

Economic Inequality, the Working Poor and Belief in the American Dream

Supplementary Materials

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- I. Survey Characteristics**
- II. IRB Review**
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I. Survey Characteristics

2016 CCES Pre-Election Module

The 2016 CCES is a nationally representative sample of N=64,600 adult Americans administered by YouGov/Polimetrix. Information about the CCES in general, as well as the 2016 CCES, is available here (<https://cces.gov.harvard.edu/>). The module used in this brief report is a randomly drawn subset of N=1,000 persons from the overall 2016 CCES sample. Respondents in this module are dispersed across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. This module included other unrelated experiments conducted by other researchers sharing the module; as a result, the experiment presented in this report was administered to three fifths (N=592) of the module. Importantly, this module was administered immediately after respondents completed the pre-election common content questionnaire. Thus, key demographic variables used as moderators or controls (e.g., respondent income, education, age, race/ethnicity, employment status or partisanship) were measured pre-treatment.

June 2017 Omnibus Survey

The June 2017 Qualtrics Omnibus Survey is a nationally representative sample of N=1,050 adult Americans conducted between June 15th - July 1st, 2017. Information about Qualtrics Omnibus Surveys is available here (<https://www.qualtrics.com/online-sample/omnibus/>). Each Omnibus survey is compiled using demographic quotas, based on American Community Survey (ACS) census percentages, for national representation on: age, gender, ethnicity, household income, and census region. As such, the June 2017 Omnibus Survey closely approximates the 2015 ACS on many demographic dimensions, and in several cases, is much closer to national percentages than commonly used surveys such as the 2016 American National Election Study. Respondents in the June Omnibus Survey are dispersed across 47 states and the District of Columbia.

II. IRB Review

This experiment was reviewed by the institutional review board at the University of [ANONYMOUS] (HS-16-145) and deemed exempt as it did not involve the use of deception and met the criteria for minimal risk to participants.

III. Treatment Scripts

Control

Every year, the U.S. Census Bureau conducts a survey of Americans, called the American Community Survey. The 2015 American Community Survey is now available, and it offers a picture of what the typical American city looks like. The following are some of the key findings of the survey:

- The average city in the U.S. houses nearly 718,000 people, with the smallest city having 54.5 thousand residents and the largest metropolitan area housing roughly 20 million residents
- In the average city roughly 71 percent of residents are White, 10 percent are Black, 12 percent are Latino/a, and 3 percent are Asian.

Inequality

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- The average city in the U.S. houses nearly 718,000 people, with the smallest city having 54.5 thousand residents and the largest metropolitan area housing roughly 20 million residents
- In the average city roughly 71 percent of residents are White, 10 percent are Black, 12 percent are Latino/a, and 3 percent are Asian.
- One of the most striking findings of the survey is the amount of income inequality that exists in many towns and cities throughout the country. For example, in the typical city in 2015, it is not uncommon to find neighborhoods where the bottom 20% of residents earn annual incomes below \$25,000 per year while the top 20% earn annual incomes above \$150,000. Thus, the typical American city contains visibly unequal neighborhoods, where the “haves” and the “have-nots” live in plain view of one another.

InequalityWP

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- The average city in the U.S. houses nearly 718,000 people, with the smallest city having 54.5 thousand residents and the largest metropolitan area housing roughly 20 million residents
- In the average city roughly 71 percent of residents are White, 10 percent are Black, 12 percent are Latino/a, and 3 percent are Asian.
- One of the most striking findings of the survey is the amount of income inequality that exists in many towns and cities throughout the country. For example, in the typical city in 2015, it is not uncommon to find neighborhoods where the bottom 20% of residents earn annual incomes below \$25,000 per year while the top 20% earn annual incomes above \$150,000. Moreover, among the individuals earning low incomes, many are classified as “working poor,” in that these individuals work full-time jobs but still earn incomes at or below the poverty line. Thus, the typical American city contains visibly unequal neighborhoods, where the “haves” and the “have-nots” live in plain view of one another.

V. Supplementary Results Tables

Table S1. Sample Demographics and Comparisons

	2015 ACS	2016 ANES	2016 CCES	2016 CCES Module	2017 Qualtrics Omnibus
Female	50.8%	52.3%	54.3%	53%	51.0%
HS Degree or Higher	87.1%	93.1%	96.5%	97.0%	98.0%
BA or Higher	30.6%	39%	36.2%	36.5%	45.8%
White	61.5%	71.1%	71.6%	74.4%	68.3%
Black	12.3%	9.3%	12.3%	12.0%	12.3%
Hispanic	17.6%	10.5%	8.1%	6.2%	13.2%
Asian	5.3%	3.5%	3.5%	2.8%	3.1%
Median Age	37.8	49	49	48	41
Median Income	\$55,775	\$50-59K	\$50-59K	\$50-59K	\$50-75K
Unemployed	6.3%	5.2%	5.5%	6.2%	5.8%
Democrat	-	34%	38.5%	38.4%	40.0%
Independent	-	32%	28.2%	28.5%	26.3%
Republican	-	28.8%	23.7%	24.0%	29.6%
Northeast	17.5%	16.4%	20.0%	20.2%	18.4%
Midwest	21.1%	23.4%	22.4%	22.0%	21.4%
South	37.7%	38.2%	36.6%	36.2%	37.1%
West	23.7%	22%	21.0%	21.6%	23.1%

Table S2. Effect of Experimental Treatments on Belief in Meritocracy

	2016 CCES Module			2017 Qualtrics Omnibus			Combined Surveys		
Treatments									
<i>Inequality</i>	-.027	(.028)	[.331]	-.003	(.021)	[.877]	-.011	(.017)	[.503]
<i>InequalityWP</i>	-.047^	(.027)	[.084]	-.036^	(.020)	[.079]	-.040*	(.016)	[.015]
Intercept	.593	(.019)	[.000]	.621	(.014)	[.000]	.611	(.011)	[.000]
N	591			1,050			1,641		

Source: 2016 CCES Module and 2017 Qualtrics Omnibus Survey

Notes: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses and p-values in brackets. Estimated in the software package Stata®. Reported p-values are based on two-tailed tests.

Table S3. Effect of Experimental Treatments on Belief in Meritocracy

Table B5. Effect of Experimental Treatments on Belief in Meritocracy									
	2016 CCES Module			2017 Qualtrics Omnibus			Combined Surveys		
Treatments									
<i>Inequality</i>	-.187	(.185)	[.310]	-.035	(.137)	[.798]	-.083	(.110)	[.452]
<i>InequalityWP</i>	-.326	(.176)	[.064]	-.223	(.134)	[.096]	-.261	(.107)	[.014]
Thresholds									
Cut 1	-3.040	(.211)		-3.006	(.161)		-3.016	(.128)	
Cut 2	-1.318	(.141)		-1.613	(.112)		-1.495	(.088)	
Cut 3	.149	(.129)		-.019	(.098)		.042	(.078)	
Cut 4	1.567	(.150)		1.425	(.110)		1.473	(.088)	
N	591			1,050			1,641		

Source: 2016 CCES Module and 2017 Qualtrics Omnibus Survey

Notes: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients from ordered logit regression models with standard errors in parentheses and p-values in brackets. Estimated in the software package Stata®. Reported p-values are based on two-tailed tests.

Table S4. Conditional Effect of Experimental Treatments on Belief in Meritocracy by Respondent Racial Prejudice (*FIRE Scale*)

Treatments			
<i>Inequality</i>	.014	(.052)	[.792]
<i>InequalityWP</i>	-.015	(.050)	[.766]
Moderator			
<i>FIRE Scale</i>	.269	(.083)	[.001]
Interactions			
<i>Inequality</i> × <i>FIRE</i>	-.131	(.124)	[.290]
<i>InequalityWP</i> × <i>FIRE</i>	-.101	(.119)	[.396]
Intercept	.512	(.035)	[.000]
N		495	

Source: 2016 CCES Module

Notes: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses and p-values in brackets. Estimated in the software package Stata®. Reported p-values are based on two-tailed tests. The *FIRE Scale* is based on the items proposed by DeSante and Smith (2020) that were included in the 2016 Post-Election Common Content Questionnaire (CC16_422c-CC16_422f). While the *FIRE Scale* was measured post-treatment, neither treatment exerted significant effects on this measure (see Table S5 below), which alleviates concern about usage of this post-treatment moderator introducing bias (Montgomery, Nyhan and Torres 2018).

Table S5. Effect of Experimental Treatments on Respondent Racial Prejudice (*FIRE Scale*)

Treatments			
<i>Inequality</i>	.004	(.027)	[.875]
<i>InequalityWP</i>	.005	(.026)	[.843]
Intercept	.342	(.019)	[.000]
N		495	

Source: 2016 CCES Module

Notes: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses and p-values in brackets. Estimated in the software package Stata®. Reported p-values are based on two-tailed tests. The *FIRE Scale* is based on the items proposed by DeSante and Smith (2020) that were included in the 2016 Post-Election Common Content Questionnaire (CC16_422c-CC16_422f).

Table S6. Effect of Experimental Treatments on Belief in Meritocracy

	Whites Respondents			Non-White Respondents		
Treatments						
<i>Inequality</i>	-.019	(.019)	[.322]	.004	(.031)	[.884]
<i>InequalityWP</i>	-.035	(.019)	[.071]	-.049	(.029)	[.099]
Intercept	.636	(.014)	[.000]	.553	(.021)	[.000]
N	1,149			492		

Source: Combined 2016 CCES Module and 2017 Qualtrics Omnibus Survey

Notes: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses and p-values in brackets. Estimated in the software package Stata®. Reported p-values are based on two-tailed tests.

Table S7. Conditional Effect of Experimental Treatments on Belief in Meritocracy by Respondent Income

Treatments			
<i>Inequality</i>	-.024	(.038)	[.535]
<i>InequalityWP</i>	-.101	(.037)	[.007]
Moderator			
<i>Income (quintiles)</i>	.032	(.008)	[.000]
Interactions			
<i>Inequality × Income</i>	.006	(.011)	[.584]
<i>InequalityWP × Income</i>	.021	(.011)	[.056]
Intercept	.513	(.027)	[.000]
N		1,569	

Source: Combined 2016 CCES Module and June 2017 Qualtrics Omnibus Survey

Notes: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses and p-values in brackets. Estimated in the software package Stata®. Reported p-values are based on two-tailed tests. Conditional marginal effects were estimated for Figure 2 using the “margins” package in Stata®.

Table S8. Effect of Assignment to Control and *InequalityWP* Conditions on Belief in Meritocracy among Low-Income Respondents

Treatments			
<i>Control</i>	.004	(.041)	[.913]
<i>InequalityWP</i>	-.096	(.039)	[.015]
Intercept	.545	(.029)	[.000]
N		314	

Source: Combined 2016 CCES Module and June 2017 Qualtrics Omnibus Survey, only respondents in the lowest (1st) income quintile

Notes: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses and p-values in brackets. Estimated in the software package Stata®. Reported p-values are based on two-tailed tests.

Table S9. Conditional Effect of Experimental Treatments on Belief in Meritocracy by Respondent Partisanship

Treatments			
<i>Inequality</i>	-.034	(.024)	[.159]
<i>InequalityWP</i>	-.055	(.023)	[.015]
Moderator			
<i>Party ID</i>	.109	(.027)	[.000]
Interactions			
<i>Inequality</i> × <i>Party ID</i>	.034	(.038)	[.375]
<i>InequalityWP</i> × <i>Party ID</i>	.037	(.038)	[.320]
Intercept	.564	(.016)	[.000]
N		1,641	

Source: Combined 2016 CCES Module and June 2017 Qualtrics Omnibus Survey

Notes: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses and p-values in brackets. Estimated in the software package Stata®. Reported p-values are based on two-tailed tests.

Table S10. Conditional Effect of Experimental Treatments on Belief in Meritocracy by Respondent Income, with covariates

Treatments			
<i>Inequality</i>	-.031	(.037)	[.409]
<i>InequalityWP</i>	-.090	(.036)	[.012]
Moderator			
<i>Income (quintiles)</i>	.022	(.008)	[.010]
Interactions			
<i>Inequality × Income</i>	.007	(.011)	[.497]
<i>InequalityWP × Income</i>	.020	(.011)	[.069]
Controls			
<i>Education</i>	.013	(.005)	[.010]
<i>Age</i>	.002	(.000)	[.000]
<i>Male</i>	.020	(.014)	[.149]
<i>Black</i>	-.017	(.021)	[.433]
<i>Latinx</i>	.025	(.022)	[.257]
<i>Asian</i>	.024	(.038)	[.531]
<i>Party ID</i>	.060	(.008)	[.000]
Intercept	.272	(.040)	[.000]
N		1,569	

Source: Combined 2016 CCES Module and June 2017 Qualtrics Omnibus Survey

Notes: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses and p-values in brackets. Estimated in the software package Stata®. Reported p-values are based on two-tailed tests.

Table S11. Conditional Effect of Experimental Treatments on Belief in Meritocracy by Employment Status for Low-Income Respondents

Treatments			
<i>Inequality</i>	-.006	(.050)	[.911]
<i>InequalityWP</i>	-.090	(.048)	[.063]
Moderator			
<i>Employed</i>	-.022	(.069)	[.749]
Interactions			
<i>Inequality × Employed</i>	.011	(.091)	[.900]
<i>InequalityWP × Employed</i>	-.017	(.088)	[.846]
Intercept	-.006	(.050)	[.911]
N		314	

Source: Combined 2016 CCES Module and June 2017 Qualtrics Omnibus Survey, only respondents in the lowest (1st) income quintile

Notes: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients from OLS regression models with standard errors in parentheses and p-values in brackets. Estimated in the software package Stata®. Reported p-values are based on two-tailed tests.

Table S12. Indirect Effect of Experimental Treatments on Preference for Government Reduction of Inequality

	Mediator: <i>Belief in Meritocracy</i>	Outcome: <i>Government Should Reduce Inequality</i>
Treatments		
<i>Inequality</i>	-.009 (.017)	-.001 (.028)
<i>InequalityWP</i>	-.040* (.016)	-.023 (.029)
Mediator		
<i>Belief in Meritocracy</i>		-.491*** (.043)
Constant	.611 (.012)	.887 (.033)
ACME		.019
		95% CI: [.004, .037]
Direct Effect		-.002
		95% CI: [-.062, .053]
Total Effect		.017
		95% CI: [-.044, .073]
% Mediated		.485
N	1,635	1,635

Source: Combined 2016 CCES Module and 2017 Qualtrics Omnibus Survey

Notes: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients and standard errors estimated using the “medeff” package in Stata®.

^p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 Reported significance levels are based on two-tailed tests.