We Are One: The Social Maintenance of Black Democratic Party Loyalty

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Despite growing ideological diversity within the group, black Americans have maintained their overwhelmingly unified support for the Democratic Party. We argue that black Democratic partisanship is upheld, in part, through black Americans' use of social sanctions (both positive and negative) to encourage compliance with a group norm of Democratic Party support. Leveraging the exogenous assignment of racial social context provided by the race of an interviewer in face-to-face American National Election Study survey interviews of black respondents, we demonstrate the racialized social imperative of black Democratic Party identification. We show that black respondents are more likely to identify as Democrats in the presence of other blacks, particularly those respondents whose conservative ideological placement provides a cross-pressuring incentive to otherwise make an alternative partisan choice. Our social explanation of black partisan homogeneity is a significant departure from previous accounts that have focused almost exclusively on attitudinal ascriptions to racial shared fate.

African Americans' nearly unanimous support for the Democratic Party has become a generally accepted political fact of the post–civil rights era. Indeed, since 1976 black support for Democratic presidential candidates has rarely dipped below 80% and has exceeded 90% in some elections. In explaining blacks' unified commitment to the Democratic Party, scholars often point to the presidential election of 1964, Democratic support for the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the 1965 Voting Rights Act as defining moments that crystallized the idea of the Democrats as the party of black interests (Rigueur 2014). While important, it is not obvious that events from over 50 years ago can explain why nearly unanimous black support for the Democratic Party remains steadfast, particularly in the face of growing political conservatism within the black community (Tate 2010).

In fact, the curiosity of blacks' persistently high levels of Democratic identification becomes more striking when placed alongside the trends of increasing ideological sorting across parties for other racial/ethnic groups in recent years. While research has cast doubt on the idea that liberal/conservative ideology is the primary basis for citizen's partisanship (Huddy, Mason, and Aarøe 2015; Kinder and Kalmoe 2017), for white and Hispanic Americans, at least, the two are certainly strongly related. Using data from the 2012 and 2016 American National Election Studies (ANES) surveys, figure 1 demonstrates the strong connection between Democratic Party identification and liberal/conservative ideology for white and Hispanic Americans. However, the figure also demonstrates that the relationship between black Democratic identification and liberal/conservative ideology is remarkably weak. Of particular
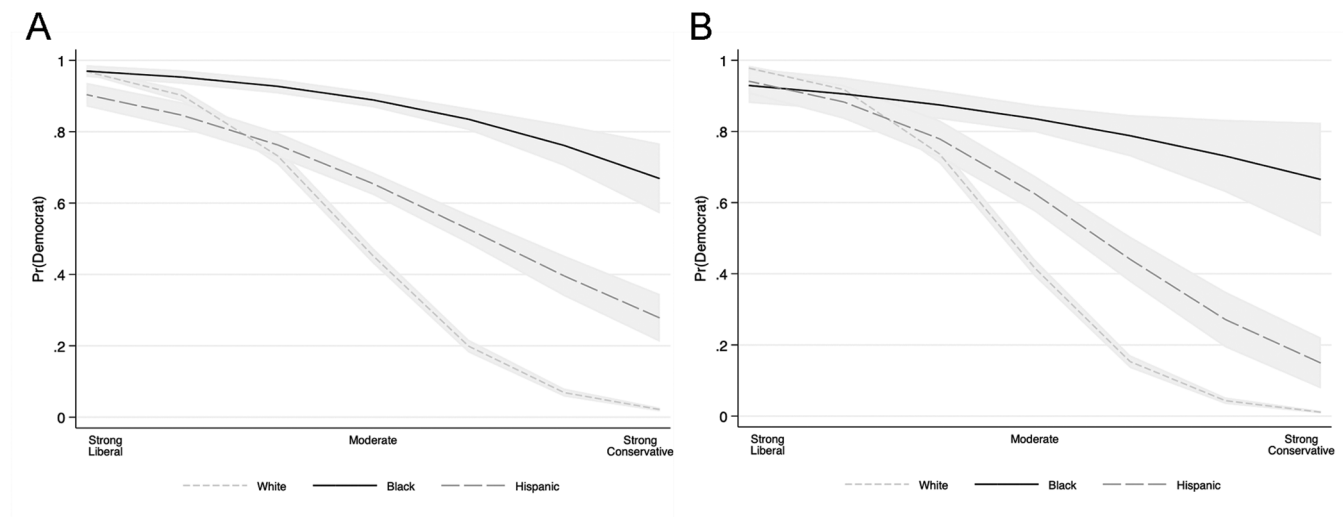
Figure 1. Probability of identifying as a Democrat by ideology and race: *A*, 2012 ANES; *B*, 2016 ANES. Results are marginal effects of the bivariate relationship between ideology and Democratic Party identification, with 95% confidence intervals. These results are only for respondents interviewed in face-to-face ANES interviews.

note: approximately 75% of self-identified black conservatives still identify as Democrats.[1]

In this article, we take up and answer the question of why black conservatives are so unwilling to abandon the Democratic Party. We contend that supporting the Democratic Party is understood by black Americans as a *normalized form of black political behavior*, a behavioral choice for which blacks hold one another accountable. This explanation builds on work in role identity theory, which highlights that social interactions inform how individuals understand the "doing" of membership in a social category or group. In-group connectedness among black Americans provides in-group social accountability as a constraint on black political behavior. The social benefits of conformity and likely social consequences for defection from expected group behavior thus can be made salient even by the simple presence of other in-group members. High degrees of social interconnection among blacks constrain even those who have ideological reasons to defect from the group norm of supporting the Democratic Party (i.e., black conservatives) from doing so. That is, even these black Americans have social incentive to fulfill the political party role obligation.

We test our argument by leveraging data from social interactions during the face-to-face survey interview process.

We find that when asked to report their party identification in face-to-face surveys, the presence of a black interviewer constrains black respondents' willingness to identify as anything other than a Democrat. The differences in party identification across the race of the interviewer are most pronounced among exactly those whose individual preferences and social identification diverge: blacks who identify as ideologically conservative. We interpret this as evidence to support the argument that racialized behavioral expectations, not just shared policy attitudes or group affinities, play an important role in the maintenance of black political unity.

WHY BLACK PARTISANSHIP?

It is our contention that black partisanship is not sufficiently explained by existing dominant models of partisan identification—what might be termed the instrumental model or the (standard) expressive model. Under the instrumental model of partisanship, voters' sincere policy preferences guide their partisanship; ideological and policy fit with the party and evaluations of performance of the party in government guide party identification (e.g., Huddy et al. 2015). By this account, the increased economic and ideological diversity within the black community over the last several decades (Dawson 2001; Tate 2010) should have led to a lower rates of affiliation with the Democratic Party among black Americans. The degree of sustained affiliation with Democrats, we argue, suggests other forces at work in black partisanship.

Conversely, the expressive approach suggests that partisanship becomes an "enduring psychological attachment" that is resistant to change (Huddy et al. 2015). In this model, group belongings are often deemed central to partisanship,

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1. In the 2012 survey 1,764 or 50.6% of white respondents, 322 or 31.8% of black respondents, and 376 or 37.6% of Hispanic respondents identified as conservative. In the 2016 survey 1,449 or 47.8% of white respondents, 105 or 26.5% of black respondents, and 166 or 37.1% of Hispanic respondents identified as conservative. The 2012 and 2016 ANES did not include a sufficient number of Asian Americans with which to replicate this analysis.

and group concerns a core component of the political decision-making calculus (Huddy, Bankert, and Davies 2018; Huddy et al. 2015). The fundamental idea is individuals see the party that is represented by people similar to themselves and that is associated with their social group(s) as the most likely to represent their own interests in government (Huddy et al. 2015). Under this model, then, group identification leads to partisan identification. While this approach is more in line with our argument about the centrality of group belonging to partisanship, we diverge with our contention that, for black people, partisanship does not necessarily become its own, independent social identity. Instead, conformity to a Democratic partisan norms without development of a Democratic partisan identification can emerge as the by-product of the strong identification and social interreliance that blacks have with the racial group. Put another way, blacks' attachment not to a party but to the racial in-group's norms of placing the group's interest above their own helps explain why black support for the Democratic party remains high despite ideological and, increasingly, socioeconomic diversity.

THE LIMITS OF LINKED FATE EXPLANATIONS OF BLACK PARTISANSHIP

Our explanation of black Democratic partisanship also goes beyond the dominant theoretical perspective for understanding attitudinal constraints on black political opinions: Dawson's (1994) black utility heuristic model. Dawson's central idea is that of a notion of shared or linked fate—that African Americans have come to see their individual interests as inseparable from the interests of the larger racial group. The interests of the racial group thus become central to black political judgments via cues that activate this latent predisposition (White 2007).

Linked fate is commonly measured by just a single survey question that asks blacks whether they think that what happens generally to black people in this country will have something to do with what happens in their individual lives. Dawson and others have shown not only that a high proportion of African Americans agree with this statement but also that their endorsement of linked fate is a reliable predictor of a range of political positions, namely, support for racial policies and black political figures (Dawson 1994, 2001; Gay 2004; Gurin, Hatchett, Jackson 1990; Hajnal and Lee 2011; Miller et al. 1981; Simien 2005; White 2007).

Yet, the linked fate paradigm is not without its limitations (see Laird 2019). In particular, linked fate does not seem to be particularly useful in explaining black Democratic Party identification. Indeed, while Dawson's own work frequently alludes to a connection between black group interest, as measured by linked fate, and party identification, there is, in fact,

little empirical evidence demonstrating such a relationship and a growing number of studies showing at best a weak or conditional relationship between Democratic Party identification and linked fate (Hajnal and Lee 2011; Philpot 2017; Tate 1994).

We took up our own analysis of the connection between linked fate and black identification with the Democratic Party by analyzing four different surveys that span more than 30 years, from 1984 to 2016.[2] For each survey, we built a simple model of Democratic identification that included controls for age, sex, education, and liberal/conservative ideology. The predicted effect of black linked fate on blacks' willingness to identify as Democrats across the surveys is presented in figure 2. As the figure illustrates, the connection between the linked fate measure and Democratic Party identification is, in nearly all cases, weak or nonexistent. Although higher levels of linked fate generally do appear to increase the probability of a black person identifying as a Democrat, the average effect size of linked fate across all these data sources is about 4 percentage points. At no point does the probability of low-linked-fate blacks identifying as Democrats dip below .80. If linked fate plays a significant role in explaining black Democratic partisanship, it is not in the straightforward way alluded to by Dawson.

Perhaps one might reason that linked fate fails to empirically predict Democratic Party identification because there is so little variation in Democratic Party identification to be explained. We are less concerned, however, with the empirical predictive power of linked fate for Democratic Party identification than with its theoretical purchase. In Dawson's linked fate framework, support for the Democratic Party is expected even for those whose ideological, class, or other individual interests do not align very well with that of the Democratic Party's platform because they perceive the Democratic Party to be more likely to represent the interests of blacks as a group (Dawson 2001, xii). Put more simply, linked fate makes Democrats of even black conservatives because race still aligns their interests with those of the group. It is this particular theoretical argument that we take on in our investigation of black conservatives' loyalty to the Democratic Party.[3]

It remains importantly unclear, we note, why individual black Americans, like black conservatives with ideological incentives to support the Republican Party, would not simply rationalize the Republican Party's positions on race to bring them more in line with their own beliefs. Republicans, after all,

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2. All four surveys are probability samples, and all but the 2016 ANES have oversamples of black Americans.

3. We recognize that the explanation we will offer in this article to explain why black conservatives are loyal to the Democratic Party is potentially one of several. However, we place our focus on challenging Dawson's linked fate framework because it is the predominant theory used to explain black political behavior and decision-making.
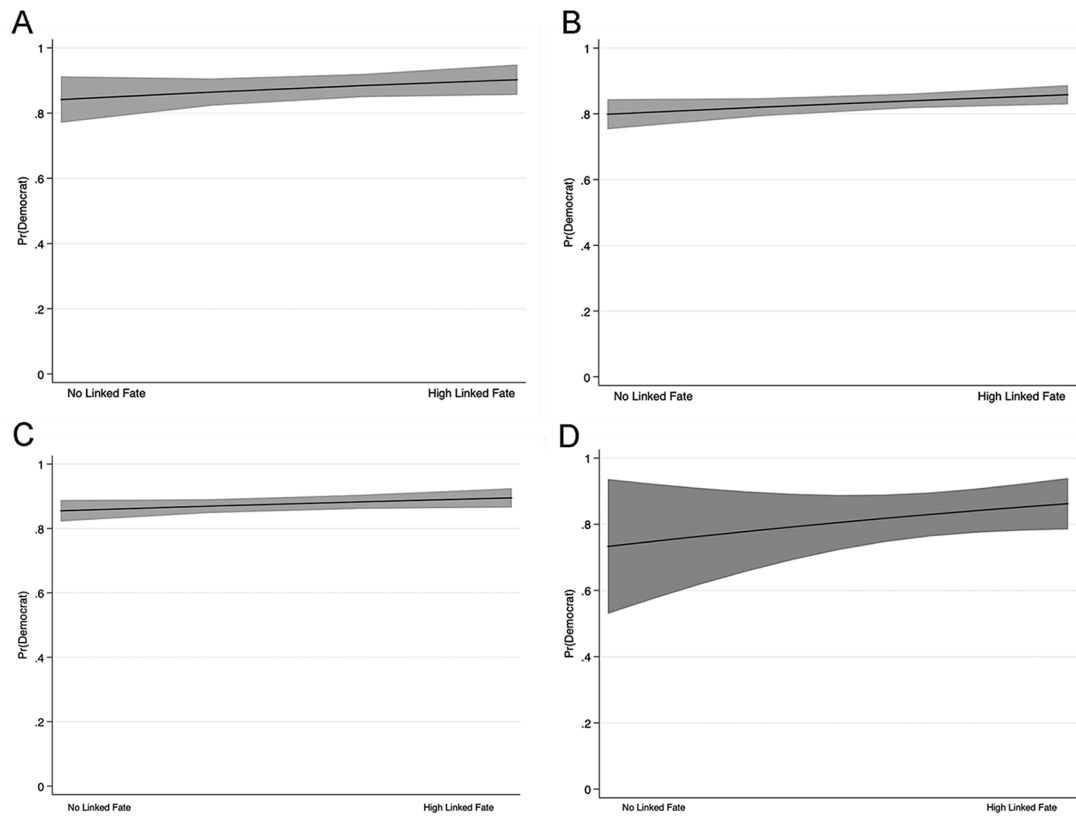
Figure 2. Relationship between linked fate and Democratic Party identification: *A*, 1984 ANES; *B*, 1996 ANES; *C*, 2012 ANES; *D*, 2016 ANES. Model includes controls for age, sex, education, and liberal/conservative ideology. Bivariate models produce similarly small relationships. Results represent the marginal effect of linked fate on Democratic Party identification, with 95% confidence intervals. *C* and *D* only include data from face-to-face interviews.

frequently offer explanations for why it would be in black Americans' collective and individual interests to support the Republican Party. Many of the limited government, self-help, personal responsibility, and moral arguments offered to blacks by Republicans are couched in terms of black empowerment and racial group uplift. Why, then, would those blacks who see it in their individual or ideological interest to support the Republican Party not simply use these arguments as a means of resolving the linked fate dissonance?

RACE AS (POLITICAL) ROLE IDENTITY

To resolve our questions about the tenuous connection between linked fate and black Democratic Party identification in the face of crosscutting pressures, we turn to work on role identities (Hogg, Terry, and White 1995; Stryker 1980; Turner 1978). Role identity theory (sometimes known as identity theory; see Hogg et al. 1995) offers an interpretation of group-consistent behavior as resultant from socialization processes in which adherence with normed performance of being in the category is rewarded and deviation is punished (Wood and Eagly 2012). To apply this framework to black political behavior is to center the effects of shared social understandings and expectations of "being black" that have

grown out of the particular experience of social, economic, and residential segregation of black Americans. A focus on role identity alters the way we understand black political decision-making by moving our attention away from a perspective that necessitates a strict or direct connection between individual and group interests to a focus on relational interactions that produce intraracial norms and expectations (Brewer 2001) about how one should behave, politically, as a black person.

Although some scholars have used social identity theory to understand conformity to group norms, the keys to norm compliance in such analysis are identity category salience and self-esteem linked to group identity—which often get invoked in the context of intergroup relations. Our shift of focus is to norm adherence in an intraracial context and on explaining variation in norm compliance linked to an identity that is chronically salient, as race is for many blacks (Dawson 1994). Role identity theory enables explanation of behaviors that result not directly out of (perceived) competition with a relevant out-group, as is often shown in the social identity literature, but for the sake of being seen as a good member of the in-group even without consideration of the out-group. As Schneider and Bos (2019) write in reference

to the application of social role theory to gender and politics, "expectations are and should be internalized, directly leading to behavior of group members consistent with that of the typical roles" (178). Long-run reinforcement through reward for adherence and punishment for deviance should result in a high degree of norm-consistent behavior among group members, particularly those who strongly identify with the group. And circumstances in which such sanctioning is expected to be likely should further incentivize norm adherent behaviors.

Although they do not explicitly reference role identity theory, this is essentially what White and Laird (2020) describe in discussion of their experiments examining black political decision-making during the 2012 election. In an effort to understand how blacks make trade-offs between group and simple self-interest, White and Laird demonstrate that social pressure—particularly from other blacks—to conform to expectations of "black" political behavior can significantly constrain black political decisions. While persuasive, the applicability of the White and Laird argument to understanding black decision-making in different political contexts, and to specifically explaining black partisan homogeneity, remains somewhat unclear. By applying the insights gained from role identity theory and White and Laird to the understanding of black partisanship, we are better able to understand how norms and expectations of partisan identification get enforced within an individual's dominant racial context. In short, in order to understand the maintenance of black partisan solidarity, we must consider how role identity and intraracial social constraint influence black political behavior.

We argue that many years of essentially undifferentiated black support for the Democratic Party have resulted in the normalization of Democratic Party identification within the black community, such that identifying as a Democrat is a well-understood expectation within the black community of how one should behave politically. These expectations, we argue, have led to an understanding within the black community that supporting the Democratic Party is "just something that black people do." Given the widespread reinforcement of this norm, through repeated observation that most blacks do in fact support the Democratic Party, the act of publicly supporting the Democratic Party among blacks could reasonably be seen as a racial identity (or role) confirming behavior that individual blacks perform in an attempt to obtain social confirmation or status from other blacks. Once this behavior is confirmed or rewarded, individual blacks then come to see these acts as linked to identity affirmation, and thus the behavior is repeated. Likewise, publicly supporting the Republican Party would likely be viewed as a rejection of the expected role behavior, with social costs accordingly expected.

We note that our expectations about the malleability of blacks' partisan identification are also in line with recent scholarship on the effects of social interaction on partisan attitudes. Klar (2014), for example, demonstrates that social context has a significant effect on partisan-based motivated reasoning. Klar compares the policy attitudes of individuals based on their interactions with varying types of partisans to attitudes when there is no social interaction. Engaging in social interactions (policy dialogue) with homogenous partisan groupings resulted in heightened levels of partisan-motivated reasoning for individuals who were of the same party identification as the group. Interaction with heterogeneous partisan networks resulted in ambivalent policy positions for both strong and weak partisans (see also Klar and Krupnikov 2016). Similarly, Levitan and Vesser (2009) find that individuals in attitudinally diverse social networks have a propensity for more ambivalence in their policy attitudes relative to those individuals in attitudinal congruent networks. What we are adding here is specificity about how intraracial social context drives partisan expression.

METHODS: RACE OF INTERVIEWER AS A SOCIAL NORM SIGNAL
Design
To demonstrate the process by which black party unity is maintained through racialized social pressure to comply with black role expectations, we leverage the interracial constraints on black political beliefs created through the assignment of black and white interviewers to black respondents during the face-to-face survey interviews of the cumulative ANES surveys from 1988 to 2012, the 2004–16 General Social Survey (GSS), and the 2012 ANES.[4] The ANES and GSS studies are nationally representative face-to-face surveys that when pooled over time offer a reasonably large number of African American respondents. The 2012 ANES is particularly useful, as it has a somewhat large, nationally representative sample of black respondents, which allows for nuanced analysis of black political behavior at the national level.[5] Using these data, we examine the effects of black and white interviewers on how blacks and whites respond to survey questions that measure

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4. We use only face-to-face interviews because they more accurately capture meaningful social interactions. The analysis of the cumulative ANES includes all years that the ANES recorded interviewer race (black/nonblack) for face-to-face interviews. These years include 1988, 1992, 1996, 2008, and 2012. For many of the midterm elections, the ANES conducted telephone interviews. The 2000 ANES was also conducted via telephone. We did not use the 2004 ANES since interviewer race was only recorded as white or nonwhite. In an effort to avoid contamination effects, all analysis relies only on preelection interviews.

5. While the 2016 ANES was available at the time of the submission of this article, its interviewer characteristics measures were not yet available.

partisanship as a means of testing the ability of racialized social pressure/expectations to constrain partisan defection. The interaction of black interviewers with black respondents represents a special type of controlled social interaction that, when compared to the responses given to nonblack (mostly white) interviewers, allows us to be reasonably confident that differences in respondent choices are likely the result of compliance with expected racial behavior.

It is important to note that black and white interviewers in face-to-face surveys are not typically randomly assigned to respondents. While we have no reason to believe this would bias blacks' responses to the party identification question, it is nonetheless prudent to account for possible confounders that may emerge from this assignment strategy. Thus, we attempt to account for the lack of random assignment in several ways. First, we replicate the analyses in multiple years of the ANES and GSS cumulative data files that contain race of interviewer data.[6] Assuming that any biases that exist are not likely to manifest in the same way across all years of both the ANES and the GSS, our ability to replicate the effects across time and study should increase confidence that any relationships we observe are not likely the result of systematic bias in interviewer assignment.[7] Second, we employ multiple adjustment procedures to account for possible confounders. We adjust for pretreatment covariates using logistic regression and propensity score matching, enabling comparison of individuals who are as similarly situated as possible across interviewer type. Finally, we replicate our analysis on a set of large-N telephone surveys, since telephone surveys do not typically assign interviewers on the basis of residential proximity (as telephone interviews are typically conducted from centralized call centers). Moreover, compared to face-to-face interviews, telephone surveys offer a conservative test of our argument, as the degree of potential social discomfort experienced in a telephone interview is not as strong as that experienced in face-to-face interviews (Davis 1997).[8]

We have the following set of expectations for the relationship between interviewer race and partisanship. First, given that black identity is so enmeshed with Democratic partisanship, we expect that those black respondents who are interviewed by coracial interviewers will be more likely than those interviewed by nonblack interviewers to identify with the Democratic Party than as either independents or Republicans (**H1**). Conversely, of course, levels of Democratic party identification among those black respondents not interviewed by black interviewers should be lower.

We also expect interviewer race to condition self-reported Democratic partisanship in the context of telephone surveys (**H2**). Survey mode differences, however, may moderate the effect; face-to-face social interaction likely signals greater potential for social sanction or perceptions of judgment. Thus, the constraining effect of black interviewers on reported partisanship may well be smaller in the context of the telephone survey.

Finally, we expect that the race of the interviewer will condition the effect of liberal/conservative ideology on black partisanship (**H3**). We expect that in the absence of a black interviewer, black respondents will not feel the same racialized social pressure to affirm their status as a group member and conform to racial group norms. Thus, conservative respondents interviewed by white/nonblack interviewers or who complete the online questionnaire should be more likely to report partisanship based on their individual ideological preferences. Hence, we expect that the relationship between ideology and partisanship for blacks will be strongest in the presence of a white interviewer or with no interviewer. In the presence of a black interviewer, however, the social norm signal should constrain blacks' reliance on their ideological preferences in forming their partisanship answers. Thus, in the black-interviewer context, black conservatives and black liberals should be more similar in their likelihood of identifying as Democrats.

Results

Our first test of the expectation (hypothesis 1) that, in the presence of another black person, black Americans will seek to conform to the norm of identifying with the Democratic Party is an analysis of whether the percentage of blacks who identify as Democrats varies as a function of the race of the interviewer in face-to-face surveys of black Americans. In table 1 we present data on the distribution of black partisanship and race of interviewer for the cumulative ANES and cumulative GSS.[9] We categorize respondents as Democrats

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6. Others have done analysis of race of interviewer effects using earlier years of the ANES; however, this information is not included in the current ANES cumulative data file. The cumulative files for each survey include the 1988, 1992, 1996, 2008, and 2012 ANES surveys and 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016 data for the GSS.

7. We will subsequently employ multiple adjustment procedures to assess the robustness of these results to potential confounders.

8. The literature on linguistic profiling makes it clear that individuals do make inferences about individuals' race based on the way that they speak, and there are numerous studies that show how people are discriminated against based solely on their voice and speech (see Baugh 2005; Squires and Chadwick 2006).

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9. We are limited to the 1988, 1992, 1996, 2008, and 2012 ANES. We are aware that race of interviewer was collected for earlier years; however, race of interviewer is not included in the ANES cumulative file, and our correspondence with the ANES suggested that they are unable to locate these data. See Anderson, Silver, and Abramson (1988) for information on other years.

Table 1. Distribution of Party Identification by Race of Interviewer for White and Black Respondents, ANES Cumulative File and the GSS Cumulative File (FTF Surveys)

	Black Respondents			White Respondents			
	Nonblack Interviewer	Black Interviewer	Difference (A)	Nonblack Interviewer	Black Interviewer	Difference (B)	DID (A − B)
ANES:							
Republicans (incl. leaners)	7.4	2.5	−4.9*	44.7	39.9	−4.8	−.1
	[6.0, 8.8]	[1.1, 3.9]		[43.5, 45.8]	[34.1, 45.8]		[−7.5, 7.1]
Independents	12.1	4.2	−7.9*	12.1	11.0	1.1	−6.8*
	[10.3, 13.8]	[2.3, 5.9]		[11.3, 12.9]	[7.3, 14.7]		[−11.9, −1.7]
Democrats (incl. leaners)	80.5	93.3	12.8*	43.2	49.1	5.9	6.9
	[78.4, 82.5]	[91.1, 95.5]		[42.1, 44.4]	[43.1, 55.1]		[−.53, 14.5]
N	1,357	479		6,842	273		
GSS:							
Republicans (incl. leaners)	8.6	5.3	−3.3*	39.9	40.6	.7	2.6
	[7.3, 9.9]	[3.8, 6.8]		[39.0, 40.8]	[38.0, 43.3]		[−8.7, .5]
Independents	15.9	13.1	−2.8*	18.0	16.2	−1.8	−1.0
	[14.2, 17.7]	[10.8, 15.3]		[17.4, 18.7]	[14.3, 18.3]		[−4.8, 2.7]
Democrats (incl. leaners)	74.1	81.2	7.1*	39.8	40.6	.8	6.3*
	[72.0, 76.1]	[78.6, 83.8]		[38.9, 40.7]	[38.0, 43.3]		[1.6, 11.1]
N	1,742	848		11,952	1,351		

Note. 95% confidence intervals in brackets. Column percentages for the GSS do not add up to 100, which we attribute to two factors: (1) respondents who declined to answer the question and (2) the race of the interviewer was not coded and thus dropped from our analysis. FTF = face to face; DID = difference in difference; incl. = including.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .10$ (two-tailed).

including leaners, Republicans including leaners, and true independents. We treat leaners as partisans for two reasons. First, previous research suggests that leaners are actually partisans and behave much more like partisans than true independents (Greene 1999; Keith et al. 1986; Klar and Krupnikov 2016). Second, the branching nature of the party identification question offers the potential influence of racialized social pressure on black party identification at both branch stages.

The results presented in table 1 support our expectation that social pressure from other blacks to conform to norms of black political behavior increases blacks' willingness to identify with the Democratic Party in a way that is not true for white respondents in either survey. As evident in table data, in both the cumulative ANES and cumulative GSS reported Democratic partisanship is higher among black respondents interviewed by black interviewers than those interviewed by nonblack interviewers. While it is true in both the ANES and the GSS that white respondents do experience an increase in Democratic partisanship, neither yield significant increases in Democratic Party affiliation. We posit that these results for white respondents reflect the minimal interactions

white individuals have with black people, meaning that they are less susceptible to the effect of social pressure in the face-to-face interview setting.

In the ANES, the Democratic Party identification gap between blacks interviewed by black versus nonblack interviewers is 11.5 percentage points, moving the percentage of blacks who identify as Democrats from about 82% in the presence of a nonblack interviewer to well over 90% when partisanship is asked by a black interviewer.[10] White respondents also experience an increase in their Democratic Party affiliation of 5.9 percentage points when interviewed by a black interviewer, but that increase in affiliation is not strong enough for us to see as significantly different from the effect of a nonblack interviewer on whites' Democratic Party affiliation. Furthermore, we find that being interviewed by a black individual has a weaker effect for white respondents in the GSS, who only experience a .80 percentage point increase in their

10. When nonblack interviewers are restricted to white interviewers, the gap is even larger, approximately 13 percentage points. The vast majority of nonblack interviewers are white.

identification with the Democratic Party. For black respondents, the Democratic Party identification gap resulting from having a black interviewer in the GSS is still substantively meaningful and statistically significant with a 6.6 percentage point increase.

In both data sources, the presence of a black interviewer appears to encourage black respondents to identify as Democrats, while similar black respondents interviewed by nonblack interviewers identify as either Republican or independent. In order to better gauge the uniqueness of the influence of a black interviewer, we conduct a difference-in-difference analysis (indicated in the DID columns in table 1) for both data sources and find meaningful differences in the influence of a black interviewer on Democratic Party affiliation. This is particularly true for the GSS data, where the difference between the increase in Democratic affiliation for black respondents interviewed by a black interviewer relative to a nonblack interviewer and that same difference for the data set's white respondents is statistically significant. We also see a similar difference-in-difference effect in the ANES data, although it falls just outside of traditional levels of significance with a *p*-value of .07.

The results of the difference-in-difference test provide a clearer picture of the unique pressure black individuals feel when they are interviewed by a same race interviewer. The significant increases in Democratic Party affiliation across both the ANES and the GSS, as well as the differences in this effect for black and white respondents, strongly affirm our theoretical claims about the unique power racialized social pressure has over black individuals' identification with the Democratic Party.

Although the results presented in table 1 suggest that the race of the interviewer present during face-to-face surveys has a unique influence on black individuals' willingness to identify as Democrats, it is important to keep in mind that neither the ANES nor the GSS surveys randomly assign interviewers to respondents. While interviewers are not likely explicitly selecting respondents on the basis of their partisanship, it is nonetheless important to account for, as best we can, any preexisting differences between respondents interviewed by black interviewers and those interviewed by white interviewers. We thus adjust for pretreatment respondent characteristics (sex, age, southern region), pretreatment interviewer characteristics in ANES only (interviewer gender), and pretreatment survey characteristics (year of survey).[11] We adjust for these possible confounders using both

matching estimators and logistic regression models. Once the observed differences in confounders between the treatment and control groups have been taken into account, we then reestimate the effects of interviewer race on Democratic Party identification (including leaners).

The results in the first row of table 2 present the raw unadjusted percentages of black Democratic partisanship by race of interviewer pooled across all years of the ANES for which we have race of interviewer data (matching table 1).[12] The second row of table 2 presents race of interviewer effects on Democratic partisanship adjusting for pretreatment characteristics using propensity score matching. Once we adjust the model with covariates, the estimated effect of the black interviewer on black Democratic Party identification remains substantively meaningful and statistically significant across both data sources. This unique effect is made even more apparent when we see the statistically significant relative difference in the effect of a black interviewer on the Democratic Party identification for black and white respondents.

These results increase our confidence that what we are observing is in fact the result of black Americans altering their self-reported Democratic partisanship in response to the race of the person interviewing them and not any preexisting difference in the type of respondents interviewed by black and white interviewers. This durable difference in partisan affiliation reported across race of interviewers supports our claim that when the survey context mimics a social context with the potential to be challenged or subject to negative sanctions from racial in-group members, blacks alter their behavior to be more in line with the established group norm.[13]

To further ensure that the estimated relationship between reported partisanship and race of interviewer is not simply a design artifact of face-to-face surveys, we also test for the effect in the context of telephone surveys. One concern with face-to-face surveys such as the ANES is that they tend to assign interviewers from areas proximate to the respondent;

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11. Although sex and age are technically posttreatment (vs. pretreatment) as these characteristics were asked by the interviewer, they are not

likely to be influenced by the interviewer. As all questions are asked during the survey process, we do not adjust for any measures that would likely be influenced by the treatments. We adjust on age, sex, region, and year of survey because these variables are unlikely to be influenced by the treatment. Thus, any differences across black and white interviewers are likely the result of preexisting differences that could potentially contaminate our treatment effect.

12. Similar analysis can be found in the appendix for the cumulative GSS.

13. Using the 2012 ANES, we were also able to adjust for the percentage of blacks in the respondent's neighborhood (zip code). These adjustments had no measurable impact. See the appendix for the analysis.

Table 2. Percentage of Self-Identified Black Democrats (Including Leaners) by Race of Interviewer, ANES Cumulative Files

	Black Respondents			White Respondents			
	Nonblack Interviewer	Black Interviewer	Difference	Nonblack Interviewer	Black Interviewer	Difference	DID
Unadjusted	80.5	93.3	12.8*	43.2	49.1	5.9	6.9
	[78.4, 82.5]	[91.1, 95.6]		[42.1, 44.4]	[43.1, 55.1]		[−.5, 14.5]
Adjusted: propensity score matching (via logistic regression)	80.2	93.2	13.0*	43.3	49.6	6.3*	6.7*
	[79.9, 80.7]	[89.2, 94.7]		[43.1, 43.5]	[48.7, 50.5]		[5.5, 7.4]

Note. Pretreatment adjustments for ANES: year of survey, age, sex, South, married, and interviewer gender. 95% confidence intervals in brackets. DID = difference in difference.
* $p < .05$ (two-tailed).

as a result it is possible that black interviewers are more likely to interview a certain type of black person who may, for whatever reason, be more predisposed to identify as a Democrat. Although our adjustment procedures (and in particular the adjustments for percentage black residents in one's neighborhood presented in app. sec. A1) should account for much of this potential difference, analysis of telephone-based surveys provides another check on potential confounding introduced via mode-specific threats. Phone surveys generally operate from centralized call centers, and to the extent there are no explicit attempts to match interviewers by some criterion related to the race or background of the respondent, telephone surveys may better meet the all-else-equal criterion of a good quasi-experimental design ensuring more equivalent groupings.

There are, however, drawbacks to using telephone surveys to test our argument. In particular, the social distance between interviewer and respondent during phone surveys can reduce our ability to observe a treatment effect. Although phone surveys do not eliminate the potential social sanctioning cued by the presence of a black interviewer, interviewer behaviors such as facial gestures and body language cannot be conveyed over the phone. As a result, we expect the effect of interviewer race on Democratic Party identification may not be as large as that observed in the face-to-face context. Similarly, given the potentially greater ambiguity of an interviewer's racial background via voice recognition, we may observe more variation in individual responses to the treatment (interviewer race). In sum, while we certainly expect black phone interviewers to heighten black Democratic Party identification (hypothesis 2), we also expect this effect may be smaller and harder to detect than in face-to-face interviews.

We examine phone-based survey data from the widely available Pew Research Center data archives.[14] Both are publicly available data sources that consistently report interviewer race: Pew after 2007 and Gallup after the middle of 2011. These data sources also have measures of party identification and identify leaning Democrats and Republicans. Because we expect small effects in response to interviewer race over the phone and because the average survey from these sources has only about 150 black respondents, we pooled over 100 randomly selected surveys from Pew's US Politics and Policy data archive from 2008 to 2014. The result is a data set with 13,138 black respondents with corresponding race of interviewer and party identification data.[15]

The results of this analysis are presented in table 3. The pooled Pew data produce an estimate of a 2.1 percentage point higher rate of identification with the Democratic Party among black respondents interviewed by black interviewers. These results are as we expected: smaller estimated race of interviewer effects than in the face-to-face studies but still statistically significant and substantively meaningful. As with other analysis, the difference-in-difference analysis makes it clear that the effect of a black interviewer on Democratic Party

14. We replicated the results from the Pew Research Center data using 50 phone surveys from Gallup News Service polls. The results from the analysis of the Gallup data are consistent with our findings with the Pew data. The Gallup analysis can be found in the appendix.

15. The advantages of using Pew and Gallup (in the appendix) data over pooling the few academic phone surveys of African Americans are (1) the Pew surveys give us relative consistency in sample design and data collection procedure; (2) both Pew and Gallup data are clustered around the same time period as our face-to-face surveys, while most of the high-quality academic phone surveys of blacks were done in the 1980s and 1990s; and (3) we can have sufficient statistical power for estimating expected small effects (see, e.g., Gelman and Weakliem 2009).

Table 3. Distribution of Black Party Identification by Race of Interviewer, Pew Cumulative File (2008–14, Telephone Survey)

	Black Respondents			White Respondents			
	Nonblack Interviewer	Black Interviewer	Difference	Nonblack Interviewer	Black Interviewer	Difference	DID
Republicans (incl. leaners)	9.5	7.9	−1.6*	48.8	48.6	−.2	1.4
	[8.8, 10.2]	[7.3, 8.5]		[48.4, 49.1]	[48.2, 49.1]		[−3.4, .4]
Independents	8.9	8.4	−.5	10.2	10.3	−.1	.4
	[8.2, 9.7]	[7.8, 9.1]		[10.0, 10.3]	[10.0, 10.6]		[−1.7, .5]
Democrats (incl. leaners)	81.6	83.7	2.1*	40.9	41.1	.2	1.9*
	[80.6, 82.5]	[82.9, 84.5]		[40.4, 41.4]	[40.6, 41.5]		[.2, 3.7]
N	5,851	7,287		42,792	45,752		

Note. 95% confidence intervals in brackets. DID = difference in difference; incl. = including.
* $p < .05$ (two-tailed).

identification is unique relative to the change in identification among white respondents in both data sources. These results replicate the findings of the face-to-face studies while at the same time offering a more conservative test of social sanction expectations.

ESTABLISHING WHOSE RACE MATTERS: LEVERAGING ONLINE SURVEY COMPARISONS

In the results presented thus far, we have only compared the behavior of blacks interviewed by black interviewers to those interviewed by white interviewers. What we still do not know is what blacks' partisanship would be in the absence any interviewer. Without a baseline comparison—or control group—we cannot confidently say whether what we are observing is an effect generated by a black interviewer's presence encouraging blacks to identify as Democrats or, alternatively, the effect of white interviewers' presence encouraging blacks to report less Democratic identification or both. Davis (1997), for example, argued that when interviewed by a white individual, black respondents would be more likely to respond in counterstereotypical ways to distance themselves from other blacks (320). Given that white Americans' partisanship is more heterogeneous, black respondents interviewed by a white person may be less sure of the interviewer's partisan leaning. Thus, a desire to portray themselves as less stereotypical could be the greater norm-driven incentive. The inability to sort out the (potential) effects of black and white interviewers is, more generally, a problem that characterizes much of the existing research on race of interviewer effects (see Rhodes 1994).

To solve this problem, we turn to the 2012 ANES. In addition to having results for those who participated in face-to-face interviews with white and black interviewers, the 2012 ANES featured an online survey. The online survey was conducted at roughly the same time as the face-to-face survey and asked identical questions but was completely self-administered. The 2012 ANES thus provides a unique opportunity to estimate the percentage of blacks who likely would have identified as Democrats in the absence of any interviewer.[16] The distribution of partisan identification by interviewer race and online mode of survey in the 2012 ANES is presented in table 4. The results are consistent with our expectation that it is the presence of a black interviewer—the signal to in-group social norms—that produces the race of interviewer effect on partisanship. In the presence of a nonblack interviewer and in the online "control," approximately 85% of blacks identified as Democrats. In the presence of a black interviewer, Democratic partisan identification uniquely jumps to 96%.[17]

The lack of true random assignment to the interviewer conditions and to the online questionnaire suggests that we should once again adjust for pretreatment characteristics. Because the online mode had no interviewers, we cannot adjust for interviewer characteristics. We do have respondent characteristics that were not likely affected by the treatment: gender, age, living in the South. Once again, the adjustments do little to alter the relationship between interviewer race and Democratic Party identification (see the appendix for full results).

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16. There are different procedures underlying how the online and face-to-face samples of the 2012 ANES were drawn. To account for these differences we will, later in this article, employ adjustment procedures.

17. The 2012 ANES has a more nuanced measure of race than that included in the cumulative file. Here we include all individuals who identify as black, while the ANES cumulative file only includes non-Hispanic blacks.

Table 4. Distribution of Party Identification by Race of Interviewer and Online Mode, 2012 ANES (FTF and Online)

	Online (Control) (A)	Nonblack Interviewer (B)	Black Interviewer (C)	Difference		
				(B − A)	(C − A)	(B − C)
Black respondents:						
Republicans (incl. leaners)	5.1	7.2	2.0	2.1	−3.1*	5.2*
	[3.2, 6.9]	[3.9, 10.5]	[.2, 3.7]			
Independents	9.9	8.9	1.6	−1.0	−8.3*	7.3*
	[7.4, 12.4]	[5.2, 12.5]	[.0, 3.1]			
Democrats (incl. leaners)	85.0	84.0	96.4	−1.0	11.4*	−12.4*
	[82.0, 87.9]	[79.3, 88.7]	[94.2, 98.7]			
N	554	237	255			
White respondents:						
Republicans (incl. leaners)	43.6	40.8	41.0	−2.8	−2.6	−.2
	[41.8, 45.3]	[37.7, 43.9]	[31.4, 50.5]			
Independents	14.8	12.3	9.5	−2.5*	−5.3	2.8
	[13.6, 16.1]	[10.2, 14.4]	[3.8, 15.2]			
Democrats (incl. leaners)	41.6	46.9	49.5	5.3*	7.9	−2.6
	[39.8, 43.3]	[43.7, 50.0]	[39.8, 59.2]			
N	3,061	975	105			

	DID between Black and White Respondents		
	Online versus Black Interviewer	Online versus Nonblack Interviewer	Black versus Nonblack Interviewer
Republicans (incl. leaners)	−.2	.5	.6
	[−11.9, 11.6]	[−8.1, 9.0]	[−12.7, 11.4]
Independents	−3.6	−.3	−3.3
	[−12.3, 5.2]	[6.5, 6.0]	[−11.2, 4.7]
Democrats (incl. leaners)	3.7	−.1	3.9
	[−8.1, 15.5]	[−8.8, 8.4]	[−8.4, 16.2]

Note. 95% confidence intervals in brackets. FTF = face to face; DID = difference in difference; incl. = including.
* $p < .05$.

This analysis supports our expectations (hypothesis 1) that black interviewers have a unique effect on how black respondents report their partisanship during surveys. Returning to our role identity argument, these results show that social interactions that lead to concern for potential sanctions or activating one's willingness to conform to group expectations lead to changes in a black individual's reported affiliation with the Democratic Party. We can offer, however, one further probe regarding whether what appears to be a unique influence of black interviewers on expressed Democratic partisanship is due to its salience as an in-group behavioral norm versus simply a greater salience of race when in the presence of a black interviewer, by comparing the responses to other survey items invoking race. In particular, we identify several items that not only reference the in-group but also might make black respondents anticipate negative reactions from white interviewers for in-group favoring replies: opinion items on affirmative action, preferential hiring, and government aid for blacks and the standard feeling thermometer asked about whites as a group. If our role-identity sanctioning model is correct, the pattern across race of interviewer and survey mode could very well flip: blacks in the online control and interviewed by black interviewers might be more similar than blacks incentivized by the presence of a white interviewer to temper their stances on racial group conflict. If, however, the social identity theory model is correct and black interviewers simply uniquely make race more salient, then answers to black interviewers should be more in-group centric (and out-group conflictual) than in the online "control."

Table 5. Distribution of Black Respondent Opinion on Racial Items by Race of Interviewer and Online Mode, 2012 ANES (FTF and Online)

	Online	Black Interviewer	Nonblack Interviewer
% support affirmative action (university)	40.4 [36.3, 44.6]	44.4 [38.1, 50.7]	33.2 [27.0, 39.7]
% support affirmative action (work)	41.1 [37.0, 45.3]	46.2 [39.9, 52.6]	33.0 [27.0, 39.5]
% agree government should help black Americans	32.7 [28.3, 37.5]	34.2 [26.6, 42.5]	18.9 [13.3, 25.6]

Note. 95% confidence intervals in brackets. All significance testing is two-tailed. FTF = face to face.

Results from this simple analysis are presented in table 5. They are consistent with our role-identity-based argument and inconsistent with a social identity theory argument that black interviewers simply make race more salient. In general, we find depressed support for racial policies that would benefit blacks when respondents are answering nonblack (mostly white) interviewers in comparison to both the online-only respondents and those interviewed by black interviewers. Unlike the partisanship item, blacks responding to black interviewers respond to these items in ways statistically indistinguishable from those self-reporting their answers online. These results are more consistent with race of interviewer signaling expected behavior than simply signaling salience of racial identity.[18]

WHO IS CONSTRAINED—IDEOLOGICAL VERSUS RACIAL CONSTRAINT

We have provided more evidence for our role identity argument by showing that the presence of a black interviewer creates a social interaction through which blacks feel compelled by racialized social pressure to conform to racial group expectations—in particular, adhering to the norm of identifying as a Democrat. But our argument also implied an expectation of who should be most affected by this particular

racialized interaction. Those individuals who have ideological reasons for behaving in ways inconsistent with the racial group norm, in particular black conservatives, should be the most likely to be affected by presence of a black interviewer (hypothesis 3) because they have a crosscutting political impetus to behave otherwise. Absent this social interaction with a coracial interviewer, blacks who identify as ideological conservatives should be less likely to identify as Democrats because the absence of social pressure to conform to group expectations relieves some of their cross-pressure. Because black conservatives, however, are generally aware of the social consequences of defecting from the norm of Democratic partisanship within the black community, when questioned about their partisanship by a black interviewer they should feel constrained by these social expectations and instead choose to behave in a way inconsistent with their own ideological interest and identify as Democrats.

To assess this implication of our argument, we summarize the effect of the interviewer's race on blacks' two-point Democratic partisanship by the respondent's score on the seven-point liberal/conservative ideology measure in the 1988–2012 cumulative ANES, 2012 ANES, and 2004–16 GSS in figures 3A–3C.[19] In short, across all three data sources, the probability of black people identifying as Democrat declines markedly as they become more conservative, except those interviewed by black interviewers.

Consider first those interviewed by nonblack interviewers. In the 1988–2008 cumulative ANES (fig. 3A), the probability of these respondents identifying as Democrat decreases by more than 20 percentage points from around .90 among strong liberals to about .60 for strong conservatives. Roughly the same magnitude of decrease replicates in the GSS surveys (fig. 3C). In the 2012 ANES (fig. 3B), the estimated difference is even greater, with the model predicting a .97 probability of identifying as a Democrat among strong liberals and a .56 probability of identifying as Democrat among self-identified strong conservative blacks—a 41-point decrease in the probably of identifying as a Democrat as a function of ideology.

Similar patterns hold for black respondents who answered the 2012 online survey, free of the constraints that an interviewer might impose. The model predicts a .96 probability of black liberals in the online portion of the 2012 ANES identifying as Democrats but only a .49 probability of black

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18. We also note that while there is some evidence that differential respondent recruitment by race of interviewer may produce "race of interviewer effects" (Kim, Krosnik, and Lelkes 2019), these differential patterns across item type and robustness of partisan differences to covariate adjustment undermine recruitment as a full explanation.

19. Because there is not a well-defined norm in the black community about political ideology, we do not expect it to vary as a function of the interviewer's race. In the 2012 ANES the correlation between race of interviewer and ideology is .02 ($p = .53$), in the GSS it is .00 ($p = .88$), and in the cumulative ANES it is .07 ($p < .00$).
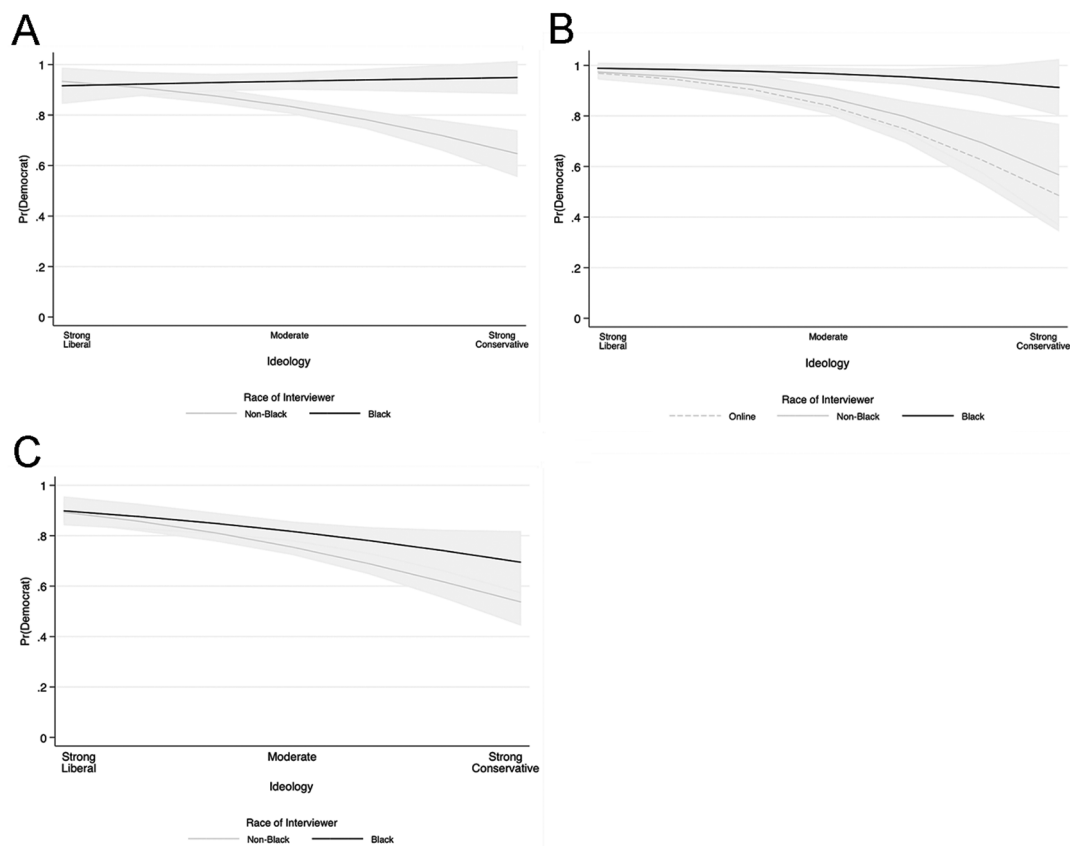
Figure 3. Black Democratic Party identification by liberal/conservative ideology and race of interviewer, with 95% confidence intervals. *A*, 1988–2012 ANES; *B*, 2012 ANES; *C*, 2004–16 GSS. Marginal effect of liberal/conservative ideology on probability of identifying as Democrat. Includes controls for sex, age, and South in all data sets, with additional controls for interviewer sex and study effects in *B* and *C*.

conservatives doing the same. That is a 47-point decrease in the probability of identifying as a Democrat. Again, this is a pattern consistent with standard accounts of how liberal/conservative ideology should relate to party identification.

The "standard" relationship between party and ideology, however, is broken when blacks are asked about their partisanship by a black interviewer. Consistent with our expectations, those interviewed by a black interviewer express a strong and largely ideologically undifferentiated willingness to identify as Democrats. In neither the cumulative ANES nor the 2012 ANES does the probability of black conservatives identifying as Democrats ever dip below .90 when a black interviewer is present. While there is more variance in the GSS data, there is still little change in predicted party identification across ideology measures for either Democratic party identification measure. These results suggest that the presence of a black interviewer almost completely constrains black conservatives, nearly eliminating the link between ideology and partisanship for blacks.

Finally, if we are correct that the effect of black interviewers on black Democratic partisanship is the result of black interviewers holding black conservatives accountable

to the norms of black political behavior, then we should be able to observe this effect across other measures of conservatism. Therefore, we examine whether the presence of black interviewers conditions the relationship between expression of Democratic partisanship and two distinct forms of conservatism: economic/free market conservatism and moral/traditionalist conservatism. Free market conservatism has its basis in the belief that government should play only a very limited role in regulating the US economy. We measure this concept with two questions from the 2012 ANES that assess blacks' opinions about how much government regulation of business is good for society and whether the free market or government is better equipped to handle today's complicated problems. Conservative responses to these questions prioritize free market solutions and downplay government intervention. We measure moral/traditionalist conservatism with a number of measures that assess the need to preserve traditional lifestyles such as "Do you think newer lifestyles are contributing to the breakdown of society?" and "How tolerant should society be of people who have different moral standards?" Conservative responses to these questions prioritize the need to preserve traditional values and ways of
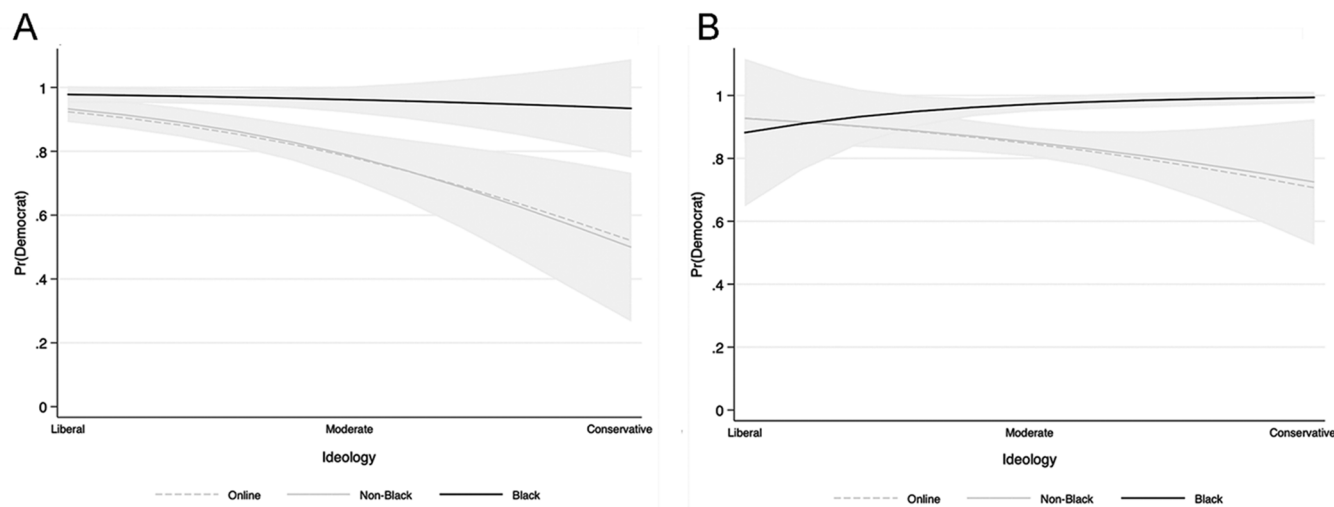
Figure 4. Economic/free market (*A*) and moral/traditionalist (*B*) conservatism by black Democratic Party identification and race of interviewer/mode, 2012 ANES (with 95% confidence intervals). See the appendix for model estimates.

living. Both of these concepts are measured in the 2012 ANES.

Figures 4*A* and 4*B* summarize the results of this analysis. Generally, both the free market and moral/traditionalist results mirror those using the liberal/conservative self-identification item presented in figure 3. For blacks responding to a white interviewer and those responding online, the more conservative the respondent on either dimension, the less likely he or she is to identify as a Democrat. For blacks in the black interviewer condition, however, the relationship between these ideological values and Democratic partisanship is essentially zero. There is, however, a slight increase in Democratic partisanship among morally conservative blacks interviewed by a black interviewer.

The results from this analysis demonstrate that social interactions between black individuals can powerfully constrain black partisan political behavior. As we have seen, those blacks who have ideological reasons for defecting from the group norm of political behavior—black conservatives—resist doing so in the presence of a black interviewer. However, when allowed to answer these questions in the privacy of their own homes or when interviewed by a white interviewer, black conservatives behave as one might expect, by identifying as independents or Republicans. These findings complement the previous analysis presented and provide strong support for role identity theory's ability to explain black Democratic Party affiliation maintenance. Social interactions with fellow group members constrain black political behavior, and the presence of other blacks induces norm conformity because blacks succumb to racialized social pressure in order to avoid negative sanctions from racial group members.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this article, we took up the puzzle of the persistence of African Americans' overwhelming support for the Democratic Party. Despite political alternatives and economic incentives offered to blacks by the Republican Party, and despite the lure of political independence and third-party identification, the vast majority of blacks still affiliate with the Democratic Party. While the existing literature offers linked/shared fate orientations as an explanation for this unwavering affiliation, closer examination shows that the relationship between shared fate and the Democratic Party affiliation is, at best, weak. This leads to the question of how black politics might actively constrain African Americans to maintain such strong support for the Democratic Party—a question of behavior, not just attitudes.

We argued for the importance of understanding support for the Democratic Party as one of the most well-defined and visible norms of the black community. This racialized social norm—one that defines what it is, politically, to be black—can lead black individuals to constrain their political behavior to stay within the bounds of black community expectations. We position this argument in the context of role identity theory. This theoretical framework moves beyond the standard linked fate model resting primarily on psychological attachment to the racial group to a model that relies more on social connections and perceptible social costs and benefits that come with compliance with or defection from the behavior black community members expect of each other.

Our evidence to support this claim came from examining how partisanship varies by the race of the interviewer across a broad set of surveys. Our robust results show that, for black

individuals, simply being in the presence of another black individual can alter their political behavior, causing them to fall more in line with the partisan expectations of the black community. We observe that blacks who were interviewed by a black individual show significantly higher identification with the Democratic Party than those interviewed by whites. The distinctiveness of this finding for black people is made more apparent across each of the surveys through the difference-in-difference analysis that provides consistent evidence that white respondents' partisan identification does not experience the same level of constraint when they are interviewed by a black individual.

Importantly, we further empirically distinguish this as an in-group phenomenon by using the 2012 ANES to show that blacks who interact with no interviewer exhibit partisanship patterns like those interviewed by whites—with lower levels of Democratic partisanship reported than those interviewed by blacks. We also showed that identification with the Democratic Party was greatest among those blacks that hold conservative political dispositions, demonstrating that racialized social context is an effective cross-pressure, constraining those blacks who have an ideological incentive to defect from the group norm.

This study suggests that role identities may be a particularly useful tool for understanding black political behavior. If black partisanship has more to do with blacks' sense of what is expected of them from other blacks than their perceptions of how what happens to blacks as a group affects them as individuals, then racial identity factors into black decision-making not just through political attitudes but through social processes. This, of course, raises important questions about how politics establishes racial group norms. Moreover, if the inclination to fall within the boundaries of the racial group's norms is driven by a desire to be accepted and respected among fellow blacks, the question of blacks' political cohesion may be particularly important to study across other venues of variation in racial social segregation, such as neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces.

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