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# Creating The Middle-Class: The Impact Of Class Based Identity Appeals In Presidential Campaigns

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CREATING THE MIDDLE-CLASS:  
THE IMPACT OF CLASS BASED IDENTITY APPEALS IN PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS

By Lois M. Kimmel

An Independent Study Thesis  
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at the College of Wooster  
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**ABSTRACT:**

This paper investigates the effect of class-based identity appeals in presidential campaign speeches on voters' subjective class-based identities and attitudes toward economic policies. Many scholars argue that the relevance of class is declining in contemporary American politics; however, I maintain that class persists as an influencing identity in American political behavior. I argue that recent presidential candidates make more appeals to class-based identities due to the heightened salience of economic inequality in America. Relying on Social Identity Theory, from research in political psychology, I find that more voters who receive a middle class-based identity appeal identified with the middle class, felt a stronger association with the middle class, and favored economic policies that benefited the middle class, compared to those those who did not receive the middle class appeal; however, these results were not statistically significant. Furthermore, an additional analysis finds statistically significant support that middle class identifiers are more sensitive to class-based identity appeals.

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### **Introduction:**

During September 2011, the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) Movement emerged to “protest the blatant injustices of our times perpetuated by the economic and political elites” (nycga.net 2016). OWS, as a visible representation of the sentiments expressed by a significant portion of the American public, raised the salience of economic inequalities in America, characterizing them as “the crises of our time” (Van Gelder 2011, 1). While both Democratic and Republican presidential candidates have steadily increased the frequency of identity appeals to the middle class since 1952, candidates’ use of these appeals rose dramatically as a result of the increased awareness of economic inequality, in the wake of the OWS Movement (Rhodes and Johnson 2014; Chapp 2009). In other words, heightened awareness of economic inequality “encouraged candidates from both parties to make increasing use of class-based appeals in their campaign rhetoric” (Rhodes and Johnson 2014, 19).

While the frequency of these class-based appeals has increased, scholars have debated whether class identity actually influences voting behavior, and if it does, the extent to which that impact matters (Clark and Lipset 1991; Hout, Brooks, and Manza 1995; Clark, Lipset, and Rempel 1993). Drawing from Social Identity Theory (SIT), a leading psychological theoretical framework established by Tajfel and Turner (1979) used to explain social behavior, this paper asks what impact these class-based identity appeals in campaign speeches have on citizens’ subjective socio-economic class identification, specifically the middle class. Furthermore, this paper investigates whether and how these class-based identity appeals affect attitudes toward economic policies. Class-based identity appeals may work to activate the salience of one’s class identity, which may have significant implications for the role of identity in democratic elections, as well as the purpose of campaigns in democracy.

Based on evidence regarding the nature of socio-economic class, identity in politics, and campaigns, I established two main hypotheses. According to SIT, political communications about groups increase the salience of that groups' identity in voters' minds (Huddy 2001; Jackson 2005). Therefore, I hypothesize that the reception of a class-based identity appeal will lead individuals to identify with the middle class and have a stronger association with the middle class. Furthermore, SIT maintains that identification with a group leads to exhibitions of in-group favoritism and out-group bias; therefore, I also hypothesize that the reception of a class-based identity appeal will lead individuals to hold more favorable attitudes toward economic policies that benefit the middle class, and less favorable attitudes toward economic policies that benefit those outside the middle class. I rely on an experimental research design in order to test the relationships described in each of the two hypotheses. By testing these hypotheses, I offer further insight into the ongoing debate regarding the role of class in American politics.

Chapter 1 offers an overview of the relevant literature regarding the nature of class and the relevance of class in contemporary American politics (Marx 1848; Weber 1922; Clark and Lipset 1991; Hout, Manza, and Brooks 1993). Furthermore, this section evaluates Social Identity Theory, established by Tajfel and Turner (1979), and factors that influence campaigns and their function (Varveck 2009; Petrocik 1996; Holbrook 1996). Expanding on the relevant literature, Chapter 2 establishes the theoretic basis of the hypotheses and the methodology employed to evaluate my predictions. Chapter 3 provides details of the results along with statistical analysis. Finally, Chapter 4 offers conclusions of the study, accompanied by a discussion of potential explanations, an agenda for further research, and the normative implications of my findings.

## Chapter 1: Review of the Literature

The emergence of the Occupy Wall Street Movement occurred in tandem with both rising income inequality and a growing public awareness of this disparity. Consequently, the rhetoric of 2012 presidential candidates began to address class and income through identity appeals (Chapp 2013). Specifically, candidates targeted middle class identity groups. Identity appeals in campaign rhetoric raise the salience of voters' identities, which ultimately impacts policy attitudes and opinions. Previous literature on the topics of social class, social psychology, and campaign rhetoric offer insight into the relationship between group identity appeals and middle class identification. However, there is lack of consensus between scholars regarding the extent to which class impacts vote choice in contemporary American elections. Therefore, I seek to discover under which conditions class impacts vote choice, and specifically the extent to which greater class identity awareness influences political attitudes. Grounded in political psychology of group membership and behavior, I hypothesize that the reception of a class-based identity appeal from a presidential candidate will cause citizens to report a stronger connection with the middle class, and be more likely to favor economic policies that would benefit the middle class.

### *Defining Class:*

Class in society is marked by inequality, with some citizens ranked higher or lower than others. The philosophies of Karl Marx (1848) and Max Weber (1922) inspire most common conceptions of class in contemporary political science and sociology research. Writing during the Industrial Revolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Karl Marx believed that societies are mainly shaped by their economic organization, and social change stems from class conflict. According to Marx, social classes are “defined by their distinctive relationships to the means of production” (Gilbert

2011, 4). Marx used the means of production to define class because he “regarded production as the center of social life...The individual’s place in society, relationships to others, and outlook on life are shaped by his or her work experience” (Gilbert 2011, 4). Marx categorized people who share the same relationship to the means of production into three main classes: capitalists, or the owners of the means of production; workers, or those who are employed by others; and, landowners, or those who are regarded as survivors of feudalism (Clark and Lipset 1991, 378).

Furthermore, Marx established the idea of class-consciousness. According to Marx, having a shared objective economic status based on relations to the means of production is not sufficient in facilitating a social class. Rather, members of a social class must recognize their shared interest in order to form a sense of class consciousness. Class consciousness refers to an “awareness of membership in a group defined by a relationship to production, a sense that this shared identity creates common interests and a common fate, and, a disposition to take collective action in pursuit of class interests” (Gilbert 2011, 202). In the conception of class consciousness, Marx distinguishes between *class-in-itself* and *class-for-itself*. *Class-in-itself* refers to class “in a formal, definitional sense; its members share a social position, but are unaware of their common situation,” whereas *class-for-itself* refers to class in “an active, historical sense; its members are aware of common interests, they engage in militant action focused on goals that they conceive as being in direct opposition to those of other classes” (Gilbert 2011, 220).

Influenced by Marx’s work, Max Weber (1922), a German sociologist in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, further developed the formulation of class by differentiating between class and status. Weber defines social class as “composed of people who have life chances in common, as determined by their power to dispose of goods and skills for the sake of income” (Clark 2003, 41). Weber’s definition of class does not take into account one’s awareness of their shared

economic situation with others. Status, on the other hand, is a subjective phenomenon, where members “generally think of themselves as a social community, with a common lifestyle” (Gilbert 2011, 9). Status is closely connected with honor, prestige, and the felt perceptions of one’s own value by other people (Clark 2003). Unlike Marx’s definition of social class, Weber’s definition of belonging to a social class does not necessarily require class-consciousness or class-based action. Sosnaud, Brady, and Frenk (2013) argue that this “distinction is salient because it suggests that social class can exert a significant effect even in a country like the United States where people report low levels of class-consciousness and often identify with classes that do not correspond to their objective life chances” (82).

Building off the theories from Marx and Weber, Gilbert (2011) identifies nine variables that are significant in understanding class in contemporary American society: occupations, income, wealth, personal prestige, association, socialization, power, class-consciousness, and social mobility. These nine variables do not constitute a closed list, but tend to be the most useful in empirical studies of class, with occupation, income, and wealth being the most frequently employed (Clark 2003; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008; Manza and Brooks 1999). Social scientists can investigate class through either one of these variables or a combination of several. Though each variable does not hold equal importance, all are useful in understanding class and human behavior (Gilbert 2011, 15).

Social class is a distinctive concept because it can be considered both a category and a group. For example, social class can be a category that simply describes a person, similar to categories like age or gender. Social class can also function as a group, where people feel a sense of belonging. While no formal political organizations based on class exist, “people feel [as though] they belong to a social class” (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008, 336). Furthermore, class can be

conceived as a motivating idea. For example, “when class is treated as an interpretation of the political scene, and orienting political idea, or a reason for taking action...it becomes possible to see how concerns for a class character might still dominate” (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008, 362). In other words, class can be treated as an idea, rather than a demographic characterization.

*“Are Social Classes Dying?”*

In the 1990s, the question, “Are Social Classes Dying?” became the foundation for a controversial debate within political science, with strong supporting evidence in favor of conflicting positions. Class research reveals “a mix of upward and downward trends in the effects of class” on political behavior (Clark 2003, 57). With the rise of awareness about the growing income inequality in America, this question reemerges in American politics.

Terry Nichols Clark and Seymour Martin Lipset (1991) instigated this debate in “Are Social Classes Dying?” by arguing “that social class is declining in its importance in some post-industrial societies” (Clark 2003, 1). They demonstrate that “class is an increasingly outmoded concept” (Clark and Lipset 1991, 397). Class stratification, in which people are differentiated hierarchically based on class, no longer applies to understanding political behavior due to the growth of the economy, political parties, and the changing dynamics of the family.

Subsequent studies supply supporting evidence and theoretical foundations for the thesis that class voting is irrelevant in electoral politics (Hout, Brooks, and Manza 1995; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). Newly politicized “social divisions are supposedly replacing traditional class cleavages” (Hout, Brooks, and Manza 1995, 807). For example, Huckfeldt and Kohfeldt (1989) argue that “the decline of class as an organizing principle in contemporary American electoral politics is directly related to the concurrent ascent of race” (2). They hypothesize that beginning

with the 1964 Goldwater campaign, the Republican party successfully appealed to U.S. workers by invoking racial themes, causing the “politics of race [to] disrupt class politics because, as long as the majority of blacks belong to a disadvantaged class, the social and political isolation benefits advantaged groups” (Huckfeldt and Kohfeld 1989, 1).

Similarly, religious commitment or religiosity has become more strongly correlated with voting behavior in the past decade (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2011; Layman 2001). In an analysis of church attendance from 1952 until 2004, Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope (2011) found an increasingly strong association between religiosity and Republican presidential vote. In general, white churchgoers voted for the Republican presidential candidate at significantly higher rates than non-churchgoers and this trend increases over time despite class identification.<sup>1</sup> Hacker and Pierson’s (2010) *Winner-Take-All Politics*, argues that interest groups like the Christian Coalition actively recruited tens of millions of working and middle class Christians to the Republican’s electoral coalition. The Christian electoral base “was being brought in on terms that required very little attention to their economic concerns,” and the political leaders mobilizing this transition either “deflected attention from economic issues or [assured] supporters that the threats to their economic security came from liberals and Democrats” (Hacker and Pierson 2010, 204). Evangelical Christians specifically are most likely to be persuaded to join the Republican voting coalition despite their income level. For example, “an evangelical voter with \$50,000 in annual income is as likely to be a Republican as a non-evangelical voter with \$100,000 in annual income” (Hacker and Pierson 2010, 149). According to Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope (2011), “the relationship between religiosity and voting that has developed

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<sup>1</sup>For example, during the 2004 presidential election 55% of Baptist churchgoers voted for the Republican candidate, whereas only 34% of Baptist non-churchgoers voted for the Republican candidate. Similarly, 53% of Catholic churchgoers voted for the Republican candidate, compared to 33% of Catholic non-churchgoers (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2011, 131).

recently appears to be genuine and not a spurious reflection of other factors” (132). Therefore, religious commitment, rather than class, is a more significant indicator of voting behavior. Due to the expansion of voting based on racial, cultural, and religious cleavages, class voting has decreased in significance over time.

Clark and Lipset’s (1991) original paper sparked immediate rebuttals, most notably from Hout, Brooks, and Manza (1993) who criticize the original argument that class is no longer relevant in American electoral politics, and present evidence in favor of the claim that class persists as an influencing factor in politics. Hout and colleagues (1993) find the evidence from Clark and Lipset (1991) to be “highly selective and [unable to] withstand critical scrutiny;” they are especially troubled by the “complete neglect of other evidence that shows the continuing, and even rising, importance of class” (Hout, Brooks, and Manza 1993, 263). Clark and Lipset (1991) hinge their argument on the relationship between hierarchy and class—they argue that since hierarchies are declining, class is declining as well. However their emphasis on hierarchy is “potentially misleading in that forms of hierarchy could decline without any change in class structure” (Hout, Brooks, and Manza 1993, 263).

Additionally, Hout and colleagues (1993) find four major flaws in the methodology employed by Clark and Lipset (1991). First, the reliance on the Alford Index, a model that relies on the percentage of either working or middle class people who vote for left or right parties, is dubious because the index is based on a two-class model which creates “artificially high levels of cross-class voting among both groups” (Hout, Brooks, and Manza 1993, 265). This two-class model oversimplifies class, causing significant underestimation in the extent of class voting (Hout, Brooks, and Manza 1993). Second, the Alford Index is subject to sampling error, but Clark and Lipset (1991) fail to test the data for significance. Third, the cross-national analysis of

five countries fails to show consistency with other published data and reverses the causal link between egalitarians and class voting. Finally, Clark and Lipset (1991) ignore the “decisive role of unions, social movements organizations, and political parties in shaping the conditions under which voters make choices” (Hout, Brooks, and Manza 1993, 263). Hout and colleagues (1993) ultimately conclude that “class structures have undergone important changes in recent decades,” but class still “persists as a factor in life chances and politics” (Hout, Brooks, and Manza 1993, 270)

Several studies indicate that class persists as a defining characteristic in voting and political behavior (Brewer and Stonecash 2001; Evans 2000; Hout, Brooks, and Manza 1995; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006; Stonecash and Lindstrom 1999; Stonecash and Mariani 2000). Although voting based “new political” cleavages such as religiosity, gender, and race have become more important, “research finds little or no decline in the importance of economics” (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2011, 135). In a basic statistical analysis of the difference between Democratic presidential vote between lower and upper income groups of white American voters since 1952, Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope (2011) find a 17-point difference in 2004 and a 22-point difference in 1996, compared to only a six-point difference in 1956. Similarly, Stonecash and Mariani (2000) demonstrate a steady rise in class voting from the 1950s to the 1990s in the presidential election. The difference between low-income and high-income groups in voting for Democratic presidential candidates rose from four percent in the 1950s to 18 percent in the 1990s. In another analysis of presidential vote, McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal (1997) find that since 1972, presidential vote has become more closely linked to income. Similarly, Congressional election voting has also become more closely related to district income since 1994 (Stonecash and Lindstrom 1999). Stonecash and Mariani (2000) also find a 21-

percent difference between low-income and high-income groups voting for Democratic congressional candidates during the 1990s. Furthermore, in an investigation of political behavior in the American South, Brewer and Stonecash (2001) find that “income has come to have a relatively greater effect on partisan support than race issues” (131).

In an attempt to reconcile the opposing conclusions of scholars, many have adopted a view that class voting matters under certain conditions. Many studies argue that “the role of class is conditional on different factors in the political environment” (Chapp 2009, 4). Even proponents of the decline in class thesis have begun to “assert that an important task for future research is to identify the conditions under which class plays an important role” (Walsh, Jennings, and Stoker 2004, 417). Clark, Lipset, and Rempel (1993) argue “social classes have not died, but their political significance has declined substantially” depending on political, economic, and social conditions (93). In other words, under certain conditions, social class plays a stronger role in political behavior.

Additionally, evidence indicates that “class identities become less relevant as societies become more [economically] prosperous” (Curtis 2013, 206). If the economic environment in a country is generally wealthy, then class is less likely to impact political behavior. According to Evans and Kelley (2004), “perceptions of social position will change systematically over the course of economic development, as objective circumstances change” (7). This theory, characterized as the “rising tide” hypothesis, claims economic growth and prosperity cause people to perceive themselves to be higher in the class structure (Evans and Kelley 2004). Vote choice is often influenced by the health of the country’s economic system (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008, 366).

In the American context specifically, variance in party stance leads to an increase in class voting (Brewer and Stonecash 2001; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008; Stonecash and Mariani 2000). Brewer and Stonecash (2001) identify three necessary conditions for class voting to occur: class inequality issues must be salient; parties must take opposing stands; and the electorate must perceive the difference between party stances. First, income inequality has steadily increased in America since the 1960s (Hacker and Pierson 2010). Secondly, political parties have become more divided on the issue of inequality (Abramowitz 1994; Dionne 1997). Finally, the public perceives and recognizes the diverging party positions (Pomper 1971). Since the U.S. political environment meets these three necessary conditions, the electorate will be more likely to vote based on class.

On the individual level, class voting is more significant for those with stable class identification (Walsh, Jennings, and Stoker 2004), high levels of political sophistication (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008), and high levels of political participation (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). Class is a malleable concept, in which “over the life course, individuals categorize themselves in the same or in a different class category” (Walsh, Jennings, and Stoker 2004, 472). Walsh, Jennings, and Stoker (2004) use a longitudinal panel study format spanning two generations through 32 years in order to investigate the influence of subjective class identity on participatory orientations towards government. Approximately three-fifths of each generation maintained the same class identity over time. The effects of class identification on attitudes were most pronounced in those individuals who maintained a consistent class identity over time. Walsh, Jennings, and Stoker (2004) demonstrate that “class identification matters, especially when it is a stable feature of one’s identity” (482). Additionally, Lewis-Beck et al. (2008) find that “the class vote is at its height among the most politically sophisticated, but steadily diminishes as sophistication

decreases” (344).<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Lewis-Beck et al. (2008) find that higher levels of political participation correspond with class voting.<sup>3</sup> In other words, as political participation increases, “the vote choice becomes more and more structured by class” (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008, 346).

### *Measurements of Class:*

The varying conclusions regarding whether class matters in determining political behavior can be attributed to the methodology researchers employ. Results about class voting are dependent upon how the researchers choose to operationalize class. Manza and Brooks (1999) identify three distinct ways to characterize class in studying U.S. political behavior. The first approach distinguishes between blue-collar (working class) and white-collar (middle class) workers, which relies on the assumption that the principle class distinction in capitalist societies is “between the middle class as a whole and the lower or working class” (Manza and Brooks 1999, 55). This dichotomous measure of class, based on occupation in the American context, was designed by Campbell et al. (1960) in *The American Voter* and has most notably been adopted by the American National Election Studies (ANES) survey series in addition to subsequent studies in political science (Clark and Lipset 1991; Walsh, Jennings, and Stoker 2004; Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 1985). This two-category method has significant limitations that might hinder conclusions about class voting behavior in America. Class divisions within both working and middle class groups are not taken into account. For example, Hout, Brooks, and Manza (1993) argue that by “lumping together all [people] employed in non-manual

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<sup>2</sup>Lewis-Beck et al. (2008) measure political sophistication using elements of political interest and ideology and compare them to the correlation (tau-b) between subjective class and vote choice. In an investigation of the American 2000 presidential election, voters with high political sophistication scored tau-b equal to 0.12, whereas voters with low political sophistication scored tau-b equal to 0.02.

<sup>3</sup>Employing a “political involvement index,” which incorporates seven participative acts in order to measure political participation, Lewis-Beck et al. (2008) find that low participation respondents produce a tau-b score equal to 0.03; medium participation respondents, a tau-b equal to 0.1; and, high participation respondents, a tau-b equal to 0.19.

occupations into one ‘class’ and all [people] working in manual occupations into the other ‘class,’” the two-class model creates “artificially high levels of cross-class voting among both groups.” Furthermore, the two-class model has no relation to Marxist, Weberian, or functionalist class categories, so the method “is useless for testing hypotheses” about class voting (Hout, Brooks, and Manza 1993, 63). However, Jackman and Jackman (1983) find modest support for the two-class approach. They employed a five-class measure in 1975, but found that 81 percent of respondents identified as either working or middle class. Since a majority of respondents identified with these two main categories, it is reasonable to assume that the two-class approach holds some merit in the study of class voting.

The second common approach argues that income, not occupation, is the preferred measure to operationalize social class (Brewer and Stonecash 2001; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008; Stonecash and Mariani 2000). Proponents of the income measure of class claim, “higher-income people have different material interests than lower-income people...and ultimately very different life chances ” (Manza and Brooks 1999, 56). However, some scholars maintain that income as a class indicator is problematic because sometimes “people with the same income will have quite different long-term economic interests” (Manza and Brooks 1999, 56). While the income-based model produces variations in conclusions from the two-class model, neither encompasses all the complex aspects involved in class.

In order to reconcile the limitations of the two-class model and the income-based model, Hout, Brooks, and Manza (1995) and Manza and Brooks (1999) employ the “total class index” model with advances in stratification theories, in which they use occupational location and employment situation to measure class with both gradational and relational conceptions of class. Gradational studies of classes place “occupations on a single continuum, ranked by the prestige

attributed to each job,” whereas relational approaches “define classes in terms of either market or production relations, [which results in] a set of categorical distinctions among actors based on their employment status” (Manza and Brooks 1999, 56). Hout, Brooks and Manza (1995) distinguish between *traditional class voting*, which they define as “that portion of the statistical association between class and voting behavior that arises from the affinity of blue-collar classes for left-leaning parties and the affinity of white-collar classes for right-leaning parties,” from *total class voting*, which “includes all sources of the statistical association between class and voting behavior, including not voting at all” (809). They develop statistical models that are relevant to each type of class voting. Drawing from Blau and Duncan’s (1967) original 17-category schema, Hout, Brooks and Manza (1995) consolidate the schema into a more reasonable six-category schema: professionals; managers; owners and proprietors; nonmanagerial white-collar workers; skilled workers and foremen; and semi-skilled and unskilled blue-collar workers. This distinction and advances in stratification theories allow a more complex understanding of the extent that class differences have led to decline in class voting.

Researchers struggle to determine how many social classes exist, and how to determine the qualifications of participation in a social class. In broad theoretical terms, American society can be broken down into six major hierarchical class categories. The underclass comprises 12% of the society, earning approximately \$10,000 or less a year; the working poor is 13% of society, earning up to \$20,000; the working class is 30%, earning up to \$30,000; the middle class is 30%, earning up to \$45,000; the upper middle class is 14%, earning up to \$80,000; and, finally, the capitalist class is one percent, earning \$1.5 million or more (Gilbert 2011, 18). However, in empirical studies of social class identity, scholars tend to employ fewer class categories. For example, in his foundational and influential study, Richard Centers (1949) measured class with

four categories: lower class, working class, middle class, and upper class. Jackman and Jackman (1983) conducted empirical studies on class in the United States using five class categories: the poor; the working class; the middle class; the upper-middle class; and the upper class. They argue this categorization is best because the middle class is indeed the middle category of the class stratum. However, many contemporary studies of class use a two-class identification of middle class and working class as articulated in the American National Election Studies (ANES) survey and designed by Campbell et al. (1980) (e.g. Lewis-Beck et al. 2008; Manza and Brooks 1999; Walsh, Jennings, and Stoker 2004).

*Subjective and Objective Class Identity:*

Most Americans identify themselves as middle class (Centers 1961; Curtis 2013; Jackman and Jackman 1983; Lareau and Conley 2008; Sosnaud, Brady, and Frenk 2013). For example, Richard Centers (1961) demonstrates that approximately 80% of respondents identify as middle class, when asked to choose from upper, middle, and lower class categories. Finding support for Centers' (1961) classic study, Evans and Kelley (2004) asked respondents to rank their class on an unlabeled ten-point scale, with one being the highest class, and ten the lowest class. Approximately 65% of American respondents identify themselves in the fourth, fifth, or sixth point category, which indicates a majority of participants identify with the middle class. The 2000 American National Election Survey (ANES) found 59% of Americans identified as middle class and 41% identified as working class, when asked to choose between belonging to the middle or working class (Lareau and Conley 2008, 28). Data from 2000 to 2004, collected by the General Social Survey (GSS), showed 47% of respondents identified as middle class and 44% as working class when asked to choose between the lower, working, middle, or upper class

(Lareau and Conley 2008, 29). Most recently, according to the Pew Research Center, less than 50% of Americans identify as middle class (Casselman 2015).

This phenomenon of identifying with the middle class regardless of one's objective social standing has been characterized as "middle class identity bias" (Curtis 2013; Evans and Kelley 2004). Americans are likely to say they are in the middle class, even though factors such as income, occupation, employment status, homeownership, or education would indicate otherwise. Middle class identity bias raises the distinction between subjective class identity and objective class identity. Subjective class identities are the categories individuals choose when asked to place themselves into a social class (Centers 1961; Curtis 2013; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008; Sosnaud, Brady, and Frenk 2013). In order to operationalize subjective measures of class, researchers most often conduct surveys that ask respondents to name their social class from a list of alternatives (Jackman and Jackman 1983; Lareau and Conley 2008; Sosnaud, Brady, and Frenk 2013; Walsh, Jennings, and Stoker 2004). Objective class identities refer "to a person's life chances as defined by his or her occupation, skills, authority, economic interest, and market situation" (Sosnaud, Brady, and Frenk 2013, 81). The objective approach to looking at class uses observable social strata based on qualities such as, income, occupation, employment status, homeownership, or education. The difference between subjective and objective class identities "has the potential to be especially relevant to the study of class voting" (Sosnaud, Brady, and Frenk 2013, 81).

However, some scholars argue that there is little variation in data despite whether subjective or objective measures are used. Either measure "produces essentially the same empirical results, in examining the simple relationship of social class to political behavior" (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008, 347). For example, Sosnaud et al. (2013) find that subjective and

objective class measures correspond for 49.89% of objective middle class members. In other words, about half of American's subjective class identification corresponds to their objective class identification. Additionally, only 32.79% of respondents had deflated subjective class conceptions, in which their self-identified subjective class group was lower than their objective class position. Moreover, only 17.32% of respondents had inflated class conceptions, in which their self-identified subjective class group was higher than their objective class position (Sosnaud 2013, 91). Similarly, Hout (2008) demonstrates that subjective measures of class identification, especially with the middle class correspond with objective measures of income, occupation, and education level.

Despite such evidence of correspondence between objective and subjective measures of class, others find slight divergences (Evan and Kelley 2004; Lamont 1992). In other words, subjective class identities do not always correspond with objective measures of class. For example, Sosnaud et al. (2013) find that 71.48% of objective upper middle class respondents deflated their subjective class identification, while 36.90% of objective working class respondents inflated their subjective class identification (91). This has significant implications for voting behavior because "political cohesion rests on the development of strong, subjective identities" (Huddy 2003, 524). Additionally, "even weak subjective identities have a more powerful influence on political membership than objective group memberships" (Huddy 2003, 524). In other words, subjective identities are more likely to impact political behavior than objective identities. Furthermore, subjective identities are more susceptible to malleability from the contextual environment (Walsh et al. 2004). Therefore, class, as a social identity, is best thought of in terms of subjective measures.

Using the subjective approach to measure class is accompanied by some limitations. For example, subjective assessments do “not take into account the depth of class feeling” (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008, 339). A respondent may identify as a specific class in name, but not actually feel the strength of that connection. Additionally, subjective assessments are usually determined through a survey design (Centers 1961; Lareau and Conley 2008; Sosnaud, Brady, and Frenk 2013; Walsh, Jennings, and Stoker 2004). Using a survey method, especially providing participants with a list of categories, prompts respondents to answer within the limitations of the category options. For example, Lewis-Beck et al. (2008) find that about one in three respondents say they have not reflected on being a member of a class, but nevertheless select a class category from a list when prompted through a survey (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008, 339). Additionally, in the American context, very few individuals are willing to label themselves in the lower or upper class due to social desirability (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). Survey respondents are unlikely to identify with the extreme ends of the class spectrum due to the social desirability associated with identifying with the middle class. This poses significant limitations on the validity of conclusions achieved using the subjective approach.

*Social Identity Theory:*

This project employs Social Identity Theory (SIT) in order to examine the influence of class-based identity appeals on subjective class identity and attitudes towards economic policies. SIT is a “social psychological analysis of the role of self-conception in-group membership, group process, and intergroup relations” (Hogg 2006, 111). Social identity provides “a link between the psychology of the individual—the representation of the self—and the structure and process of social groups within which the self is embedded” (Brewer 2001, 115). Specific research has used SIT to investigate political identities relating to ethnicity (Flanagan 2014), race (Critin et al.

2000), gender (Hogg and Turner 1985), and political ideology (Duck, Hogg, and Terry 1995). SIT can be directly applied to class-based identities (Cramer Walsh et. al 2004). According to SIT, voters who identify with a specific class group will be more likely to behave in a manner that will benefit the entire class group. This behavior influences attitudes toward economic policies and political behaviors (Hogg 2006; Huddy 2001; Walsh, Jennings, and Stoker 2004).

The original conception of SIT, developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979) and Tajfel (1970), attempts to understand “the nature of prejudice and intergroup conflict, and [is] based on the premise that human beings have a tendency to categorize individuals into in-groups and out-groups on perceived similarity or dissimilarity to the self” (Jackson 2005, 133). The foundation of SIT assumes that “a social category into which one falls, and to which one feels one belongs, provides a definition of who one is in terms of the defining characteristics of the category” (Hogg, Terry, and White 1995, 259). In other words, association with a group influences one’s attitudes and behaviors. The group with whom an individual chooses to identify creates a social identity that defines how the individual ought to think, feel, and behave. SIT holds the most promise for political psychologists because it has been applied in multiple countries, has been replicated, can be applied to a wide range of groups, and can directly address the issues that interest political psychologists (Huddy 2001). An examination of the theoretical framework, historical foundations, and recent applications, shows that SIT helps explain attitudes and behaviors related to class identity.

SIT begins with categorization, which is “the cognitive process that allows humans to streamline perception by separately grouping like and unlike stimuli” (Thoits and Virshup 1997, 114). Humans behave as “cognitive misers,” in that they desire shortcuts for understanding information. The process of categorization serves as a “guide for action in the sense that it helps

to structure the social environment according to certain general cognitive principles” (Henri Tajfel 1978, 62). Categorization simplifies and systematizes the social environment, and humans use those categories to identify themselves and others. Therefore, one’s sense of identity emerges through the process of categorization.

SIT draws a distinction between *individual identity* and *social identity*. Individual identity refers to personal traits and characteristics. Hogg (2006) conceptualizes individual identity as “self-construal in terms of idiosyncratic personality attributes that are not shared with other people or personal dyadic relationships with a specific other person” (115). For example, one may consider herself funny, but does not share that identity with a group. Social identity on the other hand is defined as “that part of an individual’s self-concept that comes from a sense of group membership, a psychological sense of attachment and belonging, such that the group is thought of as ‘we’” (M. Jackson 2005, 120). For example, one may identify as a woman and feel a sense of connection with other women. SIT, as a political psychology theory, is interested in the conditions under which individual identity shifts to social identity.

Some scholars argue that the dichotomous distinction between individual identity and social identity is too stark (Brewer 2001; Brewer and Gardner 1996; Hogg 2006; Stets and Burke 2000; Thoits and Virshup 1997).<sup>4</sup> However, “rather than attempting to extract some common definition of a concept like social identity, the value of different perspectives should be

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<sup>4</sup> Brewer and Gardner (1996) distinguish three aspects of the self: the individual self, the relational self, and the collective self. The individual self is defined by those personal traits that differentiate the self from all others. The relational self is defined by the relationship between the self and a specific group of other people. The collective self is defined by group membership that differentiates “us” versus “them.” Furthermore, Brewer (2001) identifies four major variations on the social identity theme: person-based, relational, group-based, and collective social identities. The person-based social identity emphasizes the content of identity that is associated with belonging to a particular group or category. Relational social identity defines the self through association with particular roles in relation to other people. Relational social identities, such as doctor-patient or parent-child, are interdependent because the “traits and behaviors expressed by one individual are dependent on and responsive to the behavior and expectations of the other parties in the relationship” (Brewer 2001, 118). Group-based social identity considers the self as a part of a group and is best captured by Turner’s (1985) self-categorization theory. Finally, collective social identity “involves shared representations of the group based on common interests and experiences” and also engages in social action (119).

recognized and acknowledged” (Brewer 2001, 123). For the purposes of this discussion, this project will employ Tajfel’s (1978) understanding of social identity as “that *part* of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to membership” (63). Tajfel (1978) acknowledges the limitations of this definition, but maintains that “this limitation is deliberate” because the aim is to avoid discussions as to what “is” identity, rather focusing on the role of group membership (63). Similar to Tajfel (1978), this project also deliberately focuses on the role of group membership on identity rather than identity in isolation.

Furthermore, *social identity* is distinguished from *political identity*, which is defined as “those aspects of the self that are seen as important in determining one’s political interest” (M. Jackson 2005, 120). In the field of political psychology, scholars investigate which characteristics of social identity are most likely to be incorporated into political identity, and the process by which this occurs. Class can be conceived as a part of one’s social identity, but also can influence political attitudes and behaviors and therefore influence political identity. I argue that under certain conditions, specifically economic issue salience and priming during presidential campaign speeches, class becomes a defining aspect of political identity.

According to Tajfel (1978), social identity is formed from group membership. Groups are collections of more than two people sharing the same social identity. The meaning of group membership can take on multiple definitions, but generally include three main components: cognitive, evaluative, and emotional (Brown 1999; Hogg, Terry, and White 1995; M. Jackson 2005; Miller et al. 1981; Henri Tajfel 1978). The cognitive component refers to an individual’s knowledge that they belong to that group. In other words, individuals must subjectively identify with their group. The evaluative component claims that group members acknowledge that

“membership [of the group] may have a positive or negative value connotation” (Henri Tajfel 1978, 28). Finally, the emotional component combines elements from the cognitive and evaluative aspects, claiming that belonging to a group may be accompanied by “emotions (such as love or hatred, like or dislike) directed towards one’s own group and towards others which stand in certain relations to it” (Henri Tajfel 1978, 29).

Additionally, a broad distinction exists between *similarity-based categorical groups* (common-identity groups), which are groups based on direct attachment to the group, and *interaction-based dynamic groups* (common-bond groups), which are groups based on attachment among members (Hogg 2006; Levine and Moreland 2008; McGrath, Arrow, and Berdahl 2000). This distinction closely correlates to Marx’s distinction between *class-in-itself*, where members of a social class are unaware of their connection with other members of the group, and *class-for-itself*, where members are aware of their shared fates with those who share their group membership (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). According to SIT, people can be in a common-bond or a common-identity group, but if they “have no sense of belonging, do not identify and do not define and evaluate self in terms of the properties of the group, then they are unlikely to think, feel, and behave as group members” (Hogg 2006, 117). In other words, subjective identification with a group is the most defining aspect of group membership. Tajfel (1982) defines a group’s existence by the fact that its members “categorize themselves with a high degree of consensus in the appropriate manner, and are consensually categorized in the same manner by others” (229). In order to belong to a group, an individual must identify herself as a member of the group, understand the meaning of membership, and be aware of others in the group.

Group identification connotes “a perceived self-location within a particular social stratum, along with a psychological feeling of belonging to that particular stratum” (Miller et al. 1981, 495). Identifying with a group leads to *in-group favoritism* and *out-group bias*, in which “group members are prone to think that their own group (and its products) are superior to other groups (and their products), and [are] ready behaviorally to discriminate between them as well” (Brown 1999, 747). Individuals are likely to favor attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs of those who share their same group identity; and, furthermore discriminate against those outside the group (Brown 1999; Mullen, Brown, and Smith 1992; Thoits and Virshup 1997). For example, due to *in-group favoritism*, those who identify with the middle class will tend to hold positive attitudes towards others who identify as middle class. Moreover, middle class identifiers will favor economic policies that benefit the middle class. Similarly, due to *out-group bias*, middle class identifiers will hold negative attitudes towards those outside the middle class such as big banks, Wall Street, and the non-working poor. Middle class identifiers will therefore not favor economic policies that are perceived to benefit those outside their own class group.

This conceptualization of group identification, in-group favoritism, and out-group bias is best demonstrated by a series of experiments conducted by Tajfel and his colleagues, known as the minimal group paradigm experiments (Billig and Tajfel 1973; Tajel 1970; Tajfel and Billig 1974). In laboratory settings, Tajfel and colleagues randomly assigned participants to meaningless, superficial, anonymous groups with no competing interests. Subjects exhibited in-group favoritism and out-group bias even in the minimal group settings. For example, when boys were assigned to a group arbitrarily, and then asked to allocate rewards to other participants, Tajfel (1970) found that 70% of participants allocated rewards in a way that would benefit those who belonged to their same group. Therefore, social identity is “extremely open to

contextual influences, since people proved remarkably willing to adopt novel group identities in the laboratory setting and [then] use them as a basis for intergroup discrimination” (M. Jackson 2005, 133). Subjective class identification can be considered an arbitrary and self-defined social group similar to those used in the experiments (Lareau and Conley 2008). Based on these principles, those who identify with the middle class will be more likely to favor economic policies that benefit the middle class.

The minimal group paradigm experiments to develop SIT relied on experimental method designs in a laboratory setting, which offers many benefits in terms of isolating the minimum conditions under which in-group bias impacts behavior; however, this methodology lacks external validity (Brewer 2001; Huddy 2001; M. Jackson 2005). The laboratory setting does not always correspond to the social realities of group behavior in the real world. For example, one criticism of the methods critiques that the groups were trivially assigned rather than freely chosen. This criticism refers to the distinction between *acquired* identities, which are voluntarily chosen by the self, and *ascribed* identities, which are given by someone else. Huddy (2001) argues, identities that were historically ascribed (such as religion, gender, race, and ethnicity) are now transforming into acquired identities that one can fashion and recreate. In contemporary American society, social identities are more likely to be acquired than ascribed, which poses crucial challenges to social identity researchers (Huddy 2001). Another criticism argues that the subjective meaning of social identities differ between individuals. Huddy (2001) argues the minimal group paradigm experiments did not take into account the individual personality differences of the participants.

Despite critiques of the method, the minimal group paradigm experiments offer valuable information for understanding the psychological basis of group behavior. Tajfel and Turner

(1979) explain some of the motivational underpinnings of in-group favoritism through *positive distinctiveness*, in which individuals need to believe that “we” are better than “they” in all ways. Groups strive for positive distinctiveness because “the status, prestige, and social valence of the group” attaches to the individual (Hogg 2006, 120). Due to the desire to distinguish oneself positively, group membership is more likely to emerge among higher status groups (Ethier and Deaux 1994; Huddy and Virtanen 1995; Swan and Wyer 1997). However, members of low-status groups may employ *social mobility strategy*, in which members deny their group membership or identify with a higher status group (Jackson et al. 1996; Tajfel and Turner 1979). Additionally, low-status group members may employ *social creativity* and *social change* to enhance their group’s standing (Huddy 2001; van Knippenberg and van Oers 1984; Mummendey and Schreiber 1984). For example, members of a lower status group will change their group’s standing “by rating an undesirable attribute more positively or rating the group more favorably on other comparative dimension” (Huddy 2001, 135). In the context of my research question regarding class identities, the concepts of *positive distinctiveness* through strategies such as *social mobility* and *social creativity* are especially relevant. A 2015 Gallup survey found that approximately 51% of Americans identify as the middle class (Newport 2015). While a majority of Americans subjectively identify as the middle class, objective measures indicate otherwise (Lareau and Conley 2008). Therefore, people in low class status groups are likely to employ the social mobility strategy and identify with the middle class. For example, according to Sosnaud et al. (2013), approximately 36.90% of working class Americans have an inflated perception of their class group identity. Those individuals in low personal economic conditions argue that their lower class status is only temporary and they really belong in the middle class. Additionally, people who identify as the middle class elevate the status and meaning of group

membership by equating being middle class with being hard working and deserving (Walsh 2012).

The self “can be viewed as a collection of many different identities” with varying strengths (Jackson 2005, 119). We each “possess multiple potential social identities whose degrees of overlap and whose relative significance for our self-concept may vary” (Crittin, Wong, and Duff 2001, 73). Therefore the degrees to which a social identity will impact behaviors or attitudes depend upon one’s strength of association with their group membership.<sup>5</sup> For example, Theiss-Morse (2009) found that people with strong senses of national identity were 35% more likely to hold attitudes that favored war as a national obligation than those with weak senses of national identity. Similarly, Sidanius, Feshbach, Levin, and Pratto (1997) observed that blacks in American who strongly identified as African-American had a diminished sense of patriotism, compared to those with weak African-American identification. Identification with a group alone is insufficient to determine political attitudes and behavior, but rather the strength of group identification plays a significant role. A stronger association with a group will lead to increased support for policies that benefit that group (Reese and Brown 1995; Tate 1993). Additionally, those with strong group associations are more likely to hold negative attitudes towards out-groups (Gibson and Gouws 2000; Perreault and Bourhis 1999) and hold more positive views toward their in-group (Jackson and Smith 1999; McKenna and Bargh 1998; Simon, Kulla, and Zobel 1995). In other words, the crucial component in out-group antipathy

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<sup>5</sup> Strength of identification is measured through survey questions. For example, The American National Election Survey (ANES) measures strength of identification through “felt group closeness.” The respondents are given a list of groups and then asked: “Here is a list of groups. Please read over the list and tell me the letter for those groups you feel particularly close to—people who are most like you in their ideas and interests and feelings about things.” This has been criticized as a relatively weak measure (Huddy 2001). Rather, single direct questions are more likely to capture an accurate illustration of the degree to which one identifies with a particular group. For example, participants are asked, “How glad are you to belong to this group?” and “How important is this group to your sense of who you are?” with a 5-point response scale ranging from (1) “not at all glad/important” to (5) “extremely glad/important” (Jackson 2005, 173).

and in-group bias “is the existence of a strong, internalized, subjective identity, not simple group membership” (Huddy 2001, 130). An individual may identify with the middle class, but not feel a strong sense of association with that group. Weak group association with the middle class will alter the impact that group membership will have on political attitudes and behaviors. The relationship between my variables will therefore likely be stronger for those individuals who have a higher sense of association with their class-based identification.

Strong levels of identity association tend to correspond to relative stability of social identity over time. In other words, “the strongest forms of group identity may also be the least affected by context, helping to maintain identity strength over time” (Huddy 2003, 526). Political scientists frequently disagree over the relative stability and fluidity of social and political identities (Ethier and Deaux 1994; Hogg and Turner 1985; Huddy 2001; Kinket and Verkuyten 1997; Walsh, Jennings, and Stoker 2004). Some scholars, most notably Hogg and Turner (1985), argue that social identities are highly liable and easily susceptible to change. However, Huddy (2001) criticizes such claims arguing that “much of [the] empirical base [supporting such claims] depend on information about identities that are relatively weak or nonexistent prior to the experimental setting in which they are created” (148). Since laboratory settings pose external validity issues, Walsh et al. (2004) employed a panel study spanning two generations (1965-1997), and found that approximately three-fifths of participants maintained the same class identities. Over a lifetime, people can categorize themselves in either the same or different class categories. The strongest impact of class on political behaviors “should be among people who have consistently interpreted the world, including the political world, through the same class identity” (Walsh et al. 2004, 472). Since identity stability can impact strength of association, class stability is an important component in understanding social identity.

Furthermore, a person may have to reconcile multiple competing identities (Brewer 2001). For example, Flanagan (2014) argues that Latino Americans might be torn between their ethnic and national loyalties on an issue such as bilingual education. Whether strength of association is stronger for ethnic or national identity impacts voters' opinions regarding bilingual education. Similarly, Thomas Frank (2005) investigates why people, specifically poor white rural Americans vote against their own class interest in *What's the Matter with Kansas?* In reconciling culture-based group memberships and lower class-based group membership, rural white Americans behave politically along the lines of culture, rather than class.

Political party identification and political ideology can strongly determine one's political behaviors (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2011); however, certain conditions make other aspects of one identity more influential in determining political behavior (Hogg and Turner 1985; Jackson 2005; McGuire et al. 1978; McGuire and Padawer-Singer 1976; Mullen, Brown, and Smith 1992; Swan and Wyer 1997; Tavits and Potter 2015). Jackson (2005) proposes that the "conception of political identity needs to go beyond partisanship to include other aspects of the self which may be seen as politically relevant under various circumstance" (146). For instance, salience, which is "the activation of an identity in a situation," impacts political attitudes and behavior (Stets and Burke 2000, 229). A salient social identity is one which functions "psychologically to increase the influence of one's membership in that group on perception and behavior" (Turner et al. 1987, 118). Political salience specifically, "can work by either intensifying an identity or by heightening the link between an identity and politics" (Huddy 2001, 542). For example, Hogg and Turner (1985) show that increasing gender salience causes individuals to think of themselves in gender-specific terms. Similarly, McGuire et al. (1978) find that increasing ethnicity salience leads to stronger of ethnic group identity association.

Additionally, Reese and Brown (1995) demonstrate that black voters who attend politically active churches have a stronger sense of racial identity than blacks in less politically active congregations.

Campbell et al. (1980) identify the link between group and politics as *political proximity*. They argue that political proximity increases when a group member runs for political office because the candidate heightens that group's political salience. For example, Paolino (1995) shows that the presence of female political candidates running for Congress in 1992 increased the likelihood that female voters would translate their support for women's issues into electoral support for female candidates. In other words, "the presence of women candidates increased the salience of women's issues" (Huddy 2001, 543)

During the election cycle these political proximity cues come from sources such as campaign advertisements, campaign speeches, and media coverage of the campaign to impact the salience of identity (Huddy 2001). When these messages include information about the political opinions or preferences of different groups in society, "those group identities are made more salient in the political context" (Jackson 2005, 148). When a political message, such as a presidential campaign speech, "includes information about group preferences, [it] serves to *prime* that group identity in people's minds" (Jackson 2005, 148). Priming increases the salience of a particular idea, which ultimately shapes the way one forms political opinions. In an experimental study using a real-world campaign context, Jackson (2005) finds that political identities are extremely malleable, in that they can be altered through priming from identity-appeals. After a single instance of exposure to a media report, respondents were more likely to identify with the new group they read about.<sup>6</sup> This demonstrates that "contextual cues can play

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<sup>6</sup> The three groups, artificially created by Jackson (2005), are "The Moderate Middle," "Generation Y," and "College Students." The media articles contained identity-appeals to one of these three group identities.

a significant role in shaping political identity...and that identity can exert a direct effect on vote choice” (Jackson 2005, 158).

When class identity is salient, it guides thinking and behavior (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Turner et al. 1994; Walsh, Jennings, and Stoker 2004). If voters receive class-based identity primes, then class will likely influence their subjective group identification and political opinions. As demonstrated by previous research, one’s group membership can shape political attitudes and behaviors when that identity is made salient. Class is rarely the only identity shaping political behaviors; however, if class is manipulated to be more salient in the minds of the voter, then it will have a larger impact on political opinions and behaviors. If voters receive class-based identity appeals in presidential campaigns, then they will be more likely to develop political opinions within the framework of what is beneficial to their class group. Campaign rhetoric is one method employed by politicians to raise the salience of class identity.

#### *Campaign Rhetoric:*

Contemporary American presidential campaigns rely on strategic rhetoric to reach voters based on their identity (Flanagan 2014). Politicians make identity appeals in order to connect with specific groups of voters. Modern political campaigns use group *identity-based targeting*, which is defined as a “candidate’s efforts to appeal to voters’ affective attachments to their politicized social group” (Holman, Schneider, and Pondel 2015, 1). Campaigns target specific subsets of voters by reaching out to pivotal groups (Chapp 2013; Flanagan 2014; Hillygus and Shields 2008; Druckman, Kifer, and Parkin 2009; Ridout et al. 2013; Jackson 2005). For example, ethnic identity appeals towards Latino minority groups are made using the Spanish language to foster a sense of unity, connection, and understanding (Abrajano 2010). Similarly,

in a content analysis of presidential campaigns from 1980 to 2008, Chapp (2015) finds that all candidates made appeals to both civil religion identities and specific religious subgroup identities. These subtle religious identity appeals activate voters' social identities. Likewise, Holman, Schneider, and Pondel (2015) account for candidates' identity appeals to women, such as Mitt Romney's "Dear Daughter" ad, George W. Bush's "W is for Women" slogan, and Obama's "Women for Obama" initiative led by First Lady Michelle Obama.

Socio-economic class, specifically the middle class, as an identity, has characteristics that distinguish it from other common identity appeals. As SIT maintains, identity is not fixed, but rather subject to change depending on the context (Hout 2006). Class specifically is highly malleable and subjective (Hout 2006; Hout 2008; Lewis-Beck et al. 2009). As a subjective group identity, the middle class has no membership qualifications or definitions. Therefore, class appeals are ambiguous because they do not target specific pre-defined groups of citizens (Alesina and Cukierman 1990; Milita, Ryan, and Simas 2013). Most Americans think of themselves as middle class (Lewis-Beck et al. 2009); therefore in light of the recent rise of economic inequality, "middle class rhetoric [is] a 'common denominator' appeal, attempting to unify Americans from across the socio-economic spectrum" (Chapp 2013, 4). Furthermore, class can be considered a "superordinate identity," which is a broad universal identity that can reduce the importance of subgroup identities (Gaertner and Dovidio 2000). Because class is a superordinate identity, voters are likely to respond to class identity appeals in presidential campaign speeches.

The role of the campaign therefore is to "heighten voter awareness of prevailing economic conditions and the electoral relevance thereof" as well as "activate and reinforce preexisting dispositions" (Markus 1988, 152). Class-based identity appeals will not change a

voter's class identification, but they will increase the salience of class identity, which will impact strength of group identification and closeness. Because campaigns strengthen rather than alter existing views, some scholars have questioned the effectiveness of campaigns.

### *Do Campaigns Matter?*

Despite the pervasiveness of exposure to campaign communications—from 1952 to 1992, more than 97% of all voters reported some exposure to presidential campaign communications—a significant body of literature maintains that campaigns are irrelevant in determining presidential election outcomes (Campbell et al. 1960; Key and Cummings 1966; Kramer 1971; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1968; Markus and Converse 1979; Holbrook 1996; Page and Jones 1979; Tufte 1978). The founding research on the role of campaigns, the Columbia Studies, surveyed prospective voters in Erie County, Ohio, throughout the course of the 1940 presidential campaign, and voters in Elmira, New York, during the 1948 presidential campaign (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1968; Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954). The Columbia Studies showed that “most people expressed a vote intention in the spring, before the campaign, that coincided with their political predispositions, and voted according to those predispositions in the fall” (Holbrook 1996, 6). In other words, “campaigns appeared to hold very little sway over how people voted” (Holbrook 1996, 6). Building off the Columbia Studies, the Michigan Model focused on other determinants of voting behavior to help explain the limited role of campaigns. In the landmark publication of *The American Voter*, Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes (1960) found that party identification is the strongest determinant of attitude formation and voting behavior, further solidifying that campaigns do not change voters' views.

In addition to party identification, the objective economic conditions of the country play a significant role in determining election outcomes (Sides and Varveck 2013; Kramer 1971; Tufte 1978; Abramowitz 1988; Holbrook 1996; Campbell 1992). Varveck (2009) demonstrates that the state of the national economy has correctly determined the presidential election outcome for 64% of elections since 1952.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the economy, along with party identification, are considered the election “fundamentals” that can predict outcomes long before the campaign (Sides and Varveck 2013). As a “fundamental,” the economy determines election outcomes; therefore, campaigns are largely irrelevant to most voters.

Furthermore, Key (1966) and Fiorina (1981) find that “retrospective voting” determines election outcomes. According to Key (1966), “as voters mark their ballots...they have in their minds recollections of their experiences of the past four years” (9). Since the state of the economy is characterized as a “performance issue” rather than an “owned issue” by a party, voters are more likely to evaluate the economy based on perceived performance and reward or punish the incumbent party accordingly (Petrocik et al. 2003). An “owned issue” refers to an issue that a particular candidate, or political party, is considered better able to “handle,” or resolve the problem (Petrocik 1996, 826). On the other hand, “performance issues” are not automatically owned by a single party, “but can provide an advantage to a candidate when events, official behavior, and policy successes and failures allow the candidate to claim credit for good times or blame the opposition for bad times” (Petrocik et al. 2003).

According to Holbrook’s (1996) analysis of voting behavior in presidential elections between 1972-1992, voters who approve of the president’s performance are 15 times more likely to vote for the incumbent presidential party than those who do not approve of the president’s

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<sup>7</sup> Varveck (2009) compares actual incumbent vote share in presidential elections to a range of predictions of incumbent vote share based on four models to measure the economic state using gross domestic product (GDP) and disposable income (RDI) measures.

performance, even when controlling for party identification (39). In other words, people vote based on the performance of the incumbent administration, not based on political campaigns. This demonstrates that the “fundamentals” of the economy, along with party identification, determine election outcomes, rather than campaigns (Sides and Varveck 2013).

Despite evidence that campaigns do not matter, other scholars argue that campaigns serve an important role for education and mobilization in democracy (Bartels 1993; Gelman and King 1993; Holbrook 1996; Jackson 2005; Jamieson 1992; Vavreck 2009). The primary functions of campaigns are “disseminating information” (Holbrook 1996, 15). The mere occurrence of campaign events does not influence public opinion, but rather campaigns derive influence from the amount and type of information they generate. According to Popkin (1991), “campaigns make a difference because voters have limited information about government and uncertainty about the consequences of policies” (70). Since voters tend to be politically unaware, they are influenced “by campaigners who offer more information or better explanations of the ways in which government activities affect them” (Popkin 1991, 70). Gelman and King (1993) find support for Popkin’s (1991) claim that campaigns provide voters with much-needed information. Using 67,000 individual-level responses from 49 commercial polls during the 1988 campaign, Gelman and King (1993) argue that “presidential election campaigns play a central role in making it possible for voters to become informed so they can make decisions according to the equivalent of enlightened preferences when they get to the voting booth” (435). According to Markus (1988) campaigns serve as a “very important vehicle for heightening voters’ awareness of prevailing economic conditions and the electoral relevance thereof” (152). In other words, campaigns generate information, which educates citizens on how to vote in accordance with factors such as their party identification or past president performance.

Additionally, campaigns “do in fact influence an individual’s likelihood of voting” (Hillygus 2005, 53). Experimental research demonstrates that campaign information increases voter turnout (Gerber and Green 2000; Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995). Accompanying survey research supports the idea that campaign activities impact voter turnout (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 2005; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Campaigns therefore help determine who turns out to vote and who does not. Specifically, campaign efforts are most effective at mobilizing those initially not planning to vote (Hillygus 2005). Additionally, voters’ “predispositions must be activated or reactivated by the campaign so that their predispositions turn into actual support at the polls” (Holbrook and McClurg 2005, 691). Melinda Jackson (2005) maintains that the main function of political campaigns is to “activate” latent political predispositions “by making them salient and relevant to the current political context” (123). According to this activation process, “individual votes depend less on the changes in attitudes and gains in information that occur during the campaign than on long-term dispositions that are present at the outset of the context” (Finkel 1993, 4). In other words, political campaigns do not change individual attitudes, but they do increase the salience of issues and pre-established opinions.

*Role of the Economy in Campaigns:*

The economy is considered an election “fundamental” because it generally can determine election outcomes (Sides and Varveck 2013, 11). Since 1948, the “economy fundamental” has correctly predicted “the winner of most presidential elections” (Sides and Varveck 2013, 11). During the 1992 presidential campaign, one of Bill Clinton’s strategists displayed a sign that reiterated their campaign strategy: “It’s the economy, Stupid” (Varveck 2009). By focusing on the economy, Clinton’s campaign raised economic salience, causing approximately 60% of

voters to perceive the economy as getting worse, which helped Clinton gain votes (Varveck 2009, 35). Similarly, once inaugurated as president, Barack Obama declared, “If I don’t have this [economy fixed] in three years, then [this will] be a one-term proposition” (Sides and Varveck 2013, 11). Obama recognized his chances of winning reelection were contingent on the state of the economy.

Election outcomes can generally be determined by the country’s objective economic conditions (Kramer 1971; Erikson 1989; Fiorina 1981; Key 1996; Tufte 1978; Markus 1988; Sides and Varveck 2013). Unlike other issues that are “owned” by a party, the economy is considered a “performance issue” (Petrocik et al. 2003). When economic conditions are good, voters tend to reelect incumbents; whereas, when economic conditions are bad, voters tend to punish incumbents (Hetherington 1996). With all other factors being equal, “voters give greater support to candidates of the incumbent party when the election is preceded by a period of prosperity than when times have been poor” (Kiewiet and Rivers 1984, 370). In an analysis of presidential elections from 1976 to 1992, Sides and Varveck (2013) find that as GDP increases, incumbent parties perform better (12). Objective economic conditions have “played a significant role in structuring election outcomes” (Sides and Varveck 2013). Going into the 2012 election, the Obama presidency was associated with “modest economic growth accompanied by a slower decline in the unemployment rate and little change in disposable income” (Sides and Varveck 2013, 30). According to the objective circumstances of the U.S. economy in 2012, Obama was predicted to win reelection.

Scholars generally accept that elections are decided based on economic circumstances; however, this claim leads scholars to question “whose economic conditions are the relevant datum for voters” (Markus 1988, 138). One camp argues that voters consider their own personal

economic predicaments. These “pocketbook” voters support the incumbent party when they experience personal financial security (Markus 1988). The other camp argues that voters are “sociotropic” in that their political judgments are shaped by evaluations of the country’s economic health, not their own (Kinder and Kiewiet 1979; Markus 1988). “Sociotropic” voters develop “rough evaluations of national economic conditions” independently of their own financial circumstances, “and then credit or blame the incumbent party accordingly” (Kinder and Kiewiet 1979, 132). Whether a voter is more orientated towards “pocketbook” or “sociotropic” behavior has significant political and policy implications (Markus 1988, 139). Mutz (1998) demonstrates that people tend to be more concerned with the whole of a group rather than their personal self-interest. In terms of voting behavior, people tend to consider group perspectives. This corresponds with group behaviors as described by Social Identity Theory (SIT), specifically the role of group membership. SIT argues that those who view themselves as a member of a group will exhibit in-group favoritism (Huddy 2001). Along the same lines, if one is a “sociotropic” voter, they will likely identify as part of a larger group, and therefore vote according to what would benefit the group as a whole, rather than them individually.

Implicit in this literature is “the assumption that voters on average correctly perceive economic conditions when judging incumbents” (Hetherington 1996, 373). However, studies show that voters living in the same economic circumstances perceive differences in the performance of the economy (Kramer 1983; Kinder, Adams, and Gronke 1989). For example, Hetherington (1996) conducted a logistic regression model to demonstrate that incumbent George Bush lost the 1992 presidential election despite favorable economic conditions because people perceived the economy as worse than it actually was. Similarly, Sides and Vavreck (2013) find that during the 2012 reelection campaign, Barack Obama outperformed predictions

based on the objective economic conditions of the country. Obama's performance can be attributed to his ability to make the election fundamentals of "partisanship and the economy even more salient to voters than they already were" (Sides and Varveck 2013). In other words, Obama rhetorically leveraged appeals based on the economy. He relied on class-based identity appeals. For example, during his final campaign speech on November 2, 2012, in Iowa, Barack Obama made personal identity appeals to the middle class:

"Now, the choice you make tomorrow...is not just between two candidates or parties. It's a choice between two different visions of America -- *who we are; what we believe; what we care about*. It's a choice between going back to the top-down policies that caused the mess we've been fighting our way out of for four years -- *or moving forward to a future that's built on a strong and growing middle class.*"<sup>8</sup> (Emphasis added)

As demonstrated by the passage from Obama's campaign speech, middle class rhetoric "ultimately invites some sort of economic judgment," which is a fundamental determinant of elections (Chapp 2013, 7).

In order for the economy to impact voting behavior, citizens have to correctly perceive the economic context (Hetherington 1996; Gelman and King 1993; Bartels 1998). Campaigns "can make fundamental factors more salient" (Sides and Varveck 2013, 187). By producing economic messages, candidates prime how citizens perceive the economic environment. For example, during the 2012 election, 82% of Obama's 179,463 campaign ads and 82% of Romney's 66,310 ads referenced the economy (Sides and Varveck 2013, 110). Obama's campaign messages emphasized the economy's improvement, relying on rhetoric such as "26 straight months of private sector economic growth" and "4.25 million jobs created" (Obama for America). Romney, on the other hand, ran ads that portrayed the economy as struggling due to Obama's leadership. For example, one ad criticized Obama by asking, "Has there ever been a president so out of touch with the middle class?" (Broken Promises Spending). Since the

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/campaign2012/obama/11.05.12.html>

perception of the economy is a fundamental determinant of election outcomes, candidates use rhetoric to heighten the salience of the economic environment.

Voters' perceptions of economic performance, not just objective economic measures, determine election outcomes, therefore, scholars are interested in what impacts voters' perceptions of economic performance. One strategy employed by campaigns to increase the salience of an issue, such as economic performance, is priming. Priming increases the "salience of a particular idea or framework, which [impacts voters'] subsequent judgments" (Jackson 2005, 148). Campaigns specifically exert substantial influence on voters through the process of priming (Druckman 2004; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Iyengar and Kinder 1987). By stressing certain issues, campaigns prime the public to evaluate elected officials on the basis of those issues (Hetherington 1996). For example, when a political campaign message includes information about group preferences, it "primes" that group identity in people's minds (Jackson 2005). If a campaign primes economic issues relating to the middle class, voters are more likely to make choices based on their identification with the middle class.

Since national economic circumstances determine election outcomes, a "rational candidate will exploit the electoral context to his or her advantage" (Varveck 2009, 27). In other words, the type of campaign candidates run depends on whether they are "helped" or "hurt" by the preexisting economic conditions (Chapp 2013). Varveck (2009) argues that candidates who are "helped" by good economic circumstances will run *clarifying* campaigns in which "they simply clarify their position or their role in fostering the good economic times or the lack of a role in bringing about bad times" (31). On the other hand, candidates who are "hurt" by poor economic conditions will run *insurgent* campaigns, in which they essentially try to change the topic (Varveck 2009, 32). For example, during the 2004, election Republican incumbent George

W. Bush ran a clarifying campaign since he was helped by the economic conditions, whereas Democratic challenger John Kerry ran an insurgent campaign (Varveck 2009, 38).

Similarly, the poor national economic circumstances of 2008 were attributed to Republican incumbents; therefore, during the 2008 election, Republican candidate John McCain ran an insurgent campaign with fewer middle class appeals. On the other hand, Democratic candidate, Barack Obama ran a clarifying campaign with more middle class references. In a clarifying campaign, candidates will likely make more middle class appeals in order to prime class identity. Additionally, during the 2012 campaign, Obama ran a clarifying campaign with appeals to the middle class (Sides and Varveck 2013). For example, during the October 3, 2012, presidential debate, Obama portrayed his campaign message on the economy stating:

“Now, four years ago, when I stood on this stage, I said that I would cut taxes for middle-class families. *And that's exactly what I did. We cut taxes for middle-class families by about \$3,600.* And the reason is, because I believe that we do best when the middle class is doing well. And by giving them those tax cuts, they had a little more money in their pocket, and so maybe they can buy a new car.”<sup>9</sup> (Emphasis added)

While the economy is evaluated based on past performance, other issues are thought to be “owned” by either the Republican Party or the Democratic Party (Petrocik 1996). For example, Republicans own issues relating to taxes, spending, and the size of government; whereas Democrats own issues associated with social welfare, intergroup relations, and civil liberties (Petrocik et al. 2003). In campaigns, candidates tend to emphasize those issues their party “owns.” For example, Petrocik et al. (2003) find evidence of issue-ownership campaigning across thirteen tested elections. From 1952-2002, 60% of issues raised by Republican candidates and 51% of issues raised by Democratic candidates were owned by their own party (Petrocik et al. 2003, 609). While the middle class isn’t an issue, the Democratic Party is largely viewed as the party associated with the middle class (Nicholson and Segura 2012). In accordance with

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.debates.org/index.php?page=october-3-2012-debate-transcript>

Petrocik's (2003) findings, Obama appealed to the middle class three times more frequently than Romney did during the 2012 presidential election (Chapp 2015).

Therefore, based on the available literature, I argue that class identity has a determining impact on political behavior especially with the reemerging salience of economic. Identity by nature is malleable and susceptible to variations in strength. An identity appeals to the middle class has the ability to manipulate an individual's class group identity and the strength of that group identification. Furthermore, according to SIT, those who identify with a group, such as the middle class, will exhibit in-group favoritism and out-group bias. In other words, middle class identifiers will be more likely to hold attitudes toward economic policies that would benefit the middle class. Presidential candidates make appeals to the middle class, which ultimately impacts both group identification and attitudes toward policies. Table 1 describes this model. In the following chapter, I describe the methodology used to test these predictions.

Table 1. Expectations

	<b>Middle Class Identity Appeal</b>	<b>No Campaign Appeal</b>
Group Identification	Strong identification with middle class	Weak identification with middle class
Attitudes Toward Policies	More favorable attitudes towards policies that would benefit the middle class	Less favorable attitudes towards policies that would benefit the middle class

## Chapter 2: Methodology

This project argues that with the rising awareness of income inequality in contemporary America, class has reemerged as a salient factor for voting. Presidential campaign speeches prime class identity, which therefore impacts group identification and public opinion. The independent variable of this study is the campaign appeal, which refers to the rhetoric of a presidential candidate's campaign speech. The dependent variables of this study are group identification and attitudes toward policies. Group identification refers to strength of identification with the middle class. Attitudes toward policies refer to degree of favorability toward policies that are perceived to impact the middle class. In order to examine the impact of class-based identity appeals in presidential campaign speeches on voters' subjective class-based identities and attitudes toward economic policies, I rely on an experimental design that utilizes survey data collected from a national representative sample of participants. Table 2 details my variables and expected outcomes.

Table 2. Variables

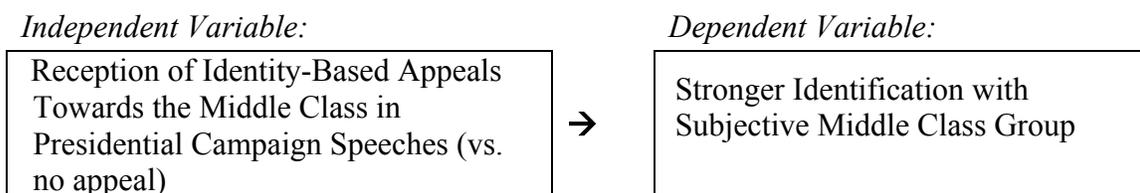
<b>Independent Variables:</b>		<b>Dependent Variables:</b>			
Campaign Appeal		Group Identification		Attitudes Toward Policies	
Middle Class Appeal	No Identity Appeal	Strong Identification with Middle Class	Weak Identification with Middle Class	More Favorable Attitudes	Less Favorable Attitudes

According to Social Identity Theory (SIT), a specific identity appeal will raise the salience of that aspect of one's identity. Category salience "plays a clear role in shaping identity" (Huddy

2003, 534). Therefore, based on SIT, raising middle class identity salience through appeals in presidential campaign speeches will lead people to feel a stronger sense of connection and identification with the middle class. In other words, I hypothesize:

*Group Identification Hypothesis: Reception of identity appeals to the middle class in presidential campaign speeches leads to a stronger identification with the subjective middle class group; whereas, no reception of identity appeals leads to weak identification with middle class.*

Figure 1. Group Identification Hypothesis Arrow Diagram



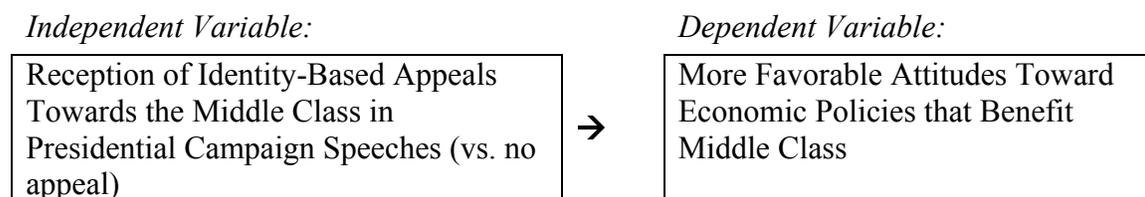
Additionally, this relationship will be stronger for those who identified with the middle class regardless of exposure to the middle class identity appeal in a campaign speech. In other words, if an individual identifies with the middle class, then reception of a class identity appeal will be more likely to increase their strength of association with the middle class. Middle class identifiers will be more sensitive to middle class identity appeals, which will therefore lead to an increase in their strength of association with the middle class.

Furthermore, according to SIT, identification with a group leads to in-group favoritism and out-group bias (Brown 1999). Individuals are likely to favor attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs that benefit those who share their same group identity; and, furthermore discriminate against those outside the group (Brown 1999; Mullen, Brown, and Smith 1992; Thoits and Virshup 1997). If an individual receives an identity appeal to the middle class, they will likely hold positive attitudes and opinions about economic policies that are perceived to benefit the middle class. Those who identify with the middle class view their group as more deserving. Middle class

identifiers will likely hold attitudes that favor the middle class on issues such as income inequality, minimum wage, millionaire taxes, big banks, unemployment, and the state of the economy. Therefore I hypothesize:

*Attitudes Toward Policies Hypothesis: Reception of identity appeals to the middle class in presidential campaign speeches leads to more favorable attitudes towards economic policies that would benefit the middle class; whereas, no reception of identity appeals leads to less favorable attitudes towards economic policies that would benefit the middle class.*

Figure 2. Attitudes Toward Policies Hypothesis Arrow Diagram



#### *Experimental Design:*

This project utilizes an experimental design in order to examine the relationship between receptions of a class-based identity appeals and subjective class group identification and attitudes toward economic policies. Experimental designs are best used to provide answers to causal questions because experiments “intrude upon nature” (Kinder and Palfrey 1993, 6). An experimental research design “exerts control over the experimental setting by modifying conditions in systematic ways, varying on one factor at a time,” while holding all other factors constant (Fridkin and Kenney 2010, 52). Prior research applying social identity manipulation has relied on experimental designs (Chapp 2009; Jackson 2005; Tajfel 1970).

Due to the control inherent in experimental designs, experiments have strong internal validity because they sort out cause and effect relationships (McDermott 2002; Fridkin and Kenney 2010). Experiments allow variables of interest to be held in isolation, which permits researchers to “untangle complex phenomena, [and] sort out the details of the underlying

process” (Fridkin and Kenney 2010, 53). During a real presidential campaign, voters are exposed multiple stimuli that would impact attitudes. An observational research design would be unable to isolate the causal effect that identity appeals have on voters’ attitudes. Therefore, in order to investigate identity appeals specifically on voters, an experimental design is best. Additionally, experimental designs are relatively simple and economical to execute, allowing the researchers to establish clear conclusions (Fridkin and Kenney 2010).

While experimental designs offer “benefits that make them an invaluable tool in the study of political behavior” they are associated with noteworthy limitations (Fridkin and Kenney 2010, 66). The artificial setting created by the experimental design limits external validity and generalizability (Huddy 2003). Research conducted through experimental processes does not always reflect the experience it tries to replicate, which poses external validity problems. For example, experimental designs do not always reflect the reality of how citizens receive information (Fridkin and Kenney 2010). Additionally, the sample population in an experimental setting may pose generalizability problems. For example, a convenience sample of college sophomores does not reflect the broader demography of American citizens (Johnson and Reynolds 2012). Furthermore, many citizens are apathetic and do not hold carefully constructed political attitudes; however, when asked about a topic, respondents “are likely to reveal an attitude on the spot” (Fridkin and Kenney 2010, 64). In other words, citizens may create an attitude simply because they are asked to give their opinion (Converse 1964). Similarly, participants may be influenced by social desirability, wherein they respond based on what they perceive to be the correct answer, rather than their honest opinion (Johnson and Reynolds 2012).

Despite these limitations, the ability of experimental designs to isolate variables of interest can “provide authoritative answers to causal questions” (Fridkin and Kenney 2010, 52).

Therefore, in order to test my hypotheses, I employed an experimental design. A national sample of participants were recruited through Amazon's MTurk and randomly assigned to either the treatment group or the control group. Holding all other factors constant, the treatment group received the class-based identity appeal, while the control group received no identity appeal. Following exposure to the campaign message appeals, respondents answered an identical series of questions investigating group identification and attitudes towards economic policies.

*Independent Variable:*

In order to understand the causal relationship of campaign identity appeals on strength of association and attitudes, I manipulated the conditions to isolate my independent variable, middle class appeal. Keeping all other factors consistent, I altered the appeal participants received. I split my sample into two groups—the treatment group received the identity appeal to the middle class, while the control group received no identity appeal. In order to increase external validity, I relied real campaign rhetoric from Barack Obama's 2012 presidential campaign stump speeches.<sup>10</sup> Since the rhetoric is from a real campaign environment, it reflects the true appeals voters receive in the political environment. I manipulated the original language of the speech with the middle class identity appeal in order to form a treatment group. For example, the treatment group appeal reads, "I fight on behalf of the *middle class*," whereas the control group appeal reads, "I fight on behalf of the *American citizens*." These slight alterations manipulate the class identity appeal while keeping all other factors constant. Table 3 details my alterations.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=101322>

Table 3. Appeal Treatment

Treatment Group: Middle Class Appeal	Control Group: No Identity Appeal
<p data-bbox="188 365 782 399">Excerpt from a speech Broadcast on C-SPAN:</p> <p data-bbox="188 436 792 907">“My belief is that I have to participate and fight on behalf of the <b>middle class</b> that had given me so much, so that the next generation would be able to have those same opportunities. We’ll cut programs that don't work, and we'll keep eliminating waste that doesn't improve prospects for <b>the middle class</b>. What we need is somebody who is out there fighting for the <b>middle class</b> and wants to grow the <b>middle class</b>. And we will grow this <b>middle class</b>, and we will strengthen America, and we'll remind the world just why it is that we live in the greatest nation on Earth.</p> <p data-bbox="188 949 782 1276">“When I talk about <b>middle class</b>, I'm also talking about <b>poor</b> folks who are doing the right thing and trying to get into the <b>middle class</b>. And <b>middle class</b> is also an attitude. It's not just about income. It's about knowing what's important and not measuring your success just based on your bank account. But it's about your values and being responsible and looking after each other and giving back.”</p> <p data-bbox="188 1318 474 1352">-Barack Obama, 2012</p>	<p data-bbox="828 365 1422 399">Excerpt from a speech Broadcast on C-SPAN:</p> <p data-bbox="828 436 1422 907">“My belief is that I have to participate and fight on behalf of the <b>American citizens</b> that had given me so much, so that the next generation would be able to have those same opportunities. We’ll cut programs that don't work, and we'll keep eliminating waste that doesn't improve prospects for <b>our citizens</b>. What we need is somebody who is out there fighting for <b>citizens</b> and wants to grow the <b>opportunity</b>. And we will grow this <b>opportunity</b>, and we will strengthen America, and we'll remind the world just why it is that we live in the greatest nation on Earth.</p> <p data-bbox="828 949 1422 1276">“When I talk about <b>hardworking citizens</b>, I'm also talking about folks who are doing the right thing and trying to <b>improve themselves</b>. And <b>this</b> is also an attitude. It's not just about income. It's about knowing what's important and not measuring your success just based on your bank account. But it's about your values and being responsible and looking after each other and giving back.”</p> <p data-bbox="828 1318 1114 1352">-Barack Obama, 2012</p>

Despite the fact that middle class identity appeals occur in multiple forms such as TV advertisements, websites, direct mail, the media, phone calls, or canvassing, I explicitly focused on campaign stump speeches because they come directly from the candidate (Chapp 2009). A candidate’s identity appeal in a stump speech is intentional and not altered by the media or a spokesperson. A campaign speech is the most direct way a candidate communicates with the public. In order simulate the real campaign environment I formatted the language to reflect a

real campaign speech published on a well-known news source. I attributed the source of publication to C-SPAN because unlike sources such as CNBC, FOX, or NPR, C-SPAN is associated with less political ideological bias. Images of the appeal are located in Appendix A.

While crediting Barak Obama with the rhetoric increases external validity, it is problematic for internal validity. Many respondents hold previously established beliefs toward Barack Obama and the Democratic Party. Since many citizens vote according to their party identification, acknowledging Obama as the speaker may alter how people perceive the appeal (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2011). Additionally, scholars show that people perceive the Democratic Party as “owning” the middle class (Petrocik 1996, Petrocik et al. 2003). Therefore, if a respondent identifies as a Republican, they may be less responsive to the appeal in activating their class identity. While this is important to take into account, it will not impact the conclusions of my study because both the speech with middle class appeal and the speech with no identity appeal are attributed to Obama; therefore, the party of the speaker will impact both the treatment and the control group at the same rate, which would hold my results constant.

*Dependent Variables:*

According to SIT, identities are malleable and impact political attitudes (Huddy 2003). In accordance with the Group Identification Hypothesis, exposure to class-based identity appeals leads respondents to identify with the middle class and feels a stronger sense of connection with the middle class. My dependent variables of subjective class group identification and strength of group identification are measured through survey questions modeled on ANES surveys.

I asked respondents about their identification with four groups: class, religion, political party, and race/ ethnicity. Since class is of the most interest to this study, I asked about it first to

ensure respondents are answering directly after receiving the appeal. According to “question-order effect,” the order in which questions are presented to respondents “may also influence the reliability and validity of answers” (Johnson and Reynolds 2010, 337). I asked about class identity first in order to avoid perceptual contrast, which occurs when “one rating follows another, and the second rating is made in contrast to the first one” (Pasek and Krosnick 2010, 40). For example, a respondent might exhibit perceptual contrast in answering questions about strength of group association.

I operationalized class through subjective means, rather than objective measures. I gave respondents a list of class categories from which to choose: lower class, lower middle class, middle class, upper middle class, upper class, and other (specify). The five class categories are beneficial because “Middle Class” is directly in the middle of the five groups. The “Other” option allows respondents to avoid selecting a choice they feel does not directly reflect their class group. The categories of “Lower Middle Class,” “Middle Class,” and “Upper Middle Class” all contain the phrase “Middle Class,” which might be problematic because respondents who selected one of these three might identify with a category within the middle class; however, the identity appeal was directed toward just the “Middle Class,” therefore only those who select “Middle Class” are considered to identify with the middle class group.

To accompany the closed question of subjective class identification, I used rating questions to measure strength of association with class group and importance of group membership. Rating scale questions are useful because they place respondents on a continuum, which permits comparisons of evaluations (McIntyre and Ryans 1977; Moore 1975; Munson and McIntyre 1979). However, rating scale questions pose problems because “many scale points are not clear and uniformly interpreted by respondents” (Pasek and Krosnick 2010, 36). In other

words, respondents differ in their interpretations of response alternatives (Wilcox, Sigelman, and Cook 1989). In order to produce valid results using a rating scale question, a reasonable number of points must be presented to respondents. For example, the three-point scale gives too few options, and a 99-point scale gives too many options (Pasek and Krosnick 2010). In assessing the most effective number of options to offer respondents, scholars find ratings tend to be more reliable and valid when five points are offered (Pasek and Krosnick 2010; Lissitz and Green 1975). Therefore, I employed a five-point ranking scale to measure strength of group identification by asking, “How glad are you to belong to this group?” and “How important is this group to your sense of who you are?” In the analysis, I combined these two question measures into one all-encompassing descriptor of strength of association. For each respondent, I added the scores of the two questions and divided by two in order to develop an average for strength of group association.

In addition to class identity, I asked questions regarding race, political party, and religion. Previous studies show that these three identities can be very influential in determining political behavior (Huckfeld and Kohfeld 1989; Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2011; Layman 2011; Varveck 2009). Additionally, the alternative questions limit respondents being primed by the middle class questions rather than by the stimuli in answering additional questions.

To accommodate for the limitations of rating questions, I also relied on ranking questions. Since people hold multiple identities (Huddy 2001), I am interested in whether the class identity appeal causes class to become a more important part of one’s identity due to the heightened salience. I therefore asked participants to rank a set of identity groups with whom they might associate. A lower class score in the ranking indicates higher strength of association with the class group. While participant responses sometimes fail to vary in rating questions,

ranking questions require comparisons between multiple groups (Krosnick and Alwin 1988; Krosnick 1999; McCarthy and Schrum 2000). Ranking questions are more time consuming, but responses are “less distorted...and [produce] more reliable and valid results” (Pasek and Krosnick 2010). In the ranking question, the ordering of the groups in each survey was random to minimize the possibility of the data being tainted by the ordering of the identity groups. Table 4 illustrates the wording used in my questions and response options.

Table 4. Dependent Variable Group Identification Survey Questions

Measure:	Question:	Answer:
Strength of Group ID	<b>Class</b>	
	Which class do you identify with the most?	1. Lower class 2. Lower Middle class 3. Middle class 4. Upper Middle class 5. Upper class 6. Other [SPECIFY]
	How glad are you to belong to this class group?	5-point response scale ranging from (1) “not at all glad” to (5) “extremely glad”
	How important is this class group to your sense of who you are?	5-point response scale ranging from (1) “not at all important” to (5) “extremely important”
	<b>Religion</b>	
	Which religion do you identify with the most?	1. Christianity 2. Judaism 3. Islam 4. No Religion 5. OTHER [SPECIFY]
	How glad are you to belong to this religious group?	5-point response scale ranging from (1) “not at all glad” to (5) “extremely glad”
	How important is this religious group to your sense of who you are?	5-point response scale ranging from (1) “not at all important” to (5) “extremely important”
	<b>Political Party</b>	
	Which Political Party do you identify with the most?	1. Republican Party 2. Democratic Party 3. Libertarian Party 4. OTHER [SPECIFY]
	How glad are you to belong to this political party group?	5-point response scale ranging from (1) “not at all glad” to (5) “extremely glad”
	How important is this political party group to your sense of who you are?	5-point response scale ranging from (1) “not at all important” to (5) “extremely important”
	<b>Race</b>	
	Which race or ethnicity do you identify with the most? (Select all that apply)	1. White 2. Black or African American 3. Native American or American Indian 4. Asian / Pacific Islander 5. Latino/ Latina 6. OTHER [SPECIFY]
How glad are you to belong to this racial group?	5-point response scale ranging from (1) “not at all glad” to (5) “extremely glad”	
How important is this racial group to your sense of who you are?	5-point response scale ranging from (1) “not at all important” to (5) “extremely important”	
Strength of Group ID 2	Please consider your membership in each of the four groups listed below, and tell us how important each group membership is in determining your <u>political</u> interests. <b>How important is this group membership in defining your political interests and opinions?</b> Rank the group that is the most important to you as 1, and the least important group as 4. Use your cursor to drag the groups.	1. Class 2. Religion 3. Political Party 4. Race

Additionally, the dependent variable for my second hypothesis is attitudes toward policies. According to SIT, those who receive an identity appeal will be more likely to exhibit in-group favoritism and out-group bias. Therefore, those who receive a middle class identity appeal will hold more supportive attitudes toward economic policies that are perceived to benefit their own group, the middle class. Furthermore, they will also consider those not in the middle class as less deserving, and therefore be less likely to favor policies that benefit those outside the middle class.

I measure these dependent variables through survey questions as illustrated by Table 5. Those who receive the middle class identity appeal will be more likely to agree that middle class Americans deserve a tax break indicating in-group favoritism. Additionally, they will also be more likely to disagree that corporations should receive a tax cut because of out-group bias towards the upper class. Furthermore, members of the middle class are more likely to blame Wall Street bankers than consumers for poor economic conditions.

Americans have certain perceptions of the ideal citizen, and individuals strive to achieve this ideal character, which often can distort survey data. In surveys “respondents may intentionally lie in order to appear more socially desirable, thus manifesting what is called social desirability response bias” (Pasek and Krosnick 2010, 42). Social desirability response bias may distort the results of the survey used in this project. Respondents may feel that it is more socially desirable to favor policies toward the middle class, even if they do not genuinely hold that opinion, due to the value of the middle class in American history (Lewis-Beck 2009). In order to prevent social desirability response bias, this project guarantees that all respondents’ answers will be kept completely confidential and anonymous. Confidential answering has been shown to decrease distortion of responses due to social desirability (Krosnick 1999). Additionally, since

the control group and the treatment group were asked identical questions, social desirability response bias will impact the responses at an equal rate in the comparisons for analysis.

Table 5. Dependent Variable Attitudes Towards Policies Survey Questions

Measure:	Question:	Answer:
Out-group Bias/ In-group Favoritism	<b>How much are the following group to blame for the poor economic conditions of the past several years?</b>	
	Wall Street Bankers	1. A great deal
	Consumers	2. A lot
	The Government	3. A moderate amount
		4. A little
		5. Not at all
	<b>To what extent do you agree with the following statements?</b>	
	Middle Class Americans deserve a tax cut.	1. Strongly agree
	Corporations deserve a tax cut.	2. Agree
	Unskilled workers should receive free job training.	3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
	4. Disagree	
	5. Strongly disagree	

*Control Variables:*

In addition to questions addressing my dependent variables of interest, I asked a series of questions in order to control for other factors that might impact results. I asked respondents to disclose their approval of the president, age, gender, and objective class (through income and education measure). Table 6 details the language of the questions. I asked the control variables last because according to scholars “fatigue may cause respondents to give perfunctory answers to questions late in the survey” (Johnson and Reynolds 2008, 338). I kept my survey brief in order to minimize distortions in data due to respondent fatigue and asked the most relevant questions at the beginning of the survey when respondents are less likely to be affected by fatigue.

Table 6. Control Variables

<b>Indicator:</b>	<b>Question:</b>	<b>Answer:</b>
Presidential Approval	How strongly do you approve of how Barack Obama is handling his job as president?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strongly Approve</li> <li>2. Approve</li> <li>3. Neither disapprove nor approve</li> <li>4. Disapprove</li> <li>5. Strongly disapprove</li> </ol>
Age	How old are you?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 18-24</li> <li>2. 25-34</li> <li>3. 35-44</li> <li>4. 45-54</li> <li>5. 55-64</li> <li>6. 65 and older</li> </ol>
Gender	What is your gender?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Male</li> <li>2. Female</li> <li>3. Other [SPECIFY]</li> </ol>
Income	What was your total household income before taxes during the past 12 months?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Less than \$25,000</li> <li>2. \$25,000 to \$34,999</li> <li>3. \$35,000 to \$49,999</li> <li>4. \$50,000 to \$74,999</li> <li>5. \$75,000 to \$99,999</li> <li>6. \$100,000 to \$149,999</li> <li>7. \$150,000 or more</li> </ol>
Education	What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Less than high school</li> <li>2. High school graduate</li> <li>3. Some college, no degree</li> <li>4. Associate's degree</li> <li>5. Bachelor's degree</li> <li>6. Ph.D.</li> <li>7. Graduate or professional degree</li> </ol>

*Procedures:*

In order to test my hypotheses, I recruited participants through Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). MTurk is an "online web-based platform for recruiting and paying subjects to perform tasks" (Berinsky et al. 2012). MTurk has emerged as a growing tool for data collection in the social sciences because it is inexpensive, allows for rapid data collection, and produces a diverse subject population. Respondents are typically compensated for five minutes of work with approximately 10 cents (Berinsky et al. 2010). Additionally, researchers can collect massive amounts of data within hours due to the rapid nature data collection (Goodman

et al. 2013). Furthermore, MTurk reaches a more diverse sample population than the traditional student, community, or convenience samples, which allows for greater generalizability (Buhrmester et al. 2011; Goodman et al 2013; Berinsky et al. 2010). In fact, Berinsky et al. (2010) find that respondents recruited through MTurk were more representative of the national population than in-person convenience samples. Since this study requires a national representative sample of American citizens, MTurk is the most appropriate tool to employ. My request for survey responses was sent out on February 10, 2016, at 11:30 a.m. and on February 12, 2016, at 7:30 p.m. on MTurk.

In order to avoid priming respondents' identities prior to partaking in the study, I employed mild deception in the title and objectives of the survey. In the context of recruitment the survey description stated: "Read and Respond to a Political Campaign Speech. In the following study, you will be asked to read and respond to a political campaign speech." Since I am particularly interested in class identity, the intentionally vague language restricts identity priming prior to participation in the survey. Due to the mild deception of my study, I sought approval from the College of Wooster's Human Subjects Review Committee.

The title link directed respondents to a Qualtrics survey. Only American citizens were surveyed because this project is interested in political behavior in the United States. First, participants read the consent form and decided whether or not to continue with the experiment. Participants had the option to withdraw from the survey at any point. Once participants agreed to the consent form, they reviewed the campaign speech—half the participants were assigned to the treatment group while the other half were assigned to the control group. Following exposure to the campaign speech, I asked two open-ended questions to test information retention through a manipulation check in order to confirm that respondents read the appeal. I asked: "Who gave

this speech?” and “On what TV network was the speech given?” Only respondents who answered at least one of these questions were included in the data set to insure reliability. Respondents then completed a short survey detailed in Appendix A. Finally, participants were debriefed and paid for participation in the experiment. Participants were compensated with \$0.25- \$.50.

*Plan for Analysis:*

In order to evaluate the impact my independent variable of campaign appeal on my dependent variables of group identification and attitudes toward policies, I rely on descriptive statistics and an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tool for quantitative analysis (Johnson and Reynolds 2008, 481). Descriptive statistics allow me to compare the means between my variables of interest while accounting for the standard deviation. Additionally, the ANOVA method will offer insight into variation between groups. ANOVA statistical analysis “is advantageous for quantitative studies of categorical variables and allows for the comparison of means across groups” (Flanagan 2014, 73). Through ANOVA, I will determine whether the null hypothesis—that the independent and dependent variables have no relationship—can be rejected. The null hypothesis can be rejected if the value of statistical significant is less than 0.10.

### Chapter 3: Results

Based on prior research in political psychology and campaign effects, I predict that reception of a middle class identity appeal will cause individuals to identify with the middle class and have a stronger sense of association with the middle class group. I investigated this relationship through three measures for the dependent variables: subjective class identification, strength of group association, and ranking of social groups. I also predict this relationship will be stronger for those who identify with the middle class. Furthermore, in the second hypothesis, I predict that reception of a middle class identity appeal will make individuals more likely to favor economic policies that are perceived to benefit the middle class and less likely to favor economic policies that are perceived to benefit those outside middle class. I investigated the dependent variable of in-group favoritism through two survey responses: attitudes about blaming consumers for the poor economy and economic policies that are intended to give the middle class a tax break. Similarly, I investigated the dependent variable of out-group bias through similar survey responses regarding attitudes about blaming Wall Street bankers for the poor economy and economic policies that are intended to give corporations a tax cut. In order to evaluate these two hypotheses, I developed a survey experiment that randomly assigned participants to either a middle class identity appeal (the treatment group) or no identity appeal (the control group.)

In the analysis of the data collected from the surveys, I first describe the characteristics of the participants of the sample population. Then I consider the descriptive statistics for the measures of my dependent variables of interest. Finally, I evaluate the variation between the treatment group and the control group in regard to the dependent variables of each of the hypotheses through ANOVA measures. I further rely on ANOVA measures to observe whether

the effects of the treatment are stronger among participants who identified specifically with the middle class.

*Participants:*

This study's population consisted of 271 total participants from Amazon's MTurk; however, 70 responses were not included in the analysis. Participants were excluded when the response to at least one of two manipulation check questions was incorrect (N=54) or the survey response was deemed incomplete (N=16). The first manipulation check question, asking who the speaker was, produced 200 correct responses (73.80%) and 71 incorrect responses (26.20%). The second manipulation check question, which asked on what new network the speech was given, produced 97 correct responses (35.79%) and 174 incorrect responses (64.21%). A total of 83 participants correctly answered both manipulation check questions (30.63%), while 188 failed to correctly answer both (69.37%). Including only those respondents who correctly answered at least one of the manipulation check questions (N=201; 74.17%) helps ensure that participants actually read the appeal, which increases internal validity.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, a total of 201 survey responses, or 74.17%, were included in the final analysis. Within the 201 responses, participants were randomly divided into a control group, who received no identity appeal (N=94), and a treatment group, who received a middle class identity appeal (N=107). The random assignment was beneficial because it ensured equal distribution of participants between treatments and within sample populations (Johnson and Reynolds 2012).

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<sup>11</sup> Since the manipulation check questions refer to details of the appeal, rather than the content of the appeal, I also run ANOVA tests for statistical significance with the entire sample population regardless of whether the correctly answered any manipulation check questions (N=255). The ANOVA tests, however, for the dependent variables of interest did not produce statistically significant results. In other words, the manipulation check standard for inclusion in the data analysis did not alter the results; therefore, in this results section, I include only participants who correctly answered at least one of two manipulation check questions correctly.

The control group consisted of 94 participants (46.8% of the total sample), while the treatment group consisted of 107 participants (53.2% of the total sample).

The demographic identifiers, such as gender, political party identification, age, household income, race, and level of education, of the two sample populations were almost statistically identical. Appendix 2 details the demographic distribution. The random assignment is beneficial because it rules out the effect of other factors such as gender, political party identification, race, age, and education on impacting the results. In terms of gender distribution, a chi-square test for independence reveals that the number of men and women were similar between the two groups ( $\chi^2=0.049$ , 1df,  $p=0.470$ ). A chi-square test for independence “measures the discrepancy between frequencies actually observed and those we would expect to see if there was no population association between the variables” (Johnson and Reynolds 2012). Since the level of significance (p-value) is greater than 0.10, the variation between men and women was not significant. Similarly, a chi-square test for independence indicates minimal variation between political party identification of the two groups ( $\chi^2=2.6716$ , 3df,  $p=0.437$ ). Furthermore, a chi-square test for independence shows little variation between respondents who racially identified as white compared to those who identified as non-white ( $\chi^2=2.000$ , 1df,  $p=0.109$ ). In terms of the ages of the respondents, an independent sample t-test, which compares the means between the two sample populations, reveals that the variation is not significant ( $p=0.140$ ). Similarly, based on an independent sample t-test, the household incomes between the two groups were similar ( $p=0.237$ ). Finally, the variation in levels of education between the two groups was not significant ( $p=0.730$ ). Therefore, the random assignment effectively distributed the two treatments between similar population samples.

*Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variables:*

In order to evaluate the dependent variables of the group identification hypothesis, I used three measures in the survey. Table 7 details the scale of response options, frequency, mean, and standard deviation for each of my variables of interest. I expect that the treatment group respondents will be more likely to identify with the middle class than the control group respondents. Consistent with my prediction, the mean for treatment group respondents ( $Y=2.6822$ ) was higher, indicating that more participants identified with the middle class, when they received the middle class identity appeal, than for the control group respondents ( $Y=2.4894$ ). Additionally, I predict that the strength of class group association will be higher for the treatment group than the control group. I combined the survey questions about gladness (How glad are you to belong to this class group?) and importance (How important is this class group to your sense of who you are?) into one all-encompassing measure of strength of group association. As expected, the mean for strength of association of the treatment group ( $Y=2.4579$ ) was higher than that for the control group ( $Y=2.3118$ ). In a second measure of strength of class group association, I relied on a ranking scale. Ranking a group lower indicates that it is more important. For example, ranking class first would indicate that class is most important. As predicted, the ranking measure revealed a lower mean for the treatment group ( $Y=2.115$ ), than the control group ( $Y=2.3830$ ).

The second hypothesis predicts that those who receive a middle class identity appeal will demonstrate in-group favoritism toward the middle class and out-group bias toward those not in the middle class. Unlike my first hypothesis, the second hypothesis did not produce consistent results based on expectations. Of the four variables I use to operationalize in-group favoritism and out-group bias, only two variables reveal findings in accordance with the expected direction.

As expected, the mean of the treatment group ( $Y=3.6321$ ) for attitudes toward the middle class was higher than the mean of the control group ( $Y=3.6277$ ). In other words, more participants in the treatment group favored an economic policy that would give the middle class a tax break, compared to those in the control group. Unlike attitudes of in-group favoritism, attitudes of out-group bias behaved in opposition to the expected direction. The mean of the treatment group ( $Y=3.7830$ ) was not higher than the mean of the control group ( $Y=3.8830$ ). Similarly, in-group favoritism of economic policies also behaved in the opposite expected direction. The mean of the treatment group ( $Y=3.7429$ ) was not higher than the mean of the control group ( $Y=3.9149$ ). Finally, the economic policies out-group bias measure performed as expected: the mean of the treatment group ( $Y=3.9245$ ) was higher than the mean of the control group ( $Y=3.7766$ ).

The highest possible mean for these dependent variables was five. The means of all four measures of the dependent variables for Hypothesis 2 were above 3.6, which is relatively high. The means in both the treatment group and the control group were high, which indicates the possibility of a ceiling effect. In other words, since the measures of in-group favoritism and out-group bias are already high, there was not much room for them to increase, even with exposure to a middle class identity appeal. With two exceptions, the means of the dependent variables between the control and treatment group are generally in the expected direction. Next, a statistical test of significance using ANOVA will offer more insight into the relationships.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics for Variables of Interest  
Full Sample Across Conditions

			<b>Entire Sample Population</b>	<b>MC Identity Appeal</b>	<b>No Identity Appeal</b>	
<b>Measure</b>	<b>Question Wording</b>	<b>Response Options</b>	Mean (Std. Deviation) Frequency	Mean (Std. Deviation) Frequency	Mean (Std. Deviation) Frequency	
<b>Hypothesis 1: Group Identification</b>	Middle Class Group Association	Which class do you identify with the most?	1. Lower Class 2. Lower Middle Class 3. Middle Class 4. Upper Middle Class 5. Upper Class	2.5920 (0.90705) N=201	2.6822 (0.89651) N=107	2.4894 (0.91281) N=94
	Strength of Class Group Association	How glad are you to belong to this class group?/ How important is this class group to your sense of who you are?	1. Not at all 2. Somewhat 3. Glad/ Important 4. Somewhat 5. Extremely	2.3900 (1.01268) N=200	2.4579 (1.03960) N=107	2.3118 (0.98056) N=93
	Strength of Class Group Ranking	Ranking Question: Rank the group that is most important to you. Ranking of Class	1. Highest 2. 3. 4. Lowest	2.2929 (0.98982) N=198	2.2115 (0.97217) N=104	2.3830 (1.00650) N=94
	Attitudes: In-group Favoritism	How much are the following groups to blame for the poor economic conditions of the past several years?—Consumers (Reverse Rank)	1. A great deal 2. A lot 3. A moderate amount 4. A little 5. Not at all	3.6300 (1.07652) N=200	3.6321 (0.99834) N=106	3.6277 (1.1638) N=94
	Attitudes: Out-group bias	How much are the following groups to blame for the poor economic conditions of the past several years?—Wall Street Bankers	1. Not at all 2. A little 3. A moderate amount 4. A lot 5. A great deal	3.8300 (1.18665) N=200	3.7830 (1.15474) N=106	3.8830 (1.22568) N=94
<b>Hypothesis 2: Attitudes Toward Policies</b>	Economic Policies: In-group Favoritism	To what extent do you agree with the following statements?—Middle class Americans deserve a tax cut.	1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree	3.8241 (0.97142) N=199	3.7429 (1.00027) N=105	3.9149 (0.93509) N=94
	Economic Policies: Out-group bias	To what extent do you agree with the following statements?—Corporations deserve a tax cut. (Reverse Rank)	1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree	3.8550 (1.27361) N=200	3.9245 (1.16862) N=106	3.7766 (1.38466) N=94

Shaded grey indicates the relationship is in the expected direction

*Full Sample Across Conditions ANOVA Analysis:*

The descriptive statistics described in the previous section demonstrated that several of the findings were in the expected direction, but did not illustrate the statistical significance of the relationships. Therefore, in order to draw deeper conclusions about my hypotheses and explain the variations between my groups, I rely on an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), which is a methodological tool that compares the means between groups. ANOVA extrapolates whether “there are any differences among the means,” and which “specific means differ and by how much” (Johnson and Reynolds 2012, 481). Additionally, ANOVA determines “whether the observed differences have arisen by chance or reflect real variations among the categories or groups” (Johnson and Reynolds 2012, 481). Of relevance to this analysis are the F-statistic and the p-value of the ANOVA model. The F-statistic refers to the test statistic of the model. A higher test statistic indicates a stronger relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The p-value is a measure of statistical significance. If the p-value is less than 0.10, then the relationship between the two variables is considered statistically significant. However, if the p-value is greater than 0.10, then the relationship between the two variables is not statistically significant.

The ANOVA measures for the dependent variables of my first group identification hypothesis are illustrated in Table 8. The middle class group association measure produced a test statistic equal to 2.277 and a p-value equal to 0.133. The p-value is close to, but not less than 0.10, so the relationship between the variables is not significant. Regarding the measures of strength of class group, neither the association measure ( $F=1.036$ ,  $p=0.310$ ) nor the ranking measure ( $F=1.485$ ,  $p=0.224$ ) produced significant results. I predicted that exposure to a middle class identity appeal would lead to stronger identification and association with the middle class.

Given these results, I can conclude that the means correspond to the direction of the hypothesis, but are not statistically significantly different from each other.

Table 8. ANOVA Results  
H1: Group Identification Hypothesis (Full Sample Across Conditions)

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Question Wording</b>	<b>F-Statistic</b>	<b>P-value</b>
Middle Class Group Association	Which class do you identify with the most?	2.277	0.133
Strength of Class Group Association	How glad are you to belong to this class group?/ How important is this class group to your sense of who you are?	1.036	0.310
Strength of Class Group Ranking	Ranking Question: Rank the group that is most important to you. (Ranking of Class)	1.485	0.224

*p*<.10+, *p*<.05\*, *p*<.01\*\*, *p*<.001\*\*\*

Table 9 details the ANOVA measures for the dependent variables of my second, attitudes toward policies hypothesis. In analyzing the relationship of a class identity appeal on in-group favoritism, neither the attitude measure ( $F=0.001$ ,  $p=0.977$ ) nor economic measure ( $F=1.560$ ,  $p=0.213$ ) indicates results of significance. Similarly, the relationship of a class identity appeal on out-group bias did not produce significant results for the attitude measure ( $F=0.352$ ,  $p=0.553$ ) or the economic policies measure ( $F=0.671$ ,  $p=0.414$ ). Based on evidence from Social Identity Theory, I predicted that reception of a middle class identity appeal would lead to more favorable attitudes toward economic policies that are perceived to benefit the middle class and less favorable attitudes toward attitudes that are perceived to benefit those outside the middle class. Given the results from the ANOVA tests for significant, I can conclude that the relationship of a middle class identity appeal on in-group favoritism and out-group bias is not statistically significantly different from the control group of no identity appeal.

Table 9. ANOVA Results  
H2: Attitudes Toward Policies Hypothesis (Full Sample Across Conditions)

Measure	Question Wording	F-Statistic	P-value
Attitudes: In-group Favoritism	How much are the following groups to blame for the poor economic conditions of the past several years?—Consumers	0.001	0.977
Attitudes: Out-group bias	How much are the following groups to blame for the poor economic conditions of the past several years?—Wall Street Bankers (Reverse Rank)	0.352	0.553
Economic Policies: In-group Favoritism	To what extent do you agree with the following statements?—Middle class Americans deserve a tax cut.	1.560	0.213
Economic Policies: Out-group bias	To what extent do you agree with the following statements?—Corporations deserve a tax cut. (Reverse Rank)	0.671	0.414

$p < .10$ +,  $p < .05$ \*,  $p < .01$ \*\* ,  $p < .001$ \*\*\*

*Sample of Middle Class Identifiers ANOVA Analysis:*

While the ANOVA analysis of the full sample across conditions did not indicate significant relationships between middle class identity appeals and subjective class group identification for the full sample, it is possible that those who identify with the middle class are more sensitive to class appeals. Thus, I analyzed a sub-category of respondents – those who identified with the middle class—in order to further examine the conditions under which class identity appeals impact individuals. In the smaller sample, I included respondents who identified as middle class (N=96) from both the treatment (N=56) and the control group (N=40). This analysis of the sub-population offered insight into the effects campaign identity appeals might have on individuals who already identify with the middle class.

According to my first hypothesis regarding group identification, those in the treatment group will have a stronger sense of class association than those in the control group. Table 10 details my findings. In accordance with the hypothesis, the mean of class group association strength was higher for the treatment group (Y=2.7500) than the control group (Y=2.4875). However, the ANOVA test for this relationship (F=2.078, p=0.153) does not pass the level of

significance, but comes extremely close, which indicates the potential for some relationship. As the sample population reduces, it becomes more difficult to detect statistical significance; therefore the p-value's proximity to the level of significance is promising. Additionally, of respondents who identified as middle class, those who received the identity appeal ranked class as more important to their political identity ( $Y=2.0364$ ) than those who did not receive an identity appeal ( $Y=2.4250$ ), which corresponds to expectations. Furthermore, the ANOVA test for this variable ( $F=4.081$ ,  $p=0.046$ ) is significant. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between the variables can be rejected. Figure 3 illustrates this statistically significant relationship through a means plot graph.

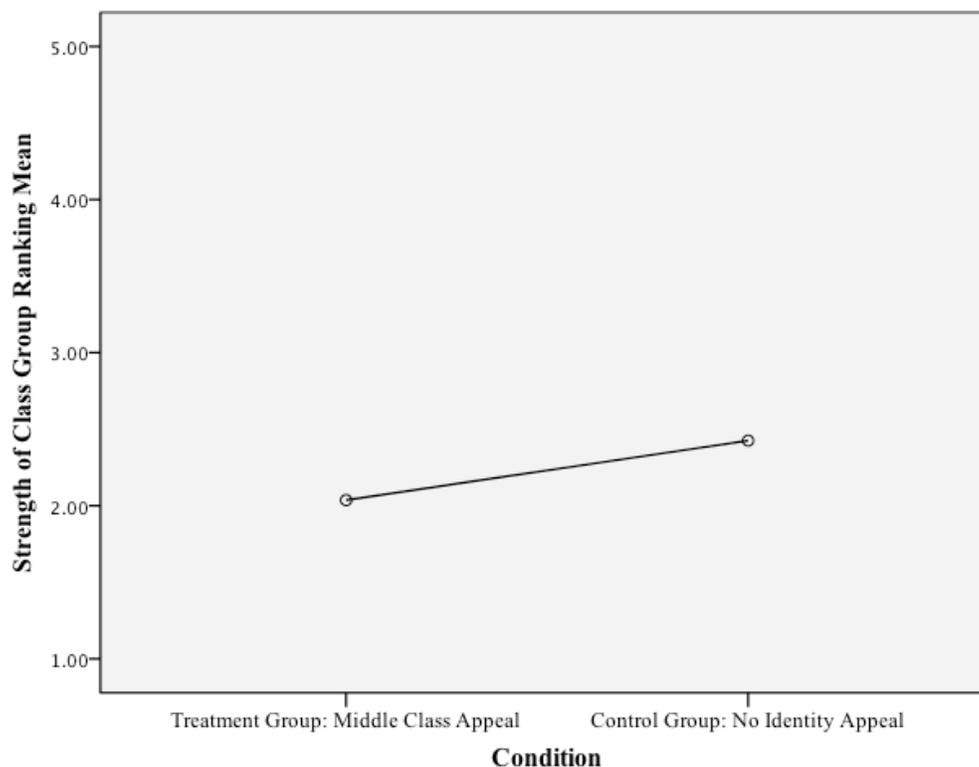
Table 10. ANOVA Results  
H1: Group Identification Hypothesis (Sample of only Middle Class Identifiers)

Measure	Question Wording	All Middle Class Identifiers	MC Identity Appeal	No Identity Appeal	F-Statistic	P-value
Strength of Class Group Association	How glad are you to belong to this class group?/ How important is this class group to your sense of who you are?	2.6406 (0.885) N=96	2.7500 (0.944) N=56	2.4875 (0.780) N=40	2.078	0.153
Strength of Class Group Ranking	Ranking Question: Rank the group that is most important to you. (Ranking of Class)	2.2000 (0.941) N=95	2.0364 (0.922) N=55	2.4250 (0.931) N=40	4.081	0.046*

$p < .10+$ ,  $p < .05^*$ ,  $p < .01^{**}$ ,  $p < .001^{***}$

Shaded grey indicates the relationship is in the expected direction

Figure 3. Means Plot for Strength of Group Association  
Sample of Only Middle Class Identifiers



In other words, those who identify with the middle class are more sensitive to class identity appeals in strengthening group association. According to the first Group Identification Hypothesis, reception of a middle class identity appeal will lead to a stronger sense of association and identification with the middle class. Given these statistically significant results, I can conclude that this relationship holds for those who previously identified with the middle class group. This indicates that middle class identity appeals increase the strength of class group association for individuals who identify with the middle class.

While the sample of only middle class identifiers produced significant results for the dependent variables of the first hypothesis, this sample did not provide any significant results in

regard to the second hypothesis regarding attitudes toward policies that benefit the in-group or out-group. Table 11 illustrates the means, standard deviation, sample size, the F-statistic, and the p-value. Neither in-group favoritism regarding attitudes ( $F=1.331$ ,  $p=0.252$ ) nor economic policies ( $F=0.540$ ,  $p=0.464$ ) were meaningfully impacted by the independent variable. Similarly, neither out-group bias attitudes ( $F=0.191$ ,  $p=0.663$ ) nor out-group bias economic policies ( $F=0.514$ ,  $p=0.475$ ) were substantially affected by the independent variable.

Table 11. ANOVA Results  
H2: Attitudes Toward Policies Hypothesis (Sample of only Middle Class Identifiers)

Measure	Question Wording	All Middle Class Identifiers	MC Identity Appeal	No Identity Appeal	F-Statistic	P-value
Attitudes: In-group Favoritism	How much are the following groups to blame for the poor economic conditions of the past several years?—Consumers	3.6250 (1.079) N=96	3.5179 (0.991) N=56	3.7750 (1.1872) N=40	1.331	0.252
Attitudes: Out-group bias	How much are the following groups to blame for the poor economic conditions of the past several years?—Wall Street Bankers (Reverse Rank)	3.7604 (1.140) N=96	3.8036 (1.052) N=56	3.7000 (1.265) N=40	0.191	0.663
Economic Policies: In-group Favoritism	To what extent do you agree with the following statements?—Middle class Americans deserve a tax cut.	3.9167 (0.937) N=96	3.8571 (0.980) N=56	4.0000 (0.877) N=40	0.540	0.464
Economic Policies: Out-group bias	To what extent do you agree with the following statements?—Corporations deserve a tax cut. (Reverse Rank)	3.7813 (1.224) N=96	3.8571 (1.167) N=56	3.6750 (1.309) N=40	0.514	0.475

$p < .10$ +,  $p < .05$ \*,  $p < .01$ \*\*,  $p < .001$ \*\*\*

Shaded grey indicates the relationship is in the expected direction

Overall, there is not enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis, which claims no relationship exists between the independent and dependent variables, for either hypothesis. Based on prior research, I expected that reception of a middle class identity appeal in presidential campaign speeches would lead to a stronger identification with the middle class group; whereas, no reception of an identity appeal would lead to weak identification with the middle class group.

The data analysis revealed the direction of the relationship was consistent with expectations, but not significant; therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. Additionally, I expected that reception of a middle class identity appeal in presidential campaign speeches would lead to more favorable attitudes toward economic policies that would benefit the middle class; whereas, no reception of identity appeals would lead to less favorable attitudes toward economic policies that would benefit the middle class. The analysis of survey data, however, revealed that these two variables were significantly independent of each other, and therefore the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

The results from the full sample across conditions was not significant; however, the sample population who identified as middle class provided further insight into the social class characteristics of individuals who are most sensitive to the middle class identity appeals. In accordance with the first hypothesis, the strength of class group association among those who identify as middle class was significantly impacted by the middle class identity appeal.

## Chapter 4: Conclusion

This project relied on research from political psychology to investigate the nature of personal class identity in the American political context by focusing on how campaign rhetoric can activate political identity. Specifically, this project asked: how does priming subjective middle class identity in presidential campaign speeches impact conceptions of class-based identity and public attitudes towards economic policies? I established two main hypotheses, which were tested through an experimental survey design method.

The first, group identification hypothesis, suggests that reception of a middle class identity appeal in a presidential campaign speech would lead to a stronger identification and association with the middle class. An ANOVA test for statistical significance demonstrated that the relationship between the variables behaved in the expected direction, but was not statistically significant. A further analysis of only participants who identified with the middle class revealed statistically significant results. Those who identified with the middle class were more sensitive to the middle class identity appeal in affecting their association with the middle class group.

The second, attitudes toward policies hypothesis, expected that reception of a middle class identity appeal in a presidential campaign speech would result in an individual holding more favorable attitudes toward policies than are perceived to benefit the middle class, and less favorable attitudes toward economic policies that are perceived to benefit non-middle class groups. However, an ANOVA test revealed no statistical significance between the variables. In this final chapter, I examine the potential explanations for these results, offer suggestions for future research, and discuss some normative implications.

*Potential Explanations:*

Social class has an extensive history in political theory and American political rhetoric (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). The term “middle class” in the American context is associated with a specific lifestyle, image, and value. In other words, the “middle class” has a connotation that specifically correlates with deep historical definitions and associations. Jackson’s (2005) study on the role of identity in political campaigns created clean artificial identities: the moderate middle, Generation Y, and College Students. Unlike the “middle class,” these group identities were created for the purpose of the experiment, and not associated with historical or political struggles. Like Richard Nixon’s “silent majority,” Bill Clinton’s “soccer moms,” or George W. Bush’s “compassionate conservatives,” the identities in Jackson’s (2005) experimental study were artificially constructed for the electoral context. The clean idea of these identities helped isolate the relationship between identity appeals and group identification, which produced a significant relationship (Jackson 2005). The “middle class,” however, is not a clean idea, but rather associated with deep definitions and connotations; therefore, individuals who received a class-based identity appeal might have been less likely to adopt a stronger sense of class identification or alter their attitudes toward economic policies.

Furthermore, this experimental survey design only captured a participant’s class identity at one point in time, which poses problems for external validity. According to Walsh et al. (2004), over the course of life, “individuals categorize themselves in the same or in different categories” (472). Through a longitudinal study, Walsh et al. (2004) found that the impact of class identity on political opinions is stronger for those who maintained the same class identity over time. In other words, class identity stability is vital in whether class impacts political

opinions. Due to temporal limitations, the current study could only investigate class at one instance of a person's life, which does not reflect the true nature of social class identification.

Another potential explanation stems from the alterations made between the word choice of the treatment group and the word choice of the control group. In order to ensure the only variation between the treatment group and the control group was the language of the speech, I simply replaced all instances of the phrase "middle class" in Obama's actual speech with a non-identity alternate. Therefore, the only variation between the two groups was the language rather than the content of the speech. This leads one to wonder whether variation between the content of the appeals, rather than just the language, would alter the results of the study. Participants were not impacted by the change in "middle class" language, but they might be impacted by a change in the actual content of the speech in referring to middle class ideals and values.

Additionally, the timing of the election cycle could have impacted the results collected in the survey. The survey was released in early February 2016, which coincided with the first primaries of the 2016 American presidential election. The coverage of the 2016 presidential race heightened the salience of electoral politics. Citizens were exposed to news coverage, advertisements, and speeches from 2016 political campaigns. These forms of campaign communications likely contained identity appeals, including class-based identity appeals (Casselmann 2015). With the heightened exposure to campaign materials, including identity appeals, the survey's class identity appeal may have had less of an impact. Additionally, during this time, President Barack Obama was considered a lame-duck president, with waning political influence. The identity appeal in the survey was attributed to Obama in order to increase external validity. However, Obama's speech in the experiment could be perceived as outdated and less politically charged since he is no longer eligible to run for executive office. Moreover,

the class-based identity appeal in the experiment was from the 2012 election season. Since 2012, the campaign rhetoric regarding identity, specifically class-based identity, is likely to have changed.

Furthermore, the participants for this study were recruited through Amazon's MTurk, which was not an identical representation of the national population.<sup>12</sup> The survey sample population consisted of a higher percentage of males (57.4%) compared to the national average (49.1%). Additionally, those between 18 to 44 years old were overrepresented in the sample population (73.5%) compared to the national population (36.5%). Similarly, those who identified as white were overrepresented in the sample population (76.5%) relative to the national population (72%). Even though the demographic distribution was consistent between the control and treatment group, the entire survey sample population consisted of a disproportionate percentage of males, younger people, and white people when compared to the national population.

Moreover, of specific interest to the study of class is the relative consistency of class identification between demographic groups. According to a national survey conducted by the PEW Research Center (N=2,508), 49% of respondents identified as middle class. Similarly, 48% of the survey sample population used in this study (N=201) identified as middle class. Variation occurs, however, between the upper class identifiers of the national survey (32%) and upper class identifiers from the sample population (12%).<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the national sample of lower class identifiers (17%) was much lower than those from the sample population (40%). Thus, lower class identifiers were overrepresented in the sample population compared to the

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<sup>12</sup> All statistics regarding national demographic characteristics come from the 2010 Census website: <http://www.census.gov/topics/population.html>

<sup>13</sup> In order for the data collected in this survey to be comparable to the data collected from the PEW research center, I combined measures for lower class and lower middle class as well as measures for upper class and upper middle class.

national population. Table 12 illustrates these comparisons, as well as more specific demographic breakdowns.

Table 12. Class Breakdown Across National Population and Sample Population

		Upper Class		Middle Class		Lower Class	
		National	Sample	National	Sample	National	Sample
All		32%	12%	49%	48%	17%	40%
Race	White	17%	11.5%	51%	51.2%	31%	37.2%
	Non-white	14.5%	15%	47.5%	38%	36.5%	47%
Gender	Male	19%	16.2%	46%	45.2%	34%	38.4%
	Female	15%	7%	53%	55%	31%	38%
Income	Under -\$49,999	6%	7%	43%	32%	50%	60%
	\$50,000- \$99,999	17%	8%	65%	76%	18%	16%
	Over \$100,000	48%	63%	46%	37%	6%	0%
Education	High school or less	9%	0%	49%	25%	41%	75%
	Some college	14%	7.5%	49%	52.5%	36%	40%
	College Grad	31%	15%	51%	51%	17%	34%

#### *Future Research:*

The relationships between the variables of interest for this study behaved in the expected direction, but were not statistically significant. This indicates there is some relationship into which future research could offer insight. The role of identity in political campaigns should continue to emerge in research agendas for those studying the American political system. Social Identity Theory (SIT) helps explain the role of identity in political campaigns, but like any theoretical framework, SIT does not take into account all possible factors that impact identity's relationship with political behavior (Brown 1999; Hogg 2006). Since individuals possess multiple identities, scholars wonder whether multiple identities can be salient in the same context (Hogg 2006). Additionally, Brewer's (1991) Optimal Distinctiveness Theory argues that individuals desire a need for uniqueness. The size of the identity group might impact the application of theoretical framework. Since approximately 50% of Americans consider

themselves “middle class,” the middle class identity group might be too large of a group to study with SIT. Future research studying class groups should consider adapting SIT to accommodate multiple identities and larger group size.

Furthermore, experimental research designs, including the one employed in this study, are associated with weak external validity. This field of research would benefit from additional methodologies in order to compliment the advantages of experimental research designs. For example, future research might consider field experiments built off the methodology employed by Gerber and Green (2000). Field experiments would increase external validity, while still maintaining the ability to manipulate the independent variable. Moreover, Walsh et al. (2004) found that stability of class identity over time impacts political attitudes; therefore, future research should engage in longitudinal studies.

Additionally, future research using an experimental design should collect data from a larger sample size. Due to monetary and temporal limitations, this study only collected useful data from 201 citizens. While meaningful conclusions can be drawn from 201 responses, a larger sample size would offer more conclusive results. One statistically significant finding from this study was that the impact of middle class identity appeals was stronger on those who identified with the middle class. In other words, those who consider themselves in the middle class are more sensitive to class-based identity appeals when altering their strength of group association. This statistically significant evidence may prompt researchers to explore this finding further. The sample population contained only 96 middle class identifiers; therefore, future research would benefit from a population with a larger number of middle class identifiers in order to draw further conclusions.

*Normative Implications:*

Since 1952, both Democratic and Republican presidential candidates “have allocated increasing rhetorical attention to class matters” (Rhodes and Johnson 2014, 29). With the rising awareness regarding income inequality, class identity has emerged in presidential campaign speech rhetoric as a tool for making class a salient identity. In the current 2016 election environment, candidates make identity appeals to the middle class.<sup>14</sup> The most obvious manifestation of class-based identity appeals comes from Bernie Sanders, who acknowledges that the main issue of his campaign is the middle class. According to a response from Sanders in the March 2016 Democratic debate in Flint, Michigan, “My one issue is trying to rebuild a disappearing middle class. That’s my one issue.”<sup>15</sup> Through his campaign, Sanders’ rhetoric has been characterized by class-based identity appeals, calling on middle class Americans to take part in a “political revolution” against the “billionaire ruling class elite.” In a speech in Vermont after the first primaries, Sanders said, “this campaign is not about electing a president. It’s about making a political revolution. What that revolution is about is bringing millions and millions of people into the political process” (Beckwith 2016a, 3). In a clear exhibition of strengthening group association and out-group bias, Sanders continued, that the revolution happens “when we bring our people together and when we have the courage to stand up to the billionaire class and tell them they can’t have it all. That our government belongs to us, not just the super PACs and wealthy campaign contributors” (Beckwith 2016a, 3). The strength of Sanders’ campaign comes from his class-based messages (Cohn 2016).

On the opposing spectrum of political ideology, Republican candidate Donald Trump’s popularity during the 2016 presidential race can also be understood through his ability to make

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<sup>14</sup> This paper was last updated on March 15, 2016; therefore, the description of the 2016 presidential election only includes information that was available prior to March 15, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/07/us/politics/transcript-democratic-presidential-debate.html>

class-based identity appeals. Trump is particularly popular among the coalition of Republican, white, Christian, and working class Americans (Mason and Davis 2016). Charles Murray (2016) attributes Trump's success to acknowledging the growing disparity between socio-economic classes in America. Recently, the "emergence of a new upper class and a new lower class, [has left] the working class caught in between" (Murray 2016, 2). The entire working class "has legitimate reasons to be angry at the ruling class," and Trump's rhetoric emphasizes "the forgotten class" (Murray 2016, 5). For example, according to Trump's victory speech after the first round of primary elections, "the middle class has been forgotten in our country. [The middle class] helped and...probably was the predominant factor in making our country into a country that we all love so much...but we've forgotten the middle class" (Beckwith 2016b, 3). Trump speaks directly to the anger felt by lower class Americans by making class-based appeals (Mason and Davis 2016). Candidates, such as Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump, make these appeals, but what impact do they have on voters' perceptions, opinions, and behavior?

According to the conclusions drawn from the data collected in this study, reception of a middle class identity appeal is not statistically significant in altering an individual's class identity, strength of class association, or attitudes toward economic policies. A slight variation in campaign speech diction did not significantly alter voters' identities or opinions. In a democracy, it is reassuring that voters are resistant to manipulation by minor changes in identity rhetoric. Despite exposure to class-based identity appeals, citizens' identification with the middle class and their opinions on economic policies remain stable.

However, reception of a middle class identity appeal for middle class identifiers significantly increased their strength of group association with the middle class, which has important implications for electoral politics in a democratic setting. In a 2016 survey collected

by the Tarrance Group, a Republican strategy firm, 70% of the electorate described themselves as middle class (McGurn 2016). In other words, as a majority of the electorate, the middle class identity group could determine the presidential election. Middle class identifiers are more sensitive to class-based identity appeals, which has the potential to impact their voting behavior. Therefore, class-based identity appeals in presidential campaign speeches directed toward middle class identifiers can change strength of group association, which could further impact public attitudes and voting behavior. For example, Bernie Sanders' reliance on class-based identity appeals increased his popularity among citizens who make less than \$50,000 a year. According to a compilation of national surveys from the *New York Times* and CBS News during the Democratic primaries, 47% of middle class voters support Sanders, compared to 39% who support Hillary Clinton. This distinction becomes even starker among states where Sanders' has actively campaigned (Cohn 2016).

During the 1992 presidential election, Bill Clinton's campaign strategist noted, "It's the economy, Stupid," in determining the election winner. In the 2016 presidential election, journalist William McGurn (2016) has observed, "It's the Middle Class, Hillary," in determining the next president. The economy has always been a fundamental determinant of election outcomes (Holbrook, 1996); however, as the salience of economic inequality expands in the minds of the electorate, "middle-class anxiety will define this election (McGurn 2016, 1). Therefore, the battle for the 2016 presidency can be seen as a "battle [to win] the middle class" (Luhby 2016, 1).

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## APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHICS

Descriptive Statistics for Population Samples							
		Entire Sample Population		MC Identity Appeal Population		No Identity Appeal Population	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Distribution		201	100%	107	53.2%	94	46.8%
Gender	Male	117	57.4%	62	59.6%	54	58.1%
	Female	82	40.2%	42	40.3%	39	41.9%
	Missing Data	5	2.5%				
Political Party	Republican Party	56	27.5%	28	26.7%	26	27.7%
	Democratic Party	111	54.4%	62	59%	49	52.1%
	Libertarian Party	15	7.4%	5	4.8%	10	10.6%
	Other	20	9.8%	10	9.5%	9	9.6%
	Missing data	2	1%				
Age	18-24	18	8.8%	11	10.5%	7	7.4%
	25-34	92	45.1%	52	49.5%	40	42.6%
	35-44	40	19.6%	21	20.0%	19	20.2%
	45-54	19	9.3%	8	7.6%	11	11.7%
	55-64	26	12.7%	9	8.6%	15	16.0%
	65 and older	6	2.9%	4	3.8%	2	2.1%
	Missing data	3	1.5%				
Household Income	Less than \$25,000	48	23.5%	20	19.2%	27	28.7%
	\$25,000 to \$34,999	32	15.7%	18	17.3%	14	14.9%
	\$35,000 to \$49,000	27	13.2%	13	12.5%	14	14.9%
	\$50,000 to \$74,999	43	21.1%	27	25.9%	16	16.8%
	\$75,000 to \$99,999	31	15.2%	15	14.4%	15	26.6%
	\$100,000 to \$149,000	12	5.9%	7	6.7%	5	5.3%
	\$150,00 or more	7	3.4%	4	3.8%	3	3.2%
	Missing data	4	2.0%				
Race	White	156	76.5%	77	72%	76	80.9%
	Black or African American	14	6.9%	10	9.4%	4	4.3%
	Native American or American Indian	12	0.5%	1	0.01%	0	0.0%
	Asian or Pacific Islander	1	5.9%	7	6.6%	5	5.3%
	Latino/ Latina	5	2.5%	1	0.01%	4	4.3%
	Other	15	7.4%	10	9.4%	5	5.3%
	Missing data	1	0.5%				
Education	Some high school	1	0.5%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%
	High School graduate	19	9.3%	9	8.6%	10	10.6%
	Some college	40	19.6%	23	21.9%	17	18.1%
	Associate's degree	21	10.3%	9	8.6%	11	11.7%
	Bachelor's Degree	94	46.1%	50	47.6%	43	45.7%
	Post graduate degree	26	12.7%	14	13.3%	12	12.8%
	Missing data	3	1.5%				

## APPENDIX B: SURVEY

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Qualtrics Survey Software

### Consent

#### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY COLLEGE OF WOOSTER

This study aims to investigate reactions to a political news story.

#### Purpose

You are being asked to participate in a research study. We hope to learn more about your reactions to a political campaign speech. Only U.S. citizens are qualified to participate and only U.S. citizens will receive payment.

#### Procedures

If you decide to volunteer, you will be asked to complete a brief survey which should take approximately 10 minutes.

#### Risks

There are no real risks from participating.

#### Benefits

Participants will earn \$.25 on MTurk for their time.

#### Confidentiality

Any information you provide will be held confidential.

#### Cost

There is no cost to you beyond the time and effort required to complete the procedure described above.

#### Right to Refuse or Withdraw

You may refuse to participate in the study. If you decide to participate, you may change your mind about being in the study and withdraw at any point.

#### Questions

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Lois Kimmel at lkimmel16@wooster.edu or my faculty advisor Angie Bos at abos@wooster.edu.

#### Consent

By clicking the link below to proceed to the survey, you are indicating that you have decided to volunteer as a research subject, that you have read and understood the information provided above, and that you are at least 18 years of age.

### US citizen

Are you a US citizen?

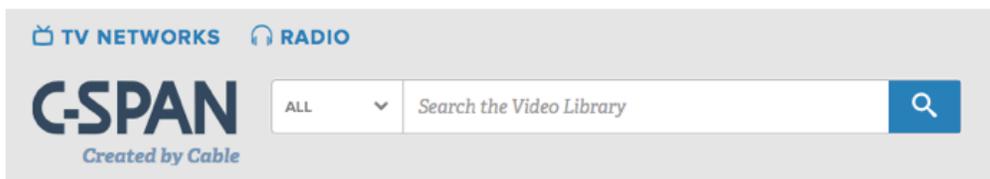
Yes

No

### Instructions

Please read the following excerpt from a political news story.  
After reading the speech, you will be asked a few questions about what you read and how you reacted.

### Stimuli

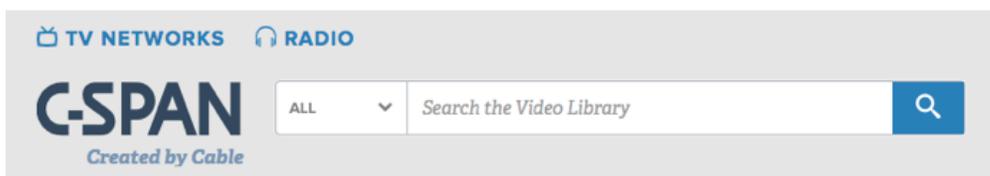

 The header for the C-SPAN video library. It features a navigation bar with "TV NETWORKS" and "RADIO" icons. Below this is the "C-SPAN" logo with the tagline "Created by Cable". To the right is a search bar with a dropdown menu set to "ALL" and the placeholder text "Search the Video Library". A magnifying glass icon is on the right side of the search bar.

**JULY 26, 2012**

## Barack Obama Remarks at a Campaign Rally in Parma, Ohio

“My belief is that I have to participate and fight on behalf of the American citizens that had given me so much, so that the next generation would be able to have those same opportunities. We’ll cut programs that don’t work, and we’ll keep eliminating waste that doesn’t improve prospects for our citizens. What we need is somebody who is out there fighting for citizens and wants to grow the opportunity. And we will grow this opportunity, and we will strengthen America, and we’ll remind the world just why it is that we live in the greatest nation on Earth.

“When I talk about hardworking citizens, I’m also talking about folks who are doing the right thing and trying to improve themselves. And this is also an attitude. It’s not just about income. It’s about knowing what’s important and not measuring your success just based on your bank account. But it’s about your values and being responsible and looking after each other and giving back.”


 This is an identical copy of the C-SPAN video library header described above.

**JULY 26, 2012**

## Barack Obama Remarks at a Campaign Rally in Parma, Ohio

“My belief is that I have to participate and fight on behalf of the middle class that had given me so much, so that the next generation would be able to have those same opportunities. We’ll cut programs that don’t work, and we’ll keep eliminating waste that doesn’t improve prospects for the middle class. What we need is somebody who is out there fighting for the middle class and wants to grow the middle class. And we will grow this middle class, and we will strengthen America, and we’ll remind the world just why it is that we live in the greatest nation on Earth.

“When I talk about middle class, I’m also talking about poor folks who are doing the right thing and trying to get into the middle class. And middle class is also an attitude. It’s not just about income. It’s about knowing what’s important and not measuring your success just based on your bank account. But it’s about your values and being responsible and looking after each other and giving back.”

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**Manipulation Checks**

Please answer the following questions about the excerpt from the news article you just read:

Who gave this speech described in the news article?

On what news network was this speech given?

**Class**

Which class do you identify with the most?

- Lower Class
- Lower Middle Class
- Middle Class
- Upper Middle Class
- Upper Class
- Other

How glad are you to belong to this class group?

- Not at all glad
- Somewhat glad
- Glad
- Very glad
- Extremely glad

How important is this class group to your sense of who you are?

- Not important at all
- Somewhat important
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

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**Religion**

Which religion do you identify with the most?

- Christianity
- Judaism
- Islam
- No Religion
- Other

How glad are you to belong to this religious group?

- Not at all glad
- Somewhat glad
- Glad
- Very glad
- Extremely glad

How important is this religious group to your sense of who you are?

- Not important at all
- Somewhat important
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

**Pol Party**

Which political party do you identify with the most?

- Republican Party
- Democratic Party
- Libertarian Party
- Other

How glad are you to belong to this political party group?

- Not at all glad

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- Somewhat glad
- Glad
- Very glad
- Extremely glad

How important is this political party group to your sense of who you are?

- Not important at all
- Somewhat important
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

### Race

Which race or ethnicity do you identify with the most? (Select all that apply)

- White
- Black or African American
- Native American or American Indian
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Latino/ Latina
- Other

How glad are you to belong to this racial group?

- Not at all glad
- Somewhat glad
- Glad
- Very glad
- Extremely glad

How important is this racial group to your sense of who you are?

- Not important at all
- Somewhat important
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

**ranking groups**

Please consider your membership in each of the four groups listed below, and tell us how important each group membership is in determining your political interests.

**How important is this group membership in defining your political interests and opinions?**

Rank the group that is the most important to you as 1, and the least important group as 4. Use your cursor to drag the groups.

- Race

---

- Political Party

---

- Religion

---

- Class

---

**in group/ out group bias**

How much are the following groups to blame for the poor economic conditions of the past several years?

	Not at all	A little	A moderate amount	A lot	A great deal
Wall Street Bankers	<input type="radio"/>				
Consumers	<input type="radio"/>				
The Government	<input type="radio"/>				

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Middle class Americans deserve a tax cut.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Corporations should receive a tax cut.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unskilled workers should receive free job training.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**demographics**

How strongly do you approve of how Barack Obama is handling his job as president?

- Strongly disapprove
- Disapprove
- Neither disapprove nor approve
- Approve
- Strongly Approve

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What is your age?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 or older

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other (Please list)

What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?

- Some high school
- High school graduate
- Some college
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Post graduate degree

What was your total household income before taxes during the past 12 months?

- Less than \$25,000
- \$25,000 to \$34,999
- \$35,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$149,999
- \$150,000 or more

#### Debrief

Thank you for your participation in this study. The purpose of this investigation is to determine the impact class-based identity appeals in presidential campaign speeches have on individual's sense of identity and attitudes toward economic policies. In

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order to ensure participants' responses reflect that which might occur in the real world, I relied on rhetoric from Barack Obama's 2012 campaign speech, making minor alterations. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Lois Kimmel at [lkimmel16@wooster.edu](mailto:lkimmel16@wooster.edu)

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