OLIGARCHY IN THE USA?

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The Study

Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens
Gilens & Page 2014

- Studied 1,779 instances between 1981 and 2002 in which a national survey of the general public:
  - Asked a favor/ oppose question about a proposed policy change
  - Included respondent income
- Measured interest group alignment by stance of Fortune's "Power 25" and 10 key industries with highest lobbying expenditure**s**
- **Conclusion:** "Average" Americans have virtually no influence on policy-making

The Data

	issue_area	outcome outcome	middle_income_approval	high_income_approval	str_approve	sw_approve	str_disapprove	sw_disapprove
1	budget	0	0.86072940	0.89119607	0	0	3	0
2	taxation	0	0.73955721	0.78940707	3	3	1	0
3	taxation	0	0.80703312	0.77898908	3	17	0	0
4	foreign pol	0	0.76106739	0.77349818	0	0	0	0
5	taxation	0	0.67668808	0.74013972	3	3	1	0
6	foreign pol	0	0.49619108	0.45774668	0	0	0	0
7	taxation	0	0.70511162	0.70347244	3	3	1	0
8	foreign pol	0	0.52737153	0.52566779	0	0	0	8
9	taxation	0	0.77737767	0.79815757	1	0	0	9
10	taxation	0	0.87603694	0.78196514	0	0	0	10
11	soc welfare	0	0.24961019	0.34650588	0	0	1	0

Research Questions

- ### INFLUENCE

Are there certain policy areas in which average citizens have greater independent influence?

- ### PREFERENCES

Are there certain policy areas in which there is a greater divergence of preferences?

ANALYZE DATA

1 **Import**
Convert from Stata to R

2 **Tidy**
Create categorical policy Adopted/Not Adopted variable and Winner variable

3 **Summarize and Mutate**
Group by policy area, adoption status, and winner. Calculate the percentage of policies that each group "won" within a given area

4 **Visualize**
Create two graphs visualizing the percentage of "winners" across policy areas

Import

```r
# Read stata file into R using haven
d <- read_dta(file = here('./data/rep-inequality/rep-inequality.dta'))  %>%
  filter(!is.na(pred50_sw), !is.na(pred90_sw)) %>%
  select(middle_income_approval=pred50_sw,
         high_income_approval=pred90_sw, outcome=OUTCOME, issue_area=XL_AREA) %>%
  # Categorize by policy area, Adopted/Not Adopted, and "winner" - Both/Neither/Avg/Elite
  group_by(issue_area, adopted=ifelse(outcome >0, "Adopted", "Not Adopted"),
           winner=determine_winner_vec(outcome, middle_income_approval, high_income_approval
                                       "Elite") ) %>%

  # Count issues in each category
  summarize(count=n())  %>%
  # Calculate proportion of issues based on total number of issues per policy area
  group_by(issue_area) %>%
  mutate(pct= count/sum(count))
```

Tidy

```r
# Read stata file into R using haven
d <- read_dta(file = here('./data/rep-inequality/rep-inequality.dta'))  %>%
  filter(!is.na(pred50_sw), !is.na(pred90_sw)) %>%
  select(middle_income_approval=pred50_sw,
         high_income_approval=pred90_sw, outcome=OUTCOME, issue_area=XL_AREA) %>%
  # Categorize by policy area, Adopted/Not Adopted, and "winner" - Both/Neither/Avg/Elite
  group_by(issue_area, adopted=ifelse(outcome >0, "Adopted", "Not Adopted"),
           winner=determine_winner_vec(outcome, middle_income_approval, high_income_approval,
                                       "Elite") ) %>%
  # Count issues in each category
  summarize(count=n())  %>%
  # Calculate proportion of issues based on total number of issues per policy area
  group_by(issue_area) %>%
  mutate(pct= count/sum(count))
```

Summarize and Mutate

```r
# Read stata file into R using haven
d <- read_dta(file = here('./data/rep-inequality/rep-inequality.dta'))  %>%
  filter(!is.na(pred50_sw), !is.na(pred90_sw)) %>%
  select(middle_income_approval=pred50_sw,
         high_income_approval=pred90_sw, outcome=OUTCOME, issue_area=XL_AREA) %>%
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           winner=determine_winner_vec(outcome, middle_income_approval, high_income_approval,
                                       "Elite") ) %>%
  # Count issues in each category
  summarize(count=n())  %>%
  # Calculate proportion of issues based on total number of issues per policy area
  group_by(issue_area) %>%
  mutate(pct= count/sum(count))
```

Data Transformed

|	issue_area	adopted	winner	count	pct
1	budget	Adopted	Both	3	0.130434783
2	budget	Adopted	Elite	1	0.043478261
3	budget	Adopted	Neither	4	0.173913043
4	budget	Not Adopted	Neither	15	0.652173913
5	camp finance	Adopted	Both	5	0.078125000
6	camp finance	Adopted	Neither	3	0.046875000
7	camp finance	Not Adopted	Average	6	0.093750000
8	camp finance	Not Adopted	Both	9	0.140625000
9	camp finance	Not Adopted	Neither	41	0.640625000
10	civil rts	Adopted	Both	8	0.173913043
11	civil rts	Adopted	Elite	1	0.021739130

Visualize

```r
# Order fill categories to keep consensus (Both/Neither) together
winners <- c(comparison, "Average", "Neither", "Both")

p_out <- ggplot(d, aes(fill=factor(winner,winners), y=pct, x=issue_area)) +
 geom_bar(position="stack", stat="identity") +
 labs(x = "", y = "Percent", fill = "Winner") +
 ggtitle(paste("Average vs.", comparison, "Policy Influence")) +
 scale_fill_brewer(palette="RdYlBu") +
 theme(plot.title = element_text(hjust = 0.5, face="bold")) +
 coord_flip() +
 facet_grid(~ adopted)

return(p_out)
```

Average vs. Elite Policy Influence
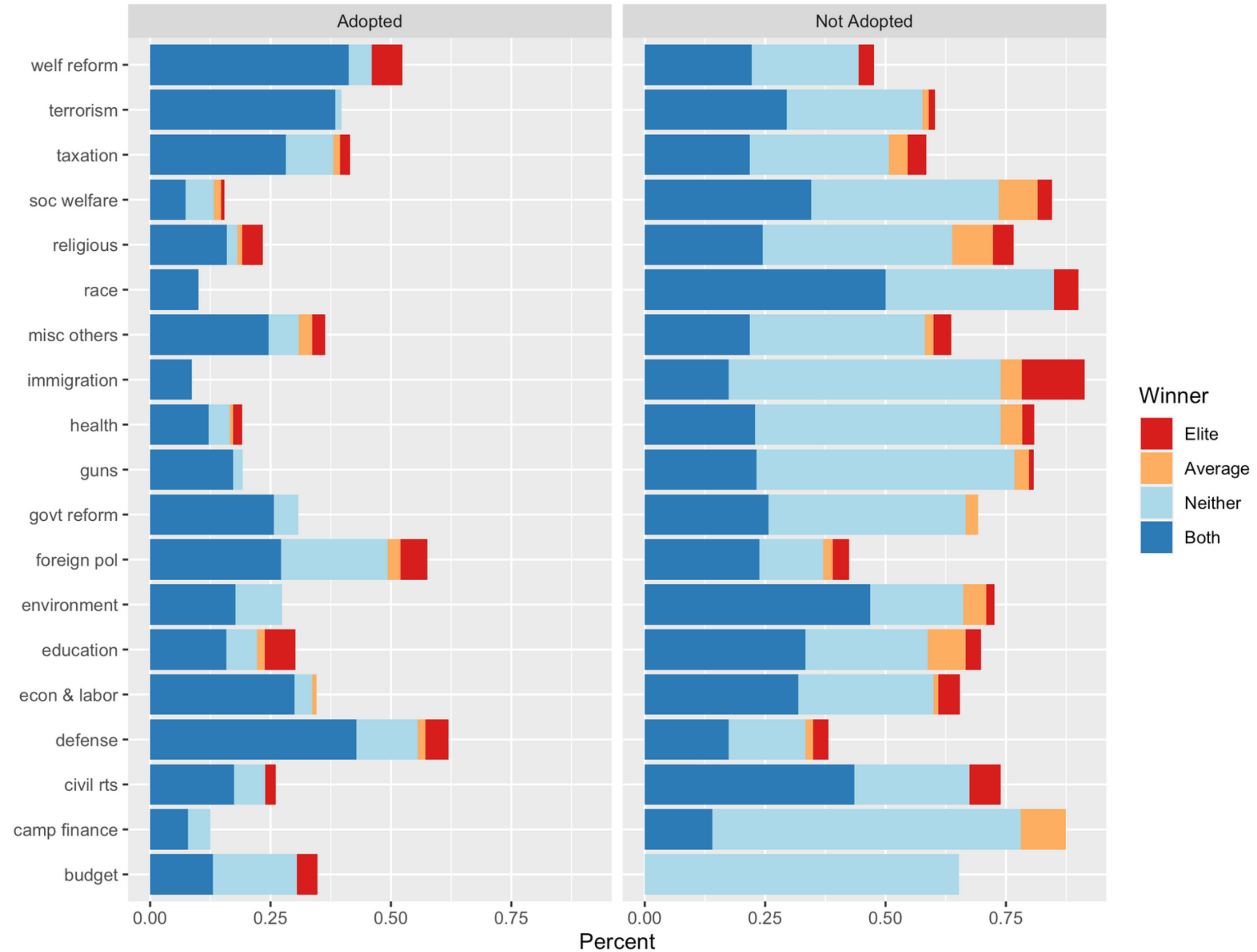
Average vs. Interest Group Policy Influence