = .99, F(2, 101) = 0.30, p = .74, \eta^2_p = .01$.

The final three traits analyzed – competence, experience, and intelligence (Conover, 1981) – did produce significant differences between the candidates selected. Using a repeated-measures ANOVA, the White candidate ($M = 4.85, SD = 0.94$) was perceived as significantly more competent than the Hispanic ($M = 4.56, SD = 1.05$) and Black ($M = 4.59, SD = 1.02$) candidates, Wilks’ $\Lambda = .87, F(2, 101) = 7.40, p = .001, \eta^2_p = .13$. Similarly, the White candidate ($M = 4.97, SD = 0.98$) was perceived as significantly more intelligent than the Hispanic ($M = 4.74, SD = 1.09$) and Black ($M = 4.67, SD = 1.12$) candidates, Wilks’ $\Lambda = .88, F(2, 101) = 7.23, p = .001, \eta^2_p = .13$. Finally, these pictures were significantly different in terms of perceptions of experience, Wilks’ $\Lambda = .80, F(2, 101) = 12.61, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .20$. Using pairwise comparisons with the Sidak correction, the White ($M = 5.02, SD = 1.02$) and Hispanic ($M = 4.98, SD = 1.06$) candidates were perceived as significantly more experienced than the Black candidate ($M = 4.56, SD = 1.02$), $p < .001$ in both cases. While these results illustrate differences between perceptions of the candidates selected for this study, they may be more indicative of prejudices toward members of minority racial/ethnic groups. As such, these findings appear to support prior research (e.g., Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005; Monk-Turner et al., 2010) and may foreshadow the perceptions of political candidates predicted in this study.

**AMP picture pretest.** The second pretest assessed the pictures used in the Affect Misattribution Procedure (AMP) to ensure similarly recognizable features and characteristics. This pretest, which was administered on MTurk, included participants in the United States ($N = 101$) whose ages ranged from 19 to 72 ($M = 39.33, SD = 13.37$) and who were 49% male.
Participants were allowed to select more than one race/ethnicity that they thought best described them: 82 participants self-identified as White, 12 as African American, nine as Hispanic, three as Native American, two as Asian/Pacific Islander, and one selected Other.

The majority of the images used in this pretest were obtained through an online database of pictures. The images on this database included numerous pictures of self-identifying White and Black men. The pictures included only the faces of those individuals, all of whom had neutral facial expressions. This database, however, did not include many images of self-identifying Hispanic men. Thus, these images were obtained through newspaper websites and general image searches. All men included from these searches were clearly identified as Hispanic or Latino. These images were cropped close to the men’s faces and resized to the same dimensions, so they closely resembled the pictures from the aforementioned database. A total of 48 pictures were randomly presented to participants during this pretest.

For each picture, participants were asked to identify the race/ethnicity of the man they saw. They chose between Asian, African American, Hispanic, and Caucasian. To begin assessment of these potential AMP pictures, the race/ethnicity identifying question was examined to ensure each man could be correctly attributed to his respective race/ethnicity. To accurately assess implicit attitudes toward individuals of a particular race/ethnicity, participants need to be able to identify the race/ethnicity of each individual. Thus, three of the Hispanic men were immediately ruled out due to the low percentage of participants who correctly identified them as Hispanic (28% on average). The remaining Hispanic men were correctly identified as Hispanic by 73% of participants on average. The pictures of the Black and White men did not

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present such disparities in identification. The least correctly identified picture of a Black man was correctly identified by 83% of participants, and the least correctly identified picture of a White man was correctly identified by 71% of participants. The final 30 pictures – 10 of each race/ethnicity – that were selected for inclusion in the AMP were correctly identified by 92% of participants on average (Hispanic = 81%, Black = 98%, and White = 97%).

Prior to the race/ethnicity identification question, participants were asked to rate each man based on how memorable and attractive they perceived him to be. Using a repeated-measures ANOVA, the Hispanic \((M = 2.71, SD = 1.09)\), Black \((M = 2.70, SD = 1.05)\), and White \((M = 2.78, SD = 1.13)\) men were not significantly different in terms of their perceived attractiveness, Wilks’ \(\Lambda = .98, F(2, 99) = 1.22, p = .30, \eta_p^2 = .02\). Similarly, with a second repeated-measures ANOVA, the Hispanic \((M = 3.56, SD = 1.08)\), Black \((M = 3.46, SD = 1.08)\), and White \((M = 3.44, SD = 1.14)\) men were not significantly different in terms of how memorable they were perceived, Wilks’ \(\Lambda = .97, F(2, 99) = 1.75, p = .18, \eta_p^2 = .03\).

**News story pretest.** The final pretest in this study examined the three news stories to ensure their content could be processed both systematically and heuristically in accordance with the heuristic systematic processing model (HSM). This pretest, which was administered on MTurk, included participants in the United States \((N = 50)\). However, one participant was excluded from the following analyses due to erratic lengths of time spent reading the news stories (ranging from 2.60 to 574.22 seconds). The remaining participants’ ages ranged from 18 to 68 \((M = 33.47, SD = 12.07)\), and they were 51% male. Participants were allowed to select more than one race/ethnicity that they thought best described them: 38 participants self-identified as White, seven as African American, three as Asian/Pacific Islander, three as Hispanic, and one selected Other.
Pretest participants began by reading all three news stories, presented on separate pages. They then completed a free thought response task to assess whether heuristic or systematic processing was employed. More specifically, participants were asked to write their thoughts about the news stories in order to determine the type of processing employed (Chaiken, 1980). These open-ended responses were unitized based on thought unit. This unit of analysis was selected due to the varying format of participants’ answers (e.g., incomplete sentences, compound sentences). The thought unit of analysis permitted examination of each distinct idea. Two coders independently divided each participant’s response into units of analysis based on single thoughts, which included complete and incomplete sentences as well as each portion of a conjunction (see Appendix 1 for complete codebook). These coders achieved 94% agreement on the placement of the division of the thoughts. Those thoughts that did not match were discussed by the coders until agreement was achieved. Participants’ total number of thoughts ranged from one to seven ($M = 2.59$, $SD = 1.34$), and the total words used ranged from six to 80 ($M = 30.14$, $SD = 18.72$).

The open-ended data then was coded to determine the type of processing. The coding process undertaken here was used, in part, to establish a solidified and tested codebook to code similar responses in the later experiment. In accordance with prior research, “message-related thoughts” were coded as indicative of systematic processing in regard to the level of detail in the response, while “simple evaluative thoughts” were coded as indicators of heuristic processing in regard to the lack of detail given in the response (Meyers-Levy & Maheswaran, 2004, p. 163). This single dichotomous category was divided into two dichotomous categories to increase the level of clarity surrounding these open-ended responses: detailed/non-detailed and simple/complex. The level of detail was identified to signify the type of processing, where more
detail indicated systematic processing (Meyers-Levy & Maheswaran, 2004). Also, the complexity of the thought provided another indicator of the route of processing employed (Neuwirth, Frederick, & Mayo, 2002). Chen and Chaiken (1999) defined systematic processing as that which requires greater cognitive effort and “a relatively analytic and comprehensive treatment” of the information (p. 74). Conversely, heuristic processing involves simple evaluations about the information. Thus, complex thoughts signify systematic processing, and simple thoughts indicate heuristic processing.

First, coders identified each unit of analysis as a detailed (systematic) or non-detailed (heuristic) thought. More specifically, coders were instructed to identify non-detailed thoughts as unspecific thoughts evaluating the news stories or the political candidate. These non-detailed thoughts could include unsupported references to the quality of the news stories or the political candidate’s abilities. For detailed thoughts, coders identified thoughts about the specific elements in the news stories about the candidate. These detailed thoughts could include supported references to the quality of the news stories or the candidate’s abilities. They also could include the listing of specific message content, such as the candidate’s political party, race/ethnicity, goals, experience, etc.

Second, coders identified each unit of analysis as a complex (systematic) or simple (heuristic) thought. For simple thoughts, coders were instructed to identify straightforward, uncomplicated thoughts evaluating the news stories or the political candidate. These simple thoughts could include regurgitation of the information provided in the news stories and/or a simple evaluation of the candidate with no supporting information or consequence identified. For complex thoughts, coders identified statements involving greater complexity regarding the content of the news stories or the candidate’s role. These complex thoughts could include the
application of the information provided in the news stories to one’s own life, the consideration of
the information beyond the news stories themselves (e.g., future implications), and/or detailed
and nuanced judgments of the news stories or the candidate.

Coders categorized each thought as either detailed or non-detailed as well as simple or
complex. To determine the utility of the codebook, intercoder reliability was conducted on each
of the two categories, including all participants’ comments. Percent agreement is reported to
illustrate overall agreement; Cohen’s Kappa also is reported to correct for chance agreement
between exactly two coders (Cohen, 1960). For detailed/non-detailed comments, percent
agreement was 88.2%, and Scott’s Pi using Potter and Levine-Donnerstein’s (1999) adjustment
for unequal category distribution was .76 (Cohen’s Kappa was .73). For the simple/complex
comments, percent agreement was 80.3%, and Scott’s Pi was .61 (Cohen’s Kappa was .60).
Those thoughts that did not match were discussed by the coders until agreement was achieved.

Participants recorded more non-detailed ($M = 1.80, SD = 1.22$) than detailed ($M = 0.78,
$SD = 0.90$) thoughts. Also, participants recorded more simple ($M = 1.39, SD = 1.26$) than
complex ($M = 1.18, SD = 1.07$) thoughts. This finding makes sense given the common desire to
put forth the least amount of cognitive effort possible (Chen, Duckworth, & Chaiken, 1999).
However, it also illustrates the possibility for both heuristic and systematic processing of the
news stories read for this study.

The time spent writing these responses was recorded for each participant, permitting
another possible measure of the type of cognitive processing employed, where longer response
times indicate systematic processing and shorter response times indicate heuristic processing
(Chaiken, 1980). These response times ranged from 19.06 to 265.43 seconds ($M = 69.74, SD =
53.62$). Additionally, the time spent reading the three news stories was recorded as a possible
indicator of processing style. These response times ranged from 36.73 to 352.10 seconds ($M = 137.62$, $SD = 80.22$).

Finally, Neuwirth et al.’s (2002) scale of systematic and heuristic processing was used to assess the cognitive mechanism at play. The authors’ scale uses five closed-ended questions to address systematic processing. Additionally, it analyzes three types of heuristic processing: 1) topic difficulty (four questions), 2) selective scanning (two questions), and 3) skimming (two questions). These questions were adapted to fit the context of this study (see Appendix 3 for all item wordings). Participants were asked to rate their agreement with these items, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). This pretest also provided a way to test the loadings of the factors identified by Neuwirth et al. (2002) using the modified wording developed for this study.

On initial inspection of the data, two of the scale’s items had problematic levels of skew and kurtosis and were dropped from the pretest analysis. These two items (“I had difficulty seeing how the information in the news stories fit together into a story that makes sense overall” and “The news stories were difficult to understand”) indicated that participants had little difficulty understanding the news stories. As such, these items may not be suitable for analyses of news stories, as news content is typically meant to be easily understood. It should also be noted that the items assessing selective scanning and skimming received low scores. These items may also be problematic due to social desirability, where participants are unwilling to admit a lack of attention paid to the stimulus materials. In this pretest, however, these items achieved levels of relatively normal distribution.

To address the structure of this scale, principal components analysis with promax rotation was employed. The initial analysis produced four factors with eigenvalues greater than one. One
item (“When reading the news stories, I didn’t spend much time thinking about the information”) did not load well on any of the factors and was removed. Following this modification, the structure matrix showed that all items loaded no less than |.70| and cross-loaded no greater than |.46|. Though four factors were extracted, they did not perform as anticipated. The formation that emerged is illustrated in Table 3. The first factor resembled a combination of the selective scanning and skimming factors identified by Neuwirth et al. (2002). Thus, this factor clearly represents some form of heuristic processing (called heuristic skimming). The second factor includes three of the items Neuwirth et al. (2002) used to identify systematic processing, while the third factor includes the two remaining systematic processing items. In this study, however, the second factor appears to represent systematic processing related to relationships between the information and the individual’s life and experiences; thus, this factor will be referred to as systematic connections. The third factor, on the other hand, seems to rely on references to systematic processing involving actions that may occur, making this the systematic implications factor. Finally, the fourth factor coincides with the two remaining items from Neuwirth et al.’s (2002) topic difficulty factor related to heuristic processing. Each of these four factors performed well in terms of reliability: heuristic skimming ($M = 2.59$, $SD = 1.21$, $\alpha = .82$), systematic connections ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 1.17$, $\alpha = .64$), systematic implications ($M = 4.66$, $SD = 1.16$, $r = .61$), and heuristic topic difficulty ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.14$, $r = .42$).⁶

⁶ Neuwirth et al. (2002) did not perform factor analysis on their scale. This pretest may begin to illustrate some potential flaws in this measure.
With particular regard to this scale, few significant correlations were found. None of these four factors was significantly correlated with time spent completing the open-ended thought response, number of words used in the open-ended response, number of thoughts used, or the total number of detailed, non-detailed, complex, or simple thoughts. However, systematic implications were marginally significantly correlated with the total time spent reading the news stories. This relationship was negative, though, which runs counter to typical HSM predictions. Also, several of the factors in this scale were significantly and positively correlated with each other. This may indicate the co-occurrence of heuristic and systematic processing. That said, it

Table 3
*PCA solution for pretest HSM scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
<th>Factor 3</th>
<th>Factor 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When reading the news stories, I only paid attention to the portion of that seemed important.</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When reading the news stories, I only paid attention to the portion of that seemed interesting.</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I generally skimmed through the news stories.</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found myself making connections between the information I got from the news stories and information I’ve gotten elsewhere.</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I thought about how the information in the news stories relates to other things I know.</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tried to relate the ideas in the news stories to my own life.</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on the information I received from the news stories, I thought about what actions should be taken by the public.</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>-.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I thought about the practical implications of the information in the news stories.</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The news stories presented too many conflicting viewpoints.</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It took a lot of mental effort to understand how the parts of the news stories fit together.</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-.31</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Promax rotation was used. Factor 1 had an eigenvalue of 2.60, factor 2 had 2.35, factor 3 had 1.31, and factor 4 had 1.05.
appears that few of the typical HSM measures are related to the HSM characteristics predicted by Neuwirth et al.’s (2002) scale. (See Table 4 for a zero-order correlation matrix.)

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zero-order correlations among pretest HSM measures</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Detailed thoughts</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Non-detailed thoughts</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>-23</td>
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<td>3 Complex thoughts</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>.62</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Simple thoughts</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>-35</td>
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<td>5 Time spent writing (seconds)</td>
<td>69.74</td>
<td>53.62</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.52</td>
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<td>6 Total time reading (seconds)</td>
<td>137.62</td>
<td>80.22</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.05</td>
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<td>7 Number of words</td>
<td>30.14</td>
<td>18.72</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Number of thoughts</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Factor 1: Heuristic skimming</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Factor 2: Systematic connections</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.29</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 Factor 3: Systematic implications</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12 Factor 4: Heuristic topic difficulty</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>.33</td>
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Note. Values are Pearson’s r correlation coefficients. Cases with missing values were excluded listwise. N = 49

* p < .10; ** p < .05; *** p < .001

Several interesting findings emerged relating to the open-ended data. First, the total number of non-detailed (heuristic), detailed (systematic), simple (heuristic), and complex (systematic) thoughts all were significantly correlated with the total time spent writing the open-ended response. However, the correlations were stronger for detailed (i.e., systematic) and simple (i.e., heuristic) thoughts. This finding appears counterintuitive based on the some of the theoretical predictions made by HSM scholars. In fact, it disputes Chaiken’s (1980) prediction that longer response times would indicate systematic processing and shorter response times would indicate heuristic processing. However, it is not counter to logic, where individuals who wrote longer responses had a greater likelihood of including both systematic and heuristic thoughts in their responses. It seems individuals who spent more time writing their responses were more likely to offer detailed but simple responses. This finding may indicate the need for these two categories (as opposed to one dichotomous category), as they may provide an indication of concurrent processing.

Second, the total number of thoughts for each category was significantly correlated with the number of words the participants used. Similarly, the number of thoughts was significantly
related to each type of response. In this case, however, the correlations were stronger for non-detailed and simple (i.e., heuristic) thoughts. This finding runs counter to prior HSM measures, as individuals who recorded a greater number of thoughts were more likely to engage in heuristic processing.

Third, the total time spent reading the three news stories was significantly correlated with the total number of non-detailed and simple (i.e., heuristic) thoughts. Unexpectedly, this relationship was positive, where more time spent reading the stories was related to more heuristic thoughts. Conversely, detailed and complex (i.e., systematic) thoughts were not significantly correlated with time spent reading the news stories. Again, this runs counter to prior predictions and indicates that HSM measures incorporating time spent consuming the message or the number of thoughts or words used in the open-ended response may not be the most effective measures of systematic and heuristic processing.

It is possible that the simplicity of the stories used in the pretest did not inspire much variation in thought. The incongruity presented by this study’s final experimental manipulations may be needed to reveal the anticipated cognitive processing and any meaningful alignment among the measures in this study. Despite the potential shortcomings of the aforementioned measures, they will be used in the subsequent experiment to see if similar results emerge.
**Beta Test and Final Study Participants**

To determine the appropriate number of participants for this study’s final experiment, a beta test was conducted. Participants were recruited through MTurk and completed the experiment in its final form. Using responses from 99 participants, the expected effect size of the hierarchical regression model used to test the first three hypotheses (with regard to voting intention) was utilized in G*Power – a software used to calculate statistical power analyses – to determine the necessary number of participants. The following values were utilized in G*Power’s linear multiple regression fixed model, $R^2$ increase dialogue box to determine the necessary sample size: $R^2$ change value for the third and final block of the hierarchical regression model ($\Delta R^2 = .038$); number of predictors ($N = 21$); number of tested predictors in the final block ($N = 4$); alpha level ($\alpha = .95$); and power value (.95). Given these values, a total of 494 participants were needed to achieve this model’s anticipated effect size.

Including those who completed the beta test, a total of 602 participants completed the final study. However, five participants were removed from the data set because they correctly identified the actual identity of the politician they read about in the news stories. Also, three participants reported living in Minnesota (i.e., the state where the fictitious gubernatorial election described in the news stories was taking place) and were removed from the sample. Two participants were removed from the sample for incorrectly answering a simple identification question meant to spot participants who were not adequately paying attention to the questions. Also, one participant was eliminated for noting that he or she restarted the study after a computer issue and saw two different sets of the stimulus news stories, thus, contaminating his or her subsequent responses. Finally, two additional participants were eliminated based on their times

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7 The question asked participants to select the number 333 from seven numerical choices.
spent reading the three news stories. One participant spent less than one second reading the stories, and another spent nearly 38 minutes reading them, indicating extreme distraction from the study. Since these participants’ times represented outliers, their responses were eliminated from the data.\(^8\)

Of the remaining 589 participants, 40% were male and their ages ranged from 18 to 81 years old \((M = 36.94, SD = 13.20)\). Participants were allowed to select more than one race/ethnicity that they thought best described them: 488 participants self-identified as White, 45 as African American, 38 as Hispanic, 37 as Asian/Pacific Islander, seven as Native American, and seven selected Other. In terms of education level achieved, the greatest number of participants completed a four-year college degree \((N = 187)\), but many reported completing some college (but not a two-year college degree) \((N = 145)\).

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\(^8\) Nine participants were not included in the analysis of the implicit attitudes data because they reported being able to read or interpret Chinese characters. Three others were excluded from analysis of the implicit attitudes data because they reported issues with the images loading on their computers.
Procedure

Similar to the aforementioned pretests, participants located the final experiment through MTurk’s search function and completed the study after consenting to participate. The study began by explaining to participants that they would read three national news stories published online about a political candidate. They were then randomly assigned to the type of news stories they read (described in the Stimuli section).

Following stimulus consumption, participants answered questions relating to the dependent variables in the follow order: 1) open-ended thoughts response regarding the news stories’ content; 2) explicit attitudes toward the candidate; 3) explicit attitudes toward Black and Hispanic individuals; and 4) implicit attitudes toward the political candidate in the news stories as well as White, Black, and Hispanic individuals. Participants then answered questions relating to the manipulation check and the moderating and control variables. Lastly, they completed the closed-ended HSM questions as well as demographic questions.
Stimuli

Participants read three news stories that were adapted from two actual news stories published in the 1990s in *The Vancouver Sun* and the *St. Petersburg Times*. Each manipulated news story focused on the story of one man and his aspirations to become a politician, featuring a single picture of that man. The news stories were about the political candidate’s goals and work ethic. Each of the three news stories contained unique content about that candidate and a different picture of the candidate. The candidate’s political party was mentioned once in the first sentence of each news story as well so that the two cues (race/ethnicity and political party affiliation) were presented in equal number. Direct references to policies frequently tied to a particular political party were purposefully avoided. Identifying information was removed from each news story except for sex of the individual (i.e., male) and the name of the politician, which was held constant across all conditions.

The news stories were presented as online news stories and mimicked the presentation of an actual online news story. Each of the news stories was identical except for the two manipulations (forming a 3x3 design): the race/ethnicity of the man pictured in the news stories and the political party associated with the man identified in the news stories. Participants read about a political candidate who was White (*N* = 196), Black (*N* = 203), or Hispanic (*N* = 190) and was identified as part of the Republican Party (*N* = 197), Democratic Party (*N* = 186), or Independent Party (*N* = 206). To maintain control over the effects of the stimulus, the size of the picture in each news story was held constant across conditions. (See Appendix 2 for stimuli examples.)
Dependent Variables

**HSM assessment: Open-ended.** Just as in the news story pretest, participants completed an open-ended, free thought response task to assess whether heuristic or systematic processing was employed. Using Chaiken’s (1980) measure, participants were asked to write their thoughts about the news stories they consumed immediately after they read them.

Exactly like the news story pretest, these open-ended responses were unitized based on thought unit. Two new coders – blind to the purpose of the study – independently divided each participant’s response into units of analysis based on single thoughts, which included complete and incomplete sentences as well as each portion of a conjunction (see Appendix 1 for complete codebook). Using a randomly-selected 20% of the sample of participants’ comments (\(N = 117\)), the coders achieved 76% agreement on the placement of the division of the thoughts. Those thoughts that did not match were discussed by the coders until agreement was achieved.

Participants’ total number of thoughts ranged from one to 15 (\(M = 3.29, SD = 2.11\)), and the total words used ranged from two to 223 (\(M = 38.51, SD = 27.93\)).

The open-ended data then was coded to determine the type of processing. First, coders identified detailed (systematic) or non-detailed (heuristic) thoughts. Second, coders identified complex (systematic) and simple (heuristic) thoughts. To determine the utility of the codebook, intercoder reliability was conducted on each of the two categories, including a randomly-selected 20% of the sample of participants’ comments (\(N = 117\)). For detailed/non-detailed comments, percent agreement was 98.5% and Scott’s Pi using Potter and Levine-Donnerstein’s (1999) adjustment for unequal category distribution was .97 (Cohen’s Kappa was .97). For the simple/complex comments, percent agreement was 98.7% and Scott’s Pi was .97 (Cohen’s
Kappa was .97. Again, those thoughts that did not match were discussed by the coders until agreement was achieved.

Similar to the pretest results, participants recorded more non-detailed \((M = 1.93, SD = 1.81)\) than detailed \((M = 1.36, SD = 1.36)\) thoughts. Participants also recorded more simple \((M = 2.47, SD = 1.82)\) than complex \((M = 0.82, SD = 1.20)\) thoughts.

**HSM assessment: Closed-ended.** The time spent writing these responses was recorded for each participant, permitting another possible measure of the type of cognitive processing employed, where longer response times indicate systematic processing and shorter response times indicate heuristic processing (Chaiken, 1980). These response times ranged from 3.56 to 1,736.96 seconds \((M = 112.66, SD = 129.40)\). Additionally, the time spent reading the three stories was recorded as a possible indicator of processing style. These times ranged from 5.59 to 1,187.24 seconds \((M = 188.77, SD = 144.89)\).\(^9\)

Neuwirth et al.’s (2002) scale of systematic and heuristic processing also was used to assess the cognitive mechanisms at play. These closed-ended questions were randomly presented and asked near the end of the study’s questionnaire to avoid triggering systematic processing early in the study based on the nature of the questions. To address the structure of this scale, principal components analysis with promax rotation was employed. This extraction produced three factors with eigenvalues greater than one, and the structure matrix showed that all items loaded no less than \(|.64|\) and cross-loaded no greater than \(|.44|\). The formation that emerged is illustrated in Table 5. These three factors did not identically resemble those predicted by Neuwirth et al. (2002) nor did they correspond with those identified in this study’s pretest of the items. The first factor resembled a combination of the selective scanning and skimming factors

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\(^9\) One participant’s times were not included due to a software recording error.
identified by Neuwirth et al. (2002). Thus, this factor clearly represents some form of heuristic processing (called heuristic skimming). The second factor coincides with all of the items on Neuwirth et al.’s (2002) topic difficulty factor related to heuristic processing. Finally, the third factor includes all of the items Neuwirth et al. (2002) used to identify systematic processing.

Each of these three factors performed well in terms of reliability: heuristic skimming ($M = 2.42$, $SD = 1.07$, $\alpha = .83$), heuristic topic difficulty ($M = 2.20$, $SD = 1.00$, $\alpha = .79$), and systematic ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 1.00$, $\alpha = .73$).
Several interesting findings emerged relating to the final study open-ended data. (See Table 6 for a zero-order correlation matrix of all HSM variables for the final study.) First, the total number of non-detailed (heuristic), detailed (systematic), simple (heuristic), and complex (systematic) thoughts all were significantly correlated with the total time spent writing the open-
ended response. These correlations were not widely different based on the type of processing employed, which is inconsistent with Chaiken’s (1980) prediction that longer response times would indicate systematic processing and shorter response times would indicate heuristic processing.

Second, the total number of thoughts for each category was significantly correlated with the number of words the participants used. Similarly, the number of thoughts was significantly related to each type of response. In this case, the correlations were stronger for non-detailed and simple (i.e., heuristic) thoughts. This finding runs counter to theory, as individuals who recorded a greater number of thoughts were more likely to engage in heuristic processing.

Third, total time spent reading the three news stories was not significantly correlated with any category of thought. Again, this runs counter to prior predictions and indicates that HSM measures incorporating time spent consuming the message or the number of thoughts or words used in the open-ended response may not be the most effective measures of systematic and heuristic processing.

Fourth, there were some significant relationships among the four categories used to code the open-ended data. Detailed and non-detailed thoughts were negatively correlated and simple
and complex thoughts were similarly negatively correlated. Though simple and non-detailed thoughts, which were meant to represent heuristic processing, were significantly and positively correlated, detailed and complex thoughts, which were meant to represent systematic processing, were not significantly correlated. Also, non-detailed and complex thoughts as well as detailed and simple thoughts were significantly and positively correlated, indicating an overlap in heuristic and systematic processing that may be indicative of continuous concurrent processing. These initial results indicate a clear difference in the categories analyzed in the codebook created here. They also point to a lack of nuance in previous studies’ examination of open-ended data as a means of measuring heuristic and systematic processing.

An examination of the correlations with Neuwirth et al.’s (2002) close-ended scale measuring cognitive processing offered another means for understanding the coding categories developed for the open-ended data. Heuristic skimming was significantly and negatively correlated with detailed, simple, and complex thoughts. This finding suggests that individuals who did not closely read the news stories were unlikely to engage in responses with detailed, simple, or complex comments. It ought to be noted that these correlations – though significant – were relatively weak. Similarly, heuristic processing as it relates to the difficulty of the topic presented in the news stories was significantly and negatively correlated with detailed, simple, and complex thoughts. Regarding Neuwirth et al.’s (2002) systematic processing portion of the scale, it was significantly and positively correlated with non-detailed and complex thoughts. It appears that individuals who process systematically produce more non-detailed and complex thoughts.

Thus, it seems the most accurate category developed in the codebook may have been complex thoughts. Complex thoughts performed as theory would predict, such that they were
negatively correlated with heuristic processing and positively correlated with systematic processing, both at significant levels. Though all coded thoughts will be included in subsequent analyses, it is anticipated that complex thoughts – and possibly its counterpoint of simple thoughts – may offer the most reliable measure of heuristic and systematic processing.

**Explicit candidate evaluations.** To assess their responses to the news stories, participants also answered questions regarding their explicit evaluations of the political candidate they read about. Two of these questions were developed and tested by Barrett and Barrington (2005). First, participants gave their general evaluations of the candidate. Using a seven-point scale ranging from very unfavorable to very favorable, participants rated their general impression of the candidate ($M = 4.84$, $SD = 1.50$). Second, with a similar scale ranging from very unlikely to very likely, participants rated their likelihood of voting for the candidate if they were able, indicating their behavioral intentions ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 1.76$).

Additional evaluative questions were drawn from Conover (1981), where three factors of politicians’ characteristics were tested and recommended for future use. Each question utilized a seven-point semantic differential scale, and all items were randomly presented to participants. The author suggested politicians be assessed in terms of evaluative dimensions, political leadership and political activity abilities, and experience and perceived ability. The first factor in Conover’s (1981) scale – evaluative dimensions – consists of semantic differential scales containing words related to moral evaluations (e.g., good/bad, fair/unfair). These items correspond with other authors’ measures of participants’ responses to particular politicians (e.g., Barrett & Barrington, 2005; Rosenberg & McCafferty, 1987; integrity factor from Schenck-Hamlin, Procter, & Rumsey, 2000). Conover’s (1981) second factor addresses the politician’s perceived political leadership and political activity abilities (e.g., active/passive, strong/weak).
The third factor in the scale examines evaluations of the politician’s experience and perceived ability (e.g., competent/incompetent, experienced/inexperienced). This factor closely resembles Schenck-Hamlin et al.’s (2000) competence factor. As such, Conover’s (1981) three factors used to evaluate politicians appear to represent those characteristics commonly assessed in studies about topics similar to those at hand.

To ensure the scale’s validity, AMOS 20 was used to conduct confirmatory factor analysis. Best practices for structural equation modeling – and confirmatory factor analysis – suggest that good-fitting models have a non-significant chi-square ($\chi^2$), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) below .06, comparative fit index (CFI) above .95, and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) below .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999, p. 27). In order to run the model in AMOS 20, one missing value was replaced with the mean value for the item.\(^\text{10}\) To begin testing these factors, a single-factor model with all 17 items was created. This model did not achieve an acceptable level of fit: $\chi^2(119, N = 589) = 631.50, p < .001; \chi^2/df$ ratio = 5.31; RMSEA = .09 (90% confidence interval: .08 to .09), PCLOSE < .001; CFI = .94; SRMR = .05. However, Conover’s (1981) three-factor model’s fit was significantly improved over the single-factor model: $\chi^2_{\text{D}} = 54.19, DF = 3, p < .001$. As such, the suggested three-factor model achieved a more acceptable level of fit: $\chi^2(116, N = 589) = 577.31, p < .001; \chi^2/df$ ratio = 4.98; RMSEA = .08 (90% confidence interval: .08 to .09), PCLOSE < .001; CFI = .94; SRMR = .05. To further justify use in subsequent analyses, each factor formed a reliable scale: evaluative dimensions ($M = 5.00, SD = 1.18, \alpha = .95$), political leadership and activity ($M = 5.55, SD = 1.02, \alpha = .91$), and experience and perceived ability ($M = 5.33, SD = 1.15, \alpha = .85$).

\(^{10}\) This value was removed (i.e., the missing value was maintained) for all other tests.
Next, participants completed Sigelman et al.’s (1995) scale, which contains two factors. Each question utilized a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, and all items were randomly presented to participants. The first factor – competence for handling policy issues – asked participants their perceptions of the political candidate’s ability to encourage democracy and eliminate government spending. The second factor – compassion and concern for social equality – asked participants to assess the candidate’s perceived ability to help people overcome poverty and end discrimination. To begin testing these factors, a single-factor model with all nine items was created. This model did not achieve an acceptable level of fit: $\chi^2(27, N = 589) = 287.56, p < .001; \chi^2/df$ ratio = 10.65; RMSEA = .13 (90% confidence interval: .12 to .14), PCLOSE < .001; CFI = .91; SRMR = .09. However, Sigelman et al.’s (1995) two-factor model’s fit was significantly improved over the single-factor model: $\chi^2_D = 23.55, DF = 1, p < .001$. As such, the suggested two-factor model achieved a more acceptable – though still unacceptable – level of fit: $\chi^2(26, N = 589) = 264.01, p < .001; \chi^2/df$ ratio = 10.15; RMSEA = .13 (90% confidence interval: .11 to .14), PCLOSE < .001; CFI = .92; SRMR = .06. Using the modification indices, several changes were made to the model but none produced an acceptable level of fit. Thus, exploratory factor analysis was used to determine the structure of the scale, using principal components analysis with promax rotation. Since a single-factor structure could appear, the political ideology scale (three items) was included in the test. Using the structure matrix, the initial analysis produced three factors with eigenvalues greater than one; however, two items did not perform well and were removed (“Maintain a strong and well-prepared military” and the reverse-coded “Favor people like himself”). After this modification, two factors with eigenvalues greater than one emerged, where one factor represented the scale being tested and the other factor represented the political ideology scale. The structure matrix showed that all
items of interest loaded no less than $|0.75|$ and cross-loaded no greater than $|0.07|$. Further justifying use of this single-factor scale in subsequent analyses, the measure of the candidate’s perceived ability to improve social and fiscal policy performed reliably ($M = 4.57, SD = 1.21, \alpha = .91$).

**Explicit attitudes toward racial/ethnic minority group members.** Participants then were asked to answer several questions regarding their explicit attitudes toward Hispanic and Black individuals. These questions drew on stereotypical associations to determine the degree of positive or negative perceptions of members of these racial/ethnic groups. Two measures for each racial/ethnic minority group (four total) were used in this analysis. First, drawing on the comparisons conducted by Payne et al. (2008), feeling thermometers for each of the two minority groups were utilized as well as one for White individuals. These three feeling thermometers ranged from one to 10 and were randomly presented to participants. Participants reported feeling the most positive about White people ($M = 7.56, SD = 2.00$) followed by Hispanic people ($M = 7.19, SD = 2.18$). They reported feeling the least positive about Black people ($M = 6.94, SD = 2.32$).

Second, Payne et al. (2008) found a relationship between the AMP and Brigham’s (1993) Attitudes toward Blacks (ATB) scale and suggested the two measures’ relationship in terms of correspondence between their affective attributes. Thus, Brigham’s (1993) ATB scale was modified and utilized in this study. The scale was altered such that attitudes toward both Black and Hispanic individuals could be addressed using a very similar scale. That is, the original ATB scale was maintained to assess attitudes toward Black individuals (e.g., “If a Black person were put in charge of me, I would not mind taking advice and direction from him or her”); where appropriate, those items clearly identifying Black individuals were changed to address Hispanic individuals (e.g., “If a Hispanic person were put in charge of me, I would not mind taking advice
and direction from him or her”). However, some questions in the scale did not address one particular racial/ethnic group (e.g., “I favor open housing laws that allow more racial integration of neighborhoods”). These items were used in the creation of both the explicit attitudes toward Black individuals and the explicit attitudes toward Hispanic individuals scales. All of these items were assessed using seven-point scales and were randomly presented to participants. One item included in this scale was not originally designated by Brigham (1993) to be reverse coded but appeared to need such coding (“Some Black people are so touchy about race that it is difficult to get along with them”). After this recoding, alpha values were substantially improved (from .89 to .93 for attitudes toward Black individuals and from .90 to .93 for attitudes toward Hispanic individuals). Participants reported slightly more positive attitudes toward Hispanic people ($M = 5.66, SD = 0.94, \alpha = .93$) than Black people ($M = 5.58, SD = 1.00, \alpha = .93$).

**Implicit attitudes toward racial/ethnic minority group members and political candidates.** Finally, participants completed a measure of their implicit attitudes toward Black, Hispanic, and White individuals as well as the political candidate they read about. The Affect Misattribution Procedure (AMP) was used given its proven compatibility with explicit measures, permitting comparisons of changes in explicit and implicit attitudes (Payne et al., 2008). In addition to implicitly evaluating pictures of Black, Hispanic, and White individuals not previously shown to the participants (see AMP picture pretest section for more information on picture selection), the three pictures of each political candidate were incorporated into the AMP. Thus, participants evaluated a total of 39 randomly-presented pictures of individuals.

Following the procedure established by Payne and colleagues (Payne et al., 2005; 2008), for each picture, participants were presented with a picture of the individual for 100 milliseconds, followed by a blank screen for 130 milliseconds, and then a picture of a Chinese
pictograph (i.e., “drawing”) appeared for 100 milliseconds. (A different Chinese pictograph appeared for each trial.) These three screens automatically progressed at the predetermined speed. Lastly, the final page for each AMP trial consisted of a picture of static or “noise” (Payne et al., 2008, p. 20) along with a single item asking participants to rate the drawing they just saw on a seven-point scale ranging from extremely unpleasant to extremely pleasant. Immediately after participants completed their rating, the next trial began. The entire AMP lasted approximately five minutes.

Importantly, prior to the AMP pictures being shown, participants were given detailed instructions (similar to those recommended by Payne et al., 2005). They read as follows:

The next set of questions will ask you to evaluate your opinions of several drawings. For each question, you will see two images. First, you will see a real-life image. Then, you will see a drawing. These images will automatically progress. When asked, please rate your opinion of the drawing and then click the red button to continue.

It is important to note that the real-life image can sometimes bias people's judgments of the drawings. **Please try your absolute best not to let the real-life images bias your judgment of the drawings!** Give an honest assessment of the drawing (the second image), regardless of the image that precedes it.

Please do not look away from your screen, and respond as quickly as possible.

Since this procedure was rather complicated and, most likely, foreign to participants, participants were required to complete three practice AMP trials prior to completing the AMP trials used as variables in this study. These three practice trials included pictures of puppies to gauge the AMP’s ability to measure what should result in positive responses. This loose test of the AMP’s
ability was confirmed by participants’ overall positive responses to the AMP practice trials ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 0.92$, $\alpha = .79$).

Payne et al.’s (2005) final measures of implicit attitudes when using the AMP were calculated by subtracting one group from another. For example, attitudes toward each minority racial/ethnic group would be subtracted from attitudes toward the White individuals shown, providing a measure of implicit attitudes toward White individuals in relation to the comparison group. That is, positive scores would indicate implicit positivity toward White individuals (or negativity toward the comparison group), and negative scores would indicate negativity toward White individuals (or positivity toward the comparison group). Using the mean values of participants’ responses to the AMP trials for each racial/ethnic group, participants were equally positive toward White individuals ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.79$, $\alpha = .84$) and Black individuals ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.76$, $\alpha = .85$) but slightly less positive toward Hispanic individuals ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.81$, $\alpha = .84$). The variables used in subsequent analyses of implicit attitudes toward minority racial/ethnic groups are the difference variables suggested by Payne et al. (2005): White compared to Black ($M = 0.004$, $SD = 0.57$); White compared to Hispanic ($M = 0.089$, $SD = 0.52$).

With regard to implicit attitudes toward the political candidate in the news stories, participants’ responses were included for the respective candidate they read about. For example, if a participant read about the White political candidate, he or she received a score for implicit attitudes toward the White candidate but not the Black or Hispanic candidates. No difference variable was calculated, as this was not logical given that each participant saw only one political candidate in the news stories. Thus, the raw mean variables were used in subsequent analyses of implicit attitudes toward the political candidates. Participants reported the most implicit positivity toward the Black candidate ($M = 4.75$, $SD = 0.89$, $\alpha = .68$), followed by the White
candidate ($M = 4.47, \ SD = 0.90, \ \alpha = .64$), and lastly the Hispanic candidate ($M = 4.28, \ SD = 0.90, \ \alpha = .56$).


Moderating, Control, and Demographic Variables

At the end of the study, participants were asked to complete questions regarding the moderating, control, and demographic variables. First, participants completed questions about their political ideology and political party affiliation, which represent the key moderating variables in this study. They were asked where they place themselves on a seven-point scale ranging from extremely conservative to extremely liberal ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 1.70$). Then they were asked where they place themselves on that same scale in relation to social policies ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 1.86$) and fiscal policies ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 1.81$). These three items formed a reliable scale of political ideology ($M = 4.66$, $SD = 1.64$, $\alpha = .91$). Participants also were asked to identify their political party affiliation; 234 identified with the Democratic Party, 89 with the Republican Party, 165 with the Independent Party, 76 with no party, and 25 selected some other political party affiliation. The majority of those who selected some other party described themselves as part of the Libertarian Party ($N = 16$), while some identified with the Green Party ($N = 6$).

Next, participants addressed their prior news media consumption. They were asked to report how many hours on an average day they spend reading print or online newspapers ($M = 1.93$, $SD = 1.11$), watching television news ($M = 2.02$, $SD = 1.29$), and consuming news online (NOT newspapers) ($M = 2.39$, $SD = 1.28$). Response options ranged from zero to eight or more hours per type of media. These variables were summed to form an hours-per-day measure of news media consumption for each participant ($M = 6.34$, $SD = 2.82$).

Political cynicism also was assessed in this study. In order to account for general attitudes toward politicians, this measure helped identify those individuals with a preexisting disposition of negative attitudes toward politicians. To assess political cynicism, Pinkleton, Um, and Austin’s (2002) measure was used due to its specific focus on evaluations of politicians.
generally. These five items, which were randomly presented to participants and measured using seven-point scales, assessed level of agreement with the idea that “politicians lose touch with the people once elected” and “candidates for office are only interested in people’s votes, not in their opinions.” These political cynicism items formed a reliable scale and indicated that this study’s participants were somewhat cynical about U.S. politicians’ abilities and motives ($M = 5.61, SD = 1.03, \alpha = .89$).

Also, political interest was measured to determine if it has an impact on the aforementioned hypotheses and research questions. The items identified by Knobloch-Westerwick and Meng (2011) were modified and used in the study at hand. These two items asked how closely participants follow news and information about government and public affairs as well as elections ($M = 4.61, SD = 1.66, r = .88$).\(^\text{11}\)

Lastly, participants were asked to report demographic information, including their age, gender, race/ethnicity, and highest education level achieved.

\(^{11}\) News media consumption, political cynicism, and political interest were tested as control variables in the models presented in the results section, and none of the results were substantially altered.
Manipulation Check

Among the final set of questions, two questions assessed the effectiveness of the experimental manipulations. Participants were asked to identify the race/ethnicity of the political candidate they read about. A crosstabs analysis indicated significant differences in how participants identified the race/ethnicity of the candidate they read about, \( \chi^2(6, N = 589) = 607.71, p < .001 \), Cramer’s V = .72. Specifically, 99% of participants who saw the White candidate correctly identified him as White. Similarly, 96% of participants who saw a Black candidate correctly identified him as Black. These results indicate that participants correctly remembered the race/ethnicity of the candidate they read about when he was White or Black. However, only 40% of participants who saw the Hispanic candidate correctly identified him as Hispanic (44% identified him as White). Certainly, this finding indicates individuals’ inability to correctly remember the race/ethnicity of Hispanic men but also presents a limitation in this study, which is addressed more fully in the limitations sections.

Borrowing from Rosenberg and McCafferty (1987), participants also assessed how liberal or conservative the candidate was, using a seven-point scale ranging from extremely conservative to extremely liberal. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed that individuals were significantly different in their perceptions of the candidates’ political ideology based on the actual political party of each candidate, \( F(2, 586) = 155.05, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .35 \). Individuals who saw the Democratic candidate found him significantly more liberal (\( M = 4.90, SD = 1.21 \)) than the Independent (\( M = 4.09, SD = 1.23 \)) and Republican candidates (\( M = 2.70, SD = 1.28 \)). Similarly, a crosstabs analysis indicated significant differences in how participants identified the political party of the candidate they read about, \( \chi^2(4, N = 589) = 813.29, p < .001 \), Cramer’s V = .83. Of the participants who saw the Democratic candidate, 93% correctly
identified his political party affiliation. Also, 89% of those who saw the Republican candidate correctly identified his party, and 84% of those who saw the Independent Party candidate correctly identified it. These results indicate that most participants correctly remembered the political affiliation of the candidate they read about.
Results

H1, H2, H3, RQ1 and RQ2

Explicit attitudes toward candidates with participant political party affiliation. To access this study’s first three hypotheses, several three-way ANCOVAs were used. These models examined the three-way interaction between participants’ political party affiliation (Democratic, Republican, or Independent) and the 3x3 between-subjects design of the two conditions: the candidate’s political party (Democratic, Republican, or Independent) and the candidate’s race/ethnicity (White, Black, or Hispanic). Age, gender, education level, and a dichotomous race/ethnicity variable (those self-identifying as only White were coded as 1, those self-identifying as any other race/ethnicity were coded as 0) were included as covariates. For illustrative purposes, Table 7 displays zero-order correlations for all explicit and implicit candidate attitude variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7</th>
<th>Zero-order correlations among implicit and explicit attitudes toward political candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Voting intentions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Evaluative dimensions (Conover, 1981)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Political leadership and activity (Conover, 1981)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Experience and ability (Conover, 1981)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ability to improve policy (Sigelman et al., 1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Overall impression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Implicit: Black candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Implicit: Hispanic candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Implicit: White candidate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Values are Pearson’s r correlation coefficients. Cases with missing values were excluded listwise.
*p < .10; **p < .05; ***p < .001

To begin, participants’ likelihood of voting for the candidate (i.e., behavioral intention) was examined as the dependent variable. The means of participants’ responses based on the

---

12 The significant influences of these covariates reflect that participants who were older, male, White, and more educated evaluated the candidates more negatively.
assigned conditions and the participants’ political party affiliation (all included) are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White Democrat</th>
<th>White Republican</th>
<th>White Independent</th>
<th>White Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4.80</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No party</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The three-way interaction between conditions and participants’ political party affiliation revealed a significant effect on participants’ willingness to vote for the candidate about whom they read, $F(8, 457) = 2.06, p = .04, \eta^2_p = .04$. Table 9 displays all main effects and interactions within the model, and Table 10 shows the estimated marginal means for the three-way interaction.

Table 9

Three-way ANCOVA results predicting voting intentions, controlling for age, gender, education level, and race/ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>\eta^2_p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>7.33</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.69</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.83</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/ethnicity</td>
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<td>.71</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate race/ethnicity</td>
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<td>2.49</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate party</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant party</td>
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<td>1.39</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate race/ethnicity X Candidate party</td>
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<td>0.92</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate race/ethnicity X Participant party</td>
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<td>0.29</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate party X Participant party</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.83</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate race/ethnicity X Candidate party X Participant party</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first hypothesis predicted that more conservative or Republican individuals would respond positively to a White political candidate associated with the Republican Party, and more liberal or Democratic individuals would not alter their perceptions of this candidate. Though this relationship was not statistically significant, Republicans did favor the White Republican more than Democrats and Independents. Moreover, Democrats’ perception of the Republican candidate did not significantly differ based on the candidate’s race/ethnicity. These results provide some support for H1.

The second hypothesis predicted that more liberal or Democratic individuals would respond positively to White, Black, and Hispanic political candidates associated with the Democratic Party, and more conservative or Republican individuals would not alter their perceptions of these candidates. Democrats did not significantly differ in their positivity toward Democratic candidates with regard to the candidate’s race/ethnicity, indicating general support for Democratic candidates. Also, Democrats preferred the White Democratic candidate significantly more than Republicans and marginally more than Independents ($p = .03$ and $p = .08$, respectively), and they preferred the Hispanic Democratic candidate significantly more than Republicans ($p = .03$). However, Republicans’ perception of the Democratic candidate did significantly differ based on the candidate’s race/ethnicity, where they showed greater intention
to vote for the Black Democrat rather than the White or Hispanic Democrat \( (p = .08 \text{ and } p = .02, \text{ respectively}) \). These results provide some support for H2.

The third hypothesis predicted that more conservative or Republican individuals and more liberal or Democratic individuals would respond in opposite attitudinal directions to Black and Hispanic political candidates associated with the Republican Party. Specifically, more conservative or Republican individuals were predicted to respond positively, while more liberal or Democratic individuals would respond negatively. As expected, Republicans expressed a significantly greater intention to vote for the Black and Hispanic Republican candidates than did Democrats \( (p = .04 \text{ and } p < .001, \text{ respectively}) \), providing support for H3. Interestingly, Republicans also showed greater preference for the Black and Hispanic Republican candidates over the White Republican candidate, though this difference was not statistically significant.

The first research question addressed the influence of political party affiliation on attitudes toward Black, Hispanic, and White political candidates associated with the Independent Party. Independent Party candidates did not secure a greater or lesser likelihood of votes based on their races/ethnicities. With respect to individuals who affiliated themselves with the Independent Party, they did not exhibit a particularly strong preference for candidates associated with the Independent Party. Generally speaking, Independents’ scores were between those of Republicans and Democrats when evaluating Republican, Democratic, and even Independent candidates. Figures 1-3 illustrate the voting intentions of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents based on the candidate’s race/ethnicity and political party affiliation.
The second research question asked which cue, race/ethnicity or political party affiliation, is more salient in determining attitudes toward political candidates. Both main effects were marginally significant. First, the estimated marginal means using the Sidak correct showed that the race/ethnicity of the candidate did have an influence on voting intentions, where the Black candidate was most preferred ($M = 4.77$) and was followed by the Hispanic ($M = 4.44$) and White ($M = 4.35$) candidates. However, pairwise comparisons showed none of these differences to be statistically significant. Regarding the main effect of the candidate’s political party, participants preferred Independent candidates ($M = 4.76$) more than Republican candidates ($M = 4.28$) at a marginally significant level ($p = .08$). Democratic candidates ($M = 4.52$) did not significantly differ from other candidates based on political party and in terms of voting intentions. Though these effects are not particularly strong, it appears political party may be a stronger predictor of voting preference than the race/ethnicity of the candidate. More clearly illustrating this point, when considering the interaction between the participants’ political party and the candidate’s party, a significant result emerged, $F(4, 457) = 7.83, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .06$. Republicans ($M = 5.23$) preferred Republican candidates more than Democrats ($M = 3.55, p < .001$) and Independents ($M = 4.05, p = .03$). Also, Democrats ($M = 5.12$) preferred Democratic candidates significantly more than Republicans ($M = 3.93, p = .001$) but not significantly more than Independents ($M = 4.51, p = .12$). (Independents candidates, on the other hand, did not elicit any significant differences based on the participants’ political party affiliation.) Thus, for Republicans and Democrats, it appears that the political party affiliation of a candidate is a salient cue used in determining voting preference.

To further probe the first three hypotheses, separate ANCOVAs – controlling for age, gender, education level, and race/ethnicity – were used to determine the influence of the three-
way interaction on participants’ perceptions of candidate based on evaluative dimensions, political leadership and activity, and experience and ability (Conover, 1981), as well as the overall impression rating (Barrett & Barrington, 2005) and Sigelman et al.’s (1995) measure of the candidate’s perceived ability to improve social and fiscal policies. The results of the first three of these models indicate that the anticipated three-way interaction is contingent upon the quality of the politician being assessed. It was significant when participants assessed his evaluative dimensions (e.g., good/bad, fair/unfair) and political leadership and activity (e.g., active/passive, strong/weak) but not for his experience and ability (e.g., competent/incompetent, experienced/inexperienced). Also, this interaction was significant when participants assessed their overall impression of the candidate but not when they reported their perceptions of his ability to improve social and fiscal policy. (See Table 11 for all main effects and interactions within these five models.)
Table 11

Three-way ANCOVA results predicting candidate perceptions, controlling for age, gender, education level, and race/ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>η²p^2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>.02</td>
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<td>.01</td>
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<td>Candidate party</td>
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<td>Candidate party X Participant party</td>
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<td>Candidate race/ethnicity X Candidate party X Participant party</td>
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<td><strong>Experience and ability</strong></td>
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<td>Candidate race/ethnicity X Candidate party X Participant party</td>
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<td><strong>Ability to improve policy</strong></td>
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<td>.02</td>
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<td>.03</td>
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<td>.02</td>
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<td>Participant party</td>
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<td>.02</td>
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<td>2.08</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.04</td>
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</table>
Based on estimated marginal means using the Sidak correction, the model examining evaluative dimensions showed that Democrats ($M = 5.81$) preferred the Black Democratic candidate more than Independents ($M = 4.84, p = .02$). Also, Republicans ($M = 5.81$) preferred the Hispanic Republican candidate significantly more than Independents ($M = 4.18, p = .002$) and marginally more than Democrats ($M = 4.99, p = .10$). The model examining political leadership and activity again showed that Republicans ($M = 6.16$) preferred the Hispanic Republican candidate more than Independents ($M = 5.16, p = .05$) and marginally more than Democrats ($M = 5.46, p = .10$). Also, Democrats ($M = 5.78$) preferred the White Democratic candidate significantly more than Independents ($M = 4.95, p = .02$). Furthermore, the third model with a significant three-way interaction included participants’ overall impression of the candidate as the dependent variable. Within this model, Republicans ($M = 5.54$) rated the White Independent candidate more positively than did Democrats ($M = 4.30, p = .08$). Also, Republicans rated the Hispanic Republican ($M = 6.02$) significantly higher than Democrats ($M = 4.63, p = .01$) or Independents ($M = 3.99, p = .002$).

The results of the significant three-way interactions within these five models indicate the near lack of difference between Republicans’ and Democrats’ perceptions of candidates’ qualities based on their races/ethnicities and political party affiliations. That is, these results only partially coincide with the predictions made in H1-H3. However, they do show Republicans’ and Democrats’ preferences for their own parties but primarily when compared with individuals who associate themselves with the Independent Party. Thus, it appears that Republicans and Democrats are not that different in their evaluations of candidates, but Republicans and Democrats are different from Independents in their perceptions of candidates. When Republicans and Democrats do differ in their evaluations of candidates’ qualifications, they only differed with
regard to the Hispanic Republican candidate. These results should be interpreted with caution, however, as they address participants’ perceptions of the candidates’ qualities. If voting intention and behavior is of primary concern – and often is for political candidates – then the aforementioned results that offer support for H1-H3 are more pertinent.

To address the research questions, Independent candidates, generally speaking, were not perceived more positively or negatively based on their races/ethnicities. Once again, individuals who affiliated themselves with the Independent Party did not exhibit a particularly strong preference for candidates associated with the Independent Party. Also, in only one of the models was the main effect of the candidate’s political party significant. When considering the candidate’s ability to improve policy, participants thought the Independent candidate \((M = 4.75)\) was more capable than the Republican candidate \((M = 4.39, p = .06)\). However, for two of the models, the main effect of the candidate’s race/ethnicity was marginally significant. The race/ethnicity of the candidate did have an influence on evaluative dimensions, where the Black candidate was preferred \((M = 5.20)\) more than the Hispanic candidate \((M = 4.91, p = .09)\). Also, the race/ethnicity of the candidate impacted perceptions of the candidate’s ability to improve policy, where the Black candidate \((M = 4.79)\) was perceived as more able than the White candidate \((M = 4.44, p = .06)\). Though these effects are not particularly strong, it appears both race/ethnicity and political party affiliation may predict perceptions of the candidate’s abilities, though not in every case. However, giving more credence to the impact of the candidate’s political party, two of the models showed a significant interaction between the candidate’s political party affiliation and participants’ party affiliation. Democrats \((M = 4.87)\) thought the Democratic candidate was better suited to improve policy than did Republicans \((M = 4.28, p = .04)\). With regard to participants’ general impressions of the candidates, Republicans \((M = 5.33)\)
liked the Republican candidate significantly more than Democrats ($M = 4.46, p = .06$) or Independents ($M = 4.46, p = .08$). These results indicate a clearer difference between Republicans and Democrats, particularly when the candidate’s race/ethnicity is not considered.

**Implicit attitudes toward candidates with participant political party affiliation.** To examine participants’ implicit attitudes toward the candidates, the same three-way ANCOVA was rerun with scores for implicit attitudes toward the candidates as the dependent variable. The anticipated three-way interaction did not emerge, nor did any significant two-way interactions. Table 11 illustrates the effects found within the model. However, there was a significant main effect of the candidate’s race/ethnicity, where implicit attitudes toward the Black candidate ($M = 4.59$) were higher than those for the Hispanic candidate ($M = 4.27, p = .06$). Also, it is important to note that the race/ethnicity of the participant significantly predicted implicit attitudes toward the candidates, where White participants were less positive generally. That said, when considering individuals’ political party affiliation, it appears that the predicted influences of congruity theory are more applicable to explicit attitudes.

Table 12
*Three-way ANCOVA results predicting implicit attitudes toward candidates, controlling for age, gender, education level, and race/ethnicity*

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<th></th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>$\eta^2_p$</th>
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<td>.00</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>4.23</td>
<td>.04</td>
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<td>.01</td>
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<td>.05</td>
<td>.01</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.01</td>
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<td>.01</td>
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<td>.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Candidate party X Participant party</td>
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<td>.00</td>
</tr>
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<td>0.99</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.02</td>
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</table>
**Explicit attitudes toward candidates with participant political ideology.** Continuing to examine the first three hypotheses and two research questions, several hierarchical regression models were used, incorporating the continuous measure of participant political ideology as the moderating variable. These models examined the interaction between participants’ political ideology and the two condition variables of the candidate’s political party and his race/ethnicity. In order to conduct these analyses, dummy coding was required for the manipulated condition variables (which is explained below). As with the prior models, age, gender, education level, and the dichotomous race/ethnicity variable were added as covariates.\(^{13}\)

The first of these hierarchical regression models utilized participants’ likelihood of voting for the candidate (i.e., behavioral intention) as the dependent variable. To begin, dummy coding was used to create dichotomous independent variables, where the White and Independent Party political candidates represented the excluded groups. The results of this model did not reveal any significant three-way interactions.\(^{14}\) That is, participants’ political ideology – ranging from extremely conservative to extremely liberal – did not significantly moderate the influence of the politician’s political party affiliation and his race/ethnicity on their voting intentions. However, several significant two-way interactions emerged in this model. As might be expected, individuals who self-identified as more conservative were more likely to support the Republican candidates, \(b = -0.35, t(571) = -3.41, p = .001\). Similarly, more liberal individuals indicated a greater preference for Democratic candidates, \(b = 0.42, t(571) = 4.22, p < .001\). These findings also indicate that Independent Party candidates – the excluded group – were rated between the

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\(^{13}\) The significant influences of these covariates reflect that participants who were older, male, White, and more educated evaluated the candidates more negatively.

\(^{14}\) After rerunning this model – and all those examining explicit candidate attitudes using regression – with only those participants who identified as Republicans, Democrats, or Independents, the three-way interactions remained non-significant.
Democratic and Republican candidates when the relationship was moderated by individuals’ political ideology. Also, a marginally significant relationship emerged between the interaction of the candidate’s race/ethnicity and participants’ political ideology, where more liberal individuals showed greater intention to vote for the Hispanic candidates, $b = .18$, $t(571) = 1.74$, $p = .08$. This model also produced three significant main effects: 1) Participants generally preferred the Black candidates ($b = .32$, $t(579) = 1.86$, $p = .06$); 2) Participants expressed a significant distaste toward voting for the Republican candidates, ($b = -.50$, $t(579) = -2.93$, $p = .004$); and 3) More liberal participants tended to dislike all of the candidates more than conservative participants, ($b = -.10$, $t(579) = -2.93$, $p = .03$). The results of this model are displayed in Table 13.

The previous model was run again using the aforementioned dependent variables to determine the influence on various aspects of the candidates’ perceived abilities, including overall impression (Barrett & Barrington, 2005), evaluative dimensions (Conover, 1981), political leadership and activity (Conover, 1981), experience and ability (Conover, 1981), and ability to improve policy (Sigelman et al., 1995). As tables 14 and 18 illustrate, the results were
largely the same as the previous test when considering participants’ overall impressions of the candidates and their perceptions of the candidates’ abilities to improve policies.

However, some notable differences arose with regard to the Conover’s (1981) scales of evaluative dimensions (e.g., good/bad, fair/unfair), political leadership and activity (e.g., active/passive, strong/weak), and experience and ability (e.g., competent/incompetent, experienced/inexperienced). Tables 15-17 provide the results of these models. In particular, the interactions between the candidate’s political party and participants’ political ideology were no longer significant. That is, the congruity between political party and political ideology did not determine assessments of evaluative dimensions, political leadership and activity, or experience and ability. These findings may represent an identifiable difference in individuals’ evaluations of candidates based on their willingness to vote for them or their overall impressions of them as opposed to their evaluations of the candidates’ abilities. On the other hand, these results may indicate a measurement effect such that the semantic differential scales used to assess the Conover (1981) concepts produced different responses than the Likert-type items included in the items assessing voting intentions, overall impressions, and ability to improve policy. Importantly though, these results did not emerge in the previously reported ANCOVAs, which utilized the same dependent variables.
### Table 14
Hierarchical regression model results for overall impression of candidate

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<th>t</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Adj R²</th>
<th>R² change</th>
<th>F</th>
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<td>-2.55**</td>
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<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-1.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step 2**

| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) | .38 | .12 | 2.63** | .06 | .07 | .03** | 5.53*** |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) | .12 | .04 | 0.79 |      |      |        |       |
| Candidate party (Republican) | -1.12 | -0.04 | -0.83 |      |      |        |       |
| Candidate party (Democrat) | .13 | .04 | 0.96 |      |      |        |       |
| Political ideology | -0.09 | -0.10 | -2.34** | .12 | .09 | .04** | 4.60*** |

**Step 3**

| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Candidate party (Republican) | -0.68 | -0.14 | -1.95* | .12 | .09 | .04** | 4.60*** |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Candidate party (Republican) | .42 | .09 | 1.19 |      |      |        |       |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Candidate party (Democrat) | -0.25 | -0.05 | -0.71 |      |      |        |       |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Candidate party (Democrat) | .45 | .09 | 1.24 |      |      |        |       |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Political ideology | -0.01 | -0.01 | 1.46 |      |      |        |       |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Political ideology | .14 | .22 | 1.46 |      |      |        |       |
| Candidate party (Republican) X Political ideology | -0.15 | -0.25 | -1.69* | .17 | .26 | 1.96** |       |
| Candidate party (Democrat) X Political ideology | .12 | .09 | 0.08 |      |      |        |       |

**Step 4**

| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Candidate party (Republican) X Political ideology | -0.11 | -0.12 | -0.48 | .12 | .09 | .00 | 3.72*** |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Candidate party (Republican) X Political ideology | -0.10 | -0.10 | -0.42 |      |      |        |       |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Candidate party (Democrat) X Political ideology | .02 | .02 | 0.08 |      |      |        |       |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Candidate party (Democrat) X Political ideology | -0.06 | -0.06 | -0.27 |      |      |        |       |

Note: *Identified group = 1; Other groups = 0.

*p < .10; **p < .05; ***p < .001

### Table 15
Hierarchical regression model results for evaluative dimensions

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<th>t</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Adj R²</th>
<th>R² change</th>
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<td>.06***</td>
<td>8.84***</td>
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<td>-.15</td>
<td>-3.57***</td>
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<td>-1.74*</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

**Step 2**

| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) | .28 | .31 | 2.40** | .08 | .07 | .02** | 5.68*** |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) | -.07 | -.03 | -0.59 |      |      |        |       |
| Candidate party (Republican) | -.12 | -.05 | -1.07 |      |      |        |       |
| Candidate party (Democrat) | .06 | .02 | -.53 |      |      |        |       |
| Political ideology | -.04 | -.06 | -1.37 |      |      |        |       |

**Step 3**

| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Candidate party (Republican) | -.39 | -.11 | -1.42 | .11 | .08 | .02** | 3.96*** |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Candidate party (Republican) | .26 | .07 | 0.92 |      |      |        |       |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Candidate party (Democrat) | -.18 | -.05 | -0.65 |      |      |        |       |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Candidate party (Democrat) | .11 | .03 | 0.40 |      |      |        |       |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Political ideology | .07 | .14 | 0.99 |      |      |        |       |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Political ideology | .07 | .14 | 0.94 |      |      |        |       |
| Candidate party (Republican) X Political ideology | -.11 | -.23 | -1.53 |      |      |        |       |
| Candidate party (Democrat) X Political ideology | .11 | .20 | 1.49 |      |      |        |       |

**Step 4**

| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Candidate party (Republican) X Political ideology | .04 | .06 | 0.24 | .11 | .07 | .00 | 3.24*** |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Candidate party (Republican) X Political ideology | -.04 | -.05 | -0.20 |      |      |        |       |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Candidate party (Democrat) X Political ideology | .02 | .03 | 0.14 |      |      |        |       |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Candidate party (Democrat) X Political ideology | -.14 | -.18 | -0.80 |      |      |        |       |

Note: *Identified group = 1; Other groups = 0.

*p < .10; **p < .05; ***p < .001
Table 16
Hierarchical regression model results for political leadership and activity

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<th>t</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Adj. R²</th>
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<td>.03***</td>
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<td>-.02</td>
<td>-0.49</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

Step 2:

| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) | 1.6 | .07 | 1.55 | .05 | .04 | .01 | 3.70*** |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) | .06 | .03 | 0.57 | | | |    |
| Candidate party (Republican) | -.05 | -.02 | -0.52 | | | |    |
| Candidate party (Democratic) | -.00 | .00 | 0.02 | | | |    |
| Political ideology | -.01 | -.01 | -0.24 | | | |    |

Step 3:

| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Candidate party (Republican) | -.41 | -.13 | -1.69* | .07 | .04 | .02 | 2.51** |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Candidate party (Republican) | .22 | .07 | 0.91 | | | |    |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Candidate party (Democratic) | -.08 | -.02 | -0.31 | | | |    |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Candidate party (Democratic) | -.34 | .10 | 1.35 | | | |    |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Political ideology | -.01 | -.03 | -0.23 | | | |    |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Political ideology | -.03 | -.06 | -0.40 | | | |    |
| Candidate party (Republican) X Political ideology | -.01 | -.03 | -0.20 | | | |    |
| Candidate party (Democratic) X Political ideology | .04 | .09 | 0.64 | | | |    |

Step 4:

| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Candidate party (Republican) X Political ideology | .13 | .21 | .83 | .07 | .04 | .00 | 2.08** |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Candidate party (Republican) X Political ideology | -.01 | -.01 | -0.03 | | | |    |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Candidate party (Democratic) X Political ideology | .04 | .06 | 0.28 | | | |    |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Candidate party (Democratic) X Political ideology | -.07 | -.10 | -0.44 | | | |    |

Note: *Identified group = 1; Other groups = 0.
*p < .10; **p < .05; ***p < .001

Table 17
Hierarchical regression model results for experience and ability

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<th>t</th>
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<th>Adj. R²</th>
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<td>-2.53***</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Step 2:

| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) | .20 | .08 | 1.79* | .10 | .09 | .01 | 7.09*** |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) | .18 | .07 | 1.58 | | | |    |
| Candidate party (Republican) | .04 | .02 | 0.34 | | | |    |
| Candidate party (Democratic) | .04 | .02 | 0.36 | | | |    |
| Political ideology | -.03 | -.04 | -1.03 | | | |    |

Step 3:

| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Candidate party (Republican) | -.34 | -.09 | -1.27 | .11 | .09 | .01 | 4.20*** |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Candidate party (Republican) | .13 | .04 | 0.49 | | | |    |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Candidate party (Democratic) | -.34 | -.09 | -1.24 | | | |    |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Candidate party (Democratic) | -.01 | .00 | -0.03 | | | |    |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Political ideology | .07 | .11 | 0.75 | | | |    |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Political ideology | .06 | .14 | 1.00 | | | |    |
| Candidate party (Republican) X Political ideology | .00 | .00 | 0.02 | | | |    |
| Candidate party (Democratic) X Political ideology | .09 | .19 | 1.37 | | | |    |

Step 4:

| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Candidate party (Republican) X Political ideology | .09 | .12 | 0.50 | .11 | .08 | .00 | 3.42*** |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Candidate party (Republican) X Political ideology | -.04 | -.05 | -0.21 | | | |    |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Candidate party (Democratic) X Political ideology | .00 | .00 | -0.02 | | | |    |
| Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Candidate party (Democratic) X Political ideology | -.10 | -.13 | -0.99 | | | |    |

Note: *Identified group = 1; Other groups = 0.
*p < .10; **p < .05; ***p < .001
Based on these results, the first three hypotheses and two research questions can be reassessed using the political ideology moderating variable. The first hypothesis predicted that more conservative individuals would respond positively to a White political candidate associated with the Republican Party, and more liberal individuals would not alter their perceptions of this candidate. The three-way interactions used to test this relationship were not significant. Thus, these results do not offer support for H1. Similarly, these lacking interactions did not provide support for H2, which predicted that more liberal individuals would respond positively to White, Black, and Hispanic political candidates associated with the Democratic Party, and more conservative individuals would not alter their perceptions of these candidates. Finally, the third hypothesis predicted that more conservative individuals and more liberal individuals would respond in opposite attitudinal directions to Black and Hispanic political candidates associated with the Republican Party. This prediction was not supported based on the non-significant interactions using political ideology as the moderating variable of interest.
The first research question addressed the influence of political ideology on attitudes toward Black, Hispanic, and White political candidates associated with the Independent Party. Independent candidates were not evaluated as significantly better or worse than Republican or Democrat candidates based on their races/ethnicities when considering each of the dependent variables. That said, individuals who were more liberal or conservative did tend to favor candidates who were Democrats or Republicans, respectively. To better understand reactions to Independent candidates, the dummy coding of the candidate’s political party affiliation was recoded such that the Democratic candidate was excluded. This recoding allowed for a closer look at the differences between the Republican and Democratic candidates. Even after the prior models were rerun with this recoding, no significant three-way interactions emerged. Of note though, the two two-way interactions between participants’ ideology and candidate political party reemerged. Specifically in terms of voting intentions, more conservative individuals significantly preferred the Republican candidate \( (b = -0.77, t(571) = -7.64, p < .001) \), and they preferred the Independent candidate but to not as great a degree \( (b = -0.42, t(571) = -4.22, p < .001) \). These findings suggest that Independent candidates are preferred by individuals who are more moderate in terms of their political ideology.

The second research question asked which cue, race/ethnicity or political party affiliation, was more salient in determining attitudes toward political candidates. Political party emerged as a salient cue in terms of determining voting preference. Specifically, the Republican candidates were disliked generally. However, the race/ethnicity of the candidate was a salient cue in predicting voting preference, the overall impression of the candidate, evaluative dimensions, and experience and ability. In this case, the Black candidates were preferred significantly more than the White candidates. However, more clearly illustrating the impact of the candidate’s political
party affiliation, three of the models showed significant interactions between the candidate’s political party and participants’ political ideology. More liberal (conservative) individuals thought the Democratic (Republican) candidate should get their votes. This pattern also emerged when considering evaluations of their overall impressions of the candidates and the candidates’ abilities to improve policies. These results indicate a clearer difference between politically conservative and liberal individuals, but more so when the candidate’s race/ethnicity is not considered. These findings reflect those reported in the prior analysis of the influence of participants’ political party affiliation, such that both cues appear salient depending on which behavior or attitude is assessed and whether participants’ political identities are considered.

**Implicit attitudes toward candidates with participant political ideology.** To examine participants’ implicit attitudes toward the candidates, the hierarchical regression model with the White and Independent candidates serving as the dummy-coded excluded groups was rerun with scores for implicit attitudes toward the candidate seen as the dependent variable. This model revealed three significant three-way interactions of the four possible. Table 19 illustrates the effects found within the model.

Table 19  
Hierarchical regression model results for implicit attitudes toward candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>Race/ethnicity</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Adj. R²</th>
<th>R² change</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Candidate race/ethnicity (Black)</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>2.78**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic)</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-1.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate party (Republican)</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-2.07**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate party (Democrat)</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Political ideology</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Candidate party (Republican)</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-1.23</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>2.08**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Candidate party (Republican)</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Candidate party (Democrat)</td>
<td>-0.38</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-1.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Candidate party (Democrat)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Political ideology</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Political ideology</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate party (Republican) X Political ideology</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate party (Democrat) X Political ideology</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.49</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>2.06**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td>Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Candidate party (Republican) X Political ideology</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>-0.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Candidate party (Republican) X Political ideology</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
<td>-0.42</td>
<td>-1.70*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate race/ethnicity (Black) X Candidate party (Democrat) X Political ideology</td>
<td>-0.38</td>
<td>-0.49</td>
<td>-2.33**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate race/ethnicity (Hispanic) X Candidate party (Democrat) X Political ideology</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>1.75*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Identified group = 1; Other groups = 0.

*p < .10; **p < .05; ***p < .001
One of these significant three-way interactions indicated that more liberal individuals (where political ideology was one standard deviation above the mean) showed more negative implicit attitudes toward the Hispanic Republican candidate, $b = -.68$, $t(567) = -1.79$, $p = .07$. As Figure 4 illustrates, more liberal individuals showed implicit distaste for the Hispanic Republican candidate, while more conservative individuals did not alter their implicit perceptions of the Hispanic candidate based on his political party affiliation. This finding provides some support for H3, given that more liberal individuals did respond less positively to the Hispanic Republican candidate (but more conservative individuals did not respond more positively).

![Figure 4. Implicit attitudes toward Hispanic candidate](image)

However, the second significant three-way interaction revealed that – contrary to expectations – more liberal individuals showed more negative implicit attitudes toward the Black Democratic candidate, $b = -.29$, $t(567) = -1.01$, $p = .01$. Meanwhile, more conservative individuals did not significantly alter their perceptions of the Black candidate based on his political party, as is illustrated in Figure 5. This finding does not provide support for H3 given
that both conservative and liberal individuals responded similarly in their implicit responses to the Black candidate. To more clearly illustrate these differences, Figure 6 shows participants’ implicit attitudes toward the White candidate.
Finally, though the three-way interaction was significant for responses to the Hispanic Democrat candidate based on participants’ political ideology, the Johnson-Neyman technique found no significant transition points based on the values of the moderating variable.

Regarding the original hierarchical regression model, the relatively consistent two-way interaction between the candidate’s political party and participants’ political ideology did not occur. Two main effects emerged though, where participants significantly implicitly preferred the Black candidates and showed a dislike of the Republican candidates. Addressing RQ2, these findings provide some evidence of an equal influence of the cues relating to candidates’ race/ethnicity and political party affiliation.

To address RQ1, which questioned the influence of political ideology on attitudes toward Black, Hispanic, and White political candidates associated with the Independent Party, the aforementioned results can be rephrased to surmise the following: 1) More liberal individuals held more positive implicit attitudes toward the White Independent candidate when compared with the Hispanic Republican candidate; and 2) More liberal individuals showed more positive implicit attitudes toward the White Independent candidate than the Black Democratic candidate. To probe this further, when the political party variable was re-dummy-coded so candidates of the Democratic Party served as the excluded group, the model produced one significant three-way interaction. This relationship became significant at greater levels of the moderating variable of political ideology ($b = .38$, $t(567) = 2.33$, $p = .02$), where more liberal individuals had more positive implicit attitudes toward the Black Independent candidate, $b = 1.01$, $t(567) = 2.62$, $p = .01$. Similarly, when the political party variable was recoded so candidates of the Republican Party served as the excluded group, the model produced one moderately significant three-way interaction, $b = .31$, $t(567) = 1.70$, $p = .09$. This relationship became significant at greater levels
of the moderating variable of political ideology, where more liberal individuals had more positive implicit attitudes toward the Hispanic Independent candidate, $b = .68$, $t(567) = 1.79$, $p = .07$. Thus, it appears that more liberal individuals are more likely to find Independent candidates more implicitly appealing.

Taken together, implicit attitudes did not reveal typical adherence to the candidates’ political parties based on participants’ political ideology, but they did illustrate how the race/ethnicity of the candidate can be a variable of interest in this relationship. When considering participants’ political ideology, their implicit attitudes were more indicative of the anticipated (in)congruity than were their explicit attitudes. However, for both the political ideology and political party moderating variables, there was little evidence supporting the predictions regarding congruity theory when examining implicit attitudes.
**H4, H5, H6, H7, and RQ3**

**Cognitive processing of news story cues with participant political party affiliation.**

The next set of hypotheses examines the cognitive processing of the news story stimuli. To begin testing these predictions, three-way ANCOVAs were run to analyze the three-way interactions between participants’ political party affiliations and the 3x3 between-subjects design created by the two conditions. Age, gender, education level, and the dichotomous race/ethnicity variable were used as covariates in each model.

When considering participants’ open-ended responses, each of the four coded categories for heuristic and systematic processing – detailed, non-detailed, complex, and simple – was included as a dependent variable in a separate model. These four three-way interactions did not significantly predict detailed thoughts ($F(8, 457) = 0.92, p = .50, \eta^2_p = .02$), non-detailed thoughts ($F(8, 457) = 0.48, p = .87, \eta^2_p = .01$), complex thoughts ($F(8, 457) = 0.47, p = .88, \eta^2_p = .01$), or simple thoughts ($F(8, 457) = 0.77, p = .63, \eta^2_p = .01$).

However, these models did produce some other effects. When predicting complex thoughts, there was a significant two-way interaction between participants’ political party and the candidate’s race/ethnicity, $F(4, 457) = 2.51, p = .04, \eta^2_p = .02$. The estimated marginal means using the Sidak correction showed Democrats ($M = 1.08$) used significantly more complex thoughts than Independents ($M = 0.35$) after reading about a Hispanic candidate ($p = .004$). Also, a main effect of participants’ political party emerged, $F(2, 457) = 3.33, p = .04, \eta^2_p = .01$, where Independents ($M = 1.05$) used significantly more complex thoughts than Republicans ($M = 0.64, p = .05$).

When predicting simple thoughts, there was a moderately significant two-way interaction between participants’ political party and the candidate’s political party, $F(4, 457) = 2.12, p = .08,$
\( \eta_p^2 = .02 \). Using the Sidak correction, the estimated marginal means showed that individuals who identified with the Independent Party and saw an Independent Party candidate \((M = 2.94)\) were significant more likely to write simple comments than were Republicans who saw the same candidate \((M = 1.81, p = .04)\). This finding corresponds with congruity theory, where cognitive processing takes a more heuristic approach when the candidate’s political party matches one’s own party affiliation. However, Republicans \((M = 1.26)\) who read about a Republican candidate were less likely than Democrats \((M = 2.57, p = .04)\) and Independents \((M = 2.55, p = .07)\) to write simple thoughts. This finding contradicts congruity theory, since individuals who read about a candidate of their own political party did not process more heuristically than those without a match between their party and that of the candidate. This model also produced two main effects for both the political party of the participant \((F(2, 457) = 3.57, p = .03, \eta_p^2 = .02)\) and the race/ethnicity of the candidate \((F(2, 457) = 2.62, p = .07, \eta_p^2 = .01)\). Using the Sidak correction, the estimated marginal means showed that Republican participants \((M = 1.93)\) used fewer simple thoughts than both Democrats \((M = 2.53, p = .06)\) and Independents \((M = 2.62, p = .03)\). Also, participants reported more simple thoughts when they read about Black candidate \((M = 2.64)\) compared to a Hispanic candidate \((M = 2.14, p = .08)\). Generally speaking, the complex and simple categories established in this study’s HSM codebook appear to be more related to the predictions of congruity theory than were the detailed and non-detailed categories and, thus, may serve as better representations of systematic and heuristic processing, respectively.

To further elaborate on these results, the other HSM variables were used as dependent variables using the same model structure detailed previously. First, the number of thoughts participants recorded in their open-ended responses was not predicted by the three-way interaction between participants’ political party, the candidate’s race/ethnicity, and his political
party affiliation, $F(8, 457) = 1.05, p = .40, \eta^2_p = .02$. A two-way interaction between participants’
political party and the candidate’s party did emerge though, $F(4, 457) = 2.02, p = .09, \eta^2_p = .02$.
However, the pairwise comparisons did not reveal any significant mean differences among the
groups. Also, this model contained a main effect of the candidate’s race/ethnicity, $F(2, 457) = 
3.02, p = .05, \eta^2_p = .01$, such that participants recorded more thoughts when they read about a
Black candidate ($M = 3.51$) than a Hispanic candidate ($M = 2.89, p = .04$).

Second, the number of words participants used in their open-ended responses was used as
the dependent variable. It was not predicted by the three-way interaction, $F(8, 457) = 0.97, p = 
.46, \eta^2_p = .02$. One two-way interaction was found, where participants’ political party and the
candidate’s race/ethnicity interacted to predict the number of words used in the open-ended
responses, $F(4, 457) = 2.89, p = .02, \eta^2_p = .03$. For those participants who read about a Hispanic
candidate, the estimated marginal means using the Sidak correction showed that Democrats ($M = 
42.82$) wrote more words than did Republicans ($M = 24.54, p = .009$) or Independents ($M = 
30.54, p = .06$). Additionally, a main effect of the candidate’s race/ethnicity emerged, $F(2, 457) 
= 3.19, p = .04, \eta^2_p = .01$. Participants who saw a Black candidate ($M = 40.45$) wrote more than
those who saw a Hispanic candidate ($M = 32.63, p = .06$).

Third, the three factors identified in Neuwirth et al.’s (2002) close-ended HSM scale
were used as the dependent variables. Again, the three-way interactions did not predict heuristic
processing related to skimming ($F(8, 457) = 0.51, p = .85, \eta^2_p = .01$), heuristic processing related
to topic difficulty ($F(8, 457) = 0.71, p = .68, \eta^2_p = .01$), or systematic processing ($F(8, 457) = 
0.29, p = .97, \eta^2_p = .01$). Several other effects did emerge from these models though. For
heuristic skimming, there was a moderately significant two-way interaction between
participants’ political party and the race/ethnicity of the candidate, $F(4, 457) = 2.17, p = .07, \eta^2_p$
For those participants who read about a Hispanic candidate, the estimated marginal means using the Sidak correction showed that Independents ($M = 2.79$) reported more heuristic skimming than did Democrats ($M = 2.26$, $p = .03$). Also, this model produced a main effect of the race/ethnicity of the candidate, $F(2, 457) = 2.90$, $p = .06$, $\eta^2_p = .01$, such that participants reported more heuristic skimming when they read about a Hispanic candidate ($M = 2.56$) than a White candidate ($M = 2.21$, $p = .05$). Similarly, the model predicting systematic processing revealed this main effect, $F(2, 457) = 3.16$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2_p = .01$, where participants reported more systematic processing after reading about a White candidate ($M = 4.75$) than a Hispanic candidate ($M = 4.42$, $p = .05$). This model also contained a main effect of the candidate’s political party, $F(2, 457) = 2.93$, $p = .06$, $\eta^2_p = .01$. Individuals who saw the Democratic candidate ($M = 4.74$) used more systematic processing than those who saw the Independent candidate ($M = 4.49$, $p = .05$). Moreover, the model predicting heuristic processing regarding topic difficulty illustrated a main effect of the candidate’s political party, $F(2, 457) = 2.47$, $p = .09$, $\eta^2_p = .01$, where participants reported more heuristic processing after seeing the Independent candidate ($M = 2.30$) versus the Republican candidate ($M = 2.02$, $p = .08$).

Fourth, when considering the amount of time participants spent writing their comments, the three-way interaction was not significant, $F(8, 457) = 1.09$, $p = .37$, $\eta^2_p = .02$, and no other effects were identified.

Finally, using the amount of time participants spent reading the news stories as the dependent variable did produce a significant three-way interaction, $F(8, 457) = 2.03$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2_p = .03$. Using the Sidak correction, the estimated marginal means showed that when participants read about a White Democratic candidate, those affiliated with the Republican Party ($M = 326.32$) spent significantly more time reading the news stories than did Democrats ($M = 164.85$, $p = .02$).
104

$p = .01$) or Independents ($M = 193.53, p = .08$). Also, when reading about the Black Republican candidate, Republicans ($M = 122.78$) spent significantly less time reading the news stories than Independents ($M = 271.29, p = .04$) who saw the same candidate. Furthermore, for individuals who saw the Hispanic Democrat candidate, Democrats ($M = 250.95$) spent a moderately significantly greater amount of time reading the stories than Independents ($M = 151.20, p = .08$). This model did not produce any other significant effects.

Taken together, these results indicate that only the amount of time participants spent reading the news stories was predicted by the three-way interaction between participants’ political party affiliation and the two condition variables (candidate race/ethnicity and political party affiliation). However, the effects within this model do not support H6 or H7, which predicted that more conservative or Republican individuals who consumed news stories about a Black or Hispanic political candidate associated with the Republican Party would process heuristically and systematically, while more liberal or Democratic individuals who consumed news stories about a Black or Hispanic political candidate associated with the Republican Party would process systematically. This model revealed that Republicans spent more time reading about a White Democrat than did Democrats or Independents, Independents spent more time reading about a Black Republican than did Republicans, and Democrats spent more time reading about a Hispanic Democrat than did Independents.

The fourth hypothesis predicted that consuming news stories about a White political candidate would result in heuristic processing. However, the results of the aforementioned models found participants reported more systematic processing after reading about a White candidate when compared to those who read about a Hispanic candidate. Also, participants
reported more heuristic skimming when they saw a Hispanic candidate when compared to those who saw a White candidate. These results directly contradict H4.

The next hypothesis, H5, predicted that consuming news stories about a Black or Hispanic political candidate associated with the Democratic Party would result in heuristic processing. However, there were no significant two-way interactions between the condition variables – the candidate’s race/ethnicity and political party affiliation. The lack of effects in all the models tested indicates that this hypothesis was not supported.

The associated research question – RQ3 – asked about the route of processing taken when Black, Hispanic, and White political candidates associated with the Independent Party were presented in news stories. Several of the models produced results addressing this question. First, Independents who saw an Independent Party candidate wrote more simple comments than Republicans who saw that candidate. This result indicates that the congruity between the political party of the participant and that of the candidate resulted in more heuristic processing, which means congruity theory held for those associated with the Independent Party. Second, participants who saw the Democratic candidate used more systematic processing than did those who saw the Independent candidate. As such, participants spent more time considering the appeals of the Democratic candidate than the Independent candidate. Third, participants who read about the Independent candidate reported more heuristic processing in terms of topic difficulty than those who read about the Republican candidate. Again, participants were more likely to process heuristically when they encountered an Independent Party candidate. Put together, these results indicate that Independent Party candidates and voters are also subject to congruity theory, though individuals generally tend to process Independent candidates more heuristically than Democratic or Republican candidates.
**Cognitive processing of news story cues with participant political ideology.** To test these hypotheses using the continuous moderating variable regarding participants’ political ideology, several hierarchical regression models were used. These models examined the interaction between participants’ political ideology and the two condition variables relating to the candidate’s political party and his race/ethnicity. Again, dummy coding was required for the manipulated condition variables, where the White and Independent candidates served as the excluded groups (unless otherwise noted). As with prior models, age, gender, education level, and the dichotomous race/ethnicity variable were included as covariates.

When considering participants’ open-ended responses to the news stories they read, each of the four coded categories for heuristic and systematic processing – detailed, non-detailed, complex, and simple – was included as a dependent variable in a separate model. First, none of the four three-way interactions significantly predicted detailed thoughts: Black Republican candidate \(b = -.03, t(567) = -0.12, p = .91\), Hispanic Republican candidate \(b = -.04, t(567) = -0.18, p = .85\), Black Democrat candidate \(b = .11, t(567) = -0.55, p = .58\), and Hispanic Democrat candidate \(b = -.11, t(567) = -0.51, p = .61\). Second, none of these interactions significantly predicted non-detailed thoughts: Black Republican candidate \(b = -.17, t(567) = -0.58, p = .56\), Hispanic Republican candidate \(b = -.41, t(567) = -1.37, p = .17\), Black Democrat candidate \(b = -.15, t(567) = -0.55, p = .59\), and Hispanic Democrat candidate \(b = -.10, t(567) = -0.55, p = .59\). Third, these interactions also did not significantly predict complex thoughts: Black Republican candidate \(b = -.10, t(567) = -0.52, p = .61\), Hispanic Republican candidate \(b = -.23, t(567) = -1.17, p = .24\), Black Democrat candidate \(b = -.06, t(567) = -0.32, p = .75\), and Hispanic Democrat candidate \(b = .01, t(567) = 0.03, p = .98\). Fourth, and similarly, these interactions did not significantly predict simple thoughts: Black Republican candidate \(b = -.09,
The other variables considered as potentially indicative of heuristic or systematic processing were considered as dependent variables in subsequent models. The three-way interactions did not predict the number of words or thoughts used in the open-ended responses. Also, the three-way interactions did not predict heuristic processing related to skimming, heuristic processing related to topic difficulty, or systematic processing – the three factors identified in Neuwirth et al.’s (2002) close-ended HSM scale. These results do not offer initial support for the predictions of H6 or H7, which suggested that 1) More conservative individuals who consumed news stories about a Black or Hispanic political candidate associated with the Republican Party would result in heuristic and systematic processing; and 2) More liberal individuals who consumed news stories about a Black or Hispanic political candidate associated with the Republican Party would result in systematic processing.

Conversely, when considering the amount of time participants spent writing their comments and the amount of time they spent reading the news stories, two significant three-way interactions emerged. Similar to this HSM variable’s performance in the previously discussed ANCOVA, the political ideology of the participants who read about the Hispanic Democratic candidate moderately significantly influenced the amount of time the spent reading the news stories, $b = 41.27, t(566) = 1.84, p = .07$. However, the Johnson-Neyman technique found no significant transition points based on the values of the moderating variable (i.e., political ideology). Also, the political ideology of the participants who read about the Black Democratic candidate moderately significantly influenced the amount of time spent writing the open-ended
response, $b = 36.27$, $t(566) = 1.90$, $p = .06$. Again, the Johnson-Neyman technique found no significant transition points based on the values of the moderating variable.

Helping to parse out these results, a few significant two-way interactions were detected. There was a significant two-way interaction where participants who saw the Black Republican candidate – as opposed to the White Independent candidate – spent more time writing about the news stories they read, $b = 58.31$, $t(566) = 1.85$, $p = .06$. A similar result emerged with regard to the time spent reading the stories but not to as great a degree, $b = 56.62$, $t(566) = 1.62$, $p = .10$. Similarly, participants who read about the Hispanic Republican candidate scored lower on Neuwirth et al.’s (2002) heuristic skimming factor of HSM, $b = .49$, $t(567) = 1.86$, $p = .06$. That is, when the Hispanic Republican candidate was viewed, participants were less likely to report skimming the news stories. These results do not provide support for this study’s hypotheses; however, they do suggest that participants responded to the stereotypical incongruity of the Black and Hispanic Republican candidates by spending more time writing and reading about that candidate and the associated news stories. Thus, regardless of participants’ political ideology, the Black and Hispanic Republican candidates resulted in more systematic (or less heuristic) cognitive processing, particularly when contrasted with a White Independent candidate.

Furthermore, participants who saw the Hispanic Democrat candidate used significantly fewer words in their open-ended responses, $b = -12.95$, $t(567) = -1.85$, $p = .07$. These findings also correspond with congruity theory, as reading about the stereotype congruent Hispanic Democratic candidate resulted in less systematic (or more heuristic) cognitive processing. Conversely, when the Hispanic Democrat was featured in the news stories, participants were less likely to engage in heuristic processing concerning the topic’s difficulty (Neuwirth et al., 2002), $b = -.42$, $t(567) = -1.68$, $p = .09$. This result, of course, contradicts the previous one, suggesting
that reading about the Hispanic Democratic candidate resulted in concurrent processing. These results do not offer full support for H5, which predicted that consuming news stories about a Hispanic political candidate associated with the Democratic Party would result in only heuristic processing. Finally, more conservative individuals who saw a Republican candidate used more words in their open-ended responses, $b = 2.96$, $t(567) = 1.68$, $p = .09$. This finding suggests that for more conservative individuals, exposure to the Republican candidate alone was enough to trigger a longer open-ended response. This finding contradicts congruity theory, which would expect more conservative individuals to process heuristically – not systematically – after reading about a Republican political candidate. No other significant two-way interactions were found.

To address H4, which stated that consuming news stories about a White political candidate would result in heuristic processing, participants’ responses to the candidates were examined based particularly on the candidate’s race/ethnicity. Considering the main effects of the aforementioned regression models addressing HSM variables, participants who saw the Black or Hispanic candidates did not significantly differ from those who saw the White candidates in terms of the number of detailed, non-detailed, simple, or complex thoughts used. However, a moderate statistical difference was detected between Hispanic and White candidates, where participants who saw the Hispanic candidate spent less time writing their open-ended comments, $b = -22.17$, $t(579) = -1.68$, $p = .09$. Also, participants who read about the Hispanic candidates were significantly less likely to report systematically processing (Neuwirth et al., 2002) of the news stories than were those who read about White candidates, $b = -.28$, $t(579) = -2.78$, $p = .006$. These results indicate that participants were more likely to process heuristically after reading about a Hispanic candidate when compared to a White candidate; however,
participants did not differ in their modes of processing when the Black and White candidates were compared. These findings do not support H4.

To further address RQ3, which questioned the route of processing taken when Black, Hispanic, and White political candidates associated with the Independent Party were presented in news stories, there were some significant main effects signifying differences between candidates associated with the Democratic or Republican parties and those associated with the Independent Party for the HSM dependent variables. Participants who saw Republican Party candidates recorded significantly more complex thoughts than did those who saw Independent Party candidates, $b = .28$, $t(579) = 2.30$, $p = .02$. Also, participants who read about Republican Party candidates were significantly less likely to report heuristically skimming (Neuwirth et al., 2002) than were those who read about Independent Party candidates, $b = -.22$, $t(579) = -2.24$, $p = .03$. Similarly, those who saw the Republican Party candidates were moderately significantly more likely to report systematically processing (Neuwirth et al., 2002) than were those who saw the Independent Party candidates, $b = .17$, $t(579) = 1.68$, $p = .09$. These findings indicate that reading about Republican candidates is more likely to trigger systematic processing than is reading about Independent candidates. This finding is similar to that found when analyzing the HSM variables using participants’ political party affiliation as the moderating variable.
H8 and H9

Impact of cognitive processing on explicit and implicit attitudes. The next two hypotheses predicted relationships between explicit and implicit attitudes toward the candidates based on the type of cognitive processing employed. Both of these predictions require the selection of certain cases to determine how these individuals, in particular, responded to the stimuli. Before selecting any particular cases and for illustrative purposes, Table 20 provides partial correlations between implicit and explicit attitudes toward the candidates for all participants, controlling for age, gender, education level, and race/ethnicity.

Table 20
Partial correlations among implicit and explicit attitudes toward all candidates for all participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Implicit attitudes</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Explicit: Voting behavior</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>.19***</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Explicit: Overall impression</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>.15***</td>
<td>.82***</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Explicit: Evaluative dimensions</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>.15***</td>
<td>.71***</td>
<td>.76***</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Explicit: Political leadership and activity</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.52***</td>
<td>.59***</td>
<td>.67***</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Explicit: Experience and ability</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>.10**</td>
<td>.60***</td>
<td>.67***</td>
<td>.75***</td>
<td>.77***</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Explicit: Ability to improve policy</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>.12**</td>
<td>.68***</td>
<td>.69***</td>
<td>.71***</td>
<td>.55***</td>
<td>.61***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Values are Pearson's r correlation coefficients. Cases with missing values were excluded listwise. N = 589
*p < .10; **p < .05; ***p < .001

In particular, H8 predicted that the heuristic processing of news stories about a White political candidate would result in significant correlations between implicit and explicit attitudes toward that candidate. To test this prediction, only participants who read about a White candidate and processed heuristically were included. More specifically, participants who were included saw a White candidate and made at least one non-detailed or simple comment in their open-ended responses. Using only these responses, a partial correlation was run, controlling for age, gender, education level, and race/ethnicity. This analysis resulted in several significant partial correlations between participants’ implicit and explicit attitudes toward the White candidate.

Table 21 shows that participants’ implicit attitudes were significantly and positively correlated...
with all explicit attitude variables considered in this study except political leadership and ability (Conover, 1981). These results offer support for H8.

Table 21
Partial correlations among implicit and explicit attitudes toward White candidates when processing heuristically

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Implicit attitudes</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Explicit: Voting behavior</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Explicit: Overall impression</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>.83***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Explicit: Evaluative dimensions</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>.73***</td>
<td>.75***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Explicit: Political leadership and activity</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.56***</td>
<td>.57***</td>
<td>.65***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Explicit: Experience and ability</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>.64***</td>
<td>.67***</td>
<td>.70***</td>
<td>.72***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Explicit: Ability to improve policy</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.73***</td>
<td>.79***</td>
<td>.71***</td>
<td>.56***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Values are Pearson's r correlation coefficients. Cases with missing values were excluded listwise. N = 190
*p < .10; **p < .05; ***p < .001

To further investigate this finding, the other HSM variables considered in this study were used to test this hypothesis. Interestingly, these results did not emerge as clearly when considering the two closed-ended factors of heuristic processing proposed by Neuwirth et al. (2002). To assess the impact on individuals who both saw a White candidate and processed heuristically, both heuristic processing variables were divided by median splits (which was calculated with all participants) where only those individuals with higher values – indicating more heuristic processing – were included. When skimming related to heuristic processing was used as the selection variable (after the median split) with the White candidate selection variable, implicit and explicit attitudes toward the candidate were uncorrelated. When topic difficulty relating to heuristic processing was used as the selection variable with only those who saw the White candidate, implicit attitudes were moderately significantly correlated with voting intentions, $r = .18, p = .09$. However, no other partial correlations emerged.

15 When tested separately, both simple and non-detailed thoughts operated similarly to when they were combined.
When considering those individuals who saw the White candidate and also spent a lesser amount of time writing their open-ended responses – as indicated through a median split – implicit attitudes toward the candidate were significantly partially correlated with voting intentions, $r = .21, p = .04$, and Conover’s (1981) evaluative dimensions, $r = .19, p = .07$. However, for individuals who used fewer comments and words and spent less time reading the news stories, their implicit and explicit attitudes toward the White candidate were not significantly partially correlated. Taken together, these results provide some support for H8, particularly with regard to the frequent significant correlation between implicit attitudes toward the White candidates and participants’ intentions to vote for them.

The next hypothesis in this set predicted that the systematic processing of news stories about a Black or Hispanic political candidate associated with the Republican Party would result in a non-significant correlation between implicit and explicit attitudes toward that candidate. To test this prediction, only participants who read about a Black or Hispanic candidate associated with the Republican Party and processed systematically were included. More specifically, participants who were included saw a Black or Hispanic Republican candidate and made at least one detailed or complex comment in their open-ended responses. Using only these responses, there were some significant partial correlations – controlling for age, gender, education level, and race/ethnicity – between participants’ implicit and explicit attitudes toward the candidate they saw. Table 22 shows that participants’ implicit attitudes were significantly and positively partially correlated with voting intentions and moderately correlated with the overall impression of the candidate and the evaluative dimensions of the candidate (Conover, 1981). However, when tested separately using individuals who saw a Black or Hispanic Republican candidate and processed systematically based only on complex thoughts, only one relationship between implicit
and explicit attitudes was even moderately significant – evaluative dimensions, \( r = .23, p = .09 \).

As such, those individuals who reported detailed thoughts were influential in the emergence of the previously reported significant correlations. For just those with detailed thoughts, implicit attitudes were correlated with voting intentions, \( r = .31, p = .004 \), general impressions, \( r = .22, p = .05 \), and evaluative dimensions, \( r = .19, p = .08 \). These results offer some support for H9, but more so for individuals who wrote complex comments.

Table 22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Implicit attitudes</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Explicit: Voting behavior</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Explicit: Overall impression</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td>.80***</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Explicit: Evaluative dimensions</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td>.62***</td>
<td>.73***</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Explicit: Political leadership and activity</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.38***</td>
<td>.55***</td>
<td>.64***</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Explicit: Experience and ability</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.46***</td>
<td>.63***</td>
<td>.75***</td>
<td>.77***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Explicit: Ability to improve policy</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.64***</td>
<td>.69***</td>
<td>.68***</td>
<td>.52***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Values are Pearson's \( r \) correlation coefficients. Cases with missing values were excluded listwise. \( N = 114 \)

* \( p < .10 \); ** \( p < .05 \); *** \( p < .001 \)

Again, to further investigate this finding, the other HSM variables considered in this study were used to test this hypothesis. Similar results emerged when considering the closed-ended HSM factor of systematic processing (Neuwirth et al., 2002). To assess the impact on individuals who both saw a Black or Hispanic Republican candidate and processed systematically, this systematic processing variables was divided by a median split (which was calculated with all participants) where only those individuals with higher values – indicating more systematic processing – were included. When this systematic processing selection variable (after the median split) was used alongside the Hispanic and Black Republican candidate selection variable, implicit and explicit attitudes toward the candidate were partially correlated only for voting behavior, \( r = .28, p = .04 \).
When considering those individuals who saw the Black or Hispanic Republican candidates and also spent more time writing their open-ended responses – as indicated through a median split – implicit attitudes toward the candidate were significantly partially correlated with voting intentions, $r = .31, p = .01$, and general impressions of the candidate, $r = .22, p = .09$. Additionally, using a median split for individuals who spent more time reading the news stories, individuals who also saw the Black or Hispanic Republican candidates expressed implicit and explicit attitudes that were significantly partially correlated in terms of voting intentions, $r = .29, p = .03$. For individuals who used more comments and words, their implicit and explicit attitudes toward the Black and Hispanic Republican candidates also were moderately significantly partially correlated with specific regard for intended voting behavior, $r = .27, p = .08$, and $r = .25, p = .06$, respectively. These results provide some support for H9, where full support is mitigated by the relatively consistent correlation between implicit attitudes toward the candidates and participants’ voting intentions.
H10, H11, and H12

**Counterstereotyping effects on explicit attitudes.** The final set of hypotheses predicted counterstereotyping effects of exposure to political candidates of minority race/ethnicities on attitudes toward minority racial/ethnic groups more generally. More specifically, it was predicted that consuming news stories about a White political candidate would lead to more negative implicit and explicit attitudes toward Black and Hispanic individuals. Conversely, consuming news stories about a Black (Hispanic) political candidate was predicted to lead to more positive implicit and explicit attitudes toward Black (Hispanic) individuals. For illustrative purposes, Table 23 illustrates the zero-order correlations between the explicit and implicit racial/ethnic group attitude variables, including the AMP mean scores and difference variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 23</th>
<th>Zero-order correlations among implicit and explicit attitudes toward racial/ethnic groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Black individuals (thermometer)</td>
<td>6.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Hispanic individuals (thermometer)</td>
<td>7.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 White individuals (thermometer)</td>
<td>7.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Black individuals (Brigham, 1993)</td>
<td>5.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Hispanic individuals (Brigham, 1993)</td>
<td>5.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 AMP Black individuals</td>
<td>4.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 AMP Hispanic individuals</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 AMP White individuals</td>
<td>4.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 AMP difference (White-Black)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 AMP difference (White-Hispanic)</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Values are Pearson's r correlation coefficients. Cases with missing values were excluded listwise.

*p < .10; **p < .05; ***p < .001

To begin testing H10-H12, a one-way ANCOVA was run, controlling for participants’ age, gender, education level, and race/ethnicity, with explicit attitudes toward Black or Hispanic individuals as the dependent variable. The race/ethnicity of the candidate was used as the independent variable with three categories: White, Black, or Hispanic. First, the feeling thermometer measure (Payne et al., 2008) was used to assess these attitudes. With attitudes toward Black individuals as the dependent variable, this relationship was not significant, F(2,
579) = 0.17, \( p = .84 \), \( \eta^2_p = .00 \). That is, the race/ethnicity of the political candidate did not influence participants’ attitudes toward Black individuals broadly speaking. To assess these attitudes toward Hispanic individuals, the feeling thermometer measure was used as the dependent variable, and the results did not indicate that the race/ethnicity of candidate influenced perceptions of Hispanic individuals, \( F(2, 579) = 0.10, p = .91, \eta^2_p = .00 \). Though this relationship was not statistically significant, the estimated marginal means for participants’ attitudes toward Hispanic individuals when exposed to a Hispanic candidate (\( M = 7.24 \)) were slightly more positive than those who saw a White (\( M = 7.18 \)) or Black (\( M = 7.17 \)) candidate.

Second, Brigham’s (1993) Attitudes toward Blacks (ATB) scale was used to assess the news stories’ impact on explicit attitudes toward members of racial/ethnic minority groups. After controlling for age, gender, education level, and race/ethnicity, the estimated marginal means for participants’ attitudes toward Black individuals after exposure to a Black candidate (\( M = 5.61 \)) were slightly more positive than those who saw a White (\( M = 5.59 \)) or Hispanic (\( M = 5.54 \)) candidate, but this relationship did not reach statistical significance, \( F(2, 582) = 0.26, p = .78, \eta^2_p = .00 \). Thus, again the race/ethnicity of the candidate did not predict explicit attitudes toward Black individuals. Similarly, using Brigham’s (1993) ATB scale to assess explicit attitudes toward Hispanic individuals as the dependent variable in this model did not support predictions. That is, the race/ethnicity of the candidate did not predict explicit attitudes toward Hispanic individuals, \( F(2, 582) = 0.26, p = .77, \eta^2_p = .00 \). As such, it does not appear that exposure to a political candidate based on his race/ethnicity influences explicit attitudes toward racial/ethnic groups more generally. These results do not provide support for the explicit attitude component of H10, H11, or H12.
**Counterstereotyping effects on implicit attitudes.** These hypotheses also predicted an influence on participants’ implicit attitudes toward racial/ethnic minority groups after exposure to the news stories. Using the AMP difference variable that provides a measure of implicit attitudes toward Black individuals in relation to implicit attitudes toward White individuals, the race/ethnicity of the political candidate – after controlling for participant age, gender, education level, and race/ethnicity – did not predict implicit attitudes toward Black individuals, \( F(2, 570) = 0.86, p = .42, \eta^2_p = .00 \). Next, the AMP difference variable comparing implicit attitudes toward Hispanic and White individuals was used as the dependent variable in a similar ANCOVA. Again, this relationship was not statistically significant, \( F(2, 570) = 1.99, p = .14, \eta^2_p = .01 \).

The results from this section of tests indicate that exposure to news stories about a political candidate of a minority race/ethnicity does not produce a counterstereotyping effect, where attitudes toward other members of that race/ethnicity are thought of more positively. As a whole, these results do not support the predictions regarding implicit or explicit attitudes made in H10, H11, and H12.\(^{1617}\)

\(^{16}\) These results were not significantly changed when participants who saw the Black and Hispanic candidates were combined into one group and compared to those who saw the White candidate.

\(^{17}\) For each of the implicit and explicit racial/ethnic group attitude tests, including the related attitude toward a racial/ethnic group variable did not significantly alter these results. That is, when using the feeling Brigham (1993) scale to examine attitudes toward Black individuals, controlling for the Brigham (1993) scale used to assess attitudes toward Hispanic individuals did not change the findings reported. Also, using the dichotomous participant race/ethnicity variable as a moderating variable (rather than a covariate) did not produce any significant interactions nor did it significantly alter the aforementioned results.
Discussion

This study explored the intersection of the cues of race/ethnicity and political party affiliation as they are presented in the news media and predict evaluations of political candidates. It predicted individuals’ responses to political candidates presented in the news media after considering the expectations of congruity theory, the heuristic systematic processing model (HSM), and cueing. It revealed many meaningful relationships. First, it found that congruity theory is an appropriate theoretical mechanism for explaining individuals’ intentions to vote for political candidates, where individuals’ political party affiliation is the ideal moderating variable to consider. Second, it found that both a candidate’s political party affiliation and race/ethnicity are salient in determining voting preferences and attitudes toward the candidate. Third, using HSM and congruity theory, this study’s results indicated that a cue occurs when information is consciously consumed, which should be conceptualized and operationalized differently than a prime, which occurs when information is unconsciously consumed. Fourth, it developed an HSM codebook for open-ended data, which is recommended for future use. Fifth, it found Independent Party candidates are not favored or disfavored when compared to Republican and Democratic candidates, and Independent voters show no preference for Independent Party candidates. Finally, it showed that the news media’s positive portrayal of political candidates within minority racial/ethnic groups does not result in more positive attitudes toward their respective racial/ethnic groups more generally.
Using Congruity Theory to Predict Attitudes

This study explored the relationship between stereotypical associations and their influence on subsequent attitudes toward political candidates presented in the news. It used two cues – race/ethnicity and political party affiliation – to guide newsreaders in forming their impressions of political candidates. Importantly, previous research has shown cues meant to illustrate some characteristic of a politician are impactful in shaping individuals’ attitudes about that politician (e.g., Barrett & Barrington, 2005; Rosenberg et al., 1986; Rosenberg & McCafferty, 1987). This study, in particular, used one visual cue and one textual cue that were predicted to influence individuals’ perceptions of the candidates based on the congruity between the cues and each individual’s self-identified political party affiliation and political ideology. That is, individuals’ stereotypes of politicians’ political party affiliations were expected to be perceived and evaluated in accordance with their own political leanings.

Congruity theory guided the expectations of this research, such that individuals were expected to respond differently to the cues presented in the news stories based on the match or mismatch between the cues in the news story stimuli and each individual’s preexisting schemas (Lee & Schumann, 2004). In short, cues producing congruity or incongruity can result in both positive and negative reactions to that particular cue and the associations activated by that cue. It was predicted that the stereotypical associations between the race/ethnicity of the politicians and their political party affiliations would serve as the foundation for the resulting congruity or incongruity.

Explicit attitudes toward the candidates. This study’s predictions regarding congruity theory and the cues presented in the news stories were considered in accordance with two important moderating variables – the participant’s political party affiliation and the participant’s
political ideology. Interestingly, these two moderating variables produced vastly different results in terms of the anticipated relationships predicted by congruity theory. Simply put, reactions based on individuals’ political party affiliations (i.e., Republican, Democrat, and Independent) were more successfully predicted by congruity theory than were individuals’ political ideologies (e.g., extremely conservative or extremely liberal).

When participants’ self-reported political party affiliation was considered as the moderating variable, the anticipated relationship emerged, as predicted using congruity theory. That is, the interaction between the political candidate’s race/ethnicity and political party affiliation predicted voting intentions toward him when also considering the participant’s political party affiliation. However, this relationship was not significant when participants’ self-identified political ideology was used as the moderating variable. This finding is consistent with prior research, which identified differences between individuals who identify by political ideology and those who identify by political party where the two positions can function differently and contain different individuals seemingly near the same political dimension (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes 1960; Converse, 2006). Moreover, it seems many individuals lack the political sophistication to accurately place themselves on a conservative-liberal continuum; whereas, the group-based nature of U.S. political parties provides a more easily understandable and widely used group affiliation (Converse, 2006). Thus, it is not entirely surprising that these two moderating variables diverged in their predictions of voting behavior.

When considering individuals’ political party affiliations, congruity theory was generally successful in predicting responses to the political candidates in the news stories based on the cues representing their races/ethnicities and political party affiliations. First, individuals’ intentions to vote for the White candidates were not significantly different based on the
individual’s and the candidate’s political party affiliation. This result suggests that the White candidate’s race/ethnicity and political party affiliation were not significant influences on voting intentions when taken together with the participant’s preexisting group-based political affiliation.

Second, individuals identifying as Democrats did not differ in their perceptions of the Democratic candidates based on the candidate’s race/ethnicity, as they showed greater intentions to vote for the Democratic candidates generally. Democrats also preferred the White and Hispanic Democratic candidates more than Republicans, which runs in concert with congruity theory. However, Republicans showed greater intentions to vote for the Black Democratic candidate rather than the White or Hispanic Democratic candidates, though it was predicted that Republicans would dislike Democrats generally. This finding mirrors the relatively constant result where Republicans – and sometimes others as well – generally preferred the Black candidate. Such a result may indicate a methodological issue regarding picture selection; however, the pretests meant to curb this potential problem showed that the Black candidate was not perceived as more memorable or attractive than the White or Hispanic candidates. Moreover, the White candidate was seen as more competent and intelligent than the Black and Hispanic candidates, and the White and Hispanic candidates were considered more experienced than the Black candidate. These pretest results contradict the notion of a methodological artifact due to picture selection; however, the question remains as to why the Black candidate was preferred by Republicans and possibly more generally. It is possible that, in a response to social desirability, individuals made a conscious effort to show greater preference for the Black candidate, eliminating any consideration of racism, as race-based prejudicial attitudes have been shown to be more prevalent among Republican – and conservative – individuals (e.g., McConahay & Hough, 1976).
Third, in accordance with congruity theory, it was predicted that Republicans and Democrats would respond in opposite attitudinal directions to Black and Hispanic political candidates associated with the Republican Party due to the stereotypical incongruity of these characteristics. As was anticipated, Republicans responded positively, while Democrats reacted negatively. That is, Republicans expressed a significantly greater intention to vote for the Black and Hispanic Republican candidates than did Democrats. Such a result not only coincides with congruity theory but also makes intuitive sense. A Black or Hispanic Republican political candidate offers the Republican Party an opportunity to appeal to voters of these racial/ethnic groups by using a candidate of a similar racial/ethnic background. Democrats, on the other hand, were unable to reconcile the incongruity prompted by the cues presented in the news stories about the Black and Hispanic Republican candidates, leading to more negative evaluations of that candidate based on the threat posed by a Black or Hispanic candidate contradicting their stereotypical association with the Democratic Party and threatening to pull votes away from that party.

This study also tested several attitudinal variables to determine individuals’ responses to the political candidates beyond their voting intentions. Participants’ reactions to the candidates were examined based on evaluative dimensions, political leadership and activity, and experience and ability (Conover, 1981) as well as overall impression (Barrett & Barrington, 2005) and the candidate’s perceived ability to improve social and fiscal policy (Sigelman et al., 1995). Generally speaking, the results of these attitudinal variables were relatively close to those of voting intention, but only when individuals’ political party affiliation was considered as the moderating variable (as opposed to individuals’ political ideology). The primary difference in attitudinal variables emerged in that Republicans and Democrats were not as clearly different
from each other, but they were different from Independents. Thus, voting intentions – rather than attitudinal evaluations – showed the strongest adherence to congruity theory.

These results are important for political science and media effects researchers both theoretically and methodologically. Given these results, it appears that congruity theory is a viable theoretical framework to utilize when attempting to understand the attitudes and behaviors of potential voters evaluating political candidates, but only when these voters’ political party affiliation is considered. Using stereotypes of political candidates coupled with individuals’ political party affiliations, this study showed that congruity theory can explain shifts in terms of voting intentions and evaluative characteristics. Simply put, the match or mismatch between an individual’s background characteristics, his or her stereotypes, and the media stimulus presented can predict that individual’s response. Methodologically speaking, considering an individual’s political party affiliation as a moderating variable – as opposed to his or her political ideology – has implications beyond this study. When considering the influence of participants’ political identities, it is crucial for researchers to consider both political party affiliation and political ideology, as these variables clearly function differently, as shown by this study and prior studies (e.g., Campbell et al., 1960; Converse, 2006). With specific regard to congruity theory, it appears that an individual’s political party affiliation is most revealing of his or her subsequent voting intentions. However, without carefully considering the multi-faceted nature of individuals’ political identities, it is too easy to assume null or overextending effects if the less desirable variable is utilized in a study. As such, researchers should carefully consider what type of political identity they are interested in examining prior to the execution of the study to ensure the conclusions made adequately address the intricacies of individuals’ political beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.
**Implicit attitudes toward the candidates.** Not surprisingly, a distinction between the two moderating variables – political party affiliation and political ideology – emerged when examining effects on implicit attitudes, but not in the same way. Using the Affect Misattribution Procedure (AMP) as a measure for implicit attitudes toward each of the candidates, individuals’ political party affiliation did not significantly interact with the two manipulations (i.e., the candidate’s race/ethnicity and political party affiliation). That is, when considering individuals’ political party affiliation, congruity theory appears to be the applicable theoretical mechanism to explain changes in explicit attitudes, but not implicit attitudes.

Conversely, using individuals’ political ideology as the moderating variable did produce significant three-way interactions; however, they are not particularly straightforward. The results of these tests revealed that more liberal individuals showed implicit dislike for the Hispanic Republican candidate, which makes sense given the stereotypical incongruity of this pairing, but more liberal individuals also showed more negative implicit attitudes toward the Black Democratic candidate. The latter finding is not compatible with congruity theory – or with traditional logic. Though these two findings seem to contradict each other theoretically and logically, implicit attitudes may be more indicative of congruity theory than explicit attitudes when considering an individual’s political ideology. However, for both the political ideology and political party affiliation moderating variables, there was little evidence that congruity theory was a satisfactory explanatory mechanism when examining implicit attitudes, suggesting that congruity theory may not be the appropriate theoretical framework for examining implicit attitudes.

**Attitudes of Independent voters and toward Independent candidates.** This study also considered the impact of Independent Party candidates and Independent Party voters.
Unexpectedly, individuals who identified as members of the Independent Party did not show a preference for Independent Party candidates. Generally speaking, Independents showed a mid-level intention to vote for all the candidates when compared to Republicans and Democrats. Prior research has indicated that individuals identifying as Independents tend to be less politically involved, interested, and informed (Norpoth & Velez, 2012) and many lean toward the Democratic or Republican parties, essentially functioning as “closet Democrats and Republicans” (Keith et al., 1992, p. 4). As such, the diversity of individuals claiming to be Independents in this study may mute the actual voting intentions and attitudes of those truly committed to the Independent Party. That is, the dispersion of those leaning Democrat or Republican intermixed within the Independent Party classification may neutralize each other, diluting any true effect of those identifying with the Independent Party.

Regarding the Independent candidates in the news stories, they were not evaluated differently – attitudinally or in voting intentions – than Republican or Democratic candidates based on the candidate’s race/ethnicity. However, more conservative (liberal) individuals significantly preferred the Republican (Democrat) and Independent candidates but not the Democrat (Republican) candidate when considering explicit attitudes and voting intentions. Regarding implicit attitudes, political ideology – when used as the moderating variable – was influential in illustrating that more liberal individuals were more likely to find Independent candidates more implicitly appealing. When considering political ideology, this study suggests that Independent Party candidates are more implicitly preferred by individuals who range from moderate to liberal in terms of their political ideology, but can be explicitly preferred by more conservative individuals.
Again, these results point to the distinction between individuals’ political ideologies and their political party affiliations. These two variables have notable differences not only on predicting attitudes and voting intentions toward Republican and Democratic Party candidates but also toward Independent Party candidates. Specifically, individuals who identify with the Independent Party show no particular preference for Independent Party candidates; however, individuals who are less conservative (i.e., more moderate or liberal) in terms of their political ideology are more likely to implicitly support Independent candidates while individuals who are less liberal (i.e. more moderate or conservative) are more likely to explicitly support them. Simply put, it is possible that a measure of political ideology is more adept at identifying individuals likely to support Independent Party candidates.

**Considering salient attitudes.** One of this study’s research questions asked which cue, the candidate’s race/ethnicity or political party affiliation, was more salient in determining attitudes toward that political candidate as presented in the news. Individuals generally preferred the Black candidate. However, as was previously mentioned, this result may illustrate the influence of a social desirability bias. More profoundly though, individuals frequently seemed to consider the candidate’s political party affiliation to be the more salient cue, particularly when reporting explicit attitudes toward the candidate. When considering participants’ political party affiliation alone, Democrats showed preference for Democrats and Republicans for Republicans. Looking specifically at the moderating variable of participants’ political ideology, a similar pattern emerged where more liberal (conservative) individuals found the Democratic (Republican) candidate more appealing. Importantly though, these results were not mirrored in individuals’ implicit attitudes. Neither cue was particularly influential in shaping or changing implicit attitudes toward the candidates. Thus, it appears both cues – the candidate’s political
party affiliation and race/ethnicity – are salient depending on which behavior or explicit attitude is assessed and whether the individual’s political identity is considered; however, the political party affiliation cue related to the candidate is more consistently salient when assessing explicit attitudes and behavioral intentions.

**Limitations and future research.** Though this portion of the study revealed many interesting findings related to the use of congruity theory to predict attitudes and behavioral intentions toward political candidates, it did suffer from limitations. First and most importantly, participants in the final study struggled to correctly identify the Hispanic candidate’s race/ethnicity. In fact, more individuals classified him as White than the correct identification of Hispanic. This lack of clarity is troubling, considering participants’ recognition of the candidate’s race/ethnicity was key to the manipulations in this study. This result is unexpected, however, considering that pretest results revealed that 70% of participants correctly identified this candidate as Hispanic. Future research should use different pictures to test the reliability of the results reported here, particularly with regard to both the lack of recognition of the Hispanic candidate and the general liking of the Black candidate in the final study. It is possible that prior research has avoided studying visual cues related to Hispanic individuals for this very reason; some participants may lack the visual sophistication to correctly identify the race/ethnicity of non-White and non-Black individuals (e.g., Hispanic, Middle Eastern, etc.). As such, future research should consider adding a textual cue that identifies the race/ethnicity of the individual featured in the news stories to ensure participants correctly interpret the cue.

Moreover, this study faced a limitation with regard to implicit attitudes toward the political candidates. Though the AMP measures worked reliably when assessing Black, White, and Hispanic individuals who were not the political candidates considered in this study, the
reliabilities for the implicit attitude measures specifically used for the candidates were not particularly high. It is possible that participants evaluated the candidates differently based solely on the individual pictures, but the pretest results suggested this would not be the case. Thus, it is unclear why these pictures did not function particularly well as scaled measures. Future research, then, should test different pictures representing the political candidates to see if higher reliabilities for the implicit measures can be reached.

This portion of the study also offered some interesting findings regarding individuals who associate themselves with the Independent Party, but this party association variable may have needed more parsing out. The Independents in this study did not show preference for the Independent Party candidates, which may be the result of individuals claiming to be Independents who actually lean toward the Republican or Democratic parties (Keith et al., 1992). As such, future research should attempt to better classify Independents by separating those individuals who lean strongly toward another party, leaving “pure Independents” to include in a similar study (Norpoth & Velez, 2012).

Future research also should consider using congruity theory to predict attitudinal and behavioral reactions based on other cues presented in the news. First, the gender of the candidate could be manipulated to better understand how that visual (or textual) cue interacts with the candidate’s political party affiliation and race/ethnicity. As this study suggests, political party affiliation would be the appropriate moderating variable to analyze in such a study. Second, it would be interesting to include a manipulation within the news stories that identifies the candidate’s religious affiliation. Coupling religious affiliation with political party affiliation in the news stories may reveal interesting relationships regarding how political candidates are evaluated by potential voters. Congruity theory may work well to predict the influence of the
individual’s religious identity on that individual’s voting intentions and attitudes toward the candidate based on his or her religious affiliation. Third, rather than directly identifying the candidate’s political party, the news story could present the candidate’s stances on particular political issues typically attributed to one party or another. This manipulation would represent a more subtle manipulation of the candidate’s political party and should include both moderating variables – political party affiliation and political ideology – to determine if congruity theory can predict reactions to policy stances presented in the news.

Additionally, future research should consider the impact of both political party affiliation and political ideology on media effects research. Oftentimes, studies examining the influence of media content haphazardly include a political identity variable without consulting the political science literature that suggests these variables function quite differently. At the very least, media effects research that wishes to consider the influence of an individual’s political identity should include more than one measure of said political identity. As this study clearly shows, political party affiliation and political ideology function differently in determining reactions to media content. Thus, media effects researchers should be careful to include the appropriate measures with regard to political identity.

Lastly, it is possible that some of the effects found here were a result of the population sampled. This study used Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk) to recruit and include participants in all steps involved in this study. Though MTurk was selected because it offers a larger, more diverse sample in comparison with other participant samples often used in experimental research, it may have had some unique influences on the results. For example, a rather small proportion of the sample self-identified as Republican (15%). Also, much of the sample self-identified as White (83%). These factors may have contributed to this study’s
findings. As such, future research may want to attempt to gather a sample with a greater dispersion in demographic characteristics such as race/ethnicity and political party affiliation.

That said, other research has found MTurk to be an acceptable platform for finding more diverse participant samples, particularly in terms of age, for experimental research (e.g., Mason & Suri, 2012; Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010).
Integrating Cognitive Processing into Congruity Theory

**Codebook development.** One of the major contributions of this study is the development of a codebook meant to measure the heuristic and systematic processing associated with the heuristic systematic processing model (HSM). This codebook is meant to be used when coding open-ended responses to stimuli. Using prior research as inspiration, the codebook identified four categories of processing – detailed, non-detailed, complex, and simple. Previous scholars indicated that the detailed/non-detailed distinction would illustrate the differences between systematic and heuristic processing, respectively (Meyers-Levy & Maheswaran, 2004). The present codebook identified detailed (systematic) thoughts as those that included specific elements of the news story stimuli and non-detailed (heuristic) thoughts as unspecific thoughts evaluating the stimuli. However, the categories of complex and simple were added to the codebook, since they seemed to better adhere to the tenets of HSM. Complex thoughts included statements involving greater complexity regarding the content of the stimuli, and simple thoughts were straightforward, uncomplicated thoughts evaluating the news story stimuli. In terms of intercoder reliability, the codebook performed well in the pretest, and it improved substantially when two different coders, blind to the purpose of the final study, evaluated the open-ended responses.

Not surprisingly, the results of the pretest and final study showed discrepancies in consistency between the codebook developed in this study and prior measures used to operationalize HSM. The measures used in previous research on HSM incorporated into this study included the number of thoughts used in the open-ended responses, number of words, time spent writing the response, time spent reading the news story stimuli, and a modified version of Neuwirth et al.’s (2002) closed-ended scale of systematic and heuristic processing. In both the
pretest and the final study, the measure of total time spent writing the open-ended response did not function predictably in determining heuristic or systematic processing, and as such, this measure is not recommended for future use in operationalizing HSM. Also, the number of thoughts each participant wrote was significantly related to non-detailed and simple thoughts, where a greater number of thoughts was correlated with heuristic processing. This finding disputes Chaiken’s (1980) prediction that longer response times indicate systematic processing and shorter response times indicate heuristic processing, meaning that this measure also may not be a good choice for HSM research.

Neuwirth et al.’s (2002) closed-ended scale of systematic and heuristic processing also offered an interesting avenue for exploring the measurement of these cognitive processes. The scale, however, did not perform as expected, particularly with regard to heuristic processing. The two heuristic processing categories in the scale – one related to the skimming of the news stories and the other related to the perceived difficulty of news stories’ topics – were negatively related to detailed, simple, and complex thoughts. Also, very few individuals admitted to having difficulty with the topic or having skimmed the stories. These results may indicate the lack of applicability of these two scales in examining responses to media content, particularly when they are tested in a situation where participants are paid for their participation (e.g., through MTurk). In this case, it is possible that participants were reluctant to admit to having skimmed the news stories or not understood them since they may have thought their payment would be withheld for these reasons. The systematic processing category of Neuwirth et al.’s (2002) scale did seem to perform a bit better though. It was significantly and positively correlated with non-detailed (heuristic) and complex (systematic) thoughts.
With regard to the codebook categories themselves, detailed and non-detailed thoughts were negatively correlated and simple and complex thoughts were similarly negatively correlated, as was expected. Also, simple thoughts were significantly and positively correlated to both detailed and non-detailed thoughts, indicating that the detailed and non-detailed categories may not be particularly effective.

As such, the complex and simple categorization of systematic and heuristic processing seem the best measure for open-ended responses and is tentatively recommended for future research. Complex thoughts performed closer to what theory would predict, as they were negatively correlated with other measures of heuristic processing and positively correlated with systematic processing. However, all of the categories should be used in simpler situations, where they can be tested for type of processing without the more complicated predictions made here. For example, one study might manipulate participants’ motivation levels using a more pointed stimulus to predict their open-ended responses’ correspondence with the heuristic and systematic processing categories. In this situation, more motivated participants should process systematically (i.e., produce more complex thoughts) and less motivated participants should process heuristically (i.e., produce more simple thoughts). Prior research frequently has attempted to more explicitly manipulate the type of processing employed in situations involving increased or decreased motivation (e.g., Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994; Chen, Shechter, & Chaiken, 1996; Maheswaran & Chaiken, 1991; Wood, 2000), but little research has attempted to measure the type of cognitive processing after stimulus consumption. This study was the first step toward that goal. The continued development of this codebook offers a unique and valuable addition to the literature that should aid in the operationalization of HSM in future studies.
**Predicting processing with political party affiliation.** The news stories did not elicit any of the categories developed in the HSM codebook when examining the three-way interactions produced by the two manipulated variables – the candidate’s political party and race/ethnicity – and the individual’s political party affiliation. That is, the type of cognitive processing employed while reading the news stories was not predicted by this study’s manipulations and the tested moderating variables. However, some interesting lower-order effects emerged in these models.

First, Independents wrote significantly more complex thoughts than Republicans. This may indicate Independents’ attempts to better understand the candidates and their policy positions based on the cues presented in the news stories. It also suggests that Independents processed systematically more often than did Republicans, meaning that Independents may have relied less on the candidate’s politically party affiliation and race/ethnicity as salient cues than did Republicans. This result works in conjunction with this study’s prior findings, such that Independents’ middle-of-the-road responses to the candidates in terms of attitudes and voting intentions may have resulted from a sense of confusion or frustration that lead to systematic processing. However, this finding was somewhat tempered by Independents’ greater likelihood of writing simple thoughts about Independent candidates when compared to Republican individuals. As such, Independents appear to lean toward systematic processing, but only when not encountering an Independent candidate. This finding corresponds with congruity theory, such that the heuristic route of processing was taken when the candidate’s political party matched the individual’s party affiliation.

Second and unexpectedly, Republicans who read about a Republican candidate wrote fewer simple thoughts than Democrats and Independents. This finding challenges the
expectations of congruity theory, as individuals who read about a candidate who matched their political party affiliation did not process more heuristically than those who lacked a match between their party and that of the candidate. Third, individuals reported more simple thoughts when they read about the Black candidates when compared to the Hispanic candidates. This finding may be explained by participants’ general liking of the Black candidates, as shown in the aforementioned tests of attitude change and behavioral intentions, and resulting willingness to process heuristically.

Taken together, these results indicate that the complex and simple categories established in this study’s HSM codebook are more related to the predictions of congruity theory than are the detailed and non-detailed categories, since the models tested did not show evidence of changes in detailed or non-detailed thoughts. Thus, as the pretest and final study tests suggested, the complex and simple categories may serve as better representations of systematic and heuristic processing, respectively.

To continue testing measures meant to capture heuristic and systematic processing, the other HSM variables considered in this study were tested similarly to the codebook categories. The number of thoughts in the open-ended response, number of words, amount of time spent writing the open-ended response, and the three HSM items in Neuwirth et al.’s (2002) scale did not create any meaningful relationships related to the cognitive processing of these news stories, particularly as related to congruity theory. The only other HSM variable that showed some promise in capturing the cognitive processing that resulted from reading these news stories was the time participants spent reading the news stories. Republicans spent significantly more time reading about the White Democratic candidate than did Democrats or Independents. Also, Republicans spent significantly less time reading about the Black Republican candidate than did
Independents. Finally, Democrats spent significantly more time reading about the Hispanic Democratic candidate than did Independents. These results suggest that Republicans experienced a greater level of incongruity (i.e., systematic processing illustrated by more time spent reading) when reading about the White Democratic candidate and a greater level of congruity when reading about the Black Republican, which is in line with congruity theory. However, Democrats experienced a greater level of incongruity when reading about the Hispanic Democratic candidate, which does not align with the predictions of congruity theory.

In sum, it appears that congruity theory was not adequate in explaining the cognitive processing routes taken by individuals based on how their political party affiliation matches with a political candidate’s political party affiliation and the stereotypes associated with his race/ethnicity. The primary exception emerged with regard to the Independent Party candidates, such that Independent Party candidates and Independent Party voters showed more evidence of conformity to congruity theory, though individuals generally tended to process more heuristically after reading about Independent candidates. Possibly most importantly, these findings suggest that the HSM codebook developed in this study may offer a fruitful measure for examining heuristic and systematic processing.

**Predicting processing with political ideology.** The two-way interaction created by the manipulated news story stimuli was then tested with the moderating variable of participants’ political ideology to determine the influence on cognitive processing. As with the political party affiliation moderating variable, these three-way interactions did not predict any of the four HSM codebook categories – detailed, non-detailed, simple, or complex thoughts. Also, this interaction did not predict the number of words used in the open-ended responses or the number of thoughts, nor did it predict the three factors identified in Neuwirth et al.’s (2002) close-ended HSM scale.
Two effects of interest – related to congruity theory – did emerge though. First, individuals who read about the Black Republican candidate spent more time writing their open-ended responses and reading the news stories than did those who read about the White Independent candidate. Second, individuals who read about the Hispanic Republican candidate were less likely to report skimming the news stories (Neuwirth et al., 2002). In response to the stereotypical incongruity of the Black and Hispanic Republican candidates, individuals spent more time writing and reading about those candidates and the associated news stories. Thus, as is supported by congruity theory, reading news stories about Black and Hispanic Republican candidates resulted in more systematic (or less heuristic) cognitive processing.

It ought to be noted that several of the results produced by these models contradicted the expectations of congruity theory. For example, individuals who read about the Hispanic Democratic candidate used significantly fewer words in their open-ended responses, indicating heuristic processing. Meanwhile, those same individuals engaged in less heuristic processing concerning the topic’s difficulty. Congruity theory would predict that individuals who read about this candidate would experience heuristic processing, since incongruity should not be encountered given the stereotypical consistency of the candidate’s characteristics. However, these results indicate concurrent processing – both heuristic and systematic – which does not fit within the predictions of congruity theory.

When considered with the other findings using the political ideology moderating variable, it appears that congruity theory does not function particularly well to predict the type of cognitive processing utilized after encountering stereotypical congruity or incongruity. Also, Independent Party candidates are consistently processed heuristically, regardless of the candidate’s race/ethnicity or the participant’s political party or ideology. Additionally, the
political party affiliation moderating variable does seem to operate more consistently in making these predictions than does the political ideology moderating variable, which is consistent with the findings presented in this study related to participants’ attitudes and voting intentions toward the candidates.

**Limitations and future research.** Though the findings presented in this section of the study certainly have promise, they do need further investigation to determine their continued usefulness in scholarship. First, and most importantly, the codebook needs more testing. As was previously mentioned, it needs simpler testing to determine if the categories developed in this study are maintained when examined using common manipulations for heuristic and systematic processing (e.g., motivation and importance of information). It should be tested with the other HSM measures used in this study to confirm their relationships and aid in the selection of the best measures for post-stimulus consideration of the type of cognitive processing undertaken by participants.

Also, there does not appear to be a strong relationship between the predictions of congruity theory and the type of cognitive processing employed. Future research should test this assumption to confirm that this theory does not correspond with the level of congruity, particularly with regard to stereotypical incongruity, as prior research suggests these ideas could be related (e.g., Gawronski & Creighton, 2013; Maheswaran & Chaiken, 1991).
Theory Integration

Taking inspiration from the discrepancies in the literature regarding key theories of media effects, this study also put forth a theoretical and empirically testable explanation of the differences between cueing and priming. Prior research has utilized measures of both implicit and explicit attitudes to operationalize priming and cueing. To help alleviate this overlap in conceptualization and operationalization, this study integrated literature on a dual-processing model – the heuristic systematic processing model (HSM) – as well as congruity theory to account for the cognitive processing mechanisms at play. This study argued that the primary difference between cues and primes lies in whether or not they are consciously consumed and utilized. That is, a prime occurs when information is unconsciously consumed or resides outside an individual’s immediate notice, and a cue occurs when information is consciously consumed or triggers a thought that is immediately accessible. As such, several predictions were made that combine elements from research on HSM, congruity theory, and the relationship between implicit and explicit attitudes to predict the influence of cues (in relation to primes).

The first inquiry into the relationship between cueing and the theories utilized in this study tested to see if the heuristic processing of news stories about a White political candidate would result in significant correlations between implicit and explicit attitudes toward that candidate. This test sought to decipher when explicit attitudes could be used to assess cueing and priming; when heuristic processing occurs, the information encountered is congruent with prior schemas, and the information does not present a social desirability concern, it was predicted that psychological priming could be assessed using explicit attitude measures. This prediction was supported in that implicit attitudes toward the White candidate among those who processed heuristically (i.e., wrote non-detailed or simple thoughts) were significantly and positively
related to all but one explicit attitude measure in this study (political leadership and ability, Conover, 1981).

The second relationship examined in this sequence of testing looked at the systematic processing of news stories about a Black or Hispanic political candidate associated with the Republican Party, where a non-significant correlation between implicit and explicit attitudes toward that candidate was anticipated. In this case, when information that was encountered was incongruent with prior schemas – predicting systematic processing – individuals were expected to modify their unfavorable explicit responses to account for social desirability. However, they would not be to hide these responses in their implicit attitudes. Thus, if socially sensitive information is processed systematically and in the conscious awareness of the individual due to incongruity, the influence of the cue should be revealed in the implicit attitudinal response more so than the explicit responses. Again, this prediction was supported using this study’s HSM codebook, but only for the complex category of the two systematic categories (not the detailed category). For individuals who saw a Black or Hispanic political candidate associated with the Republican Party and wrote complex comments in their open-ended responses, their implicit and explicit attitudes were unrelated – except for one moderately significant relationship between implicit attitudes toward and Conover’s (1981) evaluative dimensions of the candidate.

It should be noted that the other HSM measures considered in this study performed inconsistently with regard to this section of hypotheses. Among each of these tests, there was a frequent significant relationship between implicit attitudes toward the candidates and individuals’ intentions to vote for them, regardless of the candidate in the news stories or the type of cognitive processing employed. As such, these results provide further confirmation for
the use of the HSM codebook developed in this study – particularly the complex and simple
categories – as a potentially superior measure for gauging modes of cognitive processing.

These results also provide some support for the relationships between implicit and explicit attitudes as they define cueing and, as its counterpoint, priming. Given the support for these predictions, it is suggested that the more consistent terms – regarding cueing and priming – and their associated conceptualizations and operationalizations should be adopted. “Psychological priming” should maintain its label as priming and utilize implicit attitude measures or implicit attitude induction procedures unless the information encountered is congruent, does not contain a social desirability concern, and heuristic processing occurred or is predicted to occur. That is, primes represent bits of information that are unconsciously processed or applied and are primarily assessed with changes in implicit attitudes. Conversely, “political priming” and cueing should be identified as one concept and be called cueing to alleviate continued confusion in distinguishing the various forms of priming described above. This study suggests that cues can be operationalized using measures of explicit and implicit attitudes, where cues represent the impact of systematically and consciously processed information and its application.

Limitations and future research. Though these conclusions are in line with the present study, they are ambitious in nature and should be tested in future research to ensure these relationships are not unique to this particular study. Future research should test these same predictions using different stimulus materials and different congruent and incongruent relationships. For example, the stimulus news stories could present some political issue as it relates to a particular group people (e.g., women and reproductive rights) and use a different
participant characteristic (e.g., gender) as the moderating variable to predict attitudes toward the news stories and the person or people represented in them.
The Counterstereotyping Effects of Political Leadership

Some prior research has indicated that exposure to media portrayals of members of minority racial/ethnic groups presented in positive ways could result in more positive attitudes toward the group more generally (e.g., Mastro and Tuckachinsky, 2011; Ramasubramanian, 2007; 2011). The use of counterstereotypes – representations of groups of people or an individual within the group in roles that contradict a stereotype – in the media has been shown to reduce stereotypical and prejudicial attitudes and behaviors among that media’s consumers. As such, this study examined the influence of the news media’s portrayal of political candidates who are members of racial/ethnic minority groups on subsequent attitudes toward other members of that particular racial/ethnic minority group. Reading news about members of racial/ethnic minority groups in positions of potential leadership, which often necessitate skills contradicting those of the predominant stereotypes (e.g., lazy, poor, unintelligent), was predicted to result in consumers of these news stories adopting more positive attitudes toward those minority racial/ethnic groups more generally.

Using both implicit and explicit attitudes toward Black and Hispanic individuals, this study did not reveal the anticipated effect of the counterstereotypical news story stimuli. Reading three news stories about a Black, Hispanic, or White political candidate did not reveal a significant difference in attitudes toward Black and Hispanic individuals more generally. That is, there were no significant differences in how the three news story conditions regarding the race/ethnicity of the candidate (Black, Hispanic, and White) predicted implicit and explicit attitudes toward Black and Hispanic individuals at a macro level. The expected effect of the counterstereotypes in the news stories would have revealed a significant positive relationship
between, for example, reading about the Black candidate and attitudes toward Black individuals more generally. This effect did not occur for any of the candidates examined in this study.

These findings, then, do not align with those aforementioned studies that found the media capable of eliciting counterstereotypical responses from media consumers. It is likely that the null findings reported here are as a result of the nature of the portrayal of the Black, Hispanic, and White individuals in this study – as political candidates. Mastro and Tuckachinsky (2011) contended that exposure to a counterstereotypical depiction of an individual within the stereotyped group may not result in more positive attitudes toward that group of people if the media portrayal is not deemed positive enough. In this case, it is possible that individuals do not think highly enough of political candidates to bring about the predicted positive responses to the counterstereotypical portrayals of the Black and Hispanic political candidates. Along these lines, Schneider and Bos (2011) found that individuals hold different stereotypes for Black politicians than they do for Black individuals more generally. The authors found Black politicians were considered ambitious, confident, and determined, while Black individuals more generally were not. Thus, it seems quite possible that individuals’ thoughts of politicians do not translate into their beliefs about the larger group to which they belong, particularly with regard to race/ethnicity. In sum, the counterstereotypical image of a Hispanic or Black political candidate in the media does not encourage individuals to think more positively about Hispanic or Black individuals as larger groups.

Although this study did not reveal the anticipated attitudes after exposure to the counterstereotypical news story stimuli, it does offer a valuable addition to the literature on the effects of media. It showed that the news media’s positive portrayal of political candidates within minority racial/ethnic groups does not result in more positive attitudes toward their respective
racial/ethnic groups more generally. These findings indicate that, if counterstereotypes are being used to purposely evoke more positive feelings toward larger groups of people, media representations of political candidates to illustrate the counterstereotype are not effective. That is, individuals or organizations wishing to bring about more positive attitudes toward a particular group of people would be ill advised to do so through media portrayals of political candidates. It seems media content that offers clearer positive depictions and that of individuals who are not political candidates is more likely to produce the desired increase in positive attitudes toward that group of people (e.g., Ramasubramanian, 2007). Simply put, counterstereotypical media depictions with a political candidate as the featured individual likely will not increase individuals’ feelings of positivity toward the candidate’s associated racial/ethnic group.

**Limitations and future research.** Though these hypotheses yielded interesting – and unexpected – results, they do face some limitations. As was previously mentioned, many of the participants in this study were not able to correctly identify the race/ethnicity of the Hispanic political candidate. Without recognition that the Hispanic candidate was, in fact, Hispanic, the counterstereotypical portrayal of the Hispanic political candidate may not have been a strong enough stimulus to elicit more positive attitudes toward Hispanic individuals more generally. Such a change is unlikely though, as exposure to the Black political candidate – who was easily recognized by participants as Black – did not bring about more positive attitudes toward Black individuals more generally. However, future research should test this assumption by using a more easily recognizable Hispanic individual or by clearly identifying the individual as Hispanic using a textual cue within the media content.

Overall, it is hoped that the theory, method, and results presented here will help improve and develop future scholarship in both the media effects and political psychology areas of study.
References


Althaus, S., & Kim, Y. M. (2006). Priming effects in complex information environments:


Appendix A

Codebook: Heuristic and Systematic Processing in Open-Ended Responses

Data

ID: Participant number

Responses: Participant’s response

Number of Words and Thoughts

Q1: Number of Words

• How many words did the participant include?

Instructions: Please count the number of words the participant used in his or her response.

• Record the number of words in the participant’s response.

Q2: Number of Thoughts

• How many thoughts did the participant include?

Instructions: Please count the number of thoughts the participant used in his or her response.

• Record the number of thoughts in the participant’s response.

  • One thought may be a complete or incomplete sentence, but it may also be one portion of a conjunction (i.e., two sentences connected by the word and, or, but).
  
  ▪ The items in a list are not separate thoughts.

  • Mark the individual thoughts in the “Data” column by putting a backslash (/) between the thoughts.
For example: Mr. Fullerton is an ambitious politician who is trying now to achieve the seat of Governor of his state. He is typical of many politicians in promising things that is sure to help the people of his state, such as promoting better education. Not sure whether he is telling the truth or not, or if he will deliver on his ideals.

For example: What comes to mind is naivety. He sounds very optimistic and seems to be promising things that a lot of other candidates do but never deliver on. I think he will find out that change is not that easy.

**Type of Thoughts**

**Q3-Q9: Detail**

- For each thought, was it detailed or not?

*Instructions:* Please consider the amount of detail the participant used in his or her response. Every thought must be coded as detailed or not detailed. Leave unnecessary “thought” spaces blank (or add a column if necessary).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-detailed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Code non-detailed thoughts as 0.
  - Non-detailed thoughts include unspecific thoughts evaluating the news stories or the politician.
  - These thoughts may include unsupported references to the quality of the news stories or the politician’s abilities.

- Code detailed thoughts as 1.
Detailed thoughts include thoughts about the specific elements in the news stories about the politician.

- These thoughts may include supported references to the quality of the news stories or the politician’s abilities.
- These thoughts may include the listing of specific message content, such as the candidate’s political party, race/ethnicity, goals, experience, etc.

- For example:
  - Thought 1: Mr. Fullerton is an ambitious politician who is trying now to achieve the seat of Governor of his state. = 1
  - Thought 2: He is typical of many politicians in promising things that is sure to help the people of his state, such as promoting better education. = 1
  - Thought 3: Not sure whether he is telling the truth or not, or if he will deliver on his ideals. = 0

- For example:
  - Thought 1: What comes to mind is naivete. = 0
  - Thought 2: He sounds very optimistic = 0
  - Thought 3: and seems to be promising things that a lot of other candidates do but never deliver on. = 0
  - Thought 4: I think he will find out that change is not that easy. = 0

**Q10-Q16: Complexity**

- For each thought, was it complex or simple?
Instructions: Please consider the complexity of the thought the participant used in his or her response. Every thought must be coded as complex or simple. Leave unnecessary “thought” spaces blank (or add a column if necessary).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simple</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complex</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Code simple thoughts as 0.
  - Simple thoughts include straightforward, uncomplicated thoughts evaluating the news stories or the politician.
    - Simple thoughts may include regurgitation of the information provided in the news stories.
    - Simple thoughts may include a simple evaluation of the candidate with no supporting information or consequence identified.
- Code complex thoughts as 1.
  - Complex thoughts include statements involving greater complexity regarding the content of the news stories or the politician’s role.
    - Complex thoughts may include the application of the information provided in the news stories to one’s own life.
    - Complex thoughts may include the consideration of the information beyond the news stories themselves (e.g., future implications).
    - Complex thoughts may include comparisons with other individuals or situations.
    - Complex thoughts may include detailed questioning of the news stories or the politician.
Complex thoughts may include detailed and nuanced judgments of the news stories or the politician.

For example:

- Thought 1: Mr. Fullerton is an ambitious politician who is trying now to achieve the seat of Governor of his state. = 0
- Thought 2: He is typical of many politicians in promising things that is sure to help the people of his state, such as promoting better education. = 1
- Thought 3: Not sure whether he is telling the truth or not, or if he will deliver on his ideals. = 1

For example:

- Thought 1: What comes to mind is naivete. = 0
- Thought 2: He sounds very optimistic = 0
- Thought 3: and seems to be promising things that a lot of other candidates do but never deliver on. = 1
- Thought 4: I think he will find out that change is not that easy. = 1

**Coding Example**

One complete line of coding might look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Q1: Number of Words</th>
<th>Q2: Number of Thoughts</th>
<th>Q3: Detail</th>
<th>Q10: Complexity</th>
<th>Q4: Detail</th>
<th>Q11: Complexity</th>
<th>Q5: Detail</th>
<th>Q12: Complexity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Mr. Fullerton is an ambitious politician who is trying now to achieve the seat of Governor of his state.</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Stimuli Examples

News story 1

Fullerton announces candidacy for governor

Jonathon Fullerton, a member of the Democratic Party, has announced his candidacy for governor of Wyoming.

Fullerton, 50, who has lived in the state his entire life, said he is seeking office because he thinks Wyoming is ready for a change in leadership.

“The present administration has been in for a few terms. I think it’s time to get some diversity, to generate some new thoughts and fresh ideas,” Fullerton said.

If elected, he said he would like to see more openness between the state’s elected officials and its residents. This openness would begin in the governor’s office, he said.

“I think I’ll be able to better serve the people of Wyoming in this position,” Fullerton added. “I hope the citizens of this great state will elect me and allow me to improve their perceptions of the government.”
Fullerton begins campaign for governorship

After recently announcing his candidacy for governor of Wyoming, Jonathon Fullerton, a member of the Democratic Party, has begun campaigning to lead the state.

Fullerton, 50, kicked off his campaign stops this weekend by discussing ways to reduce the state’s debt.

“I want to begin my tenure by slashing our debt,” Fullerton said at his first major speaking event of the campaign season. “I’m going to implement a plan to overhaul the excessive spending allowed and even encouraged by prior administrations.”

Encouraging bipartisan compromise and limiting statewide governmental spending are among the ways Fullerton suggested he would cut the state’s debt. He also assured his constituents he would not rescind the present tax cuts.

A press release from Fullerton’s office announced that his campaign platform will revolve around the need for change in the state. He will encourage voters to consider the fresh perspective he can bring, the release stated.

Touting his prior achievements, Fullerton said he is the best-suited person to become the next governor of Wyoming, a job that calls for political smarts coupled with good management skills and knowledge of state government procedure.

“Jon is as tough as nails and straight as an arrow,” said Fullerton’s chief of staff. “He negociates from strength. In other words, he’s tough when he does it, but if he gives you his word, it’s like money in the bank.”
Fullerton continues to tout skills, platform at campaign events

Jonathon Fullerton, a member of the Democratic Party, took to the campaign trail to explain why he is best suited to serve as the next governor of Wyoming.

Fullerton, 50, said he is the ideal candidate based on his prior effectiveness as a leader and his proven work ethic.

“Jon is one of the hardest working people I’ve ever met,” said a friend and former coworker. “He just works incredible hours. In fact, my only concern about Jon is that he works too hard.”

When asked about his work ethic, Fullerton said he enjoys putting in long hours, particularly if it is for a cause like state politics.

“I often wonder how long a person can keep this pace, but I just keep going,” Fullerton said in response to a question about burnout. “You can’t whine about it. When we have some success, it all seems worthwhile.”

Fullerton added that he will use this work ethic to keep his campaign promises, including reducing the level of unemployment and providing accessible education to all children.

“Our children deserve the best education we can give them,” he said. “That’s why my administration will focus on improving the educational standards in our state.”

Sticking with his campaign tradition, Fullerton continues to conclude each speaking event with a call for change in leadership and an assurance that he is the best candidate for the position.

“The people of Wyoming deserve a leader who will stand up for them and quit indulging the bureaucrats,” he said in a speech. “We need reform in Wyoming, and I have the skills and tenacity to better serve you.”
Appendix C

Final Study Measures (Listed in Order of Appearance)

HSM Open-Ended Thoughts Response

• Please write what comes to mind when you think about what you just read.

Explicit Attitude Measures

Attitudes toward the candidate.

From Barrett and Barrington (2005)

• If you were able, how likely would you be to vote for the candidate you read about?
  o Seven-point scale ranging from very unlikely to very likely

From Conover (1981) with anticipated factors listed

• The following words represent characteristics of people. Please rate the political candidate you read about on each of the following characteristics. (All items had seven-point scales.)
  o Factor 1: Evaluative dimensions
    o Good/bad
    o Sincere/insincere
    o Honest/dishonest
    o Trustworthy/untrustworthy
    o Fair/unfair
    o Kind/cruel
    o Pleasant/unpleasant
o **Factor 2: Political leadership and activity**
  
  o Active/passive
  
  o Industrious/lazy
  
  o Dynamic/undynamic
  
  o Decisive/indecisive
  
  o Strong/weak
  
  o Dominant/submissive
  
  o Independent/dependent

O **Factor 3: Experience and perceived ability**

  o Competent/incompetent
  
  o Experienced/inexperienced
  
  o Intelligent/unintelligent

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*From Sigelman, Sigelman, Walkosz, & Nitz (1995)*

- Please rate how much you agree that the political candidate you read could do each of the following things. (All items had seven-point scales, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.)

  o **Factor 1: Competence for handling policy issues** (Perceived ability to…)
    
    o Maintain a strong and well-prepared military
    
    o Encourage the growth of democracy throughout the world
    
    o Stimulate business and the economy
    
    o Keep government spending under control
    
    o Eliminate wasteful government spending
Factor 2: Compassion and concern for social equality (Perceived ability to…)
- Favor people like himself (reverse coded)
- Help poor people overcome poverty
- Help end discrimination against minority groups
- Be fair to all Americans

Attitudes toward Black individuals.
- Feeling thermometer ranging from zero to 10

From Brigham (1993)
- Please rate how much you agree with each of the following statements. (All items had seven-point scales, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.)
  - If a Black person were put in charge of me, I would not mind taking advice and direction from him or her.
  - If I had a chance to introduce Black visitors to my friends and neighbors, I would be pleased to do so.
  - I would rather not have Black people live in the same apartment building I live in. (reverse coded)
  - I would probably feel somewhat self-conscious to dance with a Black person in a public place. (reverse coded)
  - I would not mind it at all if a Black family with about the same income and education as me moved in next door.
  - I think Black people look more similar to each other than White people do.
Interracial marriage should be discouraged to avoid the “who-am-I?” confusion which the children feel. (reverse coded)

I get very upset when I hear a White person make a prejudicial remark about Black people.

I favor open housing laws that allow more racial integration of neighborhoods.

It would not bother me if my new roommate was Black.

It is likely that Black people will bring violence to neighborhoods when they move in. (reverse coded)

I enjoy a funny racial joke, even if some people might find it offensive. (reverse coded)

The federal government should take decisive steps to override the injustices Black people suffer at the hands of local authorities.

Black and White people are inherently equal.

Black people are demanding too much too fast in their push for equal rights. (reverse coded)

White people should support Black people in their struggle against discrimination and segregation.

Generally, Black people are not as smart as White people. (reverse coded)

I worry that in the next few years I may be denied my application for a job or a promotion because of preferential treatment given to minority group members. (reverse coded)

Racial integration (of schools, businesses, residences, etc.) has benefitted both
White and Black people.

- Some Black people are so touchy about race that it is difficult to get along with them. (reverse coded in present analysis)

**Attitudes toward Hispanic individuals.**

- Feeling thermometer ranging from zero to 10

*From Brigham (1993)*\(^{18}\)

- Please rate how much you agree with each of the following statements. (All items had seven-point scales, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.)

  - If a Hispanic person were put in charge of me, I would not mind taking advice and direction from him or her.
  - If I had a chance to introduce Hispanic visitors to my friends and neighbors, I would be pleased to do so.
  - I would rather not have Hispanic people live in the same apartment building I live in. (reverse coded)
  - I would probably feel somewhat self-conscious to dance with a Hispanic person in a public place. (reverse coded)
  - I would not mind it at all if a Hispanic family with about the same income and education as me moved in next door.
  - I think Hispanic people look more similar to each other than White people do. (reverse coded)

\(^{18}\) Items in the scale that apply to both Black and Hispanic individuals without needed alteration were not asked twice but used in the formation of both scales.
- Interracial marriage should be discouraged to avoid the “who-am-I?” confusion which the children feel. (reverse coded)
- I get very upset when I hear a White person make a prejudicial remark about Hispanic people.
- I favor open housing laws that allow more racial integration of neighborhoods.
- It would not bother me if my new roommate was Hispanic.
- It is likely that Hispanic people will bring violence to neighborhoods when they move in. (reverse coded)
- I enjoy a funny racial joke, even if some people might find it offensive. (reverse coded)
- The federal government should take decisive steps to override the injustices Hispanic people suffer at the hands of local authorities.
- Hispanic and White people are inherently equal.
- Hispanic people are demanding too much too fast in their push for equal rights. (reverse coded)
- White people should support Hispanic people in their struggle against discrimination and segregation.
- Generally, Hispanic people are not as smart as White people. (reverse coded)
- I worry that in the next few years I may be denied my application for a job or a promotion because of preferential treatment given to minority group members. (reverse coded)
- Racial integration (of schools, businesses, residences, etc.) has benefitted both White and Hispanic people.
Some Hispanic people are so touchy about race that it is difficult to get along with them. (reverse coded in present analysis)

**Implicit Attitude Measure**

- The Affect Misattribution Procedure (see Payne et al., 2005)
  - Used 30 pictures of White, Black, and Hispanic individuals
    - 10 pictures from each group
  - Used nine pictures of the political candidates read about
    - Three pictures of each candidate

**Manipulation Check**

- What was the race/ethnicity of the candidate you read about?
  - Asian
  - African American
  - Hispanic
  - Caucasian

- What was the political party affiliation of the candidate you read about?
  - Democrat
  - Republican
  - Independent

*From Rosenberg and McCafferty (1987)*

- How conservative or liberal was candidate you read about?
  - Seven-point scale from extremely conservative to extremely liberal
• Did you recognize the politician you read about in the news stories? If so, please describe how you know of him. (Yes or No; If yes, open-ended response was requested.)

Moderating, Control, and Demographic Variable Measures

Political ideology.
• When thinking about politics, where would you place yourself on the following scale?
  o Seven-point scale from extremely conservative to extremely liberal
• When thinking about social policy issues, such as gay rights, abortion, and health care reform, where would you place yourself on the following scale?
  o Seven-point scale from extremely conservative to extremely liberal
• When thinking about fiscal policy issues, such as taxation and economic regulation, where would you place yourself on the following scale
  o Seven-point scale from extremely conservative to extremely liberal

Political party affiliation.
• What is your political party affiliation?
  o Republican
  o Democrat
  o Independent
  o None
  o Other (please specify) – with open-ended response box

News media consumption.
• On an average DAY, how many HOURS do you spend:
  o Reading print or online newspapers?
Watching television news?
Consuming news online (NOT newspapers)
  - Response options for each media range from zero to 8+ hours

**Political cynicism.**

*From Pinkleton, Um, & Austin (2002)*

- Please rate how much you agree with each of the following statements. (All items had seven-point scales, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.)
  - Politicians lose touch with the people once elected.
  - Candidates for office are only interested in people’s votes, not in their opinions.
  - Too many politicians only serve themselves or special interests.
  - It seems our government is run by a few big interests who are just looking out for themselves.
  - Politicians lie to the media and the public.

**Political interest.**

*From Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng (2011)*

- Please rate how much you agree with each of the following statements. (All items had seven-point scales, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.)
  - I follow news and information about government and public affairs closely.
  - I follow news and information about elections closely.

**HSM Closed-Ended Measure**

*From Neuwirth, Frederick, & Mayo (2002) with anticipated factors listed*

- Please rate how much you agree with the following statements about the news stories you
just read. (All items had seven-point scales, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.)

- **Factor 1: Systematic**
  - I thought about how the information in the news stories relates to other things I know.
  - I found myself making connections between the information I got from the news stories and information I’ve gotten elsewhere.
  - I tried to relate the ideas in the news stories to my own life.
  - Based on the information I received from the news stories, I thought about what actions should be taken by the public.
  - I thought of the practical applications of the information in the news stories.

- **Factor 2: Heuristic: Topic Difficulty**
  - It took a lot of mental effort to understand how the parts of the news stories fit together.
  - I had difficulty seeing how the information in the news stories fits together into a story that makes sense overall.
  - The news stories were difficult to understand.
  - The news stories presented too many conflicting viewpoints.

- **Factor 3: Heuristic: Selective Scanning**
  - When reading the news stories, I only paid attention to the portion that seemed important.
  - When reading the news stories, I only paid attention to the portion that seemed interesting.
Factor 4: Heuristic: Skimming

- I generally skimmed through the news stories.
- When reading the news stories, I didn’t spend much time thinking about the information.
Jennifer Hoewe: Summarized Vita

Education
- Ph.D., Mass Communications, Teaching with Technology Certificate
  The Pennsylvania State University (May 2015)
- M.A., Journalism
  Michigan State University (May 2010)
- B.A., Communications with an emphasis in journalism, English minor
  Grand Valley State University (December 2007)

Academic Appointments
Assistant Professor of Journalism, College of Communication and Information Sciences
The University of Alabama (beginning Fall 2015)

Select Publications


Teaching Experience
Instructor at The Pennsylvania State University
- COMM 118 Introduction to Media Effects (Spring 2015)
- COMM 260W News Writing and Reporting (Fall 2014, Spring 2014)
- COMM 420 Research Methods in Advertising and Public Relations (Fall 2013)

Select Awards
- University Graduate Fellowship, The Pennsylvania State University (2011-2015)
- Excellence in Communication Doctoral Award, The Pennsylvania State University (2014)
- Outstanding Graduate Student, School of Journalism, Michigan State University (2010)