Selling Out?: The Politics of Navigating Conflicts Between Racial Group Interest and Self-Interest

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Abstract: Departing from accounts of minority group politics that focus on group identity’s role in forwarding group members’ common interests, we investigate political decisions involving tradeoffs between group interests and simple self-interest. Using the case of black Americans, we investigate the political tools of crystallized group norms about politics, internalized beliefs about group solidarity, and mechanisms for enforcing both through social pressure. Through a series of novel behavioral experiments that offer black subjects individual incentives to defect from the position most favored by black Americans as a group, we test the effects of social pressure to conform. We find that racialized social pressure and internalized beliefs in group solidarity are constraining, and depress self-interested behavior. Our results speak to a common conflict—choosing between maximizing group interests and self-interest—and yet also offer specific insight into how blacks remain so homogeneous in partisan politics despite their growing ideological and economic variation.

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Introduction

During the 20th century movement for black rights, it was not uncommon for African American leaders and their associates to be offered money, jobs, and political appointments in exchange for either ceasing their political activities or actively subverting the efforts of other black activists. For example, some accounts report that A. Phillip Randolph, founder of the first officially recognized black labor union and one of the organizers of the 1963 March on Washington, was at one point offered a blank check by the Pullman Railroad Company in exchange for cessation of his organizing of black railroad workers. According to published accounts, Randolph was greatly offended by the implication that he could be “bought off” and returned the check, but only after writing on it “Negro Principle: Not For Sale” (Santino 1983; 1989).

Although many black activists, like Randolph, refused to “sell-out”—to accept personal gain at the cost of the greater racial group interest—others did choose to accept the incentives offered to them in exchange for undermining the objectives of the black rights movement. A well-known case of the latter is that of Ernest Withers. Withers, a photojournalist and close associate of Martin Luther King, Jr., documented many of the most important moments of the Civil Rights Movement. He was known for his iconic and often personal photographs of King, himself, which were taken as the two traveled the country together campaigning for black rights. After Withers’ death in 2007, however, it was revealed that he had been working for the FBI as a paid informant tasked with spying on King. While the details and scope of Withers’ spying are still unknown, his actions were seen by many blacks as a betrayal of black Americans’ efforts towards racial equality.\(^2\)

\(^2\) Note we do not know if Withers was positively incentivized or coerced.
These high profile accounts of attempts to undermine the black rights movement, we argue, are illustrative of a more general and fundamental problem of group-based politics: how to prevent members of the group—whether they be movement participants, elected officials, or ordinary citizens—from “selling out” the shared interest of the group in political choices and actions that increase the common political and social standing of the group in exchange for individual private gains. We turn to the case of black Americans, in particular, because they have arguably been the most successful in resolving this dilemma. And yet the answers to how they have done so and whether they will continue to be able to do so as black America grows increasingly diverse are not obvious. How might they be able to enforce compliance with group norms? And what would enable blacks, who may, indeed, agree with the principles of the black rights movement, to choose to act on personal incentives to betray racial group norms?

This paper addresses this fundamental question of group politics, therefore, in the context of black political behavior. We endeavor to understand how it is that blacks navigate tradeoffs between their racial group interest and their simple self-interest. We are notably departing from previous research on the connection between racial group interest and self-interest among black Americans that describes the use of racial group interest in black political decision-making as a type of low information rationality, where the racial group interest stands in as a proxy for self-interest when true self-interest is difficult to gauge. We are instead asking explicitly about the navigation of known conflicts between maximizing racial group interest and one’s own simple self-interest. We argue that blacks do have incentives to act in their simple self-interest, and may readily accept private incentives to defect from expected racial group norms of political behavior—but only under specific informational conditions. Crystallized and intense in-group norms, and processes of racialized social pressure around them, we argue, are central to understanding why black Americans act on racial group in exchange for satisfying individual self-interests. We test our model of how group and self-interest conflict is navigated using a series of experiments that vary both the personal incentives for
defecting from and the amount and kind of peer monitoring around a political behavior well-defined by in-group norms. We find that in the absence of social monitoring, defection is not uncommon, but that racialized social pressure—monitoring signals from other blacks—has a unique ability to reign defection in. We also identify attitudes about the group and the value of the incentive that moderate the effects of this process.

**Black Politics—Room for Group and Self?**

Much of what we know about the empirical linkage between (racial) group interest and black political decision-making stems from Michael Dawson’s (1994) book *Behind the Mule: Race Class and African American Politics* (see also Gurin, Hatchett and Jackson 1989). Dawson argues that the central importance of race to black political decision-making represents a form of low information rationality. Arguments about low information rationality generally invoke the notion that individual citizens cannot access and process all of the relevant information about their potential political choices, and thus use heuristics, or information shortcuts, to infer how choices relate to their self-interest (e.g., Popkin 1991; Lupia 1994). In this vein, Dawson argues that African Americans regularly rely on racial group interest, as it is their most salient known interest, as a proxy for their own individual interests. As Dawson states, because of the history of racial discrimination in the United States:

…it was much more efficient for African Americans to determine what was good for the racial group than to determine what was good for themselves individually, and more efficient for them to use the status of the group, both relative and absolute, as a proxy for individual utility (p. 10).

Dawson’s idea, termed the “black utility heuristic,” established a theoretical justification for why African Americans would be more likely to use racial group considerations than individual level considerations when making political decisions. Indeed, many studies have linked the key measure...
from Dawson’s study—linked fate, or subscription to the notion that what happens to blacks generally affects oneself as an individual black person—to an array of political outcomes, from policy positions to voter turnout (Gurin, Hatchett, and Jackson 1989; Tate 1992; Dawson 2004; White 2007). Yet, some have challenged the notion that group interest is always the default for black political decision-making (e.g., Cohen 1999). Indeed, White (2007) has shown that the relevance of racial group considerations to black political decision-making is context specific and dependent upon whether political choices are communicated in a way that makes their implication for the racial group clear and unclouded by sub-group differentiation.

Thus, while the notion of the black utility heuristic is a useful framework for understanding black political decision-making under conditions of low information, “linked fate politics” falls short in explaining decision-making where blacks are faced with perceptible tradeoffs between their own self-interest and the interest of the racial group. And we argue that such circumstances are not uncommon. They seem relatively easy to identify in social choices. Consider, for example, that when evaluating housing options, African Americans have been shown to express a preference for neighborhoods with significant numbers of other African Americans (Charles 2000; Krysan and Farley 2002) as well as an interest in neighborhoods with low crime rates, good public schools and quality housing stock (Erase 2012; Harris 1999; Krysan et al. 2009). What guides the choice when these considerations directly conflict with one another, which they too often do? Similarly, blacks can feel very conflicted about dating and marrying outside of their race because of the tension such a choice represents between their individual preferences and their sense of the group interest (Kennedy 2008). One also expects that such trade-offs are at least at times quite perceptible in explicitly political choices. Why should middle-class black Americans not perceive some tension between their own self-interest and support for social welfare programs? Or why should those who strongly favor anti-abortion stances not desire to support the (Republican) candidates who endorse those positions? Our standard answers are likely ones that would invoke a strong commitment to a
norm of racial group solidarity. But why is it that some blacks, even those who claim to be loyal group members, do, in fact, defect from the expected group behavior while others do not? And how is it that blacks are able to maintain group solidarity in the face private incentives to defect from the group norm?

** Integrating Group and Self—Social Pressure around Intense and Crystallized Norms**

We argue that blacks' use of racial considerations in political decision-making is more than just low information rationality—though we do not argue that it never functions as such. That argument hinges on the notion that many African Americans, even those who are highly racially identified, are frequently faced with political circumstances where the choice before them involves some known conflict between maximizing private or personal benefits and maximizing what they and most other blacks believe is in the best interest of the group. In these circumstances, we argue, clear and common understandings of in-group expectations for the political behavior of blacks—well-established group norms—and of likely social consequences for defection from the group norms place significant constraints on blacks' political behavior. That is, we are arguing that this is an in-group process, which rests upon individuals’ social identification with their group. The costs of defecting from understood norms and practices of the group are about loss of standing within the group, which implies both a value to that consequence and an understanding that other members of the group are both likely to be aware of and to punish the defection. Our model is a general one of how tensions between group interest and individual interest may be navigated—but also one that helps explain the unique outcome of the high degree of black political solidarity in the United States. That is, we are laying out the conditions under which group and self are navigated in a way that produces a high degree of adherence to the group. Hence, we will motivate the model with both general expectations and justifications for some of those expectations from the particular experience of black Americans.
In the case of black Americans, we expect that blacks are constrained from following strict self-interest by the social costs of other blacks questioning their commitment to or standing within the group. Moreover, we argue that such social pressure can be internalized, creating an individual belief in black solidarity that is also constraining and works to prevent self-interested behavior—that acceptance of the importance of group solidarity represents an important individual-level commitment to group-based norms of collective political behavior. Lastly, we emphasize that we are arguing that there are limits to the power of black social pressure—importantly that there is a political “there, there.” In line with social psychological research on group norms, we argue that social pressure must work in conjunction with intense and crystallized norms of black political behavior (Cialdini et al. 1990). From this follows an expectation that it should be quite difficult to enlist racialized social pressure to induce blacks to behave in ways counter to their understanding of well-established norms—to subvert group interest because the group is suddenly saying it is okay. And in making all of these arguments, we point to the way in which the segregation that has uniquely marked the black experience in America has enabled the sort of social connections and institutions that facilitate this process.

Social Pressure in Political Choices

There has been a recent resurgence in the idea that social pressure can importantly influence mass political behavior. Some recent studies of voter turnout, for example, have focused on how social pressure in the form of shaming can influence an individual’s probability of voting. For example, Gerber, Green and Larimer (2008) demonstrate that threatening to publicize a citizen’s turnout record to their neighbors can increase turnout by between 2 and 8 percentage points. In other words, some people are more likely to participate when they are made to believe that their behavior is likely to be observed by close others. This type of effect has been replicated over a
number of studies and supports the general idea that “shaming” is an effective tool for shaping political behavior (Gerber, Green and Larimer 2010).

This concept of shaming is actually quite similar to the idea of “reputational sanctions” that has permeated understandings of black collective action. Chong (1991), for example, invoked the concept in his theoretical framework for understanding why individual African Americans would choose to participate in the collective action of the Civil Rights Movement, given that they likely realized that their participation was not a necessary condition for them to enjoy the benefits of the movement—if any were actually to accrue. Chong argued that African Americans were able to overcome this collective action problem because they were motivated by a number of non-tangible incentives to participate, most centrally social pressure. In Chong’s account, activists valued not being seen by their peers as free riders, thus they adhered to group expectations of political participation. It is this idea that reputational sanctions have the power to shape group members’ behavior, even when the behavior in question may come at the risk of significant cost to the individual, that is important to extract in order to explain group politics. Indeed, though Chong does not invoke them, notions of punishment with social sanctions by the black community for defection from norms of the group interest are tangible enough that terminology for such sanctions is found in political discourse through the use of the “Uncle Tom” and/or “sellout” epithets. These phrases commonly refer to blacks who seek personal benefit by supporting political causes at odds

3 Certainly blacks also faced social pressure to abstain from movement activities, especially from family and friends concerned with the dangerous nature of political action during the movement (Payne 2007).

4 That is, at least at times, movement participants were knew their participation came with real risk of imprisonment, police or mob brutality, and even death.
with those that are perceived to benefit all or most members of the racial group.\(^5\) Notably, black conservatives, including public figures like Clarence Thomas, Herman Cain, and Allen West, often incur the “sellout” characterization. In other words, these terms are linguistic evidence of reputational sanctions for group members’ political defection (Starkey 2010). While some scholars have cautioned that the modern usage of these terms can be problematic (Carter 1991; Kennedy 2008), there is broader agreement that the threat of such characterizations continues to constrain blacks’ behavior (Carter 1991; Steele 1991; Kennedy 2008; Starkey 2010).

To be clear, “sellout” epithets are not the entirety of reputational sanctions. They represent a broader process of social pressure that maintains group norms, which commonly occurs through black institutions. Such processes to encourage blacks’ involvement during the Civil Rights Movement are well-documented. Black churches, colleges, and social and political organizations gave black leaders social spaces in which to effectively incentivize participation. Their messages commonly exploited social connections within the black community to place pressure on individuals to participate (see Morris 1984). Payne (2007), for example, describes in detail national activist Dick Gregory’s efforts to engender participation in the Freedom Movement demonstrations in Greenwood, Mississippi by publicly calling out the principal of a local black school and local black preachers for their lack of support. Gregory actually instructed parishioners to abandon black churches where the preachers were unsupportive and pray in the streets instead, with the advisement that it was “better than worshiping with a man who is less than a man!” Shortly thereafter, thirty-one local black ministers issued a joint statement expressing their unwavering support for the movement.

*Intense and Crystallized Norms*

\(^5\) These phrases may also be used for blacks who fail to support the causes of black Americans because they perceive some personal benefit in abstaining.
While existing work in political behavior broadly, and black politics specifically, points to the potential political power of reputational sanctions, it has generally failed to consider what gives power to that social pressure. Social psychological research on social pressure and conformity, however, suggests that norm crystallization and norm intensity are both important in determining whether or not social pressure will result in conformity with a group norm (Jackson 1965). Crystallization refers to the degree to which an expectation of behavior, or a norm, is understood as agreed upon among group members. Lower norm crystallization has been linked to decreased potential for a message of social pressure to lead to compliance with the norm (Cialdini et al. 1990). Similarly, norms are perceived as more or less important to the functioning of the group—to have higher or lower intensity. Concerns about reputational sanctions for violations of less intensely held norms are likely to be discounted, as individuals calculate that their deviations from the norm may likely go unnoticed or ignored; violations of more intensely held norms are more likely to deliver reputational costs.

Putting voting in this norm framework, voting seems best characterized by high crystallization and low intensity. That is, while most Americans are likely aware of considerable agreement in society with the notion that voting is an important civic duty (high crystallization), most are also aware that not only do many Americans regularly not vote, but the information of who does and does not vote is typically difficult to discover—suggesting that the norm of voting is not a preoccupation of the public (low intensity). Translating this to effectiveness of the “shaming” GOTV studies referenced above, the mechanism of their effectiveness is likely increasing the perceptions of intensity of the norm of voting. By threatening to publicize a citizen's turnout to their neighbors, the message is not communicating newfound information about the desirability of voting, but of increased chances of reputational costs for not voting.

In the case of black Americans, we argue, there are norms that meet the criteria of both high crystallization and high intensity—that there are widely held and historically entrenched expectations
within the community about how group members are to behave politically. It is these sorts of norms that stand as the strongest basis for enforcing conformity through social pressure. One such norm is clearly seen in electoral politics: it is not only well-documented, but also commonly known that nearly all black voters will vote for the Democratic candidate in modern presidential elections. In no presidential election since the mid-century realignment of the parties has a Republican candidate received more than 11% of the African-American popular vote (see Figure 1). And in elections where race was not only read into the partisan identifications of the candidates, but in the candidates, themselves—the elections of 2008 and 2012—the Democratic candidate took even larger shares of the black vote (95% and 93%, respectively). These “facts” of black political homogeneity also get reified by media coverage of elections and campaigns, which consistently describe African Americans as the most loyal voting bloc of the Democratic Party.\(^6\) Indeed, to support Democratic candidates and policies is understood to advance the racial group’s interests.\(^7\) Because the partisan loyalties and dispositions of the black community are so clear in common understandings, any deviation from the group position, even a small one, could potentially open one up to charges of “selling out” the race.\(^8\)

More generally, it seems that both participating in politics for the good of the group (taking action) and making behavioral choices that are likely to increase the standing of the group as a whole (contributing to the racial group’s interest) are commonly understood and commonly salient norms for blacks in their roles as citizens. Indeed, the behavior of black Americans in the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections speaks to both these points. Not only did the overwhelming majority of blacks

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\(^6\) Similarly, African Americans are more liberal than most whites on issues related to race, social welfare and income inequality (Smith and Seltzer 2000).

\(^7\) It is less clear that ascriptive whiteness is defined partisan politics terms.

\(^8\) Deviations to the right of the group norm, though, are more likely to incur criticism than deviations to the left (Carter 1991).
voters choose to cast their votes in support of the first black president, but blacks turned out as voters at levels equal to or higher than other racial groups—despite blacks as a group lacking many of the socio-economic resources that generally facilitate higher turnout. This dedication to the first black president can also be seen in the intensity of blacks’ approval of Obama throughout his first term. As illustrated in Figure 2, while white Democrats’ support for Obama began to wane as his term progressed, perhaps unsurprisingly in the face of criticisms over bailout programs and the President’s push for health care reform, blacks as a group (regardless of their partisan and/or ideological backgrounds) remained consistently loyal to the President throughout his first term.\footnote{9 \textit{The Diversifying Electorate—Voting Rates by Race and Hispanic Origin in 2012 (and Other Recent Elections),” U.S. Census Bureau, May 2013.}}

Taken together, these trends speak to the likelihood of obvious and well understood descriptive norms of expected political behavior with regard to the first black president—that blacks are to be supportive in opinion and action. Note that this sort of impetus for conforming in opinion and action is resonant with accounts of the politics of the Civil Rights Movement—that racialized social pressure was invoked to get blacks \textit{actively} involved in politics that mattered to the group, no matter their personal cost.\footnote{10 Data: Pew opinion polls: \texttt{http://www.people-press.org/category/datasets/}.}  

[Insert Figures 1 and 2]

\textit{Social Location as Venues for Norm Development and Enforcement}

If norm definition and development are social processes, and their enforcement comes through the exercise of social pressure, then the social location of group members is also essential to understanding whether self-interest is likely to be over-ridden by group interest. And it is in this regard that blacks seem most distinct from other groups. Despite the expansion of black rights following the Civil Rights Movement, blacks continue to be one of the most socially isolated racial

\footnote{11 For detailed accounts of exercises of social pressure in the movement, see Payne (2007).}
groups in American society, and this isolation has helped to maintain many black social and political institutions. For example, a 2009 Pew study found that nearly 60% of African-American churchgoers still attend historically black churches, churches which remain predominantly filled with black members and preachers.\textsuperscript{12} While the proportion of black college students who attend historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) has declined over the last 40 years, 13\% of black college graduates still come from HBCUs.\textsuperscript{13} Furthermore, many of those blacks who choose to attend non-HBCUs eventually find themselves members of black social and professional organizations within these institutions (Sidanius et al. 2004). This sort of racial homophily can even be seen in black social networks that exist over the internet. In a recent study of friendship networks on the social networking website Facebook, researchers noted that black students were significantly more likely to have same-race social networks than other racial groups (Wimmer and Lewis 2010). Thus, despite the increased integration of blacks into mainstream American society, racial isolation still defines the daily interactions of many if not most African Americans. And it is this segregation—and the investment in black social networks and institutional structures that were born out of it—that enable the unique degree of definition and enforcement of group-based norms of political behavior among blacks.

**Design**

To test our arguments about racialized social pressure as a constraint on black political behavior, we designed a series of experiments that enable us to observe the tradeoffs blacks make between their racial group interest and simple self-interest under different social pressure

\textsuperscript{12} These are Protestant churches from historically black denominations:


constraints. Leveraging a real world scenario, the 2012 presidential election, we are able to juxtapose self-interest (instant monetary gain) with group-interest (supporting a political candidate that the black community almost unanimously endorses) to test the limits of racial group loyalty.\(^{14}\) This type of experimental research design is empirically beneficial because it enables a direct causal connection between group interest, self-interest, and politics by manipulating each and comparing the effects to a baseline or control condition. We are able to observe and describe blacks willing to set aside their simple self-interest in favor of the group norm, to do the same for those who defect, and test how and on whom racialized social pressure constrains this defection.

**Experiment 1 – Self-Interest and Social Pressure**

This first experiment tests the effects of self-interest and social pressure on blacks’ willingness to conform to racial group norms of political behavior by randomly assigning personal monetary incentives to depart from the norm and a threat of social enforcement. We implemented the study at an HBCU because it provides an especially clean experimental test of how social pressure within the black community works. Within a black institution we can be most confident of subjects’ awareness of the group norms about politics and of likely social sanctions, that the structure of the subjects’ peer social networks are almost exclusively black to enable such sanctions, and there is an accessible institutional mechanism for outing defection. In particular, we take

\(^{14}\)Our explanation is about electoral politics and political participation more broadly. Our focus on campaign support and the 2012 election is mostly instrumental, given the particular clarity of norms of behavior within the black community it provided. Our theory and explanation would apply to any political act for which there are clear norms of behavior for group members. Though vote choice is an anonymous act, and thus not strictly enforceable through social pressure and monitoring, it is still susceptible to the influence of internalized norms of group solidarity, which we consider in our study.
advantage of the school’s student newspaper as a known mechanism for dissemination of information through these black social networks to provide a cue to likely social sanctions for deviation from a black political norm.

We used the candidacy of Barack Obama in the 2012 election as the basis for creating a black political norm-conforming action for our subjects to take—donating money to the Obama campaign. All of the 148 self-identified African American subjects who participated in the study, which ran approximately 2 months before the general election, first filled out a pre-test questionnaire and were then instructed that they were to participate in a short five minute one-on-one interview about the upcoming presidential election.\(^{15}\) Subjects were randomly assigned to receive one of three messages during the interview. All subjects were told that the researchers conducting the study were political scientists from a university who had been awarded a grant from an organization called the “Voter Turnout Project,” and that the funds from this grant were to be used to provide young people with an opportunity to contribute to campaigns. They were told that the project would provide them with $100 to donate to the presidential campaigns of Barack Obama and/or Mitt Romney, and that they could allocate the money any way they saw fit. They could donate it all to one candidate or split it across the candidates, as long as their donations totaled to $100. In the control condition, this was the only information subjects were given before the interviewer then directed their attention to a webpage on a nearby laptop where the donation amounts were to be entered (see the appendix script and screenshots); in the two experimental conditions they received an additional message from the interviewer at this point.\(^{16}\) Table 1 offers a

\(^{15}\) The experiment was conducted from September 7-20, 2012 with students at an HBCU in Louisiana.

\(^{16}\) The interviewers were one self-identified black female and one self-identified Hispanic female of Dominican decent, who acknowledges generally being perceived as African American, especially outside of the northeastern United States. Each interviewer conducted roughly the same number of
general description of the experimental conditions, which we discuss in detail below. For all subjects, once the subject determined how s/he wanted the money donated, the interviewer entered the amount into the website, asked the subject if s/he was sure about the donation and then submitted the contribution. Out of a concern for allocating state money to political candidates, no money was actually donated to the campaigns. This deception was built into the study to make it seem as realistic as possible, though all subjects were debriefed and informed of the deception at the close of the study.\textsuperscript{17}

Row two of Table 1 highlights the manipulations of the first treatment condition, which we call the \textit{Incentive} condition. In this condition, subjects were given the same ability to allocate $100 in campaign contributions, but they were additionally instructed that the computer might provide them with an incentive to donate to one of the candidates. Further, in the interest of fairness, the computer would randomly determine for which candidate the incentive would be offered. In reality, the incentive was not randomly assigned—all subjects in the incentive conditions were provided an incentive to contribute to the Romney campaign. That is, we wanted to incentivize deviation from the black norm of behavior—contributing to Obama—with a personal monetary gain, but did not want the subjects to suspect the monetary incentive as being driven by partisan incentives. Subjects in the \textit{Incentive} condition were told that for every $10 they donated to the Romney campaign they would receive a $1 personal payout, implying a maximum payout of $10 if they allocated the entire $100 to the Romney campaign. These payouts, if chosen by the subjects, were actually paid in cash within the experiment. In this condition, then, we expect to induce conflict for black subjects.

\textsuperscript{17} Post-test interviews, however, provided evidence that subjects believed they were actually contributing to the campaigns during the study.
between their individual self-interest in money in their own pockets and their group interest in supporting the Obama campaign over the Romney campaign.

Finally, in the second treatment condition, the Incentive + Newspaper condition, highlighted in the bottom row of Table 1, we add a manipulation for examining the effect of social pressure in restraining self-interest incentivized defection from the group norm. This condition is identical to the Incentive condition with the exception that we informed subjects—before they were asked to make their donation decisions—that the donation would be publicized along with their name in the university’s newspaper. In the context of this HBCU, this manipulation represents quite well the threat of racialized social sanctions. This university has a newspaper that is well read by the predominantly black student body, meaning exposure of their choices to their black peers and social networks was likely to be anticipated by the subjects. Thus, the treatment should provide a sense of social pressure to conform to the black norm of expected behavior—contributing to Obama—and reduce defection as subjects fear the social consequences of being seen as someone who deviates from that norm.

**Hypotheses**

Our set of hypotheses is summarized in Table 1. In the control condition, where the subjects were simply asked to allocate the money to the candidates of their choosing, we can establish a baseline contribution amount, which also acts as a gauge of the “norm” of black political behavior in the form of campaign contributions. If actively supporting Obama is a racial group norm, then the subjects should overwhelmingly choose to have the majority of the funds donated to the Obama campaign (H1). Our most straightforward expectations across the conditions, again, is that the introduction of personal monetary incentives (self-interest) for defection from the norm of supporting Obama should result in decreased contributions to Obama (H2), but that the effect of the incentive should be attenuated with the introduction of the newspaper disclosure as a
mechanism for social pressure to comply with the group norm despite its conflict with self-interest (H3). We do not, however, expect the effects of the treatments to be homogeneous. We expect subjects with beliefs in black group solidarity—those who have internalized the notion of the importance of the collective power of the black community and have a strong commitment to the idea that blacks should not free ride off the efforts of other blacks—will be less likely to defect in the face of the incentive (H2a and H3a). Similarly, we expect that blacks’ nominal value of money (the form of the personal incentive offered here) should condition their responses to the treatments; those blacks who place a high value on money in their lives should be particularly susceptible to the incentives (H2b and H3b).

We also examine the possible moderating effects of linked fate attitudes and party strength, as these are two other predispositions that are often implicated in the political decision-making calculus of African Americans. Our expectation is that linked fate should only differentiate subjects in the control condition—where the decision is divorced from self-interest concerns. If the previous literature is correct about linked fate as a decision-making shortcut, its influence should wane once subjects are doing the work of thinking through trade-offs between their self-interest incentives and group interests. We will consider partisan strength as another modifier of the response to the treatments, as it likely represents another form of group attachment and expected norm about the political behavior at hand. That is, in our largely Democratic demographic, those who identify strongly with the Democratic party should also be constrained from acting on the self-interest incentive to give to the opposing party’s candidate. Yet, we expect this pattern actually to be a function of racial considerations, and thus ultimately embed the moderators in a single test.

[Insert Table 1]

**Results**

Figure 3 presents the basic results of this experiment: the average amount of money allocated to the Obama campaign across each of the experimental conditions. These comparisons
allow us to assess hypotheses H1, H2 and H3. Consistent with our expectation that support for Obama would be a highly crystallized and highly salient norm (H1), subjects in the Control condition demonstrated a clear preference for supporting the Obama campaign, with a mean donation of $90. Indeed, in the absence of any incentive to do otherwise, most of the subjects in this condition allocated all of the money provided to them to the Obama campaign; only 2% of the control condition subjects gave the Obama campaign less than $50, and about 75% of subjects gave the Obama campaign $90 or more. In other words, much like the survey and election results discussed earlier would suggest most black Americans would do, the black subjects who participated in the experiment, all else equal, expressed fairly unanimous support for Barack Obama with their campaign contribution dollars. Thus, these results reflect the “norm” of black behavior present within our subject population, and provide a useful benchmark to which to compare the results of the other experimental conditions.

Within the Incentive condition, where subjects were offered the self-interest payout of $1 for every $10 they allocated to the Romney campaign, we expected less adherence to the group interest norm of supporting Obama (H2). Indeed, in the face of an incentive to defect, willingness to allocate money to the Obama campaign dropped off significantly as compared to the control. As displayed in the second column of Figure 2, the mean Obama contribution dropped by more than $20, to $68. Twenty-two percent of subjects maximized their self-interest and donated the entire $100 to the Romney campaign. In the face of individual private incentives to defect, individuals who would have ordinarily behaved in a manner consistent with the expected group norm of

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18 We also implemented nonparametric randomization inference tests (see Keele, McConnaughy and White 2012). The inferences derived from those tests are indistinguishable from those produced using ANOVA; ANOVA results are presented in the body and randomization results in the appendix.
behavior (supporting the Obama campaign) defected and chose instead to support the Romney campaign.\textsuperscript{19}

If social pressure can prevent this defection, we should observe an attenuated effect of the incentive in the form of a smaller difference from the control condition in Obama contributions in the \textit{Incentive +Newspaper} condition than in the \textit{Incentive} only condition (H3). Indeed, we observe, as illustrated in Figure 3, that when the incentive was combined with information that the donations would be published in the university’s newspaper, defection from the group norm of supporting Obama decreased significantly. Mean contributions to the Obama campaign in the \textit{Incentive +Newspaper} were $18 higher than the simple \textit{Incentive} condition. In fact, campaign contributions in the \textit{Incentive +Newspaper} condition are also statically indistinguishable from the control (p\textasciitilde.49), suggesting this social pressure resulted in a return to normalized behavior. Thus, while black political solidarity is susceptible to the influence of private incentives, social pressure can be an effective tool for keeping defection from the group norm in check.\textsuperscript{20}

\textit{Moderators of Loyalty to Obama}

\textsuperscript{19} Despite the considerable defection in the presence of an incentive, 60\% of respondents still gave more than $50 to the Obama campaign in this condition. While this may reflect either individual preferences or group-based behavior that could not be overcome by our self-interest incentive, our moderating results below further demonstrate that the significant movement across the conditions is about the tensions between group and self.

\textsuperscript{20} The pattern of responses here further supports that the subjects believed the treatments. If they did not, we would expect full and undifferentiated defection in the experimental conditions. Only 22\% of the subjects in \textit{Incentive} condition maximized their payout and only 4\% did so in the \textit{Incentive+Newspaper} condition.
We designed the experiment with a pre-test to enable us to answer questions about the mechanisms the processes of defection and constraint. The predispositions of those that defect in the face of self-interest incentives and those that respond to social pressure shed light on how this political process unfolds. Hence we examine, separately across each of the experimental conditions, the relationships between blacks’ willingness to contribute to the Obama campaign and the individual level dispositions that we expect to condition the responses to the treatments. We begin with the moderators we expected to be central—internalized notions of black solidarity and individual-level value of money. We then consider linked fate and Democratic partisan strength.\(^{21}\) (see Appendix for question wordings).

**Enforcement of Black Group Solidarity**

We expected that internalized beliefs in black political solidarity to condition their responses to the treatments, making them less likely to accept the personal incentive to deviate from the group norm (H2a and H3a). We operationalized this concept with a measure of subjects’ level of agreement with the appropriateness of referring to blacks who support the causes of white Americans at the expense of causes supported by other blacks as “sellouts” or “Uncle Toms.” That is, we have a measure of their acceptance of the type of social behavior we theorized is used to constrain self-interested behavior that goes against racial group interests.

We test these expectations by comparing, across the conditions, the average contributions of those who reject the use of the social sanction terms and of those find them at least sometimes appropriate. The results presented in Figure 4 generally support our expectations. Across the experimental conditions there is very little change in Obama contributions among those blacks who see the use of the “sellout” or “Uncle Tom” epitaph as appropriate. Even in the face of monetary incentives to defect from the group norm of behavior, blacks who believe in the use of these

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\(^{21}\) Only 5% of subjects identified as Republicans.
reputational sanctions were highly constrained and contributed about the same amount of money to the Obama campaign across all of the conditions. Thus, it seems that a belief in the use of social sanctions for preventing defection is internally constraining and, much like social pressure, an effective tool for preventing black defection from the group norm of behavior.

Blacks who do not see the use of these terms as appropriate, on the other hand, were much more likely to accept the incentive in the simple Incentive condition. Among these individuals the average contribution to the Obama campaign dropped dramatically, from $93 dollars in the Control condition to $52 in the Incentive condition. Yet, when provided with the relevant mechanism for enabling such a sanction—that is, told that their contributions would be published in the university’s newspaper—even those who rejected the use of the terms of black social enforcement conformed. Their average contribution to the Obama campaign in this condition was $86, an amount that is statistically indistinguishable from the amount allocated by their counterparts in the Control condition (p=.35). It seems even those who do not see the use of these terms as appropriate they realize that other blacks do, and thus feel constrained by possible social sanction. Thus, regardless of what blacks might normatively think about the method of enforcing group norms, the presence of social sanctions and the mechanisms for enforcing them effectively prevent group defection.

[Insert Figure 4]

**The Importance of Money**

Given that our individual incentives came in monetary form, we have a straightforward way to test the moderating effect of personal value of the personal incentive. We measure individual value of money with a scale created from two questions, one that assess the extent to which the individual bases his/her own happiness on the amount of money s/he possess and another that measures the subject’s willingness to abandon friendships if they stand in the way of making money. We expect that individuals who place greater value on money will be more likely accept monetary incentives to defect from the group norm (H2b and H3b).
Again, we use simple mean comparisons across the conditions to test our expectations, this time dividing the subjects into “high” and “low” valuers of money. The results for this analysis, presented in Figure 5, in fact show that the only differential produced by an individual’s value of money is his/her level of immunity from the threat of social sanctions. That is, while both low and high valuers defected in the Incentive only condition, giving significantly less than their counterparts in the control, only those who place a high value on money continued to defect in the face of the threat of social sanctions provided in the Newspaper+Incentive condition. In fact, the results are suggestive that individuals exposed to the social pressure treatment who placed a relatively low value on money were entirely constrained by the sanction threat; their mean in this condition was nearly $100 ($98.33). These results speak to the relative value of the self-interest gain in conditioning the trade-offs made between group and self. Though the individual incentives we offered were equal, not all subjects valued them equally. The important conclusion here is that there is room for groups to work to define possible self-interest incentives in ways that make group members more susceptible to the effects social pressure to choose group interests over individual gains.

[Insert Figure 5]

**Linked Fate**

Again, we expect that linked fate is not a tool that helps blacks make political decisions that involve trade-offs between self and group interests. Thus, we do not expect it to moderate our treatment effects. The relevant racial attitude for moderation, we have argued—and already shown—is the internalized belief in the propriety of racial social sanctions for defecting from group interests. We do, however, expect that linked fate is an important predictor of black political behavior in the absence of cues to tradeoffs, thus would fully expect variation tied to levels of linked fate among the subjects in the control condition, with those high in linked fate likely to employ that predisposition to give larger amounts to Obama. Comparing means of amounts given to Obama by those high in linked fate and those low in linked fate across the experimental conditions supports
these expectations. As displayed in Figure 6, while those high in linked fate gave, on average, a bit more than those low in linked fate in the control condition, linked fate seems orthogonal to contribution decisions in the other conditions. Indeed, the only significant result here is a statistically significant drop in contributions among high linked fate blacks from the control to the Incentive condition. In other words, it seems that, at least for some blacks, the ties that bind them to identify with the group are no match for power of financial incentives. The power of social pressure, however, works for all blacks no matter how linked they claim to be to the racial group.

Democratic Party Strength

Of course, since Obama is not just a racialized political choice, but a partisan one as well, we would expect those who identify more strongly as Democrats to be less susceptible to the influence of incentives to defect from the group norm of supporting the Democratic candidate. Indeed, mean differences in Obama contributions among strong and weak partisans across the experimental conditions are not entirely inconsistent with this argument. As displayed in Figure 7, those who describe themselves as weak Democrats drop off (from the control) more than strong partisans in the Incentive condition. The Incentive + Newspaper condition, however significantly reduces defection across all blacks regardless of Democratic partisan strength.

[Insert Figure 7]

We question, however, the notion, as those who claim a post-racial America might suggest, that blacks’ support for Obama has more to do with blacks’ identities as Democrats than their racial identity. Thus, our final analysis is to embed all of our moderators into a simple linear model predicting amounts given across the conditions. Those results, as displayed in Table 2, underscore that it is the racial component of Democratic identification that does the real work in this context. The relevant statistical tests here are across the experimental conditions, across the rows of the table. The only two statistically significant differences are attached to the moderators we identified as
key—internalized beliefs in black solidarity and relative value of the self-interest incentive (money). This result indicates that once the differences in amounts given across conditions that are attributable to these attitudes are controlled for, neither linked fate nor partisanship conditioned the treatments’ effects on amounts contributed to Obama. In sum, not only is social pressure highly effective at preventing defection from racial group norms of political behavior, the power of social pressure also out-performs other key factors linked to patterns of black political behavior—racial group identification and strength of support for the Democratic Party.

[Insert Table 2]

Experiment 2 – “Racialized” Social Pressure Experiment

While the power of social pressure demonstrated in the first experiment is clear, the design did not directly test whether that social pressure needs to be from the in-group. In the context of a black institution, the social pressure that blacks faced was obviously exerted by the subjects’ black peers. Could social pressure from the out-group—namely, whites—matter in the same way? Also, we are left with questions about whether the context of social pressure matters. In the previous experiment we threatened to reveal defection to a wide audience within a social institution—which would likely include both strangers and close associates and/or friends of the subject. If our theory of group politics is correct, however, we would expect that not only should social pressure exerted by one’s friends and family matter, but that social pressure from in-group members with no personal connection should be effective in constraining self-interested behavior. Experiment 2 was designed to address these issues. It directly tests the effects of pressure from in-group members—what we call racialized social pressure in this context—against social pressure from out-group members, and uses complete strangers to the subjects as the social pressure cues. This experiment again makes use of the 2012 Obama candidacy, and uses the behavior of contributions to the campaign as the black
group interest consistent behavior, and personal monetary incentives to defect from contributing to induce a self-interest conflict.22

Subjects in this experiment were 106 black students from a predominantly white university. They were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: a control or one of two treatments. Across all of the conditions subjects were asked to fill out a short pre-test questionnaire and were then instructed that they were going to participate in a brief interview about the current presidential campaign. Subjects then entered a hallway where they approached an interviewer at a table outside of a classroom. During the course of the interview, participants were told that the researchers conducting the study were awarded a grant from an organization called the “Voter Turnout Project” and that the funds from this grant were to be used to provide young people with the opportunity to contribute to campaigns. Each subject was then given $10 in one-dollar bills and instructed to enter the classroom where there were two contribution boxes—one labeled “Obama” and the other labeled “Romney.” Subjects were told that if they would like to make a contribution to the campaigns of either of the candidates, they could do so by putting money into the respective contribution boxes, and that the “Voter Turnout Project” would match every dollar they contributed with $10 additional dollars, up to $100. Finally, they were told that they were in no way obligated to contribute; if they wanted to keep the money they should feel free to do so. Each subject was asked to sign a sheet upon entering the room acknowledging that they had received the money, and was given approximately 30 seconds to sign and make whatever contribution s/he chose. Subjects then left the room and were asked to complete another short questionnaire.

For subjects in the control condition, the above protocol describes their entire experience—they participated in the interview and entered the contribution room alone. Subjects in the treatment conditions, however, were told that they would be interviewed at the same time as another student. In all cases, this other student was a confederate. The condition designed to create racialized social

22 The experiment was conducted from October 11-20, 2012.
pressure, the *Black Confederate* condition, paired the subject with a black student of the same sex. The *White Confederate* condition paired the subject with a white student of the same sex. We confirmed that the confederates were strangers to the subjects through after-reporting by the confederates. Confederates and subjects were simultaneously given the protocol instructions and each given $10 in one-dollar bills. The confederate and subject were then instructed that they were to enter contribution room together. The social pressure treatment was implemented by the confederates’ actions upon entering the room: they walked immediately to the Obama box, said “I am giving all of my money to Obama,” inserted the entire $10 in the box, and then signed the sheet acknowledging that they had received the money. In all cases the confederate completed the protocol before the subject made any contribution. The confederate waited until the subject was done before leaving the room to induce a sense of social monitoring. When the subject was done, both exited the room and were asked to complete the final questionnaire.

**Hypotheses**

Our expectations for this experiment are simple. In the control condition, which lacks any social pressure, we expect most blacks will maximize their personal gain and will keep most or all of the money given to them (H4). If our argument about the process of conformity to group-based norms is correct, however, we expect significantly more to be given in the *Black Confederate* condition (H5), but not in the *White Confederate* condition (H6). These expectations, again, rest on the argument that supporting Obama is defined by an in-group norm of political behavior, and the consequence of deviating from such a norm is a social sanction within the black community. In

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23 The confederates were self-identified as white or black, and their physical appearances (including skin tone) were such that they were unlikely to be mis-identified by the subjects.

24 Again, no money was actually donated to the campaigns, and subjects were debriefed accordingly following their participation.
other words, black subjects are expected to be concerned *uniquely* about having other blacks question their commitment to racial group goals, and constrained accordingly.  

**Results**

We tested our hypotheses by comparing the mean Obama campaign contributions across each of the experimental conditions. The results are presented in Figure 8. Our expectation about the unique ability of racialized social pressure to constrain black political behavior away from self-interest is supported by these results. When black subjects entered the contribution room alone, they were perfectly willing to keep most of the money given to them, supporting H4. Subjects in the control group contributed an average of only $3.74 to the Obama campaign. Almost one-third of them kept *all* the money for themselves. Consistent with H6, the presence of a white student who made their intentions to support Obama very clear had no discernible effect. Subjects in the White Confederate condition gave an average of only $4.45 to the Obama campaign, netting a difference that is substantively small and statistically indistinguishable from the control (p≈.45). In the presence of the black confederates, however, consistent with H5, contributions to Obama were significantly higher, with a mean of $6.85. Just 3 subjects in this condition kept all of the money, while over half gave all the money to the Obama campaign. Like experiment 1, these results highlight the work

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25 We would also have the same moderating expectations for the response to the *Black Confederate* treatment as the two treatments from experiment 1, but our smaller case-base does not enable us to test those here.

26 We focus on money kept versus money given to Obama because only two subjects in the experiment made any contribution to Romney.

27 Using ANOVA, differences from the control and White Confederate conditions are both significant at (p<.01). Inferences from an independent sample Fisher-Pitman randomization test are indistinguishable. See Appendix, Table A5.
of racialized social pressure in constraining black political behavior. Yet, this experiment further shows that even social pressure from absolute strangers, as long as they are black, can influence black political behavior. The implications of these results are not only consistent with the argument that the in-group has a unique ability to constrain its members from maximizing self-interest at the expense of the group interest, but that such influence does not depend strictly on interpersonal connections between the group members.\(^{28}\)

[Insert Figure 8]

**Experiment 3 – Social Pressure to Defect**

In the previous experiments, we demonstrated the power of racialized social pressure to induce African Americans to conform to a norm of black political behavior. Our theory about the process of in-group constraint on members’ behavior, however, also implied that such pressure should not be effective at inducing behavior that contrasts with crystallized group norms. We test this implication of our argument in this experiment. We employ elements from each of the previous experiments to assess the effects of social pressure at encouraging defection from the group norm.

\(^{28}\) One might question whether the presence of a black confederate simply increases the salience of racial considerations (primes race) in the minds of black subjects, rather than working by a mechanism of racialized social pressure. A significant reason to doubt the racial priming explanation is the baseline salience of race with respect to Obama. Given that Obama is the first black president, it is unlikely that blacks would ever not think of him in racial terms. Indeed, recent research has shown that Obama’s popularity among blacks appears directly related to their sense of racial group pride and solidarity (Abrajano and Burnett 2012). If blacks already have a racialized view of Obama, it is not likely that any treatment could further racialize their judgments. We also tested this question within these data and found no empirical evidence to support the priming explanation. See Appendix Table A1.
Subjects each received a treatment protocol which was in form like that of the Incentive condition in Experiment 1—where they were told that for every $10 (of $100 total) they allocated to the Romney campaign they would receive a $1 personal payout. This time, however, we placed this decision inside a context that included the subject and a confederate, each being tasked to make his/her own allocation decision. The confederate was always black, and the confederate was always asked to make his/her decision first. We randomly assigned, however, whether the confederate forwent the incentive and gave all the money to the Obama campaign (Obama Confederate) or took the incentive and gave all the money to the Romney campaign (Romney Confederate). Fifty-six self-identified black students from a predominantly white university participated in this study.29

**Hypotheses**

Our expectations for this simple experiment are a bit nuanced. We expect that another black student complying with the norm of supporting Obama and monitoring the subjects’ contribution decisions should be an effective form of racialized social pressure. Thus, we expect those in the Obama Confederate condition should exhibit a high degree of compliance with the in-group norm to allocate all of the money to Obama despite the self-interest incentive to defect. Our theory implies, however, that the confederate’s violation of the norm should not have the effect of racialized social pressure. Given the crystallized group norm of Obama support, we expect the Romney Confederate condition should only enable defection in favor of self-interest in the sense that it communicates that other black person present is not performing the task of social monitoring. Given that in Experiment 1 we observed a fair degree of compliance with the group norm of supporting Obama even in the face of a self-interest incentive—in part as a function of internalized group solidarity—we expect the Romney Confederate condition will induce lower compliance than the Obama Confederate

29 The experiment was conducted October 15-20, 2012. Once again, confederates were students who were confirmed not to know any of the subjects.
condition, but will not be effective at *pushing* acceptance of the self-interest payout for contributions to Romney to particularly high levels.

**Results**

Again, we present mean differences in Obama contributions across the conditions to assess the results of this experiment, which are displayed in Figure 9. Consistent with our previous results, subjects in the Obama Confederate condition were nearly universal in allotting all of the possible campaign funds to Obama, despite the self-interest incentive to give to Romney. Though subjects in *Romney Confederate* condition gave significantly less, their mean contribution to Obama was still over $70. In fact, the difference across these two conditions is about the same as that observed between the *Control* and *Incentive only* conditions in Experiment 1. 30 Thus the difference across these two conditions seems more consistent with an interpretation that subjects in the *Romney Confederate* condition perceived the confederate’s actions as a cue that they were not being monitored for their adherence to the group norm, rather than as an effective act of racialized social pressure to violate the group norm.

[Insert Figure 9]

**Conclusion**

Despite the high degree of political solidarity often observed among African Americans, our results show that the ties that bind blacks together can be undone by appeals to self-interest. Indeed, in this context, where the self-interest involved clear but small monetary gains, self-interest

30 Of course there are caveats about comparing results of two different experiments run on separate populations at different times. These comparisons are not meant to test any hypotheses, but to put the results of Experiment 3 in context and offer a foundation for our interpretation of the level of defection observed in the *Romney Confederate* condition.
was readily traded for a political behavior that seemed incredibly well understood as in the racial group interest. Our results, then, are consistent with narratives that warn of “selling-out” the interest of blacks, which depend on a reality that some blacks are willing to accept private incentives to defect from group norms of political behavior. Yet, we also observed that not all blacks were equally vulnerable to such incentives. The willingness to defect depended importantly on internalized values, with those blacks who had internalized a strong attachment to money being most willing to trade a small personal gain for the group’s larger interest, and those blacks who had internalized beliefs in the importance of maintaining racial group solidarity being least vulnerable to the self-interest incentive. This variation is worth underscoring. While it has become almost common knowledge that blacks share a common political interest, we have shown that the degree of dedication to this collective interest can vary greatly and systematically when the choice at hand is the maximization of group interest versus self-interest.

For those interested in maintaining black group solidarity to make further gains toward social and political equality for the racial group, our results may be troubling. They raise important questions about how to maintain black collective action in the face of personal incentives offered to members of the racial group to betray the shared interests of the group. Most centrally, does black economic progress equal an end to black politics, as wealthier blacks become more concerned with their economic self-interest than with their racial group interest? The results of our introduction of racialized social pressure are in some ways encouraging. Strikingly, both the very public “outing” of advertising defection in the university’s newspaper and the far more inter-personal “outing” of simply having defection observed by another black person—a complete stranger—worked as mechanisms for constraining defection. This consistent racialized social pressure effect suggests that blacks can powerfully police one another’s behavior, keeping group members in line with group expectations of political behavior and ultimately preventing free riding. Yet, such policing, our results suggest, depends importantly on values—of the social ties that bind the group and of the
personal benefits available by defecting. That the constraining power of social pressure was conditioned by beliefs in the use of social sanctions, rather than a sense of “linked fate,” speaks to the notion that internal social processes of the group, not just common interests defined by the broader political system, are essential to maintaining political cohesion. Similarly, though those who internally valued money more were more likely to defect, we also found significant variation in such a value, suggesting that there is potential leverage for maintaining group cohesion by using black social and political institutions as purveyors of these values.

Our results also point to other limits to the political potential of social pressure. Our argument that social pressure would be particularly effective when it centered on a highly crystallized and intense group norm for blacks in their roles as citizens was born out by our evidence. The use of racialized social pressure to enforce group norms was much more effective than the use of such social pressure to encourage defection from the group norm. In particular, our result that a Romney-supportive black confederate fell far short of pushing most of our subjects to defect from supporting Obama speaks to the mostly fruitless efforts of Republicans to recruit black votes through endorsements by black figures or candidacies of black Republicans. The group norm of Democratic support is far too highly crystallized and intense for behavior in contradictory terms to be understood as socially acceptable with such cues. Republicans, it would seem, face a much more daunting challenge of changing the norms within the black community before their party has a chance at winning significant political support from African Americans. Yet, perhaps greater social signals than the ones we—or the Republican Party—have offered could work to encourage defection from the group norm. Thus, more work in this direction seems both theoretically and politically consequential.

We would also be remiss if we did not discuss that the power of racialized social sanctions does not come without difficult normative questions. If the effectiveness of racialized social pressure hinges so centrally on what is understood to be central to the racial group interest, then the
social processes that create that understanding are important. Cathy Cohen has written powerfully about how the interests of some blacks have been defined out of the black political agenda—how leaders within the black community, for example, had for so long been unwilling to push for addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the black community as a racial group issue. Our work, in some ways, magnifies her concerns. It suggests that not only would there be difficulty in mobilizing black politics to address the epidemic, but that there are incentives that would keep even those blacks whose self-interest was defined by HIV/AIDS—those who suffered from the disease personally or through close personal ties—from feeling able to push for political attention to the cause. With the issue so clearly defined as “not black,” the constraint of racialized social pressure may have, indeed, suppressed important and legitimate expressions of self-interest.

Finally, though we have focused on the case of black Americans, we underscore that our results speak more broadly to the politics of navigating conflicts between a salient group interest and self-interest. The model we have offered is one that sheds light on how group cohesion can be effectively achieved even as self and group diverge perceptibly. To understand its applicability and implications for other group identifications, work will have to be done about the venues for political group norm development and social sanctioning—whether other groups have the same potential to enable highly crystallized and intense political norms and effective social enforcement thereof. Religious communities tied by strong beliefs and strong institutions seem prime targets for such study. And considerations of whether other racial and ethnic communities can attain the same political cohesion as blacks in pursuit of greater political equality would benefit from considering whether those communities have similar tools for navigating conflicts between group and self-interests.
Table 1. Description of Experiment One Conditions and Hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Controls (n=48)</th>
<th>Incentive Condition (n=50)</th>
<th>Incentive + Newspaper Condition (n=50)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H1: Most subjects donate their funds to Obama</td>
<td>H2: Subjects donate significantly less to Obama</td>
<td>H3: Subjects donate significantly more to Obama than in the Incentive (only) Condition</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Asked to donate $100</td>
<td>• Asked to donate $100</td>
<td>• Asked to donate $100</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Money can go to Obama or Romney campaigns or split across campaigns</td>
<td>• Money can go to Obama or Romney campaigns or split across campaigns</td>
<td>• Money can go to Obama or Romney campaigns or split across campaigns</td>
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<td></td>
<td>H2a: Subjects high in solidarity beliefs less likely to take the incentive;</td>
<td>H2b: Subjects high in value of money more likely to take the incentive; donate to Romney</td>
<td>• Told contribution and name would appear in school newspaper</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>donate to Obama</td>
<td></td>
<td>• $1 for every $10 donated to Romney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H2b: Subjects high in value of money more likely to take the incentive;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>donate to Romney</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• $1 for every $10 donated to Romney</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Incentive</td>
<td>Incentive + Newspaper</td>
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<td>Enforcement of Black Solidarity</td>
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Note: Entries are OLS coefficients from simultaneously estimated models. Bolded results indicate a statically significant (p<.05, two-tailed, \( \chi^2 \)) slope change from the control condition.
Figure 1. Democratic Presidential Vote Share by Race, Exit Polls
Figure 2. Obama's First Term Job Approval by Race and Party
Figure 3. Experiment 1, Obama Contribution by Experimental Condition (95% CIs)

No Incentive (Control)  
(92% gave Obama>$50)

Incentive  
(90% gave Obama>$50)

Incentive + Newspaper  
(84% gave Obama>$50)
Figure 4. Obama Contribution by Condition and Belief in the Enforcement of "Sellout/Uncle Tom" Sanctions (95% CIs)

- No Incentive (Control):
  - Sanction Never Appropriate: $93.7
  - Sanction Often/Sometimes Appropriate: $84.3

- Incentive:
  - Sanction Never Appropriate: $82.1

- Incentive + Newspaper:
  - Sanction Never Appropriate: $85.8
  - Sanction Often/Sometimes Appropriate: $86.1
Figure 5. Obama Contribution by Condition and Value
Respondent Places on Money (95% CI)
Figure 6. Obama Contribution by Condition and Black Linked Fate Disposition (95%CI)
Figure 7. Obama Contribution by Condition and Party Strength (95% CIs)

- **No Incentive (Control)**: Not Strong Democrat ($87.4), Strong Democrat ($92.4)
- **Incentive**: Not Strong Democrat ($61.7), Strong Democrat ($76.1)
- **Incentive + Newspaper**: Not Strong Democrat ($83.2), Strong Democrat ($89.5)

Legend:
- ▼ Not Strong Democrat
- ▼ Strong Democrat
Figure 8. Experiment 2, Obama Campaign Contribution by Race of Confederate (95% CI)

No Confederate (Control) (n=34) (21% gave Obama>$5)

White Confederate (n=39) (33% gave Obama>$5)

Black Confederate (n=33) (59% gave Obama>$5)
Figure 9. Experiment 3, Obama Contribution by Experimental Condition (95% CIs)
References


Appendix (Online)

Table A1. Experiment 2: The Effect of Priming Black Linked Fate on Obama Contributions

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Black Confederate (BC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>White Confederate (WC)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCxBLF</td>
<td>-0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R^2</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results here show no “salience” and/or “priming” effect of black linked fate (we also find similar results with other measures of black in-group identity) associated with the presence of either a black or white confederate. The interaction of black linked fate and the presence of a black confederate is both substantively and statistically indistinguishable from zero. In fact, the only significant predictor of contributing to Obama is the independent effect of the black confederate, consistent with the conclusion that our social pressure explanation is driving the effects observed in Figure 8.
Hello, we are Researchers from Ohio State University and we received a grant from an organization called the Voter Turnout Project. What we are using the money from the grant to provide young people an opportunity to contribute to presidential and congressional elections. If you are ok with taking part in this project, we would like provide you with $100 to contribute to the campaigns of Barack Obama or Mitt Romney.

SLIDE 2

Why Contribute?

- Polls show a very close race – any candidate can win!
- Your vote counts but your money matters more.
- Research shows that:

$100 = 10 votes!

So why should you contribute? Polls show that the race for president is very close and that at this point any candidate can win. And your vote counts but your money can matter more. Research on campaign contributions shows that for every $100 a candidate receives he or she can get as many as 10 additional votes. These contributions tend to be used towards campaign ads and voter mobilization efforts.

SLIDE 3
Other reasons you should contribute is because young people, like yourself, are least likely to contribute to campaigns and with these contributions you can make a difference and influence the outcome of the campaign beyond your single vote.

**SLIDE 4**

**What We Offer**

- You may be offered a cash incentive to contribute to one of the candidates’ campaign.
- These incentives can range from $0 to $20 dollars.
- If you choose to accept the incentive you will be paid in cash.

So in a second we will give the opportunity to contribute to the campaigns. Before we do here are few details about what you might be offered. You may be offered a cash incentive to contribute to one of the candidates. These incentives can range from $0 to $20.00. In the interest of fairness, exactly which candidate you will be offered the incentive for will be determined randomly by the computer. If you choose to accept the incentive you will be paid in cash. Again, to be clear you will not have to donate ANY money of your own pocket.

*[READ ONLY IF NEWSPAPER CONDITION.]*

One requirement of the Voter Turnout Grant is that we need to publicly disclose the donations that you make to the candidates. So we will be publishing your name and contribution in the “Southern Digest.”
SLIDE 5
[IF CONTROL CONDITION]
So this is the calculator. How would you like us to allocate the $100? Keep in mind that you can split the money however you would like.

Barack Obama
$22.00 + Mitt Romney
$78.00 = Total
$100.00

If you donate $78.00 to the campaign of Mitt Romney, you will be giving the Romney campaign the equivalent of 7.8 votes.
So this is the calculator.

You have been offered an incentive to donate to the Mitt Romney campaign. You will receive $1.00 for every $10.00 you donate to the campaign of Mitt Romney. The maximum amount of money that you can receive is $10.00.

How would you like us to allocate the $100? Keep in mind that you can split the money however you would like.

[ENTER AMOUNT USING KEYBOARD.]
Are you sure that is what you want to give?

[SUBJECT CONFIRMS THEN THANK SUBJECT FOR PARTICIPATING]

Table A1. Experiment 1 Balance Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Incentive</th>
<th>Incentive + Newspaper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>$17,000-$34,999</td>
<td>$17,000-$34,999</td>
<td>$17,000-$34,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Ideology</td>
<td>Moderate, Middle of the Road</td>
<td>Moderate, Middle of the Road</td>
<td>Moderate, Middle of the Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Party ID</td>
<td>Leaning Democrat</td>
<td>Weak Democrat</td>
<td>Weak Democrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama 0 to 10 Rating (10=Like very much)</td>
<td>8.56</td>
<td>8.93</td>
<td>8.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage with Stable to Excellent Financial Situation</td>
<td>53.19</td>
<td>71.43</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered to Vote</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: No differences statically significant from control
Table A2. Experiment 2 Balance Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>$35,000-$69,999</td>
<td>$35,000-$69,999</td>
<td>$35,000-$69,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Ideology</td>
<td>Slightly Liberal</td>
<td>Slightly Liberal</td>
<td>Slightly Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party ID</td>
<td>Weak Democrat</td>
<td>Weak Democrat</td>
<td>Weak Democrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama 0 to 10 Rating (10=Like very much)</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage with Stable to Excellent Financial Situation</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered to Vote</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: No differences statically significant from control

Table A3. Summary Statistics for Experiment 1 Predictors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength of Democratic Partisanship</th>
<th>Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, or Independent?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean=.61</td>
<td>1= Strong Democrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD=.37</td>
<td>.66=Weak Democrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.33=Independent leaning Democrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0= all else</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Black Linked Fate</th>
<th>Do you think what happens generally to Black people in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean=.59</td>
<td>0=A lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD=.37</td>
<td>.33=Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.66=Not very much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1= Not at all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enforcement of Black Solidarity</th>
<th>Black people have often used the terms “sellout” and/or “uncle tom” to refer to those Blacks who support the causes of White Americans at the expense of causes supported by other Black Americans. Do you think the use of these terms (“sellout” and/or “uncle tom”) is ever appropriate?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean=.45</td>
<td>0=Never appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD=.49</td>
<td>1=Sometimes appropriate or Very often appropriate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Money Attachment Scale</th>
<th>Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: More money will make you happier.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean=.54</td>
<td>0=Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD=.26</td>
<td>.25=Somewhat Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.5=Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.75=Somewhat Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1=Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Money Attachment Scale</th>
<th>Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: It is sometimes okay to abandon friends if they stand in the way of you making money.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean=.54</td>
<td>0=Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD=.26</td>
<td>.25=Somewhat Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.5=Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.75=Somewhat Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1=Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A4. Experiment 1. Obama Contribution Means Difference Test by Experimental Condition - Randomization Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition Comparison</th>
<th>$0-$100</th>
<th>&gt;$50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control – Incentive Condition</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control – Incentive + Newspaper Condition</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentive Condition – Incentive + Newspaper Condition</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A5 Experiment 2. Obama Contribution Means Difference Test by Experimental Condition - Randomization Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition Comparison</th>
<th>$0-$10</th>
<th>&gt;$5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control – White Confederate Condition</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control – Black Confederate</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Confederate – Black Confederate</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>