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The Man Behind the Curtain: Who is Really Pulling the Strings?

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The Man Behind the Curtain:

Who is really pulling the strings?

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Introduction

A Review of the Literature

This study will analyze the possible factors that influence the public's fear, or lack thereof, of corrupt government officials.

- Studies show that there is a link between an educated population and improved quality of government.
- Research suggests that the low-income population believes the government should do more to help them, but there is no link that suggests they fear corrupt officials.
- While education, race, and income are factors, one must question how and why this is the case.
 - What pushes the relationship between education and lack of fear towards corrupt officials?
 - Educated people are more likely to notice and effectively complain about officials, discouraging them to misbehave. (Botero, Ponce and Shleifer 2013).

As a whole, Americans fear the thought of corrupt government officials; regardless of socioeconomic or racial differences.

Lawful Bribes aka PACs

Political Action Committees are organizations whose sole purpose is to raise and spend money to support or oppose a political candidate.

- Viewed as “lawful bribes” to support a political party or put a candidate in a federal office.
 - While there are specified spending limits, it is well known that people only make significant contributions when they expect something in return.

A quote from Darleen Druyun explains the underlying effect of PACs: “If one does not have a friend in high places, one can acquire him or her by ponying up the various forms of bribes to which many Pentagon officials and members of Congress have shown themselves to be highly receptive” (Higgs, 2007).

Race-Specific Predictors

- Isolation theory: specific race prevented from participating because of social and institutional barriers
- Political reality model: specific race is politically disadvantaged due to exclusion from political processes and politicians favoritism towards the white population. (Miller and Hoffmann, 1998).

Hypotheses & Methods

H1: Those who receive higher forms of education are less likely to fear corrupt government officials.

H2: Those with lower incomes are more likely to fear corrupt government officials, as opposed to the wealthy.

H3: White Americans are less likely to fear corrupt government officials, compared to other ethnicities.

The first hypothesis is backed up by the survey data; those with higher education are less likely to be fearful. The hypothesis was developed from various pieces of literature that discussed how higher education led to more awareness, which in turn allows for the general public to be able to recognize if corruption were to occur.

Based on the data analyzed, there is no correlation between various income levels and fear. Since everyone fears corrupt officials, there is no distinct drop in mean values as the income range rises.

The third hypothesis is completely shattered by the data analysis. While research suggests that the White population is less likely to fear corrupt officials, survey data says otherwise. Out of the White Americans who responded to this survey question, there was an average response of 2.14. This means, on average, White Americans were fearful of corrupt officials. On the other hand, African Americans had an average response of 2.63, meaning their answered leaned more towards value 3, coded at slightly afraid. Out of all the variations of ethnicities, African Americans were the least fearful of corrupt officials.

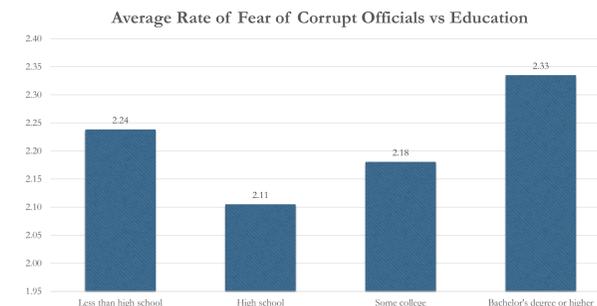
Using a crosstabs analysis and means tests, one can view how different independent variables may or may not cause a variation in levels of fear of corrupt government officials.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge and thank Dr. Ann Gordon.

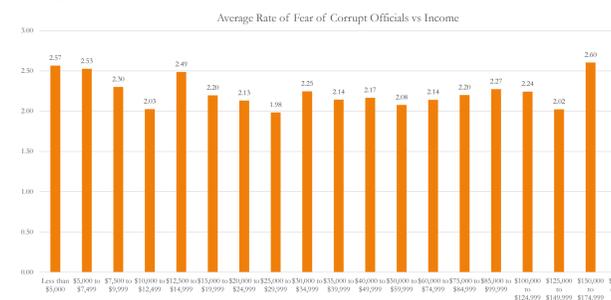
Results

Hypothesis 1:



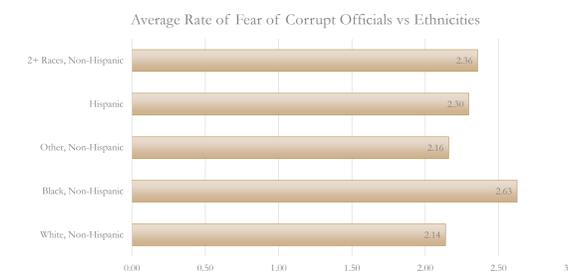
Hypothesis 1's means test shows an interesting variation of who are more afraid of corrupt officials. While the graph backs up the hypothesis that more educated people are less likely to be afraid, it is interesting how those who have less than a high school education are less fearful than those who have some college education. Afraid is coded at 2 and slightly afraid is coded at 3. P-value of 0.003.

Hypothesis 2:



Hypothesis 2's means test depicts an overall fear of corrupt government officials, regardless of income. The total mean of the nineteen ranges of incomes was at 2.21; very afraid was coded at 1, afraid at 2.

Hypothesis 3:



Hypothesis 3's means test illustrates that White Americans are most afraid of corrupt officials compared to all other ethnicities. Overall fear average of 2.2; afraid coded at 2 and slightly afraid at 3. P-value of 0.003.

Conclusions

Hypothesis 1

- The means test result supports the hypothesis. However, there is no gradual trend. While those with a Bachelor's degree or higher do fear the government the least, those with less than a high school degree comes in close second.

Hypothesis 2

- The means test results does not support hypothesis 2. There is no trend within the graph that shows an obvious increase in fear as income levels drop. Rather, fear increases at different intervals of wealth; high and low incomes.
- Hypothesis 2's results depict the fact that variation in income levels do not affect whether or not you fear corrupt officials. Everyone, rich or poor, fears them.

Hypothesis 3

- Hypothesis 3's findings suggest that various ethnicities do not impact fear levels towards corrupt officials.
- Survey data shows that African Americans had the lowest level of fear, while White Americans had the highest level. However, with an average response rate of 2.2, it further proves all ethnicities fear corrupt officials.

Overall, many studies and reports indicate that education is the defining factor in the measurement of fear towards corrupt government officials and Chapman's Survey of American Fears further backs up that claim.

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