In recent years, academics have investigated to what extent policy outcomes reflect the preferences of different income groups to draw conclusions about political inequalities stemming from the influence of income on political power. The pioneering researcher at that time, Martin Gilens, was the first to gauge the preferences of different income groups towards proposed policy changes based on large amounts of survey data. Specifically, he applied a quadratic logistic regression technique to estimate the preferences for the respondents at tenth, fiftieth and ninetieth income percentile towards 1779 proposed policy measures which he used as independent variables to explain whether or not a policy was adopted (Gilens, 2005). He found that whenever the preferences of different income groups diverge, policy outcomes strongly reflect the preferences of the rich whereas they hardly ever reflect the preferences of the poor or middle-income US citizens. In his consecutive work, Gilens and Page (2014) contrasted alternative theoretical traditions to assess which set of actors have how much influence over public policy. Him and his colleague found that economic elites and organized business oriented interest groups have substantial impact on U.S. policy outcomes, providing support for the Economic-Elite Domination and Biased Pluralism Theory and against alternative explanations such as Majoritarian Electoral Democracy or Majoritarian Pluralism (Gilens & Page, 2014). Whereas the authors primary objective of the paper is to empirically unravel unequal income policy responsiveness within the U.S., they also point towards potential mechanism that explain why policy outcomes disproportionately reflect the interest of the rich, such as the structural dependence of political parties to finance political campaigns as well as lobbying by corporations and corporate interests that seem to be more aligned to the preferences of the rich in comparison (Gilens & Page, 2014).These findings substantially question the political equality of the U.S., a fundamental principle of democracy that requires that each individual’s political influence to be equal, regardless of social status, income, educational degree, race, religion or any other characteristic. Political Equally is a necessary condition for ensuring that political power is fairly and justly distributed among all members of society and seen as essential for the functioning of democratic societies.

Given the severity of these findings a new branch of research has recently evolved led by political scientist who applied different interpretations of Gilen’s methodological approach, in which they linked the preferences of various groups towards political outcomes (Elkj & Iversen, 2020.; Elsässer et al., 2020; Lax et al., 2019; Lupu & Warner, 2022; Schakel et al., 2020). The new wave of research has put forward further evidence of unequal policy responsiveness enriching the literature in terms of breadth and scope. Several studies have contributed to the breadth by analysing whether unequal policy responsiveness exists in various countries outside the U.S. (Lupu & Warner, 2022; Peters & Ensink, 2015; Schakel et al., 2020) whereas other studies broadened the scope of the unequal policy responsiveness literature by focusing on educational and occupational inequalities (Elsässer et al., 2020; Schakel & Van Der Pas, 2021).

Examining the impact of the preferences of different groups in Germany on the likelihood of a policy being adopted, Elsässar et al. (2020) find a strikingly similar pattern that show how policy outcomes correspond exclusively to the preferences of the richest ten and one percent of the income distribution, whereas the preferences of the median and the poor do not seem to have an impact on policy changes at all. Equally, the authors show that the likelihood of policy implementation is significantly associated with the preferences of higher-grade employees, civil servants, and the self-employed, whereas the link between the policy preferences of unskilled workers and policy change is small and insignificant.

Based on the similarity to Gilens the authors argue that IT CANT BE MONEY IN POLITICS.