

Identity Fusion: An Examination of Unions and Political Behavior

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Recently research on identity fusion, the blending of an individual's personal-self and social-self with that of a group, has attempted to explain why a person engages in unconventional political participation (Swann et al. 2009). Group members with fused identities differ from other identities in that rather than undergoing depersonalization to become a prototypical member of the group, they retain their personal identity which makes them more likely to participate in extreme pro-group actions (Swann et al. 2009). Unions offer a distinctive group to understand identity fusion within the United States. However, it remains to be seen whether fused union members have increased level of political participation over nonfused members. This paper examines data from the 2011 Cooperative Congressional Election Study of 1,000 participants. The findings do not support union identity as a trigger for political behavior, but suggest that having a fused union identity can trigger positive results for union specific issues.. The implications for this hold that highly connected group members show attitudes that will favor the group's political interests.

Identity fusion is a relatively new concept to psychology. It aims to understand why a group member would go above and beyond member expectations for his or her group. This paper takes the model of identity fusion, the combining of personal and social self, and applies it to union identity. As members form groups and gain group identities, fusion argues that some members retain their personal self within the social self. They become prone to extreme behaviors. In this context the concept of political behavior and political attitudes as outlets for fused union members are tested.

Gaining a Group Identity

As social beings, humans tend to gravitate towards people who share common characteristics, values, or goals. Eventually these common goals translate to create common groups. Those members objectively belonging to a particular social group are seen as group members (Conover 1988). However, for one to be in a group psychologically, the group must be subjectively important in determining one's actions (Turner 1987). The group in which a person is a member is considered an ingroup. The groups in which a person is not a member of are considered outgroups.

Group members consequently act differently based on their position of either an ingroup member or outgroup member.

Politically, the ingroup member must have a strong attachment to the group before any action will be made. Group consciousness goes past being an objective ingroup supporter and takes membership to the next level. Members who are conscious about their group have a politicized awareness or an ideology regarding the group's position in society in addition to a commitment to collective action for the groups' interest (Conover 1988). For example, a woman might consider herself a union member based on her job, but not take any further action towards that group. But by having a group consciousness she will know what issues affect laborers in the workplace or in politics. Several authors have found that those members who strongly identify with their group will favor political outputs that favor their group (Fowler and Kam 2007; Conover 1988). For example, the group conscious woman would be likely to show her support at a rally or encourage new laws on labor rights to be passed.

In psychology, these group membership relationships have been broken down into several theories. One of these is the social identity theory by Tajfel and Turner (1979). It is here that a person has awareness, (different from objectiveness) that he or she is a member of the group (Stets and Burke 2000). This consciousness then allows that person to see their group as an ingroup and compare it to other groups (Stets and Burke 2000). The union member may form a boundary between union members and non-unionized employees or co-workers. Turner (1987) explains that people are likely to evaluate themselves in positive way and thus, when they join a group, that same positive attitude translates to the group. Furthermore, to maintain the positive identity of one's group, one must compare it favorably to other relevant groups (Turner 1987). It follows that a union member will see union members more positively than nonunion members or will place his or her union above other unions. Conover (1988) similarly suggests that people who react to political issues

in group-terms will favor their ingroup over an outgroup position as long as the group cues are apparent and salient. Social identity theory thus emphasizes the boundaries that form between similar groups and how one identifies within those boundaries.

Group membership theory expanded through Turner (1987) with the introduction of self-categorization theory. It developed out of social identity theory, but has become a theory on its own. Self-categorization recognizes a continuum; at one end of the scale a person sees themselves as a unique person and on the other end they see themselves in the ingroup category (Turner 1987). In self-categorization theory, members who move from personal identity to a group identity gain a willingness to model one's attitudes and behavior based on the typical group member's attitudes and behaviors (Turner 1987). Members begin to see an increasing similarity or interchangeability between their self-identity and other ingroup members (Turner 1987).

As a member gains a stronger group identity, self-categorization theory maintains that group members undergo depersonalization or self-stereotyping. Turner writes that "depersonalization, however, is not a loss of individual identity... it is the change from the personal to the social level of identity" (1987, 51). For example, a new employee joins a unionized factory. He may redefine himself in terms of a union member and work to become more like the other union members by attending union meetings or paying a yearly fee. Overtime, he may see himself as an average union member. Self-categorization says that members will be evaluated positively the more they become a prototypical member of the group, conforming to actions and behaviors of the group (Turner 1987). The theory works to explain a typical group member's participation.

However, not all group members are average. Some members go above and beyond to protect the group. These early theories cannot explain why a union member would write to his or her member of Congress or confront the employer directly when the normal group conducts business through formal meetings. Even more, they cannot explain highly extreme actions like why

union members would kidnap their boss and deprive him of sleep, as has been done recently in China (Watt 2013), or throw a bomb into a crowd of police officers such as was done in the Haymarket Riot of 1886 (Green 2006). These group members, under high stress conditions have gone above or beyond what the typical group expectations may be.

Identity Fusion: The Personal and Social Combine

Recently a group of researchers have pinpointed a distinguishing trait of group members that have different tendencies than previously identified group characteristics in social identity theory or self-categorization. The theory of identity fusion looks at members who are highly aligned with the group (similar to self-categorization), yet will act on their own. Swann et al. (2009) describes the critical difference between fusion and identification as one between losing and retaining one's personal identity. In identification, the member theoretically undergoes depersonalization. They become a typical group member who can be substituted into any position at any time. When fused, however, a group member retains his or her personal identity and thus remains capable of personal behaviors within the group (Swann et al. 2009). Under this theory, someone who merely identifies with a group will obey leadership, follow commands and generally do what they are told, but a fused member will act on his own to help the group out. This just might explain why a union member would throw a bomb at the police or kidnap their employer.

The boundaries of identity fusion remain unclear, but several qualities have been defined. Identity fusion has been described as a combining of personal and social identities. In other words, conceptions of oneself as an individual become fused with one's identity as a group member (Swann et al. 2009). A fused union member, for example, might socially take on the identity of "union," but his personal self has been devoted to that title as well. Unlike his fellow union members, who see the union as a social outlet and can accept an offence (such as a bad news story) at the union with distance (not take it personally), the fused member takes any insult to the group as a personal one as

well (Gomez et al 2011b). The personal self is completely a part of the social self. The key of fusion, however, is that a fused person will retain their personal identity and use that to shape the group (Swann et al. 2009). This means that a fused member will act upon his own will for the group rather than act only when the group tells him to. This allows for greater motivations for the fused person to act upon.

Members who are fused to their groups show a higher relationship bond with their specific group. Gomez et al. (2011b) describes the relationship as familial in a sense because of its strong bonds. They go on to describe that this powerful connectedness leads one to believe that all members are functionally equivalent (Gomez et al. 2011b). Because fused members believe that all members are similar in function, they believe that other group members would be willing to make the same sacrifices that they would. If a fused member believes that he would risk his life for the group, he would translate this expectation to other group members as well (Gomez et al. 2011b). Fused members see the group more as a family and thus are more attached and willing to act for the group.

Identity fusion differs from social identity with its permeable boundaries. Social identity theory proposes that all interactions are located on an interpersonal-intergroup continuum (Turner 1987). This says that people are thinking for either their personal self or social self at specific points in time. Conversely, identity fusion allows the personal self and social self to move back and forth fluidly (Swann et al. 2012). The group and the self are so intertwined that they become interchangeable at any time. The line between self and group is permeable because self and group conceptions are porous to each other. This boundary allows fused members to use their personal agency to favor group-centered actions rather than solely for personal actions.

In one of the very first studies on fusion, the triggers of personal and social identity were tested. By indicating the participant's willingness to fight for themselves, Swann et al. (2009)

activated participants' *personal* identities. In parallel, *social* identities were triggered by participants' indicating their willingness to fight for their group (Swann et al. 2009). The results showed that fused members showed a similar response to both personal and social activations whereas nonfused participants were less willing to die for the group when their social identities were not activated. Swann et al. (2009) assert that this confirms the hypothesis that personal and social identities of fused members are functionally equivalent. If a fused member can be activated to action by either personal motivations or social ones, he shows a different relationship to the group than has previously been explored.

Swann et al. (2010a) believe the difference between identification and fusion is the missing link to explain why someone would die for their group. They find that fused members of a group will be more willing to make extreme actions to protect their group. The researchers find that the majority of fused participants preferred to sacrifice themselves rather than let a trolley kill five in-group members (Swann et al. 2010). In another test they found that fused members would even push another group member aside and be killed themselves rather than letting the group member die (Swann et al. 2010a). Although these tests were proctored online they reveal a members attitude toward his or her group. These radical actions are found more in fused group members than those members who simply identify with their group.

Several other studies have moved to understand what may trigger fused members to act for their group. Swann et al. (2010b) found that by increasing the arousal of participants, fused members were more willing to act on behalf of their group. They measured for endorsement of extreme actions, such as fighting or dying for the group, willingness to donate personal funds to the group, and speediness of pro-group motor responses. The second study looks at the effects of ostracism from the group. A normal reaction to being ostracized from a group may be to show little desire to work for or interact with that group again. However, Gomez et al. (2011a) find that fused group

members respond to ostracism by making actions in favor of the group (ex. giving money). Fused members were more willing to support extreme actions after being ostracized than when they were included into the group (Gomez et al. 2011A). A fused member is so attached to the group that he or she will fight even more to stay a part of that group or to show his or her loyalty. This same willingness to act in favor of the group was not found in nonfused members of the group.

Current Boundaries

In the previous research done on identity fusion, several variables have been recurring which limit the effectiveness of the results. The studies done by Swann, Gomez and colleagues have used a similar group type and scope in each of their studies. The group type has predominantly been Spanish nationals. In their tests, a native of Spain will be asked to what degree they identify to the group of Spain. Swann et al. (2009) explains that participants from Spain tested for fusion at a rate almost double that of participants from America for each respective group's nationality. The studies therefore predominantly test Spaniards. However, this is problematic because only Spanish people have been tested for fusion and they have only been tested for Spanish or European nationality. This limits the examination to a single regime type of the Spanish. Even more, there is no variance in the cultural awareness from nation to nation. Fusion could be a result of some regime-related relationship rather than emanating on its own.

Secondly, the scope of the tests limits the utility as well. Swann et al. (2009) question why a terrorist would risk his or her life for their group. The study emphasizes why or when a group member would die or fight for their group. This specific questioning restricts the results to terrorist group situations, but terrorist groups only make up a small population of societal groups. They are most often the exception rather than the norm. Unfortunately, the group tested and the groups the results intend to explain are both small and limited. The theory of identity fusion ought to withstand tests in groups of different types and scopes to strengthen its soundness.

Political Behavior of Unions

Unions in the United States offer an alternative group type and scope to examine identity fusion. A union, as used in this context, is a group formed to improve labor standards. Working men and women join together to protect their rights as workers and to strive for better conditions, pay, or benefits. Unions differ greatly in nature from terrorists groups or other radical groups. Labor unions are also a large group, making up more than 11 percent of wage and salary workers in the U.S. (US Bureau of Labor Statistics 2013). In 2012, 7.3 million employees belonged to a public sector union, while 7 million union workers were in the private sector creating a total near 14.3 million union members (US Bureau of Labor Statistics 2013). This means that the scope is still large enough to test from, yet the group type is smaller and more distinct from a national scope.

What then, does it mean to be a group member of a labor union? Hammer (2003) describes that “people join unions both to rectify dissatisfying circumstances and to increase the gains from employment.” However, there are economic costs to each member that include union dues and the potential loss of income during times of strikes (Hammer 2003). Also, one may not be required to join a union, but, if one does not work in a Right to Work state, they may be required to pay union fees (National Right). The employee must balance the option of joining or not. He or she must balance the cost and benefits that come with joining a union membership. Furthermore, there exists to some extent a political life within unions through union elections and disagreements between labor and management. The boundaries between union life and political life are imprecise, but observable.

In addition, unions represent an acquired identity rather than an ascribed identity. An ascribed identity is one that is assigned by chance, with no choice in the matter (Huddy 2003). For example, a Spanish citizen cannot change their place of birth. They are inherently a Spanish citizen. Race, gender, and age exemplify other ascribed identities that cannot be easily changed. Unions on

the other hand are acquired identities; they are adopted by choice (Huddy 2003). Huddy points out that a stronger sense of group commitment is found to occur when an identity is acquired rather than ascribed (Huddy 2003). Therefore, union behavior may be more apparent than a Spanish citizen's behavior. Although this may be difficult to test, having an acquired identity gives unions another characteristic apart from nationality.

Previous research on union participation has identified several key factors of a union member's likelihood to participate in politics. Delaney et al. (1988) finds that union members are more likely to vote than non-members. They find that through educational programs and peer pressure among union members, unions can affect their members voting habits (Delaney et al. 1988). However, the effectiveness of this notion is uncertain. Sousa (1993) claims that unions still have some political capacity even though they lack the ability to make an impact on presidential elections. Although their political power may not be very strong, the union may still translate the practice of voting to its members.

The group environment may contribute to other political behaviors as well. Radcliff (2000) suggests that the sense of collective purpose and solidarity that comes in a union setting may contribute to more participation. The nature of unions gives it a particular identity. In one study it was reported that almost all the union member respondents had received the union newspaper and voted in the last union election (Kolchin and Hyclack 1984). Not only does the sense of a group give union members a political advantage, but physical objects such as newspapers may contribute to it as well. A study by Shepard and Masters (1959) found that a majority of United Auto Workers (in 1956) indicated that they trust the voting recommendation of labor groups, believe that labor should be accorded more influence in government and think that it is o.k. for labor to endorse candidates. Although outdated, this study exemplifies the intrinsic political nature of unions. Through collective

voting and participation in union or national elections, these authors have suggested that union members have a higher likelihood to participate in politics than nonunion members.

Others found that certain factors account for greater political participation. These include the economy, political climate, election type, company profitability, unionization history, individual's race and gender (Bronfenbrenner 1997) along with higher wages, skilled jobs, job dissatisfaction, lack of job mobility, and working day shift (Kolchin 1984). In addition Radcliff (2001) argues that election-day turnout often varies based on strength of the union.

These factors account for outside or physical forces. However identity fusion is different because it attempts to understand internally or mentally why someone would want to participate in political activities if their group is mainly for the purpose of personal or work-related objectives.

A Model to Assess Fusion

This study analyzes group members in relation to their occupational group, the union. Unions in the United States offer a different framework to understand identity fusion. Instead of dying or fighting for one's group to advance a terrorist cause (as inferred in Swann et al. 2009), group advancements for unions often come out of political situations. By testing a union member's disposition to participate in political behaviors, one can see a willingness to act in a pro-group behavior, yet by oneself. These political activities help advance the group outside of the group setting. Those union members who have stronger connections to the group are likely to have a greater interest in what is going on in government and political affairs that could potentially affect the union.

The category used to test this interest and knowledge is called political sophistication. Someone who has high political sophistication has been described as possessing many political beliefs, spanning from a variety of policy areas (Lewis-Beck et al. 2011). To form sophistication, factors including knowledge, information, and interest combine. A sophisticated voter, for example,

would know what parties are in office, would receive information on a daily basis, and be interested in that information. A political sophistication index would then show the breadth of this information.

It follows that a fused union member would have incentive to be more politically sophisticated. As seen in fusion (Gomez 2011b), a threat to the group could be taken personal for a fused member. To keep a lookout from outside threats, a fused member would need to pay attention to what is happening outside of the union that might involve potential harm. Watching the nightly news for updates on the economy would be of interest to a fused union member. The initial intake of information compounds with further interest and involvement. The more involved a union member is in the interest of his or her union, the more likely they are to know and be interested in the problems that are going on in public and government affairs. Lastly, highly fused members should show a stronger knowledge of those working in government. Their interest is in protecting the union and the union's rights. The stronger party in office or legislature would therefore have a large effect on a fused union member. Democrats tend to favor unions and union protection more so than Republicans (Freeman 2003). Having a Democratic majority in the state or federal legislature therefore becomes a valuable piece of information for a fused union member. These factors of information, interest, and knowledge combine to form political sophistication. They also lead to the first hypothesis:

H₁: Fused union members will have a positive correlation with a political sophistication index.

Another form of political activity is the act of voting. The fusion theory (Swann et al. 2009) says that fused members can be triggered by both personal and social cues. If the group suggests that its members perform an action, fused members may be more likely than nonfused to perform that action, especially if that action furthers the group's cause. Fused members retain their personal

agency to act within the group and outside the group. It is for these reasons that a fused union member will be more likely to vote or be registered to vote than a nonfused union member. To clarify, if a union highly recommends that its union members go out and vote for candidate John Smith, fused members will see that as a direct cue. Nonfused members may get this cue as well, but they are only triggered by their social agency (peer pressure from fellow union members). Fused members may want to go out and vote because the union recommended it, but they may also do so because they know the issues and what they mean for the union. Fused members are triggered twice and therefore:

H₂: A fused union member will have a higher score on a vote index than a nonfused member.

Nonfused members have less of an interest in protecting their group by using outside avenues and will choose not to participate as greatly as fused members will. They do not share the same bonds that fused members have with their group. The fused participants have both personal and group agency making them more likely to act outside of the group. Therefore, members who are fused to their union will be more likely than nonfused members to participate in political behavior.

With fusion to unions, the level of participation in political behavior will increase. In other words, with an escalated level of one's status in a union to "fused," a group member will be more willing to participate in political behavior. Those who have not risen to the status of "fused" will be less likely to participate in political behavior.

Yet political behavior is a broad topic. For the final hypothesis, it will be observed whether or not fused members need some sort of trigger to more specific issues. For a fused union identity to become apparent the member needs some sort of trigger. In Swann et al. (2010) the trigger is a trolley dilemma. Several group members are about to be run over by a trolley. The fused member, now triggered by this life threatening (yet theoretical) event must make a decision to act. He has

been triggered by the gravity of the situation, but also by the fact that fellow group members are involved. Although voting differs greatly from sacrificing oneself, the importance here is something is needed to activate a person into doing something, or thinking a specific way. Relating this back to union members, the act of going out to vote does not always trigger thoughts of “union” or what it means to be in a union. For example, watching the nightly news does not trigger a union identity. However, if a news story came on about the state of the economy or whether Congress is voting to raise taxes, that “union” identity may be triggered. The union member may be worried about his job prospects (and his union identity) and thus be more in-tune to the conversation. These deductions lead to the final hypothesis that is:

H₃: Fused union members should show stronger support for union-specific issues than nonfused members.

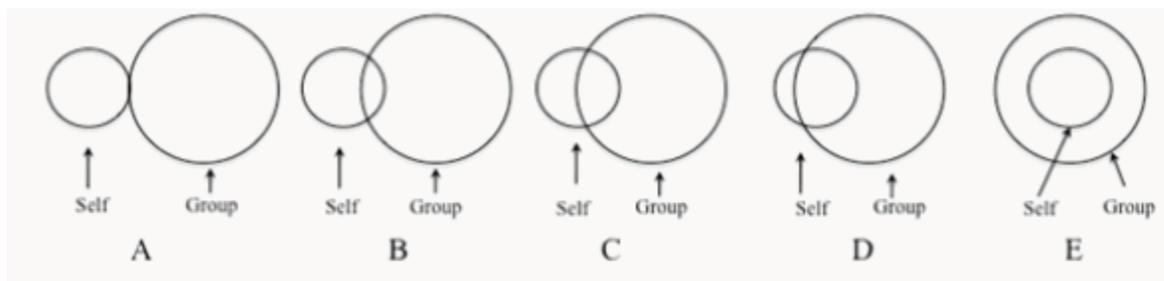
The first two hypotheses look for broad political behavior dynamics while the third hypothesis tests for a more specific set of issues and attitudes. The combination of these would show that fused members show stronger political behavior as well as possess stronger union-specific attitudinal beliefs than nonfused members.

Measuring Identity Fusion

The data for this analysis comes from the 2011 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES). 50,000+ people participated in a national stratified sample selected by matched random samples. The online sample, run through You Gov/Polimetrix is broken up into two parts. The first is made up of Common Content and asks approximately 30,000 participants. The second uses Team Content where teams design a questionnaire that goes out to subset of 1,000 people. This paper looks at one of those subsets of 1,000 people. Although not as large as the entire survey, the subset still allows for reliable statistical analysis. The specific subset to be analyzed asks about identity fusion in relation to a variety of other questions.

Several techniques have been used to test for identity fusion. The first and most widely used has been a pictorial chart made of pairs of overlapping circles. Swann et al. (2009) modified and adjusted the chart to measure one's relationship to their group (Figure 1). The first circle represents the "self" while the second represents the "group." Fused group members would place themselves in the final sequence where in the "self" circle is completely within the "group" circle. Since Swann et al. (2009) first used the scale for fusion; it has been used in several other studies by Swann et al. 2010A, Swann et al. 2010B, Gomez et al 2011A and Gomez et al 2011.

Figure 1. Measure of Identity Fusion



From "Swann, William B. Jr, Ángel Gómez, D. C. Seyle, J. F. Morales, and Carmen Huici. 2009. "Identity Fusion: The Interplay of Personal and Social Identities in Extreme Group Behavior." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 96 (5) (05):995-1011.

In response to the pictorial scale, Gomez et al. (2011b) created a verbal scale to trigger some of the same feelings of fusion found in the pictorial scale. This chart aimed at triggering a national response to identity, similar to the outcome desired in Swann et al. (2009). The new verbal scale was also created in comparison to identification scales. To test fusion, Gomez et al. used phrases like "I am one with my country" or "I am strong because of my country." In comparison, a scale by Mael and Ashforth (1989) was used to test for identification. They used phrases like "when someone criticizes my country, it feels like a personal insult" or "when someone praises my country, it feels like a personal compliment." In the first set of phrases, the person is one with the country; there is no space between them. The self and group become one. However, in the second set of phrases

there remains some distance between the self and group. This shows an identification, but not fusion with the group. The authors conclude that identity fusion and identification are two separate constructs.

To operationalize this study, union members are first identified out of a group of selected participants. The pictorial scale first used by Swann et al. (2009, Figure 1) will serve to identify those group members who see themselves as “fused” to the group. In previous tests, only those who pick letter “E” (in Figure 1.) are considered fused. However, the aim here is to understand what sets highly attached members apart from others. Therefore “fused” members in this study are those who pick letter “D” or “E” in Figure 1, or a similar configuration, signifying their strong connection towards the group. Nonfused members will pick any of the other alignments. This measure of fusion becomes the independent variable for the study (for the exact questioning, see Appendix A). A verbal scale like the one in Gomez et al. (2011b) will not be used at this time.

To test fusion and union participation, two variables were first created. The first variable is political sophistication index which included items of information, knowledge and interest. A person with higher political sophistication will be better informed, receive more knowledge about current events, and lastly be interested in those things. Someone higher up on the political sophistication scale shows awareness and attentiveness to political conditions. The second variable is a vote index which included the voting status of 2008 and 2010 as well as registration status. A person higher on the scale will have participated in more elective activities than someone lower on the scale. If the hypothesis of fused members being more politically active runs true, one would see a positive correlation with both the vote index and the political sophistication index.

To look at attitudinal differences, several items were analyzed. The first variable asks the participant his or her view of the economy over the past year. A range of responses from “gotten much better” to “gotten much worse” tell what the general trend is for specific groups. The next

asks what the respondent would prefer Congress to do when it is running a deficit. Options include cutting domestic spending, cutting military spending, or raising taxes. Finally the respondents were asked whether they would support or oppose a stimulus bill. Together these question will make up the union-specific issues and test for different attitudes among fused union members and other groups.

A combination of OLS regression and logistic regressions will be used to account for the control variables and to analyze the significance of fusion. Control variables account for possible differences in race, age, income etc. (See Appendix A for complete list).

Data and Analysis

The results of the first test, an OLS regression of the voter index, can be found in Table 1. It shows a plethora of indices one might expect to see in a voter index. It shows that the older a person is, the more likely he or she will vote, or be registered to vote. Similarly as income and education increase a person is more likely to vote. Someone without a high school education is actually less likely to vote. The gender variable tells us that males are more likely to vote or be registered than females. Strong partisans show higher likelihoods of voter participation over weak partisans. One would expect to see all of these things happening in a vote index. However, the Born Again Religion showed up as insignificant. One would expect to see greater turnout from this group. More surprisingly is that our variable of fusion showed up as insignificant as well.

In the second OLS regression performed, also in Table 1, the political sophistication variable was tested. Once again, many results showed up as expected. For example, the older a person is, the more politically sophisticated they become. Similarly with more income, comes greater sophistication. Males over females were more likely to have a wide political knowledge and education did not become significant until some college or a 4-yr college education was achieved. Also notable was the fact that strong Democrats and strong Republicans showed up as significant.

Someone who says they are a strong partisan is generally more knowledgeable of these issues and political system. In this regression, Born Again Religion failed to show up as significant. Once more, the fusion variable failed to show up as insignificant.

Both of these models exemplify the normal trends for voting and political sophistication, however they do not find being fused to a union as having a significant effect. This specific test could not support either H_1 or H_2 . However, these two hypotheses aimed at measuring behavior, the third hypothesis is distinctive because it aims at measuring specific attitudes for fused union members. In addition, the behavior measures may have been lacking a trigger.

Fused members are more willing to look out for their group (Gomez 2011b) and thus be more aware of what is going on that may affect the group. However, in order for the fusion to the group to become evident, a trigger must be involved. Union members do not always think of themselves as only a union member. For example, sometimes they may group themselves into the category of “Mom” or “Dad.” In this way their union identity may not be at the forefront, even if they do feel deeply intertwined with the union.

Three more tests were done to examine this premise. A combination of OLS regressions and logistic regressions were used to look at possible triggers to union members and what their attitudes show about union-specific issues. The results can be found in Tables 2 and 3. The first of these (Table 2) was an OLS regression that measured how respondents felt the nation’s economy had progressed over the previous year. Most found that the economy was doing much better. Those with a post-graduate education and blacks felt the economy was doing much better. But with age came the opposite effect. The older a person was, the less they were likely to feel the economy was doing better off. The more money the person made increased the likelihood that they would believe the economy to be getting better. Most notable was that fused union members also felt the economy was doing better off. The results showed strong significance for fused union members. The union

members may feel the economy has a vital role in his/her employment and therefore an important part of the “union.”

These results were positive, but a few more tests were run to support the findings. The next test, found in Table 3, was a logistic regression on government spending. The results were grouped into those who would rather cut military spending and raise taxes or cut domestic spending. The data indicates that males were more in favor of cutting domestic spending than females were. Those who also identified with the Born Again Religion also favored cutting domestic spending. Both strong Democrats and weak Democrats were against cutting domestic spending whereas both strong Republicans and weak Republicans were in support of it. These outcomes are to be expected. Democrats generally support more government spending whereas Republicans aim to cut it. The fusion variable thus becomes significant. It revealed that fused union members were less likely to support cutting domestic spending. This would make sense for a union member because more money going into domestic affairs benefits the union. Military spending would not affect a union member and raising taxes might affect the individual, but not the group as a whole. Therefore fused union members see it in the group’s interest to favor other means of revenue for the nation rather than the one that could affect the group the greatest.

The third test of group attitudes came in the form of another logistic regression. Table 3 shows the results of a question on whether or not respondents support or oppose a stimulus package to stimulate economic growth. Older people and those with higher incomes were less likely to support the stimulus package. Both strong Democrats and weak Democrats were in strong support of the stimulus whereas strong Republicans and weak Republicans were very much against it. These results show what one may expect to see. Those older and with more money have more to lose from a stimulus package whereas the younger and poor generally have more to gain. Again the Democrats are in support of government spending and the Republicans strongly against it. This

points us to the fusion variable. Fused union members tended to side with the Democrats again. They were in support of a stimulus package. As someone who has the union's interest in mind, this would indeed support unions and the workplace. A stimulus package would mean more money pumped into the economy and manufacturing which would increase job, or union security.

The culmination of these last three tests on union-specific issues reveals a rather interesting find. Fused union members, when triggered by issues that highly relate to their status as a union member, will favor the position that most benefits the union. It shows that specific issues can trigger the group identity in fused union members.

What does this say about Identity Fusion?

This test was significant because instead of testing for actions such as giving money or going to vote, the fusion test activated attitudes. Fused union members showed that they supported distinct attitudes from other group members. This shows that fusion can result in personal beliefs or interests as well as personal behavior. This study found that fused union members are more likely to pay attention and care about the issues that affect them (as a union member), and their group (the union). Although this specific test was unable to show any correlation with union behavior as a result of fusion, it did show that fused union members demonstrate attitudes that favor the union in specific issues.

If triggered, a person who is fused will favor a group outcome even if they are not directly in a group situation. This follows the viewpoint of identity fusion because members still retain their personal identity. No one is specifically telling the union members to support domestic spending or favor the economy, but it indirectly affects their position as a union member. They retain their personal identity by making these choices on their own (outside of a union environment), but they are using their personal identity to favor the group identity. Another example of this would be if a veteran of the military was asked whether they support cutting defense, raising taxes or cutting

domestic spending. If a member was fused to the military he or she would probably favor cutting domestic spending and raising taxes over cutting defense. By cutting defense they would be injuring their own group. Fused veteran members would make the decision outside of the group to not cut defense spending because that directly affects the group, their military.

As all research has its limits, this look into identity fusion was highly confined by the survey taken. It would have benefited from more participants as well as a greater variety of questions targeted at political behavior. Questions like whether the respondents helped in an election, wrote to their representatives or went to a rally would better target whether or not fused members are participating in political activities. This research failed to find extreme behavior, one of the large tenants of identity fusion in union members. This directly links back to the survey and who is answering the questions. Focusing on extreme behavior would be difficult as well because naming a specific action may alienate rather than inspire union members to act.

In further research, a stronger emphasis on how group members become fused or possibly how long it takes for a member to become fused to their group. This would better inform group leaders how dedicated their group members may be, or what it takes to become fused. In addition, further research needs to be done on where fused members release their excess energy for the group. Swann, Gomez and colleges believe this excess can go toward fighting, dying, or killing for one's group, but not all fused members go to these extremes. Knowing the other outlets, be they politics, community involvement or more negative channels would be highly beneficial to the study of group relations.

Although the hypothesis of political behavior did not show up as a significant result, it still showed that fused union members were politically active. They used their fusion status to support the group in specific political issues. This study affirmed a needed trigger for a fused identity to

appear. If the circumstance is too broad, the fused identity may not show up, but smaller, more specific issues can still trigger a group identity in politics.

Table 1.

OLS Regression of Fused Union Members for Vote Index and Political Sophistication
CCES 2011

	Vote Index	Political Sophistication
Fusion	.090 (.081)	.076 (.068)
Age	.021** (.002)	.011** (.002)
Gender (Male-1)	.117** (.056)	.252** (.049)
Income	.048** (.009)	.035** (.008)
Education		
No HS Education	-.518** (.155)	-.181 (.162)
2-Yr College	.248** (.110)	-.033 (.097)
Some College	.214** (.073)	.203** (.066)
4-Yr College	.404** (.076)	.280** (.066)
Post-Graduate	.464** (.108)	.335** (.090)
Partisanship		
Strong Democrat	.645** (.092)	.193** (.093)
Weak Democrat	.252** (.090)	.079 (.094)
Strong Republican	.593** (.096)	.171* (.095)
Weak Republican	.407** (.097)	.082 (.096)
Born Again Religion	.070 (.061)	-.079 (.055)
Constant	.650** (.158)	1.505 (.150)
Adjusted R ²	.317	.226
N	1000	1000

Note: Values are unstandardized regression coefficients. Values in parentheses are standard errors. *p<.1; **p<.05 Reference categories include HS Education and Independents. Data is from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study, 2011.

Table 2.

OLS Regression for Fused Members and **National Economy**
CCES 2011

Fusion	-.470** (.091)
Age	.009** (.002)
Gender	.015 (.067)
Income	-.019* (.011)
Education	
No HS Education	.192 (.187)
2-yr College	-.047 (.130)
Some College	.146 (.087)
4-yr College	.030 (.091)
Post-Graduate	-.324** (.130)
Religion	
Protestant	.093 (.087)
Mormon	-.022 (.233)
Atheist	-.286 (.170)
Other	-.182** (.090)
Race	
Black	-.530** .113
Hispanic	-.007 (.131)
Other	-.096 (.141)
Constant	3.401** (.196)
Adjusted R ²	.099

Note: Values are unstandardized regression coefficients. Values in parentheses are standard errors. *p<.1; **p<.05 Reference categories include HS education, Catholic, and White. 1= Gotten much better, 5= Gotten much worse. Data is from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study, 2011

Table 3.

Logistic Regression of Fused Members for Government Spending and Stimulus
CCES 2011

	Spending -Favor Cutting Domestic (In percentages)	Support Stimulus (In percentages)
Fusion	-80.4**	173.6**
Age	-0.1	-1.6**
Gender	88.2**	-41.0**
Income	3.6	-5.0*
Race		
Black	80.6*	57.4
Hispanic	-4.3	49.8
Race Other	82	-20.4
Religion		
Born Again Religion	64.9**	6.5
Protestant	-22.5	-8.6
Mormon	-46.8	-20.6
Atheist	-53.2	113.5
Other Religions	-58.4**	43.4
Partisanship		
Strong Democrat	-68.8**	621.3**
Weak Democrat	-53.2**	194.1**
Strong Republican	766.9**	-82.5**
Weak Republican	312.8**	-65.5**
Constant	19.5	261.7
N	1000	1000

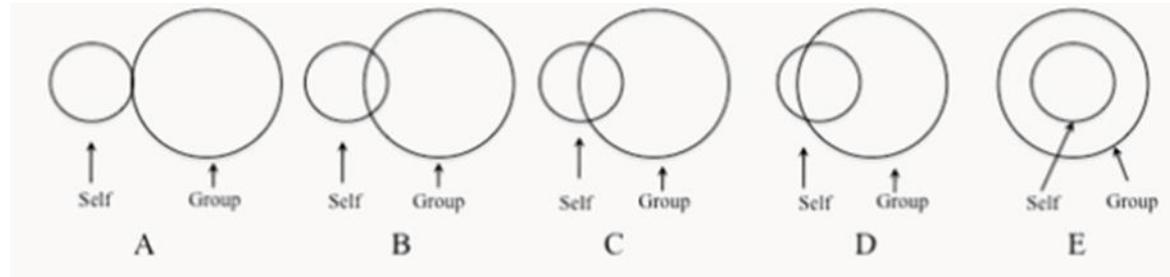
Note. *p< .1; **p<.05 Reference groups include White, Catholic and Independents. Data is from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study, 2011.

Appendix A
Variable Descriptions

Do you or have you ever belonged to a labor union?
Does anyone in your household belong to a labor union?

Independent Variable:

In each of the seven pairs of circles, one circle represents you, and the other represents the group.
Which of these pictures best represents your relationship with unions?



Controls:

Which of the following best describes your current employment status?

- Working full time now
- Working part time now
- Temporarily laid off
- Unemployed
- Retired
- Permanently disabled
- Taking care of Home or Family
- Student

Do you or have you ever belonged to a labor union?

- Current member
- Past Member
- Never have belonged to a labor union

Do you own your home or pay rent?

- Own
- Rent
- I live with someone else (such as a parent or grandparent) but do not rent
- I live in institutional housing, such as a dormitory or nursing home

Thinking back over the last year, what was your family's annual income?

- Less than 10,000
- \$10,000-\$14,999
- \$15,000-\$19,999
- \$20,000-\$24,999
- \$25,000-\$29,999
- \$30,000-\$39,999
- \$40,000-\$49,999
- \$50,000-59,999
- \$60,000-\$69,999

\$70,000-\$79,999
\$80,000-\$99,000
\$100,000-\$119,999
\$120,000-\$149,000
\$150,000 or more
Prefer not to say

What is your marital status?

Married, living with spouse
Separated
Divorced
Widowed
Single, never married
Domestic partnership

How long have you lived in your current city of Residence?

Years [Open]

How long have you lived at your present address?

Years [Open]

What is your present religion, if any?

Protestant
Roman Catholic
Mormon
Greek/Easter Orthodox
Jewish
Muslim
Buddhist
Hindu
Atheist
Agnostic
Nothing in particular

What racial or ethnic group best describes you?

White
Black or African-American
Hispanic or Latino
Asian or Asian American
Native American
Middle Eastern
Mixed Race
Other

In what year were you born?

[number]

What is your gender

Male
Female

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Did not graduate from High School
High School graduate
Some College, but no degree (yet)
2-year college degree

4-year college degree
Postgraduate Degree (MA, MBA, MD, JD, PhD, etc)

Dependent Variables:

In the past 24 hours have you... check all that apply: [Select Responses]

Read a blog
Watched TV news
Read a newspaper
Read a newspaper or print online
Listened to a radio
Listened to a radio or news program or talk radio
None of these

Which party are...

Governor (name)
Senator 1 (name)
Senator 2 (name)
House member (name)
Never Heard of Person
Republican
Democratic
Other Party / Independent
Not Sure

Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs...?

Most of the time
Some of the time
Only now and then
Hardly at all
Don't Know

Which party has a majority of seats in...U.S. House of Representatives?

Democrats
Republicans
Tied
Not Sure

Which party has a majority of seats in...U.S. Senate?

The Democrats
The Republicans
Tied
Not Sure

Which party has a majority of seats in...? [state name] [upper chamber name]

Democrats
Republicans
Tied
Not Sure

Have you ever run for elective office at any level of government (local, state, or federal)?

Yes
No

Did you win any office?

Yes

No

Thinking about politics these days, how would you describe your own political viewpoint?

Very Liberal

Liberal

Moderate

Conservative

Very Conservative

Not Sure

Are you registered to vote?

Yes

No

Don't Know

Did you vote in 2008 General Election?

Yes

No

I usually vote, but did not in 2008

I am not sure

Did you vote in 2010 general election?

Yes, I definitely voted

No

I usually vote, but did not in 2010

I am not sure

Over the past year, has the nation's economy gotten worse, better, or stayed about the same?

Gotten much better

Gotten better

Stayed about the same

Gotten worse

Gotten much worse

If your state were to have a budget deficit this year it would have to raise taxes on income or sales or cut spending, such as on education, health care, welfare, and road construction. What would you prefer more, raising taxes or cutting spending? Choose a point along the scale from 100% tax increases (and no spending cuts) to 100% spending cuts (and 0% no tax increases). The point in the middle means that any the budget should be balanced with equal amounts of spending cuts and tax increases.

0-100

The federal budget is currently running a \$300 [2011: \$1.3 trillion] billion deficit. If the Congress were to balance the budget it would have to consider cutting defense spending, cutting domestic spending, and raising taxes. What would you most prefer that Congress do - cut domestic spending, cut military spending, [or] raise taxes?

Cut domestic spending

Cut military spending

Raise taxes

Congress has considered many specific bills over the past two years. For each of the following tell us whether you support or oppose the legislation in principle. American Recovery and Reinvestment Act: Authorizes \$787 billion in federal spending to stimulate economic growth in the U.S.

Support/Oppose

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