

17.20 Introduction to the American Political Process

Recitation: Sources of American Discontent; Representation and Responsiveness

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Announcements

What You can Expect

- A simplified and intuitive overview of the readings
- Tips for the writing assignments
- Supplementary readings (**Optional** but **useful** for completing the assignment)

Representation and Responsiveness

Definition

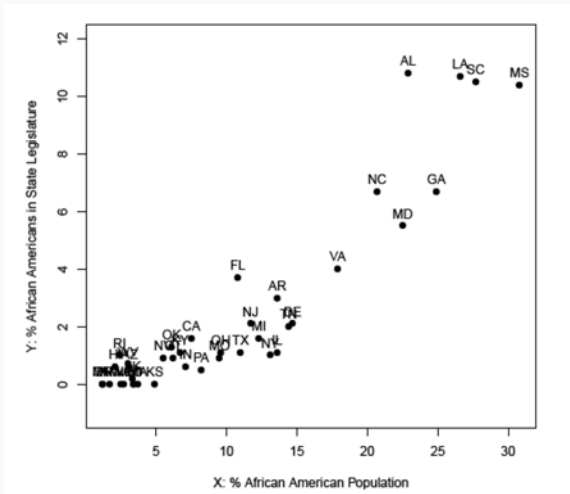
- Pitkin
 - Formalistic representation
 - Symbolic and descriptive representation
 - Substantive representation
 - Nowadays, political scientists mainly care about descriptive and substantive representation
- Mansbridge
 - Descriptive representation v. Substantive representation?
 - Descriptive representation can improve Substantive representation:
 - Overcome distrust (641-643)
 - Define group interest when group interests are not crystallized
 - Beyond enhancing substantive representation
 - Construct the social meaning: reparation and redress historical grievances
 - Legitimacy and image

- Descriptive representation without substantive representation?

- Substantive representation without descriptive representation?

How Political Scientists Study Representation

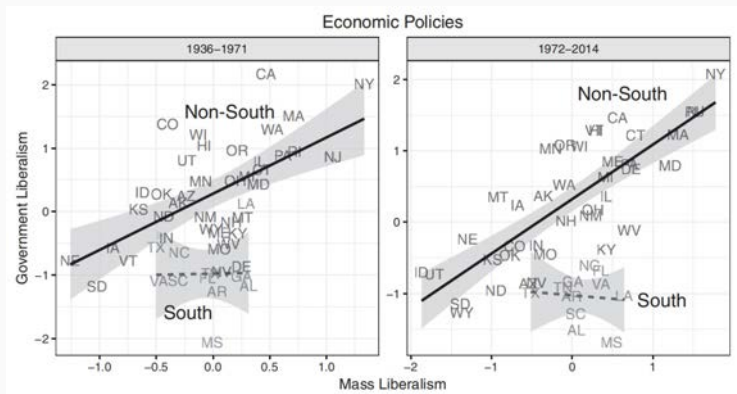
- Descriptive representation



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How Political Scientists Study Representation

- Substantive representation is roughly equivalent to policy responsiveness

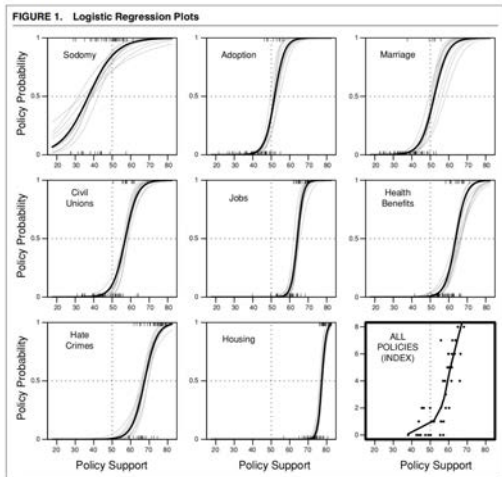


Caughey and Warshaw 2017

Caughey, Devin, and Christopher Warshaw. "Policy Preferences and Policy Change: Dynamic Responsiveness in the American States, 1936-2014." *American Political Science Review* 112, no. 2 (2017): 249-66. © Cambridge University Press on behalf of the American Political Science Association. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

How Political Scientists Study Representation

- Substantive representation is roughly equivalent to policy responsiveness



Citizen Competence

- Marty Gilens offered comprehensive literature review on whether average American citizens were capable of formulating meaningful policy preferences
- The public knows so little about policy issues
- Ordinary citizens do not hold stable and consistent policy preferences
- But there are still hopes: 1. Take cues from others 2. Maybe some people really care about one issue 3. Aggregate all survey responses

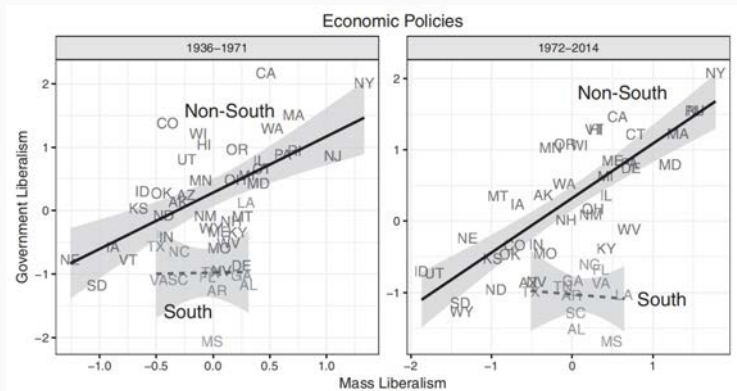
Below are the readings he cited:

- Philip E. Converse. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In *Ideology and Discontent*, edited by David E. Apter
- Benjamin I. Page and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans? Policy Preferences*
- Delli Carpini, Michael X. and Scott Keeter. 1996. *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Introduction
- Lupia, Arthur. 1994. "Shortcuts Versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections." *American Political Science Review* 88: 63-76.
- Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*

- Mechanics behind the miracle of aggregation:
 - Condorcet Jury Theorem
 - Aggregation reduces the random measurement errors and the variance of survey responses
 - Achen, Christopher H. 1975. "Mass Political Attitudes and the Survey Response." *American Political Science Review*. 69:1218-1231
 - Snyder JM, Ansolabehere S, Rodden J. "The Strength of Issues: Using Multiple Measures to Gauge Preference Stability, Ideological Constraint, and Issue Voting". *American Political Science Review*. 2008;102 (2) :215-232.

- Unequal Voice leads to Unequal Responsiveness:
 - How to measure political voice?

- But why we still see some responsiveness like this?



Caughey and Warshaw 2017

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- Sometimes the poor and disadvantaged happened to agree with the wealthy and potent
 - Economic growth
 - Job creation
- Martin Gilens and Benjamin I Page. Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens. *Perspectives on politics*, 12(03):564-581, 2014

- Solution to political inequality
- Why do people don't participate?
 - They can't: No resources
 - They don't want to: Lack of interest
 - **Nobody asked them to: Mobilization**

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