Public Opinion

J. Alexander Branham
Fall 2016

What is public opinion?

Unless mass views have some place in the shaping of policy, all the talk about democracy is nonsense.

V. O. Key

- Constrains political actors (the President, Congress, the Courts)

- Constrains political actors (the President, Congress, the Courts)
- Standard by which we judge how democracy is functioning

- Constrains political actors (the President, Congress, the Courts)
- Standard by which we judge how democracy is functioning
  - Does policy reflect what people want?

- Individual people have opinions

- Individual people have opinions
- We refer to the aggregation of individuals' opinions as public opinion

- Individual people have opinions
- We refer to the aggregation of individuals' opinions as public opinion
- Many different methods for this aggregation:

- Individual people have opinions
- We refer to the aggregation of individuals' opinions as public opinion
- Many different methods for this aggregation:
    - For example, elections, town hall meetings, protests, polls

- Individuals' political opinions depend on three things:

- Individuals' political opinions depend on three things:
- Basic preferences (what they want)

- Individuals' political opinions depend on three things:
- Basic preferences (what they want)
- Beliefs about the current circumstances and consequences of actions

- Individuals' political opinions depend on three things:
- Basic preferences (what they want)
- Beliefs about the current circumstances and consequences of actions
- Choices presented

- Preferences reflect what people want

- Preferences reflect what people want
  - Material: money, power, income

- Preferences reflect what people want
  - Material: money, power, income
  - Values: justice, morality

- Preferences reflect what people want
  - Material: money, power, income
  - Values: justice, morality

- Economic self-interest and social/moral values often taken as the basis for political preferences

- Preferences reflect what people want
  - Material: money, power, income
  - Values: justice, morality
- Economic self-interest and social/moral values often taken as the basis for political preferences
- Preference *intensity* also important

- Preferences reflect what people want
  - Material: money, power, income
  - Values: justice, morality

- Economic self-interest and social/moral values often taken as the basis for political preferences

- Preference *intensity* also important
  - Do you care more about LGBT rights or tax rates?

- What people know (or think they know)

- What people know (or think they know)
- What they believe the consequences of their actions will be

- What people know (or think they know)
- What they believe the consequences of their actions will be
- Individuals who spend more time on a subject generally have stronger beliefs

- What people know (or think they know)
- What they believe the consequences of their actions will be
- Individuals who spend more time on a subject generally have stronger beliefs
- Beliefs don't have to be based in fact - can be grounded in (e.g.) political ideology or religion

- We never observe preferences or beliefs, only choices

- We never observe preferences or beliefs, only choices
- In an election, the choices are the candidates

- We never observe preferences or beliefs, only choices
- In an election, the choices are the candidates
- In a public opinion survey, these are the answer choices

- We never observe preferences or beliefs, only choices
- In an election, the choices are the candidates
- In a public opinion survey, these are the answer choices
- Adding (or deleting) choices may change individuals' responses

- Some issues that people care about may not be presented

- Some issues that people care about may not be presented
- For example, the Democratic party kept race off the agenda for a long time to keep Southern Democrats in the party

- Some issues that people care about may not be presented
- For example, the Democratic party kept race off the agenda for a long time to keep Southern Democrats in the party
- These are referred to as latent issues

Variety of opinion

- Politicians often say that "public opinion" is on their side

- Politicians often say that "public opinion" is on their side
- But public opinion is varied - all Americans don't hold the same opinion

- Politicians often say that "public opinion" is on their side
- But public opinion is varied - all Americans don't hold the same opinion
- We agree on some of the basics:

- Politicians often say that "public opinion" is on their side
- But public opinion is varied - all Americans don't hold the same opinion
- We agree on some of the basics:
    - legitimacy of the Constitution, equality of opportunity, liberty, democracy

- Politicians often say that "public opinion" is on their side
- But public opinion is varied - all Americans don't hold the same opinion
- We agree on some of the basics:
    - legitimacy of the Constitution, equality of opportunity, liberty, democracy
- But most issues the government deals with are areas where the public doesn't hold a single view

- Individuals express opinion in a variety of ways

- Individuals express opinion in a variety of ways
    - Contacting member of Congress (letters, phone calls, etc)

- Individuals express opinion in a variety of ways
    - Contacting member of Congress (letters, phone calls, etc)
    - Blogs, letters to newspapers, conversations with peers

- Individuals express opinion in a variety of ways
    - Contacting member of Congress (letters, phone calls, etc)
    - Blogs, letters to newspapers, conversations with peers
    - Lawn signs, bumper stickers

- Individuals express opinion in a variety of ways
    - Contacting member of Congress (letters, phone calls, etc)
    - Blogs, letters to newspapers, conversations with peers
    - Lawn signs, bumper stickers
    - Volunteering for campaigns, giving money to candidates

- Individuals express opinion in a variety of ways
    - Contacting member of Congress (letters, phone calls, etc)
    - Blogs, letters to newspapers, conversations with peers
    - Lawn signs, bumper stickers
    - Volunteering for campaigns, giving money to candidates
    - Voting

- Individuals express opinion in a variety of ways
    - Contacting member of Congress (letters, phone calls, etc)
    - Blogs, letters to newspapers, conversations with peers
    - Lawn signs, bumper stickers
    - Volunteering for campaigns, giving money to candidates
    - Voting
- Not always easy to interpret

- If someone votes against their Representative, why did they do so?

- If someone votes against their Representative, why did they do so?
  - A decision the Representative made?

- If someone votes against their Representative, why did they do so?
    - A decision the Representative made?
    - Party?

- If someone votes against their Representative, why did they do so?
    - A decision the Representative made?
    - Party?
    - Something else?

- If someone votes against their Representative, why did they do so?
  - A decision the Representative made?
  - Party?
  - Something else?
- Where does majority support lie? How intense is that support?

- Often helpful to think about as support/oppose a policy

- Often helpful to think about as support/oppose a policy
- But this can mask important variation

- Often helpful to think about as support/oppose a policy
- But this can mask important variation
- Example:

- Often helpful to think about as support/oppose a policy
- But this can mask important variation
- Example:
  - Abortion pro-life vs pro-choice

- Often helpful to think about as support/oppose a policy
- But this can mask important variation
- Example:
    - Abortion pro-life vs pro-choice
    - But people have more refined opinions (in cases of rape, incest, parental consent, endangering the life of the mother, etc)

- Evaluations of actors and institutions

- Evaluations of actors and institutions
    - presidential approval, congressional approval, etc

- Evaluations of actors and institutions
  - presidential approval, congressional approval, etc
- Assessments of public policies

- Evaluations of actors and institutions
  - presidential approval, congressional approval, etc
- Assessments of public policies
  - Support or oppose a policy, most important problem, etc

- Evaluations of actors and institutions
    - presidential approval, congressional approval, etc
- Assessments of public policies
    - Support or oppose a policy, most important problem, etc
- Assessments of current circumstances

- Evaluations of actors and institutions
  - presidential approval, congressional approval, etc
- Assessments of public policies
  - Support or oppose a policy, most important problem, etc
- Assessments of current circumstances
  - How is the economy performing? How's your personal outlook?

- Evaluations of actors and institutions
    - presidential approval, congressional approval, etc
- Assessments of public policies
    - Support or oppose a policy, most important problem, etc
- Assessments of current circumstances
    - How is the economy performing? How's your personal outlook?
- Political orientations

- Evaluations of actors and institutions
    - presidential approval, congressional approval, etc
- Assessments of public policies
    - Support or oppose a policy, most important problem, etc
- Assessments of current circumstances
    - How is the economy performing? How's your personal outlook?
- Political orientations
    - Party ID and ideology

Party ID (2014 General Social Survey)
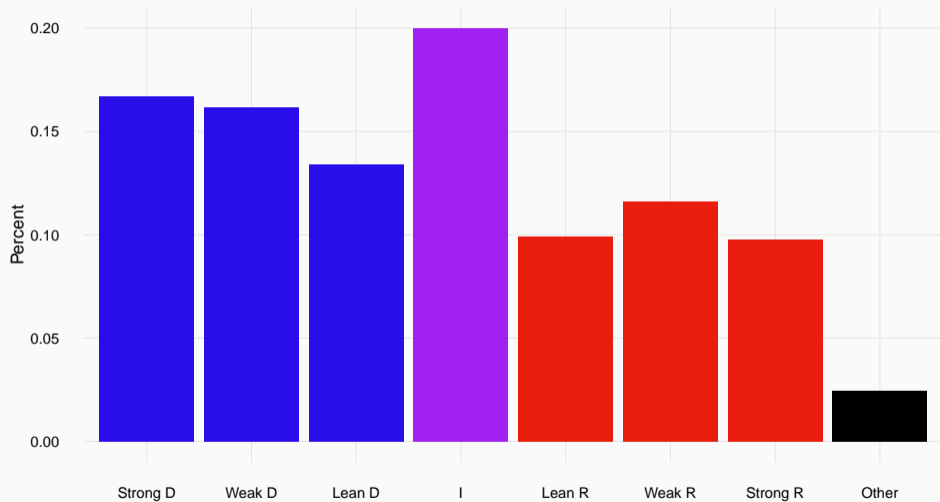
- Recall from the first half of the semester that elites seem to be highly polarized

- Recall from the first half of the semester that elites seem to be highly polarized
- Pundits and journalists oftentimes suggest that the public is highly polarized as well

- Recall from the first half of the semester that elites seem to be highly polarized
- Pundits and journalists oftentimes suggest that the public is highly polarized as well
- However, political science suggests that the public, *unlike political elites*, is not highly polarized.

- Recall from the first half of the semester that elites seem to be highly polarized
- Pundits and journalists oftentimes suggest that the public is highly polarized as well
- However, political science suggests that the public, *unlike political elites*, is not highly polarized.
- Why is that the case?

Origins and Nature of Public Opinion

- Self-interest

Foundations of Preferences

- Self-interest
- Values

- Self-interest
- Values
- Social groups

- Economic

- Economic
  - Taxes, for example

- Economic
  - Taxes, for example
- Regulations

- Economic
  - Taxes, for example
- Regulations
  - Clean air, property rights, etc

- Economic
  - Taxes, for example
- Regulations
  - Clean air, property rights, etc
- Labor

- Economic
  - Taxes, for example
- Regulations
  - Clean air, property rights, etc
- Labor
  - About 19 million people work for federal, state, or local government

- Economic
    - Taxes, for example
- Regulations
    - Clean air, property rights, etc
- Labor
    - About 19 million people work for federal, state, or local government
    - This is about 12% of the labor force

- Economic
  - Taxes, for example
- Regulations
  - Clean air, property rights, etc
- Labor
  - About 19 million people work for federal, state, or local government
  - This is about 12% of the labor force
  - Another million are in the armed forces

- Economic
    - Taxes, for example
- Regulations
    - Clean air, property rights, etc
- Labor
    - About 19 million people work for federal, state, or local government
    - This is about 12% of the labor force
    - Another million are in the armed forces
    - Federal government expenditures account for about 20% of GDP

- Economic
    - Taxes, for example
- Regulations
    - Clean air, property rights, etc
- Labor
    - About 19 million people work for federal, state, or local government
    - This is about 12% of the labor force
    - Another million are in the armed forces
    - Federal government expenditures account for about 20% of GDP
- Zoning laws, urban development, family laws, etc

- What is right and wrong?

- What is right and wrong?
- Our *value systems* help determine what we want government to do

- What is right and wrong?
- Our *value systems* help determine what we want government to do
- We develop value systems from many different places - family, religion, school, social groups, etc

- What is right and wrong?
- Our *value systems* help determine what we want government to do
- We develop value systems from many different places - family, religion, school, social groups, etc
- Economic justice

- What is right and wrong?
- Our *value systems* help determine what we want government to do
- We develop value systems from many different places - family, religion, school, social groups, etc
- Economic justice
  - Equality of opportunity

- What is right and wrong?
- Our *value systems* help determine what we want government to do
- We develop value systems from many different places - family, religion, school, social groups, etc
- Economic justice
   - Equality of opportunity
- Criminal justice

- What is right and wrong?
- Our *value systems* help determine what we want government to do
- We develop value systems from many different places - family, religion, school, social groups, etc
- Economic justice
    - Equality of opportunity
- Criminal justice
    - What's a crime and what is an appropriate punishment

- What is right and wrong?
- Our *value systems* help determine what we want government to do
- We develop value systems from many different places - family, religion, school, social groups, etc
- Economic justice
    - Equality of opportunity
- Criminal justice
    - What's a crime and what is an appropriate punishment
- What's marriage?

- What is right and wrong?
- Our *value systems* help determine what we want government to do
- We develop value systems from many different places - family, religion, school, social groups, etc
- Economic justice
  - Equality of opportunity
- Criminal justice
  - What's a crime and what is an appropriate punishment
- What's marriage?
  - Economic arrangement, interracial marriage, gay marriage

Some people think that the government in Washington ought to reduce the income differences between the rich and the poor, perhaps by raising the taxes of wealthy families or by giving income assistance to the poor. Others think that the government should not concern itself with reducing this income difference between the rich and the poor. Here is a card with a scale from 1 to 7. Think of a score of 1 as meaning that the government ought to reduce the income differences between rich and poor, and a score of 7 meaning that the government should not concern itself with reducing income differences. What score between 1 and 7 comes closest to the way you feel?
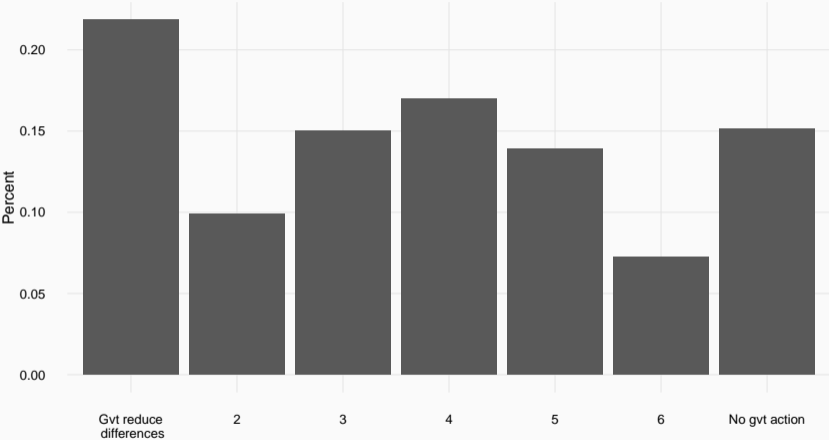
- The people we interact with - family, neighbors, race, religion, etc

- The people we interact with - family, neighbors, race, religion, etc
- People tend to support policies that benefit the group they belong to

- The people we interact with - family, neighbors, race, religion, etc
- People tend to support policies that benefit the group they belong to
  - And thus, indirectly, themselves

- The people we interact with - family, neighbors, race, religion, etc
- People tend to support policies that benefit the group they belong to
  - And thus, indirectly, themselves
- People can change opinions simply by joining an organization

- The people we interact with - family, neighbors, race, religion, etc
- People tend to support policies that benefit the group they belong to
  - And thus, indirectly, themselves
- People can change opinions simply by joining an organization
  - People can internalize the collective value

- The people we interact with - family, neighbors, race, religion, etc
- People tend to support policies that benefit the group they belong to
  - And thus, indirectly, themselves
- People can change opinions simply by joining an organization
  - People can internalize the collective value
  - For example, when our company does well we feel good

- The people we interact with - family, neighbors, race, religion, etc
- People tend to support policies that benefit the group they belong to
    - And thus, indirectly, themselves
- People can change opinions simply by joining an organization
    - People can internalize the collective value
    - For example, when our company does well we feel good
- Socialization is the process through which individuals assimilate collective preferences and norms through social interactions

- The people we interact with - family, neighbors, race, religion, etc
- People tend to support policies that benefit the group they belong to
  - And thus, indirectly, themselves
- People can change opinions simply by joining an organization
  - People can internalize the collective value
  - For example, when our company does well we feel good
- Socialization is the process through which individuals assimilate collective preferences and norms through social interactions
  - This usually occurs relatively early in life (before 18), but continues at a slower pace throughout life

- Politics and political decisions are very complicated

- Politics and political decisions are very complicated
- Ideology is a simplification of the political world

- Politics and political decisions are very complicated
- Ideology is a simplification of the political world
- In the US, we use liberal and conservative to describe individuals' ideologies

- Politics and political decisions are very complicated
- Ideology is a simplification of the political world
- In the US, we use liberal and conservative to describe individuals' ideologies
- Generally, liberals support political and social reform; government intervention in the economy; the expansion of federal social services; more vigorous efforts on behalf of the poor, minorities, and women; and greater concern for consumers and the environment

- Politics and political decisions are very complicated
- Ideology is a simplification of the political world
- In the US, we use liberal and conservative to describe individuals' ideologies
- Generally, liberals support political and social reform; government intervention in the economy; the expansion of federal social services; more vigorous efforts on behalf of the poor, minorities, and women; and greater concern for consumers and the environment
- Generally, conservatives support the social and economic status quo, favor markets as solutions to social problems, and believe that large and powerful government pose a threat to citizens' freedoms

23

- Oftentimes we think of ideology as a spectrum with those on the left favoring more liberal policies and those on the right favoring more conservative ones

- Oftentimes we think of ideology as a spectrum with those on the left favoring more liberal policies and those on the right favoring more conservative ones
- In general, the Democrats represent more liberal views and the Republicans more conservative
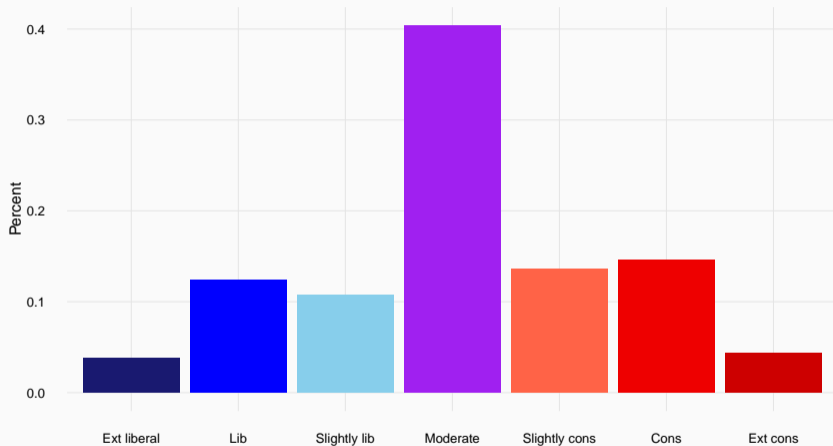
- Just as ideology helps us simplify the political world, identity can play the same role

- Just as ideology helps us simplify the political world, identity can play the same role
- People identify with certain groups because of shared social connections or values and interests

- Just as ideology helps us simplify the political world, identity can play the same role
- People identify with certain groups because of shared social connections or values and interests
- Harms/benefits to one member of that group are harms/benefits for all members

- Just as ideology helps us simplify the political world, identity can play the same role
- People identify with certain groups because of shared social connections or values and interests
- Harms/benefits to one member of that group are harms/benefits for all members
- These groups can be broad

- Just as ideology helps us simplify the political world, identity can play the same role
- People identify with certain groups because of shared social connections or values and interests
- Harms/benefits to one member of that group are harms/benefits for all members
- These groups can be broad
    - For example, most consider themselves "American" and root for the US during the World Cup

- Political party

- Political party
  - Usually stable, attachment developed in childhood and carried throughout life

- Political party
    - Usually stable, attachment developed in childhood and carried throughout life
    - The best predictor of how people will vote, even after taking into account self-interest, economics, and other identities

- Political party
    - Usually stable, attachment developed in childhood and carried throughout life
    - The best predictor of how people will vote, even after taking into account self-interest, economics, and other identities
- Oftentimes identity politics refers to historically underrepresented groups

- Slavery created a large divide between white people and black people in our society

- Slavery created a large divide between white people and black people in our society
- This manifests in many different ways

- Slavery created a large divide between white people and black people in our society
- This manifests in many different ways
- For example, among whites income and conservatism are positively correlated (as income goes up, whites tend to be more conservative)

- Slavery created a large divide between white people and black people in our society
- This manifests in many different ways
- For example, among whites income and conservatism are positively correlated (as income goes up, whites tend to be more conservative)
- But among black people, this correlation does not exist

- Slavery created a large divide between white people and black people in our society
- This manifests in many different ways
- For example, among whites income and conservatism are positively correlated (as income goes up, whites tend to be more conservative)
- But among black people, this correlation does not exist
- Nearly all black people support the Democratic party

- Tend to prioritize different issues from non-Hispanics

- Tend to prioritize different issues from non-Hispanics
- Education, immigration instead of the economy

- Tend to prioritize different issues from non-Hispanics
- Education, immigration instead of the economy
- More heterogeneity among Hispanics than black people due to different communities (Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, etc)

- Tend to prioritize different issues from non-Hispanics
- Education, immigration instead of the economy
- More heterogeneity among Hispanics than black people due to different communities (Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, etc)
- Hispanics tend to be Democrats, though not to the extent that black people are

- Men and women express different opinions as well

- Men and women express different opinions as well
- These can be easy to understand why:

- Men and women express different opinions as well
- These can be easy to understand why:

Now I'm going to read several more statements. As I read each one, please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with it. It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family.
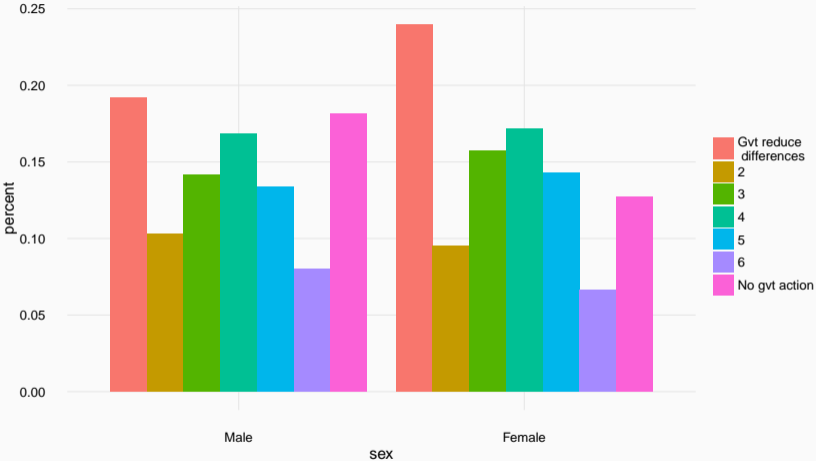
IDENTITY POLITICS - SEX
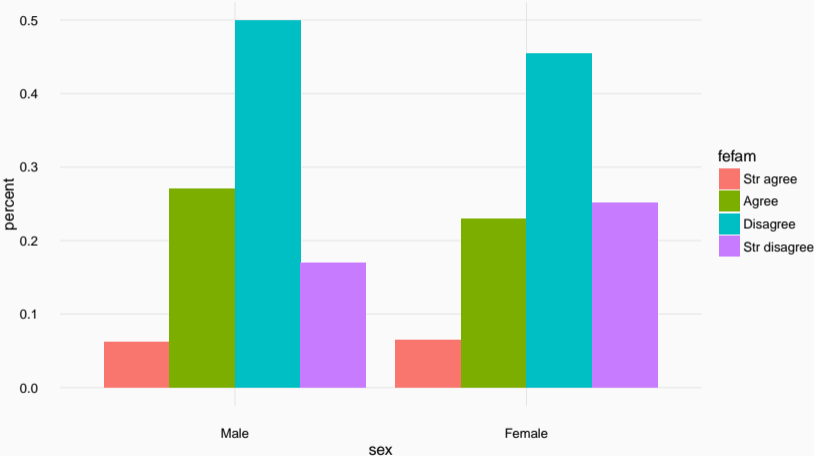
- Or they can be more difficult to understand why women and men have different views:

- Or they can be more difficult to understand why women and men have different views:
  - Question from several slides ago about government's role in reducing income differences

- Overall, women tend to be less supportive of militaristic policies, more likely to favor environmental protections, and more supportive of government-run social and health care programs

- Overall, women tend to be less supportive of militaristic policies, more likely to favor environmental protections, and more supportive of government-run social and health care programs
- Unsurprisingly, then, women tend to support the Democratic party

- Overall, women tend to be less supportive of militaristic policies, more likely to favor environmental protections, and more supportive of government-run social and health care programs
- Unsurprisingly, then, women tend to support the Democratic party
- This difference is relatively small - usually between 5 and 10 percentage points

- Perhaps not as strong in the US as in other countries

- Perhaps not as strong in the US as in other countries
- But people are more likely to vote for candidates who share their religion

- Perhaps not as strong in the US as in other countries
- But people are more likely to vote for candidates who share their religion
  - Catholics for Kennedy

- Perhaps not as strong in the US as in other countries
- But people are more likely to vote for candidates who share their religion
    - Catholics for Kennedy
    - Born-again Christians for Carter

- Perhaps not as strong in the US as in other countries
- But people are more likely to vote for candidates who share their religion
  - Catholics for Kennedy
  - Born-again Christians for Carter
  - Mormons for Romney

- Perhaps not as strong in the US as in other countries
- But people are more likely to vote for candidates who share their religion
    - Catholics for Kennedy
    - Born-again Christians for Carter
    - Mormons for Romney
- Catholics more likely to be Democrats

- We already talked about one geographic group - Americans

- We already talked about one geographic group - Americans
- There are other clear divisions - North versus South

- We already talked about one geographic group - Americans
- There are other clear divisions - North versus South
- Urban versus rural

- We already talked about one geographic group - Americans
- There are other clear divisions - North versus South
- Urban versus rural
    - Urban areas heavily Democrat, rural areas heavily Republican

- We already talked about one geographic group - Americans
- There are other clear divisions - North versus South
- Urban versus rural
    - Urban areas heavily Democrat, rural areas heavily Republican
- Even neighborhoods that we live in or come from

Public Opinion and Political Knowledge

- The average American knows little about current events or basic facts of American government

- The average American knows little about current events or basic facts of American government
- However, they can express (relatively) clear preferences across a broad range of issues

- The average American knows little about current events or basic facts of American government
- However, they can express (relatively) clear preferences across a broad range of issues
- The reason for this general ignorance is clear:

- The average American knows little about current events or basic facts of American government
- However, they can express (relatively) clear preferences across a broad range of issues
- The reason for this general ignorance is clear:
- It is costly (time, etc) to learn about politics, especially when there's little to no benefit in doing so

- Since becoming knowledgeable about politics requires a lot of time and energy, most people rely on shortcuts, labels, and stereotypes

- Since becoming knowledgeable about politics requires a lot of time and energy, most people rely on shortcuts, labels, and stereotypes
- One such shortcut is relying on others' judgment

- Since becoming knowledgeable about politics requires a lot of time and energy, most people rely on shortcuts, labels, and stereotypes
- One such shortcut is relying on others' judgment
  - Ministers, TV personalities, politicians, etc

- Since becoming knowledgeable about politics requires a lot of time and energy, most people rely on shortcuts, labels, and stereotypes
- One such shortcut is relying on others' judgment
    - Ministers, TV personalities, politicians, etc
- Another is to view policy proposals through the lens of ideology

- Some argue that low levels of political knowledge harm democracy

- Some argue that low levels of political knowledge harm democracy
- Those with low political knowledge may not understand where their interests are

- Some argue that low levels of political knowledge harm democracy
- Those with low political knowledge may not understand where their interests are
- People with low levels of political knowledge are easier to manipulate

- Although political knowledge for any one individual is low, public opinion in the aggregate is quite stable

- Although political knowledge for any one individual is low, public opinion in the aggregate is quite stable
- Most people retain one partisanship throughout life

- Although political knowledge for any one individual is low, public opinion in the aggregate is quite stable
- Most people retain one partisanship throughout life
- Individuals' values remain basically stable

- One of democracy's great strengths lies in the aggregation of numbers

((Examples))

- One of democracy's great strengths lies in the aggregation of numbers
- Aggregation counteracts the effects of political ignorance

((Examples))

- Aggregate stability does not mean that opinion never changes

- Aggregate stability does not mean that opinion never changes
- 1945 - 1970 civil rights

- Aggregate stability does not mean that opinion never changes
- 1945 - 1970 civil rights
- 1960s - 1970s taxation

- Aggregate stability does not mean that opinion never changes
- 1945 - 1970 civil rights
- 1960s - 1970s taxation
- 1990 - now gay rights

SHAPING OPINION

- MANY different actors try to convince people to their side.

- MANY different actors try to convince people to their side.
  - Government

- MANY different actors try to convince people to their side.
    - Government
    - Private groups

- MANY different actors try to convince people to their side.
    - Government
    - Private groups
    - Media

- Government tries to convince citizens to think or act certain ways

- Government tries to convince citizens to think or act certain ways
- Support for policies (wars, health campaigns, etc)

- Government tries to convince citizens to think or act certain ways
- Support for policies (wars, health campaigns, etc)
- Oftentimes not successful

- Government tries to convince citizens to think or act certain ways
- Support for policies (wars, health campaigns, etc)
- Oftentimes not successful
- Polls, social media, TV, etc

- Interest groups try to sway public opinion to their side

- Interest groups try to sway public opinion to their side
- US Chamber of Commerce, Heritage Foundation, Hoover Institution

- Interest groups try to sway public opinion to their side
- US Chamber of Commerce, Heritage Foundation, Hoover Institution
- AFL-CIO, Sierra Club, etc

- The media play a large role in public opinion formation

- The media play a large role in public opinion formation
- Most Americans say that their primary source of information about politics is from the media - newspapers, cable and broadcast TV, radio, internet sites

- The media play a large role in public opinion formation
- Most Americans say that their primary source of information about politics is from the media - newspapers, cable and broadcast TV, radio, internet sites
- The media is the conduit through which information flows

- Media act as an agenda setter

- Media act as an agenda setter
  - Has the power to bring attention (or not) to particular issues and problems

- Media act as an agenda setter
  - Has the power to bring attention (or not) to particular issues and problems
- The media can also prime people by making them think about an issue in a certain context

- Media act as an agenda setter
  - Has the power to bring attention (or not) to particular issues and problems
- The media can also prime people by making them think about an issue in a certain context
  - For example, covering the environment a lot makes people think about the election in terms of the environment

- Media act as an agenda setter
  - Has the power to bring attention (or not) to particular issues and problems
- The media can also prime people by making them think about an issue in a certain context
  - For example, covering the environment a lot makes people think about the election in terms of the environment
- Finally, the media can frame issues in a certain way

- Media act as an agenda setter
  - Has the power to bring attention (or not) to particular issues and problems
- The media can also prime people by making them think about an issue in a certain context
  - For example, covering the environment a lot makes people think about the election in terms of the environment
- Finally, the media can frame issues in a certain way
  - For example, covering welfare programs as expensive vs covering them as helping poor people

- Priming can distract people from important problems

- Priming can distract people from important problems
- Framing can make us think about issues in a biased way

- Priming can distract people from important problems
- Framing can make us think about issues in a biased way
- These *usually* aren't a problem because competing sides are trying to prime/frame issues in opposing ways, resulting in information flowing freely
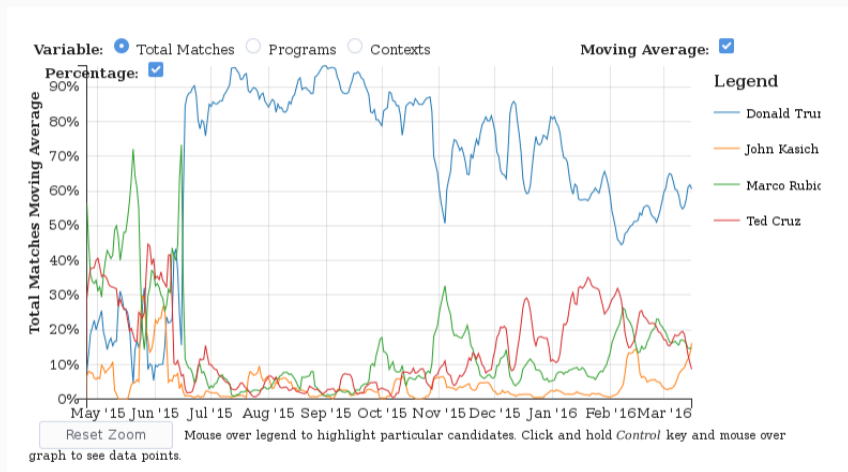
Measuring Public Opinion

- By and large, public opinion polls are the most widely-used method of gauging public opinion

- By and large, public opinion polls are the most widely-used method of gauging public opinion
- These rely on choosing a sample from the population we're interested in studying

- By and large, public opinion polls are the most widely-used method of gauging public opinion
- These rely on choosing a sample from the population we're interested in studying
    - The population here is oftentimes all Americans (or at least those over 18)

- By and large, public opinion polls are the most widely-used method of gauging public opinion
- These rely on choosing a sample from the population we're interested in studying
    - The population here is oftentimes all Americans (or at least those over 18)
- The sample needs to accurately reflect the population

- Probability sampling is great if you know the entire population

- Probability sampling is great if you know the entire population
- But this usually isn't the case with voters

- Probability sampling is great if you know the entire population
- But this usually isn't the case with voters
- So we use random-digit dialing instead

- Probability sampling is great if you know the entire population
- But this usually isn't the case with voters
- So we use random-digit dialing instead
- Selection bias can skew the results of a poll

- Probability sampling is great if you know the entire population
- But this usually isn't the case with voters
- So we use random-digit dialing instead
- Selection bias can skew the results of a poll
  - This happens when we make an error where our sample is not representative of the population we're trying to learn about

- The more people you survey, the more accurate you can be

- The more people you survey, the more accurate you can be
- Sampling error or margin of error is polling error that arises from the size of the sample

- The way that we ask questions influences the way people answer

- The way that we ask questions influences the way people answer
- Consider welfare. Do we ask about welfare or assistance to the poor?

- The way that we ask questions influences the way people answer
- Consider welfare. Do we ask about welfare or assistance to the poor?

Do you think we're spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on (welfare) or (assistance to the poor)?

Welfare vs Assistance to the poor (2014 GSS)