

Motivated Reasoning, Political Sophistication, and Associations between President Obama and Islam

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ABSTRACT Recent polls reveal that between 20% and 25% of Americans erroneously indicate that President Obama is a Muslim. In this article, we compare individuals' explicit responses on a survey about religion and politics with reaction time data from an Implicit Association Test (IAT) to investigate whether individuals truly associate Obama with Islam or are motivated reasoners who simply express negativity about the president when given the opportunity. Our results suggest that predispositions such as ideology, partisanship, and race affect how citizens feel about Obama, which in turn motivates them to accept misinformation about the president. We also find that these implicit associations increase the probability of stating that Obama is likely a Muslim. Interestingly, political sophistication does not appear to inoculate citizens from exposure to misinformation, as they exhibit the same IAT effect as less knowledgeable individuals.

Shortly before the 2010 midterm elections, several polls revealed that nearly one in four Americans believed that President Obama is secretly a Muslim, and roughly half of the electorate questioned whether he is Christian.¹ Not surprisingly, partisanship and ideology seemed to influence these results—as many as one in three conservative Republicans identified Obama's religion as Islam.² Major media outlets offered various theories to explain the public's misperceptions, including partisanship, ignorance, and a general disdain for Obama. Whatever the reason, inaccurate associations surely undermine more sanguine appraisals of the American electorate (Popkin 1991; MacKuen, Erikson, and Stimson 1992) and favor ones that reflect information shortcomings and asymmetries (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). Moreover, there are likely electoral consequences of these associations, as they may threaten Obama's legitimacy as president, weaken his ability to promote a successful policy agenda, and affect his chances at re-election in 2012.

In this article, we address the following two questions: First, do individuals truly associate Obama with Islam, or are they simply motivated reasoners who take the opportunity to express perceived negativity about the president? Second, how does political sophistication affect beliefs about Obama, given that it should

both increase an individual's capacity to accurately evaluate information, yet also increase exposure to misinformation? We test these questions by comparing individuals' explicit responses on a survey about religion and politics with reaction time data from an Implicit Association Test (IAT), which measures attitudes or beliefs that subjects may be unwilling or unable to explicitly reveal (Greenwald, McGhee, and Schwartz 1998).

MOTIVATED REASONING ABOUT OBAMA'S RELIGION

Motivated reasoning (Ditto and Lopez 1992; Kunda 1990) offers one potential explanation for the misperceptions about Obama's religion found in recent polls (e.g., see Hollander 2010). When individuals engage in motivated reasoning, partisan goals trump accuracy goals so that individuals act as biased information processors who will vigorously defend their prior values, identities, and attitudes at the expense of factual accuracy (Lodge and Taber 2000; Taber and Lodge 2006; Westen et al. 2006). In the case of Obama, partisans on the Right may be motivated to believe rumors about the president and reject factual information that does not bolster their particular worldview. Evidence of this *motivated believing* hypothesis comes from partisans' convergent results on an explicit questionnaire and an IAT designed to reveal how strongly associated concepts are in memory. These associations are often referred to as "implicit" associations because they come to mind automatically (i.e., without conscious effort) and may be outside of an individual's awareness.³ For example, people may unknowingly associate certain professions (e.g., doctors, lawyers, and

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scientists) with men more than women because of gender stereotypes or participation rates; yet, when explicitly asked, they may deny that they linked these fields to a particular gender. If motivated believing were occurring, conservatives should be more likely than liberals to explicitly report that Obama is a Muslim because of their anti-Obama predispositions. Moreover, because these claims have already been accepted and stored into long-term memory, conservatives also should be more likely than liberals to reveal implicit associations between Obama and Islam on an IAT.

Motivated reasoning, however, can occur even if individuals do not actually *believe* information suggesting that Obama is a Muslim. In other words, individuals may simply take the opportunity to express negativity when asked about the president's religion, regardless of their actual beliefs. Just consider the number of negative, yet simultaneously contradictory, names that Obama has been called by his detractors (e.g., labeling him a fascist and socialist in the same breath).⁴ And, let us not forget that until recently, liberal Democrats engaged in a similar practice of calling former president George W. Bush a litany of derogatory terms, many of which could not concurrently be true. Evidence for this phenomenon, which we call *motivated expressing*, comes from divergent patterns of explicit survey responses and implicit associations. According to this hypothesis, we still expect conservatives to explicitly state that Obama is a Muslim; however, because they construct this attitude on the spot and do not actually believe it to be true, conservatives should not exhibit stronger implicit associations than liberals on an IAT. Of course, it is difficult to make any definitive conclusions about whether associations are equivalent to beliefs, but we assume that associations are a necessary condition for those who hold beliefs.

POLITICAL SOPHISTICATED AND EXPOSURE TO MISINFORMATION

Another explanation for the public's misperceptions is a well-documented and widespread lack of political sophistication in the electorate (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996), which should lead people to rely on other methods for determining Obama's religious affiliation. For example, some individuals may use mental shortcuts, or heuristics (Popkin 1991), to surmise that the name Barack Hussein Obama must have some Islamic roots. Others may have heard statements about Obama's Kenyan father or upbringing in Indonesia and assume that he is a Muslim because of these experiences. Whatever the exact process (which is beyond the scope of the present article), we assume that political sophisticates should be more capable of evaluating information (Luskin 1990) about Obama than their low-information counterparts. Consequently, sophisticates should be more likely to correctly identify Obama as a Christian than unsophisticated citizens. We call this the *sophisticated processing* hypothesis.

Yet, we also know that politically sophisticated citizens, by definition, are more likely to be exposed to political information than unsophisticated individuals (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Zaller 1992). As a result, sophisticates will likely endure repeated exposure to misinformation linking Obama to Islam. One poll taken just before the 2008 presidential election reported that as many as 92% of Americans had heard at least one factually inaccurate statement about Obama,⁵ and one can only imagine how many times sophisticates may have heard or read misleading information about the president, given their greater political attention. So widespread were these rumors that the Obama cam-

paign even created a website called "Fight the Smears" to refute false claims circulating the Internet. Given that cognitive psychologists believe memory is organized associatively (Collins and Loftus 1975)—that is, in node-link structures in which contextual triggers can affect a node's accessibility—we expect repeated exposure to information, no matter how questionable, will create implicit associations between Obama and Islam. In other words, sophisticates need not believe specific misinformation to exhibit implicit associations in memory. Evidence for this hypothesis, which we call *differential exposure*, would come from stronger implicit associations linking Obama to Islam among sophisticates than nonsophisticates.

In sum, we empirically test a number of different hypotheses concerning misperceptions about President Obama's religion. First, our *motivated believing* hypothesis states that partisans on the Right will be motivated to process negative misinformation about the president and commit it to long-term memory. Thus, in addition to explicit reports linking Obama to Islam, conservatives should demonstrate stronger implicit associations than those on the Left. Second, our *motivated expressing* hypothesis suggests that conservatives may not actually believe that Obama is a Muslim but simply take the opportunity to express perceived negativity about him; therefore, we do not expect to find a partisan IAT effect. Third, our *sophisticated processing* hypothesis states that political sophisticates should be more capable of evaluating the veracity of information about Obama than their low-information counterparts; hence, sophisticates will be more likely to correctly identify Obama's religion. And finally, with our *differential exposure* hypothesis we argue that because sophisticates are exposed to more information of all types—which should include repeated misinformation—they will exhibit stronger implicit associations linking Obama to Islam than politically unsophisticated citizens.

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

One week after the 2010 midterm elections, 356 undergraduates enrolled at a southeastern, public university participated in our study. Of this total, 52% were women, and nearly 90% of subjects listed their race as "White/Caucasian." Partisanship and ideology were fairly evenly distributed, albeit slightly skewed toward Republicans (41% Republican, 30% Independent, and 29% Democrat) and conservatives (38% conservative, 38% moderate, and 24% liberal). Although we make no claims about the representativeness of our sample relative to the American public, we do find the same proportion of individuals in our sample who state that President Obama is a Muslim—that is, one in five participants—as reported in recent, nationally representative polls. In fact, we suspect that our findings may actually be conservative estimates of the effects present in the general electorate because any effects of partisanship, ideology, and political sophistication should be attenuated in an undergraduate sample. That is, older citizens tend to have more crystallized political attitudes and stronger partisan attachments than the typical college student (Sears 1986), and these experiences would likely exacerbate any observed effects linked to motivated reasoning.

The first portion of the study involved a computer-based IAT, which is designed to measure the strength of automatic associations between concepts in memory (Greenwald, McGhee, and Schwartz 1998). Automatic associations—that is, processes that "operate outside of conscious awareness and guidance" (Bargh

and Chartrand 1999, 462)—are important because they have been shown to disproportionately influence judgments and behaviors (Fazio 1995). The benefit of the IAT is that it allows us to detect implicit associations that may be unknown or intentionally misstated by individuals. Moreover, Devine (1989) and other scholars have demonstrated that both motivation and ability are necessary to override the biases resulting from automatic associations.

We presented subjects with words representing Christianity (Jesus, Christian, Gospel, and Church) and Islam (Muhammad, Muslim, Koran, and Mosque),⁶ as well as black-and-white images of Barack Obama and John McCain,⁷ the major-party candidates from the 2008 presidential election,⁸ using a free, open-source program called *FreeIAT* (see figure 1).⁹ Subjects were instructed to quickly sort each word or image into paired categories consisting of a candidate and religion, while making as few mistakes as possible. For example, in one block of trials subjects would be asked to sort objects into the category representing Barack Obama and Islam or John McCain and Christianity.¹⁰ In total, subjects completed five blocks of timed trials.¹¹ We used each participant's reaction times to calculate an IAT effect measure, which is commonly known as the *D*-score and is similar to Cohen's *d* (Cohen 1988) in that it may be interpreted as a measure of effect size (Greenwald, Nosek, and Sriram 2006). Positive *D*-scores (where $-2 \leq D \leq +2$) indicate associations of Obama with Islam (and McCain with Christianity).¹²

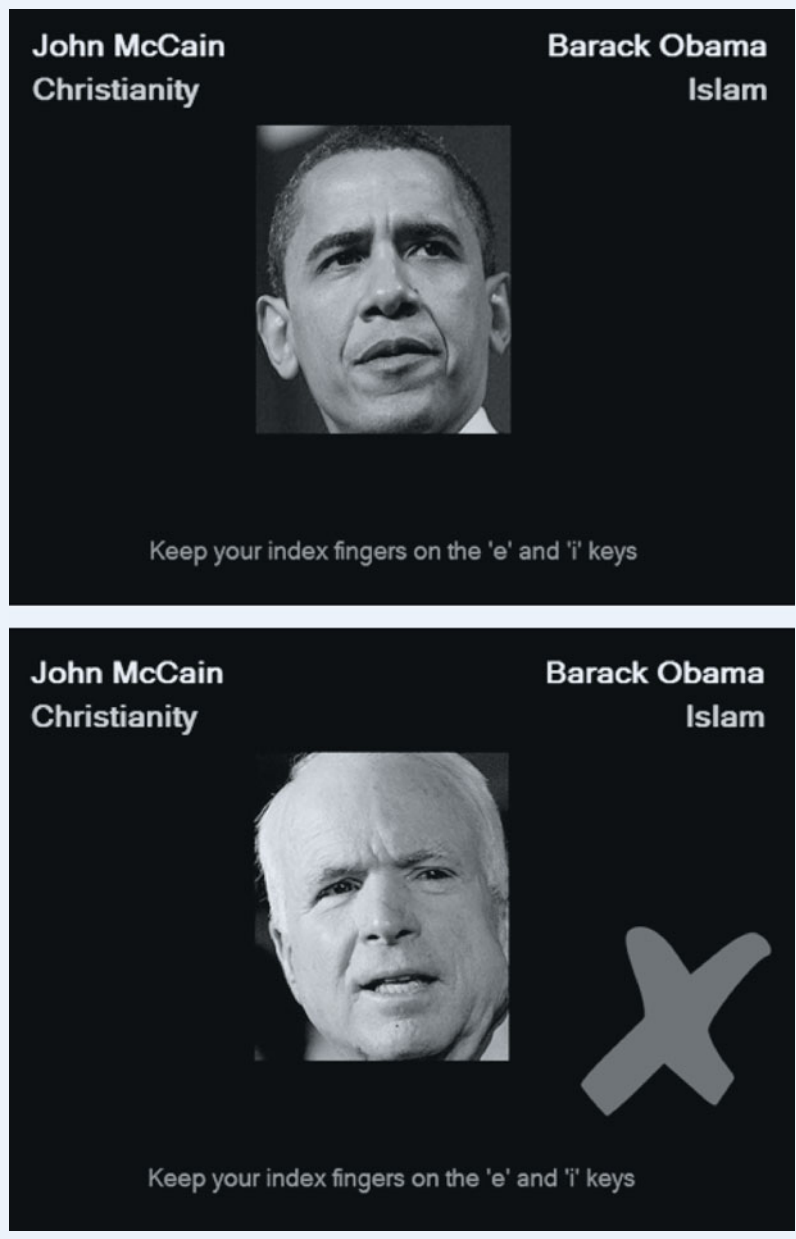
Following the Candidate-Religion IAT, subjects completed a brief questionnaire that measured their explicit feelings toward various political figures, parties, and religions. We used the difference in feeling thermometer ratings of Obama and McCain to create a relative evaluation of the candidates (preference for Obama = 1).¹³ We also asked participants whether they could correctly identify Obama's religion (Christian = 1), as well as the likelihood that Obama is a Muslim on a 4-point scale (very likely = 1). Finally, subjects completed an 8-item political sophistication test (high sophistication = 1),¹⁴ as well as demographic questions including gender (male = 1), race (nonwhite = 1), party identification (strong Republican = 1; 5-point scale), and ideology (very conservative = 1; 5-point scale).¹⁵

RESULTS

We begin by briefly reviewing some descriptive statistics from our survey and Candidate-Religion IAT (see table 1). First, only a slight majority of respondents (57%) were able to correctly identify Obama as a Christian, whereas a sizeable portion of the sample (41%) stated that it is "very likely" or "somewhat likely" that Obama is a Muslim. Moreover, we find that there is an overall IAT effect, $M_{D\text{-score}} = 0.21$, such that subjects automatically associated Obama with Islam. To put this in perspective, a mean

Figure 1

Screenshots from the Candidate-Religion Implicit Association Test (IAT)



D-score of 0.21 translates to a "medium" effect size according to Cohen's (1988) classification of "small," "medium," and "large" effects used for Cohen's *d*. It is also worth noting that the correlations among our implicit IAT effect measure, and two explicit measures, correct identification of Obama's religion and the likelihood that Obama is a Muslim, are modest at best, $r = -0.26$ and $r = 0.30$, respectively. Consistent with findings from a wide array of other IAT studies (e.g., see Lane, Banaji, Nosek, and Greenwald 2007), these relatively weak correlations among implicit-explicit measures suggest that our IAT taps a distinct dimension relative to the self-reported questions about Obama.

Not surprisingly, Republicans, conservatives, and those with favorable feelings toward McCain were more likely to explicitly

Table 1
Explicit and Implicit Associations between Obama and Islam (by Key Characteristics)

	EXPLICIT MEASURES: OBAMA'S RELIGION		IMPLICIT MEASURES: IAT EFFECT & REACTION TIME (RT)	
	Correctly Identified	Likely Muslim	IAT Effect (D-score)	Δ RT (ms) Obama with Christian-Muslim
Total				
All Subjects (n = 356)	57%	41%	0.21 (0.32)	115.1 (191.5)
Party				
Democrat (n = 103)	69%	28%	0.09 (0.30)	38.7 (174.6)
Independent (n = 104)	59%	36%	0.18 (0.35)	108.7 (218.7)
Republican (n = 142)	46%	54%	0.32 (0.27)	174.9 (164.0)
Ideology				
Liberal (n = 83)	76%	23%	0.07 (0.28)	37.5 (144.9)
Moderate (n = 134)	54%	41%	0.20 (0.33)	104.2 (216.9)
Conservative (n = 136)	48%	52%	0.32 (0.29)	175.2 (171.7)
Feelings toward Candidates				
Favor Obama (n = 157)	70%	26%	0.08 (0.30)	46.7 (197.7)
Favor McCain (n = 148)	47%	56%	0.35 (0.29)	191.8 (168.1)
Political Sophistication				
High (n = 126)	72%	27%	0.22 (0.31)	112.8 (199.6)
Medium (n = 110)	56%	38%	0.20 (0.34)	111.1 (185.3)
Low (n = 120)	41%	58%	0.21 (0.31)	112.3 (189.8)
Race				
Non-White (n = 34)	62%	42%	0.14 (0.33)	81.6 (230.4)
White (n = 317)	56%	41%	0.22 (0.32)	118.8 (187.5)
Gender				
Male (n = 171)	62%	39%	0.22 (0.32)	121.3 (204.5)
Female (n = 182)	52%	43%	0.21 (0.32)	110.8 (179.6)
Identified Obama's Religion				
Correct (n = 202)	—	—	0.14 (0.32)	72.4 (193.3)
Incorrect (n = 153)	—	—	0.31 (0.29)	172.7 (174.2)
Likelihood Obama is Muslim				
Unlikely (n = 209)	—	—	0.15 (0.32)	79.0 (186.4)
Likely (n = 145)	—	—	0.30 (0.30)	168.1 (188.2)

Notes: Cell sizes do not always total 356 due to missing values. The IAT Effect (D-score) is the difference in corrected mean response times between stereotype-inconsistent and consistent trial blocks (i.e., pairing Obama-Christianity and McCain-Islam; Obama-Islam and McCain-Christianity, respectively) divided by the pooled standard deviation. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

identify Obama as a Muslim than Democrats, liberals, and those with favorable feelings toward Obama. A similar pattern emerges when we examine implicit associations according to the D-scores and mean IAT reaction times reported in table 1. Partisans on the Right had D-scores and mean reaction times between four and five times larger than those on the Left. We interpret these large differences to mean that pairings between Obama and Islam were consistent with existing associations for conservatives and thus facilitated their reaction times (relative to pairings of McCain and Islam). Finally, in the explicit questionnaire, political sophisticates were more likely to correctly identify Obama's religion than less knowledgeable individuals; however, sophisticates show no difference in implicit associations compared to unsophisticated citizens.

Now we turn to the results from our multivariate analyses, which allow us to test several different hypotheses (see table 2). We regressed each of our three dependent variables—correctly identifying Obama's religion (logit model; column 1), the likelihood that Obama is Muslim (ordered logit model; column 2), and our IAT effect D-score (OLS model; column 3)—on partisanship, ideology, political sophistication, gender, and race. The first two models test explicit associations, whereas the third model tests implicit ones. Recall that we proposed two competing motivated reasoning hypotheses to explain the consistent misidentification of Obama's religion. One possibility is that motivated believers, who are predisposed to accept and commit misinformation about Obama into long-term memory, should reveal strong associations on the Candidate-Religion IAT, as well as biases on explicit survey items. Another plausible alternative is that motivated expressers would state negativity about President Obama without actually believing the rumors; hence, we should find no IAT effect to accompany the biases on the explicit survey questions.

Looking at the effects of ideology on our explicit and implicit measures, we find strong support for our motivated believing hypothesis, which also means that we find little evidence of motivated expressing in the data. In each of our three models, ideology is correctly signed and a statistically significant predictor of beliefs about Obama's religion. For instance, the probability that a strong liberal will correctly identify Obama as a Christian is 0.72, while the likelihood that a strong conservative will get this question correct is only 0.37 (holding all other variables at their mean values or reference categories). Likewise, the probability that a strong conservative will state Obama is "very likely" or "somewhat likely" to be a Muslim is 0.60 compared to only 0.19 for strong liberals. More importantly, the IAT effect, which measures associations between Obama and Islam, increases by 0.27 when moving from very liberal to very conservative on the scale. Substantively speaking, this means that liberals demonstrate a weak association between Obama and

Islam (i.e., a small effect size of 0.07), while conservatives exhibit a substantially strong association (i.e., a large effect size of 0.34).

Notably, the effects of partisanship are attenuated after accounting for ideology. Party identification only reaches conventional levels of statistical significance for one of the explicit dependent variables; the probability that a strong Republican will identify Obama as a Muslim is 0.55 compared to 0.23 for a strong Democrat. In addition, partisanship is a marginally significant predictor of an individual's D-score ($p < 0.10$), such that moving from a strong Democrat to a strong Republican increases the IAT effect by 0.18, controlling for other factors. As noted, the weaker effects of partisanship in our models are largely attributed to the high correlation with ideology ($r = 0.75$), which seems to be a stronger predictor of motivated believing than party identification.

Table 2

Models of Explicit and Implicit Associations between Obama and Islam

	EXPLICIT DV: RELIGION CORRECTLY IDENTIFIED	EXPLICIT DV: LIKELIHOOD OBAMA IS MUSLIM	IMPLICIT DV: IAT EFFECT (<i>D</i> -score)
Party Identification	-0.32 (0.69)	1.42* (0.67)	0.18 (0.10)
Ideology	-1.50* (0.76)	1.84* (0.74)	0.27* (0.11)
Political Sophistication	2.24** (0.47)	-2.17** (0.38)	0.01 (0.06)
Male	0.30 (0.24)	-0.07 (0.21)	-0.01 (0.03)
Non-White	0.15 (0.43)	-0.11 (0.40)	-0.02 (0.06)
Intercept	-0.14 (0.42)	—	-0.03 (0.06)
Cutpoint 1 (τ_1)	—	-0.60 (0.39)	—
Cutpoint 2 (τ_2)	—	0.96 (0.40)	—
Cutpoint 3 (τ_3)	—	2.91 (0.42)	—
(Pseudo) R^2	0.09	0.09	0.10
<i>N</i>	346	344	345

Notes: The IAT Effect (*D*-score) is a measure of association, where $-2 \leq D \leq +2$ and positive scores indicate an association between Obama with Islam (and McCain with Christianity). Models are estimated using logit, ordered-logit, and OLS respectively. Robust standard errors in parentheses. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Next, we test our sophisticated processing and differential exposure hypotheses. We expected that political sophisticates should be more capable of evaluating the veracity of information about Obama and thus more likely to correctly identify his religion than their low-information counterparts. We also hypothesized that because sophisticates are exposed to more political information than unsophisticated individuals, and by extension, more misinformation, sophisticates should demonstrate stronger associations linking Obama to Islam on the Candidate-Religion IAT. Looking at table 2, we see that political sophistication significantly predicts both of our explicit dependent variables.¹⁶ We interpret these results as strong evidence for our sophisticated processing hypothesis, such that an increase in political sophistication reduces the likelihood that respondents explicitly misidentify Obama's religion. Substantively, the probability that a politically sophisticated individual will correctly identify Obama's religion is 0.75; for unsophisticated respondents that probability is only 0.25. Moreover, the probability that someone who scores high on our measure of political sophistication will perceive Obama as a Muslim is only 0.20, while it is 0.69 for those who score low.

Contrary to our differential exposure hypothesis, political sophistication has no effect on our implicit *D*-score ($b = 0.01$, $s.e. = 0.06$, $p > 0.90$). This means that although political sophisticates correctly identify the president's religion when explicitly asked,

they are neither more nor less likely than unsophisticated individuals to automatically associate Obama with Islam. One way to interpret these null results is that political sophistication does not appear to inoculate citizens from the constant barrage of rumors, as those at high and low levels of sophistication exhibit the same 0.21 *D*-score linking Obama to Islam. This finding is also interesting because it suggests that even minimal exposure to misinformation for unsophisticated individuals appears to create long-term associations in memory. It also means that, at least for subjects in our sample, the investment of political learning did little to overcome their implicit associations, as even knowledgeable, sophisticated individuals linked Obama with Islam.

MODELING SIMULTANEOUS RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN OBAMA AND ISLAM

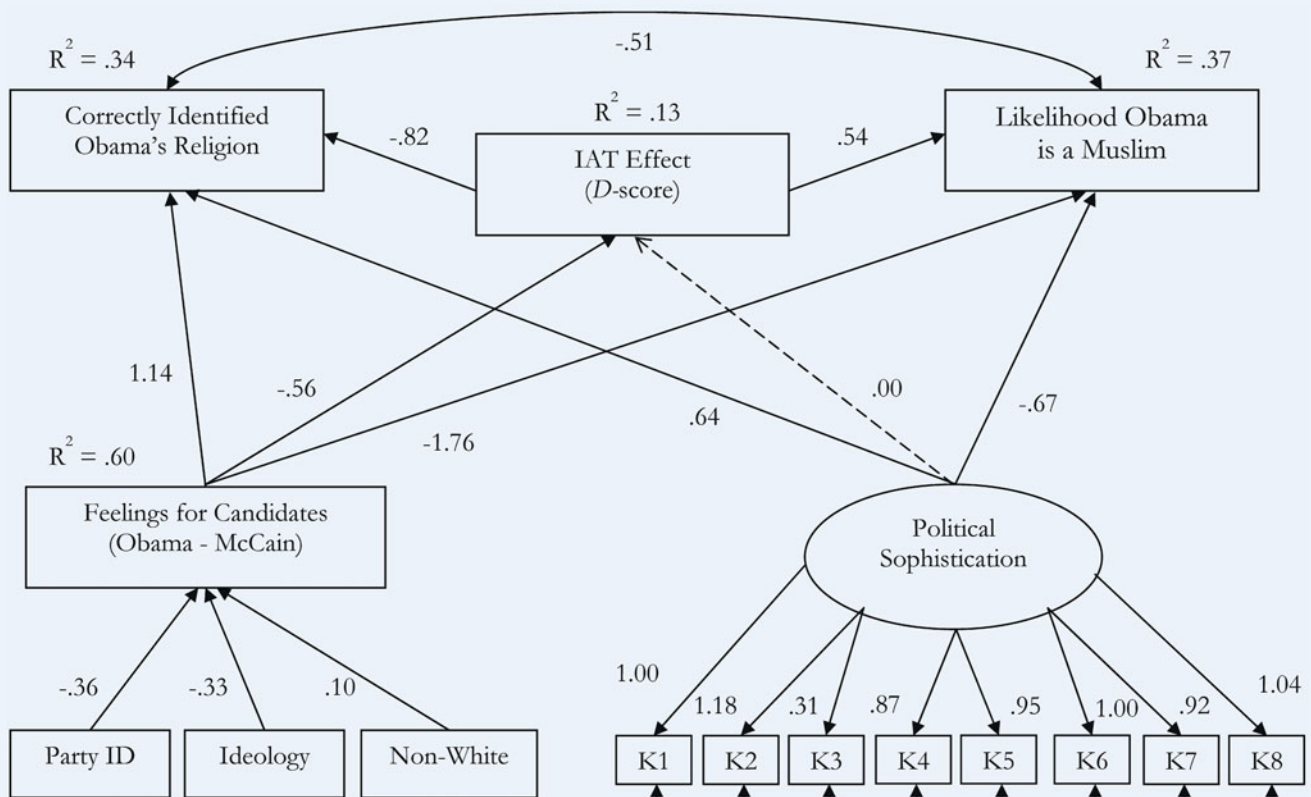
Single-equation models do not accurately depict the complex relationships captured by our data, so we have also estimated a structural equation model (see figure 2). The best fitting model indicates that exogenous factors like party identification, ideology, and race do not directly influence beliefs about Obama's religion, as we have previously modeled. Instead, we find that these beliefs are mediated by feelings toward the president. Thus, we still find strong support for our motivated believing hypothesis, but we can demonstrate that predispositions affect an individual's evaluation of Obama, which in turn significantly influences the likelihood of accepting misinformation and incorrectly identifying the president's religion. In fact, moving from those who strongly dislike Obama to those who strongly favor him decreases an individual's *D*-score by a whopping 0.56 (recall that the effects of ideology and partisanship were 0.27 and 0.18, respectively).

In addition to the process that mediates motivated believing, our structural equation model allows us to explore the consequences of automatic associations on self-reports about Obama's religion. Consistent with research that demonstrates automatic associations influence judgments and behavior (Fazio 1995), we find that our implicit measure linking Obama and Islam significantly predicts the likelihood of correctly identifying his religion ($b = -0.82$, $s.e. = 0.21$, $p < 0.001$), as well as the likelihood of stating that he is a Muslim ($b = 0.54$, $s.e. = 0.22$, $p < 0.05$), both in the expected direction. That is, implicit associations, which are automatically activated and may be outside of an individual's conscious awareness, increase the probability of (mis)identifying the president's religion.

In sum, we find strong support for our motivated believing and sophisticated processing hypotheses but little evidence of motivated expressing or differential exposure in the data. We also demonstrate how this process works structurally. Predispositions such as ideology, partisanship, and race affect how citizens feel about Obama. This evaluation, in turn, motivates individuals to believe misinformation about the president, which creates implicit

Figure 2

Structural Equation Model of Relationship between Explicit and Implicit Measures



Notes: $N = 346$. Weighted-least squares estimates (WLSMV) using delta parameterization and 1,000 iterations in *Mplus* (v. 6.11). Fit indices for this model: RMSEA = 0.028, CFI = 0.980, TLI = 0.975, WRMR = 0.912. All paths are significant at the $p < .05$ level, except when indicated by a dotted line. Observed variables are shown with rectangles; the latent variable is indicated with an oval.

associations between Obama and Islam in long-term memory. Finally, these implicit associations increase the likelihood of perceiving and explicitly stating that Obama is likely a Muslim. Interestingly, political sophistication mitigates explicit associations, but it has no effect on implicit ones.

CONCLUSION

Linking Obama to Islam is particularly pernicious in today's political climate, given how negatively the media have portrayed Muslims since the September 11 attacks (Jackson 2010). For instance, recent Gallup polls reveal that 40% of Americans admit to feeling some degree of prejudice toward Muslims.¹⁷ Note that research also demonstrates that a person must be simultaneously motivated and able to override implicit associations—without both of these characteristics, ensuing judgments and behaviors are biased (Devine 1989). If economic indicators are mixed on Election Day, associations linking Obama with Islam could potentially swing key votes of moderates, independents, and the undecided.

Our findings suggest that although routinely condemned, smear campaigns may be quite effective at creating implicit associations between targeted political figures and misinformation. Even the most sophisticated individuals in our sample showed a strong IAT effect, which was not moderated by ideology, partisanship, or evaluations of Obama. Future research should explore the sources, nature, and frequency of exposure to misinformation to

determine exactly what is required to create such associations in long-term memory. In addition, it would be interesting to know the extent to which these associations bias political evaluations and attitudes. Ultimately, our work suggests that simply stating something over and over again, regardless of its validity, does have an impact on public opinion.

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NOTES

- For instance, see polls conducted by the Pew Research Center (07/21–8/5/2010), *Time* magazine (8/16–8/17/2010), and *Newsweek* (8/25–8/26/2010).
- Pew Research Center Report dated 07/21–8/5/2010. Retrieved from: <http://pewforum.org/Politics-and-Elections/Growing-Number-of-Americans-Say-Obama-is-a-Muslim.aspx#1>
- For further discussion of implicit associations, see Greenwald and Banaji (1995).
- Newsweek* article "The Illustrated Man" by Jonathan Alter (dated August 10, 2010).
- Scripps poll: "94 percent have heard way-out Obama, McCain rumors." ScrippsNews. Retrieved from <http://www.scrippsnews.com/node/37045>

6. These category words were taken directly from the Religion IAT hosted at the Project Implicit website: (<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>).
7. Four images of each candidate were carefully selected so that the candidates' poses, facial expressions, and attire were nearly identical.
8. Recent evidence suggests that people elicit strong associations between factors such as Christian-ness and American-ness and candidate assessments for Barack Obama and John McCain (Sheets, Domke, and Greenwald 2011).
9. The FreeIAT software (Meade 2009) can be downloaded from (<http://www4.ncsu.edu/~awmeade/FreeIAT/FreeIAT.htm>). The Candidate-Religion IAT used in this study is available from the contact author's university website.
10. The pairings of categories, as well as their assignment to specific keys, were randomly assigned and varied on successive trials.
11. Blocks 1, 2, and 4 each contained 20 practice trials to help subjects acclimate themselves to the sorting task. Blocks 3 and 5 consisted of 60 recorded trials that were used to compute Greenwald, Nosek, and Banaji's (2003) IAT *D*-score ($M = 0.21$, $SD = 0.32$; range -0.66 to 1.24), which is the preferred scoring algorithm for IAT studies.
12. Details about the scoring algorithm used to compute the IAT effect (*D*-score) can be found at <http://www4.ncsu.edu/~awmeade/FreeIAT/HowItWorks.htm>, as well as Greenwald, Nosek, and Banaji (2003).
13. For ease of interpretation, all independent variables were recoded from 0 to 1.
14. We selected questions that were unrelated to President Obama and his religious views to avoid potential endogeneity issues. The political sophistication scale ($M = 0.57$, $SD = 0.26$; $KR20 = 0.70$) consisted of correct responses to the following items (correct answers and proportions in parentheses): 1) Responsibility to determine constitutionality of laws (Supreme Court; 74%); 2) Harry Reid's job (Senate Majority Leader; 28%); 3) majority needed to override presidential veto (2/3; 64%); 4) more conservative party at national level (Republican Party; 92%); 5) current number of Supreme Court justices (9; 49%); 6) Hillary Clinton's job (Secretary of State; 63%); 7) Constitutional authority to declare war (Legislative branch; 51%); and 8) name of current Supreme Court Chief Justice (John Roberts; 34%).
15. A full description of the variables and experimental protocol is available from the authors.
16. We also examined the interactions of political sophistication and a) partisan identification and b) ideology. None of these interactions were statistically significant.
17. See Gallup poll conducted October 31–November 13, 2009. Retrieved from: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/125312/religious-prejudice-stronger-against-muslims.aspx>.

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