IMPACT OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES ON

THE SELF-ESTEEM AND GENERALIZED SELF-

EFFICACY OF COLLEGE STUDENTS:

A FOCUS ON RACE AND GENDER

By

DONELL LAKIETH BARNETT

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology
Langston University
Langston, OK
2002

Master of Education in Community Counseling
University of North Texas
Denton, TX
2006

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IMPACT OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES ON

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EFFICACY OF COLLEGE STUDENTS:

A FOCUS ON RACE AND GENDER

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Dr. Sue Jacobs

Dissertation Adviser

Dr. John Romans

Dr. Valarie McGaha

Dr. Steve Harrist

Dr. Jason Kirksey

Outside Committee Member

Dr. Mark Payton

Dean of the Graduate College

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CHAPTER I

ABSTRACT

What are the implications of the 2008 Presidential election on African Americans and women? The historic occurrences of the first African American President, Barack Obama, and the successful political gains of Sarah Palin and Hillary Clinton; these events were expected to influence the self-perceptions of women and African Americans in major ways. Specifically, improved self-perceptions and performance in a wide array of areas were anticipated and welcomed outcomes. The psychological literature records very little regarding past elections of this kind, i.e. Shirley Chisholm in 1972, Geraldine Ferraro in 1984, and Jesse Jackson in 1984 and 1988. In this study, we used analog vignettes to infer the impact of the 2008 election on the self-esteem and general self-efficacy of African American and White, male and female college students. Further, we studied the effect of both a male and a female president in two different experiments. Making use of social comparison and social learning theories as guiding principles, in these two online-based, experiments we examined whether political figures influenced experimental groups differently from controls. We found significant changes for African American males and females primed with a presidential candidate vignette of their same race. We observed no changes for White males or females.

MANUSCRIPT

The 2008 presidential primaries and campaigns generated much interest and press. While it is common for national elections to dominate news coverage during the campaign season; due to its historic precedence in US presidential history, the 2008 election received markedly much more attention (Zeleny, 2008). For the first time in U.S. Presidential politics, a minority and a female, in the persons of Illinois Senator Barack Obama and New York Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, were major contenders in the two-party system.

The historic nature of the election was emboldened when Barack Obama, an African American, secured the nomination of Democratic Party in June of 2008 (Sesno, 2008). Although Hillary Clinton's historic mark as a female contender ended at the conclusion of the primaries, women's presidential history received a second look with the introduction of Sarah Palin as the Vice Presidential nominee for the Republican Party ("GOP.com," 2008). Ultimately, after a long fought campaign, Barack Obama became the 45th president of the United States; something that many people did not believe would ever happen in their lifetimes.

Commentary regarding this momentous event in history abounded throughout professional, academic, and common circles (de Moraes, 2008). It was reported that over 38 million people tuned in to watch Obama's acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention in Denver, Colorado; outperforming the 2008 Olympics with 34 million viewers. From website blogs to community barbershops, speculation regarding the significance of this event was seemingly endless. A particular point of conversation was the perceptual and

inspirational impact the candidates had/have on the African-American and female citizens of the US. One assertion was that the candidates served as role models and typified the possibilities of the American dream (Sussman, 2007). Still others discussed an evolution of self-perceptions for Blacks and women, which is attributable to the accomplishments of such high-level individuals. Psychological and political science theorists have advanced conceptual models that may provide some understanding of the implications of this moment in history.

My intent in this study was to shed light on some of the psychological implications of this historic election. Specifically, a look at the possible "role model" effect of African American and female presidential candidates was the focus. Using Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura & Vasta, 1992) and Festinger's Social Comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) as lenses through which to view this potential impact, I hope to increase understanding about the psychological processes at work in the African American and women college-age constituencies; namely self esteem and generalized self efficacy. Given the political climate in the 2008 presidential election, I expected that this analysis would provide guidance as to how presidential role models may increase the self-esteem and general self-efficacy of Blacks and women.

Challenges and Disparities

African Americans and White women have not enjoyed the same successes in career and educational settings as their White male counterparts. In the area of education, high school dropout rates paint a bleak picture. The Department of Education reported that in 2005, dropout rates for adolescent Blacks were 10.4% compared to only 6% for Whites

(National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). While Blacks experienced substantial increases in matriculation rates at universities over the last 30 years (Snyder, Dillow, Hoffman, & National Center for Education Statistics, 2008); these rates pale in comparison to rates for Caucasian males.

In 2004, Black males enrolled at a rate of 35.7% while White males enrolled at 44.1%, a drastic disparity. African American females, however, seem to be making much better progress in this area with an enrollment rate of 64.3%. The enrollment rate disparity also occurs at the graduate and professional school level (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). Thus at each educational level, from high school to graduate school, African Americans as a group lag behind their White counterparts, with African American men in the worst position.

White women have higher high school graduation rates, higher college enrollment rates, and higher graduate school rates than White males (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). The major disparities between White males and females do not seem to appear until they enter the workforce. With respect to compensation, women are not on par with men for the same work. Furthermore, the number of women in management and executive positions also drastically lags. This same gap is much more pronounced among minority women (Gabor, Houlder, Carpio, & Department of Labor, 2001).

Achievement Barriers

Several legal, policy, and institutional interventions have decreased the effects of racism and sexism that are at the heart of these disparities. The federal government and other private institutions have employed interventions such as desegregation, affirmative action,

and numerous educational initiatives to help counter balance disparities, and provide a helping hand for those wanting to advance their standings. Many educational and career advances among women and minorities over the last 50 years are perhaps directly attributable to these efforts. Nevertheless, despite the great efforts of these systemic interventions, there is a psychological legacy that remains; a legacy that is much more elusive and pervasive in forestalling continued growth in the academic and workforce ranks.

One interesting focus is the socially accepted expectations that some African Americans and women adopt, and the shared relationship these expectations have with advancement in schools and in the workplace. Many scholars have studied the socially accepted expectations and self-perception concepts that factor into the achievement gap. For women, concerns such as low risk-taking, self-efficacy beliefs, career aspirations, and sex-role orientations are prominent factors (Dolan, 2004; Farmer, 1976; Gabor, et al., 2001). "Wanting to be cool", the concept of "acting White", and the so-called anti-intellectualism belief, which is the notion of some Black youths that being smart or working hard in school, is simply not something that Blacks do; these are frequent topics in the literature on achievement disparities for Blacks (Cokley, 2003; McWorter, 2000).

It is important to look at common barriers to achievement in African Americans and women. Steele (1997) posits that some minorities underperform in academic settings for fear of confirming negative stereotypes that exist for them, what has been termed stereotype threat. Researchers have demonstrated that stereotype threat significantly impacts the academic performance of minorities and women, by disturbing their confidence and rousing anxiety under test-taking situations, when in the company of those perceived to hold those stereotypes (Cadinu, Maass, Rosabianca, & Kiesner, 2005; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Some scholars argue that a fear of success plagues many minorities (Farmer, 1976; Ajayi, 2002). The fear stems from the expectation of greater responsibility and therefore greater criticism that is likely to arise from the next developmental step in their progression, e.g. moving from mid to upper-level management. Still others have discussed the lack of role models as a major contributing factor to low motivation for achievement in women and minorities, and the resulting achievement gap (Buunk, Peirã³, & Griffioen, 2007; Wheeler, Suls, Elliot, & Dweck, 2005).

It reasons that a decreased number of successful minorities and women in academic and workforce settings would hamper the ambitions and motivations for young adults. Without these crucial exemplars, women and African Americans are more likely to restrict their career pathways to roles where there is an "established record of success", effectively perpetuating a lack of ambition for higher levels of achievement. In this study, I conceptualized lowered self-esteem and self-efficacy as possible explanations for the achievement gap. Where self-esteem is defined as a global evaluation of the self, self-efficacy refers to beliefs about how effective one will be. In the context of the 2008 presidential election, Black's and women's ability to not only achieve goals, but also to thrive in academic and career settings, the 2008 presidential candidates enhance this ability.

Theoretical Basis

Social scientists have theorized and supported the notion that political figures influence voters beyond the traditional expectations of an office holder, e.g. casting a vote for the candidate, supporting candidates financially, etc. However, the research in this area is incomplete. The majority of the work only considered the influence of political figures on

campaign-related behaviors; relying on sociological research methods. Only a few studies looked directly at the intrapersonal implications of political figures.

Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006) conducted a series of studies that looked at whether the presence of female political role models inspires interest in political activism among young women. Their first study considered the "role model effect" over time. Using a subset of questions from a national sample of high school seniors from 1976-2001, they found a significant difference in political aspirations between boys and girls in the years 1985 and 1993. They reasoned the 1985 effect related to the 1984 vice presidential run of Geraldine Ferraro. Additionally, they attributed the 1993 effect to the "year of the woman" in 1992. During that year, women had substantial gains in office holdings around the county.

They concluded that the visibility of the candidates was a mitigating factor for the role model effect. In their second study, they proposed that the 1985 finding offered a national-level candidate, therefore making Ferraro more visible, and consequently making gender a salient factor. They did not observe the same effect for 1993. Campbell and Wolbrecht explained that although the 1993 political year had numerous women candidates, yet their visibility was not sufficient to warrant an effect. This was due to the lack of national media attention and localized elections. Lastly, they observed that political viability was an important consideration. Their analysis showed that when female candidates won their races or were within a margin of 10 points, adolescent girls reported increased anticipated political involvement.

Campbell and Wolbrecht asserted that political figures serve as role models who inspire the political interests of young women. They provided evidence that the role model

effect is largely contingent upon the visibility and the viability of the candidate. It should however be noted that no demographic data was reported for their sample and that political aspirations were based on questionnaire data with no reported validity indices (Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006).

Wolbrecht and Campbell (2007) studied women in the British Parliament. They concluded when there were more female members of parliament; adolescent girls were more likely to discuss politics with their friends and to discuss their intentions to participate in politics. Further, the effects held when compared to adults.

In an unpublished study, Simon and Hoyt (2008) examined gender social identity, political ideology, and attitudes towards women related to support for Hilary Clinton as a presidential contender. They drew several conclusions; most related to this study are 1) women reported significantly less negative views toward women in authority, 2) gender based social identity outweighed political ideology and attitudes towards women in support of a female presidential candidate.

While the findings of Simon and Hoyt are instructive, their study had some major limitations. First, since it is unpublished, it and has not been vetted by peer-review. Secondly, thorough information about the sample was not available. Although not reported, it would be a fair conclusion the sample reflected more liberal views than can be generalized across the country. They likely conducted the study in the New England area of the U.S. (based on the author's institutional affiliation). Although they reported controlling for political ideology, it is important to note conservative views in one state or region of the country are moderate

views in another part of the country. As such, sample bias may still be evident, even after putting controls in place.

Taken together, Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006), Wolbrecht and Campbell (2007), and Simon and Hoyt (2008)provided convincing evidence that political figures influence the electorate on a level greater than political engagement and voting behaviors. Female politicians invoke social identity processes within women and help shape political aspirations and career interests. Further, well-known candidates who are viable contenders, regardless of political ideology, invoke emotions related to group membership and group consciousness.

A few major theories surface when looking at the theoretical underpinnings of psycho-political influence of politicians on minority and female constituents. Pitkin's (Pitkin, 1972) seminal work on representation argued that political figures function in various ways for the electorate. She argued that political representatives "stand in for" and "act for" those whom they represent (Windt Jr, 1974). Subsequent analysis of her work and her predecessors has yielded three primary types of representation, 1) substantive, 2) descriptive, and 3) symbolic.

Substantive representation refers to a governmental official who represents the issues deemed important for his or her constituent base. In this manner, people elect someone with foreign policy experience because they desire to rectify foreign policy issues. Many use the term descriptive representation to describe a political figure that is "like" their constituency based on some demographic variable. In a broader sense, the term descriptive may include common demographic characteristics such as race or gender, but may also include other categories such as career field or geographic community.

Many authors use symbolic and descriptive representation interchangeably. However, some theorists operationalize symbolic representation to illustrate something quite different (Mansbridge, 1999). Symbolic representation is a type of representation targeted towards a particular demographic, typically a person's race or gender. The distinction between descriptive and symbolic may seem semantic. Race and gender issues however, illuminate the differences between the constructs.

Race and gender, although considered by many as socially construed constructs, operate differently than other demographic characteristics. From the previous discussion on work and academic disparities, it is clear that race and gender weighted with greater psychological loads. Academic, career, health, and a host of other life events, are confounded with the loadings of race and gender, both for those who lag in their standings and for those who have "made it" or are doing well.

Both Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, and the nation's newest Justice Sonia Sotomayor, must navigate the tides of race and gender, just as the young Black boy in the hood, and the Hispanic girl in the barrio must. In spite of Sotomayor's Ivy League background, and nearly stellar judicial experience, many will only remember her now infamous "wise Latina" comment. She made that statement, appearing resolute and steadfast, which suggested that her experience as a gender and racial minority afforded her certain wisdoms, wisdoms that may prove elusive to others. Nevertheless, during her congressional hearings testimony, she appeared to hedge on the comment and was somewhat apologetic. Even at the highest levels, race and gender come to bear on the psyche differently than other characteristics. It appears that choosing to pride oneself in personal heritage may come at the peril of career and advancement even at the highest levels of achievement.

It is reasonable that women and minority candidates would share in this load just as their constituents do. Mansbridge (1999) posited that representatives, namely Blacks and women, are critical to the Black and female constituency in four primary ways. First, minority representatives provide pathways of communication within government, despite minority held notions of mistrust and skepticism. Secondly, representatives provide new thinking regarding un-crystallized interests and agendas in minority groups. This thinking is accomplished chiefly through improving the quality of deliberation and debate about issues critical to minorities.

Representatives further benefit women and Blacks by symbolically demonstrating the "ability to rule", that is negating the myth that non-White or non-male citizens are incapable of governmental leadership. Mansbridge (1999) argues minority representatives challenge some socially accepted myths that minorities are inherently inadequate for leadership roles. Lastly, representatives increase the de facto legitimacy with respect to past discrimination. While discriminatory practices preempted public service for some, the presence of representatives that hold offices, rail against residual sentiments that discrimination was good policy.

While Mansbridge's discussion primarily dealt with congressional representatives, there are no prevalent theories on the impact of national or executive office holders. Social comparison theory provides some guidance as to how presidential candidates may affect African Americans and women. Festinger (1954) postulated that individuals learn about their abilities and attitudes by comparing themselves with others. This comparison may lead to positive or negative self-evaluations. Within this process, individuals use others as proxies to estimate their performance on given tasks (Wheeler, et al., 2005). Proxies are those who have

attempted a task of interest to the observer, e.g. finishing graduate school or perhaps home improvement tasks. The observer then bases his/her approximate success on that of the proxy. Additionally, proxies tend to be those who have some reasonable similarity with the observer. Thus, an African American who is a successful business owner may serve as a proxy for aspiring African American entrepreneurs.

Most studies on social comparison processes look at direct social comparisons, that is person to person with liberal accessibility to each other. The role that third parties play in the social comparison process is understood less than the direct impact of role models. A third party person serves the role of facilitating the identification and acquisition process of the observer to the role model. The third party process is understood more clearly when looking at the relationship a student has with a faculty or career mentor.

In this example, the student may express a desire to pursue a particular area of research or practical interest. The faculty mentor, aware of a professional who specializes in that area, may introduce the student to the professional at a conference or make the student aware of the work the professional has done in that area. Similarly, a mother who grew up in the era of civil rights and women's liberation, may point to the accomplishments of Hillary Clinton and express to her young daughter how she too can be successful. We would expect that this facilitative role would substantially increase the likelihood the student or young daughter desires to emulate the success of the professional or political candidate. However, no known studies have examined the role that other people play in facilitating the comparison processes between the observer and the role model.

Bandura (1971) provided additional support for the role model process with his social learning theory. Bandura suggested that models serve as a reference for learning new or modifying old behaviors. When observers are sufficiently motivated and are attentive, they are more likely to adopt the new behavior. Sufficient motivation comes about when the benefits of the new behavior outweigh the cost of keeping the old or the reward for the new behavior is powerful. Additionally, Bandura suggested that new behaviors are influenced also by characteristics of the model. The more similar the model is to the observer the greater the likelihood of adopting the new behavior.

I expected that the successes of presidential-level candidates, such as Obama, Clinton, and Palin, would significantly influence the self-esteem and self-efficacy of African American and women college students. Therefore, the focus of this study was to experimentally test the role model effect and its impact on college students. Data was collected after the 2008 election, between January and May 2008, employing hypothetical candidates presented through vignettes rather than the actual candidates; it was assumed, however, that participants' responses might have been influenced by the election and Obama's win. Based upon their own race (Black or White) and gender (male or female), participants were randomized into either an experimental or control group for two independent experiments.

For the first experiment, the experimental groups mirrored the 2008 presidential election. A vignette represented a Black male and a White male presidential candidate. The Black male was presented to the Black male and Black female college student experimental groups. The White male president was presented to the White male and White female college student groups. For the second experiment, I altered the gender of the presidential candidates

and looked the effect on the Black and White female college student groups. Given smaller population of males on college campuses, I did not collect data for a female president by male student experimental group. I operationalized the role model effect as the difference between the scores of experimental and control groups, on the dependent variables self-esteem and general-self efficacy.

Methods

Sample

Polling data in the 2008 presidential elections showed substantial increases in electoral engagement among the college-age group (Seelye, 2008). More specifically, the 2008 primary season polls indicated markedly greater increases among White female college students and African American college students. Therefore, my sample selection was reflective of the age, race, and gender factors associated with the increase in electoral engagement. I oversampled African Americans to guard against error associated with sample characteristics (region, campus, and acculturation, factors which were assumed may unduly influence views towards a minority political candidate. The minimum sample size was determined based on recommendations for multivariate studies (Stevens, 1996).

I obtained Institutional Review Board approval from three Southwestern universities. I then recruited participants through email requests to department chairs and student list serves. School (A) is a large predominately-White public university where a sizeable number of students are from rural areas in the southwest. School (B) is a small, historically Black public university in a rural setting. School (C) is a mid-sized public university in an urban setting, with a more diverse student body than School A. Additionally, this university has a

substantial commuter population. Recruitment from these sites helped ensure adequate representation of students from rural as well as urban settings. Additionally, I selected these sites to help control for significant racial identity or acculturation bias. This threat stems from differences between African American students attending a predominantly White versus a predominantly Black university.

A total of 609 participants initiated the online-based survey. After purging the database of incomplete surveys and repeated surveys, I applied the inclusion criteria described above, resulting in 453 total participants. The sample had a proportioned gender balance consistent with university enrollment rates (Figure 1). By race, there was a relative balance of White and Black participants (Figure 1). The average age of the sample was 20.57 with 19 being the most occurring age. By university, balanced numbers were obtained from the three universities, 44.8% (N=203) from school (A), 141 (31.1%) from school (B) and 24.1 % (N=109) from school (C). Depicted in Figure 2 is the sample's student classification.

Measures

In addition to the demographic information collected above, I developed another exploratory survey described below. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale were used to measure self-esteem and self-efficacy. A vignette (sample below) representing racial and/or gender characteristics of fictional Presidential candidates were developed to serve as the experimental priming intervention.

Demographic Questionnaire-The Demographic Questionnaire was used for descriptive purposes. I asked participants to provide their age, race, gender, and academic year.

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (SES)-The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale -(Rosenberg, 1965) is a 10-item self-report measure of global self-esteem. It consists of 10 statements related to overall feelings of self-worth or self-acceptance. Five of the ten items are positively worded and five are negatively stated. The intent of the format is to assess a bi-dimensional factor structure or positive and negative self-esteem. Participants answered the items on a four-point scale, each ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The SES has been reported to have acceptable reliability (Cronbach alpha=.78), and .85 test-retest within a college student sample. Cronbach's alpha for this sample was .881.

Vispoel and colleagues compared the psychometric properties of a computerized version of the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale with a paper and pencil version. Two hundred and twenty four students (74% female, 26% male), at a mid-western university, comprised the sample for their investigation (Vispoel, Boo, & Bleiler, 2001). Participants completed a computerized version, a paper and pencil version, a measure of attitudes towards the computerized version, and a demographic sheet. They reported little difference in the properties of the two versions. Further, the student participants reported a significant preference for the computerized version.

New General Self Efficacy Scale (NGSE)-Chen et. al's NGSE (Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2001) is an eight item scale that is rated on a 5-point likert-type scale, anchors being strongly disagree and strongly agree. The NGSE was designed to assess general self-efficacy, defined as "one's belief in one's overall competence to affect requisite performance across a wide variety of achievement situations" (Eden, 2001, p. 75). Example items include "I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself" and "When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them". Internal consistencies have been reported as

ranging from .85 to .90, and stability coefficients have ranged from r=.62 to r=.65.

Cronbach's alpha for this sample was .944.

While some have argued for domain specific measurement of self-efficacy, a more global evaluation of self-efficacy has gained support in recent years (Chen, et al., 2001; Eden, 2001). Bandura and Vasta (1992) argued for a task-specific approach, rationalizing that efficacy was tied to learning specific behaviors. Bandura criticized the use of global measurement for the same reason. However, newer conceptualizations of self efficacy suggest an approach one brings to a given situation or task rather than a sense of competency that results from a specific task (Eden, 2001). As a practical matter, not everyone can become President simply because Clinton and Obama have been successful in this area. However, I argue that the candidates strengthen the overall wherewithal for success. Consequently, a more global evaluation of self-efficacy is desirable.

Exploratory survey-Although the focus of this study is the role model impact, an exploratory survey was designed to measure other variables thought to be relevant. The additional questions addressed political party identification, and support for specific candidates (their favorite candidate despite the results of the election). Candidates included the top three candidates for the Republican and Democratic parties. Additionally, questions addressed knowledge of and facilitated identification with the candidates. Example questions include "Have any of your friends talked with you about the election?" and "Has a person that you consider a parent told you that you could achieve in your career like the candidates have achieved?".

Vignettes- I designed a vignette to serve as a presidential candidate primer. . There were five elements of the vignette. 1) presidential candidate, 2) president's race, 3) presidents gender, 4) an element of working hard, and 5) an element of accomplishment. The vignettes altered on race and gender for each of the respective groups. All other elements remained the same. Below is a sample of one of the vignettes:

Black male president vignette "William, a Black man, was just inaugurated as the first African American president of the United States. In his acceptance speech, he said "I had to work really hard to get here". "I didn't grow up with a lot, but hard work and my family helped me along the way". William was smart and talented, and he always worked hard in school. While in college, William participated in activities on campus and gained the respect of his friends and colleagues. He won numerous awards for his efforts and made a mark on the campus. After college he went on to work in the community. A few years later, he realized that he could make better use of his talents by entering public office. William started off in local governments and then went on to serve his state on the national level. Having served in that office for four years, he made a run for president. After a tough and long fought election, today he is the first African American man to be President of the United States.

Procedures, research questions and design

There were two experiments in this study. Both study designs were experimental, post-test only control group designs that extended research conducted by Simon and Hoyt (2008). Students participated in an online survey for both experiments. Participants accessed the survey protocol through SurveyMonkey, an internet based research service. Usage of the online service allowed for efficient data collection and targeted recruitment.

Experiment 1. After being placed into a category group of Black males, Black females, White females or White males, the original 690 participants were randomized into either experimental or control conditions. I was able to randomize participants based on their birthdays. Upon accessing the study website, participants were asked to select whether their birthday fell between the dates of the 1st -15th or 16th-31st. Participants whose birthday fell between the dates of 1st-15th received the experimental protocol. To maintain equal numbers between the groups, I monitored the number of respondents for the groups. When any given group began to outpace its counterpart by 10 participants, I masked the alternate protocol from the survey administration, thereby allowing the groups to balance. While this method could have posed a validity threat by allowing participants time and opportunity to communicate their experience with others, this threat appeared to be negligible. Furthermore, this method increased randomization in that there was no way of controlling the order in which respondents participated in the survey.

For both experiment 1 and experiment 2 below, experimental participants completed the survey in the following order; 1) Demographic sheet, 2) Presentation of vignette, 3) Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale, 4) Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale, 5) exploratory survey. The

order allowed the experimental participants to be primed with the role model vignette depicting the achievements of the presidential candidate, with whom participants were alike based on their race or their gender, or both in the extra case of African American females described below for Experiment 2. The control groups were presented with the same order of the survey protocol with the exception that they were not primed with the vignette. Given the context and timing of the presidential election, removing names of the actual candidates from the vignette was a preferred strategy due to internal validity concerns, assuming that the actual results of the election would unduly influence perceptions about the candidates Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton.

Research question experiment 1:

Questions 1and 2 -Does a male African American presidential candidate, (via the presentation of a vignette depicting a male African American president), influence the self-esteem (1) or the general self-efficacy (2), of male African American college students differently from the control group?

Questions 3 and 4- Does a White male presidential candidate, (via the presentation of a vignette depicting a White male president) influence the self-esteem (3) or the general self-efficacy (4), of White male college students differently from the control group?

Question 5 and 6-Does a male African American presidential candidate, (via the presentation of a vignette depicting a male African American president), influence the self-esteem (5) or the general self-efficacy (6), of female African American college students differently from the control group?

Questions 7and 8-Does a White male presidential candidate, (via the presentation of a vignette depicting a White male president), influence the self-esteem (7) or the general self-efficacy (8), of White female college students differently from the control group?

Experiment 2. In this second experiment, I examined the role model effect for the female groups with a female presidential candidate. I tested this using a vignette depicting an African American and a White female candidate with Black and White female participants respectively. I compared the experimental groups against the control groups with the same dependent variable measures, self-esteem and general self-efficacy. The sample was comprised of African American and White female college students from the three campuses. I compared this third category of participants against their counterpart no vignette groups described in experiment one. Both Black and White female participants accessing the survey website, were asked to indicate whether their birthday fell between the 1st -9th, 10th -19th, or the 20th-31st. This method provided a way to a) ensure randomization and b) allow for the formation of three groups.

Research questions experiment 2:

Questions 1and 2- Does an African American female presidential candidate (via the presentation of a vignette depicting an African American female president) influence the self-esteem (1) or general self-efficacy (2) of African American female college students differently from the control group?

Questions 3and 4- Does a White female presidential candidate (via the presentation of a vignette depicting a White female president) influence the self-esteem (3) or general self-efficacy (4) of White female college students differently from the control group?

Theoretical arguments suggest that social comparisons will produce elevations in self-evaluations, operationalized in this study as a measure of self-esteem. Additionally, Social Learning Theory suggests that role models increase self-efficacy beliefs operationalized as a measure of generalized self-efficacy. Therefore, I expected that the experimental groups would evidence higher self-esteem and self-efficacy scores for the African American male and females groups as well as for Caucasian women samples. This effect for the Caucasian male group was not expected, nor was it expected for the African American female group in the second study (African American female president vignette).

Results

I used Predictive Analytic Software (PASW) for all analyses. Mean scores for self-esteem and for general self-efficacy control groups are shown in Figure 3 below. For self-esteem, Black females (N=45) had the highest mean self-esteem (M=43.82, SD=6.54), followed by Black males (N=34, M=40.35, SD=6.29), White males (N=46, M=40.26, SD=6.35), and White females (N=51, M=39.94, SD=5.56). For the general self-efficacy measure, Black females again had the highest average (M=34.00, SD=5.18), however, they are followed by White males (M=33.65, SD=5.66), then Black males (M=32.82, SD=5.87), and finally White females (M=32.94, SD=4.87).

Experiment one

Independent sample T-tests assisted in determining differences in self-esteem or general self-efficacy scores among the comparison groups. Hypothesis one and two questioned whether there was a difference for Black males in the experimental and control conditions on self-esteem and general self-efficacy respectively. The 39 participants in the

experimental group ($M = 42.17$, $SD = 5.98$) and the 34 participants in the control group ($M =$ 40.35, $SD = 6.29$), were only modestly different although not significant ($t[71] = 1.270$, $p =$ .208). On the measure of general self-efficacy, the experimental group (M=35.28, SD=3.97) had significantly higher scores ($t[71]=2.117$, $p=.038$) than the control group (M=32.82, SD=5.87). Levene's test of equal variances was not significant for any comparisons in this study, thus I assumed equal variances.

Hypothesis 3 and 4 considered differences between White males in the experimental and control groups on the dependent measures. The 39 White males in the experimental group (M=39.87, SD=7.44), which was primed with the White male president vignette, did not differ ($t[83]=-.260$, $p=.796$) from the control group (M=40.26, SD=6.35) on the self-esteem measure. Similarly, the experimental group (M=32.84, SD=4.46) did not significantly differ ($t[83]=-.719$, $p=.474$) than the control (M=33.65, SD=5.66) on general self-efficacy.

For Black females, primed with the Black male president vignette (hypothesis 5 and 6), the experimental group (N=41, M=39.95, SD=7.27) had lower self esteem ($t[84]=-2.59$, $p=.011$) than the control group (N=45, M=43.82, SD=6.54). This was a surprising finding. Similarly, the experimental group (M=32.14, SD=5.93) had a lower general self-efficacy scores than the control group (M=34.00, SD=5.18) although the difference was not significant ($t[84]=-.148$, $p=.883$).

White females primed with a White male president vignette (hypothesis 7 and 8), did not show any differences on either of the dependent measures. The 49 women in the experimental group (M=39.00, SD=6.20) and the 51 women in the control group (M=39.94, SD=5.56) were virtually identical on the measure of self esteem ($t[98]=-799$, $p=.426$).

Similarly, there were no significant differences on the general self-efficacy measure, (t[98]=-.736, p=.463) (experimental, M=32.14, SD=5.93; control, M=32.14, SD=4.87).

Experiment two

In Experiment 2, which included a female president in the vignettes, there were no differences between the experimental and control groups. For African American females, the experimental group included 52 participants (M=43.67, SD=5.77) and the control group included 45 women (M=43.82, SD=6.54). No significant difference was found on the measure of self-esteem (t[95]=-.119, p=.905) for those presented with an African American female president in the vignette. For the measure of general self-efficacy, the experimental group (N=52, M=35.28, SD=4.40) also did not differ from the control group (N=45, M=34.00, SD=5.18) (t[95]=1.32, p=.189).

For Caucasian females who were primed with a White female president vignette, no differences were found between experimental and control groups on either of the dependent measures. For self-esteem (t[106]=-1.069, p=.288) , the 57 women in the experimental group had a mean score of 38.47 and a standard deviation of 8.27. The control group (N=51) had a mean score of 39.94 with a standard deviation of 5.56. Similarly, no differences were found for the general self-efficacy measure (t[106]=-.364, p=.717). The 57 participants in the experimental group had a mean score for 32.56 (SD=5.85), and the control group's mean was 32.94 (SD=4.87).

Design threats

The post-test only design is particularly susceptible to attrition problems. However, I attempted to control this effect by having a one-time administration of an internet-based

study. Other potential internal threats included history and differential selection of participants. History posed a threat in that participants were to some extent already influenced by the presidential election due to news and media coverage. However, I viewed this threat positively as it provided the basis for this study. Additionally, as identified by Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006), sufficient visibility and viability are likely moderators of the role model effect.

The differential selection of participants from the universities was a potential threat in that, African American students attending predominantly White universities may have differing levels of racial identity and acculturation. Racial identity and acculturation may influence identification with Obama for these students differently than for others. I recruited students from HBCUs as well as predominantly White universities to mitigate this threat. Additionally, school selection will also help neutralize effects that would arise from attending a university in an urban setting versus a rural setting.

Limitations

This study is limited by the use of self-report measures for self-esteem and general self-efficacy. Self-report measures limit the external validity of a study as they are an approximation of real life occurrences. Secondly, the generalizability is limited in that this sample is primarily drawn from a specified regional sample. Thus, attitudes towards the candidates may be influenced by political philosophy predominant in certain regions of the country. Lastly, the effect for women is limited in that the actual results of the presidential election may unduly influence perceptions due to Clinton's and Palin's loss. However, this effect is expected to be negligible as the vignettes used for the study simply depict a woman and not a specific woman.

Following Simon and Hoyt's study (2008), liberal attitudes are likely to influence a participant's view of candidates. Consequently, participants attending a liberal or conservative leaning institution may be biased simply by their settings. More to the point, this study was conducted in a state that went for neither Obama nor Clinton. Furthermore, it was deemed the reddest state in the union based upon the aggregate number of seats gained by republicans vs. democrats

Discussion

A comparison of the levels of self-esteem and general self-efficacy for the control groups warrant some discussion. African Americans have consistently shown higher levels of self-esteem as compared to their Caucasian counterparts, a finding particularly true for African American females (Twenge and Crocker, 2002). This difference could be a function of the college student sample that is commonly used. African American college students likely represent a unique sub-population of African Americans as a whole.

Proportionately, the number of African Americans classified as at risk, is at least three times that of whites (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). The U.S. Department of Education's at-risk student resiliency report articulated African American college students, especially those that might be considered at risk, have amassed greater resiliency and self-confidence resources than their same-age African American peers have (Horn et. al., N.D). When combined with factors such as parental involvement, a peer group with similar resiliency and motivations, as well as the proper preparation, this resiliency promotes more resiliency and leads to latter success in college and post-secondary school. I believe the resiliency and self-confidence manifests drive and determination, and is in part what has helped propel Black college students to reach that level of success in their careers. Further, it

may be a defining characteristic that separates them from Black youth who do not attempt college.

The discrepant high school graduation, college enrollment, college completion, graduate school, and workforce rates between Black males and females are widely documented (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2008; Gabor, et. al., 2001). Further, a glance at the enrollment of nearly any college enrolment will show as much as a two to one ratio preference for women of men. As indicated comparisons of control groups, Black females scored highest on levels of self-esteem and general self-efficacy, and were affected more by the presentation of the role model vignette. This may be indicative of a learned pattern amongst Black females in which they respond to positive role models in a way much different than males respond. The differences may also represent systemic influences in the Black community that esteems females higher than males in at least the domains of education and achievement.

It is not clear why White females are not at least on par with their Black female peers. Intuitively, it would appear that this same strength of ego that operates for Black women would operate in a similar fashion for their White counterparts. The data in this study paint a different picture. White females in the control group had the lowest scores on both dependent measures. The lowered scores on these self-evaluation measures may represent environmental effects, where White female college students have lowered self-esteem and self-efficacy in the college environment.

While much was expected by Hillary Clinton's and Sarah Palin's political ambitions, their psychological effect on young White women is likely not in the realm of improved self-concept. The effect of these political figures may be restricted to career ambitions globally,

or to political career ambitions specifically as noted by Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006). The failure of the vignette to produce a difference in this group is likely accounted for by the same reason no differences were found for White males. White females, in both local and national politics are widely represented and have been so for several decades now. The vignette, and by extension Clinton and Palin, are likely to have not influenced the dependent measures because their presence is not novel enough to produce a reaction of that type.

I expected the lack of difference between groups for White males; given the prominent role White males have played in America's history of government and business. A White male president is not as much a stretch of the imagination as it is for others. Similarly, business, government, and many other facets of professional life are replete with role models of this sort. For this group, role models may have more of a reaffirming role or there may just simply be no effect at all.

Alternatively, the lack of difference for White females was unexpected. The era of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin would suggest a sense of pride, excitement, and self-reflection for White women. Based on the data obtained from this sample, the political highs achieved for these women, does not have much self-concept boosting power for college women. The fact that Hillary Clinton nor Sarah Palin did not succeed in their ultimate presidential goals, may have diminished any self-concept that would have evidenced in this study.

The conservative nature of the state in which this study was conducted may also confound this finding. Given the key positions of women like Nancy Pelosi, the US. Speaker of the House of Representatives and former EBay Chief, Meg Whitman, an alternative

explanation is that young White women are more sensitized to women in leadership roles than what is commonly thought and was anticipated in my hypotheses.

The difference observed for African American males was surprising. The positive implications of the election were particularly high for Black males in many communities across America. However, the expected effect was not born out for this sample. Further, the significant difference for self-efficacy that was not also observed for self-esteem, may be interpreted as Black males may show increased performance on tasks over the coming years, but their global evaluation of self will largely remain unaffected.

The most interesting finding is the significantly lowered self-esteem scores of Black females primed with the vignette of an African American male president as compared to those who were not. Furthermore, the difference of 3.87 points between means represents the largest difference among all comparisons in the study. No plausible explanation is readily available as to why an African American male president might create a lowered global evaluation of self for Black females. Suls and Wheeler (2000) describe a process by which individuals devalue themselves when they socially compare themselves with a high performing other, resulting in poorer performance, termed upward comparisons. However, Black females showed improved self-concept when the confederate was an African American female.

However, this observation is even more peculiar in light of question two of the second study. African American females primed with an African American female presidential candidate had a mean self-esteem score of 43.67, hardly discernable from the control group, yet distinctly higher than the group primed with the African American male

group (M=39.95). Others have shown the opposite effect. Blanton et. al. (2000) showed that Black females, under a false IQ test condition designed to elicit negative stereotypes, show higher state self-esteem when primed with a White female confederate in a downward comparison condition. That is the confederate had lower IQ scores, thus a downward comparison. In the upward comparison condition, and with a White female confederate, African American females showed lower self-esteem scores. Alternatively, when the confederate was another African American female, Blanton observed an assimilation affect whereby participants showed higher scores in the upward condition.

Implications drawn from Blanton et.al's (2000) study in comparison with the present study is that closeness to the target may be a critical piece of the comparison process. If the target is a peer or is geographically close to the individual, as opposed to a target that is in the media or has no immediate relationship with the individual, the direction of the comparison may alter. In addition, for African American females, after race has been accounted for, an evaluation of the targets gender may play a critical role.

Methodologically, although I found l differences amongst the various groups, the matter of practical difference deserves attention. The threshold difference amongst the groups appears to be about three points. However, is there an appreciable difference of three points? If so, what does a three-point difference look like? What are the signs and characteristics of a person with three points higher self-esteem or general self-efficacy than another person?

In my personal experience as an adjunct professor at a HBCU, Obama's candidacy and election was an ominous experience that seemed to lift spirits across campus on November 4, 2008. However, this excitement and revelation about the new possibilities for

African Americans did not seem to translate into better test grades, classroom decorum, or study habits. I state this as an observation of my fall 08 and spring 09 Introduction to Psychology courses, albeit purely anecdotal. Nevertheless, the reservations about assuming too much about the 2008 election season on the behavior of minority constituents appears substantiated.

This study opens up a line of inquiry that deserves future attention. Longitudinal effects should be considered over the course of the four years (or eight if re-elected) of the Obama administration. A special focus on at the self-perception, efficacy beliefs about achievement, and the resulting sociological effects (e.g. dropout rates) over time should be looked at. Secondly, qualitative analysis of the student's subjective interpretation of the 2008 election should be considered. This may shed light on the intra and intergroup differences. Further analysis should consider how to harness the impact of the election in a way that it translates into better academic and career performance. Lastly, the disparity between African American males and females should be given more consideration. Black males' decline in academics and career in conjunction with Black females' continued advancement in these areas, has systemic implications that scarily appears irreversible. This is especially true when we consider the election of the first African American president. If this event can not interrupt this trend, at least for now, then what will?

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Tables and Figures

Figure 1
Race and gender of participants

Category	Value
Male	158
Female	295
White	211
Black	242

Figure 2
Participant's student classification

- Freshmen: 158, 35%
- Sophomore: 130, 29%
- Junior: 82, 18%
- Senior: 70, 15%
- Grad: 13, 3%

Figure 3
SES/SEF totals for control groups

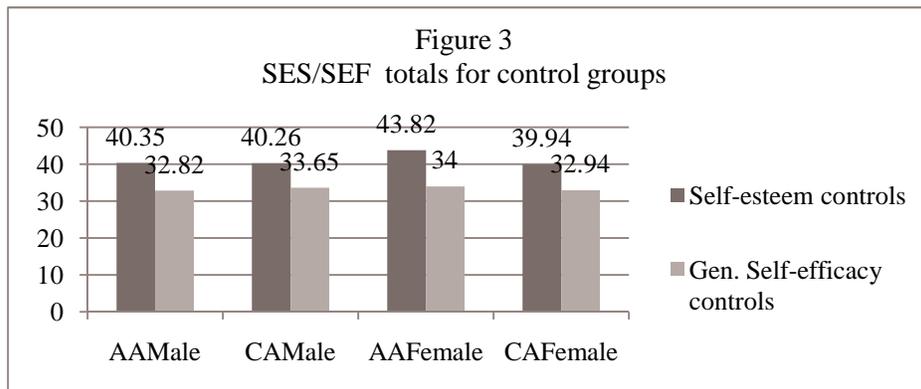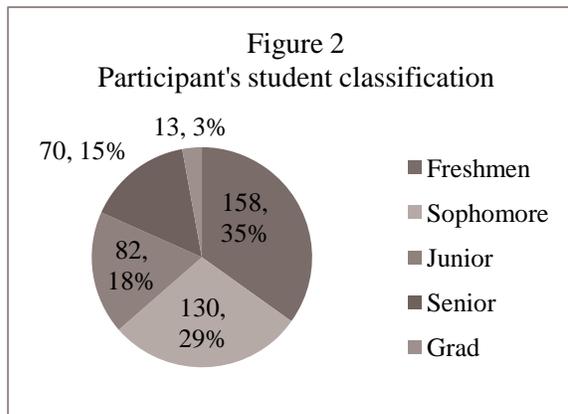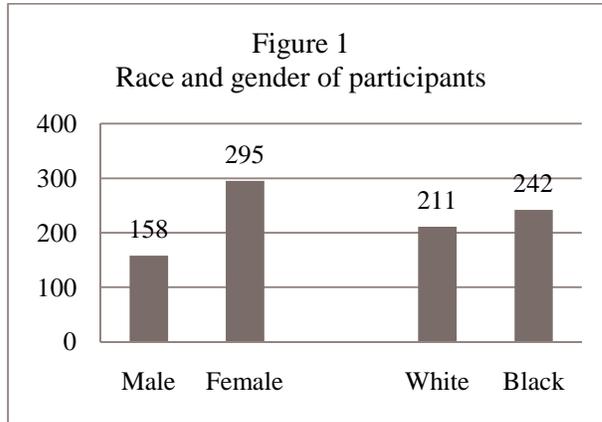| Group	Self-esteem controls	Gen. Self-efficacy controls
AAMale	40.35	32.82
CAMale	40.26	33.65
AAFemale	43.82	34
CAFemale	39.94	32.94

Table 1

N, Mean, SD, and Effect Sizes for Comparison Groups

		Ex Group			Control			
Male Pres.	Groups	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	Cohen's D
Self Esteem	Afr. Am Males	39	42.18	5.98	34	40.35	6.3	0.296
	Afr. Am Females*	41	39.95	7.27	45	43.82	6.54	0.559
	White Males	39	39.87	7.44	46	40.26	6.35	0.056
	White Females	49	39	6.2	51	39.94	5.56	0.159
General Self Efficacy	Afr. Am Males*	39	35.28	3.97	34	32.82	5.87	0.49
	Afr. Am Females	41	33.83	5.54	45	34	5.18	0.031
	White Males	39	32.85	4.46	46	33.65	5.66	0.157
	White Females	49	32.14	5.93	51	32.94	4.87	1.437
Female Pres. Groups								
Self Esteem	Afr. Am Females	52	43.67	5.77	45	43.82	6.54	0.024
	White Females	57	38.47	8.27	51	39.94	5.56	0.208
General Self Efficacy	Afr. Am Females	52	35.29	4.4	45	34	5.18	0.268
	White Females	57	32.56	5.85	51	32.94	4.87	0.07

Note: *denotes a significant difference at .05 level. **denotes significant difference at .01.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LITERATURE REVIEW

Current status of African Americans and Women

The key areas of economic development, workforce participation, and higher education, serve as primary indicators of progress or lack of progress for minority groups. Moreover, the latter part of the 20th century has evidenced great strides for adult African Americans and women. Yet still, we must continue to study the achievements of these two minority and build upon gains to ensure the continued fight for parity and equality.

Higher education with African Americans has shown promise in the last 30 years. According to the U.S. National Center for Education statistics, Blacks have witnessed steady increases in enrollment rates of 18-24 year olds in degree granting institutions (Snyder, et al., 2008). Their data reflect a rate of 15.1 in 1970, 19.4 in 1980, 25.4 in 1990, and 30.5 in 2000 (rates per/100,000; Multiracial individuals excluded). The percentage of African-Americans attending graduate schools has also seen great progress with Blacks accounting for 5.6% in 1985, 6.8% in 1995 and 10.7% in 2005.

As the participation of African-Americans in post-secondary education increases, greater workforce and economic development should follow. In fact, while Blacks accounted for 39.9% of the labor force in 1992, they represented 49.2% in 2000 (Gabor,

et al., 2001). In 2001, the Fortune 500 was introduced to the first African American CEO, and as of 2008, African Americans are at the helm of six or these mega businesses (CNNMoney, 2008).

Women have also made great strides in the areas of higher education, workforce, and economic development. The rate for women undergraduates witnessed dramatic increases over the last 30 years. Female undergraduate enrollment stood at 20.3% in 1970 and rose to 40.6 % in 2006. In fact, the rate for enrollment of women undergraduates surpassed that of men in 1988 and has virtually exceeded that of men ever since (Snyder, et al., 2008).

Gains in education have also translated into increases in economic standing. Earnings for women with college degrees rose 21.7% since 1979 after accounting for inflation (Gabor, et al., 2001). Additionally, women account for 12 of the nation's CEOs of Fortune 500 companies (CNNMoney, 2008). Still in specific disciplines e. g. social/human services, women represent the majority, far outperforming men.

The successes of African Americans and women are deserving of celebration for the great accomplishments they are. Closer examination   stifles this observation. One may view achievements of say Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, and deceptively believe that all is well among the races and the sexes. The tone is much less celebratory however, when we introduce parity to the conversation. Comparing Blacks and Whites, and men and women on indices of economic and workforce compensation, the data appears quite grim.

While enrollment of Blacks into colleges and universities has risen substantially in the US, it is a paltry observation when compared to Whites. Black males enrolled at a rate of 35.7% in 2004 compared to their White counterparts at 44.1%. Ironically, Black females enrolled at 64.3% compared to 55.9% of White females (Snyder, et al., 2008). In 2000, while African Americans enrolled in graduate programs at a rate of 247, Whites enrolled at a rate of 1259 (enrollment in thousands) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). A similar indicator of progress is dropout rates. Minorities consistently bear the burden of dropout rates. The U.S. Department of Education reported that in 2005, the high school dropout rate stood at 10.4% for African Americans compared to 6.0% for Whites (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). The rates for college dropouts appear equally bleak with 18.7% for Blacks compared to 31.8% for Whites as of March 2007.

In the occupational outlook, the unemployment rate was a staggering 10.6% for Blacks as compared to 5.4% for Whites. Additionally, Whites accounted for 88.8 % of all managerial positions, with the rest spread amongst all minorities. The drastic disparities economically and educationally should raise alarms for such a desperate conditions for our nation's youth of color.

As it relates to women, the chief area of concern is in the area of equal pay. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Gabor, et al., 2001) women have well exceeded parity in workforce participation, boasting surpassing rates of 18.5% and 13.1% in professional specialty and sales careers respectively. This compared to 13.6% and 11.8% for men. Women overwhelmingly participate more in administrative support positions at a rate of 24.5% compared to 5.6% for men.

Given the distribution of women in the workforce, it might seem that the economic outlook for women would be bright. To the contrary, women's average earnings were approximately 24% lower than that of men in 1998. Median weekly earnings of full-time female wage and salary workers were $456 in 1998 as compared to $598 for men. One interesting point is that the disparity in earnings appears to have a historical bias. Women in the 55-64 age bracket had an earnings ratio of 68.2% compared to men, while the ratio for 20-24 year olds was 89.4% (Gabor, et al., 2001). Changing times and practices with respect to workforce responsibility, likely accounts for this stark difference.

Many programs are in place to study these trends. Furthermore, many interventions such as diversity training in the workplace and high school/college retention programs serve to address the disparities in the education and in the workplace. Nevertheless, after 50 years since Brown vs. the Board of Education, and 30 years of affirmative action, equality in the 21st century seems to suggest that these efforts have had a less than desirable impact.

It is important to acknowledge that these policy-based interventions have evidenced some gains with respect to combating the effects of racism, sexism, and classism. However, these effects only represent external and environmental barriers to the achievement of African Americans and women. There remain the psychological effects of these barriers. Furthermore, without dismissing the noteworthy effects of environmental issues such as socioeconomic status, single-parent homes, and disproportionate educational resources between our urban and suburban centers, also deserving attention are intrinsic factors such as self-esteem and self-efficacy. To be sure,

individuals must have sufficient self-evaluations and believe they are competent in order to break the glass ceiling that Hillary Clinton asserts to have made 18 million cracks.

While the 2008 election is historic in its own right, African Americans and women are no strangers to the national stage of politics. Women presidential candidates date back to 1872 with the candidacy of Victoria Woodhull on the equal rights party (Dinkin, 1995). Alternatively, African Americans did not have a showing in presidential politics until 100 years later with the campaign of Shirley Chisholm in 1972. Since the 1970s, African American and female political figures have had momentous involvement with national level politics.

Public offices, ranging from school boards to national offices, have substantial representation by minorities. The 110th congress is the most demographically representative congress in the history of the United States. African Americans hold 42 seats in the House and one seat in the Senate, or approximately 8% of congress. Women represent 16% of congress with 72 in the House and 16 in the Senate (Congress, 2008). Additionally, in 1970 there were only 40 Black Mayors, compared to 2008 when that number has swelled to over 600. Moreover, according to the U.S. Conference of Mayors (2008), women represented 20% of mayors from major U.S. Cities. These public officials are poised to serve as symbols of accomplishment and progress for young Blacks and women.

While public officials seem to be great examples of role models, the impact of political figures, on the aspirations and achievement orientation of the constituency, has received very little attention from the field of psychology. Intuitively, it makes sense that

a national figure, especially a minority presidential candidate, would have a great impact on the psyche of minority citizens. Notions of pride, unity, empowerment, and positive self-concept should surface for minorities as other minority members ascend in governmental positions. Despite the fact that minority candidates have made great strides in politics, from local to congressional and currently presidential politics, the social sciences offers very little regarding the possible positive effects candidates have on the minorities.

What brings African Americans and women to the polls?

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2008), voting rates for all US citizens in presidential elections have hovered between 65% and 68 % since 1976. In the 2000 presidential election, 65.6% of voting age women participated as compared to their male counterparts with a rate of 62.2%. In 2004, 67.6% of voting age women participated, while only 64% of males turned out to vote. In fact, women voters have consistently participated in greater numbers as compared to men since 1980. Alternatively, African Americans have shown consistently lower voter participation rates than Whites. Based on current estimates, while 60.3% of Whites voted in the 2004 presidential elections, only 56.3% of registered Blacks did in the same election. Furthermore, similar margins are evident for all presidential election years since 1964.

Currently, the 2008 campaigns of Senators Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, as well as the Vice Presidential candidacy of Governor Sarah Palin, have largely been credited with the increased participation of voters during this election cycle (Seelye, 2008). Many scholars refer to the activity of voters in political affairs as voter

participation or electoral engagement. Often used interchangeably, the words are distinguishable and distinct in several ways. Voter participation is sometimes used to describe voting related behaviors such as registering to vote, participating in political activities such as joining a party affiliated group, or actual voting (Danigelis, 1978; Gay, 2001; Hackey, 1992). Electoral engagement tends to refer to more psychological and sociological activities such as affinity for a political party, political beliefs, and attitudes. Still others (Gay, 2001; Olsen, 1970) have used voter participation indices as a metric for estimating voter engagement.

Electoral engagement and voter participation have historically been a primary focus of political science. While this civic activity is a standard and expected practice, the motivation for such activities varies greatly amongst the constituency of American citizens. Involvement in political activities in large measure is attributable to the issues that are most important to a particular group (Barker, Jones, & Tate, 1999; Dolan, 2004). Controversial topics such as abortion rights, the definition of marriage, and economic issues most certainly draw increased participation principally due to the emotional charge associated with those issues.

For women voters, the issues identified as most important are often characterized as "feminist" issues (Conway, Steuernagel, & Ahern, 1997). Issues such as equal pay for equal work, domestic violence, and sexism- related civil rights issues are among the top concerns. The characterization as "feminist" issues stems from the fact that it is typically Democrats, or otherwise liberal advocates, that advance this agenda in the political system. However, as has been noted, these concerns are certainly not exclusively the concerns of identified feminists(Conway, et al., 1997). These hot button topics do

invigorate the participation from women of a more conservative orientation. Furthermore, research has shown that conservative women do support the issues as well albeit, to a much lesser degree than their liberal counterparts. In general, the primary issues that appeal to the majority of women are healthcare and education policy (Conway, et al., 1997; Dolan, 2004).

For African American voters, some drastic differences exist as to what prompts Blacks to become involved. Historically, the socio-economic status (SES) of African Americans was identified as the greatest predictor of political involvement(Barker, et al., 1999). African Americans' involvement in the political process takes on a very different form. In fact, Rosenstone (1982) studied the effects of economic adversity on voter turnout. By comparing rates of unemployment, poverty and decline in financial well-being, he found that voter participation was suppressed when economic adversity was high (Rosenstone, 1982). Alternatively, researchers have demonstrated that when economic times are high, Black voter participation is high, particularly in presidential elections. Additionally, there is a strong link between party identification and Black voter participation. In a more general sense, social justice issues present as the driving force for African Americans, particularly for those of lower socioeconomic status (Barker, et al., 1999).

Understandably, every election has its unique imprint on voters. The troubled economy and the residuals from the faltering U.S. financial system dominate the 2008 election. Additionally, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have generated a great deal of interest. Yet still, gender and race have prompted significant participation amongst women and African Americans for this election cycle. Gender and race tend to have some

heuristic value as they have unified and ignited sections of the electorate and prompted increased participation from elevated registration to record early voting.

Some authors have described this as a type of group consciousness whereas others have preferred the term racial or group solidarity (Chong & Rogers, 2005; Gurin, Hatchett, & Jackson, 1989). The terms generally refer to identification with a particular group or the ideals and philosophies espoused by a group. Theorists have advocated a separation of the terms explaining that membership in a group does not equate to shared philosophy(Chong & Rogers, 2005). For the purposes of this analysis, I will consider the equivalent. It is theoretically true that not all members of a group share the same philosophy, however the voting patterns based on group overwhelmingly tend towards a unified direction.

In the case of African Americans, some theorists have advanced the notion of shared interests, shared hope, and a believed common fate to exist for African Americans. The unified front is necessitated, given the collectivistic notion that "what happens to one happens to all" (Barker, et al., 1999; Chong & Rogers, 2005). African Americans evidence this effect by their overwhelming tendency to vote Democratic. This type of group behavior does also present in women voters; yet it is to a much lesser degree. For women, party identification or political ideology tends to temper this voting pattern tends more so; hence the aforementioned notion of "feminist issues" versus women's issues.

I propose that this type of social identity harnesses positive self-evaluations based on a platform of hope and inspiration. As Gurin, Hatchett, and Jackson (1989) explained, group consciousness can bring about hope based on eventual inclusion in traditional

politics and a sense of independence and autonomy. Moreover, groups look to those in the political realm to both symbolize the group and legitimize their shared and individual identity. In addition, groups look to their representatives to advance the issues and concerns shared by the members.

Representation

Suffrage, legal injustice, racism, and sexism have facilitated a hardened relationship between minority constituents and the government. The civil rights and women's rights movements highlighted the atrocities and inequities that existed in America, and at the same time provided a vehicle to improve the relationship between African Americans and women with the government and the prevailing societal thought. A conciliatory result of that error produced increased participation of minority members in governmental offices (Barker, et al., 1999; Conway, et al., 1997; Mansbridge, 1999).

On both the local and national levels of government, women and Black elected officials symbolically represent the progress of minorities as well as acted on behalf of the communities they represent. Scholars note the importance of having an individual who matches the constituency on some demographic factor; however this is only one type of representation (Mansbridge, 1999). Other important instances of representation include geography, social class, career fields, or political philosophy. These are all important as they allow officials to advance the agenda of their particular group. Researchers have however, shown that descriptive representation as it relates to gender and race, operates differently and largely does more for minorities than just advancing their interest

(Mansbridge, 1999). Here representation refers to any elected official, the term includes but is not limited to a state or U.S. Congressional member.

Having elected officials who represent voters on some demographic basis facilitates greater political values. Mansbridge (1999) suggested that descriptive representation is beneficial in four primary ways. Firstly, minority representatives provide adequate communication within contexts of mistrust. That is, disenfranchised groups are often untrusting of the political establishment. Descriptive representatives provide an opportunity for enhanced communication within these contexts of mistrust. Secondly, descriptive representatives provide innovative thinking regarding uncrystallized interests, chiefly through improving the quality of deliberation regarding critical issues. Descriptive representatives further benefit women and Blacks by serving as symbolically demonstrating the "ability to rule". Mansbridge argues minority representatives challenge some socially accepted myths that minorities are inherently inadequate for leadership roles. Lastly, representatives increase the de facto legitimacy with respect to past discrimination.

Bobo and Gilliam (1990) assert through their Black empowerment theory that African Americans are more trusting of the government, politically efficacious, and have an increased knowledge about politics when there is significant descriptive representation at the local level. Black political empowerment refers to the extent to which a group has achieved significant representation and influence in political decision-making, vis a vis Black congressional representatives, mayors, school boards, etc. The central premise is that the greater the level of empowerment, the more likely it is that Blacks will become

politically involved. Moreover, areas of empowerment should reflect greater levels of political trust, efficacy, and knowledge.

Historically, differences in Black-White participation were explained by socioeconomic (education, income, etc,) and psychological factors (Mathews and Prothro, 1966; Orum, 1966). Studies of political participation leading up to the 1970's supported the notion that disproportionate education and income levels were largely predictive or differences between Black and White political participation. Orum (1966) explained that African Americans sought to compensate for inferiority feelings by exaggerated participation in political groups. However, Bobo and Gilliam's (1990) analysis noted two major weaknesses with the prevailing thoughts. Firstly, Blacks participate more than Whites do when differences in socioeconomic status are controlled for, (Bobo and Gilliam, 1990). Secondly, it was a strong sense of "ethnic community", or group consciousness, which spurred heightened Black participation.

In their examination, they proposed that the greater the level of empowerment, the more likely it is that Blacks will become politically involved. Therefore, empowerment areas should reflect greater levels of political trust, efficacy, and knowledge (Bobo and Gilliam, 1990). In their foundational study, it was demonstrated that Blacks in high empowerment areas, operationalized as having a sitting African American Mayor, are more active than either Blacks living in low-empowerment areas or Whites in comparable socioeconomic conditions. Additionally, they proposed that their results indicate that empowerment influences Black participation by conveying a more trusting and "efficacious orientation to politics and by greatly increasing Black attentiveness to political affairs" (pg. 377).

Studies on the voting patterns for women and African Americans have lent strong support for the representation thesis. In Gallagher's (2006) study of the 1998 US House elections, she found that the presence of female candidates increases the participation of women voters, although the same effect is not found for men. Baker and Cook's (2005) study demonstrates that Black members of congress strongly represent group interests more so than non-Black members. Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler (2005) offered similar findings in their study on women representatives. In considering the various facets of women's representation, they found that descriptive representation increases legislators' responsiveness to women's policy concerns and enhances perceptions of legitimacy as women office-holders.

While issues serve as primary motivators, due mention must be given to the notion that many voters share the common wisdom that persons from their particular group are best suited to advocate on their behalf. Therefore, when issues are not salient or perhaps are not "hot button" topics of a particular campaign, voters tend to be engaged by simply having a member of their group competing for elected office (Bobo and Gilliam, 1990); As Bobo and Gilliam assert, the thought is that representatives of minority groups are believed to have experienced the same social concerns of their particular group and therefore are best suited to advance their groups agenda.

Some researchers have offered conflicting support for the representation thesis. For example, Bullock and Scicchitano (2001) explored the extent to which constituents were aware of their state senator's race. They argued the benefits of symbolic representation have only been anecdotal and had not been subjected to empirical tests. Furthermore, they posit that symbolic benefits are negligible when respondents are not

aware of that fact. Their sample (n=422) included African Americans (27.1%) and Whites (63.4%) across six southern states where there was an African American senator who represented them. Using a telephone survey the authors asked two questions relating to knowledge of their legislators name and knowledge of his/her race. Using a sample from six southern states, their results indicated that most Blacks and Whites were unaware that they were being represented by an African American State Senator.

Bullock and Scicchitano's hypothesis that the benefits of symbolic representatives are negligible appears to dismiss the important relationship of substantive representation. That is, no information was reported regarding the concerns of their sample. As other scholars have noted (Dolan, 2006; Mansbridge, 1999), descriptive representation is highly related to the issues or concerns of the constituency or substantive representation.

Substantive representation refers to the ability of legislators to advance policies that are important to their constituents (Mansbridge, 1999; Owens, 2005). Substantive representation also includes the ability of legislators to influence the outcomes of legislation and policy. Historical and empirical data supports the notion that having representatives who are minority does in fact sway the outcomes on issues of particular importance to women and African Americans (LeVeaux, 2004; Owens, 2005; Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005). Given these findings, it is logical that Republican candidate Alan Keyes received very little support from African American during his presidential bids in 1996, 2000, and 2008. Similarly, 2008 Republican Vice Presidential candidate Sarah Palin did not get very much cross-party support from Hillary Clinton advocates.

As observed from this discussion, representatives are poised to have a unique impact on the constituency and in particular African Americans and women. Minority elected officials have been able facilitate greater political participation among minorities (Bobo & Gilliam, 1990). As well, representatives also advance the agenda and issues of the constituency (Mansbridge, 1999). However, the benefits of having a minority or woman candidate may not be realized when the constituency is uninformed about who it is that is representing them (Bullock & Scicchitano, 2001). This lack of awareness may stem the absence of a pressing issue. Also, the representative may also not be visible enough, and therefore goes unnoticed.

One of the limitations with the representation thesis is that it has not been studied on a national level. The 2008 presidential campaign marks the first opportunity to study the impact on a national level. Furthermore, the issues of the day such as healthcare, education, race relations, the economy, and the Iraq war, has primed this election cycle and subsequently witnessed unprecedented participation. What appears to be clear about the 2008 election is that people are both aware of the issues and that the candidates have met the visibility assumption; thus, the criteria for the functional impact of the candidates have materialized.

It is however likely that the presidential candidates serve more than just functional roles of advocating on behalf of the citizenry. I theorize that the presence and the exceptional accomplishments of Obama and Clinton are inspirational to young women and African Americans. An inspiring quality that not only advances the issues of the day, but also facilitates a change in self-perceptions about possibilities that may not been previously considered; a role model effect.

Role Models

The importance of role models in the development of aspiration, goal setting, achievement, and emulation goes without saying. People who have reached significant peaks, in areas ranging from parenting to government, are routinely viewed by those yet to follow their paths as human blueprints for success and mastery. Moreover, the incorporation of role models has become critical to many programs and interventions. Maximizing participant's potential in the areas of their aspiration tends to be the aim of these programs.

Robert Merton is credited with coining the term role model through his analysis of students in medical training (Merton & Coser, 1975). His posited that role models do not simply provide a blueprint which one uses to build tasks or traits, but "the apprentice esteems the master and takes him as a role-model while also aiming to replace the master who, after a time, stands in his way"(Merton & Storer, 1979). In this view, observers of people who serve as role models do not statically attempt to emulate them; they instead work towards their achievements while still having room for individualistic growth and accomplishments. Stated differently, it is not expected that the role model is to be copied; however the model does inspire a type of intrinsic growth within the observer to the extent that the observer's strivings may include the surpassing of the models achievements.

In the context of contemporary studies, the concept of role models has been taken to mean a person whom is worthy of imitation in some area of life (Pleiss & Feldhusen, 1995). Areas of imitation may range from specific tasks to general achievements in

disciplinary fields, public service, and educational pursuits. Role models may have limited to no contact with the individual and the relationship between them is mainly characterized by admiration.

The term role model is at times used interchangeably with heroes or heroines as well as mentors. Despite this lack of distinction, Pleiss and Felhusen (1995) reviewed the literature on mentors, role models, and heroes and distinguished mentors as those who serve in the specific career field of the protégé and provide guidance for that particular field. The mentor-mentee relationship is described as a teacher-student relationship. Additionally, a mentor commands a greater degree of respect and typically involves a more intense relationship with the protégé. Alternatively, heroic individuals include public figures, fictional characters, as well as historical or contemporary individuals. Heroes and Heroines are viewed as embodying traits and values rather than facilitating a skill or admiration and typically have no contact with the admirer.

For the purposes of this review, I make use of the term role model and use it to mean one worthy of emulation. Moreover, my definition includes the latitude that the role model may or may not have contact with the individual, and is instrumental in facilitating a range of psychological activities from skills to traits and values. Many researchers whom have involved the usage of role models, demonstrated effectiveness in influencing a range of positive traits among adolescent and college-age youth (Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006; Gilbert, 1985; Hernandez, 1995; King & Multon, 1996; Penelope Lockwood, Jordan, & Kunda, 2002; P. Lockwood & Kunda, 1997; P. J. Lockwood, 1999).

Several theorists have proposed that role models function best when they match individuals on important characteristics (Bandura, 1986; Gottfredson, 1981). Consequently, the success of skill/trait acquisition is largely contingent upon the fact that the individual can adequately identify with the model. This phenomenon is often referred to as the similarity-hypothesis. While evidence has been reported that students-model relationship works best when their characteristics match, the question remains as to whether students actually seek out individuals on the basis of race and gender (Gilbert, 1985; King & Multon, 1996; Zirkel, 2002).

Lockwood and Kunda examined the impact that high-performing individuals had on the student's performance. They conducted a three-stage study to test the hypotheses 1) superstars can be inspiring if they excel at a relevant domain and their success seems attainable, 2) what determines the direction of the impact exerted by relevant superstars, and 3) how the perceived attainability of a star's success contributed to the star's impact on others. For their studies they define superstar as a person of outstanding accomplishment. In all of their studies, participants were provided with a vignette describing the accomplishments of an individual via a made up newspaper article.

In their first study, participants included 50 female undergraduates enrolled in an introductory psychology course. Participants were administered a questionnaire that assessed their intended career plans. This assessment yielded two prevailing careers, accounting (n=18) and education (n=32). Experimental groups later received newspaper articles describing a teacher and an accountant as high-achieving, talented, and innovative. Participants were then rated on a scale of 40 adjectives which included 10 embedded career success items. Additionally, participants rated the superstar using the

same measure, and an additional measure that assessed how relevant the target was to them. Results yielded that the role model significantly provoked inspiration. Of the students exposed to the relevant role model, 45 % indicated that they were inspired by the model as opposed to 15% of participants exposed to an irrelevant model who indicated they were inspired (P. Lockwood & Kunda, 1997).

In the second study, Lockwood and Kunda looked at what determines the direction of the impact brought to bear by the superstar. Specifically, they considered the notion of attainability; that is does the ability to attain the success of the superstar influence self-evaluations. Participants included 65 male and female students whom were first year and fourth year accounting majors. Participants were randomly assigned to an experimental and a control group. The experimental group was given a faux student newspaper article depicting a fourth year accounting student who was characterized as well-rounded, high achieving, and demonstrated leadership and community involvement. The experimental group then rated the target of the article as well as themselves on 10 positive and 10 negative traits considered necessary for career success. Alternatively, the control group completed self-ratings without reading about the target. Additionally, respondents were asked to explain their ratings by writing in comments.

Results provided support for the attainability hypothesis among the first- year students. However, fourth-year students rated the target much lower, and appeared to engage in defensiveness through their explanation. First- year students offered explanations that focused on their similarity to the target as well as what they could learn from them. Fourth years tended offer explanations as to why they couldn't learn from them and why they could learn nothing about themselves from the target. The author's

hypothesized defense mechanisms were engaged by the fourth years that operated to guard against the perceived threat or their peer-target (P. Lockwood & Kunda, 1997).

Lastly, Lockwood and Kunda continued analysis of the attainability hypothesis by assessing whether pre-existing attitudes about participant's academic potential affected self-evaluation and evaluation of the target superstar. The authors were concerned with whether or not an individual's pre-conceived beliefs regarding the malleability of academic success, would influence their ratings. Results of this analysis showed that students who viewed academic success as malleable also significantly viewed the success of the model as attainable. The students who viewed success as a fixed "trait" did not see the success of the model as being attainable for them.

The authors concluded that high performing individuals can be both inspiring as well and enhance self-perceptions. Alternatively, they may also be self-deflating or have no consequence. The extent to which a superstar influences others around them largely depends on perceptions about the attainability of that success. Additionally, the success of the individual rested on tasks that had not yet been attempted by the individual yet was a relevant task based on career trajectory. Thus they posited that superstars engage processes of reflection and inspiration within those that are observing them.

Reflection refers to self-enhancing views based upon membership of a particular group. When a psychologically-close other excels in an area, it invokes feelings of pride within the group (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). This pride is best seen when a teammate scores a winning touchdown, and those whom sat on the bench the whole game state "we played a good game today". In this instance, the individual's personal accomplishments

were not challenged by the superstar, thus the superstar's success was not threatening. Moreover, the success of the team therefore enhances the self-concept of all the team members.

Alternatively, inspiration engages the personal identity of the individual. Inspiration refers to self-enhancements that stem from domain-specific accomplishments and therefore an observer is more susceptible to a negative self-evaluation (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). This instance is reflected in the accomplishments of other students in a class setting. Based on Brewer and Gardner's (1996) discussion of the topic, group membership appears to buffer this effect.

Choosing role models

As noted in the previous section, the impact of role models is quite substantial. However, consideration must be given to why people choose the role models that they do. Research has shown a range of possibilities to include race, gender, visibility, and the status of the role models; all as being factors that influences why someone chooses to adopt another person as a role model (Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006; Gilbert, 1985; Karunanayake & Nauta, 2004). Consistent with Bandura's (1986) hypothesis, role models function best when there is high similarity between the model and the observer. Furthermore, Festinger posited that "Given a range of possible persons for comparison, someone close to one's own ability or opinion will be chosen for comparison" (p. 121). This assumption has held true in a variety of empirical investigations.

Karunanayake and Nauta (2004) examined whether college students' race was related to the modal race of their identified career role models, the number of identified

career role models, and their perceived influence from such models. They surveyed 220 students at a large midwestern university. Respondents were identified as 69% female, 56% Caucasian, 31% African American, 9% Latino, 1% Pacific Islander, 2% other, and 1% nonracially identified. They questioned students regarding who they considered to be role models, each of the role models relationship to the student, and the role model's race and gender. Additionally, students were administered the *Inspiration/Modeling* subscale of the *Influence of Others on Academic and Career Decision Making Scale* (Nauta & Kokaly, 2001).

They found that students tended to have role models whose race was the same as their own. Chi-square analysis yielded a significant relationship between student's race and the modal race of their identified role models. This result held for both African American and Caucasian students (other minorities were excluded due to low sample size). (Karunanayake & Nauta, 2004).

Researchers conducting similar studies have found profound evidence that race and gender serve as primary characteristics in influencing the self-esteem as well as the career and academic self-efficacy of African American and women students (Hackett, Esposito, & O'Halloran, 1989; Mack, Schultz, & Araki, 2002; Walker, 2004). These studies provide further support for a) the importance of role models and b) the salience of race and gender as important factors in stimulating self-perceptions and beliefs about success potential.

Political role models

As discussed, role models are very influential on the aspirations of African American and female youth. What remains questionable is whether the impact holds when the role model is a high- level figure. Very few scholars (Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006; Wolbrecht & Campbell, 2007) have examined the impact a person with national attention has on students where there is no direct relationship between them. Of the studies that have been conducted, some have considered the impact of celebrities and sports figures (Szymanski, 1977). However, only two have looked at political figures specifically(Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006; Simon & Hoyt, 2008).

Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006) conducted a series of studies that looked at whether the presence of female political role models inspires interest in political activism among young women. They first examined "the role model" effect over time. In this sub-study, the authors made use of the archival data sets Monitoring the Future (MTF) series. The MTF (Johnston, O'Malley, & Bachman, 2001) is a questionnaire that is administered to a national sample of high school seniors, and for this study was examined from 1976 to 2001.

The MTF questionnaire is designed to measure the behaviors, attitudes, and values of American secondary and college students, as well as young adults. Within the MTF are questions that gauge career specific interests; the current study analyzed political aspirations. Although the authors did not report demographic information for their sample, results indicated a significant difference in the political aspirations between boys and girls in the years 1985 and 1993. Furthermore, the 1985 results are attributed to

1984 vice presidential election run of Geraldine Ferraro. The 1993 results are attributed to the so called "year of the woman", 1992.

Campbell and Wolbrecht's proposed in their second study that the visibility of the candidates was a mitigating factor that influenced the earlier finding. As they propose, the 1985 offered a national level candidate, and therefore the gender of the candidate and the status of office (vice-president of a major party) necessitated high media visibility. However, the same conclusion could not be made for the 1993 effect. To understand this dynamic, the authors used data from the Vanderbilt Television News Archive and the *New York Times* to gauge the press's emphasis of political candidate's gender during the campaign season. This metric was then correlated with the difference between males and females reported political engagement. Although not significant, results implied strong relationships between relative female political interests with TV News coverage (.61; p>.001) and news coverage (.52; p>.01).

Lastly, the authors proposed that the political viability of the candidate also contributed to whether or not there would be a role model effect. Defining political viability as either winning the local area race or coming within 10 points, Campbell and Wolbrecht regressed the anticipated involvement of female adolescents on candidates' viability in local area elections (local refers to House, Senate, and Governor elections in the respondent's area). Results of this analysis show that where female candidates are viable, girls report increased anticipated political involvement.

Based on these findings, Campbell and Wolbrecht assert that political figures serve as role models who inspire the political interests of young women. Furthermore,

they offer evidence that the role model effect is largely contingent upon the visibility and the viability of the candidate. It should however be noted that no demographic data was reported for their sample and that political aspirations were based on upon questionnaire data with no reported validity indices (Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006).

While studying women in the British Parliament, Wolbrecht and Campbell (2007) found that there are more female members of parliament, adolescent girls are more likely to discuss politics with friends and to discuss and intention to participate in politics. Furthermore, this effect was found to be greater among adolescents when compared to adults.

In summary, the presence of female and African American political figures appears to carry substantial benefits for constituents of their respective demographic group. Minority political figures have been shown to increase member's participation, engagement, and have shown and inspirational affect for young people in at least careers in politics.

Simon and Hoyt (2008) provide the closest examination of the impact a political figure has on voters. More specifically, they attempted to explain how attitudes towards women, political ideology, and one's gender social identity influence support for a female presidential candidate, namely Hillary Clinton. They conducted two studies and found support for the hypothesis that gender social identity outweighed political ideology and attitudes towards women in support of a female presidential candidate (Simon & Hoyt, 2008).

In their first study, Simon and Hoyt considered participants' attitudes towards women and attitudes toward electing a female candidate for president. One hundred and twelve undergraduates (male=58, female=54, age 18-74) were surveyed using the Spence's and Helmreich's (Spence & Hahn, 1997) Attitudes Towards Women scale and the Attitudes Towards Electing a Woman for President measure. They found that a) women significantly reported more liberal attitudes, b) those with more liberal attitudes towards women were more likely to support a women for president. In total, regression analysis revealed that 36% of the variance in support of a woman president was accounted for by both sex/gender as well as attitudes towards women.

Secondly, Simon and Hoyt replicated the study using the Gender and Authority Measure (Rudman & Kilianski, 2000); their purpose was to increase the external validity of their findings by incorporating a measure that examines attitudes towards a specific woman candidate, Hillary Clinton. Participants included 83 undergraduates (44 women) whom were administered the *Gender and Authority Measure*, a *Support for Clinton* survey, *The Political Attitudes Scale*, and the *Trait Perceptions* survey.

The *Gender and Authority Measure* is intended to capture preferences for female authority figures. The *Support for Clinton* survey was created to assess which participants supported Clinton for president, and was constructed for the purpose of their study. The *Political Attitudes Scale* is a one item scale, 5-point scale with the anchors very liberal and very conservative. Lastly, the *Trait Perceptions* survey was intended to evaluate participant's perception of Clinton as possessing favorable traits to include both agentic (confident, competent, ambitious) and communal(kind, supportive, sensitive to the needs of other) traits.

Using step-wise regression analysis, they found support for the hypotheses that women reported significantly less negative views toward women in authority as compared to men (M=4.22, *SD*=.49; t(80), p<.001). Secondly, after controlling for political ideology, attitudes toward females in authority was no longer predictive of support for Hillary Clinton above that accounted for by sex of the participant and political attitudes. They conclude that attitudes about gender and authority do not account for the variance in support for Clinton, independent from political attitudes. Furthermore, they suggest the sex of the participant's operates as a unique factor in the equation.

A few limitations should be noted about Simon and Hoyt's study. Firstly, their study was not peer reviewed; therefore the rigorous criticism with which studies are typically subjected to has not been applied to their analysis. Secondly, not enough information was reported regarding the sample. Given that the study was conducted in Boston, which tends to be liberal leaning, are less generalizeable than has been reported. Lastly, their finding that women's support for Clinton after controlling for political ideology is somewhat suspect. While acknowledging that Sarah Palin is the Vice Presidential contender and thus the comparison is not equivalent, the suspicion arises from the fact that Palin was largely unable to influence Clinton supporters to endorse her party's ticket.

The Campbell and Wolbrecht study and the Simon and Hoyt study provide support for the notion that political figures do impact their constituents on a psychological level. Whereas Campbell and Wolbrecht demonstrated a link between women political candidates and the career aspirations of high-school students for at least interest in political careers. Simon and Hoyt discussed the role of gender, attitudes

towards women, and political philosophy in support of Hillary Clinton. Based on their analysis, a possible conclusion, at least for women, Clinton's bid may have ignited emotions related to group membership and group consciousness. As will be discussed in the next section, the success of a group member has important implications for the self perceptions of group members.

Self Esteem

As a construct, self esteem has been associated with an array of other personal attributes that are considered both negative and positive. According to Baumeister, self esteem is considered to be one's overall sense of worthiness as a person 1985. Branden offered a more recent definition as "the disposition to experience oneself as being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and of being worthy of happiness" (1994). From this perspective, self esteem is something of a personality characteristic by which people treat or act on life. It is considered to be an emotion, an evaluation of the self, as well as cognition.

Within the broader definition of self esteem, two types have emerged; earned self esteem and global self esteem. Earned self esteem is developed as a result of accomplishments and achievements. This type of self esteem is merit based and is considered the better of the two types because of its emphasis on skill and achievement (Lerner, 1985). Conversely, global self esteem is considered to be one's overall sense of worthiness as a person (Baumeister, 1993). Because this sense of pride or worthiness is not based on an external factor, global self esteem is sometimes viewed as negative. From

this perspective, global self esteem is linked with elevated self worth and on the extreme end narcissism.

Studying self esteem can yield many positive benefits for the African American and women college student group. Self esteem has been linked to increased grade performance, positive racial and feminist identity adjustment, achievement motivation, better academic performance, and a range of other positive traits (Ajayi, 2002; Chapell & Overton, 2002; Watt, 2006; Wohlford, Lochman, & Barry, 2004). This sense of elevated self worth should be influenced by the political candidates through social comparison processes and observation.

Social Comparison Theory

Festinger postulated in his social comparison theory (1954) that individuals learn about their abilities and attitudes by comparing themselves to other people and their opinions. Additionally, he stressed that we tend to compare ourselves against others whom we believe we have reasonable similarity. Individual's abilities will at times have clear objectives such as performance in a class or more general evaluations of self such as achievement in a given career.

Festinger bases his theory on the assumption that people naturally have an internal drive to excel in their abilities and are thus motivated towards continual improvement. Moreover, people are generally segregated into those who compare themselves to others who perform better, an upward comparison; people will also compare themselves to others who perform worse, a downward comparison (Festinger, 1954; Suls & Wheeler, 2000).

As it relates to task specific interests, Wheeler, Martin, and Suls (1997) proposed that individuals engage in social comparisons through the usage of proxies, or a person who-has successfully negotiated a task of interest. When people have identified someone who has a) completed the task of interest (e.g. graduate school, fixing a car) and b) the proxy is similar to the individual, the proxy provides a reference or gives valuable information about the outcome expectancy of the particular task.

Wheeler et.al (2005) proposed that social comparisons produce assimilative and contrastive effects for individuals who observe proxies or role models. From their view, the successes of the role model can be important resources for knowledge and motivation. The authors posit that role models should be similar in relevant attributes to be meaningful and allow for assimilative benefits. Further, role models may also have contrastive effects if they are perceived as "super flops". Wheeler and colleagues state these super flops may lower self-evaluations if observers are forced to think about the role model's failures. However, the failures of the role model may still produce beneficial effects by signaling to the observer what actions to not take. Furthermore, they propose that the contrast effects exceed pride effects; moreover, social comparisons produce both assimilative and contrastive effects. The prevailing process is thus contingent upon the observer's certitude and flexibility in making strategic comparisons, as opposed to acting by default.

As it relates to this study, I propose that the political candidates will engage social comparison processes of African American's and women. The comparisons will be drawn based on the salient nature of race and gender respectively. In accordance with the theory, the political candidates do not pose a threat to individuals because their success is

not in the same domain neither are the candidates in competition with constituents.

Therefore, a downward comparison is not probable. It is plausible that upward

comparisons will be made which in turn will influence measures of self perceptions for

African Americans and women college students.

Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura (1986) expressed in Social Cognitive Theory that three factors were

primarily at work in determining behavior. He espoused, through his notion of reciprocal

determinism, that the environment, behavior, and personal/cognitive factors worked in

tandem to influence individuals. Furthermore, Bandura proposed that learning can take

place by observing others. Development of Bandura's early studies have demonstrated

that his observation hypothesis extends to a range of learning situations (Bandura &

Vasta, 1992). Two key components of Bandura's theory have direct implication for the

current study; modeling and self efficacy.

Bandura's suggestion that learning is capable by observing others is the central

tenet of his theory (1986). Bandura posits vicarious learning, or what he called modeling,

hinged on two key criteria; characteristics of the observer, and characteristics of the

model. The learning process was enhanced the more closely observer and the model met

the criteria. As it applies to the observer, they must 1) pay attention to the model, 2)

retain the information presented by the model, 3) posses the ability to produce the act,

and 4) must be sufficiently motivated to produce the act.

As it relates to the model, observers are more likely to be influenced by someone

who is similar to them than not. Also, expressions of simple behaviors are more likely to

adopted, and hostile/aggressive behaviors are more likely to be adopted particularly in children. Furthermore, the driving force of the previous two characteristics is the reward consequences associated with the behavior. Thus, if positive short or long term benefits are perceived by the observer, imitation of the behavior is more likely to occur (Bandura & Vasta, 1992).

The modeling process is said to produce two types of learning effects (Bandura, 1971). First, observers can learn novel patterns of behavior that they have never tried. This learning process was termed the observational learning effect. Secondly, models are able to influence the existing behavior patterns of the observer. As an example, when a model is punished for a behavior, the observer learns to discontinue his or her similar behavior, lest they be punished as well. Bandura termed this the inhibitory effect. Alternatively, disinhibitory effects surface when observers increase performance of previously inhibited behavior after observing models.

Bandura's notion of self-efficacy has wide reaching application for the current study. Self-efficacy is people's judgments of their ability to organize and perform courses of action required, thus attaining designated types of performances. Studying self-efficacy beliefs in African Americans and women, has tremendous importance as self efficacy has been linked to many types of motivational, performance-related, and self evaluative constructs (Byars-Winston, 2006; Lerner, 1985; Richardson, 1984; Rosen, 1983). I reason that self-efficacy is enhanced by the presidential candidates. Moreover, through observing their success in politics, African American and women student's self efficacy beliefs are bolstered by the candidate's success.

Measuring Self Efficacy

While taking Bandura's lead on the notion that self-efficacy beliefs are domain specific and less generalizeable across tasks, the overwhelming majority of the research on self-efficacy has taken that approach (Eden, 2001). A perusal of academic databases will yield results for many types of self efficacy ranging from voting self-efficacy to career self efficacy to condom use. However, some scholars have argued for a generalized self efficacy construct. Eden defined general self efficacy as "one's belief in one's overall competence to affect requisite performance across a wide variety of achievement situations".

According to Eden's definition, general self efficacy appears to be a construct describing an approach with which people take into situations (Eden, 2001). The definition appears to move away from Bandura's task oriented efficacy to a more trait-like approach. Bandura has advised against this formulation of self efficacy, although at times he has suggested that task-oriented self efficacy measures can be aggregated to formulate an overall depiction of one's self efficacy (Chen, et al., 2001).

The philosophical basis for general self efficacy remains in question as agreement is yet to be reached on the construct. Criticisms aside, researchers in the area have demonstrated validation of the construct. Furthermore, advancements have been made to operationalize general self-efficacy and produce measures for research purposes.

Scherbaum and his colleagues (2006) reviewed the three predominant measures of general self efficacy. *Sherer et al.'s General Self Efficacy Scale*, *Schwarzer and Jerusalem's General Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale*, and *Chen et. al's New General Self*

Efficacy Scale (NGSE) were evaluated using item response theory (IRT). IRT is a model-based approach to understanding nonlinear relationships between individual characteristics, item characteristics, and individual response patterns. The authors utilized this approach for several reasons. Firstly, IRT allows for the analyses of latent traits by studying the standard error of measurement at each level. Secondly, IRT computes the amount of measurement information at the various levels (high vs. low); this provides an understanding of which items and which levels of the trait, i. e. self efficacy, provide substantial information.

Results of their analysis produced positive results for all three measures. They found support for the reliability of all three measures and established significant relationships with the latent construct general self-efficacy. However, *Chen et. al's New General Self Efficacy Scale* produced the most desirable results. The NGSE produced better results for its item discrimination, item information, and efficiency of test information functions.

Summary

Based on the assumptions of these theories, the political process engages voters because of a) the issues that confront them whether they be general concerns or group specific and b) by having members of their particular group (African Americans and women) in the running; this is largely due to the assumption that those members will put forward their concerns and the success of the candidate signals progress for the group as a whole. These assumptions are underscored by group solidarity and unification, which surfaces as a byproduct of disenfranchisement and social ills targeted at particular groups.

Subsequently, when a member of the group "makes it" in the political arena, that person also serves as a point of reference or role model who elevates self-esteem and beliefs about an individual's ability to exact change.

This process however is not mechanical. Members who have "made it" must pass social tests in order for their impact to truly take effect. The role models must be seen as having adequate viability, that is they must have a perceived real chance at winning. Secondly, they must adequately identify with their subgroup. When political role models are perceived as too removed, members from the group will withdraw or not give support in favor of another person who has sufficiently connected with them and appears to be a better candidate to represent their concerns. Additionally, preconceived notions about political ideology/party affiliation, attitudes about the ability of Blacks and women to lead, and voter's identification with their minority group may temper this effect. While sufficient empirical evidence supports the hypothesis that role models will influence self-esteem and self efficacy, the majority of these findings have been based on research conducted with role models who have had some type of interpersonal relationship with the observer.

Having successfully passed this scrutiny, and after controlling for party affiliation and attitudes about women and Black's ability to lead, the political candidates Barak Obama, Hillary Clinton, and Sarah Palin, should effect elevations on measures of self-esteem and self efficacy for African Americans and White women college students. Furthermore, this effect should be evidenced above that which is observed for White males.

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APPENDIX B

MEASURES

DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET

1. What is your age_____

2. Please tell us your gender

3. What year in college are you in_____

Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Graduate	Not in college
1	2	3	4	5	6

4. Which best describes your race/ethnicity_____

Black	White	Hispanic	Asian	Native-American	Other
1	2	3	4	5	6

5. What university do you attend?

OK State	Langston	UCO
1	2	3

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale

Instructions: Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. If you strongly agree, circle **SA**. If you agree with the statement, circle **A**. If you disagree, circle **D**. If you strongly disagree, circle **SD**.

1.	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	SA	A	D	SD
2.*	At times, I think I am no good at all.	SA	A	D	SD
3.	I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	SA	A	D	SD
4.	I am able to do things as well as most other people.	SA	A	D	SD
5.*	I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	SA	A	D	SD
6.*	I certainly feel useless at times.	SA	A	D	SD
7.	I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	SA	A	D	SD
8.*	I wish I could have more respect for myself.	SA	A	D	SD
9.*	All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	SA	A	D	SD
10.	I take a positive attitude toward myself.	SA	A	D	SD

New General Self Efficacy Scale

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following questions.

1. I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself.

2. When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them.

3. In general, I think that I can obtain outcomes that are important to me.

4. I believe I can succeed at most any endeavor to which I set my mind.

5. I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges.

6. I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks.

7. Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well.

8. Even when things are tough, I can perform quite well.

Post Analysis Questions

How trusting of the government do you feel you are?

Very Trusting	Somewhat Trusting	Neither	Somewhat Untrusting	Very Untrusting
1	2	3	4	5

Check which activities you participated in during the election season

Voted for a candidate in the primary/caucus elections

Donated money to a candidate or party

Participated in registration drives

Encouraged other people to register/Vote

Watched the debates

Researched the candidates on the internet

Volunteered with a political party or organization

If you could choose the president, regardless of who actually won, who would it be? (top three candidates from each party listed)

Clinton	Edwards	Huckabee	McCain	Obama	Romney	Other
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

What do you consider your chosen candidate to be?

Hero	Role Model	Mentor	None of these
1	2	3	4

Who did you vote for in the presidential election?

McCain/Palin	Obama/Biden
1	2

With what political party do you affiliate?

	Republican	Democratic	No Party	Other
	1	2	3	4

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements

(1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4= strongly agree)

Has a person that you consider a parent talked with you about the election?
1   2   3   4

Has another relative talked with you about the election?
1   2   3   4

Has a teacher talked with you about the election?
1   2   3   4

Has a counselor or school official talked with you about the election?
1   2   3   4

Have any of your friends talked with you about the election?
1   2   3   4

Has a person that you consider a parent told you that you could achieve in your career like the candidates have achieved?
1   2   3   4

Has another relative discussed with you that you could achieve in your career like the candidates have achieved?
1   2   3   4

Has a teacher discussed with you that you could achieve in your career like the candidates have achieved?
1   2   3   4

Has a counselor or school official discussed with you that you could achieve in your career like the candidates have achieved?

1   2   3   4

Vignettes

Black Male

William, a Black man, was just inaugurated as the first African American president of the United States. In his acceptance speech, he said "I had to work really hard to get here". "I didn't grow up with a lot, but hard work and my family helped me along the way". William was smart and talented, and he always worked hard in school. While in college, William participated in activities on campus and gained the respect of his friends and colleagues. He won numerous awards for his efforts and made a mark on the campus. After college he went on to work in the community. A few years later, he realized that he could make better use of his talents by entering public office. William started off in local governments and then went on to serve his state on the national level. Having served in that office for four years, he made a run for president. After a tough and long fought election, today he is the first African American man to ever become president of the United States.

White Male

William, a White man, was just inaugurated as president of the United States. In his acceptance speech, he said "I had to work really hard to get here". "I didn't grow up with a lot, but hard work and my family helped me along the way". William was smart and talented, and he always worked hard in school. While in college, William participated in activities on campus and gained the respect of his friends and colleagues. He won numerous awards for his efforts and made a mark on the campus. After college he went on to work in the community. A few years later, he realized that he could make better use of his talents by entering public office. William started off in local governments and then went on to serve his state on the national level. Having served in

that office for four years, he made a run for president. After a tough and long fought election, today he is the president of the United States.

Black Female

Jane, a Black female, was just inaugurated as the first African American female president of the United States. In her acceptance speech, she said "I had to work really hard to get here". "I didn't grow up with a lot, but hard work and my family helped me along the way". Jane was smart and talented, and she always worked hard in school. While in college, Jane participated in activities on campus and gained the respect of her friends and colleagues. She won numerous awards for her efforts and made a mark on the campus. After college she went on to work in the community. A few years later, she realized that she could make better use of her talents by entering public office. Jane started off in local governments and then went on to serve her state on the national level. Having served in that office for four years, she made a run for president. After a tough and long fought election, today he is the first African American female to ever become president of the United States.

White Female

Jane, a White female, was just inaugurated as the first female president of the United States. In her acceptance speech, she said "I had to work really hard to get here". "I didn't grow up with a lot, but hard work and my family helped me along the way". Jane was smart and talented, and she always worked hard in school. While in college, Jane participated in activities on campus and gained the respect of her friends and colleagues. She won numerous awards for her efforts and made a mark on the campus. After college she went on to work in the community. A few years later, she realized that she could make better use of her talents by entering public office. Jane started off in local governments and then went on to serve her state on the national level. Having

served in that office for four years, she made a run for president. After a tough and long fought

election, today he is the first female to ever become president of the United States.

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Wednesday, January 21, 2009

IRB Application No   ED08190

Proposal Title: Impact of the 2008 Presidential Election

Reviewed and   Exempt
Processed as:

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved   Protocol Expires: 1/20/2010

Principal
Investigator(s):

Donell L. Barnett   Sue Jacobs
431 Willard   431 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078   Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Shelia Kennison, Chair
Institutional Review Board

VITA

Donell LaKieth Barnett

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: IMPACT OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES ON THE SELF-ESTEEM AND GENERALIZED SELF-EFFICACY OF COLLEGE STUDENTS: A FOCUS ON RACE AND GENDER

Major Field: Counseling Psychology

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Psychology/ Counseling Psychology Option at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December, 2010.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Education in Counseling at University of North Texas, Denton, TX in 2006.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in Psychology at Langston University, Langston, OK in 2002.

Experience:

Clinical Psychology Internship, Eisenhower Army Medical Center, Augusta, GA.

Adjunct Professor of Psychology, Langston University, Langston, OK.

Mobile Psychological Assessor, OK Office of Juvenile Affairs, OKC, OK.

Professional Memberships:

American Psychological Association
Association of Black Psychologists

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Sue C. Jacobs

Name: Donell L. Barnett   Date of Degree: December, 2010

Institution: Oklahoma State University   Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: IMPACT OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES ON THE SELF-ESTEEM
                        AND GENERALIZED SELF-EFFICACY OF COLLEGE STUDENTS:
                        A FOCUS ON RACE AND GENDER

Pages in Study: 93   Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major Field: Counseling Psychology

Scope and Method of Study:
        This study was an online, experimental study to assess the impact of presidential
        candidates on the self esteem and general self efficacy of college students. The
        sample was comprised of African American and Caucasian college students, ages
        19-30, and enrolled at three different colleges in the Southwest. Experimental
        groups were primed with a presidential candidate vignette and compared against
        matched race and gender control groups. This study made use of vignettes that
        altered based on race (African American and Caucasian) and gender. With these
        alterations in the vignette primer, I examined the effect of the presidential
        candidate vignette on the outcome variables (self esteem and general self
        efficacy) against matched race and gender control groups.
Findings and Conclusions:
        The vignettes failed to produce a significant difference for Caucasian males and
        females. From this finding I conclude that due to a lack of novelty (i.e. all
        previous presidents have been Caucasian males) there is no "self concept" boost
        for Caucasian males. For Caucasian females, the effect may have been nullified
        by the strong presence of Caucasian women in congress and local government.
        Further, the effect of these high level exemplars may be limited to career and
        vocational aspirations of young women as indicated in the literature. The vignette
        produced significantly higher self efficacy scores for African American males and
        significantly lower self esteem scores for African American females. African
        American presidents may promote a greater sense of self efficacy for African
        American males. However, more research is needed to document the tangible
        effects of this boost in self efficacy. For African American females, this lowering
        of self esteem scores points to a "lower self esteem turning into a challenge"
        process in light of the substantial gains in academia and career that has been
        observed in this group over the last two decades. In sum, presidential candidates
        did not have a self concept impact on Caucasians. Presidential candidates do
        impact the self concept of African Americans although the impact is different
        between African American males and females.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Sue C. Jacobs