How Do the Rich Rule?

Public Opinion, Parties, and Interest Groups in Unequal Policy Influence

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Economic inequalities are reflected in public policy: the American government's policy output is more consistent with the opinions of its richest citizens than with those of its poorest (Gilens 2012; Gilens and Page 2014). But scholars lack an understanding of the routes through which high-income citizens' opinions influence policy adoption in governing institutions. Why do public policy choices follow the opinions of high-income citizens, rather than the broader public? Through what channels are opinions translated into legislative and executive actions? I propose to study the mechanisms of high-income citizens' influence on policy adoption by clarifying where that influence is strongest and assessing whether political parties and interest groups mediate it.

I expect to show that the Democratic and Republican parties—along with advocacy groups and business lobbies—provide distinct routes to the influence of high-income citizens' opinions on policy adoption. Washington advocacy groups and the Democratic Party disproportionately represent the relatively liberal social issue views of high-income citizens. Rich citizens' support or opposition to policies in salient social issue areas like the environment and civil rights translate into more support from Democratic leaders and advocacy groups. Business lobbies and the Republican Party represent the relatively conservative economic views of high-income citizens and match their more frequent opposition to new policies, which translates into success in shaping economic policy.

I expect to find three indirect routes to rich citizens' disproportionate influence on policy: (1) block economically-liberal policy changes through more opposition from Republicans and business, (2) influence social issue policy adoption through the positions of most advocacy groups and Democrats, and (3) achieve lower-salience policy changes through high business support and lack of partisan opposition. I expect little direct influence of public opinion (at any income level) not mediated by political party and interest group positions. In addition to serving as conduits for high-income citizen views, however, parties' and groups' stances likely have independent influence.

These expectations originate in my prior research as well as work supported by the Russell Sage Foundation. In *Affluence and Influence*, Martin Gilens (2012) analyzes the relationships between policy adoption and support for policy changes among the public and interest groups and offers the first large-scale assessment of whether policymaking consistently aligns more with the opinions of the rich. Gilens finds that the levels of support from interest groups and citizens from the top decile of the income distribution predict policy adoption, but—after taking rich citizens' views into account—the opinions of median-income citizens have no effect. In a follow-up article, Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page (2014) argue that, largely independent of high-income citizens' influence, the level of support from business interest groups is more influential than that of advocacy groups.

In my new book, *Artists of the Possible*, I also find that broad public influence on major policy change is rare and interest group influence is common. I build on Gilens' contributions, but make two critiques. First, I argue that Gilens' universe of cases of possible policy adoption, based on questions asked in public opinion polls, is not representative of those considered in Congress. Second, I argue that parties and interest groups may account for the influence of high-income citizens' views on policy change in ways that Gilens' data does not allow him to evaluate.

To better understand the mechanisms of rich citizens' influence, I propose to supplement Gilens' dataset with new variables on interest group and party leader positions and proposal ideology and to connect it with issue subtopic data from the Policy Agendas Project (PAP). This will enable analyses of which proposals are subject to high-income citizens' influence as well as whether party and group positions explain the relationship between high-income opinion and policy adoption.

Importance of the Research Problem

The Russell Sage Foundation Social Inequality Program has long recognized the importance of political inequality in both reflecting and driving economic inequality. According to the foundation's history of the program, democratic theory expects that "rising inequality should lead to

a ground swell of popular support for legislation that taxes the rich and redistributes the proceeds."[1] But U.S. policy has moved in the opposite direction over the past 30 years—suggesting that the wealthy "exert more influence over the political process, over-riding the interests of poor and middle-income voters…further entrenching economic inequality." The major foundation-funded projects in this area establish the link between rich citizens' opinions and public policy and attempt to explain it (McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal 2007; Bartels 2008, Gilens 2012).

Both the Foundation and the scholars it supports recognize that the mechanisms of unequal policy influence are far from well established. As the Foundation's Working Group on The Political Influence of Economic Elites explains, "the scholarly research on money in politics has generally concluded that wealthy individuals and interests groups cannot simply 'buy votes' in institutions like Congress."[2] This necessitates addressing two unanswered questions: (1) "how do elites use their economic resources to influence political outcomes?" and (2) what "is the relationship between that influence and inequality?" The Working Group calls for research that seeks "to emphasize not just the presence of influence, but… empirically identifiable mechanisms of such influence," especially through mobilization of economic elite influence in "organizational activity."[3]

My project seeks to fill this hole in our understanding by analyzing how high-income citizens' influence manifests in political parties and interest groups. I expect that the typical views of rich citizens will find diverse channels for policy influence through disproportionate advocacy by the Republican and Democratic parties as well as liberal and conservative groups. Explaining how rich citizens influence government will illustrate how economic inequality affects political institutions and enable predictions of how social trends and possible reforms might fortify or ameliorate inequalities.

Central Investigations

The Issue Agenda. My first task is to establish whether prior findings of high-income citizens' influence are broadly applicable across the issue agenda. Gilens studies policy proposals mentioned

in public opinion survey questions but acknowledges biases in how pollsters select topics (Gilens 2012, 54-56). The sample of polled proposals, the "survey agenda," may differ from other universes of cases. Figure 1 reports distributions of congressional hearings and newspaper stories across five broad issue areas. For comparison with the public agenda, I use the distribution of answers to open-ended questions asking citizens for the "most important problem" facing the country. For comparison with the survey agenda, I categorize the survey questions assembled by James Stimson (2004) for his policy mood measures (which overlap with those in Gilens' data).

[Insert Figure 1 here]

Compared to the congressional and media agenda, the survey agenda is disproportionately concerned with social issues. The Gilens dataset, for example, includes 100 cases asking about gun control and 166 cases asking about religion, even though both are minor parts of the congressional agenda. In the economic sphere, the polling agenda includes more cases of general economics and welfare questions and less attention to business regulation issues like energy and finance. The survey agenda appears to draw more from the idiosyncratic interests of pollsters than from any known list of public or policymaker priorities. Prior research suggests that the congressional agenda is often based on internal considerations rather than public or media priorities (Grossmann 2014, Adler and Wilkerson 2013). If scholars are interested in the determinants of policy adoption within Congress, it makes sense to start from the universe of cases on the congressional agenda. Scholars may instead be interested in how public priorities make their way to Congress, in which case it makes sense to start from the issues on the public agenda. Yet either investigation requires connecting the Gilens dataset to known universes of cases, rather than relying on the survey agenda.

With clearer issue coding, we may find that high-income citizens' influence is limited to salient topics or to certain issue areas or—as I propose—that the routes to elite influence differ by issue area. The issue area categorization will also enable an analysis of whether Gilens' findings are

most applicable to issue areas that directly address economic inequality. We may find that high-income citizens' opinions are most influential in the very issue contexts where policy results might help the rich maintain their financial advantages, such as taxes and social welfare benefits.

Interest Groups as Mediators. My second task is to analyze the relationship between interest group positions and the influence of high-income citizens' opinions. Gilens (2012) finds that the influence of rich citizens and interest groups are largely orthogonal but Gilens and Page (2014) argue that the greater influence of business interests over advocacy groups constitutes another example of economic elite influence. Another possibility is that both sectors of the interest group community disproportionately represent a subset of issue opinions held primarily by high-income citizens. Business interests numerically dominate Washington, but the advocacy community outperforms its resource disadvantages in reputation and policy influence (Baumgartner et al. 2009; Grossmann 2014). This may fail to alter the balance of influence between socio-economic classes, however, because the opinions of the rich are better represented within both group sectors (Grossmann 2012; Strolovitch 2007). Of course, many issue debates feature business and advocacy groups on both sides; I am speaking of relative differences, rather than absolute group support or opposition.

By design, Gilens' dataset includes positions from many more business interests than advocacy groups. He began with a list of the interest groups with reputations for influence but appended an additional ten business industries. He excluded additional advocacy groups because "those groups are too broad or simply channel the preferences and resources of the individual members of the public that support the groups."[4] As a result, among the 35 most influential interest groups identified in my analysis of policy history (Grossmann 2014), Gilens includes all of the most influential business groups but only 3 out of the 25 most influential advocacy groups.

Advocacy groups and business interests take on different roles in the policymaking process. Business interests are more narrowly focused on blocking changes in industry regulation and tax

policies (Drutman 2015). Advocacy groups are more often credited with bringing about new policy change (Grossmann 2014). Table 1 reveals how these differences are evident in Gilens' data. Business interests opposed 75% more proposals than they supported; advocacy groups opposed only 43% more proposals than they supported. For both types of groups, the success rate for opposing proposals was much higher than that for supporting them. My research will disentangle the multiple routes for rich citizens' influence through interest group support and opposition.

[Insert Table 1 here]

Political Parties as Mediators. My third task is to better understand the role of Democratic and Republican leaders in representing the typical opinions of rich citizens and furthering their preferred outcomes. Party leaders have a direct role in determining policy; support from the President and congressional leaders can nearly guarantee success but clear opposition from one or both parties can doom proposals. Gilens (2012) investigates partisan effects by tracking the relationships between citizens' opinions and policy adoption during periods of Republican and Democratic control, but these patterns do not reveal whether each party's leaders led the fight for policies enacted during periods of their control (Gilens 2012, 178-190). Most landmark laws pass with majority support from both parties (Krehbiel 1998; Mayhew 2005). Rich citizens may influence policy by stimulating bipartisan consensus or by dividing the parties and making any policy change more difficult.

Although the parties disagree on many issues, they may each represent high-income opinion in some issue areas (*e.g.* Republicans on economics and Democrats on social issues) and take more proactive positions where their ideas line up with economic elites. Rising inequality can thus support polarized politics but fail to lead either party to consistently represent the opinions of the disadvantaged. Each partisan side may win in the issue areas where they share rich citizens' views, explaining the resilience of elite dominance in the face of polarization and rising inequality.

Levels of Support and Opposition. My final task is to assess the shape of the relationships: what degrees of public and group support are most associated with policy adoption? Gilens (2012, 33) finds that policy adoption is associated with the level of interest group support up until the point that more groups are supportive than opposed; then the association plateaus, making additional support unhelpful. Like groups, high-income citizens may be better equipped to block new policy changes than to bring them about. Policy proposals may be especially unlikely to be adopted if only 20% of rich citizens support them, but still not very likely to be adopted if 80% support them.

If the rich are mostly influential because they block policy, the culprit may be the structure of American government rather than the lack of representation for the poor. Low levels of high-income support, just like strong interest group opposition, may be particularly influential—and they may work in tandem to block new economic policies designed to address inequality. Gilens (2009, 76-77), after all, acknowledges that proposals stimulating significant opposition account for much of the influence of high-income opinion. Gilens (2012) nonetheless assesses linear independent relationships between support at each decile of the income distribution and policy adoption. Alternative specifications may show that the difference in influence is not as abrupt or that it is more important to avoid overwhelming opposition at any income level.

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of support for policy proposals at the median and 90th percentile in the Gilens dataset. Most proposals generate more support than opposition at both levels, but high-income citizens' opinions are more narrowly centered around 60% support whereas median-income opinion is distributed from 40% to 85% support. The lack of independent relationship between median opinion and policy adoption may be due, in part, to the lack of policy impact associated with moving beyond a clear majority of 60% support (as in the case of interest groups). Although the opinions of the high-income and median-income citizens are typically aligned

(and thus differences in their distributions are muted), I expect the differences to help explain why high-income citizens' opinions are heeded more than others.

[Insert Figure 2 here]

Theoretical Expectations

A long-running strain of political thought, elite pluralism, suggests that the American parties reflect competition among different sets of elites. Seymour Martin Lipset (1960) argued that the Democratic Party has traditionally been tied to intellectual elites, whereas the Republican Party has represented business elites. Lipset found that elites were disproportionately conservative on economic issues but liberal on civil liberties, race, and foreign affairs. As an extension of this view, I argue that each political party and interest group sector disproportionately represents the views of high-income citizens. Contrary opinions are also represented, but generate less organized activity on behalf of (or against) specific policy proposals. Each party and group sector is disproportionately active when they are in greater agreement with economic elites, a likely explanation for the association between elite opinion and policy adoption. This perspective offers clear hypotheses:

1. High-income citizens' influence is concentrated in opposition to liberal economic policy proposals and support for liberal social issue proposals. The divides in public opinion between high-income and median income voters are concentrated in the relative social liberalism and economic conservatism of the rich (Gilens 2012). Most of the proposals in Gilens' dataset are liberal by my definition: they suggest an expansion in the scope of government funding, regulation, or responsibility. In an analysis of cases on the congressional agenda (where economic issues are more common), I also expect the relative importance of high-income opposition to increase.

An initial analysis of the current dataset provides some clues. Table 2 lists the 50 proposals in the Gilens dataset with the largest differences in opinion between the 90th and 50th income percentiles (ranked in order of size of the difference). It also lists the level of support at each income

percentile, the number of interest groups who favored and opposed the policy, and whether it was adopted. Only 14 of the 50 proposals were adopted, even though the rich were more supportive than the middle class in over half of the proposals; the adoptions were concentrated in social issues (e.g. abortion and stem cell research) and foreign policy (e.g. international aid and trade agreements). The rich had more success when they were more opposed than the middle class: only two proposals with disproportionate high-income opposition were adopted. The blocked proposals concerned core policies affecting inequality: taxes, business regulation, and social welfare. The influence of the rich over the middle class is concentrated by issue area, with distinct positive and negative influences.

[Insert Table 2 here]

2. Interest groups and political parties mediate most of the influence of high-income citizens. My previous work (Grossmann 2014) and other recent analyses (e.g. Burstein 2014) show little direct relationship between public opinion and policy change. Instead, public ideas and interests are represented to different degrees by the advocacy and business communities (Grossmann 2012) and by the relatively stable group coalitions of the political parties (Bawn et al. 2012). High-income opinion is overrepresented in each interest group sector and incorporated into the networks of both political parties. The results in Table 2 point to this hypothesis: most interest groups in the current dataset disagree with the relative position of the rich to the middle class in only 9 out of 50 cases.

Based on the liberal and conservative preferences of economic elites, I expect their influence to work through three different channels: (1) through Republican leaders and business interests for opposition to economic policy proposals, (2) through Democratic leaders and advocacy groups for both support and opposition on social issues, and (3) through business interests and bipartisan acquiescence for low-salience economic policy proposals. These expectations are based on two observations: American institutions have an extreme status quo bias, especially on economic policy

(Baumgartner et al. 2009; Grossmann 2014), and liberal interests and politicians have driven the social issue agenda while largely abandoning their less successful economic agenda (see Berry 1999).

3. <u>The influence of high-income citizens' opinion is less than that of interest groups; both groups and citizens are better able to block policy change</u>. In addition to mediating the influence of rich citizens, interest groups are likely to directly influence policy adoption. Better measurement of advocacy group positions should show that their influence is on par with that of the business community (based on the findings from Baumgartner et al. 2009 and Grossmann 2014). I anticipate that the combined influence of both group sectors will overwhelm the influence of public opinion.

I expect an elite-driven policymaking process that draws little directly from the public, even its richest citizens. Direct group influence will be especially strong in areas of the congressional agenda that are underrepresented in the Gilens dataset while public influence is strongest in issue areas overrepresented in the dataset. The policy process reinforces inequality, in my view, because leaders fail to respond to public support for new policies in the face of organized opposition.

Research Design and Data Analysis Strategy

Gilens' dataset includes 1,863 possible policy changes associated with survey questions from 1981-2002. He tracks whether and when each change was adopted, estimates the level of public support by each decile of the income distribution, and reports whether it was supported or opposed by 10 industries (with the highest current spending on lobbying) and 33 interest groups (with reputations for influence reported in *Fortune* magazine from 1997-2001). Appendix A lists these groups and describes Gilens' procedures for case selection and coding for policy outcomes, public support at different income levels, and interest group support and opposition.

Policy issues made it into Gilens' dataset if a question from a reputable survey asked whether a specific proposal should be adopted by the national government. He estimated public support at different income levels directly from the survey results and gathered information on interest group

support and policy adoption from hundreds of news and congressional sources. The dataset is available online and Gilens has provided the materials used for coding interest group positions.

The interest groups and industries he tracks are representative of the most influential business interests by all prior measures I compiled. Yet Gilens includes few of the most influential advocacy groups that I identify in *Artists of the Possible*; the missing include all environmental, governmental, and civil rights groups and some of the top providers of congressional testimony.

Table 3 lists the interest groups that I will add to the dataset, using Gilens' protocols to append information on their support or opposition to each proposal. The table reports the number of landmark laws with which historians credit each group (from Grossmann 2014) and two other indicators of prominence: whether they are among the top 100 providers of congressional testimony and whether they are among the top 50 spenders on lobbying in their category. Since my book focused on domestic policy, I also add the three foreign policy groups that appear most frequently in Congress and on influence rankings. I will add the positions of all 26 groups to Gilens' dataset.[5] This will be manageable because most missing groups likely took positions on a small subset of issues.

[Insert Table 3 here]

The cases in the Gilens dataset are now categorized by an extemporary issue coding scheme. I will code them using the 20 topics and 220 subtopics in the PAP codebook.[6] The PAP provides extensive directions on how to code materials with their subtopics (at policyagendas.org) and has already coded many of the underlying survey questions in the Gilens data because they are also included in James Stimson's (2004) policy mood data. Adding PAP codes will require matching these poll questions as well as coding some original questions (using Gilens' topic codes as guides).

After coding by topic and subtopic, I will be able to separately analyze economic issue areas and social issue areas and study the specific determinants of proposals that may influence economic inequality. Beyond looking for differences across issue areas, the issue coding will enable me to

associate the Gilens data with existing PAP data at the subtopic-biennium-level, including the number of congressional hearings, media mentions, and "most important problem" responses. I have already compiled these variables and will append the higher-level data to the Gilens dataset.

Next, I will code each proposal for whether it was endorsed by the President and the party leaders in the House and Senate, allowing me to create a measure of each party's support. Appendix A contains the instructions for coding these variables, which I successfully applied in a prior research project to code policy proposals addressed by *Congressional Quarterly* (CQ) since 1981. I will also use a standard liberal/conservative scale (reproduced in Appendix A) to measure whether each proposal expands or contracts the scope of government regulation, spending, or responsibility (or falls somewhere in between). When I previously asked 150 experts to apply these same criteria in four issue areas, they reached wide agreement and my research assistants were able to match their estimates. I will use a folded version of this ideological scale to assess whether proposals that deviate further from the status quo are more difficult to adopt.

To illustrate the potential utility of the partisan coding scheme, Figure 3 depicts the distribution of partisan support in five major issue areas (based on my own analysis of issues mentioned in CQ). Some issue areas, such as Crime, have proposals with more Republican support, but most feature more support from Democrats; Republicans more often favor the status quo. In all issue areas, there are some proposals with bipartisan support—which is associated with very high adoption rates—and some that generate support from neither leadership. The ideological coding parallels the partisan coding somewhat, but there are usually many more proposals for government expansion into new areas than proposals for contraction of its responsibilities.

[Insert Figure 3 here]

The new variables I collect will enable several new analyses. I will replicate Gilens' models using the new interest group and party positions. To assess whether groups have more influence in

opposition, I will also create separate variables for whether any groups (or parties) take positions, the number of groups in favor, and the number of groups against. With these new variables, I will re-run all of the analyses in Gilens (2012) Chapter 5 as well as Gilens and Page (2014) Tables 2, 3, and 4.

Using multiple models with tests of mediation and model fit improvement, I expect to show that economic elite influence works primarily by affecting party and interest group support. Recent advances in mediation analysis have improved upon traditional methods by relaxing strong assumptions, incorporating uncertainty over a range of possible relationships, and assessing the sensitivity of findings to violations of core assumptions (Imai et al. 2011; Hayes 2013; Jose 2013). Newly developed statistical packages in Stata (Hicks and Tingley 2011) and R (Imai et a. 2010) enable implementing new tests of causal mediation and assessing sensitivity. For each finding of mediation, moderation, or conditionality, I will assess robustness across multiple assumptions and tests. Because the opinion poll questions are dated by year (and the party positions will be as well), I can also take advantage of temporal ordering to assess causal direction (Hayes 2013; Jose 2013).

I will next run new models where I weight cases in the dataset to match the issue subtopic distribution of the congressional agenda measured by hearings or bills. This will analyze the determinants of whether proposals on the congressional agenda are adopted. I will use similar analyses for the media and public agenda, lowering the risk that the idiosyncratic factors governing inclusion on public opinion surveys are driving Gilens' results. Using subtopic weights, I will re-run all analyses in Gilens (2012) Chapters 3 and 5 and Gilens and Page (2014) Tables 2-4. I expect to show that, due to an oversample of high salience social issues, Gilens' dataset overstates the influence of high-income public opinion and understates the influence of interest groups.

I will also use cross-level interactions between the salience of a subtopic (measured by media mentions in the appended PAP data) and public and interest group support for proposals. This will assess whether median or high-income preferences are more important for salient subtopics and

whether advocacy group or business influence is concentrated in less salient subtopics. I can also assess interactions between public and group support and (social or economic) issue domain.

I can then return to the mediation analyses using these interactions to test my theory that the routes of economic elite influence work through different parties and interest groups depending on salience, issue type, and ideology: Republican and business interest opposition will mediate high-income opinion on liberal economic proposals; business will mediate influence on less salient economic issues; Democratic and advocacy group support and opposition will mediate elite opinion on social issues. The results will uncover the multiple paths from elite opinion to policy influence.

Finally, I will better assess the shape of the relationship between public opinion and policy adoption using Generalized Additive Models (GAMs). Gilens estimates a linear effect (near zero) for the level of public support at the median income and a large linear effect for the level of public support at the 90th income percentile. The influence may be better modeled as curvilinear across the income distribution, which GAMs are designed to assess (Hastie and Tibshirani 1990; Wood 2006). Due to status quo bias (proposals are always easier to block than enact), I also expect a non-linear relationship between rich citizens' support and policy adoption. By incorporating penalized thin-plate regression splines (Wood 2003; Wood 2006), I can model non-linear effects across two dimensions (level of support and level of income) on policy adoption. I will thus obtain estimates of policy adoption probabilities at all levels of proposal support at all levels of the income distribution; the procedures can be implemented in R, following Wood (2006, 154-160 and 221-246). Using these more flexible methods, I will re-analyze the relationships modeled in Gilens (2012) Tables 3.1 and 4.3 and Gilens and Page (2014) Table 4.

The shape of the relationships is not merely of methodological interest. I may find that the influence of public opinion is limited to near-unanimity across income categories (suggesting that avoiding opposition at any income level is key and high-income citizens are simply more likely to be

in opposition). What is at stake is whether scholars can say that the opinions of the rich are disproportionately heeded while most citizens are ignored or whether this disjuncture arises due to distinct distributions of opinion.

Table 4 summarizes how the four central investigations I outlined at the beginning of this proposal are related to the specific analyses I have just reviewed. It also reveals the potential payoff to each investigation if the results are consistent with my expectations. Each investigation should improve understanding of economic inequality and political influence. Coding by issue subtopic will enable replicating Gilens' findings within the congressional and public agendas and assessing whether the influence of high-income opinion is stronger or takes different routes in salient topics or on social issues. Coding for interest groups allows assessment of differential mediation by advocacy groups and business interests and a new estimate of the combined influence of both types of groups. Adding partisan and ideological codes will show that each party disproportionately advocates high-income opinions, explaining why polarization can coincide with elite influence no matter who controls government. Specifying what levels of support are most important for policy adoption allows me to pinpoint whether opposition to policies most associated with income inequality is the main route to high-income influence.

[Insert Table 4]

The goal is to produce a more complete mapping of how high-income citizens' opinions influence the adoption of policy, both directly and through parties and interest groups. In the process, I will assess my hypotheses regarding the multiple paths of elite influence. I acknowledge that it is unlikely that I will be able to definitively uncover all of the mechanisms for the influence of the rich. Appendix B provides a full prioritization of my most important research tasks as well as contingency plans for the most likely difficulties. Although I will also face unforeseen challenges, I

am confident that I can improve on existing models and help researchers refine our understanding of the relationships between inequality and policymaking.

Further Assessing Gilens' Findings

Gilens' dataset is the largest compilation of public opinion polls and associated policy outcomes. It is the only available source that covers a long time period, includes information on public opinion at different income levels, includes interest group positions, and is readily extendable. In addition to my concerns regarding the representativeness of Gilens' sample, however, there are other noted limitations. Beyond data collection and management errors, Gilens made several key decisions (detailed in Appendix A) that may affect his results: he included duplicate cases of the same proposed policy change using survey questions from multiple years, he only coded if a proposal was adopted within four years of a survey question, and he treated all proposals as equivalently feasible. If Gilens' research design decisions and coding procedures are questionable, the field deserves a review of their impact on his reported results (especially given that popular and scholarly audiences construed the results as undermining the viability of American democracy). Starting from the existing dataset offers the best opportunity to examine the scope and limits of prior findings and explain the relationships that Gilens uncovered.

To assess data quality, I will conduct a thorough re-examination of Gilens' interest group and outcome codes for a large sample of cases. If I uncover systematic or regular errors, I will recode and correct the entire dataset. Gilens reports high reliability estimates for his outcome and public opinion measures (reproduced in Appendix A) but he did not assess inter-coder reliability for his interest group codes. I will ask multiple coders to assess interest group support and opposition for the same subset of proposals in order to produce inter-coder reliability measures.

To assess the sensitivity of prior findings, I will produce several evaluations of the impact of Gilens' coding decisions. First, I will analyze how the results change when varying the length of the

time window available for policy adoption (to address concerns that Gilens used an arbitrary lag function). If necessary, I can also re-code all cases for whether they were ever adopted and re-run the analyses. Second, to address concerns regarding Gilens' decisions to include duplicate survey questions from different years (explained in Appendix A), I will match all repeated proposals in the dataset and collapse them into single cases, creating a smaller dataset of only unique proposals. I will average the levels of public and interest group support across instances of the same proposal. With the collapsed dataset (likely reduced in size by ~30%), I will replicate all of Gilens' models and my new models. Third, to adjust for political difficulty, I will use a folded version of the ideological code to control for proposals that represent larger deviations from the status quo. Fourth, comparing bill passage rates by issue subtopic, I will investigate whether the political feasibility of Gilens' sample of proposals systematically differs from others on the congressional agenda.

Project Work Plan

I have budgeted for help from three graduate students working half time for one year and three undergraduate students working for one academic year. The project is scheduled to begin on June 15, 2015 but I will begin preparations prior to that date. I have already familiarized myself with the Gilens dataset, added new variables, and replicated his analyses. By June, I will make several other advances: (1) practice new mediation analyses and GAMs in R using the existing dataset, (2) refine the coding materials in Appendix A for use with this project, (3) identify and hire the best student researchers to assist on the project, (4) complete a more extensive literature review and theory building exercise, and (5) prepare more instructions and troubleshooting guides for students.

In summer 2015, my graduate student researchers will begin coding Gilens' cases for interest group and party positions, ideological direction, and policy agendas subtopics. In June and July, multiple coders will code all variables for 200 random cases, providing inter-coder reliability estimates and codebook refinements. I will use my summer time on the project for a pilot test of all

of the proposed analyses on the first 200 cases. The preliminary analyses will have low statistical power, but will provide complete logs of the commands necessary for each set of tests, allow me to troubleshoot any difficulties, and provide hints about fruitful analyses.

In August 2015, the graduate students should make substantial progress on all four coding exercises and help prepare guidance for undergraduate research assistants to be hired in September. Based on prior experience, I believe undergraduates will be most useful for coding interest group positions and policy subtopics but I would like to use graduate students for coding party leader positions and proposal ideology (because these codes require closer attention).

Table 5 reports my estimates for the time required to complete these tasks based on similar tasks in my previous projects. I expect undergraduate coders to complete work more slowly, but my time estimates generously allow more than an hour for coding each proposal for policy topic and interest group positions. I have budgeted a bit less than an hour per proposal for graduate students to complete the party leader positions and the ideological scale. Table 5 also includes the summer hours that the graduate students will dedicate to the interest group and policy agendas codes.

[Insert Table 5]

Based on my time estimates for three graduate students over the summer and six (graduate and undergraduate) students in the fall, I expect all coding of 1,863 cases to be completed by December 2015. This will allow me to move forward with all of the proposed analyses in the spring of 2016. It will also leave approximately one third of my budgeted undergraduate and graduate student hours to be used for data checks and for gathering qualitative materials for writing reports.

Publications and Data Release

I envision multiple peer-reviewed journal articles and public presentations of the findings. I will present at multiple conferences and submit journal articles to top general interest political science journals before the end of 2016 (though after the grant's end date). One article will cover the

different ways that each political party and interest group sector represents the views of rich citizens in a subset of issue areas. A second will map prior findings regarding the role of inequality in policymaking onto the issue agenda, showing where unequal influence is concentrated and how it is achieved in each domain. A third paper will focus on the policy areas directly tied to inequality, assessing how rising inequalities in the public and among interest groups may be self-reinforcing through their joint impact on policy. Consistent with the principles of the Foundation, I may eventually propose a book (tentatively titled *How Do the Rich Rule?*) integrating these findings.

I will also promote findings via newspaper op-eds, blog posts, and social media. Given that the Gilens and Page (2014) study was highly publicized, I expect substantial media interest in a follow-up project. I will also release all datasets on the foundation's website, alongside read me files, coding instructions, variable descriptions, and sample statistical software input. To enable future analyses, the dataset will be fully integrated with Gilens' dataset and with the PAP data.

Budget Justification

My budget is outlined in Appendix C and in an Excel file; both use the standard Michigan State University (MSU) format. The total budget is $132,915. This includes: $11,275 for 1/9 summer salary for me for one year plus an $863 required summer fringe benefit; $43,348 to fund research support by two half-time advanced-level doctoral students for one year (26 pay periods at $833.61 per student); $6,092 for graduate student health insurance costs ($1,523 per student per semester); and $54,000 for 3,600 hours of undergraduate student work at a $15 hourly rate (equivalent to three students working half-time for 20 weeks). I added indirect costs of 15% ($17,337) to a total direct cost of $115,578. This will provide approximately 2,080 graduate student hours, 3,600 undergraduate student hours, and 160 faculty hours (though I will contribute many more).

The Department of Political Science at MSU will offer a substantial matching component totaling $59,637 for this project. It will provide $23,278 for the required tuition and fees for two

semesters and the summer for the two graduate students supported by the foundation ($11,639 per student). It will also provide $36,359 in funding for an additional half-time advanced-level graduate student for the full year ($21,674 for stipend, $3,046 for health insurance, and $11,639 for tuition and fees), increasing the total graduate student hours to 3,120.

I estimated time requirements based on my prior experiences with similar data (summarized in Table 4). To produce reliable and nuanced analyses, I also budgeted substantial time for data checks and troubleshooting. Relying on undergraduate researchers is most cost-effective for coding but graduate student expertise is required for data integration and analysis and for more difficult coding tasks. Given our graduate program specializations, the three PhD students I hire will each come with experience using data from the PAP or Gilens' dataset.

Qualifications

I am an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at Michigan State University and hold a doctorate from the University of California, Berkeley. I have published 5 books and 22 journal articles. I won the Emerging Scholar Award from the Midwest Political Science Association in 2013. My first book, *The Not-So-Special Interests*, analyzed which public groups generate organized interests to speak on their behalf and which organizations succeed in representing them. My second book, *Artists of the Possible*, analyzed trends in American public policy since 1945 and their determinants. My most cited journal article looks at the relationship between interest groups and the two major parties, connecting their electoral and legislative coalitions. My *Journal of Politics* article assesses differences in the influence of parties, interest groups, and public opinion across issue areas. In prior projects, I have managed research teams of graduate and undergraduate students, used the datasets referenced here, and applied content analysis coding schemes similar to those I propose to apply here.

[1] Russell Sage Foundation, "Social Inequality – A History of the Program." Available at:

http://www.russellsage.org/research/social-inequality-detailed (accessed 10/14/14).

[2] Russell Sage Foundation, "The Political Influence of Economic Elites." Available at:

http://www.russellsage.org/research/social-inequality/political-influence-economic-elites (accessed

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[3] Russell Sage Foundation, "The Political Influence of Economic Elites." Available at:

http://www.russellsage.org/research/social-inequality/political-influence-economic-elites (accessed

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[4] This is taken from a document called "Representational Inequality Data Coding" that is distributed

with the Martin Gilens dataset, "Economic Inequality and Political Representation." Available at:

http://www.russellsage.org/sites/all/files/u137/Representational%20Inequality%20Data%20Codin

g.pdf (accessed 10/14/14).

[5] Some of the groups in my list and in Gilens' dataset do not take official positions on legislation or

may have conflicting views among their leadership. Nonetheless, even when groups like think tanks

have no official position, they often appear as clear supporters or opponents in Congressional

testimony, floor debate, or media coverage. Like all groups in the current dataset, the additional

groups will not have a clear position on most policy proposals but—even those that lack official

positions—will have discernable and important positive or negative roles in many debates.

[6] The Policy Agendas Project codebook is available at: http://www.policyagendas.org/page/topic-

codebook (accessed 10/16/14). It has been used in dozens of scholarly articles and books, collected
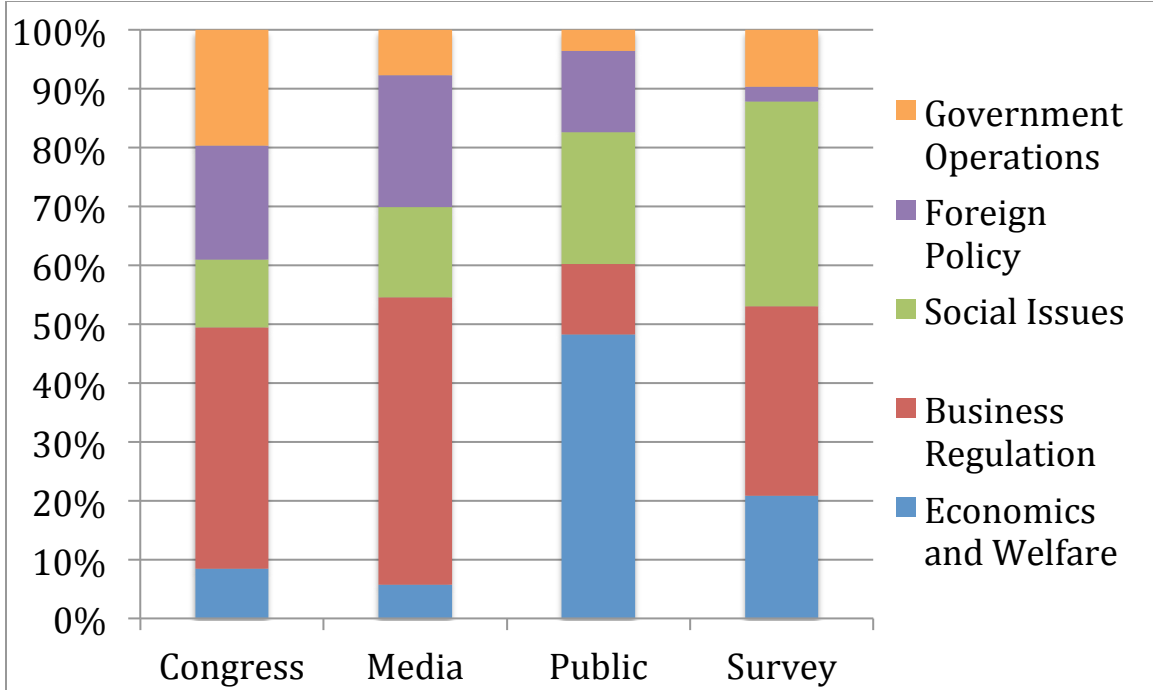
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Figure 1: Issue Agendas of Congress, the Media, the Public, and Survey Questions

The figure reports the percentage of congressional hearings, New York Times stories, "most important problem" answers, and public opinion survey questions that fall into each issue area category, based on data from the Policy Agendas Project. Because the Gilens' dataset is not yet coded by these subtopics, I use survey questions collected by James Stimson to analyze the survey agenda; there is substantial overlap between the two populations, but some differences. My issue area classifications are composed of the following issue area major topic codes: Economics and Welfare (1, 13, 14), Business Regulation (3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 15, 17), Social Issues (2, 6, 9, 12), Foreign Policy (16, 18, 19), Government Operations (20, 21).

Table 1: Interest Group Support and Opposition in Gilens Dataset

	Average # Proposals Supported	Average # Proposals Opposed	Support Success Rate	Opposition Success Rate
Business/Professional	58.5	102.7	54.8%	75.1%
Advocacy/Union	58.2	83.1	38.0%	71.6%

The table reports the average number of proposals supported and opposed by two different categories of interest groups: 1) business associations, industries and professional associations and 2) advocacy organizations and unions. It also reports the percentage of time that the policy result matches their support or opposition. These data are from the author's analysis of the Economic Inequality and Political Representation project by Martin Gilens, available at: <http://www.russellsage.org/research/data/economic-inequality-and-political-representation>

Figure 2: Histograms of Support for Policies at the 50th and 90th Income Percentiles
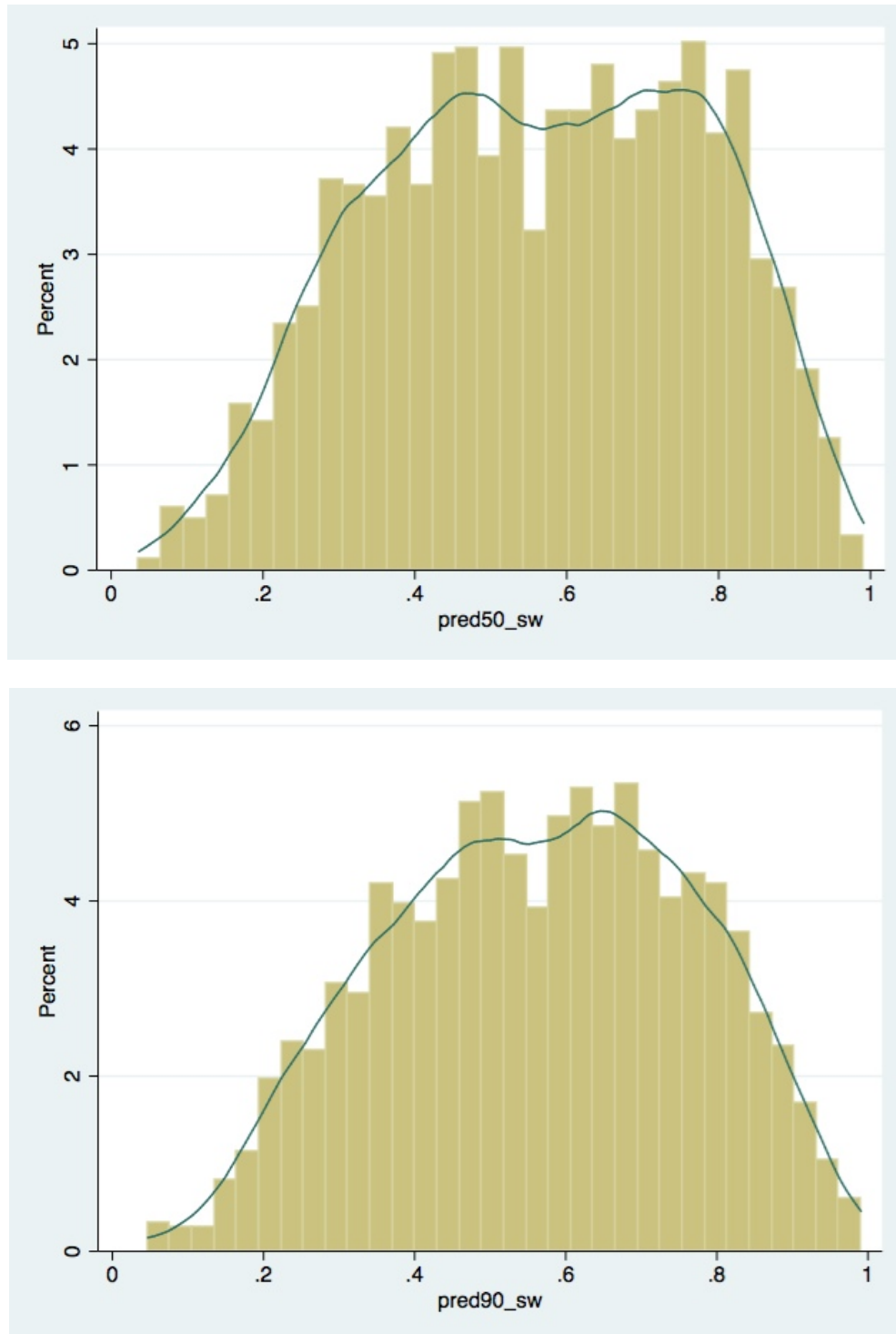
The figures are histograms with kernel density plots of the distribution of support for policy adoption at the median income (top) and the 90th income percentile (bottom). These data are from the author's analysis of the Economic Inequality and Political Representation project by Martin Gilens, available at: <http://www.russellsage.org/research/data/economic-inequality-and-political-representation>

Table 2: Policy Proposals with Largest Difference Between Rich and Middle Class Opinion

Question Text	Survey Year	Policy Result	Groups Favor	Groups Oppose	Median Income Support	Top Decile Support
Some Republicans and Democrats in Congress have proposed some spending and tax changes in order to reduce the record federal deficit. To cut the size of the federal deficit, would you favor or oppose: Raising the federal income taxes of those earning $35,000 and over by 4% a year for the next two years	1982	No	3	1	66%	34%
Now I would like to mention several proposals that have been made to help solve America's energy problems. For each one, please tell me whether you favor or oppose that proposal: Place federal price controls on electricity and natural gas?	2001	In Part	2	0	65%	37%
Would you favor or oppose a law which required an employer to give a year's notice to the employees before closing down the place where they work?	1985	No	7	4	72%	45%
As you may know, Mexico and the United States have negotiated a free trade agreement that, if agreed to, will loosen many of the restrictions, laws and controls that now govern commerce between the two countries. Do you favor or oppose the free trade agreement between Mexico and the United States, or haven't you heard enough about the proposal to say?	1993	Yes	4	11	35%	62%
I am going to read you a list of some ways that have been suggested to deal with the future financial problems of Social Security. For each one, please tell me if you would favor or oppose such a proposal: Increasing taxes on Social Security benefits for those earning more than $75,000?	1999	No	1	0	75%	48%
The federal payroll tax is used to finance the Social Security system and every working person who is covered by Social Security pays it. Would you favor or oppose cutting the payroll taxes of those families and individuals earning $60,000 or lower and increasing the payroll taxes of those families and individuals earning over $60,000?	1991	No	2	0	80%	55%
Thinking about Social Security, do you favor or oppose investing a portion of Social Security tax funds in the stock market?	1997	No	1	1	39%	64%
I'm going to name some of the specifics in the economic plan (President Bill Clinton's). For each one please tell me whether you support or oppose that part of the plan: a new federal income tax rate of 36 percent for families with household incomes over$ 180,000	1993	No	3	1	82%	59%

Do you favor or oppose: The federal government creating a government-owned and operated oil corporation to keep the private oil companies honest in their pricing and their operations	1990	No	1	0	67%	46%
Recently President Bush announced his support for a 24 billion dollar international aid program for the Republics of the former Soviet Union, which would include 4 billion dollars provided by the United States. Do you favor or oppose the United States providing this aid?	1992	No	0	5	45%	67%
Some people say a Free Trade Agreement with Mexico would be good for the United States because it would help the U.S. economy by expanding exports. Others say it will be bad for the U.S. because it will end up costing the U.S. jobs. Do you favor or oppose the Free Trade Agreement with Mexico?	1992	Yes	4	11	35%	55%
Before Clinton left office he set aside millions of acres of federal lands as national monuments, saying they are environmentally important areas that should be protected from development. Aides to President Bush say the new administration may change some of those orders and open the land to commercial use, such as mining, logging and off-road vehicles. Would you support or oppose opening up these lands to commercial use?	2001	Yes	0	2	20%	41%
There has been discussion in Washington about how to keep the Medicare program financially sound for future generations. Congress is now considering several proposals to reduce the costs of the program. As I read each, tell me whether you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose it.... Gradually raise the age at which one is eligible for Medicare from 65 to 67	1997	No	1	0	25%	46%
The Republicans in Congress have proposed changing Medicare so that seniors would receive vouchers with which they could purchase private health insurance, instead of receiving insurance directly from the government as they do now. Supporters say that this plan will give seniors more choices in health care coverage and reduce costs. Opponents say that vouchers will not pay for the coverage Medicare now provides, so seniors will have to pay more or receive less coverage under this plan. Do you favor or oppose this proposed change in Medicare?	1995	No	1	1	36%	57%
Another suggestion for reducing the problem of global warming is to increase the use of nuclear power as a source of energy and to decrease the use of fossil fuels, such as oil and gas. Would you, personally, favor or oppose the increased use of nuclear power as a source of energy in order to prevent global warming?	1997	No	0	3	41%	61%

Question	Year	Yes/No				
(Next, please tell me whether you generally approve or disapprove of each of the following.)... Establishing quotas which require schools to admit a certain number of minorities and women as students	1995	No	0	0	41%	22%
Negotiators from the White House and Congress are trying to come up with an agreement on both spending cuts and tax increases in order to cut the federal budget deficit by $23 billion. Tell me if you favor or oppose each of these provisions: Raising energy taxes	1987	Yes	13	0	18%	37%
Please tell me if you support or oppose each item I name. Do you support or oppose...reducing spending on entitlement programs like Medicare and Social Security?	1997	No	3	0	28%	47%
There have been many proposals made over the years to regulate abortion. Would you favor or oppose requiring a test to make sure that the fetus is not developed enough to live outside the womb before a woman could have an abortion?	1998	No	3	2	67%	48%
Because of the growing federal budget deficit, some lawmakers say that the federal income tax cuts that are scheduled to take effect in coming years should be cancelled or postponed. Other lawmakers say that those tax cuts should go ahead as planned to stimulate the economy. What do you think the federal government should do--suspend those scheduled tax cuts or continue with the tax cuts as currently planned?	2002	No	23	0	30%	49%
As you may know, government experts say that because the baby boom generation is so large, Social Security will begin to run out of money when those who are in their forties and fifties retire. To solve that problem a federal advisory committee has come up with three different proposals to keep the retirement fund solvent. Would you please tell me whether you favor or oppose each of those plans. For example... the first plan would keep the current Social Security system as is, but it would have the government invest about forty percent of Social Security revenue in the stock market rather than in government bonds as is currently done. Do you favor or oppose this plan?	1997	No	1	1	35%	55%
Do you favor or oppose the government's approval of RU-486, the so-called abortion pill, which a woman will be able to take under the supervision of a doctor, and which will allow her to terminate her pregnancy as an alternative to a surgical procedure?	2000	No	3	2	49%	29%
Do you favor or oppose expanding women's access to early abortion options such as the French abortion pill, RU-486?	2000	Yes	2	3	47%	66%
As you may know, Mexico and the United States are negotiating a free trade agreement that, if agreed to, will loosen many of the restrictions, laws and controls that now govern commerce between the two countries. Do you favor or oppose the free trade agreement between Mexico and the United States, or haven't you heard enough about the proposal to say? (If favor or oppose) Is that (favor/oppose) strongly or (favor/oppose) somewhat?	1992	Yes	4	11	48%	67%

(I'm going to mention some specific things President (Bill) Clinton proposed in his economic address (to Congress February 17, 1993) as part of his program to improve the nation's economy and reduce the federal budget deficit. For each, would you please tell me if you favor or oppose this particular part of his proposal.)... In order to help reduce the federal budget deficit, Clinton proposed raising the top income rate from 31 to 36 percent for families earning more than$ 180,000 a year and for individuals earning$ 140,000 a year. Do you favor or oppose this part of Clinton's economic program? (If favor or oppose) Is that (favor/oppose) strongly or (favor/oppose) somewhat?	1993	No	3	1	92%	73%
Do you favor or oppose establishing a school voucher program that would allow parents to use tax funds to send their children to the school of their choice, even if it were a private school?	1996	No	1	1	43%	62%
I'm going to give you some information about how Medical Savings Accounts would work, and then ask your opinion of them. Medical Savings Accounts would allow employers to purchase plans with lower premiums that would only provide coverage after the employee pays about...$ 5,000 a year in medical bills. Any savings the employer gets by offering this less expensive plan could be put into the employee's tax-free medical savings account, which could be used to help pay the first...$ 5,000...in medical bills or any additional medical expenses. If it is not spent, it could be withdrawn as additional taxable income or saved to spend on next year's medical bills. Supporters of Medical Savings Accounts say this will lower individuals' health care costs because it would give individuals the incentive to spend their own money more carefully. They also say this would reduce hassle for people to go to a doctor of their own choice without getting the approval of the insurance company. Opponents say that because people would have to pay the first...$ 5,000...for doctor and hospital visits at the time they receive care, Medical Savings Accounts would discourage people from getting needed services and preventive care. They also say that because healthier people are more likely to sign up for Medical Savings Accounts, this would leave sicker people paying higher premiums. After hearing these arguments, do you favor or oppose this proposed legislation to create Medical Savings Accounts, or don't you know enough about these issues to have an opinion?	1996	No	2	3	32%	51%
President Reagan wants to close down the Department of Education. Do you favor or oppose closing down the Department of Education?	1981	No	1	0	30%	49%
Would you favor or oppose a limit on the amount of his own money that a presidential candidate can spend on his campaign?	1992	No	36	3	74%	56%

Question	Year	Answer				
I'm going to name some of the specifics in (President Bill) Clinton's orders to cut costs in the federal government. For each one, please tell me if you support or oppose it. How about... reducing the number of people in the U.S. (United States) armed forces from 1.8 million now to 1.4 million by 1997? Do you support or oppose it?	1993	Yes	1	0	53%	72%
(As I read from a list of proposals tell me if you favor or oppose each that I read?)... The U.S. (United States) giving financial aid to Russia	1992	Yes	0	5	45%	63%
As you know, Congress has been voting on a budget for next year. They want to try to keep the federal deficit as low as possible, but also provide for those groups who are in real trouble because of the state of the economy. Would you favor or oppose: Providing federal money to give new home buyers lower mortgage rates	1982	No	0	3	79%	60%
On the whole, do you favor or oppose our giving economic aid to nations for purposes of economic development and technical assistance?	1990	No	0	0	56%	37%
Last year, the Congress finally approved $100 million in military and other aid to the Contras in Nicaragua after initially refusing to authorize such aid. Would you favor or oppose the U.S. once again sending $100 million in military and other aid to the Contras in Nicaragua?	1987	Yes	0	0	35%	54%
Do you think the federal government should or should not fund this type of research, or don't you know enough to say?	2001	In Part	2	0	62%	80%
(Here are some other proposals the Republicans in Congress have made. For each one, please tell me whether you favor or oppose it.) Prohibiting doctors and health-care workers at federally funded clinics from discussing abortion with their patients as a family planning option.	1994	No	3	2	42%	24%
One of the issues involved in this type of research is whether or not the embryos used were developed specifically for stem cell research. Do you think the federal government should or should not allow scientists to fertilize human eggs specifically for the purpose of creating new stem cells?	2001	No	2	0	39%	57%
Recently, several alternative programs have been put forth to help families in America cope with child care costs and burdens. Would you favor or oppose (READ EACH ITEM)? Item: The program proposed by the Democrats in Congress, in which direct financial assistance is given to families, who earn below the state median income, to pay for child care services for children up to age 15. This act would also provide funding to upgrade salaries and provide training for child care workers, and make money available for low cost loans to upgrade child care facilities so that they'll be in compliance with licensing requirements	1988	Yes	0	0	79%	61%

President Bush recently announced that the United States will join six other nations in providing financial aid and loans, as well as food, humanitarian and technical assistance to the former Soviet Union. Generally speaking, do you favor or oppose this plan?	1992	Yes	0	5	55%	73%
(READ SLOWLY) This year Congress is considering a bill which would place restrictions on the import of Japanese and other foreign cars into the United States. Any Japanese or other foreign auto manufacturer who sells over 100,000 new cars in this country would no longer be allowed to ship in an unlimited number of cars made abroad. Any cars above the 100,000 level will have to either be manufactured in this country or have an important percentage of American-made parts. Opponents of that bill say it would be the beginning of a trade war that would end up with restrictions by other countries on importing goods from the U.S. All in all, do you favor or oppose passage by Congress of this bill restricting imports to this country of foreign-made cars?	1983	No	1	1	63%	45%
Some people think the government should set formal guidelines limiting the amount of violence shown in television entertainment shows. Others think such limits would be an unconstitutional infringement on the media's right to free expression. Would you favor or oppose establishing formal government guidelines for limiting the amount of violence shown in television entertainment shows? (If favor/oppose ask:) Do you (favor/oppose) that strongly or (favor/oppose) that somewhat?	1993	No	1	0	61%	43%
As you may know, bills have been introduced in the House and Senate in Washington which would grant Elian Gonzales US citizenship, or give him permanent resident status. Would you favor or oppose the passage of such a law by Congress?	2000	No	0	0	41%	23%
(Here is a list of changes many people would like to make in the current welfare system. For each idea I read, please tell me whether you favor or oppose that change.)... Increase the minimum wage to make work a more attractive alternative to welfare	1992	No	5	4	79%	61%
As you know, as a part of the settlement of the war in Lebanon, in order to get the PLO, Israel, and Syria out of that country and allow the Lebanese to rule themselves again, the U.S., France, Great Britain, and Italy sent in troops there on a peace- keeping mission. In the fighting going on there now, several U.S. Marines have been killed and wounded. In addition, U.S. naval ships have fired at Lebanese gun emplacements that were shooting at our Marines. Do you favor or oppose the U.S. having Marines in Lebanon as part of an international peace-keeping force?	1983	Yes	1	0	53%	35%

|						
I'm going to name some of the specifics in (President Bill) Clinton's orders to cut costs in the federal government. For each one, please tell me if you support or oppose it. How about... raising the federal corporate tax on large businesses from 34 percent to 36 percent? Do you support or oppose it?	1993	No	20	1	83%	65%
Do you favor or oppose the government offering parents money or vouchers to send their children to private or religious schools, or public schools outside their district?	1999	No	1	1	37%	55%
Do you favor or oppose the North American Free Trade Agreement with Mexico and Canada that eliminates nearly all restrictions on imports, exports, and business investment between the United States, Mexico, and Canada? If you feel you have not heard enough about this issue yet to have an opinion, please just say so.	1993	Yes	4	11	37%	55%
Would you favor or oppose in the future these following changes in the way the President's health care is looked after? A special panel of the best experts should be appointed to make sure the President has the best doctors taking care of him	1985	No	0	0	70%	53%
Do you favor or oppose the North American Free Trade agreement with Mexico and Canada that eliminates nearly all restrictions on imports, exports, and business investments between the United States, Mexico, and Canada?	1993	Yes	4	11	42%	60%
The kind of stem-cell research the government is considering involves human embryos that have been created in medical clinics by fertilizing a woman's egg outside the womb. An embryo may be implanted into a woman's womb to develop into a baby. If an embryo is not implanted into a woman's womb to develop into a baby, it may be destroyed, either by being discarded or by being used for medical research. Some scientists believe this type of medical research could lead to treatments for such diseases as Alzheimer's, diabetes, heart disease and spinal cord injuries. Given this information, do you think the federal government should or should not fund this type of research?	2001	In Part	2	0	53%	70%

The table lists the 50 survey questions from the Gilens dataset with the most disagreement between the opinions of the 90th income percentile and the opinions of the 50th income percentile, ranked in order of degree of disagreement. The table reports the year the survey question was asked, whether the associated policy was coded as adopted, the number of interest groups coded for and against the proposal, and the level of support for the proposal at the 50th and 90th income percentile. These data are from the author's analysis of the Economic Inequality and Political Representation project by Martin Gilens, available at: <http://www.russellsage.org/research/data/economic-inequality-and-political-representation>

Table 3: Influential Interest Groups Not Included in the Gilens' Dataset

	# Landmark Laws Credited to Group by Policy Historians	Top Congressional Testimony Provider	Top Lobbying Spender
NAACP	22	Yes	No
U.S. Conference of Mayors	15	Yes	No
American Civil Liberties Union	13	Yes	Yes
Sierra Club	8	Yes	Yes
National Urban League	6	Yes	No
National Farmers Union	6	Yes	No
National Organization for Women	6	No	No
National League of Cities	5	Yes	No
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights	5	No	No
Brookings Institution	4	Yes	No
National Council of Churches	4	No	No
American Cancer Society	4	Yes	No
Americans for Democratic Action	4	No	No
Wilderness Society	4	Yes	No
National Association of Counties	3	Yes	No
American Enterprise Institute	3	Yes	No
Common Cause	3	Yes	Yes
Public Citizen	3	Yes	No
Natural Resources Defense Council	3	Yes	No
National Academy of Sciences	2	Yes	No
American Bar Association	2	Yes	Yes
American Conservative Union	2	Yes	No
Americans for Tax Reform	2	No	Yes
Center for Strategic and Int'l Studies		Yes	No
Council on Foreign Relations		Yes	No
Carnegie Endowment for Int'l Peace		Yes	No

The table reports the names of influential interest groups, the number of significant policy changes for which policy historians credited them (based on the analysis in Artists of the Possible), whether they were one of the top 100 providers of congressional testimony (based on the analysis in The Not-So-Special Interests) and whether they were one of the top 50 business or top 50 non-business lobbying spenders based on lobbying disclosure data.

Figure 3: Distributions of Party Support for Major Legislation Across Issue Area
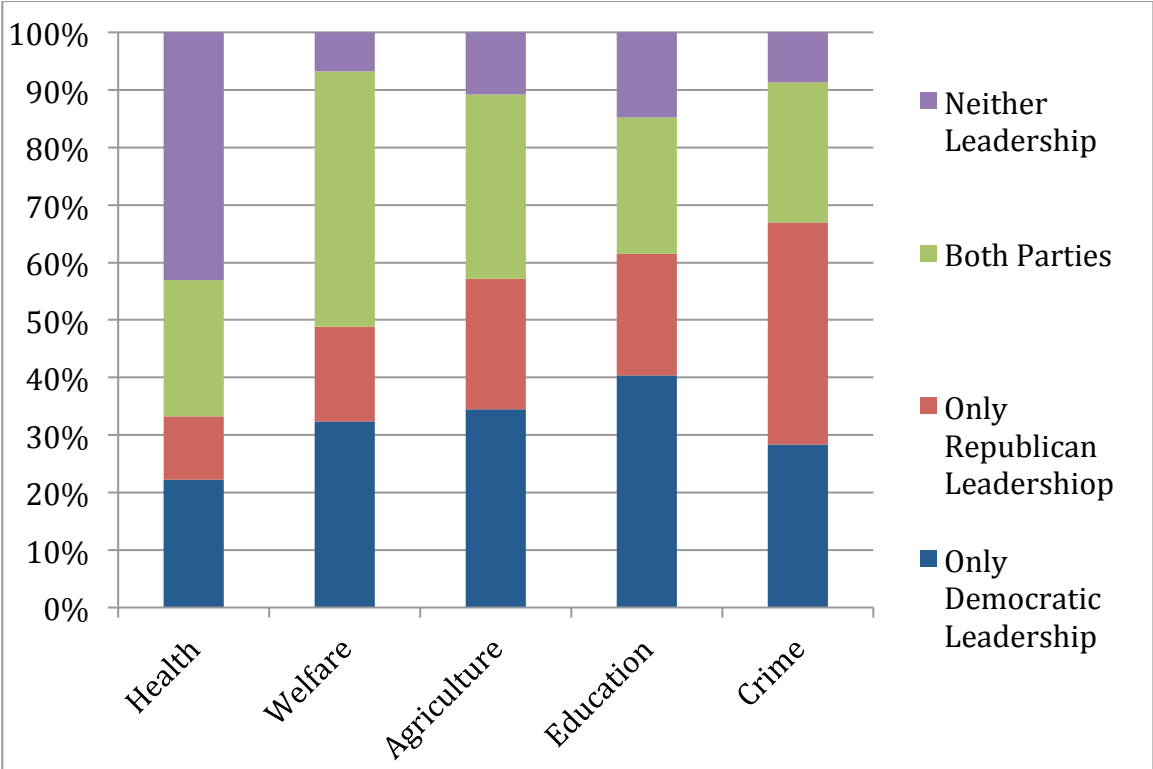
The figure reports the percentage of major policy initiatives in each issue area that were endorsed by the congressional leadership of each political party. The data is based on an original content analysis of Congressional Quarterly's summaries of major legislation.

	Additional Data	Analyses	Potential Outcomes
The Issue Agenda	Coding of questions by PAP subtopics; appending subtopic-level measures of congressional, public, & media agendas from PAP	Replicate Gilens' models with weighting by congressional & public agenda; add models with subtopic salience; add interactions by issue area to assess strongest areas of influence & different mediation paths	Show Gilens' findings are robust beyond survey agenda; show elite influence across salient and non-salient issues; show mediation paths differ for social and economic issue areas
Interest Groups	Coding for support & opposition of 26 additional groups	Replicate models on corporate & advocacy influence from Gilens and Page; test associations between high-income opinion, group support, and policy adoption; assess advocacy groups as mediators	Show that interest groups mediate high-income influence & have independent influence; show high-income influence is just as strong through advocacy groups as through business
Political Parties & Ideology	Coding for support & opposition of major political party leaders; coding for liberal or conservative policy proposals	Replicate Gilens' models after adding party support & opposition; assess Democrats & Republicans as mediators of high-income opinion in different issue areas and for liberal and conservative proposals	Show that Republicans & Democrats mediate the influence of high-income opinion (in distinct areas); explain how rising inequality & polarization can coincide with high-income influence (no matter who wins)
Levels of Support & Opposition	none	Analyze effects of different levels of public support across income deciles; assess relationships between policy adoption and support & opposition by public, parties & groups	Show that public support has decreasing returns above a majority, especially for median-income citizens; show that high-income influence in inequality-related policies works by blocking change

The table summarizes the four proposed investigations, listing the data added, the major analyses, and the potential outcomes if the results match my expectations. Each component is reliant on the others, but has distinct purposes.

Table 5: Time Estimates for Coding and Data Analysis

Prior Project Time Estimates						
	Student Level	# of Cases	Types of Cases	Data Collected	Sources Used	Hours
The Not-So-Special Interests	Undergrad.	1,600	Interest Groups	dozens of resource, prominence, and involvement indicators	group websites, lobbyists.info, Lexis-Nexis	3,200
Artists of the Possible	Graduate	791	Landmark laws, executive actions, and court decisions	issue area subtopics, liberal/conservative scale	CQ, web searches, policy history books	1,200
CQ Congress Summaries	Graduate/ Undergrad.	600	CQ Articles	party leader positions, liberal/conservative scale	CQ	500
Proposed Project Time Estimates						
	Student Level	# of Cases	Types of Cases	Data Collected	Sources Used	Hours
Interest Group Positions	Graduate/ Undergrad.	1,863	Poll Question/ Proposal	Strongly or somewhat favor or oppose for 24 interest groups	group web sites, testimony, scorecards, news, CQ	1,500
Party Leader Positions	Graduate	1,863	Poll Question/ Proposal	Uniformly or mostly favor or oppose for parties	CQ, news, press releases	750
Liberal/ Conservative Scale	Graduate	1,863	Poll Question/ Proposal	Very, somewhat, or slightly conservative or liberal (or equal)	Codebook and CQ, news, press releases	750
Policy Agendas Topic Codes	Graduate/ Undergrad.	1,863	Poll Question/ Proposal	Policy Agendas Topic and subtopic	PAP codebook	1,000

The table reports time estimates for undergraduate and graduate student research assistants to collect and analyze data for this project, drawing on my experiences from similar previous data collection efforts. Estimates include time for multiple coders to assess 200 of the cases for inter-coder reliability estimates and other data reliability and robustness checks.

Appendix A: Dataset Construction and Coding Materials

Case Selection

I will begin with the same cases, outcome measures, and public opinion data collected by Martin Gilens and made available in the "Economic Inequality and Political Representation" dataset available on the Russell Sage Foundation website.

In his book *Affluence & Influence* (pg. 57), Gilens describes his methods of case selection: "Each survey question in these datasets asks respondents whether they support or oppose some proposed change in U.S. government policy: raising the minimum wage, sending U.S. troops to Haiti, requiring employers to provide health insurance, allowing gay people to serve in the military, and so on. The survey question is the unit of analysis in the dataset, with variables indicating the proportion of respondents answering "Favor," "Oppose," or "Don't know" within each category of income and education. The survey questions in my dataset were identified using keyword searches of the iPOLL database maintained by the Roper Center at the University of Connecticut and the Public Opinion Poll Question database maintained by the Odum Institute at the University of North Carolina."

Gilens (pg. 57-58) describes four criteria for including questions in the dataset: "First, it had to pose a dichotomous choice of supporting or opposing some specific policy change. Second, it had to be specific enough to allow for a reasonably confident judgment of whether the proposed policy change was implemented… Third, all survey questions included in my dataset had to concern an issue that is or plausibly could be addressed by the federal government… Finally, the questions had to be categorical rather than conditional."

Gilens (pg. 58-59) explains that he included multiple cases for the same survey question from different years:
"If identical questions were asked in the same calendar year, I used only the most recent instance of the question… I included even identical survey questions if they were found in different calendar years. There are some policy issues that are never completely resolved but remain at least potentially on the agenda decade after decade… Consequently it is important to have multiple measures over time of these kinds of enduring issues. Even when public preferences remain fixed, the inclusion of multiple measures allows the analysis to reflect the reality of changing responsiveness on that issue."

Coding for Policy Outcomes

As Gilens (pg. 60) explains, he assessed whether the federal government adopted each proposal referenced in a survey question within four years:
"Once I identified appropriate survey questions, I used historical information sources to determine whether or not the proposed policy change occurred. If the proposed change took place within four years of the date of the survey question, the change was coded as having been adopted. More specifically, if federal policy makers completed their task within the four-year coding window, the policy was coded as having been adopted even if it did not go into effect within this time frame. For example, if Congress passed and the president signed legislation, then I considered the policy to have changed on the date it was signed into law, even if the implementation was delayed until the next fiscal year or beyond."

Gilens coded a small subset of proposals as having been partially adopted:
"In coding outcomes for survey questions with specific quantified proposals (e.g., raising the minimum wage to six dollars an hour or increasing fuel efficiency standards to forty miles per gallon), coders considered a change to have occurred if it represented at least 80 percent of the change proposed in the survey question. If the actual policy change represented less than 80 percent of that proposed in the survey question but more than 20 percent, the outcome was given a 'partial change' code. Only 3 percent of the outcomes were coded as partial changes"

Gilens reports (pg. 63) that the outcome codes proved reliable:
"Intercoder agreement for policy outcome (whether the proposed change occurred within four years of the survey question) was 91 percent, equivalent to an alpha reliability coefficient of 0.81."

Assessing Public Support at Different Income Levels

Where possible, Gilens took information on public support at different income levels directly from the surveying organization (pg. 57):
"I obtained the actual data indicating the distribution of responses to these questions by demographic categories from [the Roper Center and the Odum Institute] when possible, or from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, the Institute for Social Science Research at UCLA, the Kaiser Family Foundation, or the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. Dozens of different survey organizations collected the original survey data, with the largest number of questions coming from Harris, Gallup, CBS, and Los Angeles Times surveys."

Gilens then imputed preferences by income from the reported cross-tabulations (pg. 61):
"For each survey, respondents in each income category were assigned an income score equal to the percentile midpoint for their income group based on the income distribution from their survey. For example, if on a given survey 10 percent of the respondents fell into the bottom income category and 30 percent into the second category, those in the bottom group would be assigned a score of 0.05 and the second group a score of 0.25 (the midpoint between 0.10 and 0.40, the bottom and top percentiles for the second group). After rescoring income for each survey, I estimated predicted preferences for specific income percentiles using a quadratic function. That is, for each survey question , I used income and income-squared (measured in percentiles) as predictors of policy preference for that question (resulting in 1,779 separate logistic regressions, each with two predictors). I then used the coefficients from these analyses to impute policy preferences for respondents at the desired percentiles."

Gilens reports (pg. 63-88) that his public support measures also proved reliable:
"387 [questions] had at least one alternative version relating to essentially the same policy change asked within the same calendar year… By treating the pairs of alternatives among these 387 questions as parallel measures, I can estimate the reliability of the preference measures for the imputed preferences at various income levels…. If I use the same multiple-measure technique for estimating reliability from my 387 survey questions with alternate versions… the estimated reliabilities for the 10th, 50th, and 90th income percentiles are virtually identical at 0.77, 0.80, and 0.77, respectively."

Assessing Interest Group Support and Opposition

As Gilens (pg. 127-129) explains, he combined two lists of prominent interest groups in order to assess their support for each policy proposal:

"No list of 'powerful interest groups in Washington' could hope to be definitive, but a plausible place to start is the 'Power 25' list of lobbying organizations produced by Fortune magazine. Every few years since 1997, Fortune has surveyed Washington insiders (including members of Congress, congressional staff, White House aides, and lobbyists themselves), asking them to rate the influence of dozens of different lobbying organizations… The basis for my own coding of interest group involvement, then, is based on an expanded version of Fortune's Power 25 list. I began by combining the Power 25 lists from surveys conducted during both the Clinton and the G. W. Bush administrations… I then added to this combined list the ten industries with the highest lobbying expenditures (that were not already represented in the Power 25 list) based on lobbying disclosure data compiled by opensecrets.org… This resulted in the expanded list of forty-three interest groups."

Here is the list of groups coded by Gilens:
AARP, National Rifle Association, National Federation of Independent Business, American Israel Public Affairs Committee, AFL-CIO, Association of Trial Lawyers, Chamber of Commerce, American Medical Association, National Association of Manufacturers, National Association of Realtors, National Right to Life Committee, National Education Association, National Association of Home Builders, American Farm Bureau Federation, National Beer Wholesalers Association, Motion Picture Association of America, National Restaurant Association, National Association of Broadcasters, American Bankers Association,American Hospital Association, National Governors' Association, Health Insurance Association, Christian Coalition, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Credit Union National Association, Recording Industry Association, American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S., Independent Insurance Agents of America, American Council of Life Insurance, American Legion, United Auto Workers

Here is the list of industries coded by Gilens:
Electric companies, Computer software and hardware, Universities, Oil companies, Telephone companies, Automobile companies, Securities and investment companies, Airlines, Defense contractors, Tobacco companies

Gilens (pg. 128-129) explains how he coded interest group positions:
"I used the extended list of forty-three interest groups and industries… to identify organizations with a possible interest in the policy question. Then I used a variety of print and online resources to assess whether each of these potentially relevant groups took a public stand on the relevant policy issue (these resources included congressional testimony, interest groups' web sites, interest groups' congressional voting scorecards, news accounts, and descriptions of interest group activity from Congressional Quarterly). If the policy change under consideration tapped a core concern of an organization, that group was coded as being strongly favorable or unfavorable toward the policy change. If a group took a position on an issue that was not a core focus of the organization, the group was coded as being somewhat favorable or unfavorable toward the issue."

Gilens further explains how he directed coders to make these decisions in a document titled "Representational Inequality Data Coding" available on the Russell Sage Foundation website:
"The objective in coding the interest group alignments was not to identify all industry/interest groups that might have had an interest in a particular policy change but rather to identify only those

industry/interest groups that would have enough stake in the proposed policy change to actively devote resources to making the change occur or preventing the change from occurring… Coders identified each interest group as strongly favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat opposed, or strongly opposed to the policy change. To make these judgments, they considered both the magnitude of the impact of the policy change on the group or industry in question and also the extent to which the breadth of individual members of the group or industry would be affected. If the impact was BOTH broad across the group and substantial in affecting the group members' interests, it was coded as strong. If the impact was broad but would not strongly impact the group members interest, OR the impact was strong but was only likely to affect a portion of the group members, it was coded as somewhat, if the impact was not strong and only affected a portion of the members the group as not coded as favorable or opposed."

In my personal communication with Martin Gilens, he provided additional information on the materials he provided to coders and the standards for coding a group as favoring or opposing each specific policy proposal:
"The objective is not to identify all industry/interest groups that might have an interest in a particular policy change but rather to identify only those industry/interest groups that would have enough stake in the proposed policy change to actively devote resources to making the change occur/not occur… In coding the interest groups, they didn't need to have a documented public position on a specific policy change to get coded as supporting or opposing that change. For example, based on their stances over the years, the Chamber of Commerce, Nat'l Asso of Manufacturers, Nat'l Federation of Small Businesses, and the Nat'l Restaurant Asso were coded as opposing every proposal to raise the minimum wage in the dataset without looking for specific statements by either. Industries were treated the same way."

Gilens does not provide inter-coder reliability estimates for his interest group codes.

Based on my previous analyses of interest groups responsible for major policy change and prominence in congressional and media debates, I will code for the positions of 26 additional interest groups: NAACP, U.S. Conference of Mayors, American Civil Liberties Union, Sierra Club, National Urban League, National Farmers Union, National Organization for Women, National League of Cities, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, Brookings Institution, National Council of Churches, American Cancer Society, Americans for Democratic Action, Wilderness Society, National Association of Counties, American Enterprise Institute, Common Cause, Public Citizen, Natural Resources Defense Council, National Academy of Sciences, American Bar Association, American Conservative Union, Americans for Tax Reform, Center for Strategic and Int'l Studies, Council on Foreign Relations, and Carnegie Endowment for Int'l Peace.

I will use the same procedures and sources used by Gilens to code for their positions. Past research suggests that think tanks (including AEI and Brookings) are not solely perceived as academic institutions by policymakers and can be influential in policy debates. Coding for their involvement will enable me to assess these claims. I will nonetheless separate think tank positions from those of other groups to assess their independent influence and ensure that the results hold with and without including them.

Assessing Political Party Support and Opposition

I will use similar procedures to assess the positions of the Democratic and Republican Parties on each policy proposal. Where the proposals match those mentioned in *Congressional Quarterly*, I already have codes for party leader support and opposition. In other cases, the survey question directly mentions that a proposal comes from the president or a party leader. Where they do not, I will use the same list of media and congressional sources Gilens used to code for party leader positions.

Here are the instructions I provided to prior research assistants for the previous coding of the *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*:
The "Dem" and "Rep" columns should receive a 1 if Republican or Democratic leaders in the House or Senate supported the proposals or if CQ attributes the proposal to one or both of the parties; otherwise these columns should get a 0. To help you answer the party questions, here is a chart of party control of Congress and the presidency:
http://www.dflorig.com/partycontrol.htm
If individuals are named and you do not know their role, here is a list of the party leaders of the House and Senate over time:
http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL30567.pdf
Once we locate the media and congressional sources that discuss each proposal, we will use the same procedures to code for the party positions associated with each proposal.

Assessing Issue Subtopic

The Policy Agendas topic codebook is available online:
http://www.policyagendas.org/page/topic-codebook

The PAP subtopic codes have already been applied to every proposal mentioned in *Congressional Quarterly*, every bill introduced in Congress, and every survey question collected by James Stimson for his policy mood measure. For most proposals in Gilens' dataset, I anticipate that we will be able to match it to a previously coded proposal. For the survey questions that do not match any prior bill, CQ article, or policy mood question, my research assistants will code them based on the detailed instructions provided in the codebook at policyagendas.org.

Assessing Ideological Direction and Degree of Change

For each case, we will code it using a liberal-conservative ideological scale. A folded version of the measure also provides a measure of the degree of change from the status quo. By my definition, liberal policies expand the size or scope of government responsibility, funding, or regulation. Conservative policies contract the size or scope for government responsibility, funding, or regulation. I have already coded *Congressional Quarterly* and other lists of proposed policy changes with this coding scheme, yielding high inter-coder reliability. Where possible, I will match Gilens' cases to those found in the prior datasets and use previous codes.

For cases that do not match prior cases, research assistants will be provided with additional guidance that I have used to code other proposals:
You are reading about and rating changes that have been proposed since 1981. Many of the proposals you will be rating are therefore already law or refer to changes that, if enacted today, would be redundant with existing law. Please rate them as if they are newly proposed programs or policies. All policy proposals are legislation for federal congressional enactment. A policy that expands government funding or regulation will be viewed as liberal, even if conservative actors

pursue it. Many proposals are likely to be ideologically ambiguous or have liberal and conservative trade-offs among their components and will fall somewhere between.

Please rate each of the following policy proposal descriptions on the ideological scale:

1 - Very Conservative

Eliminates or vastly reduces an existing government program or area of government responsibility.

2 - Somewhat Conservative

Makes major reductions in government funding or regulation in an existing area of government responsibility or transfers some responsibilities from the government to the private sector or from the federal government to the states.

3 - Slightly Conservative

Makes minor reductions in government funding or regulation or transfers some minor government responsibilities to the private sector or from the federal government to the states.

Also use this category if a proposal has a mix of conservative and liberal components but has larger or stronger conservative components and smaller liberal components (such as legislation that replaces a large government program with a smaller one).

4 - Equally Conservative and Liberal

Makes no changes to the size or scope of government responsibility, funding, or regulation.

Also use this category if a proposal has a mix of conservative and liberal components and it is impossible to tell which are larger or stronger parts.

5 - Slightly Liberal

Provides minor increases in government funding or regulation or transfers some minor responsibilities from the private sector to the government or from the states to the federal government. Also use this category if a proposal has a mix of conservative and liberal components but has larger or stronger liberal components and smaller conservative components (such as legislation that replaces a small government program with a larger one).

6 - Somewhat Liberal

Provides major increases in government funding or regulation in an existing area of government responsibility or transfers some responsibilities from the private sector to the government or from the states to the federal government.

7 - Very Liberal

Creates a new government program in a new area or vastly increases spending or regulation in a current area of government responsibility.

I will create a folded version of this scale by recoding 4 to 0, 5 and 3 to 1, 6 and 2 to 2, and 7 and 1 to 4. This measure will assess the extent to which greater deviations from the status quo are more difficult to achieve.

Collapsing Duplicate Policy Changes

I will match all repeated proposals in the dataset in order to create a smaller dataset only including unique proposals. I will collapse repeated cases by averaging the levels of public and interest group support across instances of the same survey question (public and group support are currently estimated separately for each instance of a poll question). Based on Gilens' comments regarding repeat cases, I expect the elimination of repeated cases to result in a new dataset that is approximately 30% smaller than the initial dataset. To ensure comparability with Gilens' findings, I will complete all analyses (as proposed in the methods section of this proposal) using both datasets.