When do the Rich Win?

[Keywords: Democracy, groups, opinion, policy, representation, inequality]

Abstract: There is exploding academic and non-academic interest in the relative influence of economic "haves" and "have-nots" on public policy. In a recent, widely referenced article, Gilens and Page (2014) compare the influence of upper and middle-income citizens and find that the preferences of the former are all that matter for policy representation. Here, we reconsider that work, examining just how often the rich win, and the kinds of policies they get. We find that the rich and middle agree roughly 90 percent of the time, and when they disagree, the rich win only a little more often than the middle, specifically, 53 percent of the time. Even when the rich win, the resulting policies do not lean systematically in a conservative (or liberal) direction. Further analyses incorporating the preferences of the poorest Americans produce similar results: we find only slightly greater responsiveness to wealthier citizens. It may be that these differences have substantial consequences for policy and citizens, particularly as they cumulate over time; it also may be that the differences do not matter very much, and that other divisions in the electorate or other political actors are more relevant for inequalities in policy representation in the United States.

A major theoretical justification for representative democracy is that it puts power in the hands of the people. Political scientists have tested whether this actually is true by assessing the degree to which policy reflects citizens' preferences. Recent work finds that public policy is frequently responsive to the will of the people, but that there is significant variation across policy domains.[1] There may be variation in to whom policy is responsive as well. Indeed, recent work suggests that policy is responsive primarily, or even solely, to the richest Americans, at the expense of the middle class and poor.[2]

The finding of such pronounced inequality in political representation clearly contrasts with the normative basis for representative democracy. It is not entirely surprising, however. The rich have more time and money to give to campaigns and politics more generally.[3] They also tend to vote more often, and evidence suggests that voters are better represented than non-voters.[4] That the rich are better represented than the poor is what we might therefore expect. For similar reasons, we might expect that the middle are also better represented than the poor.

Perhaps more surprising would be that the rich are better represented than the middle. The median voter carries special importance in representative democracy[5] – to the extent that governments react to voters, they should be especially responsive to the middle. (It is tyranny of the majority that is the major concern in classic empirical democratic theory, after all.[6]) Yet recent research by Gilens and Page (2014) argues that the preferences of average-income Americans play only a marginal role in the formation of policy. Indeed, they claim that "When a majority of citizens disagrees with economic elites or with organized interests, they generally lose."[7]

We reconsider that finding here. Scholars who find differences in policy representation across groups focus on a model that looks like so:

$$P_j = f\left(Opinion_j^{mid}, Opinion_j^{rich}\right),$$

where *P* represents a proposed policy in issue area *j*, $Opinion_j^{mid}$ represents the opinion of medium income Americans, and $Opinion_j^{rich}$ represents the preferences of high income Americans. Here, policy is a function of the preferences of middle and high income Americans, and corresponding analysis gauges the relative contribution of each.

As we have already discussed, it may be that both groups agree. Indeed, previous research already has shown that preferences across economic groups, and especially the middle and rich, do not differ much in many policy areas.[8] In these instances, it does not matter whether the government is more reactive to one group – policy will end up in the same place regardless. This is not to say that it does not matter theoretically, of course – we would ideally want governments to react to all citizens. We are acknowledging here only that it does not matter practically, as there will be no substantive difference in policy outputs.

Strong agreement between income cohorts thus complicates an analysis of unequal representation, making it difficult to identify the target of responsiveness.[9] It is well known in the statistical literature that regression analysis with highly correlated independent variables is problematic.[10] Such multicollinearity between preferences may explain why scholars have reached such different conclusions. Some find that the poor are better represented than the rich[11] whereas others show that the relationship varies across issues.[12] Indeed, some scholars have suggested that multicollinearity complicates Gilens and Page's own analyses.[13]

Given this, we propose focusing on a subset of polices for which we find clear disagreement across majorities of middle and high income citizens. We derive this subset from Gilens' dataset, graciously made available through the Russell Sage Foundation website. This is the same dataset used by Gilens and Page[14]; it provides public preferences imputed across income percentiles for a wide range of policies.[15] Our subset focuses more clearly on the situation that is of concern in the Gilens and Page paper, namely, "when a majority of citizens disagrees with economic elites."[16] It has the added benefit of averting some of the problems associated with regression (noted above) in this case. And we use these data to reconsider two crucial questions:

- How often do the preferences of the middle and rich disagree? and,
- When they disagree, who wins?

Our analysis proceeds as follows. We first compare the preferences of the rich and the middle, and find the rich and middle rarely disagree. Next, we investigate what happens when the two groups disagree, and find that the rich win more often than the middle, though not strikingly – or significantly – so. Next, we consider the kinds of policies on which the rich and middle win. Our suspicion is that readers of Gilens and Page, Bartels, and others have been

drawing the inference that the rich advocate and win on conservative policies that give them economic advantages, such as tax cuts, over the objections of the middle (and poor).[17] We find very little evidence to support such an inference, however. Finally, we bring the preferences of the poor into the analysis, the results of which indicate that the poor do slightly worse than other income groups, though even they often win over the preferences of the middle or the rich. What inequality we do observe here appears to come mostly from negative power, where the middle and rich effectively block many of the policies that the poor favor. Let us now see precisely what the data reveal.

The Middle and the Rich

As noted above, the potential for unequal policy representation depends on differences in preferences between income groups. Let us consider differences using Gilens' dataset. The data include responses to 1,863 survey questions about potential policies over the 1981-2002 period. Of those, 84 have mixed outcomes, where the policy in question was partly adopted. Following Gilens, we drop these partially adopted policies. This means that our analysis rests on the same 1,779 policies that Gilens and Page analyze.[18]

Gilens estimates levels of support for each of these policies across various income percentiles using observed information about support among income groups.[19] For our analysis, we focus on support by those at the 10th, 50th, and 90th percentiles, the same percentiles used by Gilens.[20] Relying on imputed data limits what we can infer, of course, but the nature of the opinion data, in which income questions vary in both response categories and availability, makes the imputation necessary. And relying on Gilens' imputations has the added advantage of allowing us to assess the structure of preferences that formed the basis for what is perhaps the most influential political science article on political inequality to date.

[Figure 1 about here]

Figure 1 plots high and middle income support for each of the 1,779 policies. Middle-income support is shown on the x-axis; high-income support is shown on the y-axis; bills that passed are in green while those that failed are in red. The diagonal dashed line shows the point at which the two groups' preferences are identical, and thus also distinguishes between policies that receive more support from the rich (above the line) from policies that receive more support from the middle (below the line).

As Gilens and Page note, preferences are very highly correlated. The Pearson's *r* between the two is a striking 0.94. (Gilens and Page report that the correlation drops to 0.78 when adjusting for correlated measurement error.)[21] This seriously complicates regression analysis, as discussed above. Although, we do not use regression in our main analysis, for interested readers we present an analysis paralleling Gilens and Page's methodology in the Appendix. These results offer further support for the findings that follow.

It is relatively clear in Figure 1 that there is a positive relationship between (a) the preferences of both the middle and rich and (b) government action. In the lower-left corner, bills without support from either the middle or the rich are likely to fail, indicated by the predominance of red dots, though some of these bills still pass. In the upper-right corner, bills with support from both the middle and rich are more likely to succeed, though many of these fail as well. Consistent with much previous research, the relationship between opinion and policy is far from perfect.

[Table 1 about here]

The spread of points in Figure 1 also indicates that, while the relationship between middle and rich preferences is strong, it is not perfect. Table 1 provides an alternative analysis of

the same data, focused on majority support or opposition among the high and middle income groups (using 50 percent as the cut-point between support and opposition). Here we can see that the rich and middle agree on 1,594 bills: the 616 bills that both groups oppose, and the 978 bills that both groups favor. This amounts to 89.6 percent of the 1,799 bills. To be clear: although the magnitude of support may differ across the middle and rich, on 89.6 percent of these bills there is majority support, or majority opposition, in both income groups. On all of these policies, an analysis of "majoritarian congruence" would predict exactly the same outcome.[22]

A majority of the middle disagree with a majority of the rich on just 185 bills – 78 that the middle favor and the rich do not, and 107 that the rich favor but the middle do not. Although this is not evident in the table, note that when the middle and rich disagree it often is not by much: by 10.9 percentage points on average. That said, while seemingly small, this is larger and significantly different from the preference gap when they agree, which is a mere 5.2 percentage points ($p < 0.001$). Overall, then, there is a tremendous amount of agreement in preferences, but there are also 185 instances in which the middle and rich clearly disagree. These are the policies which allow us to explore, reliably, whose preferences win out in the policymaking process.

This raises an important difference between our analyses and that of Gilens and Page (2014): whereas their work examines the magnitude of support in both income groups, we focus here on dichotomous majority support (within each income group). This has implications for tests of influence, of course. For instance, on policies where both the middle and the rich agree, bills are about 10 percentage points more likely to be passed (or blocked) if support from the rich is greater (less) than support from the middle. (See Appendix Table A1). This may help explain why Gilens and Page (2014) find evidence in their regression analyses for the rich winning over

the middle; see the additional analyses (in Table A2) and the associated discussion in our appendix.[23]

But our interest is in addressing what happens when the middle and rich disagree, and we thus do not consider this dichotomous approach as contentious – indeed, we regard it as a more appropriate way of linking preferences with the passage or failure of bills. As discussed, it averts the problems associated with using regression analysis with highly correlated regressors. The approach also fits with the large body of previous work on policy congruence, which focuses on the passage of bills and their match with opinion majorities.[24] Perhaps most importantly, it directly addresses what Gilens and Page conclude on the basis of their results, namely, that when a majority of citizens disagree with economic elites, they generally lose. We now turn to testing that proposition. (And we note that an approach that focuses on magnitudes of support leads to similar conclusions; see the Appendix for details.)

Who Wins when the Middle and the Rich Disagree?

Figure 2 illustrates the way in which we narrow the dataset. The 1,594 policies on which the middle and rich agree cannot provide any leverage on questions about differential representation – these polices are grayed out. The remaining 185 policies – instances in which a majority of one group supports the policy while a majority of the other does not – can offer direct information about majoritarian congruence. As we have seen, there are 78 cases in which the middle favors the policy but the rich oppose it. These are the cases below the dashed line. Above the dashed line there are the 107 cases in which a majority of the rich favors the bill while a majority of the middle opposes it. Note that based on these numbers, when preferences differ, it is more often the case that the rich favor passage and the middle prefer the status quo.

[Figure 2 about here]

What happens when preferences differ? Just how often do the rich win? We can see in Figure 2 that the rich do not always win: there is a mix of both green and red on both sides of the dashed line. Note however that a win for the rich over the middle can occur in two ways. The first is where a majority of the rich support the policy and the policy passes. These are the aforementioned green dots above the line in Figure 2. The second is where a majority of the rich oppose the policy and the policy fails. This is indicated by the red dots below the line in Figure 2. This sort of negative power can be quite powerful in the political arena. Our analysis must focus, then, on a combination of these positive and negative wins.

[Table 2 about here]

In short: when the rich and middle disagree, the rich win about 53 percent of the time, and the middle win the other 47 percent of the time. Table 2 rearranges our cases in a way that makes the derivation of these win-rates clear. The first two columns show the number of policies favored by the middle (first column) or the rich (second column). Rows split these policies by whether they passed or failed; and, equivalently, whether the middle or rich won. So there are 20 policies that received majority support from middle-income respondents (and majority opposition from the rich) and passed. By contrast, there are 58 policies that were favored by the middle (and opposed by the rich) and did not pass. In the former cases, the middle won; in the latter, the rich won. Taking into account the first and second columns, the third column reports the total number of wins for each group. For the middle, there are 87 wins (47 percent of all cases); for the rich, 98 wins (53 percent of all cases). There is a small gap in win rates, but note that they are not significantly different from 50 percent at conventional statistical levels (p = 0.41).

Results differ only a little when we further restrict our analysis to cases where there is a clear gap between preferences of the rich and the middle. For instance, for the 101 cases where preferences differ by at least 10 percentage points – the same cutoff Gilens uses in some of his other analyses[25] – the number of middle wins is 45 of 101; for the rich it is 56 of 101. Again, this difference is not statistically significant ($p = 0.86$).

Taken over the 22-year period of the study, the 11-bill gap between rich and middle "wins" is equivalent to the rich netting one bill every other year. Admittedly, this does not include all policy decisions taken, but it should include those salient, seemingly important ones. (These are the policies about which survey organizations ask, after all.[26]) Even so, these results do not provide evidence of high-income dominance of American politics. The rich are systematically overrepresented, it seems, just not by much. Of course, small differences in the number of policies can make a difference, particularly as they accumulate over time. This is more difficult to measure. We can, however, gain some sense of the accumulating policy impact by assessing the ideological orientation of the policies on which the rich and middle win.

The Ideological Disposition of Policy Wins

To what extent do rich wins push policy in a conservative direction? The answer to this question is significant. If rich wins always result in conservative policy, then they can make a rather large difference over time. We suspect that this is the inference many readers of recent scholarship have drawn.[27] To our knowledge, however, this has not been systematically analyzed. And it is not necessarily the case that all rich wins result in conservative policy. After all, we know that income is positively related to education, and while the former can push individuals towards the right, the latter can push towards the left.[28] This has been well-established in work on public opinion, of course, and it may help explain why several of the rich

wins in these data actually lead to leftward policy shifts. For example, a majority of the rich supported expanding access to abortion via the French abortion pill RU-486; even though the middle were opposed, the policy changed.

We thus explore the ideology of bills directly, by coding the 185 policies where the middle and rich disagree. Incomplete data forces us to drop 19 cases, leaving 166 observations in the analysis. (See the Appendix for details.) These 166 bills are coded for ideological direction by the authors, as the ideological direction of most policies is relatively clear. Bills that expand the size or scope of government, including raising revenue, are coded as ideologically liberal. Social issues are also coded according to their ideological location at that time. So, for example, conservative policies include enacting NAFTA or restricting access to abortion or birth control; liberal policies include tax increases and affirmative action policies. Our coding allows for ideologically neutral policies as well; these tend to be concerned with foreign affairs and defense. These data are available online at (*Redacted*).

[Figure 3 about here]

The breakdown of these bills is shown in Figure 3. The left panel shows the 75 policies the middle won; the right panel shows the 91 policies the rich won. Green bars show policies that passed, grey bars show blocked policies. Across the board, the prevalence of the latter in Figure 3 indicates that it is easier to block policies than pass policies, which is understandable given the bias of American political institutions towards the status quo.

Let us consider first the ideological complexion of blocked bills. The middle appear to successfully block policies without regard to ideology – the gray bars on the left, middle, and right are roughly the same height. The rich, on the other hand, successfully block non-ideological and left-leaning policies a little more frequently than conservative policies. The middle blocked

21 conservative bills and 20 liberal bills, whereas the rich blocked 20 liberal and 11 conservative bills.

What about passed bills? The middle passes bills that are either non-ideological or slightly to the left. Notably, there are no cases of the middle passing an ideologically conservative bill over the objections of the rich in the entire 22-year dataset, though there are 11 instances of the middle wanting a conservative bill that the rich block. Similarly, bills that the rich successfully pass tend to be slightly more conservative, though not strikingly so: the rich passed 8 liberal policies over the objections of the middle, alongside 15 conservative polices – only slightly greater than the number of similar non-ideological bills.

In sum, since the rich win more than the middle (see Table 2), and since they prefer policies to the right, policy change is more conservative than it would be otherwise. The difference in any given year is small: of the 91 ideologically-coded bills for which the rich won, only 15 of those are bills that pushed the status quo in a conservative direction. This represents a minority (40.5 percent) of bills that the rich passed over the objections of the middle; and it represents less than one conservative bill per year in the sample. Of course, as we have already noted, such seemingly small annual differences may accumulate and have big effects over time.

Bringing the Poor Back In

The mathematics of representative democracy suggests that policy should follow middle-income preferences (the median voter). This makes a comparison of the rich versus the middle important – it is a test of whether high-income citizens are prioritized over what representative democratic elections should (mathematically speaking) produce. At the same time, normative concerns about inequality are not just about the under-representation of the middle; they are also, if not more often, concerned with the under-representation of the poor. Political science does not

have a predominant theory as to why the poor would be better represented than the middle or the rich. The point is not that the poor should not matter, of course, just that we have stronger expectations about the representation of the middle and rich. So far, we have seen that the rich do a little better than the middle. What about the poor?

Analysis incorporating the poor reveals broad policy agreement among all three groups. Indeed, majorities of all three groups agree on 80.2 percent of the policies. That said, the variation between the poor and rich is much greater than that between the poor and middle. The Pearson's *r* correlation for the preferences of the poor and rich is 0.84, whereas the correlation between the poor and middle is 0.93. Recall from above that the correlation between the middle and rich is 0.94. So the poor and middle are roughly correlated to the same degree as the middle and rich. Much of the time, however, all three groups agree. What happens when they disagree?

[Table 3 about here]

Table 3 shows the passage rate of policies for different combinations of support among the poor, middle and rich. (Note that this table includes the entire Gilens dataset, not just the subset previously analyzed.) The top half of the table shows policies for which either all three income groups are opposed (the first row), or only one of the three groups supports the policy. As we can see, even if a majority of all three groups are opposed to the policy, it still passes roughly 24 percent of the time. If the middle or rich want the policy, it passes more often, though still not most of the time. Even so, support from just the middle or rich seems to lead to bill passage more reliably (37.5 percent and 38.5 percent respectively) than if just the poor support the bill (18.6 percent). Indeed, the passage rate for bills supported by just the poor is lower than the rate for bill unsupported by all groups (although the minor difference here is not statistically

significant). These results suggest that the rich and middle are effective at blocking policies that the poor want.

The bottom half of Table 3 shows what happens when various combinations of income groups support passage. Even if a majority of all three groups favor a policy (in the final row), that bill passes only 40 percent of the time. The rich seem most effective at blocking bills they do not want – if a majority of the middle and poor want a policy, and the rich do not, the passage rate (20.4 percent) is comparable to the rate when all three groups are opposed. The rich do fare the best, but the middle do only slightly worse. Perhaps most notably, adding the support of the poor does not increase passage rates very much.

It is not the case that the preferences of one income group totally dominate policymaking. (One concern not addressed here is that the wealthy are especially successful with economic bills, but there is no evidence for this in the data. See the Appendix for a brief analysis.) The rich do slightly better than the middle, and the poor are least successful. And, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that all three income groups agree on the vast majority -- more than 80 percent -- of cases and the differences in success rates when there is disagreement are not great. There are inequalities to be sure, but they are limited.

Discussion: Who Wins?

Recent research suggests that U.S. policy is only responsive to the preferences of high income citizens. Disagreement in policy preferences is a necessary condition for differential representation, however. If majorities in different income cohorts prefer the same policy, we cannot distinguish whose preferences are being represented. The government might follow the rich, or the middle, or even the poor – but policy will end at the same place. To assess the extent

of differential representation, then, we have examined policies where there is disagreement between majorities in different income groups.

Results suggest that across a wide range of policies, disagreement on policy across income groups is rather rare. Actually, the preferences of the richest, poorest, and middle income Americans are correlated at what we regard as astonishingly high rates. That said, income groups do not agree on all policies, and we find that when the rich and middle disagree, it is very nearly a coin flip as to which group wins. While this may be more encouraging (normatively speaking) than recent scholarship, note that a 50-50 split between the 50th and 90th income percentiles not necessarily an "equal" result, given what the median voter theorem would expect. If middle-income wins tend to move policy towards the median voter, then these high-income wins will tend to move policy away from the median voter.

The potential impact of high-income wins is at its greatest if the rich pass policies in one ideological direction. This does not seem to be the case, however. There is only a slight right-leaning bias in those adopted policies that were supported by the rich and opposed by the middle. Our analyses thus suggest that policy in America is only a little to the right of where it would be if preferences of those with middling incomes determined policy. The poor seem to do less well than both of the other groups at getting policies they want passed, though the poor are often successful at blocking policies they dislike.

It is also important to keep in mind that not all policy decisions are about preferences of the rich, middle, and poor. Party control of government is a key variable in the policymaking process. For instance, the rich seemed to do less well during the Johnson and Obama presidencies, with the Great Society programs, the Affordable Care Act, and other various tax increases. They did better under Reagan's "Reagonomics" and income tax reduction. It may be

of some significance then that the time period analyzed (1981 – 2002) is one during which the Republicans controlled the presidency the majority of the time, 14 years out of 22. Adding the post-2002 period may well change results. This is, of course, a testable prediction, and one we leave for future work.

While explaining differences in the representation of income groups is important, what may be more pressing is understanding why there exists such broad policy agreement across income groups. Why would the poorest and the richest Americans, who ostensibly have very different needs from the government, agree to such an extent? This seemingly puzzling empirical finding emerges not only in our current analysis but in virtually all investigations of inequalities in representation by income groups. It accordingly may be that the striking similarity in preferences, not marginal differences in the representation of those preferences, is the real story. (Note that this perspective is in line with Bartels' influential "Homer Gets a Tax Cut" paper, where the emphasis is on the troubling structure of public preferences for social welfare policy.[29]) Alternatively, it may be that income is not the most salient cleavage where policy preferences are concerned, or at least that there are many other competing, cross-cutting, cleavages. This too is another subject for future work – and an important one for those interested in inequalities in policy representation in the United States.

Appendix

Details on coding ideology

The full text of some survey questions is not readily available in the Gilens and Page data, but we are able to recover enough of the question text in 166 cases of the 185 to code by ideology. Questions where the full text was not available were found using the Roper Center iPoll database. Partial question text from the Gilens data was matched to full question text in the Roper Center by searching for the partial question text and the year that the question was asked (indicated in the Gilens data). We could not find the full question text of nineteen questions, and so are forced to drop those from the analysis. The remaining 166 policies were then coded as liberal, conservative, or neutral. The authors coded these themselves, as the ideological direction of policies was clear when the full text was available. The data are available online at (REDACTED).

The Strength of Policy Support and Policy Adoption

Table A1 shows the strength of policy preference by income group. For issues in the two leftmost columns, both the rich and the middle supported the policy. For issues on the right, both groups opposed it. Note that when majorities of both groups agree (are either both opposed or both supportive), the rich are 10 percent more likely to be in greater support or opposition. This may help account for why scholars find differences in policy representation using regression-based methods. Also see the analysis in Table A2 and the associated discussion below.

[Table A1 about here]

Policy Support and Adoption for Economic and Social Issues

Issues coded in Gilens' original dataset as pertaining to the budget, economy and labor, and taxation were recoded as economic issues. Defense and terrorism were omitted, and all other

issue areas were coded as social issues. Note that the win rates for the two issue types are not statistically different from one another.

[Table A2 about here]

Analysis using Regression

As noted above, regression likely is not the best way to analyze these data, as it can give misleading results when the independent variables are highly correlated.[30] Indeed, one published article posits that Gilens and Page's analyses are questionable for this very reason.[31] This is part of the rationale for our alternative approach. That being said, some readers may be interested in whether our results are the product of a change in the method of analysis, rather than a focus on the subset of cases in which rich and middle-income preferences diverge. We accordingly examine this possibility below.

We begin by reproducing the main result from Gilens and Page's article (Table 3 in that paper), using structural equation modeling to correct for measurement error. It is not clear (to us) that this is the correct approach with these data, as it may be that we are dealing with correlated preferences and not correlated errors,[32] and the choice makes a difference, as we can see from Gilens and Page's own analysis. To allow for both possibilities, we report results using the structural equation modeling approach as well as non-structural equation modeling. The substantive message is the same in each case: when we subset the data to only those observations where the rich and the middle disagree, it is unclear whose preferences matter, if public opinion matters at all.

Results are presented in Table A3. The first model (G&P) is the structural equation model for the full set of cases used by Gilens and Page. Here we see that we can get very close to reproducing their results. (There are still minor differences, due mainly to our use of a

structural equation model estimation in R rather than in AMOS.) Model 1 in Table A3 then shows our first analysis, this time in regression form: this is the same model as G&P, but limiting the analysis to the 185 observations in which a majority of the rich disagrees with a majority of the middle. Model 2 reproduces Model 1, but uses a binary version of the dependent variable. Finally, Models 3 and 4 are OLS and probit models corresponding to Models 1 and 2, but without a structural equation component.

[Table A3 about here]

Results from all regression-based models, SEM and non-SEM alike, are similar. All indicate that when we subset the data to only the cases where the rich and the middle disagree, we cannot tell whether rich or the middle income preferences make any difference whatsoever to policy outputs. This is as true when we treat the dependent variable as interval-level (Models 1 and 3) or binary (Models 2 and 4). It is as true in SEMs as in non-SEMs. Interestingly, the interest group variable is relatively large and statistically reliable in all of the models. If we take these results seriously, we would conclude that the preferences of the rich and middle play no role in policy outputs and that the preferences of interest groups dominate. (Of course, there is reason to be skeptical, as the unreliable coefficient estimates on the preferences of the rich and middle are likely due to their highly collinear nature, and one reason we do not believe that regression analysis is the best way to analyze these data.) An *F*-test of joint significance of the two rich and middle opinion coefficients in Model 4, for example, gives a *p* value of 0.269, which strongly suggests that opinion just does not matter when the rich and middle disagree.

These null results where the rich and middle disagree can be taken to imply that Gilens and Page's results are entirely driven by the differences in opinion where the rich and middle

agree. In other words, it's not whether (and how much) the rich and middle disagree but how much the rich and middle differ when they agree that matters. Also see Table A1.

Notes

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[7] Gilens and Page "Testing Theories" 2014, 576

[8] Stuart Soroka and Christopher Wlezien, "On the Limits to Inequality in Representation," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 41 (April 2008): 319-327 and Peter Enns and Christopher Wlezien, eds., *Who Gets Represented* (New York: Russell Sage 2011)

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[12] Wlezien and Soroka "Inequality" 2011

[13] Omar Bashir, "Testing Inferences about American Politics: A Review of the 'Oligarchy' Result," *Research and Politics* (October-December 2015): 1-7

[14] Gilens and Page "Testing Theories" 2014

[15] Gilens *Affluence and Influence* 2012

[16] Gilens and Page "Testing Theories" 2014, 576

[17] GIlens and Page "Testing Theories" 2014, and Larry Bartels *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009)

[18] Gilens and Page, "Testing Theories," 2014

[19] Gilens *Affluence and Influence* 2012, chap. 2

[20] *Ibid*

[21] Peter Enns, "Relative Policy Support and Coincidental Representation," *Perspectives on Politics* 13 (December 2015): 1053 – 1064.

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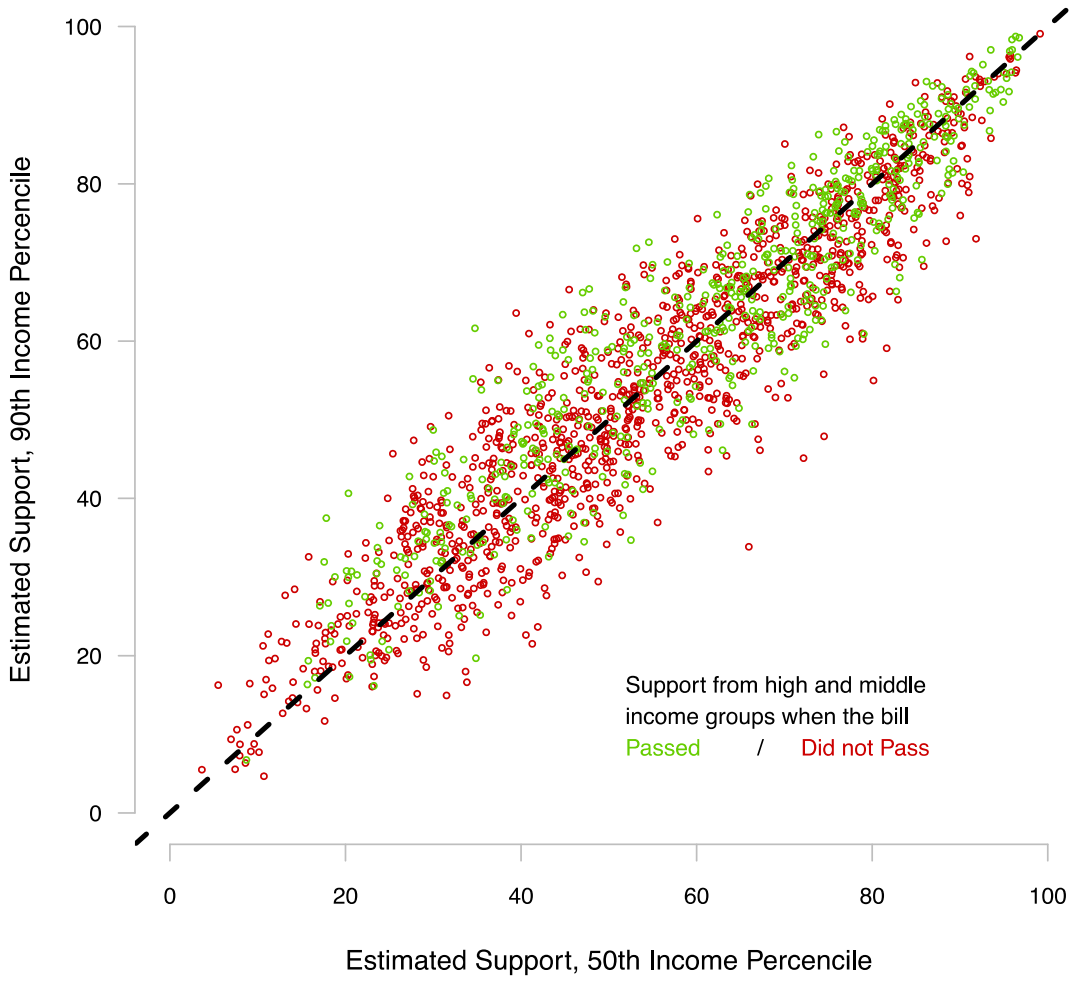
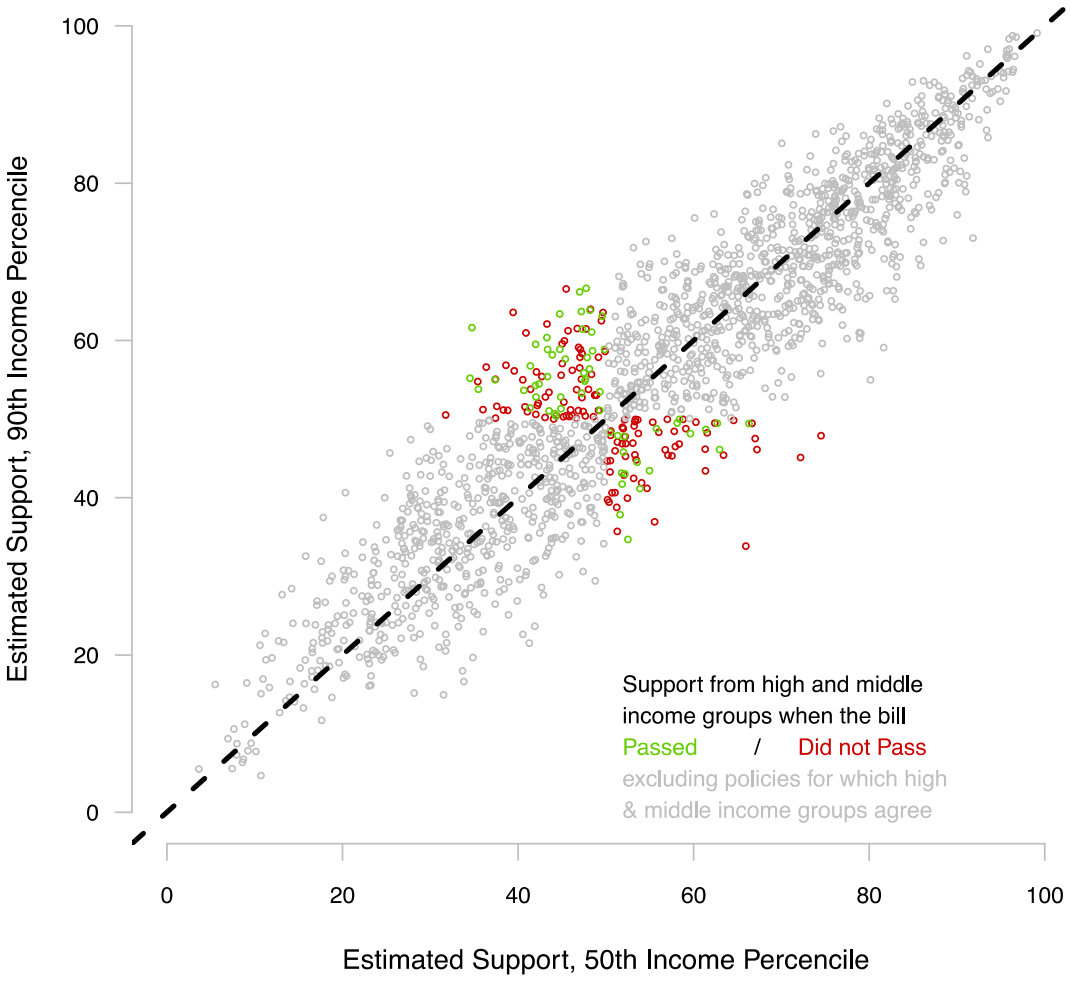
Figure 1. Policy Support for People with High and Middle Incomes, 1779 Issues



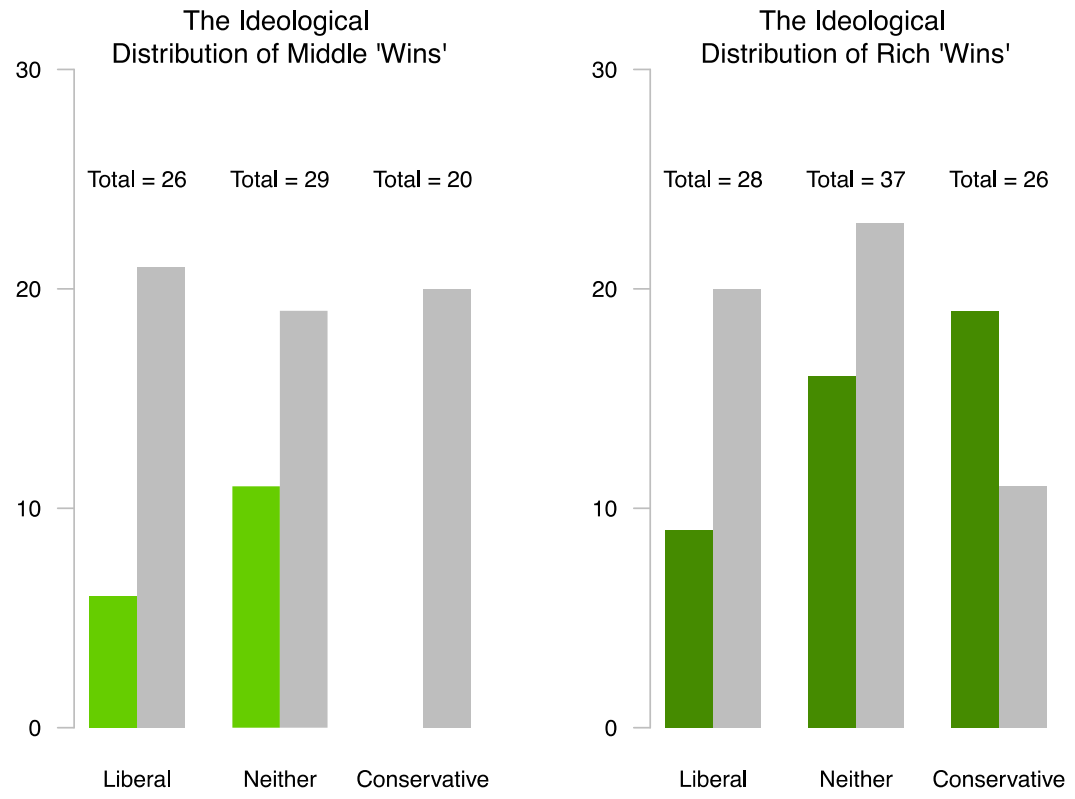
Source: Authors' analysis of Gilens data.

Figure 2. Issues where People with High and Middle Incomes Disagree



Source: Authors' analysis of Gilens data

Figure 3. The Ideological Orientation of Rich and Middle Income Policy Wins



Source: Authors' coding of subset of Gilens data. Green bars represent policies that passed, grey bars represent policies that were blocked. See Appendix for coding details.

Table 1. Policy Support for People with High and Middle Incomes

	Rich Oppose	*Rich Favor*
Middle Oppose	616	107
Middle Favor	78	978

Source: Authors' analysis of Gilens's data.
Each cell represents counts of policies that a majority of the group favors or opposes. Thus, both the rich and middle oppose 616 policies, for example.

Table 2. Policy Success when the People with High and Middle Incomes Disagree

	Middle Want	*Rich Want*	*Total Wins*	*Win Rate*
Middle Win	20	67	87	47.0%
Rich Win	58	40	98	53.0%

Source: Authors' analysis of Gilens' data.
This is the subset of all policies where the middle and the rich disagree. Thus, there are 20 policies that a majority of the middle want that a majority of the rich do not. The win rate is calculated by taking the group's total wins divided by the total number of policies (n=185).

Table 3. Wins across all policies by income group

	Blocked	*Passed*	*Passage Rate*
None Favor	416	130	23.8%
Poor Favor	57	13	18.6%
Middle Favor	15	9	37.5%
Rich Favor	56	35	38.5%
Middle/Poor Favor	43	11	20.4%
Rich/Poor Favor	11	5	31.2%
Rich/Middle Favor	64	33	34.0%
All Favor	529	352	40.0%

Source: Authors' analysis of Gilens data.
The top half of the table represents policies that either all groups oppose or only one out of the three favor. The bottom half represents policies that either all three favor or two of the three favor. Columns indicate whether the policy was passed or not. The passage rate is calculated by taking the proportion of policies that passed in each row.

Table A1. Strength of policy preferences

	Both Support		*Both Oppose*	
	Rich Support Greater	*Middle Support Greater*	*Rich Opposition Greater*	*Middle Opposition Greater*
Blocked	259	334	226	247
Passed	204	181	46	97

Source: Authors' analysis of Gilens data.
The two rows represent whether policies were passed or not. The four cells on the left are policies that a majority of both the rich and middle support, the four cells on the right are policies that both opposed.

Table A2. Economic vs Social Issues

	Economic		*Social*	
	Middle Favor	*Rich Favor*	*Middle Favor*	*Rich Favor*
Middle Win	3	12	16	53
Rich Win	16	4	39	33

Source: Authors' analysis of Gilens data.

This shows the policies that the rich and middle disagree on (the subset highlighted in Figure 2) broken down by economic issues (left side) and social issues (right side). The economic win rate is calculated by taking the total of that group's wins divided by the total number of economic issues that the two groups disagree on. The rich's win rate for economic issues is 57.1% and on social issues is 51.1%. A two-tailed difference of proportions test does not find a statistically significant difference between the win rates across the two groups of policies ($p = 0.738$).

Table A3. Regression Results

	Structural Equation Models			*Non-Structural Equation Models*	
	G&P	*Model 1*	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*
Middle Preferences	0.025	-0.498	-1.313	-0.237	-0.827
	(0.081)	(0.353)	(0.875)	(1.009)	(2.932)
Rich Preferences	0.764***	0.164	0.542	1.528	4.036
	(0.078)	(0.377)	(1.183)	(1.172)	(3.404)
Interest Groups	0.483***	0.645***	1.752***	0.549**	1.546**
	(0.075)	(0.239)	(0.532)	(0.241)	(0.716)
Constant				-0.444	-2.466
				(0.737)	(2.148)
R^2	0.071	0.049	0.081	0.059	
AIC					230.4
N	1779	185	185	185	185

* $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$.

Predictors are the logits of the imputed percent of respondents in favor of the policy at the 50th and 90th income percentiles. The interest group variable was created as described by Gilens and Page (2014). All predictors have been rescaled to range from 0 to 1.

G&P is the replication of Gilens and Page (2014), estimated using their methodology on the whole data.

Model 1 uses the same methodology but subsetting to just the 185 observations where the rich and middle disagree.

Model 2 explicitly models the binary nature of the dependent variable using asymptotic distribution free standard errors.

Model 3 uses simple OLS to estimate the model, subset to the 185 observations where they disagree.

Model 4 uses probit and no structural equation modeling.