

## BLACK OPPOSITION TO WELFARE IN THE AGE OF OBAMA

**Byron D'Andra Orey**

*Jackson State University*

**Athena M. King**

*Framingham State University*

**Shonda K. Lawrence, and Brian E. Anderson**

*Jackson State University*

**Abstract:** In this article, we examine black attitudes toward welfare as a function of racial-identity, internalized racism and affection toward Barack Obama. We argue that black feelings towards domestic policy from which blacks benefit (in this case, welfare) are augmented by the presence of an African-American president; blacks who subscribe to the notion of "linked fate" will be more likely to support such policies; however, blacks who reject the notion of "linked fate" and accept the philosophy of individualism will point to the existence of an Obama presidency as proof that such policies are extrinsic to black socioeconomic mobility and that the true hindrance is the lack of desire by other blacks to pursue avenues of upward mobility. Moreover, blacks who possess internalized racism are expected to reject progressive policies that impact a disproportionate number of blacks. Using 2008 American National Election Studies Time Series Data, we test for positive racial-identity and internalized racism in predicting attitudes toward welfare. Our findings support our expectations as the level of internalized racism, racial identity and affection toward President Obama proved to be significant in explaining attitudes toward welfare. However, ideology, party identification and socioeconomic failed to significantly explain opposition to welfare.

**Keywords:** linked fate; welfare; Obama; progressive policy; racial identity; internalized racism

**Byron D'Andra Orey** is Professor of Political Science at Jackson State University. Dr. Orey shares his research and teaching experience in global education, having led students to Ghana, West Africa and Haiti and served as a Palestinian American Research Fellow. He has conducted lectures at St. Anne's College at Oxford University (Oxford, England), Emory University, Winneba University in Ghana, Africa, Yale University and Spelman College. He has published over twenty

scholarly articles and book chapters.

**Address:** Department of Political Science, Jackson State University, P.O. Box 18740, Jackson, MS 39217. Ph.: (601) 979 2136. Email: [byron.d.orey@jsums.edu](mailto:byron.d.orey@jsums.edu)  
**Athena M. King** is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Framingham State University, Framingham, MA. Dr. King's areas of research include on race/ethnicity (with emphasis on racial/ethnic stratification), urban policy, with emphasis on black electoral complexity, and environmental justice.

**Address:** Department of Political Science, Framingham State University, 325 May Hall, 100 State Street, Framingham, MA 01701. Ph.: (508) 215-5835. Email: [AKing4@Framingham.edu](mailto:AKing4@Framingham.edu)

**Shonda K. Lawrence** is an Assistant Professor in the College of Public Service, School of Social Work at Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi where she currently serves as the Interim BSW Program Director. Dr. Lawrence worked several years as juvenile probation officer in Cook County. She has published several articles and received a number of awards and recognitions for her commitment to academic excellence. Her research areas include: social welfare policy, child welfare, and incarcerated populations.

**Address:** 1400 J.R. Lynch, CFM 336, Jackson, MS 39217. Ph.: (601) 979-2019, Email: [shonda.k.lawrence@jsums.edu](mailto:shonda.k.lawrence@jsums.edu)

**Brian E. Anderson** is an Associate Professor of Social Work at Jackson State University and Adjunct Professor at Hinds Community College and is a member of the Council on Social Work Education's Council on Leadership Development. Dr. Anderson has been selected as the "Mississippi Social Worker Educator of the Year" and "Advisor of the Year Award." His research interests include: African-American Studies, Child Welfare, Civic Engagement, School Social Work, and Welfare of Sports (Mental Health of Athletes).

**Address:** Jackson State University, P.O. Box 18740, Jackson, MS 39217. Ph.: (601) 979-0509, Fax: (601) 979-3603 (fax) [brian.e.anderson@jsums.edu](mailto:brian.e.anderson@jsums.edu) (email)

**W**elfare is a policy issue that evokes strong emotions and opinions from citizens regardless of race, class, or gender. The election of Barack Obama raises questions over the influence that electing the first Black President may have on shaping and changing attitudes toward this highly charged issue. It has been well documented that citizens employ stereotypes and other heuristics when making political decisions and when expressing their political attitudes. The extant literature reveals that citizens are influenced by what social and political elites say and the way in which the media report these comments (Sniderman, Brody & Tetlock, 1991; Zaller, 1992). Such research is rooted in the notion that many citizens use shortcuts to make political judgments, in some cases relying on trusted sources (e.g., national/local leaders) for information (Kuklinski & Hurley, 1994; Mondak, 1993).

Over the last few presidential election cycles, blacks have supported the Democratic candidate with approximately 90 percent of their vote. To some, such support might serve as a proxy for black voters' support for a progressive agenda

and sole support for progressive candidates.<sup>1</sup> Prior research indicates that black support for progressive policies is a function of both black consciousness (Nie, Verba & Petrocik 1979) and racial-identity (Gurin, Hatchett, & Jackson, 1989). For example, Tate (1993) finds that black support for Jesse Jackson in his bid to become President in 1984 was directly related to black racial-identity.

At the same time that blacks provided their support for the Democratic presidential candidate at record highs, scholars documented a decrease in black support for a number of progressive social programs. In other words, there has been a move to the right by blacks on a variety of public policy issues. Tate (2010) finds that an increasing number of blacks are becoming much cooler in their support for social welfare programs, despite the sizeable number of blacks who continue to live in poverty. Tate (2010) offers two potential explanations: 1) elites frame the issues for blacks and blacks respond accordingly, and 2) blacks also embrace negative racial stereotypes as an explanation for blacks as dependents of welfare. Indeed, in her analysis of black support for welfare reform, Tate (2010) posits that a majority of blacks may have followed the leadership of Bill Clinton and that many blacks may have bought into the negative stereotypes associated with black recipients of welfare. As it relates to Clinton, Tate (2010) suggests that Clinton vacillated on the issue of welfare, mostly by addressing it as alternately ameliorative and pejorative to the black socioeconomic condition. Clinton entered the presidential race in 1992 by using language such as "ending welfare as we know it" and "mend not end" programs such as affirmative action. Such language arguably proved to be appealing to blacks for a number of reasons. On one hand, because of the strong racial-identity blacks have held over the years, they still perceive structural barriers as one of the justifications for the continuing presence of the disproportionate number of blacks living in poverty. On the other hand, given the strong negative-stereotypes associated with blacks (i.e., blacks are "lazy"), many blacks—like many whites—are also expected to blame blacks for their failures. For Tate (2010), such attitudes point to a potential decline in black consciousness in the black community.

In addition to Tate's assessment, Michael Dawson also examines black opposition to welfare. Dawson (1994) finds that support for redistributive economic policies was a function of blacks' perceived "linked fate" with other blacks. The author also finds that class served as a constraint to the perceived linked fate, as individuals who possessed higher education and income were less likely to support economic redistribution. Even though Tate mentions negative stereotypes of blacks as a plausible explanation for support for welfare reform, the author was unable to test this position. Likewise, Dawson (1994) only provides a positive measurement of racial attitudes by also examining racial-identity as an explanation of opposition to economic redistributive services.

Such analyses are consistent with the research in the area of black politics. An abundance of research exists that focuses on positive racial-identity. Scholars have measured positive racial-attitudes using a variety of variables. Racial-identity has been researched under both "linked fate" and "common fate" (Tate, 1993 and Dawson, 1994). The linked or common-fate theory contends that because of their shared history and experiences vis-à-vis whites (i.e., economic subordination and

slavery), an overwhelming majority of blacks believe that what happens to blacks as a whole will have an impact on their personal lives. It has been measured using the following item: "Do you think what happens generally to black people in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life?" For instance, using data from the National Black Politics Survey, Harris-Lacewell (2004) reports that 75 percent of black respondents believe that what happens to other blacks in the United States has an impact on their individual lives. Hence, given their shared experiences, blacks are more likely to express "a sense of grievance as victims of injustice" (Gurin et al., 1989:497), rather than blaming themselves for the social and economic disparities between blacks and whites in the United States. Those scholars employing black consciousness as a variable (Gurin & Epps, 1975; Miller, Gurin, Gurin, & Malanchuk, 1981; Gurin, Miller, & Gurin, 1980; Gurin, Hatchett, & Jackson, 1989; Shingles, 1981; Reese & Brown, 1995) identified blacks as being "conscious" if they blamed the system and pointed to racism and discrimination for racial inequalities and if they suggested that their status in the United States was due to an unfair society.

Black Nationalism, black autonomy and racial solidarity (Welch et al., 2002; Brown & Shaw, 2002; Davis & Brown, 2002; Dawson, 2001) are collectively based on the notion that blacks should rely almost exclusively on other blacks to navigate through society and improve their socioeconomic condition. The common denominator between all of these labels is the shared experiences and unique world view possessed by blacks.

In an effort to better understand the possession of positive and negative racial-attitudes, we turn to the work of W.E.B. Du Bois. Du Bois described the tension among blacks who possess both pro-black group-identification and internalized anti-black social-evaluations in the *Soul of Black Folks*. According to Du Bois, "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others.... One ever feels this twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings" (Du Bois, 1903:45).

With the historical election of Barack Obama as the first black to serve as president of the United States in 2008 (and reelected in 2012), it may seem as though the two strivings may at last be reconciled. Unlike the message offered by Clinton, it is our contention that Obama represents a progressive voice - one we suspect will positively influence black attitudes toward welfare. Additionally, the research at hand moves beyond the traditional reliance on positive group-identity to understand black attitudes toward progressive public-policies by offering negative racial-attitudes as an alternative explanation for such policies. Specifically, we introduce internalized racism—defined as "racial antipathy toward members of one's own racial group, expressed via negative racial-stereotypes"—as a potential explanation for black opposition to social welfare programs and overrepresentation of blacks in the welfare system.

The current research examines the impact of political elites and intra-racial attitudes in explaining black attitudes toward welfare. This work builds on the first two authors' research on positive and negative racial-attitudes. According to Orey et al. (2012), black negative-racial attitudes, even when controlling for racial-

identity, help explain black opposition to racial policies and welfare. We contend that both positive and negative racial attitudes will contribute to Black opposition to welfare. We examine black attitudes toward welfare as a function of racial-identity, internalized racism and affection toward Barack Obama. First, we provide a synopsis of the Clinton and Obama administrations as they relate to black attitudes toward Democratic candidates. Next, we provide a brief introduction of internalized racism within the black community. Finally, we present the hypotheses, data and methods (based on the 2008 American National Election Studies Time Series Data), followed by the findings and conclusions regarding black attitudes toward welfare in the Obama Era.

### Black Attitudes toward Clinton and Obama

Bill Clinton and Barack Obama represent the only Democratic Party candidates to be elected President of the United States since 1992. In each election, overwhelming black support propelled the candidate to office and helped both win second terms. In addition, during the initial campaign seasons, both Clinton and Obama were perceived as agents of positive change for the socioeconomic fortunes and political power of blacks. However, Obama's campaign and administration—though purported to be modeled after Clinton's centrist posture—is arguably different than that of Clinton, particularly with respect to the means by which each candidate galvanized support of the black electorate during the first campaign and black perception of policy positions taken by the candidate once in office. Clinton, who first ran and was elected in 1992, was hailed by blacks as the promise of increased economic opportunity in the wake of twelve years of Republican economic conservatism (Harris-Lacewell & Albertson, 2005).

Clinton's overtly symbolic actions during the campaign and appointment of blacks in the administration endeared him to the black electorate; however, certain policy actions on Clinton's decision agenda proved as detrimental to black policy preferences as those promulgated under the previous Republican regime. In 1996, Clinton signed into law the Welfare Reform Act, placing a five-year lifetime limit on the number of years poor families could receive welfare benefits. At the time, roughly two-thirds of blacks supported the Act while only approximately 30 percent opposed it (Barker, Jones, & Tate, 1999). Arguably, the attitudes opposing welfare among blacks are associated with those possessed by whites. According to Gilens (1995), opposition to welfare is strongly associated with negative attitudes toward blacks. Negative racial-attitudes towards other blacks and intra-group resentment were heightened during the Clinton years and were enhanced when Clinton took policy steps aimed at "correcting" or "punishing" blacks who were the subject of the attitudes (e.g., welfare reform and the specious equivocation of "welfare" with blacks, as embodied in the archetypal "welfare queen" motif originally fabricated by Ronald Reagan's campaign in 1980). As such, backlash against Clinton for this agenda item (and others such as signing the NAFTA agreement and rescinding the nomination of Lani Guiner for Assistant Attorney General) was not met with

significant negative reaction from the black community. Finally, Clinton's vacillation between liberal and conservative positions (e.g., vetoing the Welfare Reform Act twice but signing it the third time), appeals to conservatives and suburbanites in an effort to win back "Reagan Democrats" during the 1992 campaign, and scandal-plagued administration failed to sufficiently reduce black support—and as such, black resentment and intra-group hostility. In 2000, Clinton's last year in office, nearly four out of five blacks held a favorable view of Clinton (Harris-Lacewell & Albertson, 2005:653).

In contrast to Clinton, blacks' perceptions of Obama as a legitimate contender for the Presidency were heightened with the critical Iowa primary win in January 2008; however, some blacks maintained lingering loyalty to the Clinton Administration and initially lent their support to (then New York Senator) Hillary Clinton. Later, Obama's ability to weather attacks against him (e.g. Jeremiah Wright, the "gods and guns" statement), win other key primaries and deliver a profound oration on the state of race in America was sufficient to change the perceptions of many blacks (and whites). Though questions of Obama's "blackness" were raised as early as 2007 (Walters, 2007), Obama came to be viewed as a unifying force later in the campaign because of (1) his heritage (i.e., biracial, with an African father), (2) his relatively short—yet powerful—presence on the political scene, and (3) the recognition by blacks, whites, and other ethnic groups that not only could he win, but he may be able to change the country's fortunes for the better in the wake of the Bush 43 presidency, the 2008 economic collapse, and international conflict with Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition, an Obama presidency held for many blacks the promise of progressive policy promulgation which would provide blacks with "equality of condition"—that is, policies that would remedy past effects of discrimination (i.e., redistribution of income and/or resources); other blacks viewed an Obama presidency as the potential for policy promulgation designed to help blacks to achieve "equality of result"—that is, policies that went beyond redistribution of income/resources and would actually help blacks achieve socioeconomic parity with whites and other racial/ethnic groups (e.g., affirmative action). In other words, many blacks who supported Obama in 2008 anticipated policy changes which would finally meliorate the black condition. Finally, Obama in 2008 bolstered positive racial-identity among blacks, as blacks expressed overwhelming pride in the first African American with a robust chance of winning the presidency; upon election, many blacks were imbued with a sense of "hope" not only for the newly elected black president, but for the prospect of accomplishing feats in the socioeconomic and political realm previously denied to most blacks. According to the Pew Research Center, of the 131 million people who voted in the 2008 election, blacks made up 12.1 percent of the voting electorate; 95 percent of blacks cast their votes for Obama.

Despite the perceived dearth of items on Obama's governmental and decision agendas that would benefit blacks (e.g., jobs programs for the inner city), the distance created by Obama from his "blackness" and black issues captured in the media, and Obama's obvious bipartisan/conciliatory stances on policy proposals, Obama's presence as the embodiment of "descriptive" as well as "symbolic"

representation of blacks across the board has (arguably) reduced intra-group resentment. Perhaps, policy issues related to the economy which (as of 2013) threaten all but the wealthiest individuals, play a role in reducing this degree of resentment as people are concerned more with preservation of the middle class (of which blacks comprise a significant portion) and maintaining a "safety net" for the poor (also of which blacks also comprise a significant portion). However, some blacks may reject the notion of welfare - even as an aforementioned "safety net" for blacks—because of internalized racism, a concept which will be discussed in the following section.

## The Evolution of Internalized Racism

The focus on racial-identity from the lens of positive racial attitudes paints an incomplete picture of black identity. The extant literature has focused almost exclusively on black racial solidarity, while providing almost no coverage of negative racial attitudes. Moreover, much of the research examining negative racial attitudes has focused primarily on whites—particularly as it relates to racism. By comparison, there is a paucity of literature—particularly in political science—which focuses on these factors from the perspective of blacks themselves toward other blacks. Hence, our work differs from prior work in that we focus on both positive and negative black intra-racial attitudes. First, we address instances of internalized racism—again, defined as racial animus toward members of one's own racial group—as shown in the extant literature.

We can turn to Cohen's (1999) incorporation of the theory of marginalization in helping us to explain existing attitudinal cleavages within the black community. It is appropriate here because it moves us beyond the paradigm of studying race relations as a function of the dominant group's regulation of the marginal group, to a discussion of the marginal group's regulation of their own group members. Cohen (1999) states that white stereotypes of Blacks "have great staying power" (p. 43). Indeed, DuBois writes, "the average Negro has also taken over something of the white American's attitude toward the Negro" (Myrdal, 1944:1143).

While political scientists have failed to focus on negative black intra-racial attitudes, early social psychology research on blacks focused on anti-black social evaluations among blacks. Lewin's (1941) analysis of self-hatred among Jews affirmed that group identity and personality are linked directly. Lewin (1941) later applied this framework to the study of blacks, concluding that "one of the better known and most extreme cases of self-hatred can be found among American Negroes. Negroes distinguish within their group four or five strata according to skin shade—the lighter the skin the higher the strata" (p. 189). Using Lewin's approach, Cross (1991) creates a formula whereby he defines racial-identity as being a sum of group identity and personal identity. Cross's observation is extremely important here because we assay racial-identity, both as measured by attitudes toward Blacks as a group and attitudes toward the individual her/himself.

The famous 'Dolls Tests', pioneered by Mamie Clark and administered to the

plaintiffs in *Brown vs. Board of Education* by Kenneth Clark (Clark & Clark, 1947), emphasized the level of self-loathing held by some blacks. In this research, black children were found to be more likely to express preferences for white dolls than black dolls. Following the era of self-hatred (1939-1968; see Cross 1991) was a period of time known as the "nigrescence era" (1968-1980). "Nigrescence" refers to the evolution of black racial-identity. During the "[b]lack is Beautiful" era, replications of the 'Dolls Test' seemed to indicate that "times may be changing" and "Negroes are becoming blacks proud of their race" (Hraba & Grant, 1970:400). However, Mamie Clark was less optimistic: "From my general observations, the children's perceptions of themselves as black, and all the negatives that [it] connotes, have not changed significantly since my first studies in the 1930s and 1940s" (cited in Clark, 1988:248). Still, in a recent study, Bernstein (2011) suggests that the rejection of the black dolls by the children in Clark's study had little to do with internalized racism and more to do with the children's opposition to the common practice of violent play involving black dolls during the period of time in which the study was conducted.

## Hypotheses

Previous studies—rooted in Psychology—succeed in providing empirical examinations of internalized racism; however, what seems to be missing from the extant literature is an empirical examination of internalized racism as it relates to policy preferences. In the past, such preferences have been construed as catholic desires held by most blacks and borne out of a shared sense of historical marginalization, slavery and *de jure/de facto* segregation. We contend that despite the historical placement of the group, many blacks do not subscribe to the notion that socioeconomic and political preferences are universally shared, and that some blacks—particularly, those who subscribe to the philosophy of individualism—do not readily accept the notion of "shared" or "linked" fate as it pertains to policy preferences related to welfare. However, the attitudes of blacks with regard to these policy preferences may be enhanced by the Obama presidency. We argue that black feelings towards domestic policy from which blacks benefit (in this case, welfare) are augmented by the presence of an African-American president; blacks who subscribe to the notion of "linked fate" will be more likely to support such policies; however, blacks who reject the notion of "linked fate" and accept the philosophy of individualism will point to the existence of an Obama presidency as proof that such policies are extrinsic to black socioeconomic mobility, and that the true hindrance is the lack of desire by other blacks to pursue avenues of upward mobility. Moreover, blacks who possess internalized racism are expected to reject progressive policies that impact a disproportionate number of blacks.

In sum, we expect that blacks will employ both their negative and positive racial-attitudes in expressing their affection or disaffection toward welfare. Specifically, we test positive racial-identity and internalized racism. In addition, we also believe that attitudes toward Obama will impact individuals' attitudes toward

welfare. Formally stated:

- H<sub>1</sub>: An increase in linked fate will decrease opposition to welfare.  
 H<sub>2</sub>: An increase in internalized racism will increase opposition to welfare.  
 H<sub>3</sub>: An increase in affection toward Obama will decrease opposition to welfare.

## Data and Methods

The data employed in this analysis are derived from the 2008 American National Election Studies Time Series Data. This survey employed sampling frame which occurred in five stages. During the first stage, counties were sampled, followed by census tracts from within selected counties; within census tracts, census block groups were sampled. Lastly, individual households were randomly selected from within each census block group. The Time Series consisted of one pre-election interview and one post-election interview. After informed consent forms were signed, respondents were paid for each completed interview. Post-election interviews were conducted between November 5 and December 21, 2008. Surveys were conducted in person using computer-assisted interviewing. Of particular interest to our research, the Time Series oversampled black and Latino respondents to ensure adequate representation of these groups. There were 583 blacks sampled in the survey. The pre-election survey included 2323 respondents, 2102 of whom completed the post-election survey (90% retention rate). The final sample included 1933 respondents, all of whom completed all measures.

The **dependent variable** for this analysis is opposition to welfare. It is measured using a 100 point thermometer scale recoded so that 0 represents very warm feelings (i.e., strong support for welfare policies) and 100 represents very cold feelings (i.e., strong opposition to welfare policies).

The **independent variables** include *internalizes racism, linked fate and affect toward Obama*. The internalized racism variable is constructed based on two seven-point items ranging from: 1) hardworking to lazy, and 2) intelligent to unintelligent. An additive scale is created where higher scores indicate that the respondent harbored more negative stereotypes of blacks (i.e., lazy and unintelligent). The linked fate variable is operationalized based on the following item: "Do you think what happens generally to Black people in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life?" The follow-up question used to gauge intensity was worded as follows: "Will it affect you a lot, some, or not very much?" Black affection is measured using a thermometer scale. This scale ranges from 0-100 where zero represents someone who is cold toward the president, i.e., does not like him and 100 represents someone who is extremely hot toward the president, i.e., has great affection for him.

In addition to the independent variables, a number of control variables were also included to fully specify the model. For example, scholars who endorse the principled-politics argument posit that opposition to progressive policies is not a function of racism; rather, it can be attributed to traditional American values (e.g., individualism) and ideology. Here, we include ideology as a control by using the

traditional seven-point scale ranging from strongly liberal to strongly conservative. Similarly, party identification is measured using the traditional seven-point scale, where "Strong Democrat" takes on the lowest value and "Strong Republican" takes on the highest value. Additional controls include education and income; both are measured from lowest to highest. For ease of interpretation, we have mapped all of our variables onto a [0, 1] interval. Such coding will allow us to compare across independent variables.

## Findings

We first turn to Table 1 to assess the descriptive statistics. Here, we see that based on means reported for the dependent variable, blacks are situated approximately a third of the way from the bottom, averaging about .35 on a 0-1 scale. This suggests that the average black respondent was fairly cool on the thermometer scale. Here, because the welfare scale was reverse-coded, low scores indicate that respondents were less supportive of welfare. Moving to the independent variables, respondents were extremely warm toward Obama on the thermometer scale, averaging .91 out of a possible 1.00. As expected, respondents also scored high on the linked fate scale at approximately .70. Respondents, on average, held fairly low internalized racism attitudes. The mean score on the internalized racism scale was roughly .29 on a 0-1 scale. These findings indicate that the average black respondent considered other blacks to be fairly hardworking and intelligent as opposed to lazy and unintelligent.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Welfare	508	.3486	.21293
Thermometer (affect)	525	.9134	.12482
Linked Fate	583	.7014	.23790
Education	583	.7251	.14542
Ideology	583	.4691	.18982
Income	583	.3305	.22240
Internalized Racism	583	.2907	.21734
Party ID	578	.7158	.16528

In our second cut at the data, we employed linear regression to examine black attitudes toward welfare. Table 2 provides the findings for the regression. Recall that H<sub>1</sub> posited a negative relationship between linked fate and opposition to welfare; H<sub>2</sub> offered a positive relationship between internalized racism and opposition to welfare; and H<sub>3</sub> hypothesized that an increase in affect toward Obama (thermometer) would lead to a decrease in opposition to welfare. Based on the results, Hypothesis 1 is confirmed. Here, an increase in linked fate results in a decrease in negative attitudes toward welfare by roughly seven points. Table 2



reveals that Hypothesis 2 is also confirmed. These results indicate that an increase from the low end of the internalized racism scale to the high end of the scale results in a 17-point increase in opposition to welfare attitudes among blacks. Lastly, affection toward Obama confirms Hypothesis 3. An increase in affection towards Obama results in a 35-point decline in opposition to welfare attitudes. This finding yields the strongest magnitude when compared to the other variables, as it doubles the coefficient for internalized racism and is five times larger than the linked fate coefficient. According to the findings, none of the control variables impact black attitudes toward welfare. Arguably, one might suspect that the increase in the black middle class might lead more blacks to possess colder attitudes toward welfare; however, that does not appear to be the case here. Both positive and negative racial attitudes and attitudes toward President Obama are what matters most.

**Table 2: Determinants of Black Opposition to Welfare (OLS Regression)**

Variables	
Linked Fate	-.070* (.036)
Ideology	-.017 (.048)
Income	.047 (.046)
Party ID	.006 (.059)
Internalized Racism	.168** (.042)
Barack Obama	-.353** (.073)
(Constant)	.657** (.098)
N = 502	
Adj. R <sup>2</sup> = .08	

Note: Coefficients are reported with standard errors in parentheses. \*p<.05; \*\*p<.01

## Conclusion

Based on the findings reported in our analysis, Obama is deemed to have had a positive influence on black attitudes towards welfare. Arguably, such attitudes

prove to have changed when compared to the Clinton era. Clinton's election was predicated on a platform that depicted social welfare as a "broken system" doling out millions of dollars to the undeserving. During the campaign, Clinton iterated that America needed to "end welfare as we know it." The emphasis on welfare reform harkened back to the days of Ronald Reagan's "welfare queen" motif of the early 1980s which intimated strongly that social services—and taxpayer dollars—were being particularly abused by blacks. To be sure, Clinton's rhetoric on the welfare issue was not as strong as Reagan's; however, his actions may have served as a heuristic in jarring the memories of those who once embraced or simply had been exposed to the words of Reagan. Indeed, despite the high levels of poverty within the black community, many blacks supported Clinton's policy action and condoned his actions, appearing to co-opt the stereotypical perceptions of blacks and the welfare system. After Clinton left office, assaults on the social welfare system continued under the George W. Bush's Administration, resulting in continuous budget cuts to the system over the eight-year period.

Arguably, Obama's influence is an extension of the overall affinity expressed by blacks toward Obama, as manifested in his overwhelming support during the 2008 election and continued support by blacks leading into the next election cycle. (According to a June, 2012 Gallup poll, approximately 87 percent of blacks supported the President.) In 2008, Obama ran on a platform that advocated for medical, housing and financial government assistance to those in need during a recession. In the wake of the 2008 economic collapse, the President insisted on the passage of a stimulus bill designed to save thousands of jobs (and a financial rescue of the automobile industry which saved thousands more). Obama's 2013 agenda, (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues>) is replete with policy proposals designed to provide assistance to the middle class and maintain a safety net for the poor. Because the current governmental agenda is threatened by measures proposed by conservatives and poised to further harm the middle class and abolish the safety net for the poor, blacks are hopeful that President Obama will not allow these measures to come to fruition.

The research here suggests that ideology, party identification, nor socioeconomic status matters when considering black attitudes toward welfare. What does matter, however, is the level of affection toward President Obama, the level of internalized racism and whether blacks possess strong positive racial-identification. Although, on average, there has been a move to the right by blacks on a variety of social policy issues, racial-identity, in tandem with the affection that blacks possess toward Obama, works to constrain negative attitudes toward welfare. To be sure, the election of Bill Clinton and by extension his campaign to transform welfare, worked to move blacks to the right on the issue. The election of Barack Obama, however, has tapped into blacks' liberal consciousness by softening their attitudes toward welfare.

Our findings suggest that blacks can simultaneously hold dual attitudes toward welfare using both positive and negative racial-attitudes. We turn to the work of Du Bois for instructions here. Du Bois described the tension among blacks who possess both pro-black group identification and internalized anti-black social evaluations as an indication that blacks possessed a "double consciousness." Du

Bois' perspective is consistent with our findings and suggests that we should examine, not only black positive attitudes, but, also the negative attitudes possessed by some blacks. Indeed, we argue that the employment of negative racial-attitudes, such as negative stereotypes, serves as the impetus behind much of the racial conservatism possessed by a growing number of blacks.

The analysis presented in this study suggests that blacks have not moved away from the notion of "equality of result" and feel as though the government still has a considerable task ahead in attempting to ameliorate the chronic socioeconomic disparities between blacks and whites. In addition, the results suggest the notion of "linked fate" is not on the wane; as such, the desire to support federal efforts—along with having an African-American president—is holding steady. However, the most powerful element of this study involves the perceived level of emotional connection blacks have with President Obama and the degree to which this connection influences policy preferences regarding welfare. Although "individualism" and "personal responsibility" are fundamental precepts in America's founding, blacks continue to believe the ability to succeed based on these precepts has been denied to blacks because of past racism and discrimination.

### Limitations of the Study

While there is considerable support for our hypotheses in this study, we would be remiss to address its limitations. First, the limitations of the study include the lack of generalizability of the findings to all supporters or non-supporters of the Obama Administration. It is not necessarily true that all supporters of the Obama Administration also support welfare policy, and vice versa. Second, considering the research was conducted with participants within selected counties, the participants do not totally represent the generalized election population. Additionally, it can be argued that the accuracy of responses from the paid participants is potentially not as valid as it could possibly be with an unpaid sampled population. Finally, the data were collected between November 5 and December 21, 2008, immediately following an overwhelmingly supportive (first) election of Obama and his policies. Since that time, the Obama Administration has served a full term and embarked upon a second term; thus, attitudes towards and perceptions of welfare policy may have changed. This may be especially true in light of the economic recession experienced by the country in 2008 and the slow pace of economic recovery since that time.

### Implications for Welfare Policy and Current/future Politics of Welfare

As we face economic deficits while attempting to address issues of those in need, social welfare policy will continue to be a major concern for political leaders,

proponents/opponents of social-welfare policy, social-service providers and recipients. Dialogue surrounding this issue will continue to be the highlight of many presidential campaigns to come, considering the increased number of welfare recipients and the level of need in reference to the government's fiscal responsibility to the issue. Notwithstanding, a significant move to promulgate or reject welfare policy provisions for those in need in our society will have to be taken into consideration regardless of political or racial identification/affiliation. With the passage of the War on Poverty legislation beginning in 1964, federal, state, and local governments have demonstrated their commitment to addressing racial and ideological tensions in American politics and society (Germany, 2013). The continual review, revision and implementation of notable laws and administrative rules that define the purposes and prerequisite of social welfare builds on the historical foundation grounded in the need for social welfare. It is important to note that these legislative efforts began in a time of blatant racism and discrimination that directly impacted movement toward financial, social and political freedom for blacks. Today, as more blacks experience upward mobility in these areas, "oneness" in political, financial and social identity is challenged. As we move forward, it is imperative that social, psychological and financial factors that may inhibit blacks' ability to internalize experiences of persons in need of services or provisions are examined when looking at blacks' views on (or opposition to) welfare policy.

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#### Note

- <sup>1</sup> Elsewhere (Orey & Larimer, 2008) define progressive policies as those policies that seek to remedy social, political and economic inequalities along the line of race, class, gender and age.