Middle Class Mismatch: Citizen Perceptions of the Middle Class Identity:

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Appeals to the popular middle class identity by political candidates have become almost ubiquitous in political campaigns in the United States, with candidates from both parties pledging to represent the interests of the class group in hopes of besting their opponents. Yet given media depictions of the middle class as White, does this ostensibly popular, inclusive, and race-neutral identity hold racial connotations? In other words, do citizens implicitly associate the middle class identity with a certain race? I employ a novel conjoint experiment on the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study to demonstrate that survey respondents do indeed draw an implicit connection between race and the middle class identity. In particular, respondents use the race of a depicted individual as an evaluative criterion of middle class membership. Further, this behavior is not only reflective of racial reality, but is also discriminatory against individuals from certain races who respondents disproportionately do not perceive as members of the middle class. The findings imply that the class identity, though ostensibly race-neutral, is in fact racialized, with implications for its status as a reference group in American politics.

In an op-ed appearing in the February 2, 2016 print edition of the New York Times, R.R. Reno lamented, "the white middle class is in decline, both economically and culturally," and expressed his concerns that "cultural instability compounds economic instability" (Reno, 2016). Reno further claimed that the "real" socioeconomic cleavage is in fact "intra-racial," with the most important division occurring between successful and unsuccessful whites. Reno concluded by claiming that candidates (to his mind) have minimized the important role of the white middle class in the future during a very contentious election season.

Though Reno's comments provide the audience with some food for thought, they are – as readers' comments on the online version of the article make plain – controversial. Importantly, though, by discussing "the *white* middle class [emphasis added]," Reno simultaneously divides *and* constructs groups in American society. First, Reno divides a class group (i.e., the middle class) along racial lines. His characterization implies a (perhaps) more racially inclusive class identity. Yet Reno singles out only white members of the ostensibly race-neutral class group as the subjects of his analysis, thereby simultaneously creating a group: the *white* middle class. This group comprises, to Reno's mind, its own cultural, economic, and even participatory character. The group is singular, exclusive on the basis not only of socioeconomic factors, but also on the basis of race.

Reno's discussion of the white middle class implies that some people have given thought to the relationship between race and class, even finding within-group differences in class, for example, as a function of racial group membership. Further, Reno's comments make explicit what people might believe or recognize *implicitly*: a connection between the middle class and white identities. Yet Reno is a public philosopher who is ideologically engaged, who pays close attention to questions of politics and policy in a way scholars have argued the general public

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does not (Converse, 1964; Zaller, 1992). To what extent do average citizens make the connection Reno suggests at an implicit level? In other words, when citizens consider the middle class identity and membership, do they also consider race?

Thinking Class, Seeing Race?

The racialization of the middle class identity may not seem surprising, but the implications are nonetheless important. Specifically, the middle class identity has been used in political rhetoric to appeal to voters of broad economic backgrounds; if association exists between the identity and certain racial groups, lawmakers may tailor messages about policies via the identity to certain groups that may or may not be relevant. In other words, if the identity conveys something racial, invoking "the middle class" sends an implicit racial message to voters. Further, there may be new and compelling evidence of implicit racial bias if citizens associate the class group with certain racial groups (and not others) when controlling for their racial considerations.

First, why might citizens hold an implicitly racialized conception of the middle class identity? Racialization has to do with the attribution of racial meaning – positive or negative – on an object, group, or practice; in other words, racialism is the attachment of racial meaning to a group or social issue that was not previously racially classified (Murji & Solomos, 2005; Omi & Winant, 2015). If the middle class is racialized, then the identity holds implicit racial meanings and connotations though it appears to be only a socioeconomic class group. The precedent of racialization of political phenomena, the reality of America's racialized political economy, and the Whitewashing of media depictions of the middle class lend credence to the idea that the identity may be racialized.

Scholarly work has demonstrated how implicit racialization characterizes discourse about ostensibly race-neutral terms (Mendelberg, 2001, 2008). While explicit racial appeals and epithets are neither socially desirable nor acceptable, politicians can and do use *implicit* racial appeals, or nouns and adjectives referencing race more obliquely (Entman, 1992; Hutchings & Jardina, 2009; Mendelberg, 2001, pp. 8–9). For example, the ostensibly race-neutral term "inner city" has association with Blacks (Mendelberg, 2001). Similarly, areas of policy – crime, poverty, and healthcare – have all taken on racial dimensions (Pasek, Stark, Krosnick, Tompson, & Payne, 2014; Soss, Fording, & Schram, 2011; Tesler, 2012; Valentino, 1999; Winter, 2006, 2008); two more specific examples include Welfare, which has become symbolically associated with Blackness, and Social Security, which has been linked with Whiteness (Valentino, 1999; Winter, 2006, 2008).

Additionally, the reality of the economic advantage Whites experience in the United States holds implications for the racialization of the middle class identity. More specifically, the American socioeconomic reality benefits the majority racial in-group – Whites have advantages in securing more professional jobs, better incomes, educations, and higher levels of homeownership (Feagin, 2010). These advantages help Whites to meet the thresholds of membership in the middle class – for example, a healthy income (McCall & Manza, 2011; Page, Bartels, & Seawright, 2013; Stonecash, 2000), a college education (Bartels, 2006; Kendall, 2011; McCall & Manza, 2011), homeownership and the ability to take on debt (Fisher, 1987; Hout, 2008; Kahl, 1965; Parker, 1974; The White House, 2010), and professional jobs (Dahl, 1961; Kahl, 1965; Kendall, 2011) – while disadvantaging minorities. Given this reality, the hallmarks of the middle class identity are hallmarks of Whiteness, as well.

Whites have a higher position in the American racial hierarchy, and have certain privileges and socioeconomic resources – including ubiquitous media depictions as the normal, middle class status to which to aspire – as a function of this advantaged position (Feagin, 2010; Kendall, 2011; Lipsitz, 1990; Lopez, 2014; Petrow, Transue, & Vercellotti, 2017; Rains, 1998). As such, media depictions of the middle class identity conflate it with Whiteness, and reflect the reality of the racialized political economy. In the United States, White race is relatively invisible, while racial "otherness" is defined against Whiteness, thereby facilitating White privilege (Brooks and Hebert 2003; Howell 1998; Rains 1998; Rapp 1999). Similarly, middle class privilege has developed – especially among Whites – due to the category's existence as the standard against which to compare other socioeconomic realities (Bullock, Wyche, & Williams, 2001; Liu, Pickett Jr., & Ivey, 2007). It should not be surprising then that the imagery used in advertisements, television shows, and print media helps to facilitate the normalization and invisibility of Whiteness by projecting what it means to be White (Kendall, 2011; Nicholson, 1998).

The media similarly facilitates the normalization of the middle class identity with television shows, for example, depicting middle class realities including a nuclear family, a professional father dressed in suits, and material success (Descartes & Kottak, 2009; Kendall, 2011; Lipsitz, 1990). In short, the media portrays the middle class lifestyle as "the American Dream" (Kendall, 2011). Images of this dream depict not only individuals who are relatively equal in their educational levels and property holdings, and who share similar manners, modes of speech, and morals (Allport, 1979), but who also share the same skin color. Most importantly, the media conflates these two "normal" identities of middle class-ness and Whiteness. The

aforementioned materially successful nuclear family units are generally depicted as White[1] in popular media, while depictions of minorities focus on urban, ethnic poverty (Bullock et al., 2001; Clawson & Trice, 2000; Kendall, 2011; Lipsitz, 1990; Pattillo-McCoy, 1999).[2] News depictions of the middle class substantiate this trend: while news depictions of non-Whites have focused generally on poverty (Clawson & Trice, 2000), news stories framed using the middle class identity ultimately appeal to an association between the class group and Whiteness (Kendall, 2011).

The connection between the middle class identity and Whiteness may seem a bit obvious. Given the ubiquity of cultural depictions of the middle class identity as White, however, there is reason to believe that the identity is not only racialized, but that citizens will consider Whiteness when they encounter a reference to the middle class. In other words, if the messages citizens receive about the middle class are messages about Whites, citizens will access the concept of Whiteness when they consider messages about the middle class. Thus, do citizens recognize this connection? In other words, does race factor in to citizens' assessments of middle class membership?

A number of testable implications follow. If the middle class identity is a racialized concept, constituted and reinforced by cultural depictions of the class group members, citizens should consider race in addition to ostensible class status indicators when evaluating whether individuals might be members of the middle class. Furthermore, respondents should be less likely to view people of color as members of the middle class compared to whites, even holding

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[1] Two notable exceptions include *The Cosby Show* and, more contemporarily, *Blackish* (Descartes & Kottak, 2009; Inniss & Feagin, 1995; Kendall, 2011).
[2] Even shows depicting the urban ethnic working class were created to appeal to middle class consumers, and thus did not necessarily accurately depict ethnic realities (Lipsitz, 1990). The whitewashing of African American rock and roll music by young, middle class, British and American artists so as to appeal to the middle class provides further evidence of how African American culture in particular was appropriated to appeal to a Whiter, more affluent audience (Brooks & Hebert, 2003; Lipsitz, 1990).

constant accouterments of the middle class like occupation. In other words, the race of the

subject of consideration will influence respondents' evaluations of likely members of the middle

class even in the presence of visible socioeconomic cues. Finally, this behavior is not merely an

accurate reflection of the reality of a mostly-white middle class; rather, respondents discriminate

against non-whites in making their selections.

I have not yet found empirical attempts to disentangle perceptions of others' race and the

middle class identity, and how citizens may associate these aspects of others' identities at an

implicit level, in political science research. However, there have been fruitful efforts within the

field of psychology that indicate how citizens tend to associate social status and race given how

membership in a certain social groups may lead to the presumption of membership in other

categories assumed to co-vary with the first group (Glick, Wilk, & Perreault, 1995; Lei &

Bodenhausen, 2017). A study in 2002 demonstrated that individuals associate the middle class

and whites when they consider group stereotypes and affect (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002);

similarly, recent findings substantiate the idea that among citizens who hold a certain level of

class prejudice, a composite image of a middle class individual generated by respondents looks

more white than does an image of a poor person (Lei & Bodenhausen, 2017). As such, there is

some preliminary evidence of an association between the middle class identity and whiteness.

I employ a conjoint experiment on the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study

(CCES) to explore whether and to what extent respondents hold a whitewashed image of the

middle class identity. While survey experiments are useful for assessing causality, an adaptation

of conjoint analysis is particularly useful for my purposes because it allows for the isolation of

two causal mechanisms. As such, the design distinguishes the potential influences of race and

class. I designed a particular survey experiment, known as a 'forced-choice conjoint experiment'

to explore 1) whether citizens consider others' races when evaluating whether individuals might be members of the middle class, 2) whether and how others' races influences these evaluations even in the presence of visible clues of socioeconomic status and controlling for citizens' own racial predispositions. Results lend credence to the idea that the middle class identity evokes racial as well as socioeconomic characteristics, and citizens link the identity with race at an implicit level.

Parsing an Implicit Connection: Conjoint Experiments and Expectations

Conjoint experiments have their roots in market research, and are most useful because they allow for the estimation of causal effects of *multiple* treatment components (for my purposes, depicted race *and* socioeconomic status) on a single behavioral outcome and the assessment of the relative explanatory power of these different components (Hainmueller, Hopkins, & Yamamoto, 2014; Rao, 2014). The behavioral outcome of a conjoint analysis can involve a rating task, wherein respondents give their ratings of different alternatives, or a choice task, wherein respondents must choose between two competing alternatives that differ on a number of dimensions, known as *attributes* (see, for example, Oliphant et al. (1992) and Rao (2014)).

Choice-based conjoint experiments (also known as forced-choice experiments or discrete choice experimentation) are the most popular variety of conjoint experiments (Hainmueller et al., 2014; Sawtooth Software Inc., 2013). After encountering multiple pieces of information (alternatives), respondents make a single choice per choice set; the design is therefore analogous to a voter's decision-making task or a consumer's purchasing task (Green, Krieger, & Wind, 2001; Hainmueller et al., 2014; Rao, 2014; Sawtooth Software Inc., 2013). For example, the voter must cast a single ballot and the consumer must buy a single product – more precisely,

must make a single decision – between competing candidates/products differing on multiple dimensions.

While some conjoint experiments employ descriptions, varying the terms used to describe candidates (Franchino & Zucchini, 2015; Hainmueller et al., 2014) individuals (Caruso, Rahnev, & Banaji, 2009), policy issues (Hainmueller, Hangartner, & Yamamoto, 2015; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2015) and national performance (Hansen, Olsen, & Bech, 2015), others use images in place of or in addition to text (Sawtooth Software Inc., 2013). A number of studies in political science – notably, studies examining the impact of candidate race on voters' decision-making and choices – also use images in experiments (Terkildsen, 1993; Weaver, 2012) and in observational analyses (Banducci, Karp, Thrasher, & Rallings, 2008). Following the lead of these scholars, I employed images presenting men that varied on two important attributes to respondents to the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study, or CCES.[3] Respondents then chose which man, between two presented, they felt was the most likely member of the middle class.

Respondents randomly viewed four sets of two images, and chose, in each task, which image depicted the most likely member of the middle class.[4] Attributes of the individuals depicted varied along two dimensions: race (white, Black, or Hispanic) and occupation (as a proxy for ostensible socioeconomic background; models could be either "white-collar," wearing a shirt and jacket, or "blue-collar," wearing a hardhat and jumpsuit). Importantly, there was no

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[3] The CCES is a 50,000+ person national stratified sample survey. Information on the CCES is available at the study's website.

[4] To maximize potential responses, the task was forced-choice. Respondents had to make a selection within ten seconds before auto-advancing to the next choice set.

within-race variation in model; in other words, the white man in a shirt and tie was the same white model in construction gear.[5]

After viewing a set of images, respondents made a single choice per task (making four choices total). Rather than engage in four analyses of choice (with one dependent variable representing choice per task), I amalgamated the choices into a single variable. Thus, I analyze 4,000 individual choices made by 1,000 respondents together, simultaneously maximizing observations and streamlining the analysis via a single, comprehensive dependent variable. More importantly, I coded this choice variable in such a way that accounts not only for the images respondents *chose*, but also for the images respondents *did not* choose. In other words, there are 8,000 total observations in the choice model; half of these observations note the image respondents chose (coded as "true," or 1) while the corresponding half notes the image that was *not* chosen by respondents (coded as "false," or 0). Coding the variable this way not only allows for predicting image choice given the presence of certain attributes, but also accounts for this choice in light of the specific comparison of images that respondents made.

Forced-choice conjoint experiments are appealing given their utility for comparing between competing causal claims and also because estimation and analysis are straightforward. A simple logistic regression of the binary choice variable on binary attribute variables (and relevant interaction[6] terms between attribute variables) estimates the probability of choice of an alternative given a set of attributes (for example, Black race and blue-collar attire).[7] The coefficients of the independent variables representing attributes – blue collar attire, Black race,

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[5] Images are available in the appendix.

[6] See Sawtooth (2013) for a discussion of the benefits of conjoint analysis in dealing with interactions, especially in situations where there are few attributes and attribute interaction is of concern.

[7] See Rao (2014) for a thorough discussion of the utility of logistic models for choice-based conjoint analysis.

and Hispanic race – are therefore interpretable as the average change in the probability that a given image (which contains a set of attributes) will gain support when it includes the listed attribute variable instead of the baseline attribute variable.

It is also possible to estimate the interaction between two variables and their joint influence on choice using logistic regression; in particular, interaction terms are the product of the two variables, and are important to include in situations where there are few attributes that vary and where joint influence is likely, as with images (Rao, 2014; Sawtooth Software Inc., 2013). These variables account for the potential joint impact of variables on choice, such as that of two attributes depicted together or of a depicted attribute with a respondent characteristic, like level of racial resentment. In all logistic regression models of choice, clustering standard errors by respondent corrects for systematic bias given correlation between potential choice and rating outcomes within respondents due to the influence of unobserved respondent characteristics (Hainmueller et al., 2014).

Finally, conjoint analysis allows for the comparison of the influence of different attributes on choices made among different, theoretically-relevant respondent subgroups (Hainmueller et al., 2014; Rao, 2014). For my purposes, respondents assessed whether an individual belonged in a certain class group (the middle class). A respondent's *own* socioeconomic status might influence these decisions, and it is therefore necessary to engage in sub-group analysis based on respondent social class.

Conjoint experiments therefore provide the opportunity to test a number of expectations given a racialized middle class identity. Respondents will be more likely to view individuals who "dress the part" as members of the middle class; as such, they will select models wearing white-collar outfits instead of those dressed in construction gear, having used the outfits to make

inferences about the man's occupation and socioeconomic background. However, respondents will *also* use race to make inferences about middle class status, and avoid selecting minorities as members of the middle class. They will therefore exhibit a racialized understanding of the middle class identity. Using findings from prior research as precedent, (Lei & Bodenhausen, 2017), I expect differences in probability of choice to be small, but significant.

More specifically, citizens will be less likely to select Blacks and Hispanics as members of the middle class than whites. In other words, when an image depicts a Black or Hispanic model, respondents will be more likely to select an alternative image. Prior studies note the moderating influence of certain prejudices (for example, "class prejudice" as articulated by Lei and Bodenhausen (2017)) on assessments of social class and race; it is therefore important to consider the potential influence of prejudice on respondents' choices. As the CCES includes racial resentment measures, it is possible to control for the influence of citizens' racial animus on their evaluations of social class. Modeling image choice while controlling for racial resentment (and for the interaction of these feelings with depicted attribute) will likely demonstrate that respondents' behavior is not merely a reflection of the realities of white advantage, but is instead discriminatory.

Results: A Racial Association

First, it is important to present a demographic snapshot of respondents who completed the conjoint task on the CCES. The majority of the 1,000 respondents on this module of the CCES was white (68%), followed by modest percentages of Blacks (12.5%) and Hispanics (11.3%). Given the theory that anti-minority bias may color respondents' evaluations, I focus on the choices of respondents from the majority racial in-group. As such, non-white respondents were removed from the analysis, leaving a total of 4,226 observations (or 2,113 individual choices).

From there, I eliminated respondents who are outliers on the racial resentment indices (thus making a harder test for my hypotheses), leaving a total of 4,128 observations (or 2,064 individual choices). Just over half of white respondents identify as female (56%).[8] White respondents are almost evenly split in terms of liberal (26%) and conservative (29%) ideology, but most respondents (about 39%) identify as "moderate." Just over three quarters of respondents identify as some variant of middle class ("lower middle class," "middle class," or "upper middle class"), with another 15%, roughly, identifying as working class.

Figure 3.1 (below) presents the predicted probability – as determined by logistic regression and predictive margins – of a respondent selecting an image given that the image depicts a certain attribute (blue collar, Black race, and Hispanic race).[9] I cluster standard errors by respondent to account for within-respondent bias.[10] Each chart in the figure shows the probability of choosing an image given the presence ("True") or absence ("False") of a certain attribute. For example, when the image depicts a blue-collar individual ("True") as opposed to a non-blue-collar individual ("False," which in this case refers to a white-collar individual), there is only a 0.47 probability that a respondent will choose the image (see the leftmost panel in the figure). When the image depicts a Hispanic individual, there is again about a 0.47 probability that a respondent will choose the image as opposed to an image depicting a non-Hispanic individual (see the rightmost panel in the figure).

These findings indicate that white respondents are statistically significantly *less* likely to choose a Hispanic man (as opposed to a white or Black man) as a potential member of the middle class. Thus, there is evidence that citizens use race as well as socioeconomic status to

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[8] Results including these outliers are available from the author.

[9] Full logistic regression models (presenting odds ratios) may be found in the appendix.

[10] Clustering standard errors prevents me from weighting the data using module weights.

determine middle class membership. Additionally, whites view membership of the middle class as exclusive on the basis of Hispanic race, implying that they do indeed associate race with the ostensibly race-neutral class identity.
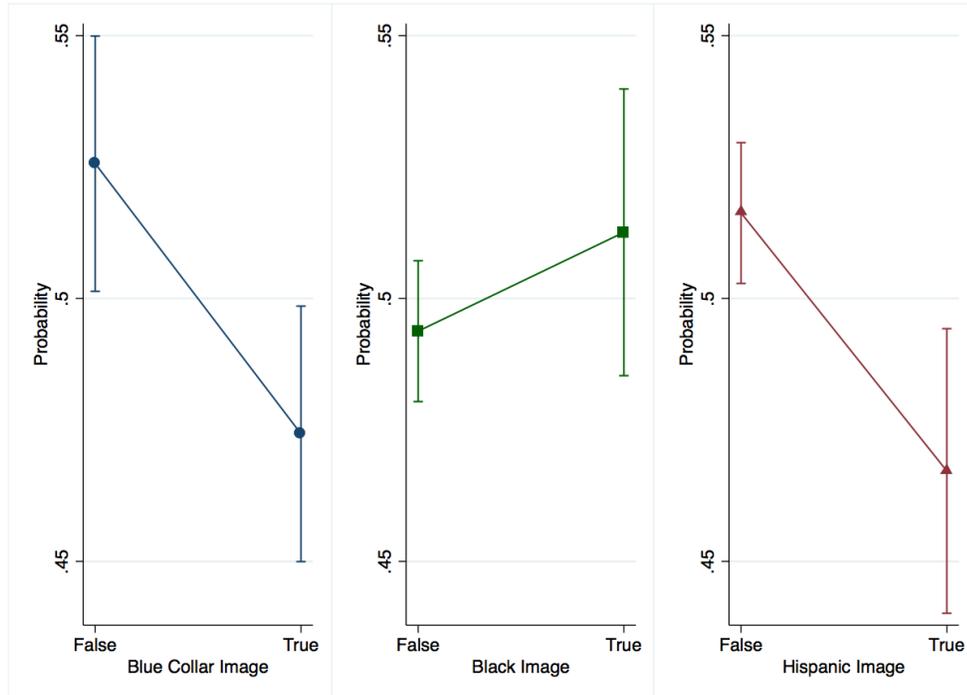

Figure 3.1: Predicted Probability of Selecting Image Given Presence of Attributes

Finally, because respondents were asked to make an appraisal about membership in a class group, there may be systematic differences in image choice as a function of their own class identities (Figure 3.2, below). Respondents' assessments of images do vary by class membership: the probability of selecting an image depicting a blue-collar (0.38) as opposed to white-collar individual (0.63) is less among respondents who identified as lower class and working class (0.42 for blue collar and 0.58 for white collar). However, there is no statistically significant difference among self-identified members of the middle class.[11] Respondents *not*

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[11] Respondents were asked about their own social class identifications before being exposed to the experiment, which means there are no problems with post-treatment bias. Additionally, as only 52 respondents identified as upper class, they were excluded from analysis.

identifying as middle class make distinctions among the depicted individuals on the basis of their style of dress (as a proxy for class background), while avoiding making assessments of class as a function of the depicted race.

Middle class respondents, meanwhile, do not discriminate based on dress; rather, middle class respondents distinguish the images based on the *race* of the individual depicted. Like the full sample, middle class respondents are less likely to select an image depicting a Hispanic than one depicting a white or Black man. Specifically, the probability of selecting the Hispanic man is only 0.46 among middle class respondents, who instead have a higher probability of selecting images of whites (0.52) as the most likely members of the middle class.
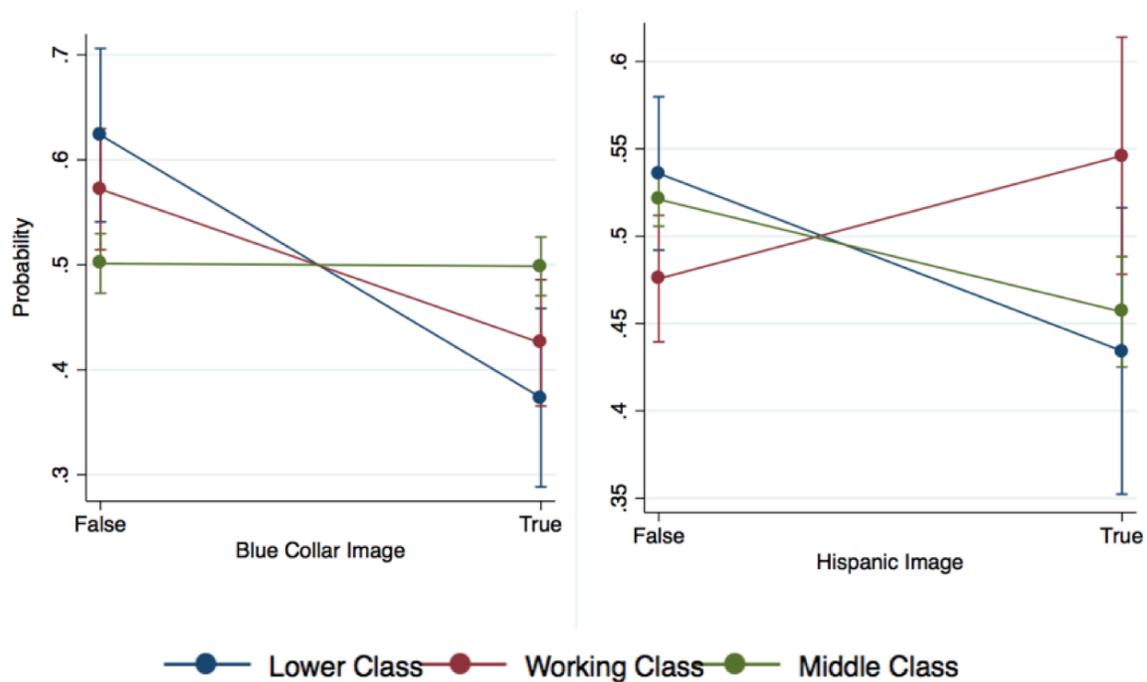

Figure 3.2: Probability of Selecting Blue Collar or Hispanic Image, by Respondent Class

Certainly, citizens consider race when evaluating class – indicating an important association between the identities. More specifically, white respondents and middle class respondents exclude Hispanics, but not Blacks, from middle class membership. This behavior

might be the result, in part, of the rise of the Black middle class since the 1960s. Legislation passed during and after the Civil Rights Movement – and also under President Bill Clinton – have facilitated the economic ascendance of Blacks in the United States (Carter, 2016; Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). In turn, this has led to a more racially diverse middle class.

While economic trends may partially account for respondents' behavior, their choices also likely have to do with the character of America's norm of racial equality. This norm emerged as a response to changing racial dynamics between whites and Blacks after the contentious Civil Rights Movement. While it may indeed have comprised minorities of numerous ethnic backgrounds, the bulk of the Civil Rights Movement was led by and focused on African Americans, leading to a norm of equality between whites and Blacks (as opposed to between whites and other minorities). whites know this history and will therefore often try to avoid discriminating against or otherwise disparaging Blacks when responding to survey questions; respondent to the CCES engage in this behavior, providing evidence of a sort of "halo effect."

Nonetheless, survey respondents hold a distinctly racialized view of the middle class identity. Unsurprisingly, respondents are more likely to select an image depicting a white-collar individual than a blue-collar individual when asked to identify the most likely member of the middle class. However, a candidate's style of dress – used as a proxy for socioeconomic background – is *not* the only factor respondents consider when they evaluate middle class membership. Since respondents select Hispanics less frequently as members of the middle class than Blacks or whites, they clearly consider race when deciding who belongs in the middle class. These trends generally hold across class subgroups, as well, providing further clarification about how respondents evaluate middle class membership.

Interactions Between Selection Criteria

Given the potential for association between class and race shaped and reinforced by depictions of the middle class, it is possible that the depicted occupation and the depicted race *jointly* influence respondents' evaluations of images when they co-occur. It is possible to explore these potential effects by adding interaction terms (between each pair of image attributes) to logistic regression models, and again using marginal effects to predict the probability of image selection. Among all white respondents, there are no statistically significant differences in the probability of image selection given the presence of these attributes even when including interaction terms as covariates in the logistic regression models. An analysis of class sub-groups returns only one significant result: middle class respondents are less likely to choose the image of a Hispanic man than ones depicting a white or Black man. On the whole, then, the joint influence of co-occurring attributes does not influence the probability of respondents' selections in a meaningful way among all respondents and among most class-based respondent subgroups.

Racial Resentment and Perceptions of Middle Class Membership

It is possible that factors beyond the attributes presented in images drive respondents' evaluations and ultimate image selection. In particular, given that respondents viewed images that vary by race, the race depicted in the image may trigger racially resentful feelings. As such, both image *and* respondent characteristics may influence respondents' image selection. Further, accounting for respondents' feelings of racial resentment toward both Blacks and Hispanics allows me to distinguish whether respondents' exclusion of Hispanics from the middle class is simply an accurate reflection of reality – a 2012 study, for example, demonstrates that a larger percentage of white respondents identify as middle class than do Black or Hispanic respondents (Pew Research Center, 2012) – or racially discriminatory behavior.

Racial resentment is an indication of respondents' feelings about Blacks, and focuses specifically on the notion that Blacks are not deserving of government assistance. Political scientists have measured racial resentment by assessing agreement with a number of statements such as, "The Irish, Italians, Jews and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors" (Feldman & Huddy, 2005; Kinder & Sanders, 1996). Racial resentment has colored white public opinion on a number of policy areas (Domke, 2001; Gilens, 1996; Mendelberg, 2001; Valentino, 1999; Valentino, Hutchings, & White, 2002; Winter, 2006), and may similarly influence respondents' decision-making about the middle class.

Respondents to the module including this conjoint experiment were asked to respond not only to these traditional racial resentment measures, but also to another set of parallel specifically designed to solicit feelings about Hispanics.[12] Where the traditional questions state "Blacks," these new measures state "Latinos;" there was only a more substantial modification of language (the replacement of "generations of slavery" with "generations of land occupation") on one question. Given the discrimination white respondents have demonstrated toward Hispanic membership in the middle class, I employ these Hispanic racial resentment measures in addition to those designed to measure feelings toward Blacks.

More specifically, the interaction of heightened Black or Hispanic racial resentment with minority image attributes may drive respondents to avoid picking the minority (especially a Hispanic). To measure racial resentment, I created an index using the traditional questions in conjunction with Stata's "alpha" function, which amalgamates them into a single scale measure (Cronbach's alpha) after computing the inter-item correlations or covariances for all variable

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[12] Full question wordings available in the appendix.

pairs (StataCorp, 2013). I repeated this process to create a separate Hispanic racial resentment measure. I then interacted each of these scaled measures with each image attribute variable (Blue Collar, Black, and Hispanic) to create six racial resentment interaction terms.

Respondents have increased likelihood of selecting the white-collar image depicting a white male as their levels of racial resentment increase. Figures 3.4 and 3.5 (below) show these general trends when controlling for respondents' racial resentment against Blacks (depicted in blue) and against Hispanics (depicted in maroon). Positive values of racial resentment indicate high levels of animus, which has a strong, positive relationship with probability of selecting the image of the white-collar white man. The trend is stronger when considering racial resentment against Blacks than against Hispanics, as indicated by smaller confidence intervals.
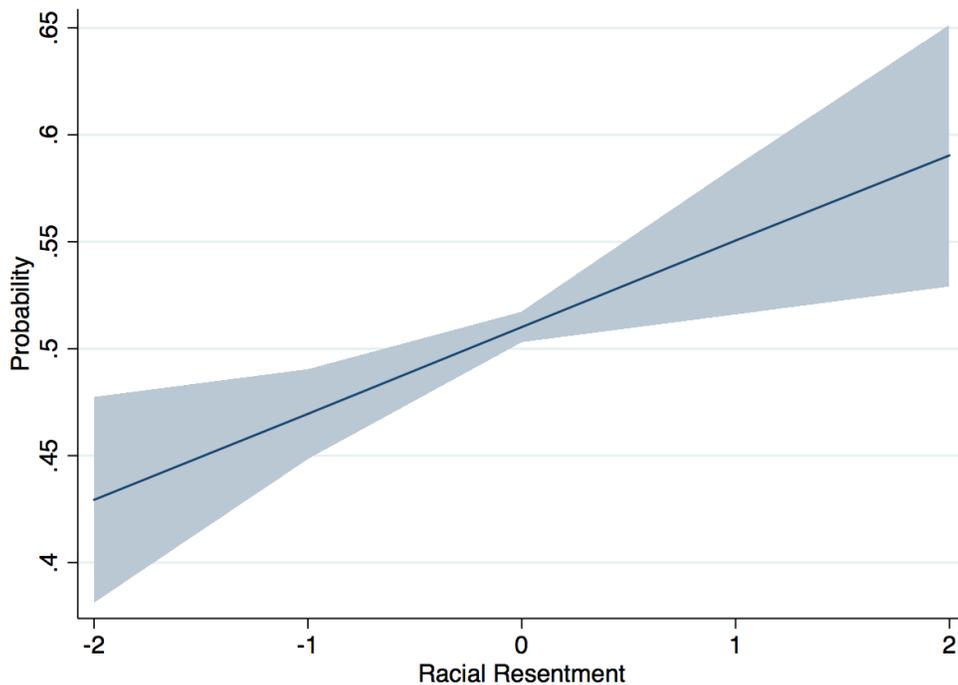

Figure 3.4: Predicted Probability of Selecting Image Given Presence of Attributes, Controlling for Racial Resentment
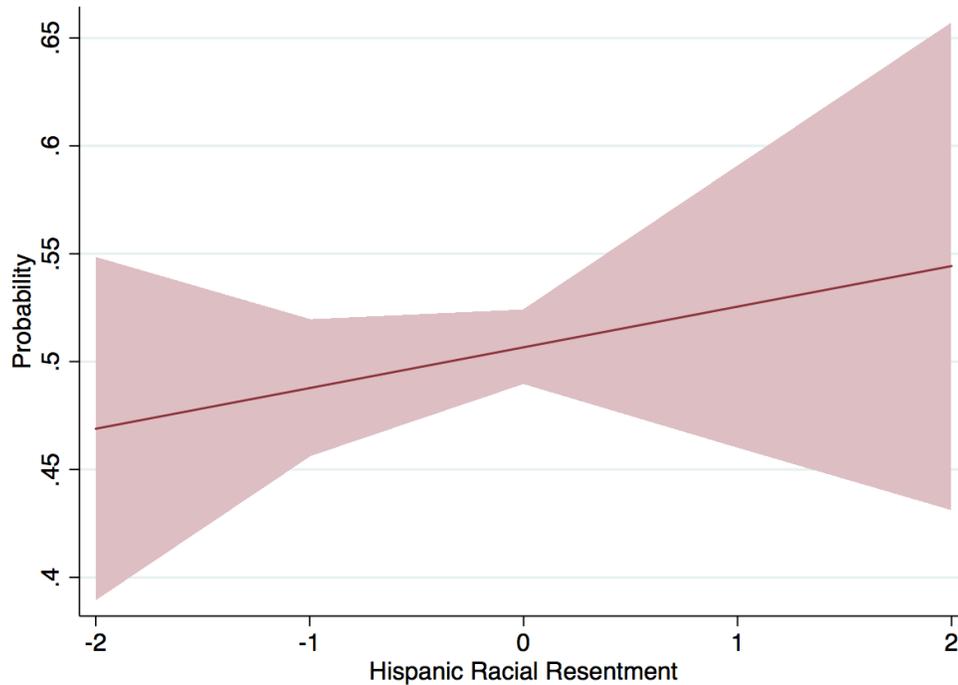
Figure 3.5: Predicted Probability of Selecting Image Given Presence of Attributes, Controlling for Racial Resentment

Figure 3.6 (below) presents the predicted probabilities of selecting an image given each image attribute as determined by a logistic regression model including the scaled measure of Black racial resentment (depicted in blue) and Hispanic racial resentment (depicted in maroon) and the three corresponding image attribute/resentment interaction terms. The interesting results are in the central and rightmost panels of the figure. Though the effect is not statistically significant, the central panel of the image shows that respondents have a higher probability of selecting an image depicting a Black individual than one showing a white or Hispanic man, *even controlling for* racial resentment toward Blacks or toward Hispanics. This finding runs counter to the notion that racial resentment should decrease the probability of selecting *any* minority image.

The juxtaposition between the initial findings indicating some discrimination – white respondents do not include Latinos in the middle class – and these results may not be as strange

as it initially seems. Given the norm of Black and white racial equality in the United States, it is unsurprising that regardless of how they might feel toward Blacks, respondents are not excluding them the way they are Hispanics in terms of inclusion in the middle class identity. Nonetheless, the evidence points to a racialized, non-Hispanic middle class identity.
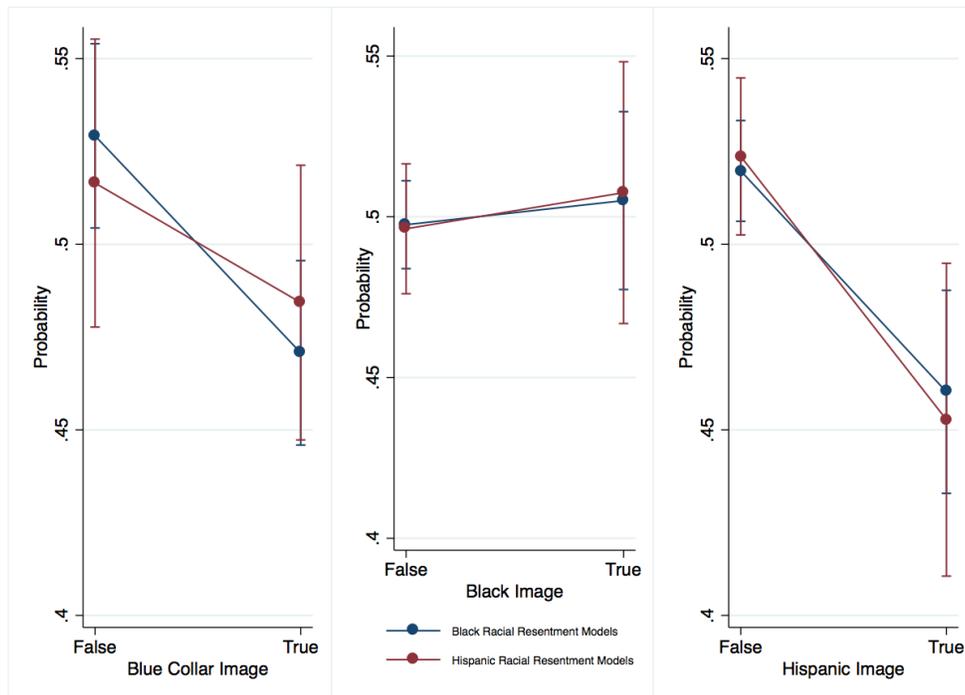
Figure 3.6: Predicted Probability of Selecting Image Given Presence of Attributes, Controlling for Racial Resentment

While they may not discriminate against Blacks when evaluating middle class membership, respondents have a statistically significantly lower probability of selecting an image when it depicts a Hispanic man than when it depicts a white or Black man even when accounting for racial resentment. The rightmost panel in Figure 3.6 shows the lessened probability of selecting a Hispanic image holds even when accounting for racial resentment toward either Blacks (0.46, in blue) or Hispanics (0.45, in maroon).[13] These findings indicate that

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[13] Corresponding tables may be found in the appendix. The only statistically significant interaction effects were between Black racial resentment and both Black and Hispanic images. The important result remains the ultimate

the middle class identity is racialized, but in complicated ways: though they do not necessarily view it as solely white, respondents certainly perceive it as an identity exclusive of Hispanics.

When breaking respondents into class groups, this discriminatory trend holds only among middle class respondents.[14] Specifically, middle class respondents have a statistically significantly lower probability (0.45) of choosing an image depicting a Hispanic man than one depicting a white or Black man (0.52) when accounting for the influence of racial resentment toward Blacks (Figure 3.7, below). Interestingly, middle class respondents' racial resentment against Blacks (as opposed to Hispanics) impacts their decision not to choose the image of the Hispanic man: when controlling for racial resentment toward Hispanics, the probability of middle class respondents choosing a Hispanic image is lower, but the model is not statistically significant. It is possible that this trend exists because the Hispanic racial resentment measures are so novel.

Even when controlling for the influence of racial resentment on image selection, respondents have a statistically significantly lower probability of selecting an image depicting a Hispanic than one depicting a man of another race. If respondents were merely demonstrating an accurate depiction of reality – a middle class comprised of fewer non-whites than whites – they should have excluded *both* African Americans and Hispanics as opposed to Hispanics alone. Yet, respondents did not do this, and avoided exhibiting anti-Black racist behavior by selecting Blacks as more likely members of the middle class than Hispanics *or* whites. As such,

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image selection while controlling for resentment and the interaction terms as opposed to the interaction coefficients themselves.

[14] There are statistically significant differences in probability of blue-collar image selection in class groups other than the middle class. When accounting for Black racial resentment, lower class respondents have a statistically significantly lower probability of selecting a blue-collar image (0.38) than a white collar one (0.62). When controlling for Hispanic racial resentment, working class respondents are more inclined to choose a white-collar image (0.56) than a blue-collar one (0.44).

respondents' perception of the middle class as exclusive of Hispanics behavior is indicative of discrimination as opposed to benign racialization.
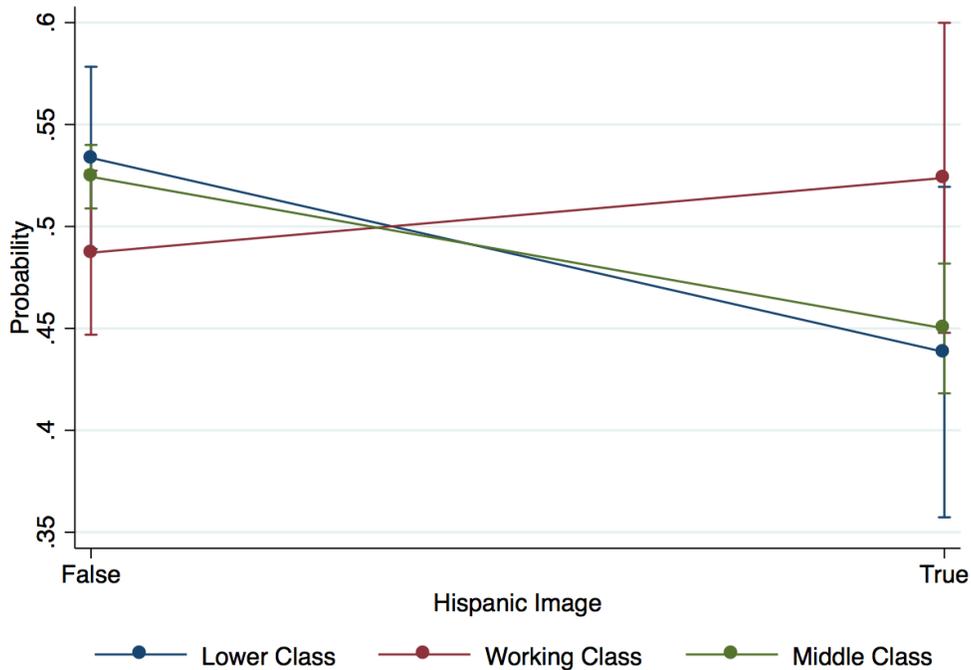
Figure 3.7: Predicted Probability of Selecting Hispanic Image Given Presence of Attributes by Respondent Class, Controlling for Racial Resentment Toward Blacks

Immigration Opinions and Perceptions of Middle Class Membership

Clearly, whites view the middle class identity as one that is distinctly non-Hispanic. While whites appear to 'know' they are not supposed to discriminate against Blacks, they have not yet internalized the norm when it comes to Hispanics, especially in light of the charged contemporary racial policy climate in the United States. Currently, the bulk of racial policy focus is on issues the public associates with Hispanics, such as immigration. One needs look no further than the rhetoric about "illegal immigration" and the focus on the US-Mexican border at the forefront of the 2016 Presidential primary (for example, Donald Trump's proposal for a

border wall for which "Mexico will be paying") to see the salience of these racial policy issues (Decker, 2016; Trump, 2017). These sorts of policy discussions "other" Hispanics by framing them as not entirely "American." As such, feelings about immigration may also impact whether respondents consider Hispanics to be members of the middle class – a quintessential American in-group.

The association between immigration and Hispanics, then, may have implications for respondents' perceptions of Hispanics as members of the middle class. Accounting for respondents' attitudes about immigration may provide further evidence of the identity's racialization and of discrimination against Hispanics in particular. To measure citizens' feelings about immigration, I used Stata's "alpha" function to create an additive index of respondents' feelings about immigration from nine immigration policy opinion questions asked of all respondents to the 2016 CCES. I used logistic regression to model image choice, and included image attributes, the immigration scaled measure, and interactions between respondents' immigration opinions and each image attribute as covariates.

Figure 3.8 (below) presents the predicted probability of all respondents' image selections given the presence of each attribute while accounting for opinions about immigration. Respondents are again less likely to select a blue-collar image than a white-collar one, and continue to discriminate against Hispanics. The probability of selecting the Hispanic image, when accounting for respondents' opinions about immigration, is about 0.46, compared to a probability of about 0.52 for images depicting a white or Black man; again, this difference is statistically significant. This trend holds among middle class respondents with similar levels of probability (0.45 for Hispanic images and 0.52 for non-Hispanic images).
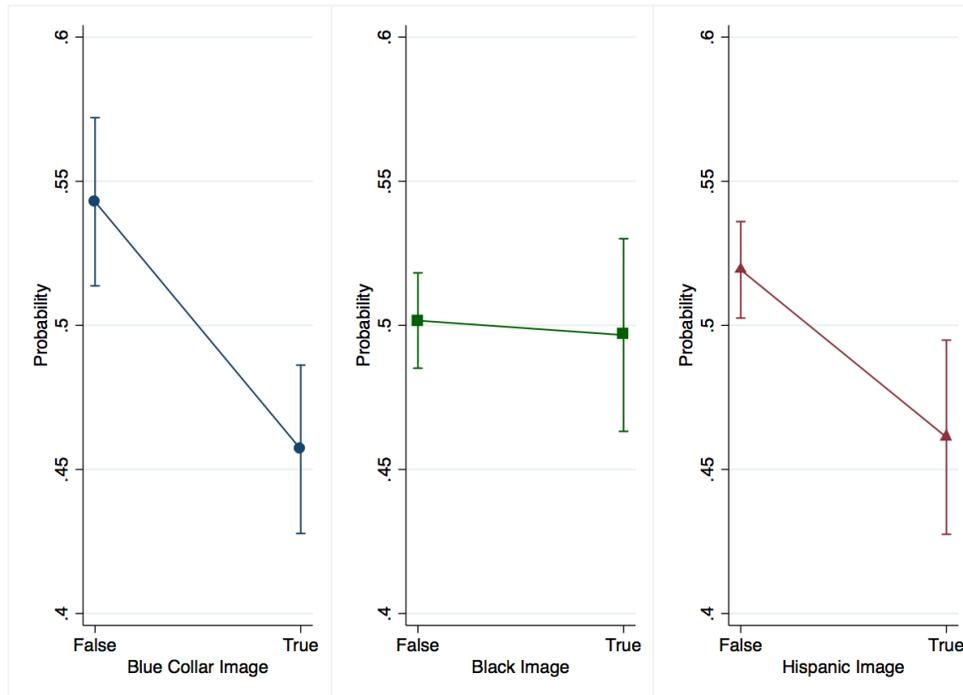
Figure 3.8: Predicted Probability of Selecting Image Given Presence of Attributes, Controlling for Immigration Opinions

On the whole, these results demonstrate a connection between opinions about immigration – a policy area with racial implications, arguably most acutely for individuals of Hispanic origin – and the middle class identity. This link provides further evidence of and nuance to the middle class identity's complicated racialization. That discrimination against Hispanics – but not Blacks – exists when controlling for feelings about immigration provides further indication that respondents perceive the middle class identity as one exclusive not of all minorities, but rather of Hispanics alone.

A Complicated Intersection

The results from the conjoint experiment indicate that the middle class identity is racialized in complicated ways. Respondents perceive the middle class not necessarily as an economic group alone, but instead associate the identity – implicitly – with race, which manifests

in racially-motivated selection of middle class membership. As such, respondents manifest a racialized understanding of the middle class identity. Respondents' avoidance of selecting Hispanics as members of the middle class is not merely an accurate reflection of reality, but is in fact discriminatory behavior. If respondents were merely making selections based on the fact that whites are most likely to be middle class given their advantages in, for example, holding higher-income jobs and owning homes, they would exclude Blacks from middle class membership as well as Hispanics. However, respondents do not avoid selecting Blacks as members of the middle class, meaning that respondents are exhibiting evidence of racial discrimination. Furthermore, this racial bias persists even when accounting for racial resentment toward Blacks and toward Hispanics, as well as for opinions about immigration. The results therefore provide more compelling evidence that this exclusion is not a benign reflection of reality, but rather discrimination. The main contention that the middle class is racialized in the public mind therefore stands: at an implicit level, citizens understand the identity to be not only an economic group, but also one with sharp racial demarcations.

The Influence of Race on Perceptions of Middle Class Identity

Among respondents to the 2016 CCES, it is clear that the middle class, while not necessarily "whitewashed," is nonetheless racialized: respondents view the middle class identity not necessarily as all-white, but certainly as distinctly non-Hispanic. When respondents had the opportunity to select members of the middle class, the excluded group was not non-whites, but Hispanics. At an implicit level, then, respondents associate race and the middle class identity.

The results from the conjoint experiment indicate that the middle class identity is extremely complicated. Race clearly influences citizens' perceptions of the middle class identity, manifesting in their perceptions of others' middle class membership. Interestingly, respondents

think that the class group comprises whites and Blacks, but not Hispanics. In an ideal world, respondents' exclusion of Hispanics from the middle class would be a mere reflection of reality. However, results indicate that this behavior is not benign, but is instead implicit discrimination.

The middle class identity is extremely complex, encompassing and evoking socioeconomic and racial characteristics and considerations. When evaluating images of potential members of the middle class, respondents associate the identity with race. This is not necessarily problematic until one considers whether the identity is inclusive of other races. While ostensibly a popular, catchall American identity, citizens do not find it – at least implicitly – to be inclusive of all those who might qualify for membership in more objective terms. This reality holds tremendous implications for citizen understanding of political rhetoric invoking the middle class. Because the identity is racialized in the minds of citizens, invoking the middle class is a way to speak with whites and perhaps even some Blacks (at the expense, in the mind of citizens, of Hispanics). Whether intentional or not, citizens consider race when they consider the middle class, rendering the identity – like so many other policies and reference terms – racialized.

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Conjoint Experiment Question Wordings – 2016 CCES

Class
There's been talk of different social classes these days. Which social class would you say you belong to?

1	Lower Class
2	Working Class
3	Lower Middle Class
4	Middle Class
5	Upper Middle Class
6	Upper Class

Race
What racial or ethnic group best describes you?

1	white
2	Black or African-American
3	Hispanic or Latino
4	Asian or Asian-American
5	Native American
6	Mixed Race
7	Other
8	Middle Eastern

Hispanic
Are you of Spanish, Latino, or Hispanic origin or descent?

1	Yes
2	No

Middle Class Membership Selection
On the following pages, we will show you a pair of images. Please indicate which of the individuals pictured you think is most likely to be a member of the middle class. You will have just 10 seconds for each pair of images.

Which of the individuals pictured below do you think is most likely to be a member of the middle class?

1	WhtWC.jpg
2	BlkWC.jpg
3	LatWC.jpg
4	WhtBC.jpg
5	BlkBC.jpg
6	LatBC.jpg

Note: respondents saw the preface on its own page first. They then saw four pairing of two randomly assigned images from the aforementioned list (images in Appendix B). Respondents saw only one pairing per page, and were auto-advanced to the next pairing after 10 seconds.

Table B1: Frequency of Image Combinations Shown to Respondents, Conjoint Experiment

	White/WC	Black/WC	Hispanic/WC	White/BC	Black/BC	Hispanic/BC	Total
white/WC	0	120	137	152	122	125	656
Black/WC	159	0	128	137	134	130	688
Hispanic/WC	135	128	0	135	140	134	672
white/BC	128	129	148	0	126	115	646
Black/BC	149	124	132	136	0	149	690
Hispanic/BC	143	111	134	134	126	0	648
Total	714	612	679	694	648	653	4,000

Note: "WC" refers to "white-collar," while "BC" refers to "blue-collar"

Respondents randomly saw four pairings of two randomly assigned images (from the six below). Respondents only saw one pairing per page, and were auto-advanced to the next pairing after 10 seconds.

Blue Collar Models

White   *Black*   *Hispanic*

White Collar Models
White   *Black*   *Hispanic*

Race Variable
As noted above, CCES asks all respondents a number of questions as Common Content. *Race* is a seven-part indicator. The CCES also asks whether respondents are of *Hispanic* origin (respondents could pick yes or no). This analysis makes use of both variables to construct the race variables used in this analysis.

Class Identification Variables
My analysis used a four-part class identification variable asked only of respondents on a particular module. The prompt asked respondents to choose any of six different class groups (lower, working, lower middle, middle, upper middle, and upper). The four-part variable was constructed by collapsing the middle class categories into a single one. The four-part variable therefore included only lower class, working class, middle class, and upper class.

Latino Racial Resentment Question Wordings
I used four questions about racial resentment toward Latinos to construct my Hispanic racial resentment measure. These questions are as follows:
1. Over the past few years, Latinos have gotten less than they deserve.
2. The Irish, Italians, Jews and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Latinos should do the same without any special favors.
3. Generations of land occupation and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Latinos to work their way out of the lower class.
4. It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if Latinos would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites.

These measures were developed by Rebecca Lisi.

Respondent Race and Class Distributions

Table C34: Race of Respondents to Module of the 2016 CCES

Race	Frequency	Percent
white	680	68
Black	125	12.5
Hispanic	113	11.3
Asian	34	3.4
Native American	11	1.1
Mixed	23	2.3
Other	14	1.4
Total	1,000	100

Table C35: Class Identification of All Respondents to Module of 2016 CCES

Class	Frequency	Percent
Lower	74	7.43
Working	170	17.07
Lower middle	228	22.89
Middle	407	40.86
Upper middle	104	10.44
Upper	13	1.31
Total	996	100

Regression Tables – Main Effects

Results presented below are logistic regressions. The probabilities presented in the paper were calculated using marginal effects (Stata's margins command). The coefficients presented below are odds ratios.

Table C36: Effect of Image Attribute on Image Choice, white Respondents

Blue Collar	0.81*
	(0.08)
Black	1.08
	(0.09)
Hispanic	0.82*
	(0.07)
Constant	1.15*
	(0.08)
Observations	4,128
Wald	14.76
P	0.00

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table C37: Effect of Image Attribute on Image Choice by Class, white Respondents

	Lower	*Working*	*Middle*
Blue Collar	0.36**	0.55*	0.99
	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.11)
Black	0.61	1.48	1.11
	(0.18)	(0.32)	(0.11)
Hispanic	0.66	1.33	0.77**
	(0.17)	(0.28)	(0.07)
Constant	2.24***	1.06	1.06
	(0.50)	(0.18)	(0.09)
Observations	324	662	3,082
Wald	13.76	8.69	14.43
P	0.00	0.03	0.00

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Regression Tables – Image Interaction Effects

Table C38: Effect of Image Attribute on Image Choice, With Image Interaction Effects (white Respondents)

Blue Collar	0.95
	(0.13)
Black	1.19
	(0.16)
Hispanic	0.94
	(0.11)
BlackXBlue Collar	0.82
	(0.17)
HispanicXBlue Collar	0.76
	(0.12)
Constant	1.07
	(0.09)
Observations	4,128
Wald	16.92
P	0.00

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table C39: Effect of Image Attribute on Image Choice, With Image Interaction Effects (white Respondents by Class)

	Lower Class	*Working Class*	*Middle Class*
Blue Collar	0.38	0.53	1.21
	(0.21)	(0.18)	(0.19)
Black	0.70	1.64	1.21
	(0.31)	(0.53)	(0.17)
Hispanic	0.63	1.16	0.96
	(0.29)	(0.31)	(0.13)
BlackXBlue Collar	0.74	0.84	0.83
	(0.49)	(0.37)	(0.16)
HispanicXBlue Collar	1.16	1.33	0.65*
	(0.79)	(0.51)	(0.12)
Constant	2.18*	1.08	0.95
	(0.70)	(0.22)	(0.09)
Observations	324	662	3,082
Wald	15.29	10.21	18.96
P	0.01	0.07	0.00

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses.
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Regression Tables – Racial Resentment Interaction Effects

Table C40: Effect of Image Attribute on Image Choice, With Racial Resentment Interaction Effects (white Respondents)

	Black Racial Resentment Model	*Hispanic Racial Resentment Model*
Blue Collar	0.79*	0.88
	(0.08)	(0.14)
Black	1.03	1.05
	(0.09)	(0.13)
Hispanic	0.79**	0.75*
	(0.07)	(0.10)
Resentment	1.18**	1.08
	(0.07)	(0.11)
Blue Collar X Resentment	0.90	1.09
	(0.07)	(0.15)
Black X Resentment	0.84*	0.83
	(0.06)	(0.09)
Hispanic X Resentment	0.85*	0.84
	(0.06)	(0.10)
Constant	1.20**	1.16
	(0.09)	(0.13)
Observations	4,128	1,910
Wald	24.04	12.16
P	0.00	0.09

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses.
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table C41: Effect of Image Attribute on Image Choice, With Racial Resentment Interaction Effects (white Respondents, by Class)

	Black Racial Resentment Models			Hispanic Racial Resentment Models		
	Lower Class	*Working Class*	*Middle Class*	*Lower Class*	*Working Class*	*Middle Class*
Blue Collar	0.37**	0.63	0.94	0.35	0.31*	1.20
	(0.14)	(0.17)	(0.11)	(0.26)	(0.14)	(0.20)
Black	0.64	1.30	1.06	0.64	1.45	1.02
	(0.19)	(0.30)	(0.10)	(0.25)	(0.58)	(0.14)
Hispanic	0.68	1.16	0.74**	0.63	0.92	0.71*
	(0.17)	(0.27)	(0.07)	(0.21)	(0.34)	(0.10)
Resentment	0.73	1.07	1.26***	0.92	1.50	1.11
	(0.14)	(0.16)	(0.08)	(0.35)	(0.39)	(0.12)
Blue Collar X Resentment	1.27	1.30	0.80**	2.10	0.92	0.95
	(0.41)	(0.30)	(0.08)	(1.50)	(0.36)	(0.14)
Black X Resentment	1.42	0.75	0.81**	0.77	0.61	0.88
	(0.34)	(0.14)	(0.07)	(0.24)	(0.21)	(0.11)
Hispanic X Resentment	1.35	0.75	0.84*	0.78	0.57	0.92
	(0.26)	(0.13)	(0.07)	(0.47)	(0.18)	(0.12)
Constant	2.16***	1.08	1.11	2.18*	1.64	1.01
	(0.49)	(0.21)	(0.09)	(0.87)	(0.54)	(0.13)
Observations	324	662	3,028	124	350	1,414
Wald	19.66	14.51	26.96	10.83	23.60	10.50
P	0.01	0.04	0.00	0.15	0.07	0.16

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses.
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Regression Tables – Immigration Opinion Interaction Effects

Table C42: Effect of Image Attribute on Image Choice, With Immigration Opinion Interaction Effects (white Respondents)

Blue Collar	0.71**
	(0.09)
Black	0.98
	(0.10)
Hispanic	0.79*
	(0.08)
Immigration Opinion	1.54*
	(0.30)
Blue Collar X Immigration Opinion	0.58*
	(0.16)
Black X Immigration Opinion	0.70
	(0.17)
Hispanic X Immigration Opinion	0.90
	(0.21)
Constant	1.29**
	(0.11)
Observations	4,128
Wald	21.12
P	0.00

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses.
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table C43: Effect of Image Attribute on Image Choice, with Immigration Opinion Interaction Effects (white Respondents, by Class)

	Lower Class	*Working Class*	*Middle Class*
Blue Collar	0.48	0.34**	0.86
	(0.23)	(0.14)	(0.11)
Black	0.57	1.59	1.00
	(0.20)	(0.46)	(0.12)
Hispanic	0.68	1.50	0.75*
	(0.21)	(0.51)	(0.09)
Immigration Opinion	0.63	1.81	1.64*
	(0.43)	(0.90)	(0.37)
Blue Collar X Immigration Opinion	2.91	0.23	0.52*
	(3.10)	(0.20)	(0.16)
Black X Immigration Opinion	0.77	1.14	0.65
	(0.67)	(0.76)	(0.19)
Hispanic X Immigration Opinion	1.10	1.44	0.91
	(0.92)	(1.00)	(0.25)
Constant	1.97*	1.30	1.20
	(0.56)	(0.32)	(0.11)
Observations	324	662	3,082
Wald	15.56	10.94	21.82
P	0.03	0.14	0.00

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses.
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05