

## **Values Voters: The Conditional Effect of Income on the Relationship Between Core Values and Political Attitudes and Behavior**

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*The postmaterialism thesis contends that newer cultural and social justice issues will supplant traditional, class-based economic concerns as societies become increasingly wealthy. Although macrolevel evidence broadly supports this prediction, individual-level evidence for the theory in the United States has been sparse. Moreover, alternative theories predict that postmaterialism will not travel well to the American context because religious cleavages that divide the major parties will be most salient. We test the postmaterialism thesis at the individual level using unique data that enable us to evaluate citizens' value-preference structures across income levels, as well as the conditional effect of income on the relationship between individuals' ranked value preferences and political attitudes and behavior. Consistent with the theory, greater income strengthens the association between egalitarianism and ideology, partisanship, evaluations of President Obama, and presidential vote choice, and weakens the relationship between moral traditionalism and these same variables. However, income does not moderate the association between economic security and individuals' identities, evaluations, or behavior. Additionally, value-preference hierarchies are quite similar across income groups after controlling for partisanship and ideology. The results lend insight into the nature of value- and income-based cleavages in American politics.*

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Ronald Inglehart's theory of postmaterialism suggests that Western societies are undergoing a values revolution in which fundamental concerns regarding economic security are being eclipsed by newer, cultural issues such as social equality—including LGBT and women's rights—energy, nuclear disarmament, and environmentalism (Abramson & Inglehart, 1995; Inglehart, 1977, 1997; Inglehart & Abramson, 1994). These newer, nonmaterial issues are argued to flourish because individuals residing in "postindustrial" societies have gained sufficient wealth to focus on other concerns involving broader threats to human health and satisfaction. Despite occasionally vociferous criticism, the core

postmaterialist prediction largely has been supported at the macro level—cultural issues are more important to political competition in Western Europe and the United States now than in the past (e.g., Kriesi et al., 2006; Layman & Carmines, 1997). However, individual-level tests of the theory in the United States have been sparse (but see Davis, 2000), and none of which we are aware directly measure the conditional effect of personal income on the relationship between individuals' political value orientations and political attitudes and behavior.

In this article, we offer such a test using a unique dataset in which respondents are asked to rank the importance of several culturally prominent core values—egalitarianism, economic security, freedom, law & order, and moral traditionalism—using the method of triads. This method is a superior measurement alternative to traditional value-importance ratings because it reflects the inherently “comparative and competitive” nature of human values. As Ciuk and Jacoby note (2015), “It is the *relative* importance of the set of relevant values that guides action” (p. 709). The method of triads is thus faithful to psychological theories of human values because the approach requires respondents to make a series of explicit comparisons, ultimately producing a complete set of rank-ordered preferences for each respondent.

Our analysis proceeds as follows: First, we construct a geometric model of value preferences using the technique described by Jacoby (2014) in order to understand better how value preferences vary across income groups. Evaluating whether value structures differ among low- and high-income individuals is valuable given research showing that the policy preferences of the wealthy diverge from those of other citizens, as well as that the wealthy are better represented in national and state government (Bartels, 2009; Bonica, McCarty, Poole, & Rosenthal, 2013; Ellis, 2012; Rigby & Wright, 2013; but see Branham, Soroka, & Wlezien, 2016; Wlezien & Soroka, 2011). Moreover, if value structures vary with income, then the postmaterialism thesis is supported—that is, the rich and poor cherish fundamentally different ideals. Interestingly, we find that Americans' value-preference structures are in fact quite similar across income groups when controlling for ideology and partisanship. That is, low-, middle-, and high-income individuals within partisan and ideological groups exhibit no significant differences in their complete set of rank-ordered value preferences.

Second, we test the postmaterialism thesis regarding income's role in shaping how individuals *relate* their ranked value preferences to the political realm. If postmaterialism represents a consequential posture for mass public attitudes and behavior in the United States even though income does not influence the *structure* of citizens' value preferences, then income should moderate the relationship between core values and political attachments, performance judgements, and vote choice. Specifically, the relationship between one's preference for both economic security and moral traditionalism—capturing a materialist concern for how individuals order their lives— and political predispositions and vote choice should weaken as income rises. Conversely, greater household income should strengthen the connection between egalitarianism and political attitudes and behavior. Here, we find mixed support for the postmaterialism thesis: The postmaterialist value of equality is more strongly related to ideology, partisanship, and candidate appraisal and choice as one's income rises, and the association between moral traditionalism and these variables decreases as income rises, but the relationship between a preference for the value of economic security and these political variables does not vary across income levels. The results testify to the nuanced connection between income and political orientations in the American electorate and illuminate postmaterialism's unique role at the individual level in U.S. politics.

### Core Values and Political Attitudes

Core values are general, abstract, and trans-situational beliefs about humanity and society (e.g., Rokeach, 1973; Rokeach & Ball-Rokeach, 1989; Schwartz, 1992, 1994). As values reflect individuals' beliefs about the desirable and undesirable end states of human existence (e.g., Rokeach, 1973;

Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987), they theoretically should underlie individuals' "policy preferences, performance judgments, and candidate assessments" (Feldman, 1988, p. 418; see also Feldman, 2003; Goren, 2001, 2012; Jacoby, 2006; Kuklinski, 2001; Peffley & Hurwitz, 1985).

Substantial evidence demonstrates that core political values influence a range of political attitudes. For example, equality shapes attitudes toward social welfare programs, (Feldman & Steenbergen, 2001; Goren, 2004; Jacoby, 2006), racial questions (Kinder & Sanders, 1996), and campaign finance reform (Grant & Rudolph, 2003), and it also relates to candidate evaluations (Doherty, 2008) and partisan attachments (Keele & Wolak, 2006; Layman & Carmines, 1997; Lupton, Singh, & Thornton, 2015; Lupton, Smallpage, & Enders, in press). Economic security affects attitudes toward the broader social welfare state (Abramson & Inglehart, 1995; Hochschild, 1995; Rossiter, 1962). And, moral traditionalism shapes attitudes toward cultural issues such as gay rights and abortion (Brewer, 2003; Craig, Martinez, Kane, & Gainous, 2005; Weisberg, 2005; Wilcox & Wolpert, 1996, 2000), and it also relates to party identification (Keele & Wolak, 2006; Layman, 2001; Miller & Shanks, 1996). This substantial and growing body of literature highlights the pervasive effect of core values on individuals' orientations toward the political world.

Although core values' basic consequences for political attitudes and behavior are now well understood, the structure of citizens' value hierarchies—and the potentially different patterns of value deployment across individual-level characteristics—remains underexplored. Earlier evidence depicted an American cultural consensus regarding the importance of at least some values (Dahl, 1989; Devine, 1972; McClosky & Zaller, 1984), but recent work indicates that in fact substantial heterogeneity exists in the mass public's value hierarchies (Jacoby, 2006, 2014). Specifically, Jacoby (2014, p. 769) finds that these differences in value rankings are "explicitly partisan (in) nature"—Democrats and Republicans prioritize markedly divergent values. Whereas Democrats and self-identified liberals highly value equality and economic security, Republicans and conservatives place a premium on moral traditionalism and social order (Jacoby, 2014, pp. 765–766). The postmaterialism thesis provides us with reason to believe that value disagreements extend to other social and political distinctions, namely income groups. Our twofold goal in this article is to investigate whether value structures differ across personal income categories and if income conditions how individuals relate their values to political attitudes and vote choice.

### **Theoretical Framework: Postmaterialism in the United States**

Inglehart's postmaterialism thesis holds that a society's priorities change as its wealth increases (e.g., Inglehart, 1971, 1997; Inglehart & Abramson, 1994). Unprecedented economic gains and physical security in postindustrial societies, the theory argues, provide opportunities for citizens residing in these societies to address broader quality-of-life issues such as social and political equality, environmental and racial justice, and the free expression of ideas (Inglehart, 1971, 1977, 1990, 1997; Inglehart & Abramson, 1994, 1999). However, Inglehart and other proponents of this modernization theory acknowledge that cultural and religious traditions unique to particular societies may limit or stall shifts from material to postmaterial values, a caveat relevant to the United States.

As Inglehart and Baker write (2000), "In fact, the United States is a deviant case, having a much more traditional value system than any other advanced industrial society. On the traditional/secular dimension, the United States ranks far below other rich societies, with levels of religiosity and national pride comparable to those found in developing societies" (p. 32). Although some criticism of the standard postmaterialism battery as it applies to the United States centers on measurement issues (e.g., Davis, 2000; Davis & Davenport, 1999), the substantive theoretical critique is that postmaterialism is not a salient cleavage in the American context precisely because religion plays a prominent role in many citizens' lives (Raymond, 2011; Wald & Calhoun-Brown, 2014).

Scholars in this tradition argue that to the extent that the historical economic basis of political contestation is supplanted in the United States, controversies regarding the importance of traditional values will take its place (Layman & Carmines, 1997). Indeed, religious traditionalism plays a larger role in determining Americans' political attitudes in more recent time periods (Layman, 1997, 2001; Layman & Carmines, 1997; Olson & Warber, 2008), and the importance of social issues has also increased over time (Abramowitz, 1995; Bafumi & Shapiro, 2009). The persistence of religiosity and the emergence of the religious versus secular divide relating to political competition thus suggests that core value differences in the United States will not conform to postmaterialist expectations, meaning that one would not expect either the structure or political use of value preferences to differ across income levels. Given the endurance of religiosity in American life, we would not expect high-income earners, for example, to move uniformly away from traditionalist values if they also maintain their religious mooring. On the other end of the income distribution, some accounts show that Republican moral rhetoric appeals to working-class voters who might otherwise be expected to support Democratic economic policies (e.g., Prasad, Hoffman, & Bezila, 2016). Put differently, this evidence implies that the salient attitudinal and behavioral cleavages among the mass public should be partisan, ideological, and religious, rather than income-based.

However, other literature predicts that income is a prominent source of division in the American electorate. For example, ideological constraint is greatest among those with higher incomes (e.g., Baldassarri & Gelman, 2008). Moreover, evidence shows that wealthier citizens are consistently and significantly more likely to oppose social welfare spending relative to other citizens (Gilens, 2009; Hacker & Pierson, 2011; Page, Bartels, & Seawright, 2013), demonstrating the presence of income-based divisions in attitudes toward central issues in American politics. Similarly, income predicts more liberal attitudes toward hot-button cultural issues such as abortion, stem cell research, and gay marriage (Gilens, 2009). Malka, Lelkes, Srivastava, Cohen, and Miller (2012) also note that the relationship between religion and ideology is influenced by one's engagement with politics—which is itself correlated with income—further suggesting that income shapes Americans' political attitudes and beliefs.

Based on this evidence, we hypothesize, consistent with the postmaterialism thesis, that egalitarianism will relate strongest to political variables among those with higher household incomes. Conversely, we expect that the connection between economic security and moral traditionalism, two older, materialist sources of political attitudes, to political identities, evaluations, and vote choice will diminish among these individuals. We first test our theory by investigating the structure of Americans' value preferences among low-, middle-, and high-income citizens, and then we examine the relationship between each variable and partisan and ideological self-identifications, presidential approval, and vote choice in the 2008 presidential elections across income groups.

### Measuring Values

The data used to test our hypotheses come from a 2010 Time-Sharing Experiments in the Social Sciences (TESS) study.<sup>1</sup> Included in the study are respondents' rank-ordered preferences of five American core political values, partisan and ideological identifications, presidential approval, vote choice in the 2008 election, and demographics, including income, our hypothesized moderating variable of interest. A total of 1,268 respondents completed the survey, but because the experimental element of the survey involved value measurement, we focus our analyses on the 628 respondents whose value preferences were collected using the method of triads.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> NSF Grant 0818839, Jeremy Freese and Penny Visser, Principal Investigators.

<sup>2</sup> Half of the respondents' value preferences were measured with traditional rating measures, and half were measured with the method of triads.

The five core values included in the survey are freedom, equality, economic security, law & order, and moral traditionalism.<sup>3</sup> Freedom and equality are central tenets of classical liberalism and the American welfare state (Devine, 1972; McClosky & Zaller, 1984). Freedom captures the enduring national belief that the government ought not to instruct one on what to think or how to act, and equality represents a paradigmatic postmaterialist concern for the equal treatment and equal rights of one's fellow citizens. Economic security is a fundamentally materialist value reflecting individuals' perceptions of socioeconomic challenges in industrial and post-industrial societies (Hochschild, 1995; Inglehart & Abramson, 1994; Rossiter, 1962). Law & order became associated with various issues—e.g., urban unrest, drugs, crime, race, and so on—that rose to prominence during the 1970s and 1980s (Nie, Verba, & Petrocik, 1979; Scammon, 1992). And, most issues associated with the “culture war” invoke moral traditionalism (Brewer, 2003; Fiorina, Abrams, & Pope, 2010; Koleva, Graham, Iyer, Ditto, & Haidt, 2012), which captures one's materialist preoccupation with how one's fellow citizens order their lives: Moral traditionalists value all members of society adhering to conventional, restrictive behavioral norms.

Respondents who were given the “triads” battery were shown a series of 10 screens. On each screen was a distinct combination of three values (i.e., a triad) from which respondents chose the most and least important. The order in which the triads appeared varied randomly. Upon choosing the most and least important values in a triad, respondents moved onto the next screen and were not allowed to page back. Respondents were not offered a “do not know/cannot choose” option, but they could skip a given triad (or part of a triad) if they decided to do so unprompted. Upon completion of the survey, each respondent's full list of rank-ordered value preferences was calculated. Individuals' preferences on each value were coded on a 1–5 scale where 1 indicates the value is the least important in the set and 5 indicates the value is the most important. Ties exist in the data such that if two values tied for the top spot in one's rank-ordered preference list, each value was given a score of 4.5.

We focus on respondents for whom value preferences are measured with the method of triads for two reasons. First, unlike traditional rating procedures, the method of triads captures the “comparative and competitive” nature of values (Rokeach, 1973) insofar as it forces respondents to choose between two (or more) values that may be important guiding principles in everyday life.<sup>4</sup> Second, data collected with the method of triads empirically outperforms data collected with traditional rating procedures (Ciuk & Jacoby, 2015). Additionally, we wish to note that ranking procedures have gained popularity in recent years among scholars exploring the links between value preferences and political behavior (Davis & Silver, 2004; Jacoby, 2014; Swedlow & Wyckoff, 2009; see Feldman, 2003 for an incisive review and discussion of the issue).<sup>5</sup>

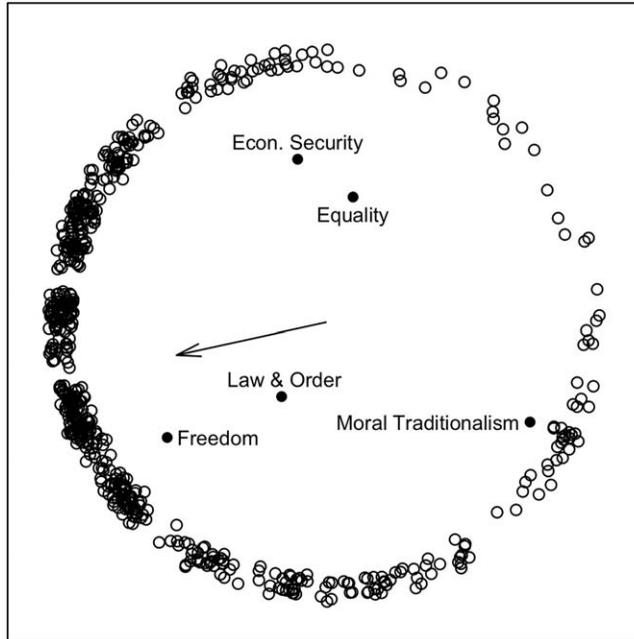
### Examining Value Structures

Our first question concerns the extent to which rank-ordered value preferences differ by income category when controlling for ideology and partisanship. To answer this question, we fit a geometric model of value preferences to respondents' rank-ordered preference data using the technique

<sup>3</sup> The question wording for the five political values is provided in the online supporting information.

<sup>4</sup> Although some research casts doubt on the reliability and validity of ranking procedures (e.g., Bernard, Maio, & Olson 2003; Maio & Olson 1998; Maio, Roesse, Seligman, & Katz 1996), other research suggests that individuals' value choices are remarkably structured, stable, and transitive (Ciuk & Jacoby 2015; Jacoby 2006). We discuss this debate at greater length in the conclusion.

<sup>5</sup> Although we argue that the triad method is best for examining citizens' value-preference structures, we also acknowledge the merits of forced-choice values questions—such as those featured on the American National Election Studies (ANES) egalitarianism and moral traditionalism batteries—that permit respondents to express explicitly their acceptance or rejection of a societal state, as opposed to stating a preference for one value over the other without necessarily rejecting the less preferred value. Accordingly, we present in the online supporting information an analysis of citizens' value structures using the 2008 and 2012 ANES. The results are substantively identical to those presented here. Namely, partisan and ideological identifications correspond far closer to value cleavages relative to income. We discuss further the results and implications of this supplemental analysis in the online supporting information.



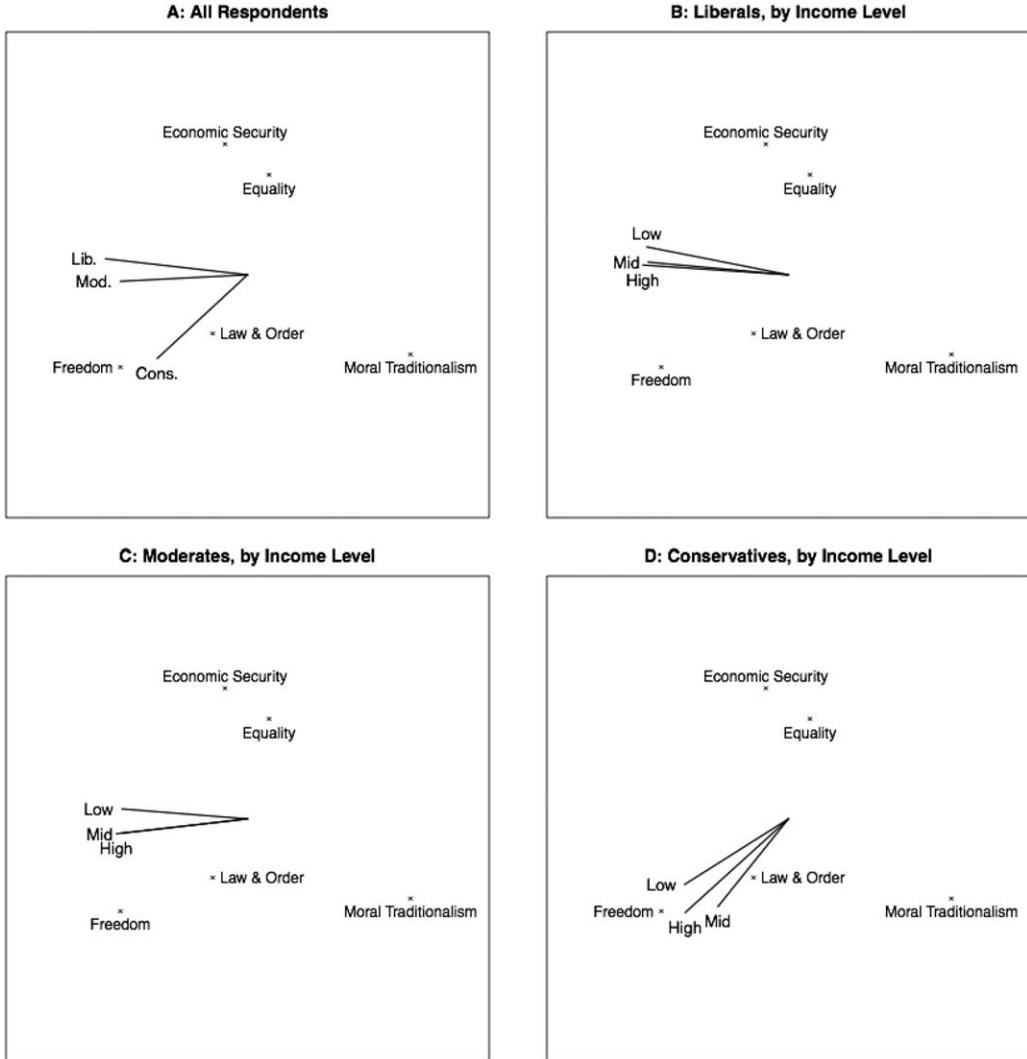
**Figure 1.** Results of vector model. Values points are represented by black dots and terminal points of individuals' vectors are represented by open dots (and jittered). The only vector shown in the plot is the mean direction vector. Mean resultant length of the vector is 0.576.

described in Jacoby (2014). Briefly, the model maps value points in an  $m$ -dimensional space—where  $m$  is empirically determined—and the configuration of value points is based on the similarities and dissimilarities in the ranks people assign to the respective values.<sup>6</sup> Values ranked similarly to each other appear close together in the  $m$ -space and dissimilarly ranked values appear farther apart. Individual respondents' preferences are represented in the space with vectors pointing toward most preferred values and away from least preferred values, with all vectors emanating from the origin and all set to length 1. Further, each individual's vector is oriented such that the ranks of the values are related to the order in which the value points project onto the vector at a 90-degree angle. In short, this model affords us the opportunity to examine and compare complete sets of value preferences, rather than one value at a time and in isolation.

Figure 1 presents the full results of the geometric model, where values are shown as points and vectors represent individuals' preferences. Values are plotted with closed circles, and the terminal points of the vectors are jittered and plotted as open circles. Two dimensions adequately describe the "value space."<sup>7</sup> The only full vector plotted in the two-dimensional space represents the "mean direction vector" for all respondents in the sample. The vector is oriented just below the horizontal, and values map onto the vector such that freedom is, on average, the most important value, followed sequentially by law & order, economic security, equality, and moral traditionalism. The length of the vector (referred to as "mean resultant length") is determined by the amount of angular separation—that is, disagreement with respect to value ranks—in the vectors over which the mean is calculated (see Jacoby, 2014, p. 762). Because the length of each individual vector is set to 1, the length of the mean direction vector can

<sup>6</sup> See the supplemental material in Jacoby (2014) for more details.

<sup>7</sup> The R-squared value for the two-dimensional solution is .90, which is a significant improvement over a one-dimensional solution ( $R^2 = .57$ ). Although the three-dimensional solution does improve fit slightly ( $R^2 = .95$ ), we believe that the two-dimensional solution best balances model fit and the scientific criterion of parsimony.



**Figure 2.** Results of vector model by ideology and income level. Value points are represented by Xs. Vectors in Panel A are mean direction vectors for liberals (Lib.), moderates (Mod.), and conservatives (Cons). Vectors in Panels B, C, and D are mean direction vectors for low-, middle-, and high-income liberals, moderates, and conservatives.

range between 0—where half of the respondents’ vectors are oriented in one direction and the other half are oriented in the exact opposite direction—and 1—where there is no variance in the direction of the vectors. In our model, the mean resultant length of the vector is 0.576, which suggests that some value heterogeneity exists at a general level in the American mass public, but perhaps not as much as the above-discussed work on values, income, and ideology and partisanship might conclude.

To what extent are value cleavages in the American mass public rooted in ideology, partisanship, and income? Looking first at ideology, the mean direction vectors for liberals, moderates, and conservatives in the sample can be seen in Panel A of Figure 2.<sup>8</sup> The orientation of the vector representing conservatives’ value preferences is farther below the horizon than either of the other two groups’

<sup>8</sup> Terminal points for individuals’ vectors are omitted from Figure 2 in the interest of clarity.

vectors, and its mean resultant length is 0.580. The vectors representing liberals' and moderates' preferences are closer to the horizon, suggesting that preferences move away from freedom and law & order toward economic security and equality as ideological identity shifts from conservative to moderate and liberal. The mean resultant lengths of the liberals' and moderates' vectors are 0.675 and 0.601. An analysis of angular variance (ANAVA) shows that the differences in the vector orientations between each group are statistically significant ( $F_{2, 618} = 32.64, p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that rank-ordered value preferences differ significantly by ideological group, confirming existing evidence regarding the marked value differences between self-identified liberals and conservatives (e.g., Abramowitz, 2010; Barker & Carman, 2012; Gibson & Hare, 2015; Jacoby, 2014; Jost, Nosek, & Gosling, 2008).

Panels B, C, and D of Figure 2 showcases ideological groups' preferences by income level. Although we observe considerable variation in value preferences across ideological groups, we see little variation across income levels within each group. Generally, high-income earners' preferences are slightly more homogeneous than their lower income counterparts, but we observe little angular variation with respect to mean direction vectors. The results of the ANAVAs show no significant differences by income group among ideological liberals ( $F_{2, 182} = 0.17, p = 0.84$ ), moderates ( $F_{2, 222} = 0.59, p = 0.56$ ), or conservatives ( $F_{2, 208} = 1.26, p = 0.29$ ). Figure 3, which displays value preferences by income group controlling for party identification, tells the same basic story: The ANAVAs show that Democrats and Republicans maintain significantly different value preferences ( $F_{1, 603} = 81.48, p < 0.01$ : see Panel A), but there are no significant differences between income groups among Democrats ( $F_{2, 338} = 1.05, p = 0.35$ : see Panel B) or Republicans ( $F_{2, 261} = 0.70, p = 0.50$ : see Panel C).<sup>9</sup>

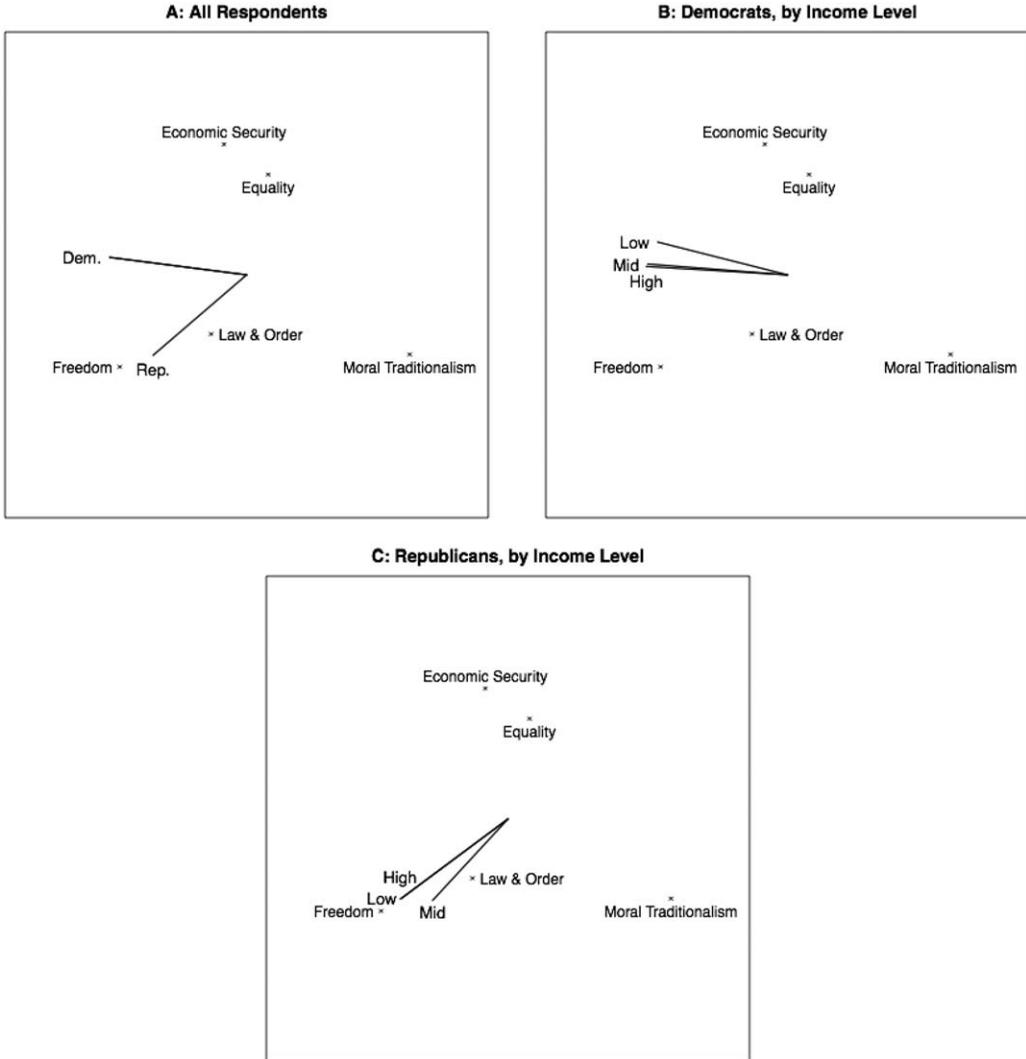
Despite significant differences in value preferences between ideological and partisan groups, we observe similar value preferences across income groups after controlling for these political sources of value cleavage. The results evince a value consensus across income groups in that no structural differences exist in the value hierarchies of low-, middle-, and high-income Americans. This finding accords with recent evidence showing that income-based partisan voting is weak in most areas of the country. Hersh and Nall (2015), for example, employ granulated census block-group data to demonstrate that the income-vote relationship is strong *only* in areas of the Old South and other areas defined by historical minority poverty and radical economic inequality. Feller, Gelman, and Shor (2012) allude to the role of values in determining presidential vote share when they write, "Given that upper-income voters are roughly split between the two parties—and are of course overrepresented among campaign contributors—much of the differences between the two parties can be identified as differences between rich liberals and rich conservatives" (p. 130). We speculate in the conclusion regarding the potential role of elite polarization and party strategy in strengthening the relationships between value preferences and ideological and partisan divisions and mitigating income-based distinctions in Americans' political attitudes and behavior.

Prior evidence and our findings in this section taken together lead us to conclude that any influence that income might exert on the relationship between value preferences and political attitudes and behavior are not due to differences in value structures between low-, medium-, and high-income individuals. Instead, any differences are likely due to varying connections between one's ranked value preferences and political identities, evaluations, and candidate choice. Our analysis next explores this potential empirical relationship by evaluating the moderating effect of income on the association between values and subsequent political attitudes and behavior.

### Conditional Relationships Between Values and Attitudes and Behavior

We specify four conditional effects models in which each of the following dependent variables are regressed on value preferences, income, and demographic control variables: partisanship,

<sup>9</sup> We exclude independents from the analysis because there are so few of them in the data.



**Figure 3.** Results of vector model by party and income level. Value points are represented by Xs. Vectors in Panel A are mean direction vectors for Democrats (Dem.) and Republicans (Rep.). Vectors in Panels B and C are mean direction vectors for low-, middle-, and high-income Democrats and Republicans.

ideological preferences, presidential approval, and vote choice—again, all attitudes and behaviors consistently shown to relate to core political values (e.g., Doherty, 2008; Feldman, 1988; Goren, 2012; Jacoby, 2006, 2014; Keele & Wolak, 2006; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, Caprara, & Vecchione, 2010).<sup>10</sup> The key independent variables in each model are multiplicative interaction terms involving value rank and income.

Partisan and ideological self-identifications are both measured on 7-point scales where 1 indicates strong Republican and very conservative and 7 indicates strong Democrat and very liberal. Approval of President Barack Obama is measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 to 4 that is built from four

<sup>10</sup> We estimate models of ideology, partisanship, and presidential approval using ordinary least squares, and we estimate vote choice using a logistic regression model.

items capturing approval of Obama's handling of foreign policy, terrorism, race, and the economy; each individual item is coded 0 if the respondent disapproves, and 1 if he or she approves ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ). Vote choice is measured as a dummy variable where 1 indicates that the respondent voted for Obama in the 2008 election and 0 indicates that the respondent voted for another candidate.<sup>11</sup>

We note at the outset of this analysis that all model specifications include only three of the five values on the survey and presented above in Figures 1–3. Namely, we include in the models equality, moral traditionalism, and economic security, whereas we omit freedom and law & order. We make this modeling decision for two reasons. First, ranking procedures produce ipsative scales that result in perfect collinearity when all ranked items are included in the same model.<sup>12</sup> Second, various model specifications suggest that the two omitted values—freedom and law & order—are largely unrelated to the four attitudes and behaviors we examine, a result consistent with those found across an array of model specifications in previous work (Ciuk & Jacoby, 2015). Descriptive statistics suggest that freedom is the most popular of the five values, and preferences for it are not restricted to one particular partisan or ideological group. Thus, despite freedom's theoretical relevance to the postmaterialism thesis, the value does not seem to be useful for understanding how citizens relate their values to important political attachments, evaluations, and behavior. Freedom thus appears to be one example of a value “truism” in American politics, a valence variable that is symbolically powerful but substantively weak. Additionally, we omit law & order from our models because the value exhibits no direct empirical relationship with any of our political variables of interest when preferences for equality, economic security, and moral traditionalism are held constant.<sup>13</sup>

Again, value preferences are coded on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 to 5 where 1 indicates that a value is relatively unimportant to the respondent and 5 indicates that it is highly important. Ties are included in the data such that if two values are tied atop a respondent's hierarchy, then each variable is coded as 4.5. The hypothesized moderator, income—annual household income, more specifically—is measured on a 19-point ascending scale ranging from 0 to 18 and median centered for analytical purposes. Control variables include education, coded on a 4-point ascending scale; age, coded on 7-point ascending scale; gender, coded 0 for male and 1 for female; race, coded 0 for White and 1 otherwise; and religiosity, coded on a 6-point ascending scale.

Results of the regression models are displayed in Table 1. We first observe that three of the four *F*-statistics are statistically significant, suggesting that the addition of the interaction terms improves model fit. Only race exhibits consistent effects among the control variables: On average, White respondents are more conservative, more Republican, more disapproving of Obama, and less likely to vote for him relative to non-Whites, consistent with existing evidence (e.g., Abramowitz & Saunders, 1998; Tesler, 2012). Although education's effect is indistinguishable from zero in the models predicting ideology and partisanship, it is significant in the model predicting approval such that higher educated respondents approve of Obama more so than others. Similarly, age and religiosity are significantly related to partisanship and ideology, respectively, as older respondents tend toward the Democratic Party and more religious respondents are more ideologically conservative relative to others (e.g., Layman, 1997, 2001).

The effects of the constitutive values variables are consistent across models in both direction and magnitude, although these findings relate only to individuals in the median income category (\$40,000–\$49,999) given each value preference variable's interaction with the income variable (Friedrich, 1982). The coefficients for equality and economic security are positive and significant, suggesting that middle-income respondents who place a greater importance on those two values are more

<sup>11</sup> Note that nonvoters are omitted from the analysis.

<sup>12</sup> That is, given knowledge of a respondent's ranked preferences of four of the values, one can perfectly predict the rank of the fifth value.

<sup>13</sup> We discuss at greater length in the online supporting information our decision to omit freedom and law & order from this analysis. We also provide supplemental analyses supporting this modeling choice.

Table 1. Regression Results

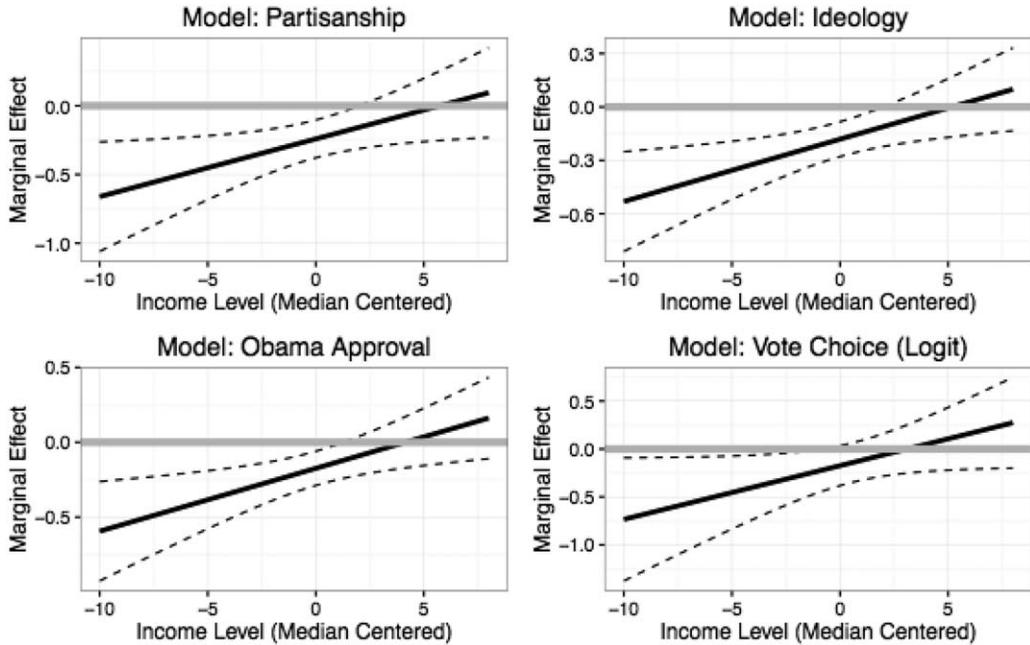
	Ideology		Partisanship		Approval		Vote	
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
Constant	2.77*	(.393)	1.65*	(.556)	0.31	(.467)	-2.54*	(.871)
Age	0.04	(.035)	0.12*	(.050)	0.04	(.042)	0.03	(.077)
Non-White	0.52*	(.131)	0.93*	(.186)	0.60*	(.158)	1.64*	(.324)
Female	0.18	(.112)	0.22	(.158)	-0.01	(.133)	0.33	(.241)
Education	0.06	(.063)	0.06	(.089)	0.24*	(.075)	0.22	(.142)
Religiosity	-0.11*	(.036)	-0.04	(.051)	-0.05	(.043)	-0.14	(.079)
Income	-0.27*	(.078)	-0.26*	(.110)	-0.28*	(.093)	-0.35	(.181)
Equality	0.34*	(.053)	0.53*	(.075)	0.33*	(.064)	0.57*	(.124)
X Inc.	0.05*	(.013)	0.04*	(.018)	0.05*	(.015)	0.06	(.032)
Moral Tr.	-0.18*	(.050)	-0.24*	(.070)	-0.17*	(.059)	-0.17	(.106)
X Inc.	0.03*	(.013)	0.04*	(.019)	0.04*	(.016)	0.06	(.029)
Econ. Sec.	0.08	(.046)	0.26*	(.067)	0.13*	(.056)	0.24*	(.103)
X Inc.	0.02*	(.012)	0.00	(.017)	0.01	(.014)	-0.01	(.028)
R <sup>2</sup> /AIC	.256		.283		.201		458.24	
<i>n</i>	532		533		522		403	
<i>F</i>	5.19*		2.93*		4.14*		2.62	

Note. For models of ideology, partisanship, and presidential approval, cell entries are OLS coefficients and standard errors. For the vote choice model, cell entries are logit coefficients and standard error. \*  $p < 0.05$ .

liberal and Democratic, as well as more approving of Obama and more likely to vote for him, relative to other individuals, consistent with past studies' findings regarding the relationship between these core values and subsequent political orientations (e.g., Feldman, 1998; Jacoby, 2006; Lupton et al., 2015). Similarly, an increased emphasis on moral traditionalism corresponds to greater conservatism and stronger Republican identification, as well as lower approval of Obama and a lower probability of voting for him in the 2008 election, again the relationships we would expect to observe given existing scholarly evidence (e.g., Carmines & Layman, 1997; Keele & Wolak, 2006; Weisberg, 2005). These findings confirm core values' significance for understanding Americans' political orientations.

Our primary relationships of interest are the multiplicative interaction terms involving each value preference variable and income. Looking first at the interactions between income and economic security, we observe that only one of the four coefficients reaches statistical significance, indicating that the relationships between economic security and our political variables of interest are largely the same across income levels. This interesting result seemingly counters the postmaterialism thesis in suggesting that whatever the role of income in moderating the association between newer, cultural values and citizens' political identities, evaluations, and behavior, concerns about economic security remain salient to political decision-making among citizens situated at each rung of the income ladder. Even considering extant work highlighting the continued relevance of the economic basis of competition in American politics (e.g., Hare & Poole, 2014), we found this result particularly curious given that if we were to expect rising income to reduce one's reliance on any one value, then economic security would be the culprit.

In order to test the possibility that our economic security item might not reflect fully a materialist orientation given the question's allusion to the need for the government to guarantee jobs and income for all, we supplemented our analysis with 2012 ANES data. Specifically, we substituted for our economic security variable a purer measure of economic self-interest: the classic measure of retrospective pocketbook evaluations (e.g., Lacy & Christenson, 2016; Nadeau & Lewis-Beck, 2001). The question asks, "Would you say that you (and your family) are better off, worse off, or just about the same financially as you were a year ago?" We specified an otherwise identical model predicting presidential vote choice as that featured in column 4 of Table 1, and we observed that income does in fact



**Figure 4.** Marginal effects of moral traditionalism conditioned on income. Black solid line represents marginal effect of moral traditionalism on dependent variable. Dashed lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

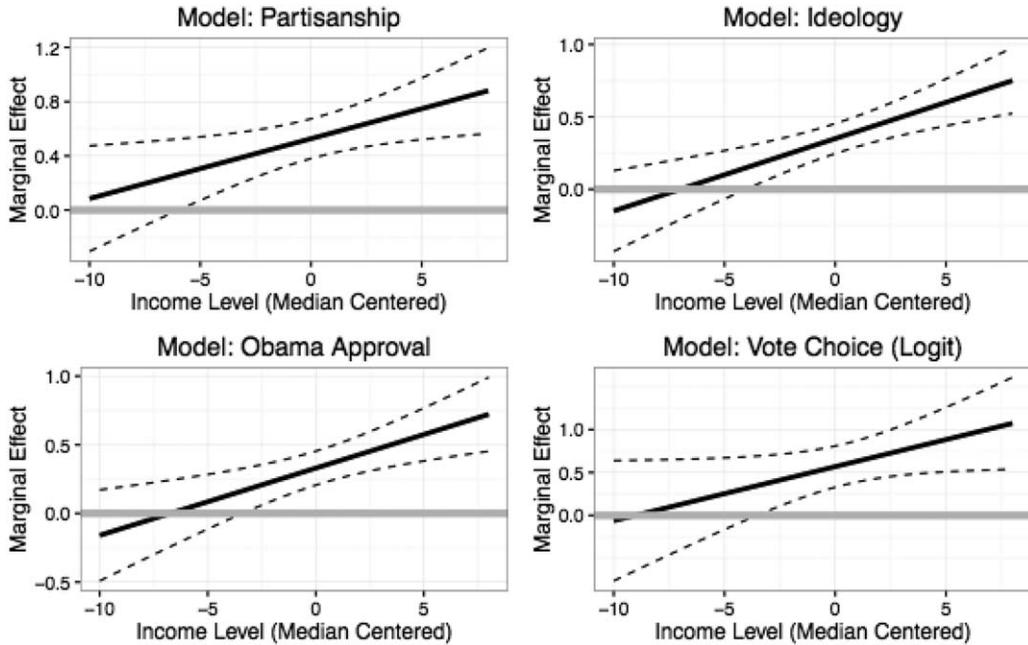
moderate the association between this nakedly materialist variable and the vote.<sup>14</sup> Thus, our result that the association between valuing economic security and other important political phenomena does not vary across income groups may require a caveat. However, we wish to emphasize that this supplemental analysis does not alter our core conclusion that individuals' fundamental value structures do not vary across income levels once we consider ideological and partisan sources of value conflict.

Three of four coefficients for the interaction between income and moral traditionalism attain statistical significance. As all of these coefficients are positive and the moral traditionalism constitutive term is negative, the data suggest that the relationship between moral traditionalism and political identities and evaluations weakens as income increases. This result is consistent with the theory that post-materialist value change should push concern for how one's fellow citizens order their lives or conform to older, prescribed modes of conduct out of the political sphere.

The coefficients for the interaction between income and equality are also consistent with theoretical expectations, as they are positive and statistically significant in three of four models: As income increases, so too does the relationship between a greater preference for the value of equality and ideological self-identifications, partisanship, and presidential approval. To highlight better the moderating relationships displayed in Table 1, we present below marginal effects plots showing the conditional effect of income on the association between value preferences and political variables.

Figure 4 shows that the marginal effect of moral traditionalism is strongest for low-income respondents and decreases as income increases. In fact, the marginal effect of moral traditionalism is statistically indistinguishable from zero at the upper portion of the income scale in all four models, graphically demonstrating the finding that wealthier individuals do not bring their preference for convention in the attitude formation or candidate-choice processes, even when the orthodox value

<sup>14</sup> A broader discussion of this supplemental analysis, as well as a table of results and marginal effects plot showing the relationship between pocketbook retrospective evaluations and 2012 vote choice, is located in the online supporting information.



**Figure 5.** Marginal effects of equality conditioned on income. Black solid line represents marginal effect of equality on dependent variable. Dashed lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

occupies a privileged spot in those individuals' value hierarchy. On the contrary, the marginal effects of equality depicted in Figure 5 show that the influence of egalitarian value preferences increases markedly as household income rises. These results testify to the nuanced and important role of core values and postmaterialism in American public opinion.

## Discussion and Conclusion

We endeavored in this article to investigate the potentially conditional impact of income on the connection between individuals' core political values and subsequent attitudes and behavior, a timely question given the concomitant rise of income inequality and polarization (McCarty, Poole, & Rosenthal, 2006), as well as worries about unequal influence between the rich and poor (Gilens, 2014). Interestingly, our analysis demonstrated that the structure of citizens' value hierarchies does not significantly differ across income groups. Instead, core value cleavages correspond directly to ideological and partisan fault lines in the American mass public. The precipitous rise of income inequality and the vastly different experiences of wealthy versus middle- and working-class citizens during and after the global financial crisis might lead one to believe that these groups possess different conceptions of the "good life." This observation of contemporary American life dovetails with the postmaterialist expectation that a greater standard of living affords the wealthy more time and comfort to shift their energies from traditional materialist concerns to broader questions of equality, morality, and good governance, among other issues. Contrary to these expectations, however, our data revealed a value consensus across income groups and, consistent with previous evidence, substantial value conflict between opposing partisan and ideological camps.

Although we observed polarized value structures across partisan and ideological lines, low-, middle-, and high-income individuals within these groups shared value preferences. Democrats and liberals are more likely to prefer equality and economic security relative to their Republican and

conservative counterparts, who favor freedom and law & order over other values. However, intraparty and intraideological differences did not emerge in our analysis, a result with normative implications because income on its own evidently does not represent a salient source of value division in American life: Class culture wars are considerably more muted than one might expect given that citizens spanning the income distribution share value preferences and thus at least a similar societal vision.

Of course, the partisan and ideological nature of value divisions present in our data evidence deep and not easily reconcilable polarization. Jacoby (2014) describes these differences as a “culture war,” and our data confirm the clashing worldviews of Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives. We suspect that decades of elite polarization and party strategy have entrenched these value distinctions and also worked to mitigate income-based value divisions. The Republican Party’s increasing attractiveness to religious and cultural conservatives (e.g., Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008; Bafumi & Shapiro, 2009; Layman, 2001) might have helped the party attract support from working-class individuals who we might otherwise expect to support Democratic economic politics (Prasad, Hoffman, & Bezila, 2016), thus weakening the relationship between income and values because the party now unites its traditional wealthy base and poorer and middle-class Whites (Feller et al., 2012). Additionally, and perhaps even more relevant to postmaterialism’s inability to explain Americans’ contemporary value structures, is the Democratic Party’s ability to court the rich (Feller et al., 2012; Gelman, Park, Shor, Bafumi, & Cortina, 2008; Gelman, Shor, Bafumi, & Park, 2007), especially in the Northeast and West Coast (Hersh & Nall, 2015). The ultimate explanation for why income does not structure Americans’ value preferences is beyond the bounds of this article, but we just experienced perhaps the most divisive presidential election in memory, and personal income was of little use for understanding the winner (Silver, 2016). Our evidence shows only that the established partisan and ideological identities correspond to sharp value divisions that transcend income categories.

We next tested whether income moderated the relationship between individuals’ value preferences and found significant support for our postmaterialist hypotheses. The one caveat involved our economic security variable. Specifically, we evaluated whether the traditional concern for economic security would be less meaningful to political attitudes and behavior among wealthier individuals, who, according to the postmaterialism thesis, enjoy the financial freedom and time to repurpose values. This expectation was not supported, as valuing economic security related to more liberal self-identifications and greater support for Barack Obama—in opinion polls and at the ballot box—for individuals equally across the income spectrum. This finding suggests that the historical socioeconomic basis of party competition has not eroded in the United States, even as cultural issues have risen to the fore. This result seemed to be consistent with the theory of conflict extension, as opposed to the displacement predicted by postmaterialism (e.g., Layman & Carsey, 2002a,b). Although new ideological and partisan conflicts have arisen in American politics, concerns over classic “kitchen table” issues remain salient for individuals across income levels.

However, we acknowledged here that our economic security variable might not have represented a fair test because it reasonably could be viewed as insufficiently materialist. Our supplemental analysis incorporating a more straightforward measure of self-interest—pocketbook economic retrospectives—exhibited a significant conditional relationship to vote choice. Namely, consistent with postmaterialist expectations, one’s assessment of his or her personal economic fortunes over the year prior to the 2012 presidential election were more highly related to vote choice among less well-off respondents. We cannot adjudicate with our limited data which of these conclusions regarding how citizens of various incomes relate economic security concerns to the political sphere, but our supplemental analysis is sufficient for us not to reject the postmaterialism thesis outright as it pertains to this value.

The results for our other two values supported a postmaterialist understanding of how individuals bring their ranked values to bear in the political realm. Postmaterialism suggests that individuals’ preference for traditional standards of behavior—controlling for religiosity—will become less important as income increases. Our results supported this hypothesis in three of four models, leading us to

conclude that moral traditionalism in the United States captures a type of antic cosmopolitanism orientation that is more relevant to poorer citizens in the domain of politics.

The observed relationship between equality and political orientations also supported our postmaterialist expectation: The association between egalitarian value preferences and political attitudes and behavior strengthens dramatically as income increases. In an era in which income inequality has become salient and concerns for working- and middle-class Americans dominate political discussion in debates ranging from the appropriate federal minimum wage to the fair taxation of capital gains, our analysis revealed that wealthier individuals deploy their egalitarian values more than other citizens in forming political judgements and vote choice. Although higher-income individuals are no more or less likely to prefer equality to other values, equality is more strongly related to their political attitudes and behavior relative to other citizens. This finding demonstrates that equality might be the central postmaterialist value in American politics—an emerging political fault line that is most relevant to the richest citizens, who thanks to their higher incomes are both able and motivated to bring their preference for more or less equal opportunity to bear in the realm of political evaluation. This result dovetails nicely with Feller et al.'s (2012) finding that much of the differences between the two parties can be identified as differences between rich liberals and rich conservatives. Our results indicate that a key cleavage in American political life may be between rich egalitarians and rich antiegalitarians.

Our study necessarily carries limitations that we readily acknowledge. First, we did not have access to the standard World Values Survey questionnaire traditionally used to capture value orientations (e.g., Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart & Baker, 2000), and we tested a macrolevel theory of societal value change to examine individual-level value structures in American politics. Nonetheless, we analyzed a broad set of important cultural values spanning the materialist versus postmaterialist divide, and we interrogated the hypotheses using an innovative methodology and a theoretically informed, empirically valid values instrument. Most reassuringly to us, our results regarding the primacy of ideological and partisan divisions for understanding Americans' value structures square with existing evidence (e.g., Jacoby, 2014; Jost et al., 2008).

Another concern with our cross-sectional data is the potential for endogeneity in the obviously intertwined relationship between core values and ideological and partisan identities. For example, some previous work suggests that values respond to the political campaign environment (Goren, 2005; McCann, 1997), as well as partisan and ideological cues (Goren, Federico, & Kittilson, 2009). Several other, more recent studies using panel data, however, find that values are quite stable (Evans & Neundorf, 2013; Jacoby, Searing, & Tyner, 2016) and that value preferences significantly influence political identities (Jacoby, 2013). Although this debate remains unsettled, one is reasonable to conclude that important political behaviors—the dependent variables in our regression models—are the “downward consequences” of certain personal and political values (Carmines & D'Amico, 2015, p. 210). This newer evidence led us to specify core values as the independent variables in our regression models featured in Table 1. However, our core findings do not rest on this causal ordering, as our analysis is fundamentally associational.

We were interested in examining first whether value divisions correspond to ideological self-identification, partisanship, and income levels, and second, if income conditions the correlation between core values on the one hand, and theoretically subsequent political orientations and behavior, on the other. Thus, the first analysis shows essentially that income does not moderate the correlation between ideological (Figure 2) and partisan divisions (Figure 3) and citizens' value structures, whereas the second analysis shows that income significantly conditions the correlation between ranked value preferences and these other orientations. Furthermore, although we recognize the potential endogeneity among values, ideology, and partisanship, we do not believe that any of those orientations and attachments causes income gains or losses. Thus, we are confident theoretically in specifying income as the moderator in our interactive models presented in Table 1.

Ultimately, our findings suggest that the precise role of income in conditioning the relationship between values and political attitudes and behavior warrants further investigation. Additionally, and more importantly, we believe that the finding testifies to the nature of political values in the U.S. context and the configuration of ideological, partisan, and values cleavages in this society. Lastly, our cross-sectional evidence cannot be used to conclude that moral traditionalism—or any other value—is less (or more) important than it was previously. Longitudinal data would be preferred for analyzing the dynamics of value structures and the connections between various values and political orientations across income groups. Nonetheless, we believe that our study contributes significantly to scholarly understanding of the structure and use of core values in American politics by exploring values' relationship to social class, an enduring object of social scientific inquiry in the United States.

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## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's website:

Question Wording for the Values Variables Included in Our Analysis

Commentary Justifying the Values Variables Included in the Regression Models Specified in Table 1

**Table S1.** Correlation Coefficients Showing Relationships Between Values and Dependent Variables

**Table S2.** Regression Models Including All Values but Freedom Specified as Independent Variables

**Table S3.** Predicting Presidential Vote Choice Using 2012 ANES Data

**Figure S1.** Mean Values Rankings for All Respondents

**Figure S2.** Mean Values Rankings by Party

**Figure S3.** Mean Values Rankings by Ideological Group Discussion of the Replication of our Main Result Regarding Americans' Value Structures Using 2008 and 2012 American National Election Studies (ANES) Data

2008 and 2012 ANES Moral Traditionalism and Egalitarianism Batteries Question Wording

**Figure S4.** 2008 ANES Moral Traditionalism Scale Scores by Party

**Figure S5.** 2008 ANES Egalitarianism Scale Scores by Party

**Figure S6.** 2008 ANES Moral Traditionalism Scale Scores by Ideology

**Figure S7.** 2008 ANES Egalitarianism Scale Scores by Ideology

**Figure S8.** 2012 ANES Moral Traditionalism Scale Scores by Party

**Figure S9.** 2012 ANES Egalitarianism Scale Scores by Party

**Figure S10.** 2012 ANES Moral Traditionalism Scale Scores by Ideology

**Figure S11.** 2012 ANES Egalitarianism Scale Scores by Ideology

Discussion of Additional Empirical Analysis Replicating Manuscript Results Using 2012 ANES Data

**Figure S12.** Marginal Effect of Economic Security on Vote Choice, Conditioned on Income Using 2012 ANES

**Figure S13.** Marginal Effect of Egalitarianism on Vote Choice, Conditioned on Income Using 2012 ANES

**References**