

## THE IMPLICITNESS OF RACE IN AMERICAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE: A STUDY OF BARACK OBAMA'S RHETORIC

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### ABSTRACT

*The paper examines Barack Obama's public discourse on race with special emphasis on the characteristics of racial references in his speeches. The study presented in the paper is based on the claim that Obama's racial discourse is characterized by his tendency to denote race implicitly (Li, 2012). The analytical model used for the analysis combines elements from the theory of evaluative language by Martin & White (2005) and the concept of rhetorical frames (Kopyers, 2009; Entman, 2004). The study examines the type, frequency and analysis of racial references in relation to their evaluative frames and compares the findings with the discourse of the movement Black Lives Matter. The findings of the study confirm the claim about Obama's tendency to use implicit racial discourse.*

**Keywords:** Barack Obama, rhetoric, race, implicitness, evaluative frames

## L'IMPLICITO DELLA RAZZA NEL DISCORSO POLITICO AMERICANO: LO STUDIO DELLA RETORICA DI BARACK OBAMA

### SINTESI

*Nel saggio viene esaminato il discorso pubblico di Barack Obama sulla razza, con particolare attenzione alle caratteristiche riguardo i riferimenti razziali nei suoi discorsi. Lo studio si basa sull'affermazione che il discorso razziale di Obama è caratterizzato dalla sua tendenza a denotare implicitamente la razza (Li, 2012). Il modello analitico utilizzato per l'analisi cerca di combinare gli elementi della teoria del linguaggio valutativo di Martin & White (2005) e il concetto di strutture (frame) retoriche (Kopyers, 2009; Entman, 2004). Lo studio esamina il tipo, la frequenza e l'analisi dei riferimenti razziali in relazione alle strutture (frame) valutative e confronta i risultati con il discorso del movimento Black Lives Matter. I risultati dello studio confermano l'affermazione riguardo la tendenza di Obama a usare un discorso razziale implicito.*

**Parole chiave:** Barack Obama, retorica, razza, implicito, strutture (frame) valutativi

## INTRODUCTION

This paper considers the language used by Barack Obama in addressing race-related topics in his public speeches. It presents an empirical investigation of the claim that Barack Obama's racial rhetoric reveals a tendency towards implicit rather than explicit references to race (Li, 2012, 3). The study examines the use of racial references in their textual context by introducing the concept of evaluative frames. The proposed concept is based on the theory of framing (e.g. Kuypers, 1997, 2009; Entman, 2004; Lakoff, 2004) and the theory of appraisal (Martin & White, 2005, Martin & Rose, 2003). A more thorough analysis of Barack Obama's public discourse on race is crucial not least because of his unique status as the first black president in the history of the USA. While Obama's presidency signalled the promise of a renewed America, the historically burdened relation of the United States of America with race posed special challenges for his political voice. He began his presidency in a country still gripped by historically conditioned preconceptions of race, but also eager to be done with the legacy of oppression and inequality. Obama was thus faced with a complex task to find a new voice on race relations in a nation which, as Li (2012) observes, continues to be *"uncomfortable discussing how race may contribute to either the success or demise of individuals"* (6). Additionally, Li (2012) also argues that one of the main rhetorical moves of Obama's public discourse was his use of coded racial discourse, specifically, his tendency to gesture towards race without referring to it explicitly. The need for such a voice came from the need of American society to simultaneously showcase and silence race. Similarly, Roediger (2008, 217) observes that representations in Obama's discourse reflect *"an overwhelming desire to transcend race without transcending racial inequality, as well as the impossibility of doing so"*.

We approach the claim about Obama's coded racial rhetoric from a discourse-analytical perspective by analysing the lexical expressions related to race in a selection of six speeches from different periods of his presidency. The analysis focuses on how Obama's public discourse constructs race through explicit or implicit expressions. The evaluative context of both types of references are analysed and described in terms of evaluative frames with emphasis on the expressions of judgement, affect, and appreciation. It is further examined how evaluative frames contribute to Obama's general frames for racial discourse in contemporary American society (FrameWorks Institute). We also compare some of the characteristics of Obama's discourse to the rhetoric employed by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. BLM is a grassroots movement that engages the topic of race,

racism and police brutality in light of unarmed African-American citizens killed by police officers.

The paper is structured as followed: first we provide background on the sphere of political discourse within which Obama positions himself as America's first black president, including a brief outline of the current state of race relations in the USA and the development of the BLM movement. Here we also present some observations on Obama's relation to race in his public presidential discourse. Then we outline the theoretical framework from which the categories used for the analysis are derived, namely linguistic categories proposed by Martin & White (2005) and the theory about rhetorical framing (Kuypers, 2009; Entman, 2004; Lakoff, 2004). Following that, we present an analysis of lexical racial references in six speeches by Obama and compare the findings to the discourse of six texts originating from the BLM movement. In addition, we analyse the evaluative frames of lexical racial references in Obama's speeches and compare them to the evaluative frames of lexical racial references in the discourse of BLM. The paper concludes by pointing out the extent to which Obama's discourse on race has been rhetorically restrained in ways that reflect the complexities of the issue of race in the United States of America.<sup>1</sup>

THE CONTINUING LEGACY OF RACE IN THE USA:  
BACKGROUND

When Obama became the first black president in the 232-year history of the American nation, he became a symbol of the promise of a so-called new *"post-racial society,"* because he broke the final racial barrier and overcame the historical legacy of slavery and racism in America. In the post-election elation, it seemed that this election also changed the importance of the concept of race itself and finally made it obsolete as anything other than a purely descriptive modifier. But it soon became clear that decades removed from the Civil Rights Era, equal rights and freedom from bias are still not a guarantee for all Americans. In his presidential farewell address given on 10 January 2017, Obama acknowledged the unfulfilled promise of his historic presidency by admitting that post-racial America remains an unrealized vision and that *"(R)ace remains a potent and often divisive force in our society"* (www.americanrhetoric.com).

As a consequence, different perceptions of the state of race in the USA persist and they differ along the colour line.<sup>2</sup> According to Pew Research Center (2016, 27 June), the majority of black citizens (88 percent) say the country needs to continue making changes for black people to have equal rights with whites, whereas only 8 percent say that enough changes have already been made.

1 The complexities of discourse in the case of ethnic minorities such as American Slovenians are exemplified in the work of Šabec (2016).

2 The way in which American racist discourse is reflected in the Slovene context through translation is discussed in Trupej (2014).

In the last few years, one of the most graphic manifestations of racial bias has manifested in the police killings of unarmed black men. The statistics of these shootings reflect the complicated legacy of inequality and conscious or unconscious bias against African Americans. Currently, the United States has no national database tracking fatal shootings by the police, but the statistics from the *Guardian's* website, *The Counted* ([www.theguardian.com/us-news/series/counted-us-police-killings](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/series/counted-us-police-killings)) show that despite making up only 2 % of the total US population, African American males between the ages of 15 and 34 comprised more than 15 % of all deaths recorded in 2016 by an ongoing investigation into the use of deadly force by police. Their rate of police-involved deaths was thus five times higher than for white men of the same age. Similar data can be found in another database on police shootings by the *Washington Post* ([www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/police-shootings/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/police-shootings/)). Although implicit racial bias is difficult to prove empirically, these data sets strongly suggest that it must play a certain role in the higher rate of the shootings of black citizens in the USA.

The constant media reports about a string of killings of unarmed black men through the use of excessive police force, for example, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Walter Scot, and too many others, provoked incredulity and anger in the public and gave rise to a new grassroots movement aimed at drawing national attention to this epidemic. The discourse of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement thematises all sorts of systemic inequality of black people in the USA, such as racial profiling, police brutality, and racial inequality in the United States criminal justice system. According to its own definition, Black Lives Matter (BLM) is an activist movement that seeks to (re)build the black liberation movement (<http://blacklivesmatter.com>). The movement started as a reaction to the violence against and murders of unarmed African-American citizens, most notably Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown and Eric Garner, and its focus is on eliminating or diminishing systematic state violence against the black population *"to include all of the ways in which Black people are intentionally left powerless at the hands of the state"* (<http://blacklivesmatter.com>).

#### OBAMA'S VOICE ON RACE

At the beginning of his presidency, Obama avoided thematising race in his public discourse. His attitude gradually changed under the influence of the killings of young black men which provoked violent protests and thus required a political reaction from the president. When reflecting upon his presidency in his farewell address, Obama referred to the unfulfilled promise of "post-racial society", using the term 'post-racial' as synonymous with the end of racial oppression. However, as Li (2012) points out, the current use of the term "post-

racial" also demonstrates a merger between race and racism, with the prefix post- indicating that not just reference to racism but also reference to race has become superfluous in modern American society. The term 'post-racial' thus also suggests the irrelevance of race-specific discourse or the need to transcend race, rather than emphasizing it. This is different from Toni Morrison's idea (1997, 5) that it is possible to emphasize race and overcome racism at the same time through converting *"a racist house into a race-specific yet nonracist home"*. However, this can only be successful if the discourse about race is stripped from its negative evaluative meanings. In his political discourse, Obama attempted to resolve the tension arising from the conflict between the need to emphasize race by talking about it and the need to transcend race and make it insignificant as a categorical modifier. Consequently, his discourse reflects a careful balance between the reality itself and the rhetorical reflection of reality, creating a race-specific discourse which simultaneously tries to transcend race as categorical rather than descriptive modifier. Li described this characteristic of Obama's discourse as *"double-voiced"* (Li, 2012, 22). This double voice means that, as Smith (2009, February 26) observes, Obama shifts race from obvious visual marks to linguistic references that require an audience attentive to the nuances of racial textuality. The interpretations of such references are sometimes clearly suggested by the context, or they may be left open, but they always require an attentive audience, capable of filling in the blanks.

Shear and Alcindor (2017, January 14) note that shortly after Obama's election, no one in the White House, especially the president himself, wanted to talk about race. Mr. Obama, who had grown up sharing two worlds as the son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas, wanted to be the president of all America. There was fear that framing his efforts in racial terms would draw attention to race as a negatively loaded qualifier and would thus intensify the already existing tensions (Shear & Alcindor, 2017, January 14).

However, before his presidency, Obama had already thematised the issue of race in his famous speech in Philadelphia on March 18, 2008, during the nomination campaign. Obama gave the speech as a response to the controversial remarks by the minister of his church, Reverend Jerimiah Wright, using it as an opportunity to turn his own mixed racial origin into an explicit topic of his campaign. In the speech he held up his own genetic make-up as the metaphor for the genetic make-up of the American state itself. That speech already contains the overall framing message of Obama's presidential rhetoric, repeated in different forms throughout his presidency, that the solutions to the problems of American society are inscribed in the American DNA itself, i.e. in the American Constitution (Plemenitaš, 2008). From the beginning, Obama rhetorically framed race as a temporary dividing line which would be overcome through

shared American values of freedom and democracy inherent in the American foundations. In his Democratic Convention speech on 27 July, 2004, long before his presidential campaign, he emphasized this idea: “*There is not a black America and a white America and Latino America and Asian America – there’s the United States of America*” (presidentialrhetoric.com).

After he became President, Obama was very reticent about discussing race. This changed in 2009, when he publicly spoke against the white police officer who arrested a black Harvard Professor, Henry Louis Gates Jr. His taking sides against a white police officer received a very public backlash, which deepened his reticence to talk publicly about racial issues.

The next time Obama thematised race again in a public speech was in very personal remarks about the death of Trayvon Martin (July 19, 2013), in which he noted that Trayvon Martin could have been his son, or even that he himself could have been Trayvon Martin. Although this time his remarks were met with more approval, there were again negative reactions to his taking sides.

Obama’s presidency was later marked by a string of police shootings of young black men which provoked violence and protests in the black community. These incidents made clear that he could no longer remain reticent in addressing racial issues, and that he would have to lead a national conversation about race. As Shear and Alcindor (2017, January 14) note, since the events in Ferguson following the killing of Michael Brown and for the rest of his presidency, Obama would strive for the balance between empathy and understanding for African-Americans and support for the police and the rule of law.

One of Obama’s later presidential speeches was his eulogy at the service for the black victims of the shootings by Dylan Roof, also known as the grace speech (2015, June 28). It is also one of Obama’s most powerful speeches on race and it marks a counterpoint to his race speech from 2008. If the race speech was an optimistic beginning of Obama’s public political engagement with race, the grace speech represented a culmination and emotional closure. Throughout his presidency, Obama faced criticisms that he was too neutral by trying to please both sides without really satisfying either (cf. Shear & Alcindor, 2017, 14 January). In the last few years of his presidency, many critical reactions from the black community originated in the movement BLM, which deals with racial issues in a direct and outspoken way.

In the following sections we look at Obama’s discourse on race by examining his speeches in terms of explicit and implicit lexical references to race and the evaluative frames in which they appear. The main purpose of the analysis is to determine the characteristics of the discourse allowing Obama to “*signify without specifying*” (cf. Li, 2012), i.e. to talk about race without putting too much emphasis on it. For a better understanding of the typical characteristics of Obama’s discourse on

race, we compare some elements of his discourse with the discourse by the movement BLM with its more confrontational approach.

### Hypotheses

Based on the previous observations about Barack Obama’s discourse on race, we have tested the following hypotheses about themes with racial reference and their evaluative frames in his discourse:

- Hypothesis 1: Obama uses implicit racial references, in particular implicit black, more frequently than explicit racial references.
- Hypothesis 2: In Obama’s discourse, implicit racial references tend to be framed by positive categories of evaluation while explicit racial references tend to be framed by negative categories of evaluation.
- Hypothesis 3: The use of evaluative frames in Obama’s discourse contributes to the positive master frames of racial discourse such as ‘opportunity for all’ and ‘interdependence’.

### METHODS AND MATERIALS

#### Lexical Expressions Signifying Race

Our analysis of Obama’s discourse on race starts with the classification of different types of explicit and implicit racial lexical references with special emphasis on references to black and white Americans. In order to provide insight into the implicitness of constructions of race in the analysed discourse, the references accounted for were divided into two broad categories: 1) explicit references to race, i.e. race (and its derivations, e.g. racial), African-American, black, white, of color, and 2) implicit references to race, i.e. implicit black, implicit white, implicit black and white, ambiguous black and ambiguous white. We define implicit racial references as such references in which race (e.g. white, black, African American, of color) is not mentioned explicitly but clearly suggested by any of the three types of context: the textual context, the context of situation or the wider cultural context. The category of implicit black and white means that one implicit reference implies both races as distinct groups. There are also two additional categories for the implicit reference which we labelled ambiguous black and ambiguous white. These labels mean that the reference remains open to interpretation, mainly depending on the immediate audience, even though the context vaguely points to a certain interpretation. For example, the category ambiguous black denotes an implicit reference where the interpretation in the context would be filled in by a particular audience. Both implicit and ambiguous references require an interpretation based on the context and an attentive audience. The distinction between them is that implicit



references are less open to interpretation because the reference is inferred from the textual, situational or cultural context.

It should also be noted that the analysis focuses on lexical expressions denoting or implying race, so pronouns, which provide a strong mechanism for implicit expression, remain beyond the scope of the analysis. Proper nouns, such as personal names, were also excluded from the analysis. The following examples from the analysis illustrate the categorization of lexical expressions denoting race (the references are in bold).

Examples of implicit references from Obama's speeches: implicit black (*This morning, we celebrate a **seamstress**, slight in stature but mighty in courage*), implicit white (*That's what **an Alabama driver** learned on December 1, 1955*), implicit black and white (*But it is a story that has seared into my genetic makeup the idea that **this nation** is more than the sum of its parts – that out of many, we are truly one*), ambiguous black (*Like the bus driver, but also like the passengers on the bus, we see the way things are – **children hungry in a land of plenty, entire neighbourhoods ravaged by violence, families hobbled by job loss or illness** – and we make excuses for inaction, and we say to ourselves, that's not my responsibility, there is nothing I could do*), ambiguous white (*We can play Reverend Wright's sermons on every channel, every day and talk about them from now until the election, and make the only question in this campaign whether or not **the American people** think that I somehow believe or sympathize with his most offensive words*).

With the use of the statistical program SPSS, the distribution of the different categories of these references from six speeches by Obama ([www.americanrhetoric.com](http://www.americanrhetoric.com)), and six texts from the movement Black Lives Matter ([www.blacklivesmatter.com](http://www.blacklivesmatter.com)) was calculated and a comparison was drawn between the two discourses.

### Evaluative Frames

After the determination of their basic percentages, lexical references to race were analysed in terms of what we define as evaluative frames. The purpose of this analysis was thus to establish the evaluative context of different categories of racial lexical references in Obama's discourse and compare it to the discourse of BLM. We introduce the concept of evaluative frames based on a combination of elements from two models of discourse analysis: the linguistic model of evaluative expressions or appraisal as proposed by Martin & White (2005) and Martin & Rose (2003) and the theory of rhetorical frames (Kuypers, 1997, 2009; Entman, 2008). Framing theory has been used in different disciplines, such as sociology and discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics (Tannen, 1993; Lakoff, 2004). According to Kuypers (2009, 302), whose research belongs to the rhetorical

tradition, frames “*organize aspects of perceived reality textually by promoting particular problem definitions, moral evaluation or solution proposals*”. Similarly, Entman defines frames as selecting and highlighting some aspects of a situation to promote a particular interpretation. The interpretation generally comes through a narrative that encompasses an interrelated definition of the policy problem, analysis and its causes, moral evaluation of those involved, and proposed remedy (Entman, 2008, 90). According to Entman, the definition of the problem, the analysis, the causes of the problem and the proposed remedy are framing functions which frame objects, while objects of framing are issues, events, or actors (Entman, 2004, 23). Entman's objects of framing are equivalent to Kuypers's themes or subjects of discussion. Both Kuypers (2009) and Entman (2004) talk about unifying frameworks or master frames, which present a sort of “umbrella” under which there is a variety of themes with their own frames. Evaluative language, including both explicit attitudinal expressions and indirectly expressed attitudinal meanings, thus accounts for a significant element of rhetorical frames. It is closely interrelated with problem definitions and remedies as these are often expressed through evaluative terms. Using the model of evaluative language by Martin & White (2005),<sup>3</sup> the elements of evaluative frames are described in terms of the following categories of attitude expressed through language explicitly or implicitly: judgement, affect and appreciation.

### Categories of Evaluation in Evaluative Frames

For the purpose of this study we define evaluative frames as evaluative language of judgment, affect and appreciation that occurs in the immediate context of the theme and is connected to the theme primarily by its contextual proximity. This means that an evaluative frame of the theme is evaluative language which occurs in the same continuous passage as the theme and may be semantically connected to the framed theme in different ways. This can occur directly or indirectly, as long as evaluative language appears in the immediate proximity of the theme: directly, with theme being the target of judgment; emoting actor or trigger of emotion, or the target of appreciation; or indirectly, with the judgement, appreciation or affect directed at the themes which are semantically related to the framed theme (actors, events, issues).

In our analysis, different categories of racial references present the themes that may be used in evaluative context, in other words, they have evaluative frames. The main criterion for determining the evaluative frame when several expressions belonging to the same general category of evaluation (e.g. positive social sanction and positive social esteem) are close to the theme is the proximity of the subcategory to the framed reference: the

3 One of the first Slovene linguists who used the theory of Appraisal by Martin and White was Križan (2016).

subcategory closest to the theme is considered as part of its evaluative frame. Sometimes evaluation is inscribed in the theme itself, for example the reference *the disadvantaged* is the theme (implicit black), with inscribed negative esteem. In some cases the evaluative frames of two different themes can overlap, e.g. emoter and target of emotion share negative affect as part of their evaluative frame (**woman** (implicit white) who once confessed her **fear of black men** (black)). We have also set the additional categories of combined positive and negative judgement, positive and negative affect, and positive and negative appreciation for the evaluative frames of themes which have positive and negative subcategories of the same general evaluative category in close proximity of each other (e.g. in a correlative phrase) (**The church** (implicit black) contains in full the **kindness and cruelty**). In general, these cases are not very common and they mostly apply to judgment. For the purpose of the statistical analysis, the cases of themes with no immediate context of evaluation in any one of the three categories were marked accordingly with the categories of no judgment, no affect or no appreciation.

As mentioned above, the categorization of the language of evaluative frames follows the model proposed by Martin & White (2005) and Martin & Rose (2003). These frames belong to the following categories: the expression of positive or negative judgement of esteem or sanction (with esteem referring to judgments of normativity, and sanction referring to judgments of morality, such as veracity and propriety), positive or negative affect (expressions of emotional attitudes), and positive or negative appreciation (judgement of aesthetic structural features). In our analysis, the categories of evaluation are treated as dependent variables, related to the categories of references to race as an independent variable. The categories of evaluative language accounted for in the analysis include both positive and negative evaluations of judgement, affect, and appreciation. In the category of judgement, further distinction is made between social esteem and social sanction. In the category of affect, further distinction is made between realis affect (feelings involving reaction, e.g. happy, sad, angry), and irrealis affect (feelings involving intention, e.g. hope, fear). In the category of appreciation, which is valuation of things rather than people, a further distinction is made between reaction (e.g. beautiful, ugly) and composition (balanced, unified, uneven, and shapeless). In some cases, double coding is used, for example, when positive composition can be interpreted as a metaphorical extension of positive sanction or esteem: *incendiary language* would thus be interpreted as negative reaction and negative sanction. Below are examples of evaluative frames from the analysis (marked in bold and with their themes followed by the category of reference in brackets).

1. judgement:
  - positive social esteem (*that we embrace changes in how we train and equip **our police** (ambiguous white) so that the bonds of trust between **law enforcement** (ambiguous white) and **the communities** (ambiguous black) they serve make us all **safer and more secure**),*
  - negative social esteem (*Her quite leadership would continue long after she made headlines, she became an icon for the civil rights movement, working with Congressman Conyers to find homes for **the homeless** (implicit black), preparing **disadvantaged youth** (implicit black) for a path to success, striving each day to right some wrong somewhere in this world),*
  - positive social sanction (*They began a boycott – **teachers and laborers, clergy and domestics** (implicit black)...walking for **respect**, walking for **freedom**, driven by a solemn determination to affirm their god-given **dignity**),*
  - negative social sanction (*we do not need to recite here the history of **racial injustice** (racial) in this country),*
  - positive and negative judgement (*He retains within him the contradictions – **the good and the bad** – of **the community that he has served diligently for so many years** (implicit black).*
2. affect:
  - positive affect: realis (*a woman (implicit white) who **loves** me as much as she **loves** anything in this world),*
  - negative affect realis (*I know **people** (implicit black and white) can **feel down** about the way things are going sometimes here in Washington; There **are Americans (ambiguous white) who agree with it** and there are **Americans (ambiguous white) who are deeply disappointed and angry**),*
  - positive affect: irrealis (*I imagined the stories of ordinary **black people** (black)...Those stories – of survival, and freedom and **hope**),*
  - negative affect irrealis (*but **a woman** (implicit white) who once confessed her **fear of black men** (black) who passed her on the street).*
3. Appreciation:<sup>4</sup>
  - positive reaction (*to Eliana and Malana, **his beautiful, wonderful daughters** (implicit black),*
  - negative reaction (*On the other hand, we've heard **my former pastor** (implicit black), Jeremiah Wright, use **incendiary** language),*
  - positive composition (*we can move beyond some of our old **racial** wounds (racial)...if we are to continue on the path of a more **perfect** union),*
  - negative composition (*but **race** (race) is an issue that I believe **this nation** (implicit black and white) cannot afford to ignore right now. We*

4 Appreciation is often double-coded with judgment.

would be making the same mistake....-to **simplify** and **stereotype** and **amplify** the negative).

### The Connection between Evaluative Frames and Master Frames

Evaluative frames are best considered as evaluative aspect of micro frames that contribute to the more general global frames, i.e. master frames (Kuypers, 2009) or unifying frameworks (Entman, 2004), which are more general frames, composed of different themes and their frames, and can span different individual texts and even discourses. According to the research by the FrameWorks Institute (<http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/>), there are three dominant race frames in public discourse in contemporary American discourse about race: 1) historical progress and personal racism, 2) the self-making person and 3) separate fates. They stress the personal nature of racism and the myth of the self-making person, rather than structural inequality (<http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/>). Several other frames have been suggested to change the public perception of racial matters, mainly frames which stress enrichment through diversity, or foreground the so-called “white privilege”, structural disparities and historical roots of racism (e.g. the frame ‘disparities as structurally given’). However, as suggested by the FrameWorks research, these frames often fail to garner support for structural changes, so other more successful frames have been proposed (Gilliam, 2006). Such frames focus less on racial inequality and disparities, but tap into widely held American values of ingenuity and opportunity, which are racially neutral. The frames that have proved particularly successful are ‘interdependence’, ‘prevention as access to preventive programs’ and ‘opportunity for all’. They emphasize that the reduction of racial disparities is critical to the common good and that prevention of problems in public policies and structural inequality can improve society as a whole (Gilliam, 2006). From the very beginning of his presidency, Obama tended to use the master frames of ‘opportunity for all’ and ‘interdependence’, already in his Democratic Convention speech in 2004 with the famous quote “*There is not a black America and a white America and Latino America and Asian America – there’s the United States of America*”. In this frame, the difference between races and ethnicities is presented through the rhetorical device of a false choice, which has been one of Obama’s favourite rhetorical devices (cf. Beam, 2009, 10 December) and fits perfectly into the rhetoric of implying rather than specifying race.

### Texts for Analysis

The analysis includes the following six speeches by Obama: 1) Remarks on the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, also



**Image 1: Barack Obama, September 2013 (Source: Wikimedia Commons)**

known as the Race Speech (2008, March 18, Philadelphia at the Constitution Center), 2) Speech honouring Martin Luther King (2010, January 17, Vermont Avenue Baptist Church), 3) Remarks on Rosa Parks (2015, December 1, Rosa Parks Capitol statue dedication), 4) Remarks by the President on Trayvon Martin (2013, July 19, after the acquittal of George Zimmerman), 5) Remarks by the President After the Announcement of the Decision by the Grand Jury in Ferguson, Missouri (2014, November 24, after the decision not to indict the police officers involved in the killing of Michael Brown), and 6) Remarks by the President in Eulogy for the Honourable Reverend Clementa Pinckney (2015, June 26, at the College of Charleston, South Carolina, after the killings in the Emanuel AME Church). The transcripts of Obama’s speeches were retrieved from the website American Rhetoric ([www.americanrhetoric.com](http://www.americanrhetoric.com)). The Obama corpus consists of around 16000 words and is the main focus of the study. The findings of the BLM corpus mainly provide a comparative background for a better understanding of the characteristic features of Obama’s rhetoric.

The discourse of Obama’s speeches is compared to the discourse of six articles selected from the website of the movement BLM.<sup>5</sup> The analysis of the BLM discourse includes the following six articles: 1) Rest in Power (); 2) Black Activists Are Literally Stealing the Stage from 2016 Contenders — And It’s Working; 3) Black Lives Matter Network Statement on #JusticeforTamirRice; 4) Ferguson, 1 Year Later: Why Protesters Were Right to Fight for Mike Brown Jr.; 5) Black Lives Matter Co-Founder: Obama Overlooked Black Women; 6) Jesse Williams’ speech on Race (<http://time.com/4383516/jesse-williams-bet-speech-transcript/>). With the exception of Jesse Williams’ speech, these speeches were retrieved from the website of the movement Black Lives Matter

<sup>5</sup> The only exception is Jesse Williams’ speech, which is included in the analysis because it is thematically closely connected to the BLM movement and is one of the best-known speeches supporting BLM.



**Table 1: The distribution of themes with regard to the expression of race in Obama**

Theme	No. of Occurrences	Percentage
implicit black	116	27.0 %
implicit black and white	73	17.0 %
black	46	10.7 %
ambiguous black	40	9.3 %
race (generic reference)	35	8.1 %
white	31	7.2 %
implicit white	28	6.5 %
African-American	27	6.3 %
ambiguous white	25	5.8 %
color (generic reference)	5	1.2 %
of color	4	0.9 %
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>

(www.blacklivesmatter.com). The BLM corpus consists of around 5000 words.

RESULTS

**The distribution of themes with regard to the expression of race**

Tab. 1 shows the frequency of different types of racial references in Obama’s discourse.

The frequencies in Tab. 1 reveal that the reference implicit black is by far the most frequent in Obama’s discourse (27 %), followed by implicit black and white (17 %), black (10.7 %), and ambiguous black (9.3 %). These are followed by the references to race as a general

concept (8.1 %), white (7.2%), implicit white (6.5 %), African-American (6.3 %) and ambiguous white (5.8 %). Color as a generic concept and ‘of color’ have a very low frequency with 1.2 % and 0.9 % respectively. What is perhaps surprising is the low frequency of the expressions African-American and ‘of color’, despite the fact that these expressions are well-established and politically correct terms.

Tab. 1 thus reveals a pattern according to which the two most common racial references in Obama’s discourse are implicit: implicit black, and implicit black and white, followed by explicit black and ambiguous black. The expressions African-American and ‘of color’ in reference to the black citizens, on the other hand, are used rarely. References to white, explicit and implicit, in

**Table 2: Evaluative frames with judgement in relation to the themes in Obama**

Theme	Lowest correlation (%)	Highest correlation (%)
race (generic reference)	positive esteem (2 %)	negative sanction (20 %)
African-American	positive sanction (3.7 %)	negative sanction (48.1 %)
black	no judgement (6.5 %)	negative esteem (37 %)
white	positive and negative judgement (3.2 %)	negative sanction (22.65 %)
Implicit black	positive and negative judgement (5.2 %)	positive sanction (34.5 %)
Implicit white	positive and negative judgement (0 %)	negative sanction (46,4 %)
Implicit black and white	positive and negative judgement (4.1 %)	positive sanction (35.6 %)
ambiguous black	negative sanction (2.5 %)	negative esteem (47.5 %)
ambiguous white	positive and negative judgement (8 %)	negative sanction (24 %)
of color	equal for all categories (25 %)	equal for all categories (25 %)
color (generic reference)	positive and negative judgement (20 %)	positive sanction (80 %)



**Table 3: Evaluative frames with affect in relation to the themes in Obama**

Theme	Lowest correlation (%)	Second highest correlation (%)
race (generic reference)	positive affect: realis (0.0 %)	negative affect realis (22.9 %)
African-American	positive affect: realis (0.0 %)	negative affect realis (25.9 %)
black	negative affect irrealis (2.2 %)	negative affect realis (8.7 %)
white	positive affect irrealis (5.2 %) negative affect irrealis (5.2 %)	negative affect realis (19.4 %)
Implicit black	negative affect irrealis (0 %)	positive affect realis (11.2 %)
Implicit white	negative affect irrealis (3.6 %)	positive affect realis(10.7 %)
Implicit black and white	negative affect irrealis (1.4 %)	positive affect realis (17.8 %)
ambiguous black	negative affect irrealis (2.5 %)	negative affect realis (20 %) positive affect irrealis (20 %)
ambiguous white	positive affect irrealis (4 %) negative affect irrealis (4 %)	positive affect realis (12.0 %)
of color	positive affect realis, positive affect irrealis, negative affect irrealis (0 %)	negative affect realis (25 %)
color (generic reference)	no correlations	no correlations

general figure less frequently than references to black, except when they belong to the category implicit black and white.

If we compare the most frequent racial references of Obama’s discourse with the BLM discourse, it is clear that there are some differences in their typical patterns. The most frequent reference in BLM is black (31.7 %), followed by implicit black (26.3 %) and implicit white (23.7 %). Implicit black and white, which is in third place in Obama, only holds 4.8 % in BLM, the same percentage as the generic concept of race. On the other hand, BLM is similar to Obama’s discourse with regard to the frequency of the expressions African-American and ‘of color.’ African-American does not figure at all in the selected sample, while ‘of color’ occurs only in 2.2. %. The analysis of BLM also did not determine any examples of the categories ambiguous black, ambiguous white and generic color.

**The elements of judgement, affect and appreciation in the evaluative frames of themes**

Tab. 2, 3, and 4 show the connections of racial references with their evaluative context in Obama. The tables show how racial references are typically framed by judgement, affect and appreciation.

Tab. 2 shows the lowest and highest correlations of each type of racial reference with the different subcategories of judgment in Obama’s discourse.

The Chi-Square test between the type of racial reference (theme) and the subcategories of judgment in Tab.

2 shows that the relation is statistically significant ( $p = .000$ ).<sup>6</sup> The results reveal that the types of themes that tend to be framed by positive judgement are mostly implicit: implicit black (positive sanction), implicit black and white (positive sanction) and also generic color (positive sanction). The rest of the themes tend to be framed by negative judgement: black (negative esteem), white (negative sanction), implicit white (negative sanction), ambiguous black (negative esteem), ambiguous white (negative sanction), African-American (negative sanction), and generic race (negative sanction). The pattern that emerges from these results shows that the categories of implicit black and implicit black and white tend to be framed by positive ethical judgments, while other racial references tend to be framed negatively. Take for example explicit black by negative esteem, explicit white by negative sanction, and implicit white by negative sanction. Such framing suggests a divide of structural inequality. Even the expression African-American tends to be framed negatively, while the framing of ‘of color’ contains an equal distribution of positive and negative elements.

The Chi-Square test of correlations between elements of judgement in evaluative frames and types of theme in BLM also shows a statistically significant relationship ( $p = .000$ ). A comparison between the findings for BLM and Obama indicates that the two patterns are similar in some aspects, but also diverge to a certain degree. There are similarities in the tendency to frame implicit black positively and implicit white negatively, with some variations in the subcategory of esteem and sanction: in

6 The Chi-Square test shows a statistically significant correlation if with the p-value is  $p \leq .05$ .

**Table 4: Evaluative frames with appreciation in relation to the themes in Obama**

Reference	Lowest correlation (%)	Second highest correlation (%)
<b>race (generic reference)</b>	positive reaction (0 %), negative reaction (0 %)	negative composition (17.1 %)
<b>African-American</b>	positive reaction (0 %) negative reaction (0 %)	positive composition (3.7 %) negative composition (3.7 %)
<b>black</b>	negative reaction (0 %)	positive composition (10.9 %)
<b>white</b>	negative reaction (0 %)	negative composition (6.9 %)
<b>Implicit black</b>	negative composition (0.9 %)	positive reaction (9.5 %)
<b>Implicit white</b>	negative reaction (3.6 %) negative composition (3.6 %)	positive reaction (7.1 %) positive composition (7.1 %)
<b>Implicit black and white</b>	negative reaction (0 %)	positive composition (12.3 %)
<b>ambiguous black</b>	negative composition (0.0 %)	negative reaction (5.0 %)
<b>ambiguous white</b>	positive reaction (0.0 %) positive composition (0.0 %)	negative reaction (8 %)
<b>of color</b>	no correlation	no correlation
<b>color (generic reference)</b>	negative reaction (0 %) positive composition (0 %) negative composition (0 %)	positive reaction (20 %)

BLM, implicit black tends to be framed by positive esteem, while implicit white tends to be framed by negative social sanction. Black, on the other hand, tends to be framed by negative sanction, while white is not framed through judgment. The main difference is revealed in the reference implicit black and white, which tends to be framed positively (positive sanction) in Obama, but negatively (negative esteem) in BLM. Another difference also occurs with the generic reference to race, which tends to be framed negatively (negative sanction) in Obama, but positively (positive esteem) in BLM.

Tab. 3 shows the lowest and second highest correlations of each type of racial reference with the different categories of affect in Obama's discourse. The second highest correlation is considered instead of the highest correlation because evaluative frames frequently contain no element of affect, which means that the highest correlation with all the themes is with the category no affect. This shows that the category of affect features much less prominently than judgement in the evaluative frames of the racial themes. The categories shown in Tab. 3 present the element of affect in the evaluative frames of themes. The Chi-Square test of the correlations between the type of racial reference (theme) and the categories of affect in Tab. 3 confirms that the relation is statistically significant ( $P = .008$ ).

Tab. 3 shows that in the case of evaluative frames containing affect, the explicit themes tend to be framed by negative affect realis. This tendency thus applies to the references generic race, African-American, black, white, and 'of color'. Ambiguous black has the same

proportion of negative affect realis and positive affect irrealis. In contrast to explicit references, implicit references, such as implicit black, implicit white and implicit black and white tend to be framed positively through positive affect realis if their frames contain affect. The generic expression color does not have evaluative frames with affect. The correlations involving affect in BLM are not statistically significant ( $p = .106$ ), but a comparison with Obama can nevertheless reveal some typical differences which fit into a broader pattern. Evaluative frames in BLM contain considerably less affect than evaluative frames in Obama, as many themes in BLM, such as generic race, white, and 'of color', do not reveal any instances of affect in their evaluative frames. The remaining themes also do not contain affect in many cases, but when they do, they tend to be framed by positive affect. Thus the categories of black, implicit black and implicit black and white all have the second highest correlation with positive affect realis, which is the same as in Obama. The patterns, however, differ distinctly in the evaluative frame of implicit white, which tends to be framed negatively (negative affect realis) in BLM, and positively (positive affect realis) in Obama.

Tab. 4 shows the lowest and second highest correlations of themes with the categories of appreciation in Obama's discourse. As with affect, the second highest correlation is considered instead of the highest correlation because evaluative frames mostly contain no element of appreciation, which means that their highest correlation is with the category of no appreciation. This shows that appreciation features much less prominently than judge-

ment in the evaluative frames of the racial references, even much less than affect. The categories presented in Tab. 4 present the element of appreciation in the evaluative frames of the themes. The Chi-Square test of the correlations between the type of racial reference (theme) and the categories of appreciation in Tab. 4 shows that the relation is statistically significant ( $P = .008$ ).

The results in Tab. 4 show that in the case of evaluative frames with appreciation, the predominant categories are positive composition, positive reaction and negative reaction. It has to be noted that most examples of appreciation can also be interpreted as judgement, for example, *incendiary* language is doubly coded as negative reaction and negative sanction, while *perfect union* is doubly coded as positive composition and positive sanction. The following themes tend to have positive framing if framed by appreciation: black (positive composition), implicit black (positive reaction), implicit white (positive reaction, positive composition), implicit black and white (positive composition), and color (positive reaction). Some also tend to be framed by negative appreciation: generic race (negative composition), white (negative composition), ambiguous black (negative reaction), ambiguous white (negative reaction). The theme 'of color' does not have frames with appreciation. The theme African-American correlates equally with positive composition and negative composition.

The correlations involving appreciation in BLM are not statistically significant ( $p = .467$ ). Evaluative frames in BLM generally contain significantly less appreciation than evaluative frames in Obama. Of all the categories of appreciation, only positive reaction appears in the evaluative frames of themes in BLM. Many themes in BLM, such as generic race, white and implicit black and white reveal no instances of appreciation in their evaluative frames. The only category of appreciation found is positive reaction, which tends to correlate with implicit black (8.2%), 'of color' (3.2%), implicit white (2.3%) and black (1.7%). These categories also tend to be framed positively in Obama.

## DISCUSSION

The analysis shows that certain patterns emerge from the findings on the frequency of racial references and their connection to the elements in their evaluative frames. It has to be noted, however, that these patterns are generalizations across several speeches and articles, and the results for individual texts can vary considerably. The race speech by Obama, for example, contains frequent explicit references to black and white, which in later speeches become less frequent. The distribution of racial references and their evaluative frames in individual texts is beyond the scope of this study. The general findings on the frequency of racial references in Obama reveal that the first two most common categories of racial references are implicit: implicit black, and implicit

black and white (*the community that he has served diligently for so many years* (implicit black); *But race is an issue that I believe this nation* (implicit black and white) *cannot afford right now*). They are followed by explicit black and ambiguous black (*to find homes for the homeless* (ambiguous black), *preparing disadvantaged youth* (ambiguous black) *for a path of success*). It is indicative that most of the explicit references, with the exception of black, have a frequency which is below 10 %. The only implicit reference with a lower frequency is implicit white (*That's what an Alabama driver* (implicit white) *learned on December 1, 1955*). The low frequency of the category of generic race also suggests that the concept of race as such is not foregrounded in Obama's speeches. It is worth noting that the expressions African-American and 'of color' have a very low frequency, which could mean that these expressions are felt as too formal or technical for persuasive discourse, or appear in collocations. The findings thus confirm the first hypothesis according to which the most common racial references in Obama are implicit. The only exception in the analysis is implicit white, although it has to be noted that references to white in general figure less frequently in Obama's discourse than references to black. The most common reference to white is white paired with black in the category implicit white and black. The confirmation of this hypothesis reaffirms Li's claim (2012, 6) that Obama achieves a "*precarious balance between the seen and the heard*" through racial rhetoric that signifies without specifying. As opposed to Obama, BLM's most common racial reference is explicit black, which clearly indicates an eagerness to bring the topic of race into the public discussion. The expressions African-American and 'of color' have a low frequency in BLM as well, a tendency which again suggests that they sound too formal for persuasive discourse.

The analysis of the racial references as themes of evaluative frames also show characteristic patterns of correlations between themes and their evaluative frames. Positive evaluative frames in the category of judgement foreground the values of social sanction such as freedom, justice, equality, honesty, or the admiration of social esteem, such as intelligence, wealth, and well-being. In Obama, the themes which tend to be framed by positive judgement are implicit: implicit black, implicit black and white (*views that denigrate both the greatness and the goodness of our nation* (implicit black and white) *and that rightly offend white and black alike*). Their positive frames consist of positive sanction, which foregrounds the core social values. The category of generic color also tends to be framed by positive judgement. On the other hand, implicit white, and both ambiguous categories, ambiguous white and ambiguous black, tend to be framed by negative judgement (*Politicians* (ambiguous white) *routinely exploited fears of crime for their own electoral ends; It was stained by this nation's* (implicit white) *original sin of slavery*). Explicit

themes (black, white) also tend to be framed negatively, black frequently with negative esteem, which foregrounds the negative consequences of racial discrimination (unemployment, poverty, violence) (**A lack of economic opportunity among black men**), and white frequently with negative sanction, which foregrounds bad moral behaviour, such as injustice, violence and discrimination (*Like **the bus driver** (implicit white).... we make **excuses for inaction**, and we say to ourselves,, that is **not our responsibility***). The main difference between Obama and BLM involves the category of implicit black and white, which tends to be framed positively in Obama, but negatively in BLM, and the category of the generic race, which tends to be framed negatively in Obama, but positively in BLM

A similar pattern emerges with affect, although affect in general plays a much lesser role in evaluative frames of racial references in both discourses. Negative affect is mostly expressed as an emotion of distrust or bitterness and anger, while positive affect is mostly expressed as an emotion of love, trust or faith. In Obama, implicit references, such as implicit black, implicit white and implicit black and white tend to be framed positively by positive affect (*a **woman** (implicit white) who **loves me as much as she loves anything in the world; memories that all people** (implicit black and white) might study and **cherish**, and with which we could start to rebuild*). In contrast, explicit references tend to be framed negatively by affect (*the blood that spilled was our blood, **the tears our tears**, until this **black church***). There is a difference between Obama and BLM with regard to implicit white, which is mainly framed by negative affect in BLM, and by positive affect in Obama. This difference is reflective of the differences in the master frames, which, in the case of BLM focus on structural disparities and white privilege. What is rather surprising in both Obama and BLM is the lower correlations of themes with affect irrealis (e.g. hope, fear, belief), which usually figures more prominently in persuasive discourse. This perhaps suggests that the greater focus in both discourses is on emotional reactions to racial issues in the present moment and less on emotional projections or wishes for the future.

Appreciation plays an even lesser role than affect in both, Obama and BLM, and the pattern here is less consistent. When appreciation appears in the evaluative frames of themes in Obama, it tends to be positive, particular in references to black: black (positive composition), implicit black (positive reaction), e.g. **his beautiful, wonderful daughters**, implicit white (positive reaction, positive composition), implicit black and white (positive composition), e.g. *As **many generations** have come to realize ... this is where **perfection** begins*, and color (positive reaction). Negative appreciation appears in the evaluative frames of generic race (negative composition), white (negative composition), and ambiguous black (negative reaction) and ambiguous white (nega-

tive reaction). The comparison with BLM shows that appreciation has a very small role in the evaluative frames of BLM, which tends to have positive framing in this category for implicit black (8.2 %), 'of color' (3.2 %), implicit white (2.3 %) and black (1.7 %). The same themes in this category also tend to be framed positively in Obama. With regard to appreciation, both Obama and BLM tend to have positive framing of implicit themes, with the exception of ambiguous black and of white. The less important role of appreciation in political discourse is understandable, as appreciation mostly involves some kind of aesthetic judgments, whereas political persuasion mainly uses arguments of morality and capability, and to some degree affect.

Based on the above findings, we can conclude that the second hypothesis can mostly be confirmed, as most implicit racial references, in particular implicit black and implicit black and white, tend to be framed positively in Obama. The reference implicit white, however, does not conform to this pattern, as it tends to be framed negatively by judgement. The same goes for the categories of ambiguous black and ambiguous white. This suggests that Obama feels most comfortable framing racial references to black positively when they are not expressed explicitly but are clear from the context. He also tends to frame the category of implicit black and white positively. And conversely, when the racial references are explicit, he tends to frame them with criticism and negative observations.

According to the third hypothesis, the evaluative frames of racial references contribute to the master frames of racial discourse in Obama's rhetoric. In his political discourse, Obama early on adopted the master frames of 'opportunity for all', 'interdependence' and 'ingenuity/solutions first', which are also considered to be the most successful frames in improving support for social policies that would reduce racial inequality according to the FrameWorks Institute (Gilliam, 2006). The findings of our study suggest that these master frames are built up inductively from the micro level. The high frequency of implicit racial references, such as implicit black and implicit black and white, indicates a willingness to embrace diversity without emphasizing essentialist conceptions of racial identity. Whenever Obama veered too much from these master frames toward the frames of structural divide or white privilege, he received a public backlash (e.g. the speech on Trayvon Martin). In BLM, on the other hand, the most common racial reference is explicit black, which is reflective of the master frames of 'Disparities as Structurally Given' adopted by the movement. The evaluative frames of racial references in Obama also contribute to the master frames of 'interdependence' and 'opportunity for all'. The positive framing of most implicit racial references, and in particular of the category of implicit black and white, reinforces the message of the common good and shifts the discussion to the solutions rather than to the roots of the problem. One



of the strategies used by Obama to achieve this is the use of implicit references conjoining black and white into a single expression and framing it positively. The predominantly negative framing of explicit and ambiguous black or white references addresses the structural roots of the problem, but the negative framing is not foregrounded due to the lower frequency of such references. In contrast, the category of implicit black and white in BLM is mostly framed negatively, which is reflective of the master frame of 'Disparities as Structurally Driven' and foregrounds the structural roots of discrimination. The above findings thus confirm the third hypothesis, according to which evaluative frames of racial references in Obama contribute to the master frames of 'interdependence' and 'opportunity for all'.

### CONCLUSION

The discourse-analytical study presented in the paper examines Lee's claim (2012, 3) that Barack Obama's rhetoric is characterized by implying rather than specifying race. The analysis of the construction of race in Obama's rhetoric focuses on implicit and explicit racial references, revealing several typical patterns in the use of racial references and the type of evaluative language they are surrounded by. Obama's discourse is then compared to the discourse of the movement Black Lives Matter.

The general findings on the frequency of racial references in Obama show that the first two most dominant categories of racial references in his speeches are implicit: implicit black, and implicit black and white, followed by explicit black and ambiguous black. It is indicative that most of the explicit references, with the exception of black, are lower than 10 %. The low frequency of the category of generic race also suggests that the concept of race as such is not foregrounded in Obama's speeches. The expressions African-American and 'of color' also have a very low frequency, which suggests that these expressions are considered as too formal or "technical" for persuasive discourse. The findings thus confirm the first hypothesis which predicts the predominance of implicit racial references in Obama's speeches. As opposed to Obama, in BLM's discourse the most common racial reference is explicit black, which clearly indicates an eagerness to engage with the topic of race directly. The analysis of the racial references as themes of evaluative frames (in terms of judgement, affect and appreciation) also shows characteristic patterns of correlations between themes and their evaluative frames. These findings mainly confirm the second hypothesis

according to which implicit references tend to have positive evaluative frames in Obama's discourse. The only implicit category in Obama that is mainly framed by negative judgement is implicit white. It has to be noted, however, that references to white tend to be less common in Obama's discourse than references to black or references to black and white in one expression. The main difference between Obama and BLM with regard to judgement involves the category of implicit black and white, which is mostly framed positively in Obama, but negatively in BLM, and the category of the generic race, which is mostly framed negatively in Obama, but positively in BLM. The categories of affect and appreciation play a much lesser role in the evaluative frames in both, Obama and BLM, but their existing correlations show a tendency similar to evaluative frames with judgement. The findings on evaluative context of racial references thus suggest that Obama feels most comfortable using positively framed racial references to black when these are not expressed explicitly but are clear from the context. And conversely, when the racial references are explicit, he often surrounds them with criticism and negative observations.

Our study also shows that the master frames of 'opportunity for all' and 'interdependence' are systematically supported by the evaluative framing of racial references, which confirms the third hypothesis according to which the evaluative frames of racial references contribute to the master frames of racial discourse in Obama's rhetoric. The high frequency of implicit racial references, such as implicit black and implicit black and white, and the tendency to frame them positively indicate Obama's willingness to embrace diversity without emphasizing essentialist conceptions of racial identity. At the same time they foreground the solution part, rather than the problem part of the master frame of Obama's discourse on race. In BLM, on the other hand, the category of implicit black and white is mostly framed negatively, which is reflective of the master frame of 'Disparities as Structurally Driven' and foregrounds the structural roots of discrimination. We can conclude that the study has revealed some characteristic linguistic mechanisms which allow Obama to be perceived as both black and transcendent of blackness and whiteness. Future research on this topic can use a broader sample of speeches or focus on the analysis and comparison of individual speeches to show the changes and transformations in Obama's rhetoric during his presidency. In the future it will be also interesting to observe and analyse the changes in the rhetoric of the movement Black Lives Matter as the movement itself evolves and changes.

IMPLICITNOST RASE V AMERIŠKEM POLITIČNEM DISKURZU: RAZISKAVA RETORIKE  
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## POVZETEK

Članek obravnava javni diskurz Baracka Obame o rasnih temah in se osredotoča zlasti na rabo leksikalnih izrazov v njegovih govorih, ki se nanašajo na raso. Kot prvi afroameriški predsednik v zgodovini Združenih držav Amerike je imel Obama zahtevno nalogo, da poišče ustrezn način, kako govoriti o rasnih vprašanjih, s katerim bi Američane združeval in ne delil. Glavni namen raziskave je preveriti trditev, da je ena glavnih značilnosti Obamovega diskurza o rasnih vprašanjih težnja k implicitnemu nanašanju na raso (Li, 2012). Teoretični okvir raziskave je združil elemente teorije o jeziku vrednotenja (Martin & White, 2005) in teorije retoričnih okvirov (Kuypers, 2009; Entman, 2004). Za analizo je bilo izbranih šest govorov Obame, za primerjavo pa je bila opravljena še analiza izbranih člankov, nastalih v gibanju Black Lives Matter. V govorih so se pokazali nekateri tipični vzorci glede implicitne oz. eksplicitne narave leksikalnih izrazov za raso in njihovem kontekstu vrednotenja, ki so potrdili trditev o težnji Obame po implicitnem izražanju o rasi. Implicitni izrazi, ki nakazujejo raso, so pri Obami na splošno bolj pogosti kot eksplicitni izrazi. Obenem se pri njem implicitni izrazi bolj pogosto pojavljajo v kontekstu pozitivnih sodb, eksplicitni pa v kontekstu negativnih sodb. Visoka pogostost pozitivnega vrednotenja implicitnih izrazov, ki v eni besedi nakazujejo bele in črne Američane, pa prispeva k njegovemu splošnemu pozitivnemu okviru tematiziranja rase skozi prizmo medsebojne odvisnosti.

**Ključne besede:** Barack Obama, retorika, rasa, implicitnost, vrednotenjski okviri

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