Government Instability Shifts Skin Tone Representations of and Intentions to Vote for Political Candidates

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Does government stability shift the way White and Black Americans represent and make voting decisions about political candidates? Participants judged how representative lightened, darkened, and unaltered photographs were of a racially ambiguous candidate ostensibly running for political office (Studies 1–3). When the governmental system was presented as stable, White participants who shared (vs. did not share) the candidate's political beliefs rated a lightened photo as more representative of the candidate, and Black participants who shared (vs. did not share) the candidate's political beliefs rated a darkened photo as more representative (Studies 1–3). However, under conditions of instability, both Whites and Blacks who shared (vs. did not share) the candidate's political beliefs rated a lightened photo as more representative (Study 3). Representations of (Studies 2 and 3) and actual differences in (Studies 4a and 4b) skin tone predicted intentions to vote for candidates, as a function of government stability and participants' race. Further evidence suggested that system stability shifted the motivations that guided voting decisions (Study 4a and 4b). When the system was stable, the motivation to enhance one's group predicted greater intentions to vote for lighter skinned candidates among Whites, and greater intentions to vote for darker skinned candidates among Blacks. When the system was unstable, however, lacking confidence in the sociopolitical system predicted intentions to vote for lighter skinned candidates among both Whites and Blacks. Implications for political leadership and social perception are discussed.

Keywords: skin tone, government instability, race, voting, perception

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In 2008 Barack Obama became the first biracial President of the United States. Born to a White mother and Black father, Obama's racial group membership was construed as ambiguous, and there was considerable variation in the degree to which White and Black Americans believed that Obama should be categorized as Black or White (Crouch, 2006; Gaither, Wilton, & Young, 2014). How people represent a candidate's racial group membership likely holds implications for important political outcomes. Indeed, political campaigns allegedly attempted to capitalize on the ambiguity in Obama's racial group membership. For example, Hillary Clinton's campaign was accused of darkening images of Obama in one of her ads to garner voter support (Stirland, 2008).

Perceptions of racial group membership are, at times, malleable. Racial minorities vary in physical characteristics, such as their skin tone or Afrocentric facial features, which can create ambiguity in their

racial group membership (Blascovich, Wyer, Swart, & Kibler, 1997; Hugenberg & Bodenhausen, 2004; Hutchings & Haddock, 2008; Krosch, Berntsen, Amodio, Jost, & Van Bavel, 2013; MacLin & Malpass, 2001; Pauker et al., 2009; Peery & Bodenhausen, 2008). Moreover, perceivers' motivations shape how they categorize people whose racial group membership is ambiguous (e.g., Caruso, Mead, & Balcetis, 2009; Krosch et al., 2013; Krosch & Amodio, 2014; Miller, Maner, & Becker, 2010; Rodeheffer, Hill, & Lord, 2012; West, Pearson, Dovidio, Johnson, & Phills, 2014).

In the present studies we extend previous research examining how motivation guides representations of racial group membership by investigating three central questions. First, we asked how White and Black Americans represent the skin tone of a racially ambiguous political candidate who either shares or does not share their beliefs and has the potential to hold positions of high social standing and power. Second, we asked how government stability influences the motivations that people prioritize and that guide their skin tone representations. Third, we asked whether people's skin tone representations of candidates predict voting intentions. The present research integrates diverse perspectives on intergroup relations and social judgment to develop novel predictions about the mechanisms that shape representations of others, and tests the consequences of those representations on decision-making.

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Group Enhancement and System Defense Motivations

Two fundamental psychological motivations that drive behavior are the motivation to enhance the social standing of one's groups (Hogg, 2006; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and the motivation to defend the status quo (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). People enhance the status of their social groups through many different means, including allocating economic resources to their group (Sachdev & Bourhis, 1991; Sidanius, Pratto, & Mitchell, 1994) and accruing members who create positive perceptions of the group (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000; Tajfel, 1981). People can also defend the status quo through multiple routes, such as derogating people who criticize the system and purchasing domestic over internationally made products (Banfield et al., 2011; Cutright et al., 2011).

More important, people's motivation to enhance their group can at times diverge from or conflict with their motivation to defend the status quo (Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Ni Sullivan, 2003). This divergence is especially likely to occur among members of disadvantaged groups (Jost et al., 2004; Jost & Burgess, 2000; Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003), and can be created by disparities in leadership roles and power between groups. For example, in the context of race relations in the United States, Black Americans hold fewer positions of power than do Whites. As of 2012, 96% of Fortune 500 CEOs were White whereas only 1% were Black (Burns, Barton, & Kerby, 2012). Likewise, as of 2015, 80% of the members of the 114th House of Representatives were White whereas 10% were Black, and 94% of Senate members were White whereas 2% were Black (Bump, 2015).

Because the status quo in the United States positions Whites in powerful leadership roles, White and Black Americans are likely to differ in the extent to which they experience concordance between the motivations to enhance their group and defend the status quo. The behaviors of Whites can serve these two motives simultaneously, whereas the behaviors of Blacks often cannot. Whites can vote members of their racial group into positions of power to simultaneously confer status on their group and reinforce the current state of affairs. In contrast, when Blacks vote members of their racial group into positions of power, they enhance their group, but they challenge the status quo. We theorize that the motive to enhance one's group is concordant with the motive to defend the status quo for Whites, but that these two motives often diverge for Blacks.

What factors lead people to prioritize the motive to enhance their group over the motive to defend the status quo? We propose that the motivations people prioritize depend, in part, on the stability of the governmental system (Kay & Friesen, 2011; Kay et al., 2009). Government stability is influenced by multiple factors, including political transitions in prominent agencies and policy changes. When governmental stability is threatened, people engage in actions to shore up the legitimacy of the system (Kay & Friesen, 2011; Kay, Jost, & Young, 2005; Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012). We expect that when the system is stable, people engage in behaviors to enhance the social standing of their group. However, when the system is unstable, they engage in behaviors to defend the status quo.

Skin Tone Representations as a Route for Defending the Group or Status Quo

Characteristics of a candidate are likely to influence whether people's active motives lead them to represent a candidate as more or less reflective of their group. People strategically include others in their group when they possess characteristics that advance the group's standing, such as competence and leadership capabilities (Levine & Moreland, 1990, 1994; Pinto, Marques, Levine, & Abrams, 2010). However, people are only motivated to include a highly competent target in their group when the target shares (rather than does not share) their beliefs (Festinger, 1950; Festinger, Schachter, & Back, 1950; Kruglanski, Pierro, Mannetti, & De Grada, 2006; Marques & Paez, 1994). Thus, belief similarity impacts whether people are motivated to include others in their group.

We predicted that system stability would determine which motivation perceivers prioritize. Moreover, we expected that these active motivations would influence how people represent the skin tone of a political candidate whose racial group membership is ambiguous, as a function of belief similarity. We argue that when people are motivated to enhance their group, they will represent a strongly qualified candidate who shares their beliefs as possessing skin tone that reflects their own racial group. Supporting this idea, attitude similarity influenced how White Americans represented the skin tone of Obama before the 2008 Presidential election. Democrats (i.e., people who shared Obama's beliefs) represented Obama as lighter skinned, whereas Republicans (i.e., people who did not share Obama's beliefs) represented Obama as darker skinned (Caruso et al., 2009; West et al., 2014). We predicted that when the system is stable, Whites would represent a candidate who shares (vs. does not share) their beliefs as lighter skinned, and Blacks would represent a candidate who shares (vs. does not share) their beliefs as darker skinned.

We also predicted that when people prioritize the motivation to defend the system, they would represent a highly qualified candidate who shares their beliefs as possessing skin tone that reflects the status quo. In so doing, people bestow legitimacy on the current state of affairs. Because the status quo in America confers positions of political power on Whites, we expected that when the system is unstable both Whites and Blacks would represent a candidate who shares (vs. does not share) their beliefs as lighter skinned.

Skin Tone Representations Predict Voting Intentions

How people represent a candidate's skin tone guides their intentions to vote for the candidate (Caruso et al., 2009; West et al., 2014). We hypothesized that skin tone representations would differentially predict voting intentions based on system stability. When the system is stable, we expected that the more people represented a candidate as reflecting their racial group, the stronger they would intend to vote for the candidate. Specifically, we predicted that under times of stability, Whites who represented a candidate as lighter skinned would have stronger intentions to vote for the candidate, and Blacks who represented a candidate as darker skinned would have stronger intentions to vote for the candidate. When the system is unstable, however, we expected that the more people represented a candidate as reflecting the status

quo, the more likely they would be to vote for the candidate. As such, we predicted that both Whites and Blacks who represented a candidate as lighter skinned would report stronger intentions to vote for the candidate.

Overview of Studies

We examined whether government stability shifts how people represent and make voting decisions about candidates. We examined skin tone representations when stability was held constant (Studies 1 and 2) and experimentally manipulated (Study 3). We also tested whether representations of (Studies 2 and 3) and actual differences in (Studies 4a and 4b) skin tone predicted voting intentions. Finally, we provided evidence for the motivations that guide voting intentions based on system stability (Studies 4a and 4b).

Study 1

In Study 1, we examined the influence of political similarity and racial group membership on representations of a candidate's skin tone. We held government stability constant to provide a baseline condition for the studies that follow. Participants were told that a highly qualified candidate running for a position in the U.S. Department of Education either did or did not share their beliefs. We showed participants three photographs of the hypothetical candidate: one was unaltered, one was altered to be lighter in skin tone, and one was altered to be darker in skin tone. Participants indicated how representative each photograph was of the candidate.

We predicted that when participants agreed with the candidate they would rate a photo that most reflected their racial group as being *more* representative than the other photos, whereas when they disagreed with the candidate they would rate a photo that most reflected their racial group as being *less* representative than the other photos. Specifically, we predicted that Whites who agreed with the candidate would rate a lightened photo as more representative than a darkened photo, whereas Whites who disagreed with the candidate would rate a lightened photo as less representative than a darkened photo. We expected that Blacks who agreed with the candidate would rate a darkened photo as more representative than a lightened photo, whereas Blacks who disagreed with the candidate would rate a darkened photo as less representative than a lightened photo.

Method

Stimuli.   We used four professional photographs that depicted a White–Black biracial man. Each photograph varied the lighting, background, and pose. One photograph remained unaltered. Using Adobe Photoshop CS3, we created two altered versions of the three remaining photographs by lightening and darkening skin tone. We isolated exposed skin areas and adjusted the midtones γ by 0.35 to create a lightened version and -0.35 to create a darkened version of each of the three adjusted photographs. This resulted in three skin tone versions of each of these three poses (see Caruso et al., 2009).[1]

Participants.   In all studies, participants were U.S. citizens and 18 years of age or older. In exchange for $5, 155 partici-

pants (98 White [65 women, 30 men, 3 no sex reported], 57 Black [34 women, 23 men]; $M_{age} = 25.37$) from the Chicago and New York City community completed the experiment. Participants were recruited via online ads posted to Craigslist and Facebook, and emails sent to participants from a study pool maintained by The University of Chicago. All ads described an opportunity to participate in a short online survey assessing "perceptions and opinions about several social and political issues." Seven additional participants completed the study but were excluded from analyses for either correctly guessing the hypothesis ($n = 4$) or failing to provide representativeness ratings of all candidate photographs ($n = 3$). A post hoc power analysis indicated that we possessed 65% power to detect the smallest of the predicted effects found in this study. All power analyses were conducted using G* Power 3 (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007).

Procedure.

Candidate information.   Participants were told that "in a continuing effort to improve the services they offer, the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) is creating a new position to help make progress on some of the most pressing issues in education." Participants knew that they would be randomly assigned to evaluate one of several candidates running for the position. Participants viewed an unaltered photograph of the candidate, who we referred to as Harvey Ryder, along with a biography presenting a strong education and occupational history. They read that Ryder was well-educated, earned his Master's degree in Education, had directed a major state policy group, and was well-suited for this position.

Candidate similarity manipulation.   Participants learned that the DOE is interested in hiring candidates who share the American public's views. Participants read that they would provide their positions on six issues relevant to education, and would then be given feedback about how similar their views were to those of Harvey Ryder. Participants then indicated which of two positions they held toward student loans (increase number or amount), teacher standards (strict or lenient), school curriculum (focus on science or humanities), administrative deadlines (national or state-by-state), length of the school year (lengthen or keep the same), and how funds should be allocated to schools (to those with high- or low-performing students). Each position was accompanied by a description outlining the stance. For example, participants indicated whether they preferred administrative deadlines to be National ("Some people think that all states should abide by the same deadline for submitting their progress reports") or State-By-State ("Others think that a coordinated deadline is unnecessary and that states should be allowed to submit their progress reports on different deadlines").

We then manipulated whether participants shared the candidate's views. We randomly assigned feedback indicating that participants either agreed ($n = 83$; 55 White [36 women, 17 men, 2 undisclosed], 28 Black [16 women, 12 men]) or disagreed ($n = 72$; 43 White [29 women, 13 men, 1 undisclosed], 29 Black [18

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[1] Photographs used in all studies can be obtained from the first author.

women, 11 men])[2] with the candidate's beliefs on five of the six issues. Participants assigned to the agreement (disagreement) condition learned that "Based on your responses, you and Harvey Ryder agree on five (one) of the six issues. The one issue on which you disagree (agree) is Administrative Deadlines: National vs. State-by-State."

Skin tone representativeness ratings. We then assessed representations of the candidate's skin tone. We explained that although public figures are often photographed, some pictures better capture the true essence of a person, and we were interested in assessing which photographs participants perceived as most representative of the candidate. Participants sequentially viewed three photographs in randomized order: one unaltered, one lightened, and one darkened. Each photograph depicted the candidate in a unique pose. We varied which pose appeared with each skin tone. Participants were asked to indicate how representative each photo was of the candidate on a 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*a great deal*) scale. Participants reported their race and gender at the end of all studies.

Results

Representations of skin tone. We conducted a 2 (Participant Race: White, Black) × 2 (Political Similarity: Agree, Disagree) × 3 (Photo Skin Tone: Lightened, Unaltered, Darkened) repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) predicting representativeness ratings of the photos. The skin tone factor was specified as repeated. As predicted, the three-way interaction was significant, $F(2, 302) = 9.32$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$, indicating that candidate similarity differentially impacted how Whites and Blacks represented the candidate's skin tone. We decomposed this interaction by examining the Similarity × Skin Tone interaction separately for Whites and Blacks.

White participants' ratings. Among Whites, the Similarity × Skin Tone interaction was significant, $F(2, 302) = 3.27$, $p = .04$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$ (see Table 1). Among Whites who agreed with the

Table 1
Study 1 and 2 Representativeness Rating Means (SDs) of the Lightened, Unaltered, and Darkened Candidate Photos for White and Black Participants in the Candidate Agreement and Disagreement Conditions

	Lightened	Unaltered	Darkened
	Study 1		
White participants			
Agree	5.16 (1.01)$_a$	4.93 (1.26)$_a$	4.51 (1.57)$_b$
Disagree	4.14 (1.60)$_b$	4.58 (1.44)$_{ab}$	4.23 (1.59)$_b$
Black participants			
Agree	4.79 (1.29)$_a$	4.82 (1.22)$_a$	5.46 (1.04)$_b$
Disagree	4.83 (1.69)$_a$	4.76 (1.92)$_a$	4.00 (1.98)$_c$
	Study 2		
White participants			
Agree	5.34 (1.21)$_a$	5.06 (1.21)$_b$	4.70 (1.45)$_c$
Disagree	4.49 (1.55)$_c$	4.80 (1.71)$_b$	4.60 (1.65)$_{bc}$
Black participants			
Agree	5.14 (1.41)$_a$	5.38 (1.29)$_{bc}$	5.42 (1.38)$_c$
Disagree	5.33 (1.39)$_a$	5.20 (1.56)$_{ab}$	4.89 (1.54)$_d$

Note. Values with different subscripts within a row or column are significantly different ($p < .05$).

candidate, representativeness ratings varied based on photo skin tone, $F(2, 302) = 4.80$, $p = .009$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. The lightened photo was rated as more representative than the darkened photo, $t(302) = 2.78$, $p = .006$, $d = .32$, and the darkened photo was rated as marginally less representative than the unaltered photo, $t(302) = -1.91$, $p = .058$, $d = .22$. Ratings of the lightened and unaltered photos did not differ ($p = .20$). These findings indicate that Whites who agreed with the candidate represented him as lighter skinned. Among Whites who disagreed with the candidate, representativeness ratings did not vary based on photo skin tone, $F(2, 302) = 1.85$, $p = .16$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$.

Black participants' ratings. Among Blacks, the Similarity × Skin Tone interaction was significant, $F(2, 302) = 8.00$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$ (see Table 1). Among Blacks who agreed with the candidate, representativeness ratings varied based on photo skin tone, $F(2, 302) = 3.24$, $p = .04$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. The darkened photo was rated as *more* representative than the lightened photo, $t(302) = 2.05$, $p = .04$, $d = .24$, and the unaltered photo, $t(302) = 2.09$, $p = .04$, $d = .24$. Ratings of the lightened and unaltered photos did not significantly differ ($p = .89$). Among Blacks who disagreed with the candidate, representativeness ratings also varied based on photo skin tone, $F(2, 302) = 4.86$, $p = .008$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. The darkened photo was rated as *less* representative than the lightened photo, $t(302) = -2.54$, $p = .01$, $d = .29$, and the unaltered photo, $t(302) = -2.51$, $p = .01$, $d = .29$. Ratings of the lightened and unaltered photos did not differ ($p = .78$). These findings indicate that Blacks who agreed with the candidate represented him as darker skinned, whereas Blacks who disagreed with the candidate represented him as lighter skinned.

Study 1 Summary

The results of Study 1 indicate that skin tone representations of the candidate are guided by motivations to enhance one's group. Participants who agreed with the candidate represented his skin tone as reflective of their own racial group. In addition, Blacks who disagreed with the candidate represented his skin tone as less reflective of their racial group.

Study 2

We had three main goals in Study 2. First, we sought to replicate the results of Study 1 with a sufficiently powered sample (80%). Second, we tested the effect of skin tone representations on voting decisions. To the extent that people prioritize the motive to enhance their group when the system is stable, we expected that Whites who represent the candidate as lighter skinned would be more likely to vote for him, whereas Blacks who represent the candidate as darker skinned would be more likely to vote for him. Third, we sought to rule out factors that might systematically vary with the skin tone alteration of the candidates and that could explain our effects. Specifically, it is possible that altering the skin tone of the candidate changes the extent to which people perceive the photographs as clear and readable, which could explain why

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[2] In all studies there were no significant differences in the number of White and Black participants distributed throughout the experimental conditions ($ps \geq .38$), indicating that within-race cell size differences can be attributed to chance variation in condition assignment.

race and candidate similarity influence skin tone representations. If this alternative hypothesis is correct, then participant race and candidate similarity would shape perceptions of clarity and readability in the same way that they guide skin tone representations. To examine this possibility, we assessed perceptions of the clarity and readability of the photographs.

Method

Participants. In exchange for $5, 393 participants (200 White [102 women, 98 men] and 193 Black [98 women, 95 men]; M_{age} = 51.22) completed the study. Ninety-two additional participants completed the study but were excluded from analyses for failing an attention check.[3] Participants were recruited from an online participant pool managed by Qualtrics. Participants were recruited to join this pool through a variety of different means, including email, social media, and advertisements on websites to participate in an online survey assessing their opinions about political issues. White and Black participants were recruited in the same manner. We collected our sample size to possess at least 80% power to detect a small to medium effect ($d \approx .30$; Cohen, 1988).

Procedure.

Candidate information and similarity manipulation. Participants were provided with the same information as in Study 1 about the DOE election and candidate whom they would be evaluating. As in Study 1, participants provided their positions on six education issues and were randomly assigned to receive feedback indicating that they either agreed ($n = 201$; 102 White [52 women, 50 men], 99 Black [46 women, 53 men]) or disagreed ($n = 192$; 98 White [50 women, 48 men], 94 Black [52 women, 42 men]) with the candidate's beliefs on five of the six issues.

Skin tone representativeness ratings. We assessed participants' representations of the candidate's skin tone in the same manner as in Study 1.

Voting intentions. Participants indicated the likelihood that they would vote for the candidate in an election for a DOE position on a 1 (*not at all likely*) to 7 (*very likely*) scale.

Perceived clarity and readability of photographs. Lastly, participants again viewed the three candidate photographs and rated each photograph on several dimensions using a 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much so*) scale (unless otherwise noted). To assess perceived photograph quality, participants indicated the photographs' clarity and professional quality. To assess photograph readability, participants indicated how easy it was to read the candidate's eyes and emotional expressions. We defined *readability* for participants as how easy it is to figure out what a person is thinking or feeling. Lastly, to ensure that we possessed sufficient power to detect perceived photograph differences, we asked two questions on which we expected differences to emerge: participants indicated the darkness of the candidate's skin tone on a 1 (*very light*) to 7 (*very dark*) scale, and the Afrocentricity of his facial features on a 1 (*highly similar to features of the average White American*) to 7 (*highly similar to features of the average Black American*) scale.

Results

Representations of skin tone. We first tested whether candidate agreement shaped skin tone representations differently for Whites and Blacks. We conducted a 2 (Participant Race: White,

Black) × 2 (Political Similarity: Agree, Disagree) × 3 (Photo Skin Tone: Lightened, Unaltered, Darkened) repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) predicting representativeness ratings of the photos. Skin tone was specified as repeated. The predicted three-way interaction was significant, $F(2, 776) = 17.98$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. To decompose this interaction, we examined the Similarity × Skin Tone interaction separately for Whites and Blacks.

White participants' ratings. Among Whites, the Similarity × Skin Tone interaction was significant, $F(2, 776) = 10.48$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$ (see Table 1). Among Whites who agreed with the candidate, representativeness ratings varied based on photo skin tone, $F(2, 776) = 14.16$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. The lightened photo was rated as more representative than the darkened photo, $t(776) = 4.94$, $p < .001$, $d = .35$, and the unaltered photo, $t(776) = 2.76$, $p = .006$, $d = .20$. The darkened photo was also rated as less representative than the unaltered photo, $t(776) = -2.79$, $p = .005$, $d = .20$. These findings replicate Study 1 and indicate that Whites who agreed with the candidate represented him as lighter skinned. Among those who disagreed with the candidate, representativeness ratings also varied based on photo skin tone, $F(2, 776) = 3.10$, $p = .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. The lightened photo was rated as less representative than the unaltered photo, $t(776) = -2.89$, $p = .004$, $d = .21$. Ratings between the lightened and darkened photos ($p = .40$), and the unaltered and darkened photos ($p = .14$) were not significantly different.

Black participants' ratings. Among Blacks, the Similarity × Skin Tone interaction was also significant, $F(2, 776) = 8.02$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$ (see Table 1). Among Blacks who agreed with the candidate, representativeness ratings marginally varied based on photo skin tone, $F(2, 776) = 2.86$, $p = .058$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. The darkened photo was rated as *more* representative than the lightened photo, $t(776) = 2.08$, $p = .04$, $d = .15$, and the lightened photo was rated as less representative than then unaltered photo, $t(776) = 2.22$, $p = .03$, $d = .16$. Ratings of the darkened and unaltered photo did not differ ($p = .76$). Among Blacks who disagreed with the candidate, representativeness ratings also varied based on photo skin tone, $F(2, 776) = 6.24$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. The darkened photo was rated as *less* representative than the lightened photo, $t(776) = -3.21$, $p = .001$, $d = .23$, and the unaltered photo, $t(776) = -2.29$, $p = .02$, $d = .16$. Ratings of the lightened and unaltered photos did not differ ($p = .24$). These findings replicate Study 1 and indicate that Blacks who agreed with the candidate represented him as darker skinned, whereas Blacks who disagreed with the candidate represented him as lighter skinned.

Voting intentions. We next examined whether skin tone representations differentially predicted Whites' and Blacks' voting intentions. To examine the relationship between skin tone representations and voting intentions, we created a single

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[3] In Studies 2–4b participants completed an attention check at the end of the experiment in which they read the following information: "People vary in the amount they pay attention to these kinds of surveys. Some take them seriously and read each question, whereas others go very quickly and barely read the questions at all. If you have read this question carefully, please write the word yes in the blank box below labeled other. There is no need for you to respond to the scale below." A 7-point scale and response box appeared below the text. Participants were excluded from analyses if they did not correctly follow the instructions in the text.

"light advantage" skin tone score by subtracting representativeness ratings of the darkened photo from ratings of the lightened photo. This score reflects the extent to which participants viewed the lightened photo as more representative than the darkened photo. In all analyses we also included ratings of the unaltered photo as a predictor to account for individual variability in ratings of this photo. As such, all analyses examine whether viewing the lightened photo as more (or less) representative than the darkened photo predicts voting intentions above and beyond ratings of the unaltered photo.

We conducted a multiple regression model in which Participant Race (White = 1, Black = −1), Political Similarity (Agree = 1, Disagree = −1), Light Advantage Scores (grand-mean centered), and all interactions predicted voting intentions. Ratings of the unaltered photo were also included as a predictor. Effect sizes for regression models in the present research are reported as semipartial correlations (r_{sp}; Aloe & Becker, 2012).

The predicted two-way Race × Light advantage interaction was significant, $B = .21$, $SE = .05$, $t(382) = 4.04$, $p < .001$, $r_{sp} = .14$. Whites who represented the candidate as lighter skinned reported stronger intentions to vote for him, $B = .15$, $SE = .07$, $t(382) = 2.13$, $p = .03$, $r_{sp} = .08$. However, Blacks who represented the candidate as darker skinned reported stronger intentions to vote for him, $B = −.27$, $SE = .08$, $t(382) = −3.53$, $p < .001$, $r_{sp} = .13$. Thus, participants who represented the candidate's skin tone as reflecting their racial group expressed greater interest in voting for him.

Mediation model. We next tested our full model in which candidate agreement predicts skin tone representations, and skin tone representations in turn predict voting intentions. We utilized Model 58 with 5,000 bootstraps in PROCESS (Hayes, 2013). This procedure tests a moderated mediation model in which a moderator variable interacts with the exogenous variable to predict the mediator, and also interacts with the mediator to predict the outcome variable. In our model candidate agreement was specified as the exogenous variable,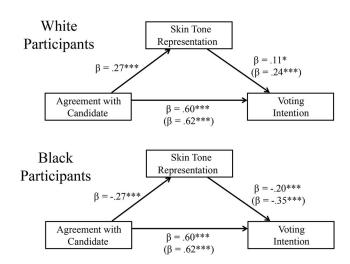 light advantage skin tone scores as the mediator, voting intentions as the outcome variable, ratings of the unaltered photo as a covariate, and participant race as a moderator. Participant race was included as a moderator because, as noted in analyses reported above, race interacted with candidate agreement to predict skin tone representations, and also interacted with skin tone representations to predict voting intentions. As a result, our model estimated indirect effects of candidate agreement predicting voting intentions through skin tone representations separately for Whites and Blacks (see Figure 1).

The 95% confidence interval of the indirect effect did not contain zero for either Whites [.0117, .1361] or Blacks [.0285, .1496], indicating significant mediation for both groups at $\alpha = .05$. Among Whites, agreement with the candidate led participants to represent him as lighter skinned, and representing the candidate as lighter skinned in turn predicted greater intentions to vote for him (Figure 1, top panel). Among Blacks, agreement with the candidate led participants to represent him as darker skinned, and representing the candidate as darker skinned in turn predicted greater intentions to vote for him (Figure 1, bottom panel).

Ruling out photograph clarity and readability as alternative explanations. We next examined whether the photographs varied in their perceived clarity and readability. We conducted a series of 2 (Participant Race: White, Black) × 2 (Political Similarity: Agree, Disagree) × 3 (Photo Skin Tone: Lightened, Unaltered, Darkened) repeated measures ANOVAs, with the skin tone factor specified as repeated. As expected, there was a main effect of photo skin tone on both perceptions of skin tone, $F(2, 776) = 84.90$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .18$, and Afrocentricity, $F(2, 776) = 15.80$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. Participants perceived the lightened (vs. unaltered and darkened) photograph as having lighter skin and fewer Afrocentric facial features.

There were main effects of skin tone on perceived clarity, professionalism, and readability of the candidate's emotions and eyes ($Fs \geq 65.12$, $ps \leq .001$). Participants perceived the darkened (vs. unaltered and lightened) photographs as less clear and profes-

Figure 1. Mediation models in Study 2 showing agreement with candidate predicting voting intentions through lighter skin tone representations for White and Black participants. All values are standardized beta coefficients. Values in parentheses represent direct relationships; values without parentheses represent relationships with all variables included in the model. * $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

sional, and as having less readable emotions and eyes.[4] There were also marginally significant or significant main effects of participant race and candidate agreement on all of the variables ($Fs \geq$ 3.05, $ps \leq .08$). Black (vs. White) participants and participants who agreed (vs. disagreed) with the candidate rated the photographs as more clear and professional, and as having more readable emotions and eyes.

Our central prediction is that participant race and candidate agreement interact with candidate skin tone to predict representativeness ratings. However, the alternative hypothesis is that the perceived clarity and readability of the photos accounts for the effects of race and agreement on skin tone representations. For these variables to explain our observed findings, there would need to be a significant Race × Similarity × Skin Tone interaction predicting clarity and readability that mirrored our main findings for representativeness ratings. Importantly, however, no interactions were significant on any of the variables ($ps \geq .18$). These analyses fail to support the alternative hypothesis, and suggest that differences in perceived clarity and readability were unlikely to explain our effects on skin tone representations or voting intentions.

Nevertheless, we sought to statistically rule out the possibility that these constructs accounted for our effects. We reran the analyses examining the effects of race, candidate agreement, and candidate skin tone on representativeness ratings and included as covariates ratings of the lightened, darkened, and unaltered photos on perceived clarity, professionalism, readability of the candidate's emotions, and readability of the candidate's eyes. All significant effects remained significant ($ps \leq .05$) when statistically adjusting for these variables, indicating that the perceived clarity and readability of the photographs do not explain why candidate agreement shifts Whites' and Blacks' skin tone representations and voting intentions.

Study 2 Summary

The results of Study 2 replicated and extended those of Study 1. Participants who agreed with the candidate represented his skin tone as reflecting their racial group to a greater extent than did participants who disagreed with him. Additionally, the more participants represented a candidate as reflecting their racial group, the stronger their intentions to vote for him.

Study 3

In Study 3, we manipulated system stability and tested its consequences on skin tone representations. If instability leads people to defend the status quo, then manipulating system stability should shift how Blacks represent a candidate's skin tone because the actions that enhance Blacks' group diverge from those that bolster the status quo. However, instability should not shift how Whites represent a candidate's skin tone because actions that enhance Whites' group are concordant with those that bolster the status quo.

Moreover, we tested how skin tone representations differentially impacted voting decisions depending on system stability. If stability prioritizes the motive to enhance one's group, Whites who represent a candidate as lighter skinned should indicate stronger intentions to vote for him, and Blacks who represent a candidate as

darker skinned should indicate stronger intentions to vote for him. In addition, if instability leads people to prioritize the motive to defend the status quo, both Whites and Blacks who represent a candidate as lighter skinned should indicate stronger intentions to vote for him.

Method

Participants. In exchange for a \$5 gift card, 216 participants ($M_{age} = 30.72$) completed the study. Participants were either recruited from the New York City (98 White [64 women, 34 men], 36 Black [36 women]) or Chicago community (45 White [13 women, 32 men], 37 Black [17 women, 20 men]) via online ads, community flyers, and emails sent to participants from a study pool maintained by The University of Chicago. All ads described an opportunity to participate in a short online survey assessing opinions about social and political issues. One participant did not report voting intentions, leaving data from 215 participants for analysis of this variable. Sixteen additional participants completed the study but were excluded from analyses for either correctly guessing the hypothesis ($n = 1$) or failing an attention check ($n = 15$). A post hoc power analysis indicated that we possessed at least 80% power to detect all predicted effects in this study.

Procedure. Participants read that because of recent debates about the future of education in America, the researchers were interested in people's opinions about the U.S. DOE. Participants learned that they would first read an excerpt from a recent newspaper article about the DOE to familiarize them with the Department, and that they would then evaluate a candidate running for a position in the DOE. All participants read a fictitious article describing the DOE as strongly influential in maintaining an orderly education system that is used as a basis for economic and political power in America. A former Secretary of State was quoted as saying that the department was effective.

System stability manipulation. Participants were randomly assigned to read additional information that presented the DOE as either stable ($n = 108$; 71 White [36 women, 35 men], 37 Black [30 women, 7 men]) or unstable ($n = 108$; 72 White [41 women, 31 men], 36 Black [23 women, 13 men]). In the *stable* (unstable) system condition, participants read that successful management (mismanagement) within the DEO had led to increased order (turmoil) within the department. DOE employees described the department as "highly stable (unstable)" and noted that "Everyone (No one) knows what is going on here. Organization is just amazing here (doesn't exist here anymore)," as well as that the

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[4] In the photographs used in Studies 1–3, the following significant rating differences emerged: the darkened (vs. unaltered and lightened) photo was rated as having darker skin ($ps < .001$), as being less clear ($ps < .001$) and professional ($ps < .001$), and as having less readable emotions ($ps < .001$) and eyes ($ps < .001$); the darkened and unaltered (vs. lightened) photos were rated as having more Afrocentric facial features ($ps < .001$); the unaltered (vs. lightened) photo was also rated as having darker skin ($p < .001$) and as being less clear ($p = .05$). In the photographs used in Studies 4a and 4b, the following significant rating differences emerged: the darkened (vs. unaltered and lightened) photo was rated as having darker skin ($ps < .001$) and more Afrocentric facial features ($ps < .001$), as being less clear ($ps < .001$) and professional ($ps < .001$), and as having less readable emotions ($ps < .001$) and eyes ($ps < .001$); the unaltered (vs. lightened) photo was rated as having darker skin ($p < .001$) and more Afrocentric facial features ($p = .01$), and as being more professional ($p = .03$).

future of the DOE was "quite predictable (unpredictable) as we continue through the coming months and years." Participants then completed a manipulation check in which they indicated the extent to which the DOE was currently *in chaos*, *unsteady*, *in order* (reverse coded), and *well balanced* (reverse coded) on a 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much so*) scale. We averaged responses ($\alpha = .91$).

Candidate similarity manipulation. Next, participants saw a photograph and read a biography of Harvey Ryder. Participants read the same information as in the previous studies describing Ryder as a candidate running for office in the DOE. They then indicated their position on the same six issues relevant to education as in the previous studies. We manipulated whether participants thought they agreed ($n = 100$; 65 White [34 women, 31 men], 35 Black [25 women, 10 men]) or disagreed ($n = 116$; 78 White [43 women, 35 men], 38 Black [28 women, 10 men]) with the candidate. Specifically, participants learned the number of beliefs that they ostensibly shared with Ryder, as well as two other candidates running for the same position (Peter Winter and Susan Butler). Participants learned that they were also receiving information about their political similarity to two other candidates to give them perspective on how their beliefs aligned with those of Ryder. Providing participants with information about their similarity to two additional candidates ensured that participants' feelings of similarity were specific to Ryder, rather than to politicians in general.

In the *agreement* (disagreement) condition we told participants that they shared five (one) out of six beliefs with Ryder, but one or two (four or five) beliefs with the other candidates. Specifically, in addition to receiving feedback about the attitudes they shared with Ryder (see Study 1 for feedback), participants in the agreement (disagreement) condition also learned that "Based on your responses, you and Peter Winter agree on two (four) of the six issues. The two issues on which you agree (disagree) are Teacher Standards: Strict vs. Lenient and Administrative Deadlines: National vs. State-by-State. Based on your responses, you and Susan Butler agree on one (five) of the six issues. The one issue on which you agree (disagree) is School Year: Lengthen vs. Keep the same."

Skin tone representations and voting intentions. We measured skin tone representations and voting intentions in the same manner as in the previous studies.

Results

Government instability manipulation check. To test whether the stability manipulation affected ratings of system stability, we ran a 2 (Participant Race: White, Black) × 2 (System Stability: Stable, Unstable) ANOVA predicting average instability ratings. Participants in the unstable condition rated that the DOE was more unstable ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 1.02$) than did participants in the stable condition ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 1.28$; $F(1, 212) = 176.60$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .45$). Neither the main effect of race nor the Race × Stability interaction were significant ($ps \geq .34$), indicating that the manipulation affected Whites and Blacks similarly.
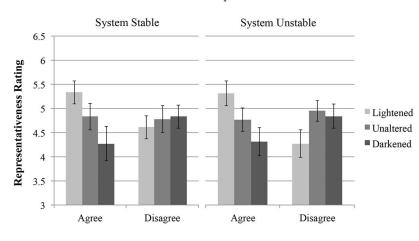
Skin tone representations. We first examined whether candidate agreement predicted skin tone representations differently for Whites and Blacks depending on system stability. We conducted a 2 (Participant Race: White, Black) × 2 (Political Similarity: Agree, Disagree) × 2 (System Stability: Stable, Unstable) × 3 (Photo Skin Tone: Lightened, Unaltered, Darkened)

repeated measures ANOVA predicting representativeness ratings of the photos. Photo skin tone was specified as repeated. As predicted, the four-way interaction was significant, $F(2, 416) = 11.12$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, indicating that the manner in which candidate similarity shaped Whites' and Blacks' skin tone representations depended on system stability (see Figure 2). We decomposed this interaction by examining the Similarity × Stability × Skin Tone interaction separately for Whites and Blacks.

White participants' ratings. Among Whites, the Similarity × Skin Tone interaction was significant, $F(2, 416) = 12.78$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$, indicating that candidate skin tone differentially affected representativeness ratings depending on candidate similarity (Figure 2, top panel). The Similarity × Skin Tone × Stability interaction was not significant, $F(2, 416) = .46$, $p = .64$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$, indicating that system stability did not impact how candidate similarity and skin tone shaped Whites' responses.
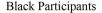
Among Whites who agreed with the candidate, representativeness ratings varied based on photo skin tone, $F(2, 416) = 11.85$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. The lightened photo was rated as *more* representative than the darkened photo, $t(416) = 4.41$, $p < .001$, $d = .43$, and the unaltered photo, $t(416) = 2.71$, $p = .007$, $d = .27$. The darkened photo was also rated as less representative than the unaltered photo, $t(416) = -2.45$, $p = .02$, $d = .24$. Among Whites who disagreed with the candidate, representativeness ratings also varied based on photo skin tone, $F(2, 416) = 2.98$, $p = .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. The lightened photo was rated as *less* representative than the unaltered photo, $t(416) = -2.42$, $p = .02$, $d = .24$, and marginally less representative than the darkened photo $t(416) = -1.85$, $p = .066$, $d = .18$. Ratings of the unaltered and darkened photos did not differ ($p = .88$). These findings indicate that Whites who agreed with the candidate represented him as lighter skinned, whereas Whites who disagreed with the candidate represented him as darker skinned.

Black participants' ratings. Among Blacks, the Similarity × Skin Tone × Stability interaction was significant, $F(2, 416) = 18.78$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$, indicating that candidate skin tone differentially affected representativeness ratings depending on candidate similarity and system stability (Figure 2, bottom panel). We decomposed this interaction by examining the Similarity × Skin Tone interaction separately for the stable and unstable conditions.

System stable. When the system was stable, the manner in which candidate skin tone shaped representativeness ratings depended on candidate similarity, $F(2, 416) = 9.83$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. Among Blacks who agreed with the candidate, representativeness ratings varied based on photo skin tone, $F(2, 416) = 7.32$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. The darkened photo was rated as *more* representative than the lightened photo, $t(416) = 3.46$, $p = .001$, $d = .34$, and the unaltered photo, $t(416) = 2.23$, $p = .03$, $d = .22$. The lightened photo was rated as marginally less representative than the unaltered photo, $t(416) = 1.78$, $p = .076$, $d = .17$. Among Blacks who disagreed with the candidate, representativeness ratings also varied based on photo skin tone, $F(2, 416) = 3.15$, $p = .04$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. The darkened photo was rated as *less* representative than the lightened photo, $t(416) = -1.98$, $p = .05$, $d = .19$), and the unaltered photo, $t(416) = -2.21$, $p = .03$, $d = .22$. Ratings of the lightened and unaltered photo did not differ ($p = 1.00$). These findings indicate that Blacks who agreed with the candidate rep-
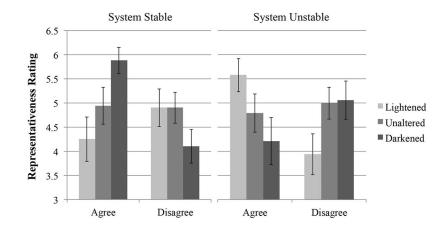
White Participants

Black Participants

Figure 2. Representativeness ratings in Study 3 plotted as a function of participant race, system stability, and agreement with the candidate. Bars indicate *SEM*.

resented him as darker skinned, whereas Blacks who disagreed with the candidate represented him as lighter skinned.

System unstable. When the system was unstable, the manner in which candidate skin tone shaped representativeness ratings also depended on candidate similarity, $F(2, 416) = 10.28$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. Among Blacks who agreed with the candidate, representativeness ratings varied based on photo skin tone, $F(2, 416) = 6.16$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. The lightened photo was rated as *more* representative than the darkened photo, $t(416) = 3.17$, $p = .002$, $d = .31$, and the unaltered photo, $t(416) = 2.24$, $p = .03$, $d = .22$. Ratings of the unaltered and darkened photo did not differ ($p = .14$). Among Blacks who disagreed with the candidate, representativeness ratings also varied based on photo skin tone, $F(2, 416) = 4.62$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. The lightened photo was rated as *less* representative than the darkened photo, $t(416) = -2.46$, $p = .02$, $d = .24$, and the unaltered photo, $t(416) = -2.83$, $p = .005$, $d = .28$. Ratings of the darkened and unaltered photo did not differ ($p = .89$). These findings indicate that Blacks who agreed with the candidate represented him as lighter skinned, whereas Blacks who disagreed with the candidate represented him as darker skinned.

Voting intentions. We next examined whether skin tone representations differentially predicted Whites' and Blacks' voting intentions depending on system stability. We created a single light advantage score in the same way as in Study 2. We regressed voting intentions onto Participant Race (White = 1, Black = −1), Political Similarity (Agree = 1, Disagree = −1), System Stability (Stable = 1, Unstable = −1), Light Advantage Scores (grand-mean centered), and all interactions. Ratings of the unaltered photo were also included as a predictor. The predicted three-way Race × Stability × Light Advantage interaction was significant, $B = .22$, $SE = .06$, $t(198) = 3.81$, $p < .001$, $r_{sp} = .19$ (see Figure 3). We decomposed this interaction by examining the Stability × Light Advantage interaction separately for Whites and Blacks.

White participants. Whites who represented the candidate's skin tone as lighter indicated stronger intentions to vote for him, $B = .32$, $SE = .07$, $t(198) = 4.27$, $p < .001$, $r_{sp} = .21$ (Figure 3, left panel). This finding replicates Study 2. Additionally, this association did not change based on the stability of the system, $B = .01$, $SE = .07$, $t(198) = .17$, $p = .87$, $r_{sp} = .01$.
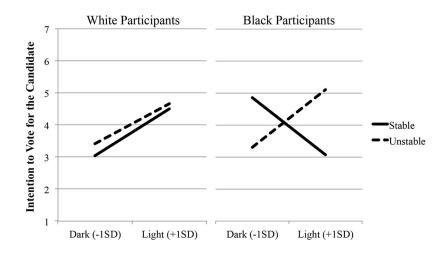
Figure 3. Intentions to vote for the hypothetical candidate in Study 3 plotted as a function of participant race, system stability, and light advantage skin tone scores (1 *SD* below and above the mean).

Black participants. Among Blacks, there was a significant Light Advantage × Stability interaction, $B = -.44$, $SE = .09$, $t(198) = -4.79$, $p < .001$, $r_{sp} = .23$ (Figure 3, right panel). When the system was stable, Blacks who represented the candidate as darker skinned expressed stronger intentions to vote for him, $B = -.43$, $SE = .13$, $t(198) = -3.24$, $p = .001$, $r_{sp} = .16$. This finding replicates Study 2. When the system was unstable, however, Blacks who represented the candidate as lighter skinned expressed stronger intentions to vote for him, $B = .44$, $SE = .12$, $t(198) = 3.54$, $p < .001$, $r_{sp} = .17$.

Mediation model. We next tested our full model in which candidate agreement predicts skin tone representations, and skin tone representations in turn predict voting intentions. We used Model 72 with 5,000 bootstraps in PROCESS (Hayes, 2013). This procedure tests a moderated mediation model in which two moderator variables interact with the exogenous variable to predict the mediator, and also interact with the mediator to predict the outcome variable. In our model candidate agreement was specified as the exogenous variable, light advantage skin tone scores as the mediator, voting intentions as the outcome variable, ratings of the unaltered photo as a covariate, and participant race and system stability as moderators. Race and stability were included as moderators because, as noted above, participant race and stability interacted with candidate agreement to predict skin tone representations, and also interacted with skin tone representations to predict voting intentions. In turn, our model estimated indirect effects of candidate agreement predicting voting intentions through skin tone representations separately for Whites and Blacks in the stable and unstable conditions (see Figure 4). Mediation was significant at $\alpha = .05$ if the 95% bias corrected confidence interval did not contain zero.

For Whites, the mediation was significant in the stable [.0235, .3974] and unstable conditions [.1023, .5436]. Regardless of stability condition, Whites who agreed with the candidate represented him as lighter skinned, and representing the candidate as lighter skinned in turn predicted greater intentions to vote for him. For Blacks, the mediation was also significant in the stable [.1653, .7895] and unstable conditions [.1298, .6259]. In the stable condition, Blacks who agreed with the candidate represented him as

darker skinned, and representing the candidate as darker skinned in turn predicted greater intentions to vote for him. However, in the unstable condition, Blacks who agreed with the candidate represented him as lighter skinned, and representing the candidate as lighter skinned in turn predicted greater intentions to vote for him. Thus, system stability determined how candidate agreement shaped Whites' and Blacks' skin tone representations, as well as how skin tone representations in turn guided voting intentions.

Study 3 Summary

Study 3 demonstrated that system stability shaped how people represented a candidate's skin tone. When the system was stable, participants who agreed with a candidate represented his skin tone as more reflective of their racial group than did participants who disagreed with him. When the system was unstable, however, both Blacks and Whites who agreed with the candidate represented his skin tone as being more reflective of people who currently hold positions of power (i.e., the status quo) than did those who disagreed with him. Additionally, skin tone representations guided voting intentions. When the system was stable, representing a candidate as reflecting one's racial group predicted stronger intentions to vote for him. When the system was unstable, however, representing a candidate as reflecting people who currently hold positions of power predicted stronger intentions to vote for him.

Study 4a

We had three main goals in conducting Study 4a. First, we sought to provide experimental evidence for the effect of skin tone on voting decisions. To this end, we experimentally manipulated the skin tone of three different political candidates. Because we experimentally controlled our proposed mediator, and as a result did not measure representations of candidates' skin tone, we did not include candidate agreement in the study design. We predicted that during times of stability, Whites would prefer a lighter skinned candidate and Blacks would prefer a darker skinned candidate, whereas during times of instability both Whites and Blacks would prefer a lighter skinned candidate. Second, we switched domains
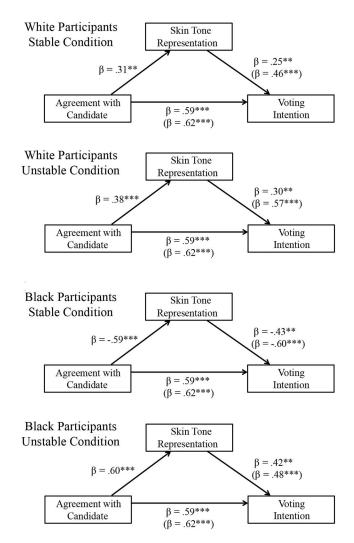
White Participants
Stable Condition

White Participants
Unstable Condition

Black Participants
Stable Condition

Black Participants
Unstable Condition

Figure 4. Mediation models in Study 3 showing agreement with candidate predicting voting intentions through lighter skin tone representations for White and Black participants in the stable and unstable conditions. All values are standardized beta coefficients. Values in parentheses represent direct relationships; values without parentheses represent relationships with all variables included in the model. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

to the Department of Agriculture (DOA) to generalize beyond the DOE.

Third, we sought to provide evidence that the motive to enhance one's group guides behaviors when the system is stable, whereas the motive to defend the status quo guides behaviors when the system is unstable. To assess the motive to enhance one's group, participants completed the group-based dominance subscale of the social dominance orientation scale (Ho et al., 2012; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). This measure captures the extent to which individuals feel that some groups should be superior to others. People who score higher on group-based dominance are more concerned about advancing the standing of their own group (Kugler, Cooper, & Nosek, 2010), and both Whites and Blacks who score higher on this measure report attitudes that favor their racial ingroup over their outgroup (Jost & Thompson, 2000).

To assess the motive to defend the status quo, we measured confidence in the sociopolitical system (Kay & Jost, 2003; Kay et al., 2010). When a system is unstable (vs. stable), people who have the greatest concerns about the standing of the system are most likely to engage in behaviors that legitimize the status quo (Banfield et al., 2011). For example, Cutright and colleagues (2011) found that when the American system was threatened, people who held the *least* confidence in the current state of affairs were the most likely to purchase products from national (vs. international) brands, presumably to bolster the system.[5]

We predicted that when the system was stable, people who scored higher on group-based dominance would engage in behaviors to enhance their group. We expected that group-based dominance would predict greater intentions to vote for a lighter skinned candidate among Whites, and greater intentions to vote for a darker skinned candidate among Blacks. We predicted that when the system was unstable, people who scored lower on system confidence would engage in behaviors to maintain the status quo. We expected that for both Whites and Blacks lower system confidence would predict greater intentions to vote for a lighter skinned candidate.

Method

Stimuli.

Photographs. From the Internet we obtained three photographs of professionally dressed men to represent the candidates in this study. Although we did not have information about their self-identified racial group membership, all photographs depicted men whose skin tone could be altered to be more reflective of either White or Black racial group membership. We cropped each photograph to depict the target from the chest upward. Using Adobe Photoshop CS5, the background of all photographs was changed to white. We created alterations of the photograph using the same procedure as in Study 1.[6]

In a pretest, 25 participants sequentially viewed each candidate's photograph, in randomized order. Participants rated the extent to which each candidate appeared to be *a good leader*, *intelligent*, *competent*, *lazy*, *attractive*, *warm*, and *masculine* using a 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much so*) scale. Repeated measures ANOVAs treating photograph as the within-subjects factor revealed no significant differences among candidates on these features ($Fs \leq .62$, $ps \geq .54$).

Biographies. We paired each photograph with one of three biographies that described the candidate's education and work history. All biographies presented the candidate as highly qualified for the position. In a pretest, 27 participants read the biographies in randomized order, without photographs. Participants indicated the extent to which the biography presented the candidate as *well educated*, *committed*, *hardworking*, *experienced in public policy*, *competent*, *dedicated to his ideas*, *capable of being a leader*, *well*

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[5] The simple effects supporting these statements were not reported in Cutright et al. (2011). Aggregating across studies, system confidence predicted brand preference in the system threat condition, $B = -.37$, $SE = .10$, $z = -3.88$, $p < .001$, but not in the no threat condition, $B = .11$, $SE = .11$, $z = .92$, $p = .36$. We are grateful to Keisha Cutright for sharing the data for these analyses.

[6] A comparison of objective luminance and subjective darkness in skin tone between photo sets can be found in the online supplemental materials.

rounded in his knowledge, and *influential* on a 1–7 scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much so*). We averaged ratings to create a positivity composite for each biography (range α = .86–.92). We then conducted a repeated measures ANOVA with candidate biography as the within-subjects factor. We found no differences in evaluations among the biographies, $F(2, 52) = .35$, $p = .71$.

Participants. We recruited 222 participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 30.84$) from New York City (28 White [15 women, 13 men]), Chicago (27 White [20 women, 7 men], 70 Black [31 women, 39 men]), Mechanical Turk (86 White [50 women, 36 men], 7 Black [5 women, 2 men]), and email advertisements (1 White female, 3 Black [1 woman, 2 men]). We used various recruitment methods, including Craigslist ads, Mturk postings, email advertisements to people who had expressed interest about participating in studies, and paid study flyers posted in campus buildings. In all recruitment materials, participants responded to an opportunity to participate in a short survey about their "perceptions of various social and political issues." Mturk respondents received $1.00 for their participation. Participants who responded to online ads or flyers received compensation in the form of $5 gift cards to either Amazon or Starbucks. Seventeen additional participants completed the study but were excluded from analyses for failing an attention check ($n = 16$) or failing to provide voting intentions for all candidates ($n = 1$). A post hoc power analysis indicated that we possessed 49% power to detect the smallest of the predicted effects found in this study.

Procedure.

System stability manipulation. Participants read that the DOA is one of the largest departments in the American government and plays an important role in maintaining high levels of food safety. A former Secretary of State was quoted as saying that "without the Department of Agriculture, (America's) farming and food safety system would be chaotic and ineffective." Participants were randomly assigned to read additional statements depicting the DOA as either unstable ($n = 108$; 66 White [41 women, 25 men], 42 Black [18 women, 24 men]) or stable ($n = 114$; 76 White [45 women, 31 men], 38 Black [19 women, 19 men]) using the same statements as in Study 3. Participants completed a manipulation check in which they indicated the extent to which the DOA was *in chaos*, *unsteady*, *in order* (reverse coded), and *well balanced* (reverse coded) on a 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much so*) scale. We averaged responses (α = .75).

Voting intentions. Next, participants learned about candidates running for a DOA position. Participants simultaneously saw photographs of three ostensible candidates whose skin tones varied in darkness. The photograph of one person was unaltered, one had been lightened, and one had been darkened. The specific skin tone assigned to each photograph and the placement of each photograph in the array was counterbalanced between participants. We paired one of the three biographies randomly with each photograph. After reading the biographies, participants again saw each candidate's photograph and reported how likely they would be to vote for each candidate for the DOA position on a 1 (*not at all likely*) to 7 (*very likely*) scale.

Group-based dominance. Participants completed the eight item group-based dominance subscale (α = .92) of the social dominance orientation scale (e.g., Jost & Thompson, 2000; Pratto et al., 1994) using a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*)

scale. A sample item is "To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups."

System confidence. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Banfield et al., 2011; Cutright et al., 2011), to assess confidence in the American system participants completed eight items (α = .83) from Kay and Jost (2003) using a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale. A sample item is "In general, the American political system operates as it should."[7]

Results

Instability manipulation check. In a 2 (Participant Race: White, Black) × 2 (System Stability: Unstable, Stable) ANOVA, the stability manipulation predicted instability judgments, $F(1, 218) = 98.65$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .31$. Participants in the unstable condition rated the DOA as more unstable ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 1.16$) than did those in the stable condition ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 1.23$). Blacks rated the system as marginally more unstable than did Whites, $F(1, 218) = 3.32$, $p = .07$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, regardless of the stability manipulation. However, the Race × Stability interaction was not significant, $F(1, 218) = 0.44$, $p = .51$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$, indicating that the manipulation affected Whites and Blacks similarly.

Voting intentions. To test whether voting intentions varied as a function of race, stability, and candidate skin tone, we conducted a 2 (Participant Race: White, Black) × 2 (System Stability: Unstable, Stable) × 3 (Photo Skin Tone: Lightened, Unaltered, Darkened) repeated measures ANOVA predicting voting intentions. Photo skin tone was specified as repeated. The predicted three-way interaction was significant, $F(2, 436) = 6.04$, $p = .003$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$, indicating that stability differentially shaped Whites' and Blacks' intentions to vote for the three candidates. We decomposed this interaction by examining the Stability × Skin Tone interaction separately for Whites and Blacks.

White participants. Whites' voting intentions depended on candidate skin tone, $F(2, 436) = 18.96$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$. Whites expressed greater interest in voting for the lighter skinned candidate ($M = 5.53$, $SD = 1.33$) over the darker skinned candidate ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 1.56$; $t(436) = 6.00$, $p < .001$, $d = .57$) and the unaltered candidate ($M = 5.08$, $SD = 1.41$; $t(436) = 3.16$, $p = .002$, $d = .30$). Whites also expressed less interest in voting for the darker skinned candidate than the unaltered candidate,

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[7] A skin tone Implicit Association Test (IAT) and the Attitudes Toward Blacks Scale (ATB) were also administered at the beginning (after the stability manipulation) and end of the study, respectively. We initially included the IAT to examine whether system stability would alter the strength of Whites' and Blacks' associations between light skin and positivity, and whether these associations would guide voting intentions. We included the ATB to assess whether the manipulation changed explicit attitudes. Whites (vs. Blacks) revealed a stronger implicit association between light skin and positivity, $F(1, 218) = 6.29$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$, and expressed more explicit anti-Black attitudes, $F(1, 218) = 4.26$, $p = .04$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. Participants in the unstable (vs. stable) condition also revealed a stronger implicit association between light skin and positivity, $F(1, 218) = 3.96$, $p = .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. The main effect of system stability did not significantly predict explicit anti-Black attitudes, and the Race × Stability interaction did not significantly predict implicit or explicit attitudes ($Fs \leq 1.69$, $ps \geq .19$). Holding more negative explicit attitudes toward Blacks was associated with stronger intentions to vote for the lighter (vs. darker) skinned candidate, $r = .16$, $p = .02$, but IAT scores did not significantly predict voting intentions, $r = .04$, $p = .58$.

$t(436) = -3.08$, $p = .002$, $d = .29$. The Stability × Skin Tone interaction was not significant, $F(2, 436) = .73$, $p = .49$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$, indicating that stability did not change Whites' preferences.

Black participants. Among Blacks, the Stability × Skin Tone interaction was significant, $F(2, 436) = 5.94$, $p = .003$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$, indicating that voting intentions depended on both candidate skin tone and system stability. When the system was stable, voting intentions depended on candidate skin tone, $F(2, 436) = 5.27$, $p = .005$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. Blacks expressed greater interest in voting for the *darker* skinned candidate ($M = 5.89$, $SD = 1.09$) over the lighter skinned candidate ($M = 5.13$, $SD = 1.49$; $t(436) = 2.70$, $p = .008$, $d = .26$) and the unaltered candidate ($M = 5.11$, $SD = 1.54$; $t(436) = 2.84$, $p = .005$, $d = .27$). Voting intentions for the lightened and unaltered candidates did not differ ($p = .92$). When the system was unstable, voting intentions also depended on candidate skin tone, $F(2, 436) = 3.17$, $p = .04$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. Blacks expressed greater interest in voting for the *lighter* skinned candidate ($M = 5.36$, $SD = 1.06$) over the darker skinned candidate ($M = 4.81$, $SD = 1.40$; $t(436) = 2.04$, $p = .04$, $d = .20$) and the unaltered candidate ($M = 4.76$, $SD = 1.62$; $t(436) = 2.33$, $p = .02$, $d = .22$). Voting intentions for the darkened and unaltered candidates did not differ ($p = .86$).

These results indicate that stability led Blacks to prefer darker (vs. lighter) skinned candidates, whereas instability led Blacks to prefer lighter (vs. darker) skinned candidates. Whites preferred lighter (vs. darker) skinned candidates, regardless of system stability.

Role of group and system motives in predicting voting intentions. We next tested whether group-based dominance and system confidence differentially predicted voting intentions based on system stability. To examine the relationship between measures of motivation and skin tone representations, we calculated a single light advantage voting score in the same way we calculated light advantage scores in previous studies. We conducted a model in which participant race (White = 1, Black = −1), system stability (Stable = 1, Unstable = −1), group-based dominance (grand-mean centered), system confidence (grand-mean centered), and all interactions predicted the light advantage voting score. Ratings of the unaltered photo were also included as a predictor.

Group-based dominance. The predicted three-way Race × Stability × Group-Based dominance interaction was significant, $B = .29$, $SE = .11$, $t(205) = 2.52$, $p = .01$, $r_{sp} = .16$ (see Figure 5, top panel), indicating that group-based dominance differentially predicted voting intentions for Whites and Blacks depending on system stability. To decompose the interaction, we examined the Race × Group-Based Dominance interaction separately for when the system is stable and unstable. When the system was stable, the Race × Group-Based Dominance interaction was significant, $B = .53$, $SE = .18$, $t(205) = 3.03$, $p = .003$, $r_{sp} = .19$. Whites' motivation to enhance their group predicted stronger intentions to vote for lighter (over darker) skinned candidates, $B = .62$, $SE = .27$, $t(205) = 2.25$, $p = .03$, $r_{sp} = .14$. Blacks' motivation to enhance their group predicted stronger intentions to vote for darker (over lighter) skinned candidates, $B = -.44$, $SE = .22$, $t(205) = -2.02$, $p = .05$, $r_{sp} = .13$. When the system was unstable, however, neither the main effect of group-based dominance nor the Race × Group-Based Dominance interaction were significant ($ps \geq .45$). These results indicate that motives to

enhance one's group shape voting intentions only when the system is stable.

System confidence. The predicted Stability × System Confidence two-way interaction was significant, $B = .30$, $SE = .13$, $t(205) = 2.30$, $p = .02$, $r_{sp} = .14$, indicating that system confidence differentially predicted voting intentions when the system was stable and unstable. More important, this interaction was not qualified by a significant three-way Race × Stability × System Confidence interaction, $B = -.18$, $SE = .13$, $t(205) = -1.38$, $p = .17$, $r_{sp} = .09$, indicating that the two-way interaction was consistent for Whites and Blacks.

When the system was stable, system confidence did not predict voting intentions, $B = .20$, $SE = .19$, $t(205) = 1.02$, $p = .31$, $r_{sp} = .06$. As expected, however, when the system was unstable, holding less system confidence was associated with stronger intentions to vote for lighter (over darker) skinned candidates, $B = -.39$, $SE = .17$, $t(205) = -2.33$, $p = .02$, $r_{sp} = .15$. These results indicate that motives to defend the status quo shape voting intentions only when the system is unstable.

Study 4a Summary

Study 4a provided evidence that system stability shapes how a candidate's skin tone guides voting intentions. When the system was stable, participants reported stronger intentions to vote for candidates whose skin tone reflected their racial group. However, when the system was unstable, both Whites and Blacks reported stronger intentions to vote for candidates whose skin tone reflected people who currently hold positions of power in America. We also provided evidence that the underlying motives guiding voting intentions change based on system stability. When the system was stable, people who possessed a stronger motive to enhance their group were more likely to vote for candidates who reflected their racial group. When the system was unstable, people who felt that the system needed the greatest defending were more likely to vote for candidates who reflected people who currently hold power in America.

Study 4b

In Study 4b we conducted a replication of Study 4a with 80% power. We also sought to more directly test our prediction that the motive to enhance one's group guides voting intentions when the system is stable, but not when it is unstable. An alternative explanation for the findings of Study 4a is that when the system is unstable, Blacks' voting intentions are guided by group-enhancement concerns. Specifically, when the system is unstable Blacks might be more likely to vote for lighter skinned candidates because lighter skinned candidates do *not* reflect their racial group. In turn, if the unstable system should fail under the direction of a lighter skinned person, it is unlikely that blame would be directed toward Blacks. Thus, electing a lighter skinned candidate could be perceived as benefitting their racial group as a form of proactive defense.

To rule out this alternative explanation, in Study 4b we directly asked participants the extent to which it would benefit their racial group if each candidate won the election and examined how these ratings predicted voting intentions. The alternative explanation purports that rating a candidate as beneficial for one's racial group
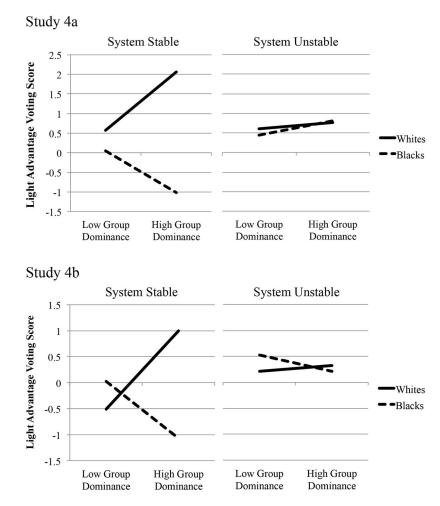
Study 4a

Study 4b

Figure 5. Intentions to vote for the lighter skinned candidate over the darker skinned candidate plotted as a function of system stability, participant race, and group-based dominance (1 *SD* below and above the mean) in Studies 4a and 4b.

predicts voting intentions when the system is unstable. In contrast, we hypothesize that rating a candidate as beneficial for one's group predicts intentions to vote for a candidate when the system is stable, and not when it is unstable. Support for our hypothesis would also converge with the finding that group-based dominance predicts support for candidates who reflect one's racial group only when the system is stable.

Method

Participants. In exchange for $5, 372 participants (193 White [103 women, 89 men, 1 no gender reported] and 179 Black [96 women, 83 men]; M_{age} = 50.45) completed the study. All participants were recruited from Qualtrics' online participant pool to take part in an online survey assessing their opinions about political issues. We decided in advance to collect approximately 500 participants, with the expectation (based on the previous Qualtrics samples we collected) that around 20% of participants would fail the attention check. Consistent with this expectation, 124 additional participants completed the study but were excluded from analyses for failing an attention check. An additional 19 partici-

pants were excluded for not reporting voting intentions for all candidates. The resulting sample size provided at least 80% power to detect all effect sizes found in Study 4a.

Procedure.

System stability manipulation. Participants were randomly assigned to read either that the DOA was unstable (*n* = 193; 102 White [49 women, 53 men], 91 Black [49 women, 42 men]) or stable (*n* = 179; 91 White [54 women, 36 men, 1 no gender reported], 88 Black [47 women, 41 men]) using the same statements as in Studies 3 and 4a. Participants then indicated the extent to which the DOA was *in chaos*, *unsteady*, *in order* (reverse coded), and *well balanced* (reverse coded) on a 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much so*) scale. We averaged responses (α = .91).

Voting intentions. Using the same methodology as Study 4a, participants next indicated their intentions to vote for a lightened, unaltered, and darkened candidate using a 1 (*not at all likely*) to 7 (*very likely*) scale.

Group-based dominance. Participants completed the eight item group-based dominance subscale (α = .80) of the most recent version of the social dominance orientation scale (Ho et al., 2012)

using a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale. A sample item is "An ideal society requires some groups to be on top and others to be on the bottom."

System confidence.   Participants indicated their confidence in the American system in the same way as in Study 4a ($\alpha = .80$).

Perceived benefit and harm to racial group.   Next, participants separately indicated for each candidate the extent to which it would benefit and harm their racial group if he were to win the election using a 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much so*) scale.

Perceived clarity and readability of photographs.   Lastly, as in Study 2, participants again viewed each of the three candidate photographs and indicated the clarity and professional quality of the photographs, as well as how easy it was to read the candidate's eyes and emotional expressions. Participants used the same response scales as in Study 2.

Results

Instability manipulation check.   One person did not provide a stability rating, leaving 371 participants for this analysis. In a 2 (Participant Race: White, Black) $\times$ 2 (System Stability: Unstable, Stable) ANOVA, participants in the unstable condition rated the DOA as more unstable ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 1.30$) than did those in the stable condition ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.38$; $F(1, 367) = 242.10$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .40$). Neither the main effect of race nor the Race $\times$ Stability interaction were significant ($ps \geq .14$).

Voting intentions.   We conducted a 2 (Participant Race: White, Black) $\times$ 2 (System Stability: Unstable, Stable) $\times$ 3 (Photo Skin Tone: Lightened, Unaltered, Darkened) repeated measures ANOVA predicting voting intentions. Skin tone was specified as repeated. The predicted three-way interaction was significant, $F(2, 736) = 4.85$, $p = .008$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, indicating that system stability differentially shaped Whites' and Blacks' voting intentions for the candidates. To decompose the interaction, we examined the Stability $\times$ Skin Tone interaction separately for Whites and Blacks.

White participants.   Whites' voting intentions depended on candidate skin tone, $F(2, 736) = 4.31$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. Whites expressed greater interest in voting for the lighter skinned candidate ($M = 4.97$, $SD = 1.58$) over the darker skinned candidate ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 1.62$; $t(736) = 2.55$, $p = .01$, $d = .19$), and the unaltered candidate ($M = 4.71$, $SD = 1.51$; $t(736) = 2.35$, $p = .02$, $d = .17$). Voting intentions for the darkened and unaltered candidates did not differ ($p = .48$). The Stability $\times$ Skin Tone interaction was not significant, $F(2, 736) = .23$, $p = .79$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$, indicating that system stability did not change Whites' preferences. These findings replicate Study 4a.

Black participants.   Among Blacks, the Stability $\times$ Skin Tone interaction was significant, $F(2, 736) = 6.79$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, indicating that voting intentions depended on both candidate skin tone and system stability. When the system was stable, voting intentions depended on candidate skin tone, $F(2, 736) = 4.50$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. Blacks expressed greater interest in voting for the darker skinned candidate ($M = 5.69$, $SD = 1.39$) over the lighter skinned candidate ($M = 5.18$, $SD = 1.36$; $t(736) = 2.54$, $p = .01$, $d = .19$) and the unaltered candidate ($M = 5.27$, $SD = 1.28$; $t(736) = 2.35$, $p = .02$, $d = .17$). Voting intentions for the lightened and unaltered candidates did not differ ($p = .58$). When the system was unstable, voting intentions also depended on candidate skin tone, $F(2, 736) = 3.56$, $p = .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. Blacks

expressed greater interest in voting for the lighter skinned candidate ($M = 5.37$, $SD = 1.34$) over the darker skinned candidate ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 1.58$; $t(736) = 2.17$, $p = .03$, $d = .16$) and the unaltered candidate ($M = 4.98$, $SD = 1.28$; $t(736) = 2.46$, $p = .01$, $d = .18$). Voting intentions for the darkened and unaltered candidates did not differ ($p = .85$). These findings replicate Study 4a.

These results indicate that stability led Blacks to prefer darker (vs. lighter) skinned candidates, whereas instability led Blacks to prefer lighter (vs. darker) skinned candidates. Whites preferred lighter (vs. darker) skinned candidates, regardless of system stability.

Role of group and system motives in predicting voting intentions.   We conducted the same model as in Study 4a to examine whether the motives to enhance one's group and defend the status quo differentially predict voting intentions depending on system stability.

Group-based dominance.   The predicted Race $\times$ Stability $\times$ Group-Based dominance interaction was significant, $B = .23$, $SE = .09$, $t(355) = 2.52$, $p = .01$, $r_{sp} = .13$ (see Figure 5, bottom panel), indicating that group-based dominance differentially predicted Whites' and Blacks' voting intentions depending on system stability. To decompose this interaction, we examined the Race $\times$ Group-Based dominance interaction separately for when the system is stable and unstable. When the system was stable, the Race $\times$ Group-Based dominance interaction was significant, $B = .55$, $SE = .14$, $t(355) = 4.00$, $p < .001$, $r_{sp} = .20$. Whites' motivation to enhance their group predicted stronger intentions to vote for lighter skinned candidates, $B = .64$, $SE = .19$, $t(355) = 3.32$, $p < .001$, $r_{sp} = .17$. Blacks' motivation to enhance their group predicted stronger intentions to vote for darker skinned candidates, $B = -.46$, $SE = .20$, $t(355) = -2.36$, $p = .02$, $r_{sp} = .12$. When the system was unstable, however, neither the main effect of group-based dominance nor the Race $\times$ Group-Based dominance interaction were significant ($ps \geq .43$). These results replicate Study 4a and indicate that when the system is stable, motives to enhance one's group shape voting intentions.

System confidence.   The predicted Stability $\times$ System Confidence interaction was also significant, $B = .25$, $SE = .10$, $t(355) = 2.60$, $p = .01$, $r_{sp} = .13$, indicating that system confidence differentially predicted voting intentions depending on system stability. More important, this interaction was not qualified by a significant Race $\times$ Stability $\times$ System Confidence three-way interaction, $B = -.05$, $SE = .10$, $t(355) = -.48$, $p = .63$, $r_{sp} = .02$, indicating that the two-way interaction was consistent for Whites and Blacks.

When the system was stable, system confidence did not predict voting intentions, $B = .11$, $SE = .15$, $t(355) = .76$, $p = .45$, $r_{sp} = .04$. As expected, however, when the system was unstable, holding less system confidence was associated with stronger intentions to vote for lighter skinned candidates, $B = -.39$, $SE = .12$, $t(355) = -3.21$, $p = .001$, $r_{sp} = .16$. These results replicate Study 4a and indicate that when the system is unstable, motives to defend the status quo shape voting intentions.

Rated benefit to racial group.   We next examined whether rating a candidate as beneficial for one's racial group differentially guided voting intentions depending on system stability. We first calculated light advantage ratings of both benefit and harm in the same way as we calculated light advantage scores in previous studies. Benefit and harm ratings were negatively correlated, $r(367) = -.35$, $p < .001$. We reverse scored harm ratings and

averaged them with benefit ratings to create a single light advantage benefit score.[8] Positive numbers indicate rating lighter skinned candidates as most beneficial for one's racial group, and negative numbers indicate rating darker skinned candidates as most beneficial for one's racial group.

We conducted a model in which Participant Race (White = 1, Black = −1), System Stability (Stable = 1, Unstable = −1), the Light Advantage Benefit Score (grand-mean centered), and all interactions predicted the light advantage voting score. Voting intentions for and the rated benefit of the unaltered photo were also included as predictors. Including these two variables as predictors allowed us to examine how rating the lightened candidate as more beneficial than the darkened candidate shaped voting intentions beyond ratings of the unaltered candidate.

The predicted Stability × Benefit interaction was significant, $B = .30$, $SE = .11$, $t(362) = 2.77$, $p = .006$, $r_{sp} = .14$, indicating that the rated benefit of a candidate for one's racial group differentially predicted voting intentions depending on system stability. More important, this interaction was *not* qualified by a Stability × Benefit × Race three-way interaction, $B = .08$, $SE = .11$, $t(362) = .70$, $p = .48$, $r_{sp} = .04$, indicating that the two-way interaction was consistent for Whites and Blacks. We decomposed this interaction by examining the effect of the rated candidate benefit on voting intentions separately for when the system was stable and unstable.

When the system was stable, rated candidate benefit predicted voting intentions, $B = .49$, $SE = .15$, $t(362) = 3.31$, $p = .001$, $r_{sp} = .17$. Participants who rated the lighter skinned candidate as most beneficial for their racial group indicated a greater preference to vote for the lighter (over darker) skinned candidate, and people who rated the darker skinned candidate as most beneficial for their group indicated a greater preference to vote for the darker (over lighter) skinned candidate. When the system was unstable, however, rated candidate benefit did not predict voting intentions, $B = −.11$, $SE = .16$, $t(362) = −.72$, $p = .48$, $r_{sp} = .04$. These results converge with our hypothesis concerning when group- and system-based motives guide voting intentions, and also fail to support the alternative explanation that people strategically support candidates who are not reflective of their own racial group during times of instability as a way of benefiting their group.

Ruling out photograph clarity and readability as alternative explanations. As in Study 2, we conducted a series of 2 (Participant Race: White, Black) × 2 (System Stability: Unstable, Stable) × 3 (Photo Skin Tone: Lightened, Unaltered, Darkened) repeated measures ANOVAs, with skin tone specified as a repeated factor. There was a significant main effect of skin tone on all variables ($Fs \geq 13.98$, $ps \leq .001$). Participants perceived the darkened (vs. unaltered and lightened) photograph as being less clear and professional, and reported that it was more difficult to read the candidate's emotions and eyes. There were also a marginally significant or significant main effect of participant race on all variables ($Fs \geq 3.47$, $ps \leq .06$). Black (vs. White) participants rated the photographs as more clear and professional, and as having more readable emotions and eyes.

More important, no interactions were significant on any of the variables ($ps \geq .32$). These nonsignificant results fail to provide support for the alternative hypothesis that differences in perceived clarity and readability explain our effects. Nevertheless, we reran the analyses examining the effects of race and stability on voting intentions while including as covariates ratings of the lightened, darkened, and unaltered photos on perceived clarity, professionalism, readability of the candidate's emotions, and readability of the candidate's eyes. All significant effects remain significant ($ps \leq .05$) when statistically adjusting for these variables, indicating that perceived photo clarity and readability are unlikely to account for our effects.

Study 4b Summary

The results of Study 4b replicated those of Study 4a. Additionally, perceiving a candidate as benefiting one's racial group predicted greater intentions to vote for the candidate when the system was stable, but not when the system was unstable. These results support our argument that the motive to enhance one's group guides voting intentions only when the system is stable.

General Discussion

In the present research we demonstrated that the way White and Black Americans represented a candidate's skin tone depended both on the stability of the system and the extent to which they shared the candidate's political views. When the system was stable, Whites rated a lightened photograph as more representative of a candidate who shared (vs. did not share) their beliefs, whereas Blacks rated a darkened photograph as more representative of a candidate who shared (vs. did not share) their beliefs (Studies 1–3). However, when the system was unstable, both Whites and Blacks who shared (vs. did not share) a candidate's beliefs rated a lightened photograph as more representative of him (Study 3).

Moreover, skin tone representations predicted voting intentions. When the system was stable, Whites who represented the candidate as lighter skinned (Studies 2 and 3) or evaluated a candidate whose skin tone had been lightened (Studies 4a and 4b) expressed stronger intentions to vote for him. Blacks who represented the candidate as darker skinned (Studies 2 and 3) or evaluated a candidate whose skin tone had been darkened (Studies 4a and 4b) expressed stronger intentions to vote for him. In contrast, when the system was unstable, both Whites and Blacks who represented a candidate as lighter skinned (Studies 2 and 3) or evaluated a candidate whose skin had been lightened (Studies 4a and 4b) held stronger intentions to vote for him.

System stability shifted voting intentions through changing the motives that people prioritize. When the system was stable, the motive to enhance one's group predicted intentions to vote for candidates who reflected one's racial group. When the system was unstable, however, the motive to bolster the status quo predicted intentions to vote for lighter skinned candidates (Studies 4a and 4b). A meta-analysis presenting the average effect sizes of these findings across studies can be found in the online supplemental materials.

Of interest, participants' representativeness ratings of the three candidate photos (lightened, unaltered, and darkened) seemed to

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[8] All results remain significant if rated benefit and harm are analyzed as independent predictors. Specifically, the Stability × Rated Benefit and Stability × Rated Harm interactions are significant ($ts \geq 2.90$, $ps \leq .004$). Additionally, the simple effects of rated benefit and harm are significant in the stable condition ($ts \geq 3.14$, $ps \leq .002$), and not significant in the unstable condition ($ts \leq 1.50$, $ps \geq .13$).

be more strongly differentiated when participants agreed with the candidate than when they disagreed with him. Specifically, as described in the meta-analysis, across studies both Whites and Blacks who agreed with the candidate rated an altered photo that most reflected their racial group as being more representative than an unaltered photo, and also displayed a significant or trending effect of rating an altered photo that least reflected their racial group as being less representative than an unaltered photo. Participants who disagreed with the candidate, on the other hand, rated an altered photo that most reflected their racial group as being less representative than an unaltered photo, but did not differ in their ratings of an altered photo that least reflected their racial group and an unaltered photo. While speculative, it is possible that participants are more motivated to represent highly qualified candidates who share their beliefs as strongly reflecting their group, whereas they are less concerned about strongly distancing qualified candidates who do not share their beliefs from their group. Future research could investigate this possibility.

We additionally found that photographs manipulated to be darker in skin tone were rated as less clear and readable than were those manipulated to be lighter in skin tone or that were unaltered (Studies 2 and 4b). More important, adjusting for ratings of perceived clarity and readability did not change our observed results. Nevertheless, it is possible that system stability could impact the extent to which people express interest in voting for a candidate whose face is clear and readable, and future research could examine whether similar findings occur when differences in clarity and readability are experimentally eliminated.

Implications for Political Leadership

Explicit prejudice and discrimination against Blacks has decreased over the past several decades (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2012). However, as of 2015 only four Black Americans have served as a governor, and only nine have been elected to the Senate. One potential reason why racial disparities in politics still exist concerns how people make judgments when it is unclear who is best suited for a position. All candidates in the present research were equally qualified for the position, which meant that participants needed to rely on information other than the candidates' qualifications to make judgments. We found that skin tone served as an additional source of information that shaped voting decisions.

Relying on representations of skin tone to make voting decisions might serve to subtly reinforce the sparse representation of Black Americans in politics. Specifically, when voters choose between equally qualified candidates and decide to elect one with lighter skin, it is unlikely that voters will attribute their decision to the candidate's skin tone. Instead, voters might generate alternative attributions for their decision (Norton, Vandello, & Darley, 2004), such as thinking that a lighter skinned candidate would face the least resistance in an unstable department. Although the reasons are numerous for why Black Americans are underrepresented in politics, the present research suggests factors that warrant continued investigation.

In the present research participants could bolster the status quo by voting for lighter skinned candidates. We would like to stress, however, that preferring lighter skinned individuals will not always reinforce the current state of affairs. Although Whites hold power within many American institutions (e.g., the legislature,

banks), African Americans do hold power in other contexts (e.g., race-based civil rights organizations, Historically Black Colleges). Our theoretical argument would predict, for example, that system instability would lead both Whites and Blacks to embrace a new potential leader of the National Association for the Advancement of Color People (NAACP) who most strongly possesses characteristics typically associated with being racially Black. System instability will only lead people to support lighter skinned candidates when doing so reinforces the status quo.

Reconciling Divergent Effects of Threat on Candidate Support

We found that instability increased support for candidates who embody the status quo. However, previous research has demonstrated that threats can increase support for candidates who embody change. How do our findings dovetail with those of this previous research? We believe that a key theoretical moderator concerns the *target* of the threat. Specifically, threats focusing on the *self* tend to increase support for leaders who reflect change (Brown, Diekman, & Schneider, 2011; Rast, Gaffney, Hogg, & Crisp, 2012). This perspective might help to explain why Barack Obama's Presidential campaign that focused on him being the candidate of "change" was successful during the economic crisis. This was a time when the majority of Americans felt that their personal finances were taking a large downturn (Gallup, 2008), and so people likely experienced the crisis more as a threat to the self than to the system. Threats to the *system*, on the other hand, lead people to defend the status quo (Jost et al., 2004; Kay & Friesen, 2011). The present research supports this perspective in the domain of choosing leaders. Future research could manipulate whether a threat focuses on the self or the system and examine the differential effects on voting for leaders who support change or the status quo.

Influences on Skin Tone Representation

Our work contributes to a growing literature documenting factors that shape representations of skin tone and racial category membership. Previous research has demonstrated that social identification (Knowles & Peng, 2005), beliefs about biological essentialism (Plaks, Malahy, Sedlins, & Shoda, 2012), and opposition to equality (Krosch et al., 2013) affect race-based representations. The present research extends beyond past work by examining how these representations guide important decisions, such as selecting who will reside in positions of power. Additionally, the present work addresses how situational factors alter the motives that people prioritize, and how skin tone representations can act in the service of these motives.

Another situational factor that guides racial categorization is economic scarcity. Recent evidence indicates that scarcity increases the likelihood that people will categorize racially ambiguous targets as Black (Ho, Sidanius, Cuddy, & Banaji, 2013; Krosch & Amodio, 2014; Rodeheffer et al., 2012). We believe that economic scarcity and system instability activate different motivations that guide representations of group membership. Economic scarcity motivates people to construct highly restrictive group boundaries as a way of preserving resources for their own group. In turn, Whites create more exclusive boundaries concerning

whom they will identify as White (Ho et al., 2013; Krosch & Amodio, 2014; Rodeheffer et al., 2012). On the other hand, system instability motivates people to reinforce the legitimacy of social structures. In the context of the present research, representing a well-qualified candidate as possessing lighter skin (and in turn voting for lighter skinned candidates) reinforces a status quo in which people with characteristics reflective of being racially White occupy positions of power. For Whites, these actions are concordant with those that enhance their racial group. In other words, system instability (relative to stability) does not change the way that Whites represent a candidate's skin tone, which is a prediction and result that diverges from predictions made by economic scarcity research.

The ambiguity of a target's racial group membership may serve as a boundary condition for the effects we have documented. We purposefully examined skin tone representations of a candidate whose racial group membership was ambiguous. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Ho et al., 2013), we believe that motivated representations of group membership are most likely to occur for racially ambiguous targets. For example, Krosch et al. (2013) found that conservatives (who were motivated to categorize targets as Black) were more likely than liberals to categorize a racially *ambiguous* face as Black, but were just as likely as liberals to categorize a racially *unambiguous* face as Black. Thus, we believe that the theoretical framework of the present research is most directly applicable to conditions of judgment ambiguity.

People might also construct skin tone representations by relying on cultural stereotypes, such as those linking light skin to positive attributes (Anderson & Cromwell, 1977; Maddox, 2004; Maddox & Gray, 2002). Given that members of both high and low status groups rely on these associations to make judgments (Uhlmann et al., 2002), future research could examine how these associations guide White and Black Americans' representations of candidates, as well as how situational factors like system stability determine the strength of their influence.

Concluding Remarks

We demonstrated that system stability impacts skin tone representations of political candidates, which subsequently influence voting intentions. The present research foregrounds how external features of the environment (e.g., system stability) combine with features of a perceiver (e.g., racial group membership and political similarity) to inform political evaluations. Our findings provide a novel perspective concerning how motivations shape perceptual representations and how these representations are employed to render political decisions.

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