American = Rich? National Identity, the Prototypical American, and Income Inequality[1]

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The results presented in this manuscript are preliminary, and so should not be referenced without first consulting the authors.

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Abstract:

Wealth inequality and poverty have been shown to come with various negative social and economic consequences, yet the psychology underlying people's attitudes toward inequality and poverty has yet to be fully understood. In this paper, we examine the relationship between national identity and attitudes toward income inequality, poverty, and policies aimed at reducing poverty. Utilizing a nationally representative data set alongside a controlled laboratory experiment, we show that national identity is associated with a lower likelihood of seeing income inequality and poverty as serious problems in the United States, and lower levels of support for policies aimed at reducing poverty. Further, this relationship is moderated by implicit perceived prototypicality of the rich and the poor – i.e. the degree to which one implicitly associated the rich with being more "American" than the poor – as well as, for certain policy areas, physiological reactivity to images of wealth and poverty. We discuss the implications of these findings for understanding public resistance to efforts to reduce income inequality.

In an interview on *Weekend Edition Saturday* on National Public Radio, Scott Simon asked Representative Adrian Smith (R-3rd District, Nebraska), "Is every American entitled to eat?" When Smith responded, "nutrition, obviously, we know is very important," Simon jumped in, "Well, not just important, it's essential for life. Is every American entitled to eat?" Smith responded, "It is essential. It is essential" ("Rep. Adrian Smith" 2017). Smith's unwillingness to agree with Simon that Americans are entitled to food elicited a flurry of Twitter and Facebook activity, but the exchange raises serious questions about what guarantees people have, whose responsibility it is to ensure people have a basic standard of living, and what factors affect people's willingness to support the state's involvement in redistributing wealth to help the poor.

At a time when income inequality in the United States has increased to a level not seen since 1928 (Sommeiller, Price, and Wazeter 2016), income tax levels are less progressive (Ashkenas 2016), and cuts in government programs designed to help the poor are frequently proposed in Congress, it is imperative for researchers to try to understand the dynamics that underlie people's support, or lack of support, for government programs that address income inequality and help the poor. David Miller (2005, 69) has argued that "nations are ethical communities whose members have special responsibilities both to support one another and to preserve their community." He further argues that "The potency of nationality as a source of personal identity means that its obligations are strongly felt and may extend very far – people are willing to sacrifice themselves for their country in a way that they are not for other groups and associations" (Miller 1995, 70). Part of this willingness to sacrifice, the argument goes, is supporting, and being willing to pay for, a welfare system that ensures that everyone has some basic standard of living and ensures that people have access to the resources they need (such as water, food, medical care, and the like) to live their life.

National identity, as a long-standing, stable identity integral to people's sense of self (Huddy 2001), should be related to support for programs that help the poor if the liberal nationalist arguments are right. Americans tend to score high on national identity, yet at the same time the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, many Americans support efforts to cut back government programs for the poor and elect political leaders who oppose a more progressive tax structure. Research shows that while some countries have a positive relationship between national identity and welfare support (Johnston et al. 2010), many countries experience the opposite (Shayo 2009). And among some countries that have a positive relationship, the support for redistribution of wealth rests on an exclusive national identity (Wright and Reeskens 2013).

We are interested in the underlying psychological dynamics that can help us understand the national identity-poverty policy relationship. We draw on the social identity approach to examine national identity and people's perceptions of the rich and the poor. Strong identifiers are more likely than weak identifiers to care about the distinctiveness of their group and to support efforts that help increase that distinctiveness. If strong identifiers believe the rich are prototypical Americans, holding the attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics that exemplify Americans and set them apart from other national groups, and that the poor are not prototypical, then they will be more likely to want to help the rich (keep their taxes low) and not help the poor (by not supporting efforts to decrease income inequality). Weak identifiers, on the other hand, are less likely to care about the prototypicality dynamics, and might even eagerly distance themselves from prototypical Americans. Importantly, we examine both conscious and nonconscious reactions to the rich and the poor since past research has shown that there are differences between nonconscious and conscious reactions to the rich and the poor among Americans

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(Horwitz and Dovidio 2015). We conclude with a discussion of the implications of our results for national identity and income inequality in the United States.

National Identity and Perceptions of the Rich and the Poor

The willingness of people to help those less fortunate is higher when people know, care about, and like each other. Family members often help each other through hard times. Friends do what they can to help as well. In a social group as large as a nation, however, people cannot know, let alone care about and like, their fellow nationals. They personally know only a small fraction of their compatriots, and since people tend to live and work in areas that share socioeconomic characteristics, it is likely that people mainly interact in a meaningful way with those in their own social class. The fostering of helping behavior within a nation therefore requires a connection among people that grows out of something other than personal interactions. That something is a common national identity that leads people to view their fellow nationals as part of a strong, intertwined community (Kymlicka 2001; Miller 1995; Moore 2001). The possible solution, then, to increasing the desire to help fellow nationals who are impoverished is to increase people's sense of national identity.

Yet group dynamics make this solution problematic. Social groups, including national groups, set boundaries on who counts as being a member of the group and who is excluded from the group. Prototypical group members are those who have the attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics that set the group apart from other groups (Hogg and Reid 2006) – that make the group distinct – and they are fully recognized as being in the group. Some members, however, are more prototypical than other members, leading those who are more atypical to be marginalized. This marginalization of some group members has significant implications because

people who strongly identify with the group are more likely to help prototypical members than atypical members and therefore atypical members do not gain the benefits that accrue to prototypical members. Previous research has shown that Americans with a strong national identity are more likely to help whites (who are perceived to be prototypical) than African Americans or Arab Americans and to support government spending on farmers and the military rather than on other government services (Theiss-Morse 2009).

If national identity is related to helping behavior, we should be witnessing a strong outcry for helping the poor, whether through government programs designed to help the poor funded by higher taxes on the wealthy or a huge upsurge in charitable giving designed to help the poor, such as giving to food kitchens, homeless shelters, and programs designed to deliver job skills training to the poor. None of this has happened in the United States, which raises the question of how Americans perceive the prototypicality of the rich and the poor. The lack of a helping response could be the result of Americans not viewing the poor as prototypical Americans. If Americans, in people's conscious or unconscious perceptions, are wealthy, then the poor would not be prototypical and would therefore be less likely to be the beneficiaries of the helping behavior of strong identifiers. Instead, the aim would be to help the prototypical wealthy, presumably by not taxing them to help the atypical poor. Conversely, because the middle class is the category that most Americans believe themselves to be part of, it could be that both the poor *and* the rich are viewed as atypical and therefore not the targets of helping behaviors.

We make the following argument in this paper. Based on previous research, we hypothesize that, in the context of the United States, the stronger people's national identity, the less they will support government programs designed to help the poor and to decrease the large income gap between the rich and the poor. This relationship, however, would be counter to the

argument that national identity leads to a greater sense of community and therefore to a greater desire to support welfare and other anti-poverty efforts. We argue that the dynamics surrounding who is considered a prototypical American is a major psychological dynamic that underlies the lack of support for these programs among strong identifiers. National identity is related to setting more exclusive boundaries on the national group and having a clear sense of who is a prototypical American. We do not hypothesize about whether strong identifiers view the rich or the poor as prototypical, although if there is a bias, we think it would be towards the rich being viewed as more prototypical than the poor (because of the desire for the group to be high status, see, e.g., Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 1999; Hogg and Abrams 1988). Since strong identifiers want to help their group, and that means helping prototypical members who contribute the most positively to keeping the group distinct (Brewer 2003), we argue that a major explanation for poverty policy support is the interaction of national identity with beliefs about the prototypicality of the rich and the poor. We hypothesize that strong identifiers who view the rich as more prototypical than the poor will oppose efforts to decrease income inequality and to help the poor. These efforts could "hurt" the prototypical rich by taking away some of their wealth and giving it to the atypical poor, or at the very least may seem unnecessary given the low priority assigned to helping atypical group members. On the other hand, strong identifiers who view the poor as more prototypical than the rich will be more likely to support these programs because they would help the prototypical poor at the expense of the atypical rich.

To dig even deeper into this relationship, we examine conscious and nonconscious reactions to the rich and the poor. Previous research has shown that perceptions of who is included in a social group can vary depending on how conscious the perception is. For example, Devos and Banaji (2005) found that while people said it is not the case that to be fully American

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you have to be white, an implicit association test showed that they connected being American with being white. Because of social desirability issues or simply not being aware of a bias, people sometimes give different impressions depending on whether the measures are implicit or explicit. In other instances, however, implicit and explicit attitudes about group membership are very similar. For example, people are willing to say that a characteristic of being an American is being Christian, and this is true whether using an explicit or an implicit measure (Jacobs and Theiss-Morse 2013). Further, explicit measures have been shown in some cases to explain political preferences better than implicit measures (e.g. Payne et al. 2010). We utilize in our research both implicit and explicit measures of the prototypicality of the rich and the poor to see if there is a difference between the two as well as which plays a greater role in predicting attitudes toward income inequality and poverty.

We utilize two distinct implicit measures to gauge nonconscious reactions to the rich and the poor: implicit measures based on the Affect Misattribution Procedure (AMP) and skin conductance measures of physiological reactivity to images depicting wealth and poverty. As described in detail later on, the implicit measure gauges the degree to which individuals nonconsciously associated images of wealth versus images of poverty with the category "American." Our expectations regarding this implicit measure are the same as with the explicit measure of the association between wealth/poverty and being American, but we expect our findings to be stronger with the implicit measure, as this measure should subvert conscious motivations across individuals to rate the rich and poor as equally American (e.g. Fazio and Olson 2003; Greenwald, McGhee, and Schwartz 1998).

Our expectations regarding the skin conductance measure are more exploratory, especially given that valence cannot be detected from physiological measures alone (Cacioppo,

Tassinary, and Berntson 2007).[2] On the one hand, it could be that individuals who have the strongest reactions to images of wealth and poverty are those among whom national identity leads to greater concern over income inequality and poverty and greater support for assistance to the poor. Strong physiological reactions to wealth and poverty may signify adverse reactions to wealth and sympathetic reactions to poverty, and so these individuals may be the most viscerally motivated to help the poor and potentially even harm the rich. On the other hand, strong reactions to images of wealth and poverty may indicate disgust or disdain toward the poor and excitement over wealth, which might mean lower levels of concern over income inequality and poverty and weaker support for assistance to the poor. As such, the most physiologically reactive individuals may be the ones who seek to further raise up the rich while keeping the poor at the bottom of the national hierarchy.

Data and Methods

We utilize two data sources to test our argument. The first is survey data from the 2016 American National Election Studies (ANES). The face-to-face sample, which is the one we used for our analyses, was a multi-stage stratified cluster sample of over 1,100 respondents. The pre-election survey was administered using computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) between September and the day before the election. The post-election survey was administered using CAPI from the day after the election to January 2017. The data were weighted to ensure adequate generalizability to the U.S. adult population (48 percent male, 69 percent white, median age 48 years, 33 percent with a college degree or higher).

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[2] Analyses have yet to be conducted pairing measures of physiological reactivity with valence measures regarding the rich and the poor. Such analyses will be done in a later version of this manuscript to shed light on the role of physiological reactivity.

The question used to measure national identity was straightforward: "How important is being American to your identity?" Response options ranged from extremely important (1) to not at all important (5). Americans tend to have a strong sense of national identity, and the ANES data reveal the same tendency. Almost half of the respondents chose the "extremely important" option (47 percent, labeled "strong identity"), with another 30 percent choosing "very important" (labeled "moderate identity"). For the purposes of the cross-tabulations and means tests, we collapsed the other three categories (moderately important, a little important, and not at all important) to create the "weak identity" category. For the regression analyses we used the full array of responses.

The income inequality questions asked respondents if they favored or opposed government involvement in trying to reduce income inequality or if they agreed or disagreed with government actions to reduce income inequality. We combined these two questions into an income inequality scale (M=1.08, SD=.687, range=0-2, α =.67) for the regression analysis, with higher scores indicating support for government involvement. We used three poverty policy questions, two of which asked respondents if they wanted to increase, decrease, or keep at the same level government spending on welfare and on aid to the poor. The third question asked if people thought the government should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living or if each person should get ahead on his or her own. These three questions were transformed to range from 0 to 1 and combined into a single poverty policy scale (M=1.54, SD=.839, range=0-3, α =.72) for the regression analysis, with higher scores indicating support for higher spending or government involvement. The feeling thermometer questions asked respondents how warm or cold they felt toward rich people (M=54.8, SD=19.47, range=0-100)

and poor people (M=74.15, SD=20.16, range=0-100). The other control variables were measured with standard measures. All variables were transformed to range from 0 to 1.

To more directly shed light on the questions raised in this paper, we also utilized data from the Images, Politics, and Physiology study, which we conducted through the Center for Brain, Biology, and Behavior (CB3) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln using a diverse adult sample. Seventy-six adults were recruited to participate in the study. Fifty-four were recruited via flyers placed around the university and surrounding community in exchange for $15 in compensation, and 22 were recruited through political science summer courses in exchange for course credit. Participants were run individually through the study at a time of their convenience between April 2016 and August 2017.[3] The study took approximately 45 minutes to complete. Two participants were omitted from all analyses due to failing one of two attention check items, which asked participants to mark particular responses to "ensure their responses were coded correctly," leaving a final sample of 74 (38% male, 72% white, median age = 22, age range = 18-54, 34% with a college degree or higher).

Participants completed several tasks, including a computer task that included measures of implicit and explicit perceptions of the rich and the poor as well as a survey component that included items measuring American national identity, attitudes toward income inequality and poverty, preferences regarding specific policies aimed at addressing income inequality and poverty, and demographics.

Implicit and Explicit Prototypicality

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[3] Participant recruitment for this study is still ongoing, and so results should not be cited without consulting the authors.

Implicit perceptions were measured using a computer task similar to that used in prior research (e.g. Devos and Banaji 2005; Yogeeswaran and Dasgupta 2010). Specifically, participants completed 2 blocks of a computerized experiment using a 2 (*wealth category: wealth vs. poverty*) x 2 (*level of awareness:* implicit vs. explicit) within-subjects design. Each block consisted of 48 trials in which participants were asked to decide whether an image shown briefly on the screen depicted something "American" or "Not American," which they denoted using the "i" and "e" keys (which key corresponded to which label was randomized between participants). Response labels were shown at the top of the screen at all times (the position of the labels corresponded to which key was associated with each label).

The *wealth category* manipulation varied within each block (i.e. across trials). Half of the trials contained images depicting wealth, whereas the other half contained images depicting poverty.[4] The *level of awareness* manipulation determined how the images were shown, and manifested between blocks (block order – i.e. whether implicit or explicit trials were completed first – was randomized across participants). During the explicit block, participants simply viewed a fixation cross for 534 milliseconds (ms), followed by the image of wealth or poverty for 466 ms, and then a noise mask (image of random black and white dots) until they responded (total = 1 second). Trials during the implicit block were identical except that after the 534 ms fixation cross, a noise mask was shown for 300 ms, followed by the image of wealth or poverty for 33 ms, and then an image of a White male face for 100 ms (enough time for the faces but not

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[4] A large collection of images was carefully selected using an online search engine, and then a final set of images was chosen by having a small sample of colleagues and students rate the images in terms of the degree to which they reflected "wealth" or "poverty." We revised the final selection of images to ensure that half of the images in each category contained people and half did not.

images of wealth or poverty to be consciously seen; total = 1 second).[5] Participants were

instructed to decide whether the face shown was "Not American" or "American." The timings

for stimuli were decided based on prior research (see Rohr, Degner and Wentura 2015) and on

pilot testing that suggested the wealth/poverty primes were consciously perceptible in the explicit

but not implicit blocks. As such, the implicit block gauges the nonconscious influence of

perceptions of wealth and poverty on evaluations of neutral faces and the explicit block gauges

straightforward conscious evaluations in a similar manner. We view the structural similarity

between these measures as a strength of this study (see Payne, Burkley, and Stokes 2008).

Experimental stimuli were presented using PsychoPy2 v1.83.01 (Peirce 2007; 2009).

A measure of explicit perceptions of prototypicality of the rich and the poor was

calculated as the proportion of wealthy images chosen as "American" during the explicit block

minus the proportion of poverty images chosen as "American" during the explicit block, thus

reflecting the degree to which participants saw wealth/the rich as more prototypical than

poverty/the poor explicitly (M = 0.29, SD = 0.0.23, range = -0.13 – 0.92). To measure implicit

perceptions of prototypicality, we calculated the same variable except using decisions made

regarding the neutral faces during the implicit block (M = 0.01, SD = 0.11, range = -0.33 – 0.33).

Physiological Measure

Physiological skin conductance levels (SCL) were measured as participants viewed a

series of twelve images that were chosen in the same manner as the images for the

prototypicality measure (6 images for wealth and 6 images for poverty). SCL was captured with

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[5] Face images were selected from the Chicago Face Database (Ma, Correll, and Wittenbrink 2015), a database of high-resolution standardized photographs of individuals between the ages of 18 and 40. Each image is coded along a variety of physical and perceptual dimensions by an independent sample of raters, and images were chosen that were rated low in seeming "unusual." Only 24 faces were chosen, and so each face was shown twice for each block.

a GSR 100c bioamplifier manufactured by BIOPAC which then transmitted the physiological

recordings to Acqknowledge, a physiological data recording computer program. Per best

practices, sensors were placed on the index and ring fingers of the participants' non-dominant

hand. Prior to stimuli presentation, participants did nothing for a minute in order to acclimate

them to lab for the purposes of stabilizing their SCL.

SCL is a measure of physiological arousal, and as people become more physiologically

aroused, their SCL tends to increase as a result. SCL is a relatively slow process. It typically

takes between two to five seconds after stimulus onset to see any possible change in overall SCL.

For the purposes of our analyses, we took the mean of SCL for every half-second interval two to

ten seconds after each stimulus was presented. We then subtracted the initial level of SCL at

stimulus onset from the previously calculated mean measure.[6] We then created a mean measure

for all of the poverty images and a mean measure for all of the wealth images. The mean values

for wealth images (M = -.08, SD = .18) and poverty images (M = -.12, SD = .15) were both

negative indicating that on average people saw these images as being neutral, as the natural

progression of SCL is a downward trajectory. No further transformation of the measures was

needed, as both were reasonably distributed with only a slight issue of positive kurtosis (Wealth

Kurtosis = 6.17, Poverty Kurtosis = 5.13) and minimal skewness (Wealth Skew = -1.32, Poverty

Skew = -1.00). Further transformations, such as a square root transformation would have only

exacerbated issues of value distribution. Arousal was slightly greater for wealth images, but a

one-tailed paired-sample t-test shows this difference was statistically marginal at best (t(70) =

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[6] We did not use a single baseline measure, as the nature of SCL is influenced by time. SCL will tend to decrease over time and is oftentimes dependent on previously presented stimuli. As such, taking individual baselines for every individual stimulus is vastly preferable.

1.57, $p = .06$). The lack of statistical significance may simply be the result of a power problem. Reactivity to wealth and reactivity to poverty were significantly correlated ($r = .29$, $p < .05$).

Survey Measures

To measure American national identity, we used a modified version of 12 items from the scale developed by Roccas et al. (2008). This scale was originally developed to capture four subdimensions of group identity, but for simplicity's sake, we only present results using the combined aggregate scale ($\alpha = .84$, $M = 3.05$, $SD = 0.62$, range = $1.42 - 4.17$). We measured broad perceptions of income inequality and poverty by calculating the mean of two items asking whether income inequality and poverty, respectively, are serious problems in the United States ($\alpha = .76$, $M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.89$, range = $1.50 - 5.00$). We then gauged support for specific policies aimed at helping the poor, including spending on aid to the poor in general, raising the minimum wage, increased funding for public housing, and increased funding for food stamps. An aggregate scale was created using the mean of these items ($\alpha = .84$, $M = 4.48$, $SD = 1.42$, range = $1.25 - 6.50$). Finally, we included feeling thermometers toward the rich ($M = 48.97$, $SD = 20.76$, range = $0.00 - 91.00$) and the poor ($M = 58.37$, $SD = 14.52$, range = $24.00 - 94.00$; see Appendix for all items used).

Results

The discussion of results will take place in three stages. In the first stage, we use the ANES data to examine the relationship between national identity and support for government programs designed to alleviate income inequality and poverty in America. In the second stage, we use data from the laboratory sample to dig deeper into the impact perceptions of prototypicality have on the relationship between national identity and these policies. Finally, in

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the third stage, we use these same laboratory data to examine the relationship between physiological reactivity, national identity, and attitudes toward income inequality and poverty. The results provide an interesting picture into why the community generated by national identity does not lead to support for efforts designed to help impoverished fellow nationals.

Figure 1 shows the impact of national identity strength on support for reducing income inequality. Responses to both questions regarding income inequality show that weak identifiers are much more likely to support government efforts to reduce income inequality than strong identifiers, with well over half of them supporting these programs (Government should take measures: Somer's d -0.137, p<.001; Favor or oppose government trying: Somer's d -.159, p<.001). Only about 40 percent of strong identifiers support these policies. When asked directly if they favor or oppose trying to reduce income inequality, a plurality of strong identifiers (42 percent) oppose government efforts, compared to 37 percent who favor such efforts.

[Figure 1 about here]

A simple explanation might be that strong identifiers simply think more highly of rich people than poor people, leading them to oppose programs that take from the rich even if it benefits the poor. Figure 2 handily dispels this notion. Regardless of national identity strength, Americans, at the explicit level, feel more warmly towards the poor than the rich. Susan Fiske and her colleagues (2010; 2011) have shown that the rich are perceived to be competent and cold whereas the poor are perceived to be incompetent and cold. Clearly perceptions of the coldness of groups do not lead people to feel a similar degree of coldness towards them. People feel warmly towards the poor (means of 70 or higher) whereas they feel neutral towards the wealthy (with means around 50), regardless of national identity.

[Figure 2 about here]

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These bivariate results do not take into account potential alternative explanations for the relationships, such as ideology and race. Conservatives are generally opposed to government spending on human services whereas liberals more eagerly support government programs to help the poor and needy. Because national identity is related to conservatism in the United States, it might be that the relationship in Figure 1 is being driven by ideology, not national identity. To take into account the multiple possible predictors of support for government poverty policies and efforts to reduce income inequality, we provide multivariate regression analyses in Table 1. The dependent variables are support for policies that address poverty, including programs that guarantee jobs and income, provide welfare, and give aid to the poor, and support for government efforts to reduce the income gap between the rich and the poor. We control ideology, age, race, sex, education level, and income. We also add the rich and poor feeling thermometers to control the feelings people have for these two groups. We can therefore determine if national identity has an impact on policy support holding all of these other variables constant.

The results show that even with ideology and feelings towards the rich and the poor controlled, American national identity is strongly and significantly related to poverty program support. The more strongly respondents identify with the American people, the less they support government programs that help the poor. National identity is also significantly, although less strongly, related to support for the government intervening in the increasing income inequality in the United States. National identity increases the desire of people to help their fellow nationals, but this desire does not extend to helping the poor. This effect holds even when ideology is in the model. Ideology, not surprisingly, is the variable that most strongly predicts support for poverty programs and reducing income inequality. Moving from extremely conservative to extremely

liberal moves people over half of the scale in opposition to these programs. That is, conservatives are much less likely to support these programs than liberals. Feelings toward the two groups are also important predictors, with warm feelings towards the rich leading to less support for poverty programs and warmth towards the poor leading to greater support. Finally, whites are less supportive of poverty and income inequality reduction programs and males are more supportive.

[Table 1 about here]

These results tell the following story. Strong identifiers are as likely as weak identifiers to feel more warmly towards the poor than the rich, but they are much less likely to support efforts to help the poor, even controlling ideology, income, and race. What explains this dynamic? We next test whether people's views of the rich and the poor as prototypical or atypical affects the relationship between national identity and willingness to help the poor. Because even at a young age children tend to favor the rich over the poor (Horwitz, Shutts, and Olson 2014), which can affect their nonconscious reactions to the rich even if they later consciously favor neither, we examine both explicit and implicit perceptions of the prototypicality of the rich and the poor.

In the laboratory data, American national identity was not significantly related to beliefs that income inequality and poverty are serious problems in the United States ($r = -0.203$, $p = 0.105$), although it was close to reaching the p=.10 level.[7] Further, national identity was unrelated to feelings toward the poor ($r = 0.082$, $p = 0.516$), but unlike in the ANES data, national identity showed a significant positive relationship with feelings toward the rich ($r =$

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[7] Given the effect size, it should be noted that this lack of statistical significance may be due to a lack of statistical power. However, when statistical controls such as ideology are included in regression models predicting beliefs that income inequality and poverty are serious problems in the U.S., the effect of national identity disappears entirely.

0.249, $p < .05$). Nonetheless, the primary goal of the laboratory study was to examine the role of perceptions of prototypicality.

As depicted in Figure 3, participants were significantly more likely to label as "American" images depicting wealth ($M = 0.78$, $SD = 0.42$) than images depicting poverty ($M = 0.49$, $SD = 0.50$; $t = 9.80$, $df = 126.57$, $p < .001$) in the explicit test, but no differences were evident in implicit perceived American prototypicality of the rich ($M = 0.83$, $SD = 0.38$) versus the poor ($M = 0.81$, $SD = 0.39$; $t = 0.472$, $df = 127.98$, $p = 0.638$). Therefore, despite any social desirability pressures that may be at play when people evaluate the rich and the poor, the tendency to think of the rich as more "American" than the poor only manifested explicitly.

[Figure 3 about here]

We next examine in the role perceptions of prototypicality play in explaining the relationship between national identity and attitudes toward income inequality and poverty. There was no relationship between explicit perceived prototypicality bias and national identity ($r = 0.176$, $p = 0.154$), but implicit perceived prototypicality bias was marginally negatively related to national identity ($r = -0.203$, $p = 0.099$). Linear regressions were used predicting the composite variable for beliefs that income inequality and poverty are serious problems in the U.S. as a function of national identity, the prototypicality bias variables (both implicit and explicit), the feeling thermometer variables, and controls for political ideology, race (White vs. non-White), sex, age, education, and whether the participant was recruited through a summer course or from the community. We also ran separate models including the interactions between national identity and each of the prototypicality bias variables. Table 2 contains the results of these models.

[Table 2 about here]

Model 1 contains the results of a model without any interactions, and shows that when looking only at main effects, the only significant predictors of believing income inequality and poverty are serious problems in the U.S. are political liberalism and negative feelings toward the rich. However, our hypothesis is that the role of American national identity is dependent on one's perceptions of the prototypicality of the rich compared to the poor. Indeed, a marginally significant interaction exists with regard to implicit prototypicality bias (but not explicit prototypicality bias). This interaction is illustrated in Figure 4.

[Figure 4 about here]

At mean levels of prototypicality bias, there is no relationship between national identity and attitudes toward income inequality and poverty. However, at one standard deviation below the mean, this relationship trends positive, and at one standard deviation above the mean, this relationship trends negative. These results suggest that among individuals who view the poor as more prototypically American than the rich, national identity increases concern over income inequality and poverty, but among individuals who view the rich as more prototypical, national identity is associated with a decrease in concern over these issues. Importantly, this is only true regarding implicit associations. That is, people's conscious evaluations of how "American" the images they saw of wealth and poverty were played no significant role in predicting concern over income inequality and poverty, but their implicit perceptions of prototypicality significantly moderated the relationship between national identity and these concerns.

This same pattern of results was evident when predicting support for specific policies that reduce poverty (see Table 3). In the main effects model for this dependent variable, American national identity significantly predicts lower levels of support for policies that reduce poverty in the aggregate, and this relationship is marginally moderated in the same direction by implicit

(but not explicit) prototypicality bias. When we include ideology as a control in these models,

this interaction is no longer statistically significant at conventional levels, but this is likely due to

a lack of statistical power. The interaction between national identity and implicit prototypicality

bias is depicted in Figure 5.

[Table 3 about here]

[Figure 5 about here]

Finally, we examined the role of physiological reactivity to images of wealth and

poverty. Simple bivariate relationships showed no relationship between American national

identity and physiological reactivity to images of poverty ($r = -.11$, $p = .37$). However, those with

higher levels of national identity did display lower levels of arousal when presented with images

of wealth ($r = -.31$, $p < .01$). Table 4 shows the results of regression analyses predicting

American national identity with reactivity to wealth and poverty images when controlling for

age, sex, education, birth in the United States, party identification, and ideology. In the first

model, reactivity to wealth images is omitted from the analysis. Here, we see party identification

($b = .16$, $p < .01$) is a significant predictor of American national identity while sex (men coded

higher) is marginal ($b = .22$, $p < .10$). When reactivity to wealth and poverty images is included

in the second model, sex loses its marginal significance ($b = .10$, $p = .46$) but both reactivity ($b =$

-1.08, $p < .05$) and party identification ($b = .15$, $p < .01$) are significant. Reactivity to images of

poverty was not a significant predictor of American national identity ($b = -.07$, $p = .89$). These

findings suggest the role of reactivity to images of wealth goes above and beyond either ideology

or party identification when predicting national identity. We (cautiously) interpret these results

as suggesting those low in national identity had the most adverse reactions to images depicting

wealth.

[Table 4 about here]

Next, we examined the role of physiological reactivity in possibly moderating the

relationship between national identity and concerns over income inequality and poverty. In three

models, we interact reactivity to images of wealth and poverty with national identity to predict

concern over income inequality and poverty. All three measures were mean-centered for the

purposes of these interaction analyses. The two models are two-way interaction models between

skin conductance levels and national identity with one model focusing on reactivity to images of

wealth and the other focusing on reactivity to images of poverty. Table 5 contains the results of

these analyses. Unlike the results regarding implicit prototypicality, we do not find any evidence

that physiological reactivity to the rich and the poor moderate the relationship between national

identity and concerns over income inequality. However, we find a significant two-way

interaction between reactivity to images of wealth and seeing poverty as a problem. Specifically,

we find that among individuals who were most physiologically reactive to images of wealth,

national identity is associated with a stronger tendency to see poverty as a problem, and among

individuals who were relatively non-reactive to images of wealth, national identity is associated

with not seeing poverty as a problem.

[Table 5 about here]

Finally, we conducted the same analyses except predicting support for policies meant to

alleviate poverty. In Table 6, there is an expected negative effect of national identity at mean

levels of reactivity across models (M1: b = -.41, p = .08; M2: b = -.45, p <.01; M3: b = -.50, p <

.01). Further, the interaction terms in both models are significant and, somewhat contrary to

expectations, in the same direction. A further examination of these interactions shows that the

average marginal effect of American identity vanishes as people are more reactive to either

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images of wealth or poverty. It is only among those with *low* physiological reactivity that we see national identity leading to opposition to poverty assistance programs.[8]

[Table 6 about here]

To better understand the nature of this interaction effect, we graph the changes in the average marginal effect of American identity based on the results of Model 1 which is the simple two-way interaction between wealthy image reactivity and American identity. The three points in Figure 6 represent the mean value of reactivity to wealthy images as well as at its values two standard deviations above and below the mean. The y-axis represents the average marginal effect of American identity on support for poverty assistance. At two standard deviations below the mean (dy/dx = -1.37, $p < .01$) and at the mean (dy/dx = -.41, $p < .10$) values of reactivity to wealthy images, the significant negative effect of American identity remains. As SCL values decrease, this negative effect becomes even more exacerbated. At two standard deviations above the mean, the average marginal effect of American identity becomes null (dy/dx = .55, p = .22) meaning levels of American identity have no effect on the poverty assistance attitudes of those with higher levels of reactivity to images of wealth. That is to say, there may be those who strongly identify as American and who are highly reactive to images of inequality. American identity does not drive the poverty assistance attitudes of these people.

[Figure 6 about here]

Discussion and Conclusion

The notion that national identity would increase people's willingness to help compatriots in need makes sense. A shared national identity creates a sense of community in which people

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[8] When both SCL measures are included in the same model only the American identity by wealthy image reactivity interaction remains significant (b = 2.68, $p < .05$).

have an obligation to take care of one another. A major problem, however, concerns who gets counted as being a member of the community. For issues surrounding poverty and income inequality, examining whether the rich and the poor are equally included in the national community is fundamental to understanding social justice. Marginalized Americans simply will not be taken care of at the same level as prototypical Americans.

Corroborating past research on the relationship between national identity and support for government programs surrounding poverty, we found that, in a nationally representative sample, strong identifiers were significantly less likely to support government programs addressing poverty and income inequality than weak identifiers. Ideology and feelings towards the rich and the poor have a stronger impact, but national identity affects people's reactions to these programs even controlling these important alternative explanations. The question is why.

We tried to answer this question by focusing on the reactions to the rich and the poor. We focused particularly on perceptions of prototypicality. People were willing to explicitly report seeing the rich as more American than the poor, but the role of perceptions of prototypicality in moderating the effects of national identity were only evidence with implicit measures. Those who strongly identify as an American and who implicitly view the rich as being prototypical are much less likely to think income inequality and poverty are problems, yet those who implicitly view the poor as prototypical are more likely to think these issues are of concern. In other words, getting income inequality and poverty on strong identifiers' radar as a problem facing the country depends on them not internalizing the connection between being rich and being American. This same tendency appears to exist when actual policy support is under consideration. Strong identifiers who implicitly think Americans are prototypically rich are less likely to support policies designed to help the poor. Poor people are marginalized in this world

view and do not reap the benefits of strong identifiers' desire to help their compatriots. The function of national identity changes entirely depending on perceptions of implicit prototypicality.

Two aspects of these findings are worth highlighting. First, we found that the people most likely to view income inequality and poverty as problems and to support policies designed to help the poor are weak identifiers who perceive Americans to be prototypically wealthy. This may seem counterintuitive but we argue it makes sense. It may be the case that some individuals are (painfully) aware of the discrepancies between the rich and the poor, have internalized associations between wealth and being American, and outwardly express their rejection of this association rather than acceptance of it. In other words, some people may view the prototypicality of rich people as a negative, and this might even make them less likely to want to identify strongly as Americans. If rich people are prototypical and weak identifiers do not like that, they would be more welcoming of taking steps to help the poor, including support for redistribution of wealth.

Second, the moderating role of perceived prototypicality was only evident with regard to implicit measures, suggesting it is the deep-seated, automatic associations people make between wealth, poverty, and being American that matter most. To understand why this is the case, we defer to psychology research on the difference between implicit and explicit attitude measures. One major theorized difference between implicit and explicit measures is that implicit measures are thought to avoid the influence of social desirability because individuals do not have the chance to consciously inhibit or edit expressions of bias (e.g. Fazio and Olson 2003; Greenwald, McGhee, and Schwartz 1998), but it is important to note that social desirability influence is not the only difference between implicit and explicit measures. A more appropriate description of the

difference between implicit and explicit measures has to do with the distinct neural processes thought to underlay implicit versus explicit attitude responses. Whereas implicit measures pick up on automatic neural processes associated with determining evaluative goals, explicit measures pick up on controlled neural processes associated with effortful thought and decision-making, which can include but is not limited to social desirability processes (e.g. Cunningham et al. 2004; Fazio and Olson 2003; Nosek 2006; 2007; Stanley, Phelps, and Banaji 2008). Individuals in this study were perfectly willing to express biases in perceived prototypicality explicitly, and so it seems unlikely that implicit associations matter more in terms of moderation of the effects of national identity because people were hesitant to express biases in perceived prototypicality. It is possible, though, that the controlled processing associated with explicit responses to the prototypicality task (whether related to social desirability or not) diminish the moderating role of perceived typicality on the effects of national identity. Indeed, we found that national identity was associated with implicit prototypicality bias but not explicit prototypicality bias. Thus, the role of perceived prototypicality in changing the *function of* national identity may be entirely limited to deep-seated, automatic associations.

Finally, we found that physiological reactivity was significantly associated with national identity (although only reactivity to wealth) and that physiological reactivity moderated the relationship between national identity and concerns over income inequality and poverty as well as support for policies that assist the poor. Reactivity to wealth played a somewhat larger role than reactivity to poverty. Higher SCLs in response to images of wealth predicted lower levels of national identity and a weaker relationship between national identity and concerns of poverty as well as support for policies that assist the poor. We interpret these results as suggesting that among individuals who respond the most adversely to images depicting wealth, national identity

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serves the function of increasing their concern for the poor, as would be predicted by scholars who promote the benefits of national identity (e.g. Kymlicka 2001; Miller 1995; Moore 2001). However, among individuals who displayed no heightened reactivity to images of wealth, national identity yields attitudes that protect and even exacerbate existing wealth inequality. Importantly, reactivity to poverty played a significant role in moderating the relationship between national identity and support for policies that assist the poor, and unexpectedly, this moderating role was in the same direction as with reactivity to wealth. This suggests that it may be reactivity to wealth disparities in general, rather than the rich specifically, that matters in determining the function of national identity.

Income inequality in the United States has become more pronounced over the years while many Americans turn against government programs to help the poor. Americans tend to strongly identify with their national group, so most people score high on national identity. If steps are going to be taken to help alleviate poverty and the increasing gap in wealth between the rich and the poor, it may depend on the strong identifiers who do not view the rich as prototypical. Weak identifiers who view the rich as prototypical can certainly help, but they are small in numbers, whereas strong identifiers who do not buy into the American = wealthy view are comparatively large in number. The degree to which perceptions of prototypicality can be shifted – which is perhaps the ultimate goal for those interested in improving the economic situations resulting from massive wealth inequality – remains a fairly open question.

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Figure 1. American National Identity and Income Inequality
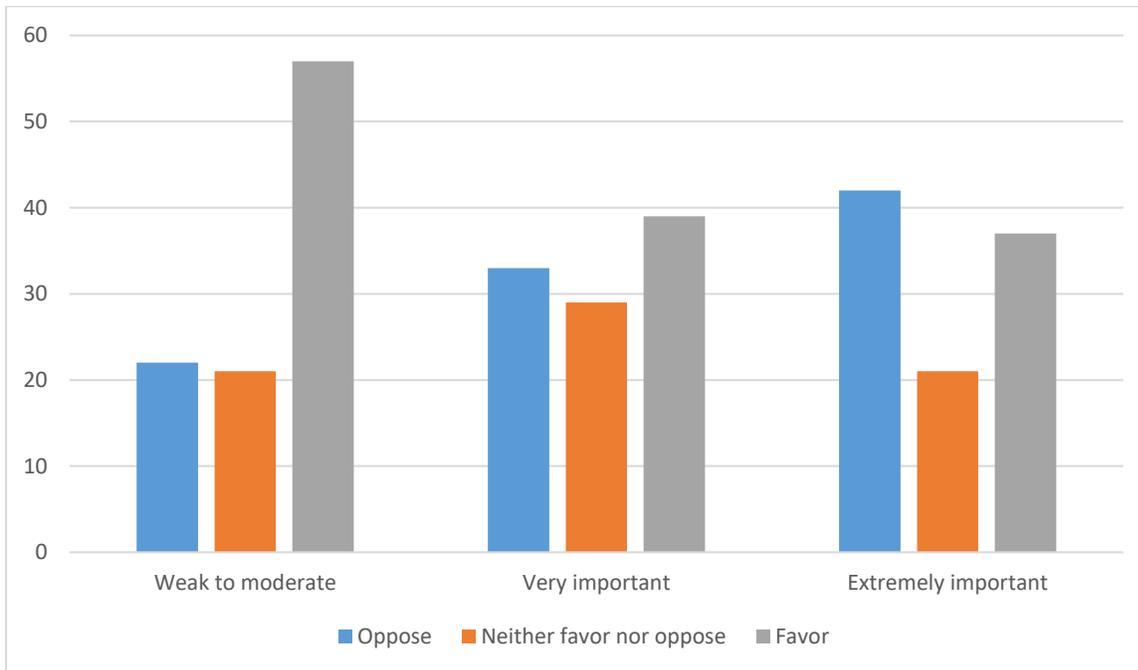
Kendall's tau-b -.157, p<.001; Gamma -.238, p<.001; Somer's d -.159, p<.001.
Source: American National Election Studies, 2016

Figure 2. Feeling Thermometers of Rich and Poor People by American National Identity
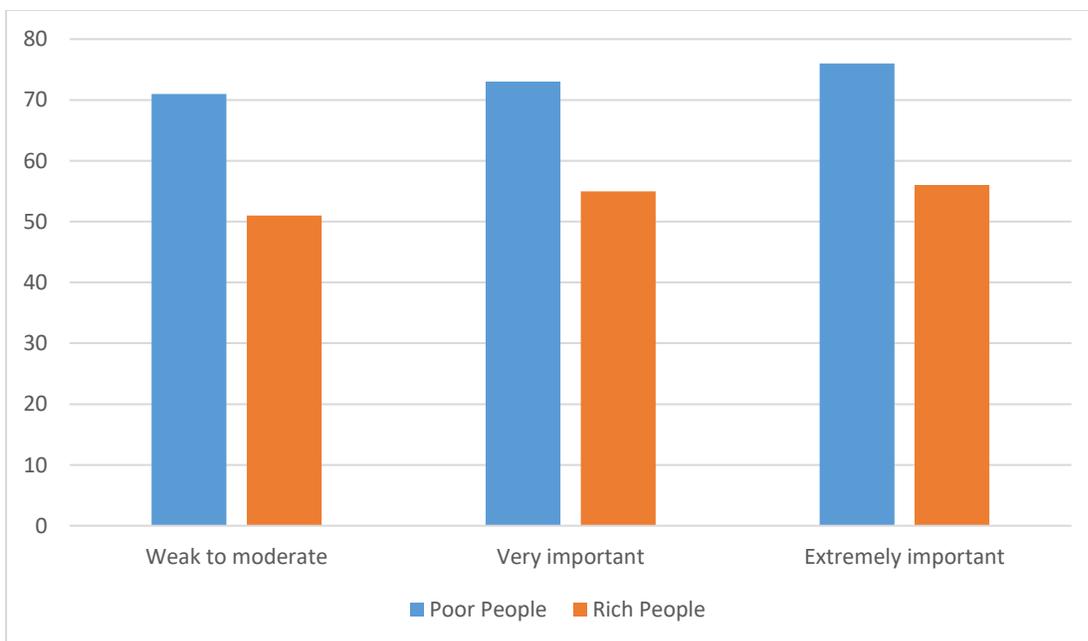
Source: American National Election Studies, 2016

Figure 3. Explicit and Implicit Perceived Prototypicality of Rich and Poor People
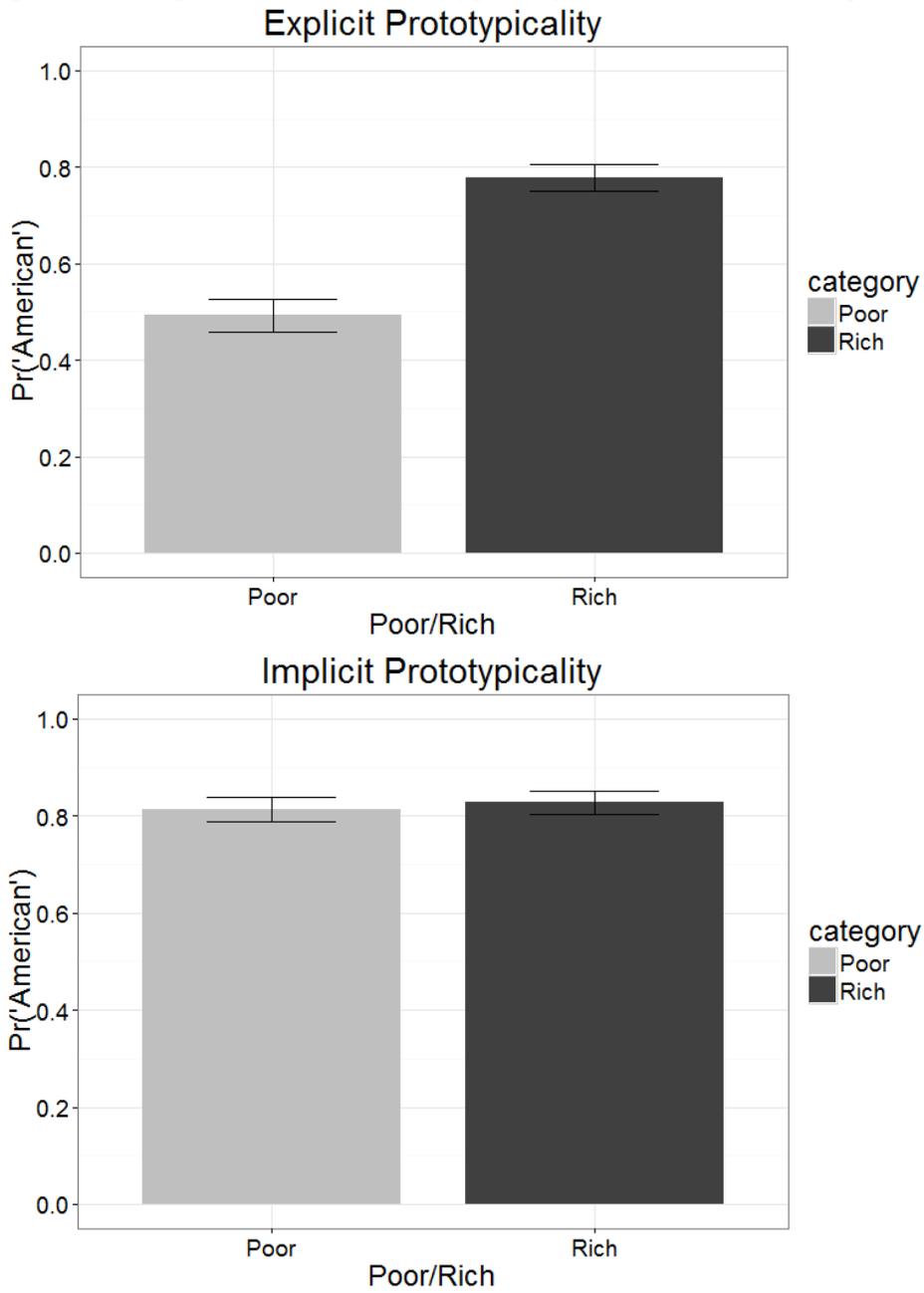
Source: Images, Politics, and Physiology Study, 2016-2017

Figure 4. Interaction between American National Identity and Implicit Prototypicality Bias
Predicting Concern over Income Inequality and Poverty
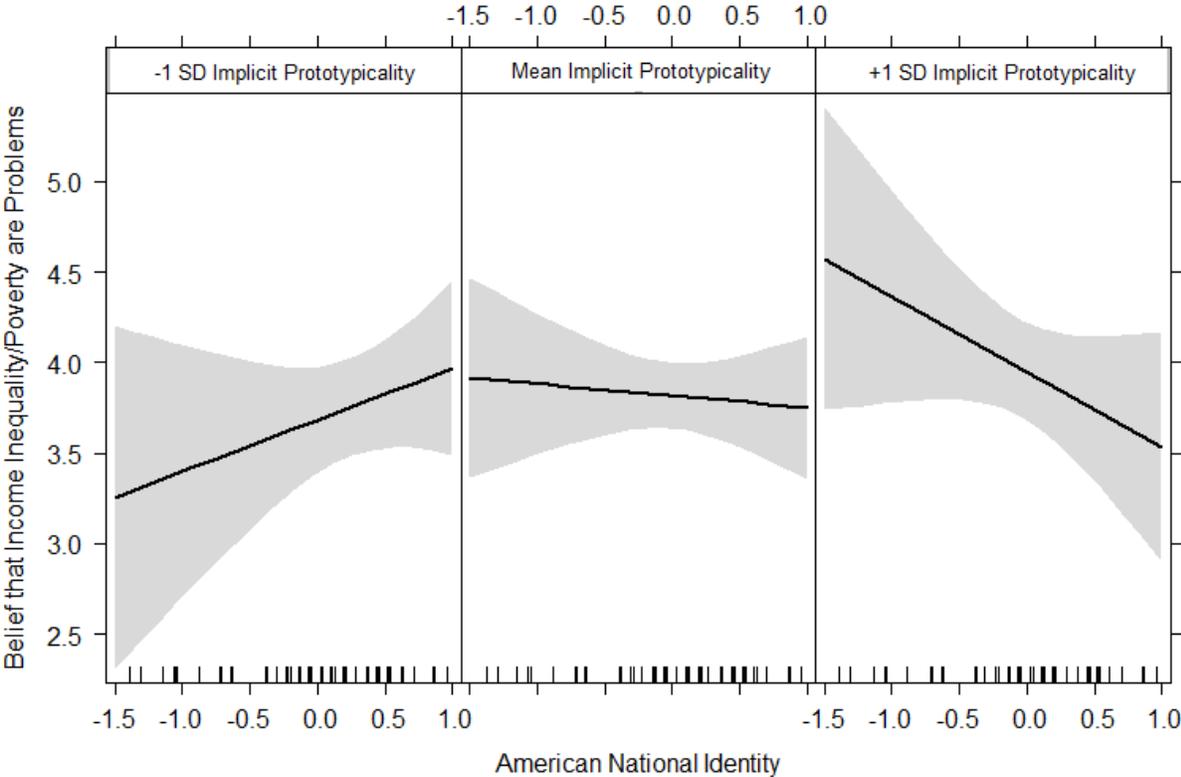
Figure 5. Interaction between American National Identity and Implicit Prototypicality Bias
Predicting Support for Policies that Reduce Poverty
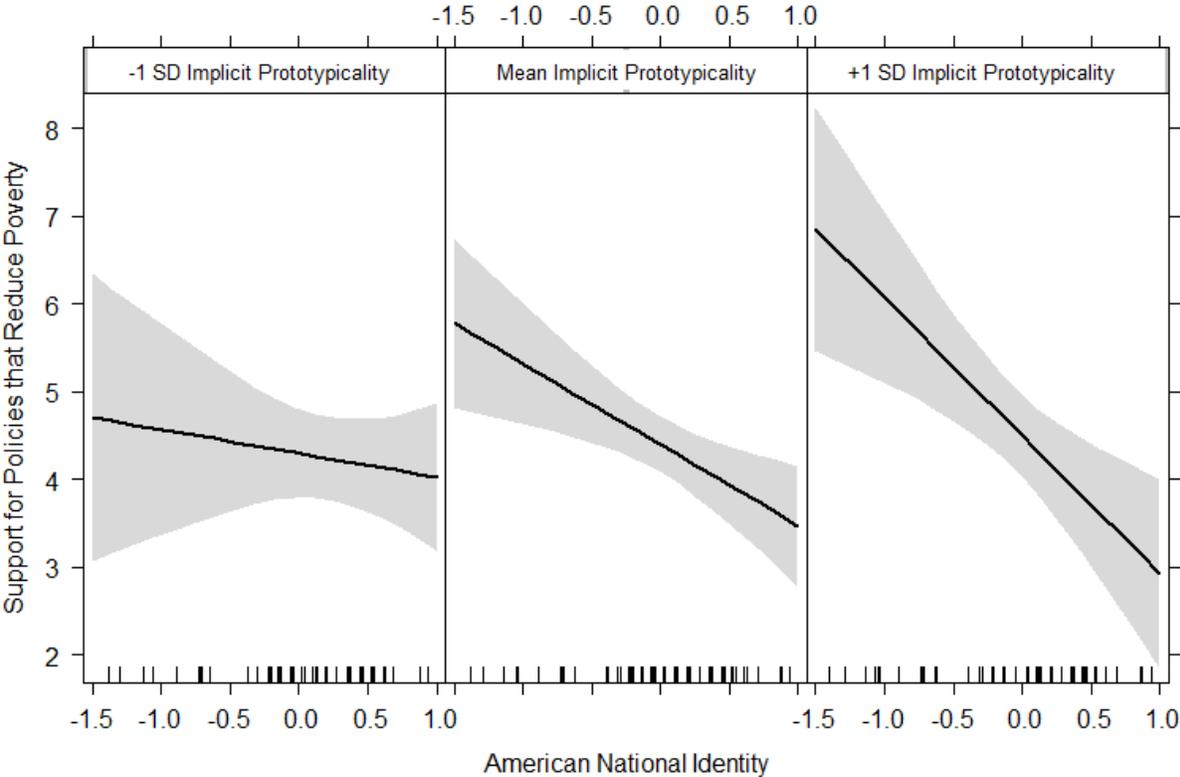
Figure 6. Interaction between American National Identity and Skin Conductance Levels for Wealth Predicting Support for Policies that Reduce Poverty

Average Marginal Effects of American Identity
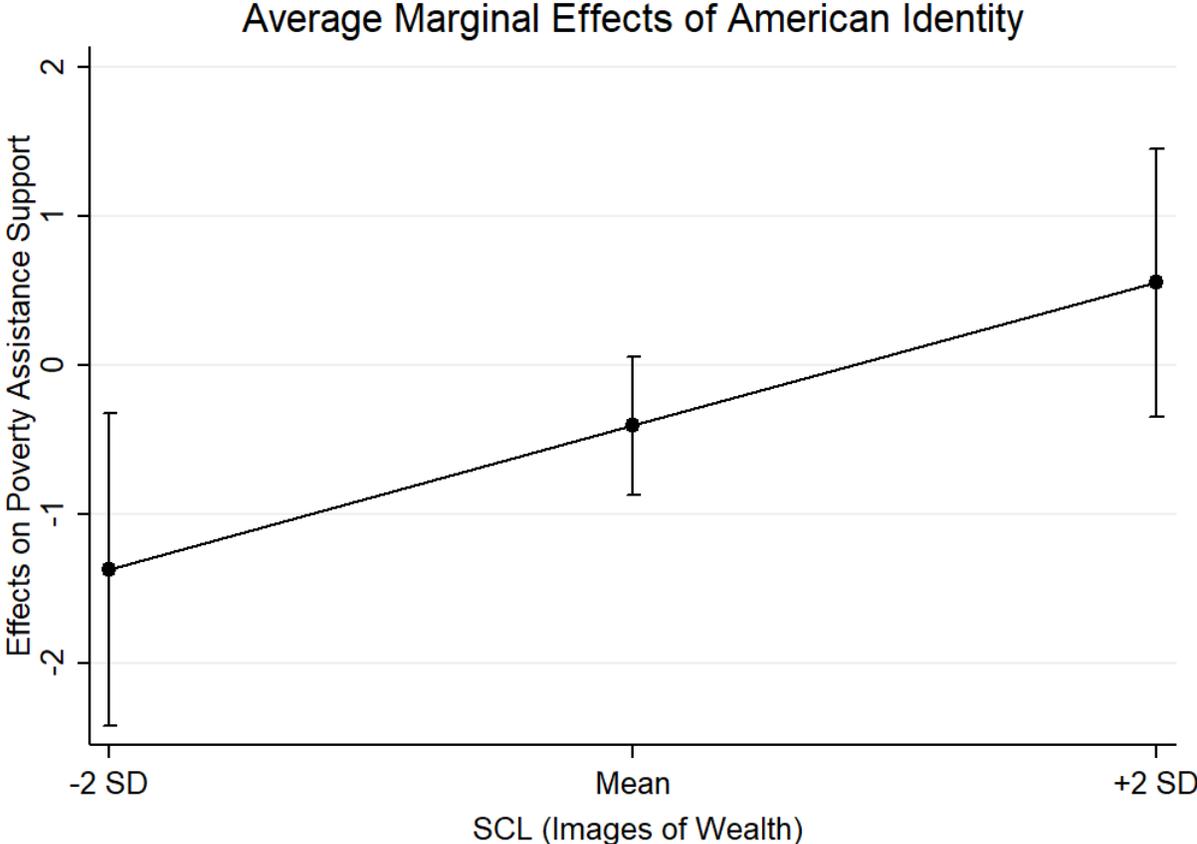
Table 1. American National Identity and Support for Efforts to Reduce Poverty

	Model 1	Model 2
American identity	-0.124***	-0.124***
	(.034)	(.033)
Ideology	-0.604***	-0.567***
	(.035)	(.035)
Race (White)	-0.082***	-0.085***
	(.020)	(.019)
Sex (Male)	-0.033	0.043*
	(.017)	(.017)
Age	0.043	0.034
	(.030)	(.030)
Education	-0.057**	-0.043*
	(.022)	(.021)
Feeling Thermometer – Rich	--	-0.201***
		(.045)
Feeling Thermometer – Poor	--	0.242***
		(.045)
Constant	0.966***	0.869***
	(.036)	(.050)
F	68.51***	60.74***
R^2	.37	.41
N	691	677

*** = p<.001, ** = p<.01, * = p<.05, ^ = p<.10; Source: American National Election Studies, 2016

Table 2. American National Identity, Perceived Prototypicality of the Rich and the Poor, and Concern over Income Inequality and Poverty

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
American identity	-0.037	-0.026	-0.045
	(.177)	(.180)	(.174)
Explicit Prototypicality Bias	-0.082	-0.061	-0.059
	(.468)	(.490)	(.462)
Implicit Prototypicality Bias	0.089	0.100	0.149
	(.952)	(.969)	(.978)
Feeling Thermometer – Rich	-0.260*	-0.275*	-0.285*
	(.005)	(.005)	(.005)
Feeling Thermometer – Poor	0.178^	0.178	0.189^
	(.007)	(.007)	(.006)
Ideology	-0.445***	-0.448***	-0.379**
	(.073)	(.074)	(.075)
Sample (Summer Course 2)	-0.076	-0.087	-0.025
	(.442)	(.451)	(.447)
Sample (Public)	0.028	0.015	0.064
	(.288)	(.293)	(.285)
Race (Non-White)	0.096	0.106	0.129
	(.221)	(.225)	(.220)
Sex (Male)	0.073	0.076	0.050
	(.239)	(.240)	(.236)
Age	-0.058	-0.053	-0.106
	(.020)	(.020)	(.020)
Education	0.141	0.135	0.208
	(.101)	(.102)	(.102)
American ID*Explicit Prototypicality	--	-0.070 (.882)	--
American ID*Implicit Prototypicality	--	--	-0.198^ (.177)
Constant	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***
	(.804)	(.815)	(.810)
F	4.12***	3.78***	4.18***
R^2	.49	.49	.52
N	65	65	65

*** = p<.001, ** = p<.01, * = p<.05, ^ = p<.10; Source: Images, Politics, and Physiology Study, 2016-2017

Table 3. American National Identity, Perceived Prototypicality of the Rich and the Poor, and Support for Policies that Reduce Poverty

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
American identity	-0.408**	-0.393**	-0.407**
	(.310)	(.316)	(.303)
Explicit Prototypicality Bias	0.110	0.136	0.145
	(.825)	(.862)	(.813)
Implicit Prototypicality Bias	0.006	0.021	0.070
	(1.678)	(1.706)	(1.691)
Feeling Thermometer – Rich	-0.266	-0.286*	-0.280*
	(.008)	(.009)	(.008)
Feeling Thermometer – Poor	0.147	0.147	0.151
	(.011)	(.012)	(.011)
Sample (Summer Course 2)	0.150	0.134	0.205
	(.782)	(.796)	(.782)
Sample (Public)	0.357	0.340*	0.404*
	(.509)	(.517)	(.503)
Race (Non-White)	0.122	0.135	0.162
	(.392)	(.398)	(.388)
Sex (Male)	0.119	0.123	0.107
	(.416)	(.418)	(.406)
Age	-0.052	-0.045	-0.115
	(.035)	(.035)	(.035)
Education	0.153	0.146	0.212
	(.175)	(.176)	(.173)
American ID*Explicit Prototypicality	--	-0.092	--
		(1.559)	
American ID*Implicit Prototypicality	--	--	-0.233^
			(3.109)
Constant	0.00*	0.00*	0.00***
	(1.292)	(1.308)	(.1.267)
F	2.55*	2.36*	2.76**
R^2	.35	.35	.39
N	65	65	65

*** = p<.001, ** = p<.01, * = p<.05, ^ = p<.10; Source: Images, Politics, and Physiology Study, 2016-2017

Table 4. Skin Conductance Levels for Wealth and Poverty Predicting American National Identity

	Model 1	Model 2
Ideology	-0.070	-0.042
	(.07)	(.07)
Party Identification	0.158*	.147*
	(.06)	(.06)
Born in U.S.	0.103	0.152
	(.15)	(.16)
Sex (Male)	0.208	0.087
	(.16)	(.17)
Age	-0.003	-0.003
	(.01)	(.01)
SCL – Rich	--	-1.083*
		(.42)
SCL – Poor	--	-0.66
		(.47)
Constant	2.677***	2.497***
	(.36)	(.38)
F	3.54**	2.99**
R^2	.15	.17
N	74	68

*** = p<.001, ** = p<.01, * = p<.05, ^ = p<.10; Source: Images, Politics, and Physiology Study, 2016-2017

Table 5. American National Identity, Skin Conductance Levels, and Concern over Income Inequality and Poverty

	Model 1(IE)	Model 2(IE)	Model 3	Model 4
American identity	-0.072	-0.099	-0.046	-0.058
	(.18)	(.18)	(.20)	(.20)
SCL – Rich	-0.287	0.048	-0.531	0.115
	(.73)	(.63)	(.78)	(.69)
SCL – Poor	0.815	0.447	0.317	-0.073
	(.66)	(.70)	(.72)	(.77)
AID * SCL – Rich	1.253	--	2.10*	--
	(.99)		(1.07)	
AID * SCL – Poor	--	2.260	--	2.377
		(1.46)		(1.61)
Ideology	-0.361***	-0.403***	0.016	-0.041
	(.10)	(.10)	(.11)	(.12)
Party Identification	-0.092	-0.082	-0.250*	-0.230*
	(.10)	(.09)	(.10)	(.10)
Born in U.S.	0.057	0.066	0.463^	0.468^
	(.23)	(.23)	(.25)	(.25)
Sex (Male)	-0.042	-0.070	0.444	0.414
	(.24)	(.24)	(.26)	(.26)
Age	-0.007	-0.005	-0.007	-0.004
	(.02)	(.02)	(.02)	(.02)
Education	0.092	0.100	0.103	0.121
	(.10)	(.10)	(.11)	(.11)
Constant	5.124***	5.101***	3.976***	3.908***
	(.56)	(.55)	(.60)	(.79)
F	5.92***	6.08***	2.48*	2.25*
R^2	.42	.43	.18	.16
N	68	68	68	68

*** = p<.001, ** = p<.01, * = p<.05, ^ = p<.10; Note: All variables included in interaction terms are mean centered; Models 1 and 2 examine concerns over income inequality and Models 3 and 4 examine concerns over poverty; Source: Images, Politics, and Physiology Study, 2016-2017

Table 6. American National Identity, Skin Conductance Levels, and Support for Policies that Reduce Poverty

	Model 1	Model 2
American identity	-0.408^	-0.451**
	(.23)	(.17)
SCL – Rich	-0.192	--
	(.76)	
SCL – Poor	--	1.697^
		(.97)
SCL – Rich * AID	2.829*	--
	(1.26)	
SCL – Poor * AID	--	4.53*
		(1.82)
Ideology	-0.191	-0.325*
	(.17)	(.16)
Party Identification	-0.280*	-0.232^
	(.14)	(.13)
Born in U.S.	-0.347	-.373
	(.40)	(.27)
Sex (Male)	0.241	0.187
	(.36)	(.33)
Age	-0.008	-0.005
	(.02)	(.02)
Education	0.056	0.069
	(.10)	(.11)
Constant	6.295***	6.437***
	(.77)	(.67)
F	7.63***	9.18***
R^2	.40	.47
N	68	68

*** = p<.001, ** = p<.01, * = p<.05, ^ = p<.10; Note: All variables included in interaction terms are mean centered; Source: Images, Politics, and Physiology Study, 2016-2017

Appendix

Laboratory Study Survey Items

American national identity
1. Other countries can learn a lot from Americans.
2. Being American is an important part of my identity.
3. In times of trouble, the only way to know what to do is to rely on American leaders.
4. I am glad to contribute to America.
5. Compared to citizens from other countries, Americans are particularly good.
6. It is important to me that I view myself as an American.
7. All Americans should respect the customs, the institutions, and the leaders of the United
1. States.
8. I am strongly committed to the American people.
9. Relative to citizens from other countries, Americans are very moral.
10. It is important to me that others see me as an American.
11. I like to help Americans.
12. There is usually a good reason for every rule and law that American leaders propose.
    1 (Strongly Disagree)
    2 (Disagree)
    3 (Neither Agree nor Disagree)
    4 (Agree)
    5 (Strongly Agree)

Feeling thermometers
Please rate how "warm" or "cold" you feel toward the following group on the below scales from 0-100. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the group. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don't feel favorable toward the group and that you don't care too much for that group. You would rate the group at the 50 degree mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward the group.

Poor People
Rich People

Concern over income inequality and poverty
1. Do you think income inequality is a serious problem in the United States?
    1 (Not a problem at all)
    2 (A small problem)
    3 (A moderate problem)
    4 (A serious problem)
    5 (A very serious problem)
2. Do you think poverty is a serious problem in the United States?
    1 (Not a problem at all)
    2 (A small problem)
    3 (A moderate problem)
    4 (A serious problem)
    5 (A very serious problem)

Support for policies that reduce poverty
1. Should the federal government increase or decrease spending on aid to the poor?
2. The federal minimum wage is currently $7.25 per hour. Do you think it should be decreased, kept the same, or increased?
3. Should the federal government increase or decrease its spending on public housing for low income families?
3. Should the federal government increase or decrease its spending on food stamps? (Food stamps provide financial assistance for food purchasing to families and individuals with low or no income.)
    1 (Significantly decrease)
    2 (Slightly decrease)
    3 (Stay the same)
    4 (Slightly increase)
    5 (Significantly increase)