

**Racial Resentment, Hurricane Sandy, and the Spillover of Racial Attitudes into
Evaluations of Government Organizations¹**

Geoffrey Sheagley

Assistant Professor
Department of Political Science
University of Minnesota, Duluth
1123 University Drive
304 Cina Hall
Duluth, MN 55812-3006
Phone: 218-726-8379
Fax: 218-726-6585
sheagley@d.umn.edu

Philip Chen

Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Political Science
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
1414 Social Sciences
267 19th Ave S.
Minneapolis, MN 55455
chen2157@umn.edu

Christina Farhart

Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Political Science
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
1414 Social Sciences
267 19th Ave S.
Minneapolis, MN 55455
farh0013@umn.edu

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This paper explores the relationship between racial attitudes, exposure to information cuing people to think about President Obama, and evaluations of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) handling of the response to Hurricane Sandy. Drawing on the work of Tesler and Sears, we explore the possibilities for racial spillover into how citizens evaluate governmental institutions and organizations. Using a split ballot experiment embedded in a large internet panel fielded during the 2012 presidential election, we find evidence that people who are cued to think about the President and who were chronically exposed to news coverage of Hurricane Sandy were much more likely to base their evaluations of FEMA on their racial attitudes. Specifically, people who lived in areas directly impacted by the storm and who are high in racial resentment had more negative evaluations of FEMA when cued to think about President Obama, compared to those who received a non-racializing cue. Linking the President to Hurricane Sandy led people to ground evaluations of organizations related to the response to Hurricane Sandy, FEMA in the case of our research, to rely on racial animus when forming evaluations.

Introduction

On October 29th, 2012, Hurricane Sandy made landfall on the coast of southern New Jersey. The storm proceeded to wreak havoc along the Eastern Seaboard, causing over \$50 billion in damage and at least 147 deaths (Blake, Kimberlain, Berg, Cangialosi, & Beven II, 2013).² Media accounts of the federal government's and the president's response to the storm typically were favorable, with New Jersey Governor Chris Christie serving as an especially notable admirer.³ Public opinion polls generally support this conclusion, with 78 percent of respondents in a poll administered Oct. 30th offering favorable assessments of President Obama's response to the storm. Similarly, a Quinnipiac University poll administered to New York voters from November 14-18 revealed that 84% of respondents thought that Barack Obama did an "excellent" or "good" job responding to the storm.⁴⁵

This is an especially startling outcome in today's era of starkly polarized political parties and elites (Hetherington, 2001; Layman & Carsey, 2002; Fiorina & Abrams, 2008; Fiorina, Abrams, & Pope, 2011). Admittedly, some conservatives, including former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani, critiqued the administration's response to the disaster.⁶ However the consensus seems to be that preparation for and response to Hurricane Sandy was well planned and effective. There is even evidence that Obama received a higher vote share in regions impacted by Hurricane Sandy than in comparable unaffected regions (Velez & Martin, 2013).

Despite the apparent consensus that Hurricane Sandy was handled effectively, the Obama presidency has been instructive in the reality that apparent successes and positive political

² http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/data/tcr/AL182012_Sandy.pdf

³ <http://www.politico.com/story/2013/10/chris-christie-obama-hurricane-sandy-98914.html>

⁴ <http://www.quinnipiac.edu/institutes-and-centers/polling-institute/new-york-city/release-detail?ReleaseID=1816>

⁵ These results are not simply an artifact of liberal bias in New York artificially boosting President's Obama favorability ratings. New Yorkers in the same survey rated Republican Governor Chris Christie marginally more favorably than they did Obama.

⁶ <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2012/11/03/giuliani-obama-dropped-the-ball-on-sandy/>

outcomes can open up new avenues for negative evaluations. This is perhaps best exemplified by the role race has played during Obama's presidency. By virtue of attaining the office of President of the United States, many declared Barack Obama's election as indicative of a sea change in American politics. The presumption being that his election signaled an ability and willingness of Americans to look beyond his race and evaluate him based on his other qualifications for office. In short, Obama's election signaled a "post-racial America." However, as ample scholarship has shown since his election, Obama's presidency was not only tinged with issues of race, but actually opened up new channels through which people rely on their racial animus to derive their political opinions.

These new channels are evident in the recent body of research on "racial spillover" – the tendency for people to rely on their racial predispositions to form evaluations in ostensibly non-racialized policy domains (Tesler & Sears, 2010; Tesler, 2012). For example, Obama's connection to healthcare reform led citizens to ground their preferences for healthcare in their racial predispositions (Tesler, 2012). These works raise the possibility that even near universal approval of Obama's handling of Sandy could nevertheless create avenues for racial animus to perniciously affect citizens' evaluations.

Yet despite the strength of work on racial spillover, examinations of race are largely restricted to one of two areas: evaluations of political candidates or the formation of issue preferences. At first blush it is not clear what – if any – evidence of racial spillover we would observe in evaluations of government agencies related to Hurricane Sandy. The most likely culprit would be an attitude object closely linked to Obama, as health care was, once Obama became increasingly involved with reform (Tesler, 2012). In the case of Hurricane Sandy, a potential target is the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). One of FEMA's

responsibilities is to coordinate local, state, and federal government responses to large-scale disasters. Critically for our purposes, FEMA is directly accountable to the president, and citizens view FEMA as having a great deal of responsibility for handling disaster response (Schneider, 2008).

This leads us to examine a new area that has yet to be subjected to the study of racial spillover: people's views about the performance of government institutions and organizations. Can racial spillover occur in this area and lead people to root evaluations of government organizations in their racial attitudes? Hurricane Sandy provides an relevant context in which to address this question because of the president's close association with coordinating the disaster response, both prior to and after the storm. By virtue of being explicitly linked in the mass media with the disaster and the government's response, it may be the case that people transfer their racial animus about Obama to an organization like FEMA. On the other hand, the near universal declaration of successful preparation and response to the disaster may eliminate the drawing of linkages along these lines.

We address this topic using panel survey data collected during and after the 2012 Presidential election. These data allow us to leverage Hurricane Sandy to examine how it shaped citizens' evaluations. We employ a two-pronged strategy to explore racial spillover in this area. Our first strategy is to rely on a subtle experimental manipulation that cued half of our respondents to think about President Obama and then rate how well FEMA handled the response to Hurricane Sandy (with the other half of our respondents receiving a non-racial, federal government cue). Because racial spillover is contextual, with media coverage, personal impact, or some other linking mechanism is necessary to connect people's racial predispositions to the ostensibly non-racial targets (Gilens, 1999; Tesler & Sears, 2010, ch. 4; Tesler, 2012), we also

explore how people's geographical proximity to the storm shapes the effect of our experimentally manipulated cue (see also Velez & Martin, 2013). We argue that Hurricane Sandy made some attitudes and considerations more accessible for voters, specifically their attitudes about President Obama. This increased accessibility, combined with a racial prime, leads certain individuals to ground their evaluations of FEMA in racial resentment.

Our research provides strong evidence that evaluations of FEMA's response to Hurricane Sandy were affected (at least in part) by their racial animus. Voters relied on their racial attitudes to form evaluations of FEMA, but these effects were conditional on location and experimental prime. Importantly, these findings hold only for evaluations of FEMA, suggesting that the results are not a result of geographic sorting but rather the linking of disaster response to lived experience.

Predispositions, Evaluations, and Racial Spillover

Scholars of race and public opinion consistently show that people rely on their racial attitudes and predispositions to form evaluations of attitude objects, including political actors (Hutchings & Valentino, 2004; Mendelberg, 2001; Valentino, Hutchings, & White, 2002; Valentino, 1999) and policies (Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000; Hurwitz & Peffley, 2005; White, 2007). These associations can be chronic, with people consistently linking policies to their racial predispositions (Gilens, 1999) or situational, with exposure to information, such as a subtle verbal or visual cue, causing people to connect their racial attitudes to their preferences (Domke, 2001; Mendelberg, 1997). While these conclusions are rooted heavily in the findings from laboratory experiments, some of these works make use of novel quasi-experiments to show that these subtle processes operate outside of the lab and among the cacophony of competing information (Mendelberg, 2001).

This work shows that racial attitudes can, and often are, connected to policies that, while not necessarily explicitly racialized, are tied to race in subtle ways. Gilens's (1999) work on racial animus and welfare attitudes is an excellent example. While welfare serves African Americans, the Department of Health and Human Services reports that fewer than 40% of welfare recipients are African American. This policy area became racialized, Gilens argues, through a consistent portrayal by the media and politicians of African Americans as the disproportionate recipients of welfare benefits.

Recently, scholars have shown that the election of Barack Obama to the presidency has led to the chronic connection between racial predispositions and a host of ostensibly non-racial policy areas, such as health care (Tesler, 2012, 2015; Tesler & Sears, 2010). The "spillover" of race into these domains is predicated on two features of the contemporary political environment. First, the salience of President Obama's race, which leads to the strong connection between racial predispositions and attitudes about President Obama. Second, the association of the president with a host of policy areas, such as health care, which leads people to then view these policies using the same set of criteria they use to evaluate Obama. In short, racial attitudes about Obama "spillover" into other domains.

The racialization of health care reform, for example, did not occur merely because Barack Obama won the 2008 election. Despite the fact that by the time he took office people's racial attitudes were strongly related to their evaluations of Barack Obama, they were unrelated to people's views about health care (Tesler & Sears, 2010).⁷ However, once Obama explicitly connected himself to health care during his first term in office by spearheading the reform effort,

⁷ In fact, the strong link between racial predispositions and evaluations of Barack Obama existed as far back as the Iowa Caucus (Tesler & Sears, 2010, p. 35).

people started to think about health care reform through a racial lens. In short, their racial attitudes about Obama “spilled over” into the policy domain of health care reform.

However, voters are not universal in their reliance on racial attitudes when evaluating health care reform. Relatedly, we argue that racial attitudes are chronically accessible for subsets of the population, namely those who were impacted by Hurricane Sandy. Thus, we expect that Obama causes racial attitudes to spill over into areas other than policy domains, specifically how people think about and evaluate the performance of institutions and features of government with which he is connected. We believe that cuing people to think about President Obama will result in them rooting evaluations of FEMA's handling of Hurricane Sandy in their racial predispositions. The association between Obama and FEMA is the first necessary step for spillover. However, we argue that certain “linking events” can lead citizens to root their evaluations in racial attitudes by raising the accessibility of considerations such as the president’s race. We show that this holds true for evaluations of FEMA for individuals influenced by Hurricane Sandy and take up this point in the next section.

Hurricane Sandy, Emotions, and Linking Information

We expect spillover into the realm of FEMA evaluations to be conditioned not only by racial primes but also by an individual’s connection to Hurricane Sandy. We follow other scholars, who used FEMA’s measure of storm impact (Velez & Martin, 2013), and argue that in order for all individuals to connect President Obama to the hurricane response, a linking event must occur that increases the accessibility of considerations that connect the president and federal agencies.

There is good reason to believe, however, that a natural disaster provides a unique context in which spillover could occur because it affects the ways in which people process and integrate information when forming evaluations. Malhotra and Kuo (2009) show that individuals

who experienced a strong emotional reaction to Hurricane Katrina were more likely to rely on heuristics cues such as party identification when assigning blame to political leaders. This supports their claim that emotions lead individuals to prioritize heuristic based processing.

Our argument follows closely from this work. We claim, like Tesler and Sears (2010), that the key to racial spillover rests in the accessibility of both the racial attitude as well as the connection to the attitude being expressed. In most cases, the key to this accessibility lies in political knowledge or sophistication a la Zaller (1992). However, under extreme conditions, namely, directly experiencing a hurricane, the connection becomes clear and accessible for a broad swath of voters. Zaller (1992) poses a hypothetical: “suppose that survey respondents could be induced temporarily to increase their normal level of engagement with an issue just at the moment of responding to a question about it. What would be the effect of such heightened engagement or ‘extra thought’?” (pg. 86). We claim that the combination of racial primes and Hurricane Sandy creates just such an increase in the level of engagement.

Zaller (1992) goes on to claim that, while this temporary increase in awareness cannot change the underlying considerations of the respondent, it could alter which considerations are ultimately sampled before forming the attitude. Our claim is similar. For individuals outside of the area affected by Hurricane Sandy, the range of considerations is broad and few links are drawn between the president and emergency management procedures. While some individuals will sample racial considerations, others will not and the effect of racial attitudes will be weak for these individuals.

A different process occurs, however, for those individuals who experienced Hurricane Sandy. These individuals saw, first hand, the constant coverage surrounding the president and his role with FEMA. This “temporary” increase in engagement strengthens the links between beliefs

about President Obama and the federal disaster response. However, in order for racial attitudes to influence agency evaluations, two things must occur: voters must be temporarily engaged (by their experience with Hurricane Sandy) and they must be primed to connect their attitudes about the president with other evaluations. Thus, neither a simple racial prime nor being affected by Hurricane Sandy is sufficient to link considerations such as racial attitudes with evaluations of FEMA. Only at the confluence of these instances will we see racial attitudes spillover into evaluations of FEMA.

This leads to three hypotheses for when racial attitudes should influence evaluations of government institutions and, more specifically, FEMA. First, for individuals unaffected by Hurricane Sandy, racial animosity should exert no influence over their evaluations of FEMA (H1). For individuals in the path of the storm, however, a new set of considerations is accessible. Absent a racial prime, these considerations will not be sampled regularly and racial attitudes will not affect FEMA evaluations (H2). Combine these new considerations with a subtle prime, however, and we expect racial resentment to exert a strong, negative influence on citizen's beliefs about the competency of FEMA's hurricane response (H3).

Methods and Measures

In order to test for racial spillover in the domain of perceptions of actor and institutional handling of a crisis, we combine two unique features of a large internet panel survey fielded during the 2012 election. First, we use an experiment administered during the third (and final) wave of the study, which was intended to cue people to think about Barack Obama. Secondly, we leverage geographic information collected in the first wave to categorize individuals by the degree to which their zip code was impacted by the storm.

The survey was conducted during the fall 2012 presidential election using participants from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) online workplace. Individuals on MTurk complete generally short tasks for payment, including completing surveys. Although participants opt in to the study, this recruitment strategy is no different from the convenience or student samples often employed for experiments; in fact, the demographic distribution is significantly more representative of the U.S. population than local convenience or student samples (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012; Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Mason & Suri, 2012).

MTurk has gained popularity recently as a platform for subject recruitment for social experiments. Results from MTurk studies have been published in multiple political science journals (Fausey & Matlock, 2011; Huber, Hill, & Lenz, 2012; Lewis & Bates, 2011) and documented findings in political science that were produced using nationally representative samples have been replicated using MTurk respondents (Berinsky et al., 2012).

The first two waves of the survey were conducted prior to the 2012 election while the third wave (which contained the relevant split ballot experiment for this study) occurred in mid-November, 2012. A total of 1,800 participants were recruited for the first wave of the panel and then recontacted through email to complete subsequent waves. Attrition was quite high from the first to second wave (38%), although attrition from the second to third wave was comparatively quite low (6%).⁸

Although attrition was high, the remaining sample at the third wave was still sizeable. In total, 991 participants completed both the first and third waves of the panel. As noted later, we

⁸ The high attrition from wave one to wave two is likely due to two factors. First, the panel study structure is not particularly common on MTurk, which meant that individuals who were unfamiliar with the structure may have decided to take the first study without realizing there would be additional studies. Second, and more importantly, our panel study contained an Implicit Association Test (IAT) using Inquisit software that caused technical problems on several participants' computers. Thus, additional attrition was likely due to technical problems participants encountered during the first wave of the study.

restrict our sample to white respondents only, resulting in a final sample size of 710 participants. This sample resembles similar MTurk samples. 58% of the final sample was female and the mean age was 36. Participants were generally well educated (90% attended some college and 55% had at least a two or four year degree) and the median household income range was \$40,000 to \$49,999 a year. As is common with MTurk samples, participants were much more likely to be Democratic (56% Democrats, 12% independents, 32% Republicans) and liberal (52% liberal, 19% moderate, 29% conservative). Although not representative of the U.S. population, we are confident that the sample is representative of the MTurk population.

Conceptually, we want to test whether consistent exposure to the disaster and the government's response led individuals to associate the President with the disaster recovery and if these associations can be cued, leading to reliance on racial predispositions in their evaluations. We are interested in how racial animosity influences evaluations of government institutions, specifically FEMA. Our theory suggests that affective evaluations of government institutions should be racialized when those evaluations are connected to Barack Obama. We expect this effect to be magnified by the degree to which people were affected by the storm.

We measure evaluations of FEMA with the question "*How well do you think **FEMA** has handled the response to Hurricane Sandy?*" Participants could respond that FEMA handled the response "Very Well" (26%), "Somewhat Well" (53%), "Not Very Well" (16%), or "Not Well At All" (5%). The percentages listed after each response option corresponds to the proportion of participants who selected that option. To cue people's racial predispositions, we use a split ballot experiment embedded in the third wave of the panel that asked half of the respondents "*How well do you think **President Obama** has handled the response to Hurricane Sandy?*" and the other half, "*How well do you think the **Federal Government** has handled the response to Hurricane*

Sandy?” This split ballot experiment occurred prior to the question regarding FEMA’s handling of Hurricane Sandy. After these questions, we also asked respondents “*How well do you think President Obama has handled the attack on the U.S. Consulate in Libya?*” We use this question to test for racial spillover in a different domain.

Our intent with this manipulation was twofold. First we wanted to assess whether people differentiated between President Obama and the federal government when forming perceptions about the handling of Hurricane Sandy. The second was to cue people to think about Obama and examine if that had a downstream effect on how they evaluated FEMA's handling of Sandy. We leverage this second feature of our experiment to examine racial spillover into the evaluation of institutions. Finally, we rely on the third question (about Libya) to assess if people impacted by the storm saw their racial evaluations spillover into a non-relevant domain.

The second feature of the panel we leverage is a question administered at Wave 1 asking participants to report the zip code of their residence. Our intent with this measure is to categorize whether an individual was exposed to the storm, with our expectation being that people who were impacted by the storm should react differently to the Obama prime than will those who were not impacted by the storm. We believe the impact of Hurricane Sandy should influence the accessibility of people’s racial animus for two reasons. First, people who are influenced by disasters, such as Hurricane Sandy, are motivated to make sense of the disaster and to attribute blame for how the disaster was handled, an effect which grows stronger for those who are affected by the disaster to greater degrees (Arceneaux & Stein, 2006). We expect that the motivation to make sense of the disaster and the government’s response should lead people to have stronger associations between the relevant actors in the event, namely President Obama and FEMA. Second, we expect that a traumatic event like Hurricane Sandy could influence how

susceptible people are to cues, like a subtle reference to President Obama. This expectation flows from work showing that people who experience natural disasters, in the case of this research Hurricane Katrina, are prone to feel negative emotions, which lead them to rely more heavily on cues when rendering decisions (Malhotra & Kuo, 2009). This could predispose people impacted by the storm to be more susceptible to our Obama prime manipulation.

We rely on respondent’s self-reported zip code on Wave I of the survey to identify the degree to which an individual was impacted by the Hurricane. We rely on publically available data from FEMA and ArcGIS that tabulates estimates of damage from Hurricane Sandy at the county level. Table 1 contains a summary of the impact estimates offered by FEMA while Figure 1 is a graph of the estimated impact.⁹

Table 1: FEMA Impact Categories

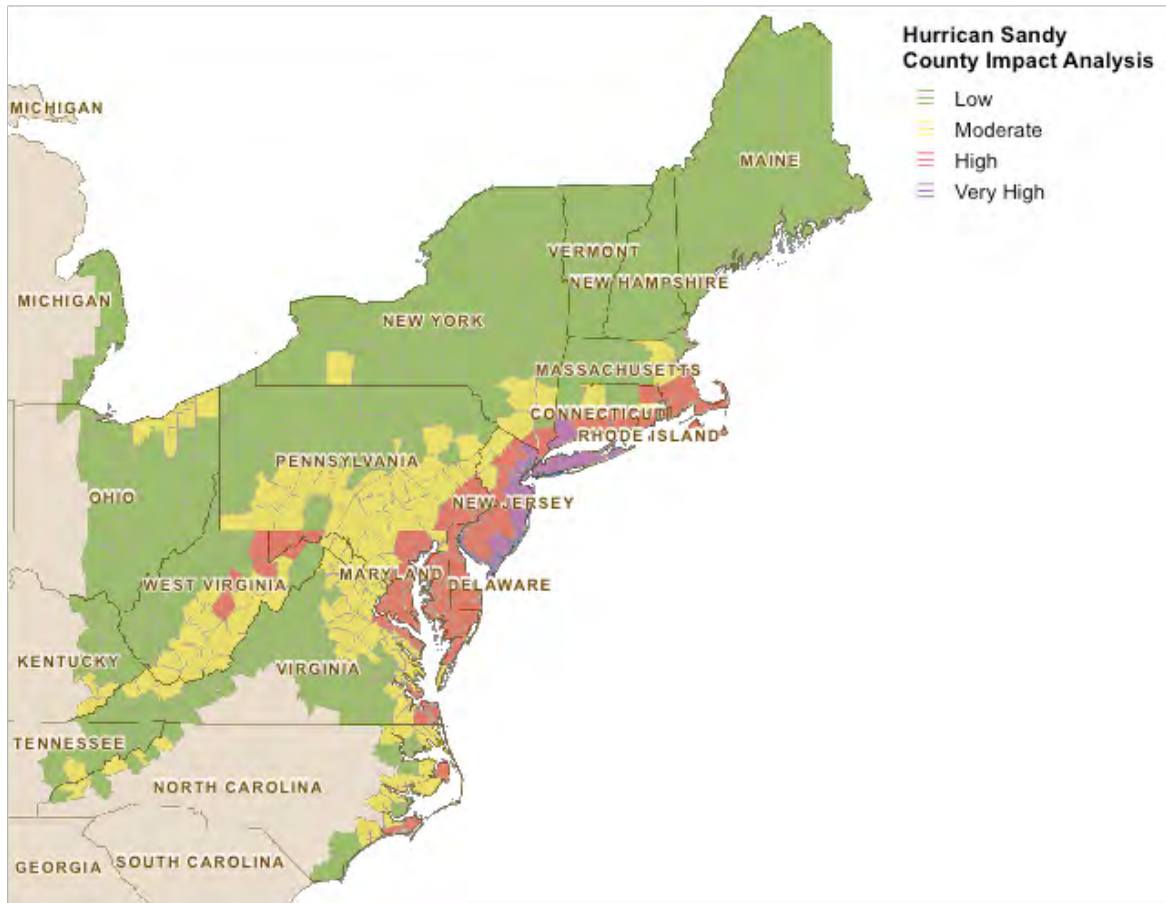
Impact Category	Measure of Impact
Very High	Storm surge affected > 10,000 people
High	500-10,000 affected by surge, or modeled wind damage > \$100 million, or more than 8” precipitation
Moderate	100-500 affected by surge, or modeled wind damage \$10-100 million, or 4-8” precipitation
Low	No surge impacts, or modeled wind damage \$10 million, or <4” precipitation.

The justification for the categories relies largely on the estimated impact of storm surge, which, according to FEMA, is responsible for the large majority of the storm’s impact. Using ArcGIS we merge the Hurricane Sandy impact data with the zip codes offered by our respondents to create an estimate of the degree to which a respondent was impacted by the storm. 501 (71%) of respondents were not at all impacted, 87 (12%) were categorized as having low

⁹ The data and a full summary of the report are available here: <http://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=307dd522499d4a44a33d7296a5da5ea0>

impact, 61 (9%) as having moderate impact, 35 (5%) as having high impact, and 20 (3%) as having very high impact.

Figure 1: Map of Hurricane Sandy Impact Zones



It is also necessary to define what we mean by “racial predispositions.” We hope to capture racial prejudice and animosity, essentially whether an individual believes that African-Americans are undeserving and should be able to get ahead without special assistance. While many measures exist that attempt to capture this concept, we use the racial resentment measures commonly contained on the ANES (Kinder and Sanders 1996).¹⁰ We use these measures for

¹⁰ Participants were asked to agree or disagree with the following four statements: "It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites", "Irish, Italian, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same", "Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class", and "Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve."

consistency, as they are the same measures used by many scholars who study racial spillover (e.g., Tesler 2012; 2015; Tesler & Sears 2010). Admittedly, scholars have questioned whether these measures accurately capture racial attitudes or tap both racial animosity AND individualism in some individuals (Feldman & Huddy, 2005). While recognizing these objections, we believe that there is general agreement on the need for federal intervention in disasters. Therefore, we suspect that individualism is less likely to color evaluations of FEMA's handling of the crisis than other political evaluations that have been examined in the past.

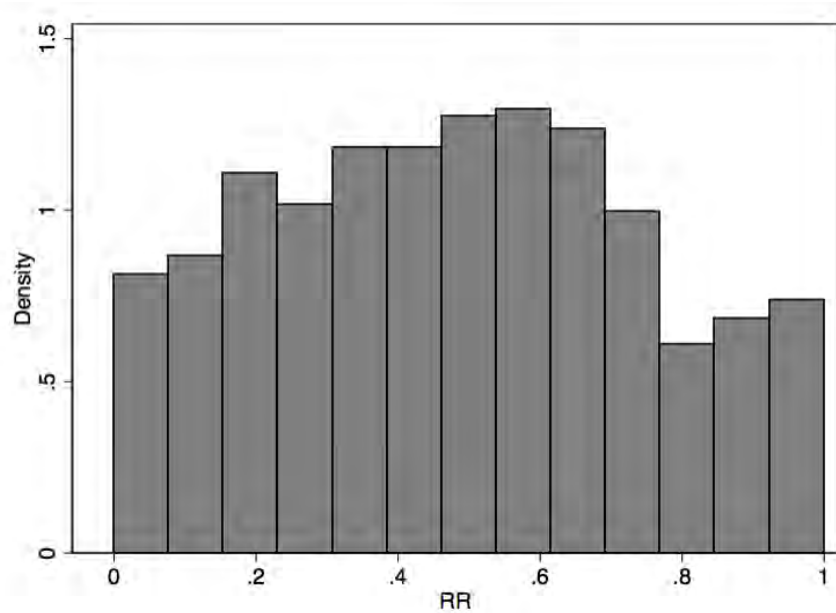
We recoded all of these variables so that higher values corresponded to greater racial resentment and combined them to form the scale running from 0 (low racial resentment) to 1 (high racial resentment). The mean of the scale is 0.61 and $SD = 0.21$. The racial resentment scale is reliable ($\alpha = 0.84$). Importantly, while work shows that racial resentment is stable, the fact that these measures were captured during the first panel wave, before Hurricane Sandy, allows us to rule out the possibility that Hurricane Sandy causes people's racial predispositions, which would confound our results.¹¹ The distribution of racial resentment in our MTurk sample is roughly normal, as Figure 2 demonstrates.

Racial resentment is typically negatively skewed in nationally representative samples, like the NES. Thus, our MTurk sample is more racially liberal than the general population. However, there is also a great deal of variance across levels of racial resentment in our sample. Finally, levels of racial resentment also do not significantly vary across the levels of sandy impact.¹²

¹¹ Relying on the racial resentment items administered during Wave 3 does not substantively change our results.

¹² The highest observed level of racial resentment is for those who were impacted at a high level by the storm (mean: 0.49) while the lowest level was for those who had a low level of impact (mean: 0.44). A ttest offers insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis that the means are the same ($diff = 0.05, p = 0.35$).

Figure 2: Distribution of Racial Resentment in MTurk Sample



In line with prior studies of racial resentment, all of our models include controls for age, education, income, gender, party identification, and ideology (Feldman & Huddy, 2005; Tesler & Sears, 2010). Age is coded in years while income and education are categorical variables, with higher values corresponding to more income and education, respectively. Gender is a binary indicator, with females coded as one and males as zero. The party and ideology variables are both seven-point scales. Party ranges from 1 (Very Strong Democrat) to 7 (Very Strong Republican), with leaners coded as partisans. Ideology ranges from 1 (Extremely Liberal) to 7 (Extremely Conservative). Each variable is scaled to run from 0 to 1. These items are drawn from Wave 1 of the survey. As with existing studies of racial resentment and racial spillover, we restrict our analyses to self-identified white respondents.

We break our analyses up into three parts. For part 1 we examine the effect of the Obama vs. Federal government prime on the degree to which racial resentment drives people's assessments of how each subject handled the response to Hurricane Sandy. Our second analysis

examines the impact of the Obama prime on the spillover of racial resentment into perceptions of how well FEMA handled the response to Hurricane Sandy. Our final analysis examines if Hurricane Sandy also impacted the link between racial resentment and perceptions of President Obama's handling of the crisis in Libya.

Results

Analysis 1 – Priming Racial Resentment

Our first test is of whether or not our experimental manipulation affects the tendency for people to rely on racial resentment when evaluating how well President Obama vs. the federal government handled the response to Hurricane Sandy. This analysis is important for two reasons. The first is to demonstrate that cuing people to think of President Obama actually primes racial resentment compared to having them think about the federal government. If we find that cuing President Obama does not prime racial resentment then this would raise concerns about our subsequent analyses on racial spillover. Second, there is a question about whether or not racial resentment will be brought to bear at all in evaluations about how any entity handled the response to Hurricane Sandy, especially given the general consensus across traditional political cleavages like party that the response was handled in an effective fashion.

Our expectation is that people who were asked how President Obama handled the response to Hurricane Sandy will rely more heavily on racial resentment than will those asked about how the federal government handled the response. To test this we construct a four-level dependent variable capturing assessments of how well President Obama/the federal government handled the response. Higher values correspond to more positive evaluations. Our racial resentment variable is coded such that higher values are more racially conservative, thus we expect a negative coefficient on racial resentment. Further, we expect that the marginal effect of

racial resentment will be greater in the Obama prime condition than in the federal government condition. We test this by specifying a two-way interaction between a respondent's racial resentment and a binary indicator for whether they were in the Obama condition (coded 0) or the federal government condition (coded 1). All models control for the previously discussed covariates. We use OLS as our estimation technique. Table 2 displays the results from the models.

The results in Table 2 illustrate a few interesting patterns. Column 1 shows that racial resentment is a significant predictor of the dependent variable while column 2 shows that this is still the case once controlling for treatment assignment. Further, while not our focus, overall evaluations are lower in the federal government condition than in the Obama condition. Column 3 includes a variable for the impact of Hurricane Sandy on respondents' locations, which has an insignificant relationship with the DV. Column 4 displays the results from the model specifying an interaction between racial resentment and treatment assignment. There is evidence of a significant interaction ($p = 0.05$), indicating that participants who received the Obama cue vs. the federal government cue differed in their use of racial resentment in their evaluations. The marginal effect of racial resentment on the dependent variable is -0.19 [95% CI: $-0.29, -0.09$] in the Obama condition and -0.07 [95% CI: $-0.17, 0.03$]. The marginal effect of racial resentment is almost three times stronger in the Obama cue condition than in the federal government condition. Moreover, the marginal effect of racial resentment in the federal government condition is not statistically different from zero ($p = 0.16$).

These results indicate that our racial prime does cue people's level of racial resentment. People primed to think about President Obama relied to a much greater degree to form their evaluations than did those asked about the federal government's handling of the crisis. It is also

worth noting that the effect of racial resentment for those in the federal government condition was statistically indistinguishable from zero, indicating that simply asking people about the federal government does not automatically prime racial resentment.

Table 2: Regression Results Predicting Evaluations of Federal Government/President Obama’s Handling of Hurricane Sandy

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Racial Resentment	-0.12*** (0.04)	-0.13*** (0.04)	-0.13*** (0.04)	-0.19*** (0.05)
Federal Gov’t Condition		-0.09*** (0.02)	-0.09*** (0.02)	-0.15*** (0.03)
Sandy Impact Intensity			-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Racial Resentment x Federal Gov’t Condition				0.12* (0.06)
Age	-0.10** (0.05)	-0.10** (0.04)	-0.10** (0.05)	-0.10** (0.05)
Education	-0.00 (0.05)	0.00 (0.05)	0.00 (0.05)	0.00 (0.05)
Income	0.08* (0.04)	0.08** (0.04)	0.09** (0.04)	0.10** (0.04)
Gender (Male)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
Party ID	-0.32*** (0.04)	-0.32*** (0.04)	-0.32*** (0.04)	-0.32*** (0.04)
Ideology	-0.11** (0.05)	-0.10* (0.05)	-0.10* (0.05)	-0.11** (0.05)
Constant	0.97*** (0.04)	1.01*** (0.04)	1.01*** (0.04)	1.04*** (0.04)
<i>N</i>	719	719	705	705
adj. <i>R</i> ²	0.315	0.337	0.335	0.337

Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Analysis 2 – Racial Spillover & Hurricane Sandy

Our second expectation is that the Obama cue condition (compared to the federal government cue condition) will affect how people evaluate FEMA’s handling of the response to Hurricane Sandy. In other words, cuing people to think about President Obama will lead to “spillover” of their racial animus from President Obama to FEMA. We further expect that this effect should be strongest for people who were impacted at higher levels by Hurricane Sandy. Because our expectations are rooted in how the effect of racial resentment varies as a function of exposure to the Obama treatment and the impact of Hurricane Sandy, we specified a model to examine if the effect of racial resentment varies across these conditions. Specifically, we used OLS to regress evaluations of FEMA on the following independent variables and controls:

$$F_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 RR_i + \beta_2 T_i + \beta_3 HS_i + \beta_4 (T * RR)_i + \beta_5 (RR * HS)_i + \beta_6 (T * HS)_i + \beta_7 (RR * T * HS)_i + \beta_8 Age_i + \beta_9 Edu_i + \beta_{10} Inc_i + \beta_{11} Gen_i + \beta_{12} Pid_i + \beta_{13} Ido_i + e_i \quad (1)$$

where i indexes respondent and F_i is support for FEMA, coded so that higher values correspond to more *positive* evaluations of how well FEMA handled the response to Hurricane Sandy. Our indicator of treatment, T_i , is coded 1 if someone was primed to think about the federal government and 0 if they were asked about President Obama. Our indicator Hurricane Sandy impact, HS_i , runs from 0 to 4. The most important feature of this model is that it allows for a differential effect of racial resentment by treatment and Hurricane impact, which allows us to test whether the effect of our treatment cuing people to think about President Obama varied depending on the impact of Hurricane Sandy in their area of residence.

Table 3 displays the results from equation 1 (model 4), and a series of lower-order model specifications. Model 1 shows that there is a strong direct effect of racial resentment, with those who are more prejudiced evaluating FEMA's handling of Sandy in a much more negative light.

Model 2 includes an indicator for treatment, which is statistically insignificant ($p = 0.30$). This shows that there is no direct effect of our treatment on evaluations, indicating that there is no evidence of racial spillover into evaluations of FEMA for the entire sample population. Model 3 introduces our indicator of hurricane impact. The coefficient on this variable indicates that people who were impacted by the storm were significantly more negative in their evaluations of FEMA, even when controlling for racial resentment.

In sum, models 1-3 provide evidence of a direct link between racial resentment and Sandy impact on evaluations of FEMA, but no evidence of our treatment exerting a direct effect on evaluations. Further, the interaction between condition assignment and racial resentment is insignificant when ignoring sandy impact. However, remember that our expectation is that cuing people to think about Obama should lead racial predispositions to "spillover" into evaluations of FEMA, but that this effect should be conditioned (moderated) by the degree to which someone was impacted by Hurricane Sandy. We test for this effect and find compelling evidence confirming our thesis.

Model 4 presents this model and the significant three-way interaction term indicates that the effect of the experimental condition on the impact of racial resentment on evaluations of FEMA varies across levels of Hurricane Sandy impact. The exact nature of the interaction is difficult to interpret. To illustrate the substantive effect, Table 4 displays the marginal effect of racial resentment on evaluations of FEMA broken out by sandy impact (none vs. highest) and the experimental condition.

**Table 3: Regression Results Predicting Evaluations of
FEMA's Handling of Hurricane Sandy**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Racial Resentment	-0.12*** (0.04)	-0.12*** (0.04)	-0.13*** (0.04)	-0.07 (0.06)
Federal Gov't Condition		-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.04 (0.04)
Sandy Impact Intensity			-0.02* (0.01)	0.01 (0.03)
Racial Resentment x Federal Gov't Condition				-0.12 (0.07)
Racial Resentment x Sandy Impact Intensity				-0.06 (0.04)
Sandy Impact Intensity x Federal Gov't Condition				-0.06* (0.03)
Racial Resentment x Impact x Condition				0.13** (0.06)
Age	-0.08* (0.05)	-0.08* (0.05)	-0.09** (0.05)	-0.09** (0.05)
Education	-0.05 (0.05)	-0.05 (0.05)	-0.05 (0.05)	-0.05 (0.05)
Income	0.09** (0.04)	0.10** (0.04)	0.10** (0.04)	0.10** (0.04)
Gender (Male)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
Party ID	-0.14*** (0.05)	-0.14*** (0.05)	-0.16*** (0.05)	-0.16*** (0.05)
Ideology	-0.10* (0.06)	-0.10* (0.06)	-0.09 (0.06)	-0.08 (0.06)
Constant	0.84*** (0.04)	0.85*** (0.04)	0.86*** (0.04)	0.83*** (0.04)
<i>N</i>	718	718	704	704
adj. <i>R</i> ²	0.149	0.149	0.152	0.153

Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Table 4: Marginal Effects of Racial Resentment on FEMA Evaluations

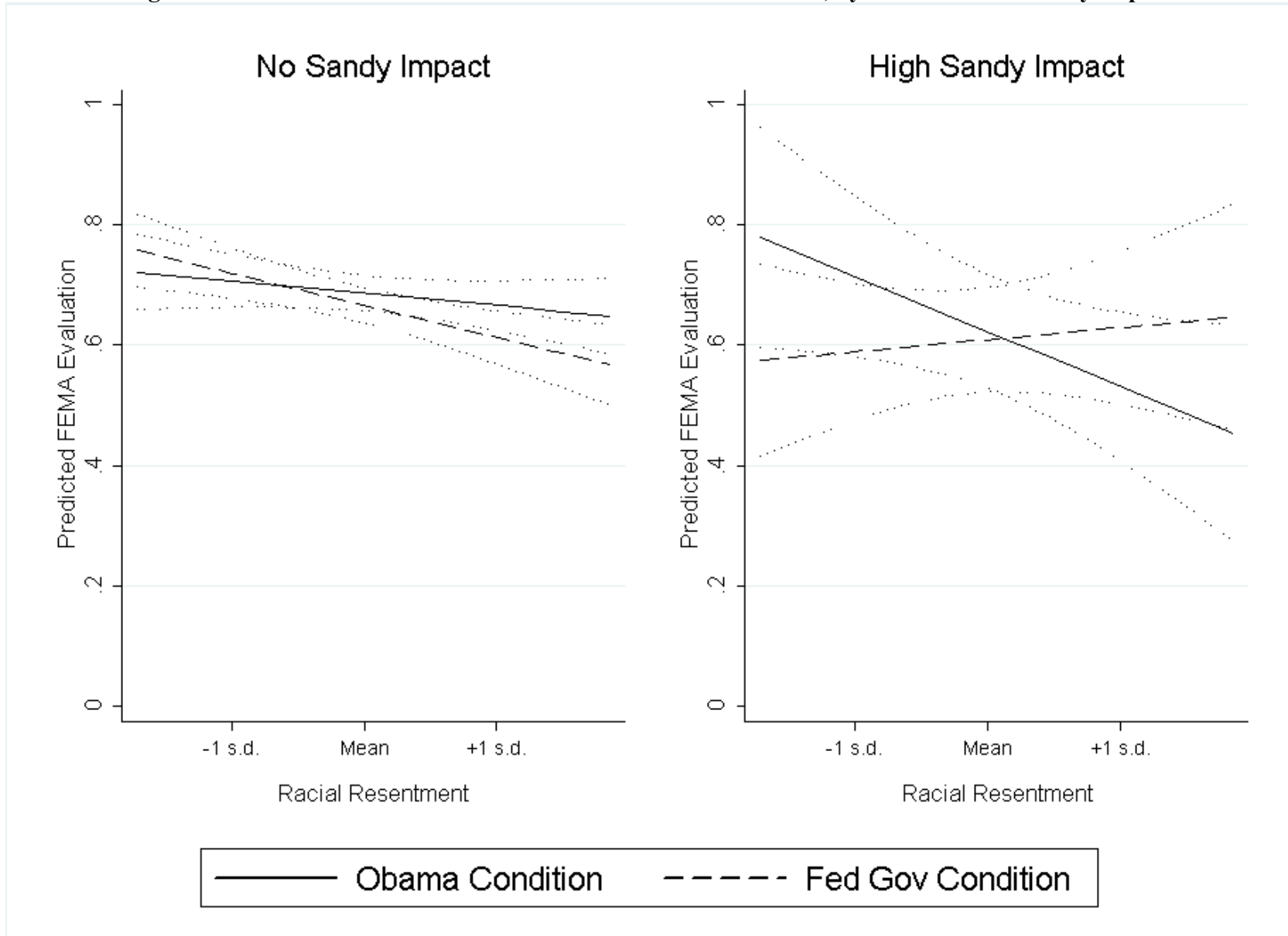
Federal Gov't Cue	-0.07
High Impact	[-0.18,0.04]
Federal Gov't Cue	-0.19
No Impact	[-0.30,-0.08]
Obama Cue	-0.32
High Impact	[-0.63,-0.01]
Obama Cue	0.07
No Impact	[-0.23,0.37]
<i>N</i>	704

95% confidence intervals in brackets

Table 4 demonstrates that the strongest marginal effect of racial resentment is for people who were highly impacted by the storm and who were primed to think about President Obama. For instance, the effect of racial resentment for those impacted by the storm and who received the Obama cue is roughly four times higher than the effect of racial resentment for those who received the federal government cue. An interesting pattern also emerges for those who were not impacted by the storm, namely that racial resentment is a relatively strong predictor in the federal government condition but not in the Obama condition, however the difference between the marginal effects is insignificant. To better illustrate the range of these effects, Figure 2 displays the predicted values of FEMA evaluation across the treatments and Sandy impact zones.

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Figure 2: Predicted FEMA Evaluations Across Racial Resentment, by Condition and Sandy Impact



The first panel in figure 2 demonstrates the lack of a difference in the effect of racial resentment for those respondents who were not impacted by Hurricane Sandy. Panel 2 demonstrates, however, that the predicted evaluation of FEMA varies heavily based on if someone received the Obama cue vs. the federal government cue when highly impacted by Hurricane Sandy. For those impacted by sandy and who received the Obama cue, higher levels of racial resentment translate to depressed approval of FEMA's handling of the disaster. However, those who received the federal government cue were relatively *more* favorable of FEMA's handling of the disaster across levels of racial resentment.

In all, this is strong evidence for our argument that that racial resentment can spillover into evaluations of government institutions, but that this effect is conditioned by people's experiences. In this case, it is only those people who were in regions directly impacted by the storm who saw their resentment spillover into a ostensibly non-racial area.

Analysis 3 – Racial Spillover Into Perceptions of the Benghazi Crisis

Our final analysis addresses the potential for Hurricane Sandy to impact spillover in other areas, namely people's perceptions of the President's handling of the crisis in Benghazi. A potential concern that could be raised with our prior sets of analyses is that the disaster may make racial attitudes chronically accessible in many domains, not just ones related to Hurricane Sandy. Our argument, on the other hand, is that spillover in this case is domain specific: we would expect to see Hurricane Sandy increase racial spillover in areas related to the disaster, namely FEMA, due to the impact of disasters on the accessibility of information. If we find that this same group of people is also more inclined toward racial spillover in other areas as well this could raise concerns about the relevance of our findings.

To address this concern, we rely on a question tapping people's views on how well President Obama handled the crisis in Libya. A few points to note before we discuss our analyses and results. Because our question specifically mentions President Obama, this should prime respondents to rely on racial animus when forming evaluations of the crisis. Second, because the question contains a prime already, we do not expect that our treatment should have an impact on evaluations. Our approach to this analysis is similar to that in the previous analysis, however we now substitute in our dependent variable related to Libya for the FEMA DV used earlier. Again, higher values on the DV correspond to more positive evaluation of Obama's handling of the crisis. Results are show in Table 5.

The results in column 1 indicate that racial resentment does impact people's perceptions of Obama's handling of the crisis in Libya. As we suspect, there is also no impact of our federal government vs. Obama prime experimental condition, presumably because asking directly about President Obama in the Libya question primes racial animus. Finally, the third column shows that people's evaluations do not depend on the degree to which they were impacted by the Hurricane. Most relevant for our purposes is that there does not seem to be any relationship between the impact of Hurricane Sandy, the experimental conditions, and levels of racial resentment. As further confirmation of this, the marginal effect of racial resentment on evaluations of Obama and Benghazi are shown in Table 6.

Table 5: Regression Results Predicting Evaluations of President Obama's Handling of Benghazi

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Racial Resentment	-0.10** (0.04)	-0.10** (0.04)	-0.10** (0.04)	-0.11* (0.06)
Federal Gov't Condition		0.00 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	0.00 (0.04)
Sandy Impact Intensity			0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.03)
Racial Resentment x Federal Gov't Condition				0.01 (0.08)
Racial Resentment x Sandy Impact Intensity				-0.01 (0.05)
Sandy Impact Intensity x Federal Gov't Condition				-0.00 (0.04)
Racial Resentment x Impact x Condition				0.01 (0.07)
Age	-0.10** (0.05)	-0.10** (0.05)	-0.10** (0.05)	-0.10** (0.05)
Education	-0.11** (0.05)	-0.11** (0.05)	-0.11** (0.05)	-0.11** (0.05)
Income	0.02 (0.04)	0.02 (0.04)	0.04 (0.05)	0.04 (0.05)
Gender (Male)	-0.04** (0.02)	-0.04** (0.02)	-0.04** (0.02)	-0.04** (0.02)
Party ID	-0.42*** (0.05)	-0.42*** (0.05)	-0.40*** (0.05)	-0.40*** (0.05)
Ideology	-0.18*** (0.06)	-0.18*** (0.06)	-0.19*** (0.06)	-0.19*** (0.06)
Constant	0.86*** (0.04)	0.85*** (0.04)	0.85*** (0.04)	0.85*** (0.05)
<i>N</i>	721	721	707	707
adj. <i>R</i> ²	0.394	0.393	0.391	0.388

Standard errors in parentheses * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Table 6 demonstrates that the marginal effect of racial resentment on the Libya crisis does not vary in a statistically significant way across any of the four conditions examined in the second set of analyses in the paper. This provides confirmatory evidence of the process we argue is taking place between evaluations of FEMA, racial animus, racial primes, and level of impact from Hurricane Sandy.

Table 6: Marginal Effects of Racial Resentment on Benghazi Evaluations

Federal Gov't Cue High Impact	-0.11 [-0.22,0.01]
Federal Gov't Cue No Impact	-0.10 [-0.22,0.02]
Obama Cue High Impact	-0.15 [-0.48,0.18]
Obama Cue No Impact	-0.09 [-0.42,0.23]
<i>N</i>	707

95% confidence intervals in brackets

Conclusion

A significant body of research demonstrates that subtle racial cues can lead people to rely on their racial predispositions when forming candidate evaluations (Mendelberg, 2001) and views on key political issues (Tesler & Sears, 2010; Tesler, 2012; 2015). Our research extends this work in a few key ways.

First, we provide compelling evidence that racial predispositions spillover, not only to candidate evaluations and policy opinions, but also to people's evaluations of ostensibly non-racial government institutions, like FEMA. This is a key finding because people's support for government programs hinge on their evaluations of how well government responds to crises and events (Malhotra & Kuo, 2008). If people can be led to root evaluations of political institutions

in their racial animus this raises serious questions about the source of people's beliefs about the legitimacy of American democratic institutions.

We demonstrate a unique confluence of events that lead to just such a reliance on racial animosity. Crystallizing, linking events raise latent considerations to the forefront of voters' minds and, given these events, racial primes lead individuals to sample certain considerations and, in the case of Hurricane Sandy, rely on racial prejudice when evaluating FEMA. By combining a subtle experimental manipulation with the occurrence of Hurricane Sandy, we leverage the internal validity advantages of experimental designs with the external validity of a substantive real-world event.

This is not to say that our study is without drawbacks. Our sample is not representative, though, like other MTurk samples, it mirrors the US population to a much greater degree than other convenience samples (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012; Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Mason & Suri, 2012). Another shortcoming is the relatively small number of people whom we are able to categorize as being affected by Hurricane Sandy. On the one hand, ideally we would have a larger number of participants who were impacted by Hurricane Sandy; however, our results are robust even with the small number of people in the impact zone.

A common narrative surrounding Hurricane Sandy was that it solidified Barack Obama's lead over his rival Mitt Romney, and helped to shepherd him into the White House for a second term (although some scholars have challenged the true electoral impact of Hurricane Sandy, see Velez & Martin, 2013).¹³ Regardless, the President was lauded for successfully managing the

¹³ <http://www.people-press.org/2012/11/04/obama-gains-edge-in-campaigns-final-days/>

federal government's response to the crisis, with two-thirds of Romney's supporters giving the President favorable ratings.¹⁴ Despite this, our research demonstrates that the salience of President Obama's connection to Sandy had unintended consequences. By linking the President to Hurricane Sandy relief efforts, those most impacted by Hurricane Sandy were susceptible to racial primes that led them to ground their institutional evaluations in racial resentment.

Our results suggest that scholars would be wise to consider the subtle ways in which racial animosity can be connected to political evaluations. Although there is no theoretical reason FEMA evaluations should be based on racial attitudes, individual experiences and subtle political cues can combine to tie institutional evaluations to racial animus. President Obama often presents an explicit racial cue for citizens, and this can influence policies that are intricately tied to his political identity, such as health care reform. As the study of racial spillover moves forward, researchers must not forget the indirect ways in which racial attitudes can influence political attitudes. This research demonstrates one instance where the political environment strongly (but inadvertently) connected racial attitudes to government evaluations. It is highly unlikely that this is an isolated effect.

¹⁴ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2012/10/31/wapo-abc-tracking-poll-high-marks-for-president-obama-on-hurricane-sandy-response/>

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