

PUBLIC OPINION

WHAT IS PUBLIC OPINION?

- how people think or feel about particular things
- it is possible to have no opinion or a strong/weak opinion

IS WHAT PEOPLE THINK/FEEL RELATED TO GOVERNING?

- we have a representative democracy
- that means we don't run things, we elect people to do that for us
- the assumption is that governing is related to what the people think

HOW DO THOSE WHO GOVERN KNOW OUR OPINIONS?

- we vote
- we express our opinions
 - writing to a congressman
 - participating in polls
 - protesting
 - writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper
 - bumper stickers, yard signs
 - run for office

(both assume that we have opinions and are willing to express them)

presumption: people have opinions, those who govern hear them, and they act

EARLY MEASURES OF PUBLIC OPINION

- books people read, letters to the editor
- federalist papers were letters printed under a fake name
- intended to shape opinion in support of the constitution
- input they received could measure their support

Later (1940-now) we developed more "sophisticated measures"

PEOPLE DON'T TRUST THE GOVERNMENT

- people don't trust the government
- it is embedded in the value of individualism
- must rely on yourself, not on the government

- opinions of the governed should be expressed by those who govern
- we don't trust the government to respond to our needs
- we have created a system that doesn't respond to our needs
- why doesn't the representative system fall apart?
- because of optimism, things will always get better
- we believe that we can solve our problems (individualism)

CULTURE: OPTIMISTIC & INDIVIDUALISTIC

- we are optimistic, we rely on ourselves
- we don't expect the government to solve our problems
- all we want is the opportunity
- want government to act if there is a failure to achieve opportunity for everyone

- have more negative opinions when asked about "the government" as opposed to a particular representative
- government is easy to mistrust, but we separate the people from the institutions
- ask people if they like congress, then ask them if they like their congressman
- we have an incumbency rate of 90%

PUBLIC OPINION MEASURED

- calls for empirical method at the turn of the 20th century
- small group of political scientists wanted more scientific rigor applied to the study of politics (they were laughed at)
- then WWII happened, an event that changed many academic disciplines, especially political science
- there was a "failure" in political science to predict the rise of Hitler
- we didn't have an academy to deal with those kinds of questions
- WWII was a true test of democracy
- political science began to get more money from the government
- began to take political science more seriously
- began to measure public opinion
- first studies demonstrated that people didn't know much about government
- many did not know how government functioned nor the issues of the day
- feeling: public doesn't have any political knowledge
- there is a vacuum, and it can be filled by a demagogue, like Hitler

POLITICAL CULTURE HELPS MAINTAIN OUR SYSTEM

- political system won't fall apart
- we are optimistic and individualistic
- people want to rely on themselves

WE STILL CARE ABOUT OPINIONS

- focus in political science since late 50s and early 60s: measurement, making sure there are reliable/valid instruments
- want to be sure we're measuring what we're measuring

HOW DO WE GO ABOUT MEASURING?

- can get a sense of public opinion by who won an election
- not as sophisticated as asking particular questions
- voting is a form of opinion, but we want to know what went into the vote

Opinion Polls are interviews or surveys of a sample of citizens used to estimate how much the general public feels about an issue or set of issues.

(sample tells us something about the larger population)

Types of Polls:

Tracking Polls - continuous surveys that enable a campaign to chart its daily rise and fall in popularity. These may be a decent measure of trends.

Exit Polls - polls conducted at polling places on election day.

A **Deliberate Poll** attempts to measure what the public would think if they had better opportunities to thoughtfully consider the issues first.

In order for a poll to be reliable, it must have:

- 1) precise wording/format
- 2) a representative sample

Precise wording/format:

- 1) Can't be leading/biased
- 2) Can't be confusing
- 3) Can't be "double-barreled"

- 4) Interviewee must be competent to answer
- 5) Full range of answers
- 6) Willingness of interviewee

Biased questioning:

Would you be more likely to vote for John McCain if you learned that God had just announced his support for his campaign?

Would your support of George W. Bush change if I told you that he was once arrested for a DUI?

No confusing/compound questions:

Would you vote for Obama in the next election and, if so, would your vote be influenced by his views on world hunger and the Middle East as well as the problems with "the economy"?

Yes: _____ No: _____

Participant competency/full range of responses:

Why do you think that senior citizens are more likely to prefer coffee to tea?

Who would you vote for in the next presidential election?

George Bush: _____ Other: _____

Closed versus open-ended questions:

Who would you vote for in the next presidential election?

OBAMA: _____ PALIN: _____

Do you believe that it is okay to cheat on a test if you didn't have time to study?

Participant Willingness (might not be willing to answer):

In the last month, have you had suicidal thoughts?

What is your sexual orientation?

Have you used cocaine while at Roanoke College?

REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE

- often pollsters are interested in large groups of people
- want to know what everyone's opinion is
- problem: difficult/impossible to interview the entire group
- solution: representative sample

POT OF SOUP EXAMPLE

- there is a pot of soup on the stove
- does it need more salt? how do you check? taste the whole pot?
- no, you take a spoonful
- make sure to stir the soup!

- want the sample to say something about the population
- if don't stir the soup, you won't get a good sample and you may end up under or overestimating how much salt you'll need
- in the same way, representative samples give us information we assume is related to the entire population
- if stir the soup before taking a spoonful, more likely to get a better estimate of how much the whole pot needs

HOW TO STIR THE SOUP?

- random sampling!
- everyone has an equal chance of being surveyed

REPLICATION

- how do you know if your results are reliable? replication
- if survey is replicated and you get different results, then you have a sampling error
- the bigger the difference, the larger the sampling error

CAUSES SAMPLING ERROR?

- low response rates
- samples that are too small
 - not enough respondents
 - more questions = more respondents needed
- short term fluctuation in public opinion

THINKING ABOUT PUBLIC OPINION

- opinion saliency: how important an issue is
- opinion stability: how much opinion changes
 - opinions that change a lot don't have high saliency
 - can look at stability across one or multiple issues
- opinion-policy congruence: how close opinion reflects government policy
 - researchers look at connection between opinions and how close they reflect reality
 - example: if someone offers opinion about an imaginary policy, it may be important and stable, but it's not congruent
 - this worries researchers; if people offer opinions they don't have, there is not enough knowledge, which opens vacuums for demagogues

ELITE VS. MASS OPINION

- can easily identify the elites, but there are many differences among the masses

Elite Opinion: Those people with a disproportionate amount of resources

- elites may or may not have a lot of money
- however, elites have resources: education or willingness to use knowledge to know, and therefore have opinions

Mass Opinion: Those without the resources and/or willingness to know

ELITE/MASS DIFFERENCES

- elites tend to have more congruence, stability (the more they know about issues, the more fixed their opinions become), and in some cases more salient
- mass opinion tends to have less congruence, more validity, and less saliency

HOW DO WE GET THE OPINIONS WE HAVE?

ORIGIN OF PUBLIC OPINION

Political Values -> Political Knowledge & Cues from Leaders -> Self-Interest = Public Opinion

POLITICAL VALUES

- freedom, equality, individualism, capitalism, etc.
- shape our behavior, underline our opinions
- however, not everyone feels as strongly about those values
- other factors may contribute more to behavior/vote/opinions

OPINION LEADERS

- media: radio, TV, newspaper
- members of the government: the president, congress, people who speak to you about opinions
- interest group leaders: Al Gore (head of the environmental movement), Ralph Nadar (consumer protection)
- music and movie stars

(doesn't give opinion, you generally gravitate toward people who agree with you)
very hard to measure effects

SELF-INTEREST

- our bottom line/how we make sense of the world
- houses the culmination of your viewpoint
- could be your political party, religious views, views on international relations, etc.
- it's the lens that we see through that shapes the rest of our opinions

IF OPINIONS FORM, THEY MUST GROW/CHANGE

- opinions come from someplace and form
- political socialization: the process by which we form our opinions

POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

- a process by which we acquire our values (takes time)
- grows with the person
- begins as a child through young adulthood
- opinions are more malleable at a young age
- stabilize between ages 25 and 30
- typically we think of it in terms of background traits that affect our political view

Background Traits Influencing our Opinions/Values:

- family
- religion (or lack thereof)
- gender (how they're treated/view the world, expected roles)
- social class (socioeconomic status)
- race/ethnicity
- education and information
- cleavages

POLITICAL CLEAVAGES THAT OVERLAP

- divide us into groups along these traits, but have us overlap as well
- come up with combinations along the background characteristics
- group identities may be important, but they're not singularly important

CROSS-CUTTING CLEAVAGES INDICATIVE OF PLURALISM

- group identity varies across individuals and levels of intensity
- that is what makes us a pluralistic society, we've allowed this to flourish
- can have two females with different background characteristics

BIG CLEAVAGES

Social Class (education and income)

- importance of this cleavage depends on the importance of economic issues
- everyone puts "middle class," assigned categories by education and income
- greater socioeconomic status means more stable, salient, congruent opinions
- tend to have greater political knowledge and more likelihood to vote

Race/Ethnicity

- blacks are more likely to support Democrats (but have less political knowledge and tend to vote less)
- young blacks are more conservative and know more about issues
- Asians and other minorities are divided but usually favor Democrats and have higher participation rates

Region

- as states grow, they become more diverse and other cleavages begin to have more influence (South used to vote Republican, now becoming more Democratic because of diversity)
- West and Midwest are favoring Democrats more
- Cantor/Pence: heads of the Republican Party, from Midwest, not South (first time leadership is not from the South)

IDEOLOGY

- political ideology and public opinion are not the same
- democrat/liberal and republican/conservative are swapped around
- when we ask individuals about their ideologies, we measure it separately

ideology - clear and consistent set of beliefs about how government and related institutions should pursue policy

Two ways scientists measure political ideology:

- 1) Self Identification - ask people to place themselves along a continuum
- 2) Ask questions to see what beliefs are about current issues and see if they help predict future positions; if you are consistent, we say constrained

- most people think they're moderate
- say only extreme leaders who speak loudest, most Americans are moderate
- however, when you ask people questions that would indicate their ideology, we find a considerable lack of consistency and clarity (conservatives hold liberal ideals)
- elites have ideologies, mass opinion does not
- most of us are non-ideological

MCCLOSKEY AND ZALLER

- examine three dimensions underlying political ideology that help us better understand the collection of views that equal ideology
- several questions in each dimension

Three Dimensions:

- 1) government policy on the economy (laissez-faire or more regulation)
- 2) government responsibility on civil rights and race relations
- 3) public and political conduct views (law and order versus peaceful protest)

Four Categories:

- 1) Pure Liberals
- 2) Pure Conservatives
- 3) Libertarians
- 4) Populists

PURE CONSERVATIVE

- favor economic freedom, but frequently support laws to restrict personal behavior that violates "traditional values"

- oppose excessive government control of business, while endorsing government action to defend morality and the traditional family structure
- support a strong military, oppose bureaucracy and high taxes, favor a free-market economy, and endorse strong law enforcement
- older, higher income, white Southern and Midwestern, religious

PURE LIBERAL

- embrace freedom of choice in personal matters, but support significant government control of the economy
- support a government-funded "safety net" to help the disadvantaged, and advocate strict regulation of business
- favor environmental regulations, defend civil liberties and free expression, support government action to promote equality, and tolerate diverse lifestyles
- younger, white, college-educated and non-religious

LIBERTARIAN

- maximum liberty in both personal and economic matters
- advocate smaller government; one that is limited to protecting individuals from coercion and violence
- embrace individual responsibility, oppose government bureaucracy and taxes, promote private charity, tolerate diverse lifestyles, support the free market, and defend civil liberties
- young, college-educated, white, higher income, live in West

POPULIST

- want government to have a great deal of power over the economy and personal behavior
- distrust free market, support high taxes, and centralized planning of the economy, oppose diverse lifestyles, and question the importance of civil liberties
- older, white, lower income and education, religious, female, Midwestern and Southern

"The Smallest Political Quiz"

<http://www.theadvocates.org/quizp/index.html>

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

FORMAL VS. INFORMAL LINKAGE

- public opinion informally links the public and government
- hard to establish the ends of the link; not direct
- voting formally links the public and government

WHO VOTES?

- the percentage of **eligible** voters who vote in the US is very low compared to other nations
- the percentage of **registered** voters who vote is comparatively better

- registration is a necessary condition of voting
- in the US, registering to vote is harder than actually voting
- if registered voters vote more than eligible voters, we should make registration the focus of policy

VOTER REGISTRATION: WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?

- the states are responsible for conducting elections and registering voters
- as a result, there is no uniform system (registration requirements vary by state)
- to prevent fraud, all 50 states require advanced registration and a demonstration of legal residency
- until federal reforms under the Voting Rights Act of 1970, some states required residency for one year!

REFORMS ON RESIDENCY

- Voting Rights Act of 1970 made residency requirement of thirty days max
- if resident for less than thirty days, can vote by absentee in old state
- the Supreme Court upheld the act in *Dunn v. Blumstein* 1972

ACCESS TO REGISTER?

- dependent on the infrastructure of state and how devoted they are to making registration a knowable and feasible process (some states make it easy, some don't)
- although residency requirements are less stringent, states are not required to make registration easier... at least until Motor Voter 1993
- process of easing registration has been a slow one

PURGING OF VOTER ROLLS

- if you haven't voted for a period of time or are convicted of a crime, you will be purged from voting rolls
- in the former case, you can re-register

IMPACT OF EASING REGISTRATION AND OTHER OBSTACLES ON TURNOUT

- Wolfsinger & Rosenstone (1980), *Who Votes*, examined factors which contributed to turnout
- they found turnout would increase by 9% nationally if...
 - elimination of closing dates (can register up to a day before election)
 - registrar office hours at 40 per week
 - open registration on weekends and evenings
 - allow for absentee registration

WHAT REFORMS HAVE BEEN UNDERTAKEN?

- some states have allowed access to be greatly improved (varies by state)
- some are allowing postcard registration
- a few states allow registration on election day (ME, MN, WI)
- Motor Voter Law of 1993 - national law requires states to open alternative venues (other than registrars office) to allow people to register (such as the DMV, Department of Social Services, Military Bases, etc.)

DESPITE THESE REFORMS...

- turnout has not increased substantially
- thought Motor Voter would be more immediately effective than it was
- this leads us to the central issue: the puzzle of turnout

THE PUZZLE

- begins with two national reforms that dramatically increased the number of eligible voters
- since reforms have been passed, there has been a decline in turnout
 - 1) Voting Rights Act of 1965 allowed many blacks, especially in the South, to actually get around the systematic disenfranchisement being leveled against that group (literacy tests, poll taxes, closed primaries, violence, etc.)
 - 2) passage of the 26th Amendment in 1971 lowered the voting age from 21 to 18
- 7) both of these measure should have increased turnout simply by adding eligible voters to the rosters
- 8) the puzzle is that these efforts had no appreciable, noticeable effect on turnout
- 9) turnout among eligible voters has gone down, not up

ADDING TO THE PUZZLE

- why didn't easing the registration requirements (especially with Motor Voter) not improve turnout rates?
- the number of registered voters increased, but that did not translate into vote... why?

WHAT IS THE IMPACT ON REGISTRATION OF THESE REFORMS?

- more likely to register in a presidential election year
- VAP vs. VEP? 40:00
- green line = eligible voters

HOW WE CATEGORIZE VOTERS MATTERS

- lets pretend that despite increases, voter turnout rates among eligible voters is still not great
- what factors influence turnout?
- registration is not a satisfactory explanation

FACTORS CAN BE DIVIDED INTO TWO GROUPS

- political factors
- personal factors

POLITICAL FACTORS

Difference in interest among elections

- Americans are asked to vote all the time
- federal system with more points of access means more elections
- turnout varies by election type (local vs. national, etc.)

Competitiveness of Elections

- turnout increases in more competitive elections
- perhaps voters feel their vote "counts" more or can make the difference

Representativeness of Party

- how well are the political parties capturing your interests?
- if the party tries to get too broad, it doesn't work; not representative
- the better one or both do, the more likely turnout increases

Organizational Efforts at Mobilization

- efforts to increase turnout through mobilization in some form works well
- the more personal the interaction, the more likely the person is to vote
- (face-to-face visit better than an email or yard sign)

PERSONAL FACTORS

Socioeconomic Status (education and income)

- probably the biggest predictor of voter turnout
- as education and income increase, so does voter turnout
- why? voters have more political knowledge than those with low income/education
- reduces the costs of voting (already have knowledge of issues, don't have to try to learn them)
- education levels are related to levels of political knowledge

Age

- decrease in voter turnout despite passage of 26th Amendment
- 18-24 have lowest turnout rates
- 65+ has a 60% turnout rate
- as age increases, voter turnout decreases
- young people are busy, migratory; not as rooted in the community yet
- however, rates among young are increasing
 - better mobilization efforts (Motor Voter, Rock the Vote, Obama)
 - websites show young people how to register/vote absentee
- if you vote once, there's an 80% chance you'll vote again
- thus if young people are voting more, trend should continue as long as next group of 18-24 follows suit

Gender

- women vote slightly more often than men

Race/Ethnicity

- minority populations are less likely to vote than their white counterparts
- however, differences in turnout rates among different minority groups
- asians are more likely to vote than blacks and hispanics
- could education explain race? asians are more educated than blacks/hispanics
- when controlled for SES, differences disappear

Party Identification

- stronger partisan attachment, more likely to vote
- easier for strong partisan; not much thinking involved
- number of people identifying themselves as independents has increased; could be related to the decline in turnout rates (independents are less likely to vote)
- could be related to the representativeness of the parties

Political Efficacy

- refers to the level of cynicism/distrust toward the government and its ability to solve problems
- voters and non-voters are equally cynical
- turnout rates are unchanged by levels of trust in government

Religious Attendance

WHAT EXPLAINS TURNOUT?

- age
- socioeconomic status
- party identification
- maybe mobilization

THREE VIEWS ON THE IMPACT OF TURNOUT RATES AND THE IMPACT ON DEMOCRACY

Cynical View

- lack of political knowledge and opinion congruence is unhealthy

Optimistic View

- given the present hurdles, the rate we have is pretty good
- don't want people with no political knowledge voting (elite point of view)
- also, there are other ways to participate

Middle Ground:

- more empirically based
- if we had 100% turnout, outcome would change
- public generally agrees with who is elected

Question: if non-voters had voted, would any of the election outcomes have changed?

Yes! 1952, 1968, 1980... 2000

POLITICAL PARTIES

FORMAL VS. INFORMAL LINKAGE

- can be thought of as a direct message from individuals to government
- (party X, which does X, stands for me)
- however, party membership is not necessarily a direct message of what a person stands for

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A DEMOCRAT OR REPUBLICAN IN 2009?

- you could go to their website, tells what policies they support
- both attack the other party
- tell what they would do better: "Other party wants to do this..."
- get a sense of how they're different without getting a sense of what they are

Will Rogers on being a Democrat

"I am not a member of any organized party -- I am a Democrat."

Will Rogers on Republicans

"The difference between a Republican and a Democrat is the Democrat is a cannibal -- they live off each other -- while the Republicans, why, they live off the Democrats."

- people don't really have a sense of what their party stands for
- in countries with more than two political parties, have a better sense of why you belong to a party

WHAT ARE POLITICAL PARTIES?

- most people define political parties by name: Democratic Party or Republican Party
- however, that's not a definition that we can generalize across history; party names have changed
- people have no idea how to begin defining political parties because they are so broad
- political scientists have come up for a definition of a political party
- we want a definition that we can generalize beyond the American case

THREE VIEWS ON POLITICAL PARTIES

- Rational Voter Model (Downs)
- Responsible Party Model (Madison)
- Wilson's Definition

(most people focus on the first two)

RATIONAL VOTER MODEL

- parties are advertising agencies, candidates are products, and voters are consumers
- provide clear differences between candidates and policies so voters can make the best choice

Critique of Rational Voter Model

- by trying to appeal to a greater audience, becomes less different
- parties are very decentralized, message gets jumbled
- decentralization/lack of clarity makes the choice less clear
- assumes voters have knowledge to make a rational choice
- however, levels of political knowledge are low
- falls apart because it assumes that the message will be clear and that voters have necessary knowledge

RESPONSIBLE PARTY MODEL

It is the party's responsibility to...

- enunciate explicit statements of programs/policies
- offer candidates loyal to programs and policies
- campaign based on choices between programs/policies
- guarantee party office holders will implement programs/policies

Necessary requirements for the RPM to work:

- Political Party must enunciate explicit statements of programs and principles
- must put forth candidates loyal to the party program and willing to enact it into public policy if elected
- conduct its electoral campaigns in such a manner that voters will grasp the programmatic differences between the parties and make their decisions on that basis
- guarantee that public officeholders elected under the party label will carry the party program into public policy and the party take responsibility for their actions in office

Thus, the RPM says that legislators elected under the party name are obligated to act in support of policies adopted by the party.

Critique of Responsible Party Model

- don't have party driven candidates, we have candidate driven candidates who are part of party
- choices are muddled, lack of distinction and lack of political knowledge is crippling to RPM
- doesn't match reality; necessary conditions for both models are missing
- decentralization and lack of political knowledge makes these models unconvincing

WILSON'S MODEL

- political party is a group that seeks to get candidates elected to public office by supplying them with a label (party identification), thus making them known to the electorate
- parties are a way of organizing interests (public opinion, cultural values, policy preferences, etc.)

They do this in three ways:

Party in the Electorate

- people who have a strong degree of loyalty toward the party
- vote for it but do not take an active role within its organization

Party Organization

- what everybody thinks of when they think of the political party as an institution
- links the electorate to party in office; the headquarters, meetings, etc.
- consists of party leaders and activists; those who work (paid or unpaid) within the organization

Party in Office

- the people who run for and attain office under the party label
- participate in party-based institutions of governance e.g. Democrat/Republican Caucus in House of Representatives or Democrat/Republican Governor's Conference

Wilson's model probably works best in defining American political parties. He notes that all three organizational functions are receding.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN DECLINE

Party in the Electorate

- fewer people are strongly attached to political party
- growing population of independents

Party Organization

- 3) if party attachment is going down, so does party's size and scope
- 4) supply of pieces that go into party organization begin to dissipate

Party in Office

- 10) there are periods of time when the parties are more divided (stronger control over individual members)
- 11) however, political parties as an organizing mechanism are in decline

12) as fewer people in the electorate have a partisan identification, it is less appealing to know that your member of congress is voting 99% of the time with the party

THE TWO PARTY SYSTEM

- the American party system has many traits that distinguish it from the party system of other countries
- decentralization, diffuse leadership, lack of strong ideological commitments
- dominated by two competing parties

MAJOR PARTIES

Anti-Federalists v. **Federalists** (1788-1816)

Federalists v. **Democratic-Republicans** (1800-1832)

Whig v. Democratic (1832-1836)

Whig v. **Democratic** (1836-1854)

Democratic v. Republican (1854-present)

ELECTORAL CHANGE: SHIFT IN NAME AND/OR CONTROL

Realignment - a shift in the policy positions and underlying coalitions supporting political parties

Dealignment - a period of instability when attachment to and support for parties is lessened

alignment --> dealignment --> realignment
we are currently in a period of dealignment

THIRD PARTIES IN AMERICAN POLITICS

"Third parties in the United States are akin to shooting stars that appear briefly and brilliantly but do not long remain visible in political constellations." --O'Connor & Sobato

MAJOR MINOR PARTIES:

Anti-Masonic (1832)

American (Know-Nothing) (1856)

Constitutional Union (1860)

Peoples' (Populist) (1892)

Progressive (Bull Moose) (1912)

Progressive (1924)

State's Rights Democratic (Dixiecrats) (1948)

American Independent (1968)

WHY TWO PARTIES? WHY DO THIRD PARTIES REMAIN MINOR?

Electoral Institutions:

- single member districts
- plurality voting
- indivisible executive (VP on same ticket)
- electoral college
- campaign funding and access issue
- media coverage
- party message broad

WHY TWO PARTIES? DISTRICT DESIGN

- single member districts: one winner by plurality
- people don't want to vote for a third party and throw away their vote

- different than multi-member districts where more than one person can serve
- e.g. there are four seats in a district, can vote for four of the ten candidates
- proportional system allows seats to correspond to the percentage of the vote won

- e.g. if a party wins 30% of the vote, they receive three of the ten open seats

Electoral College

- used to be president won presidency by electoral votes, vice president was second
- in that case, a third party is more feasible than with indivisible executive
- now electoral college is winner take all
- just need to win one more vote than opponent, and you get all the votes
- (some states use a proportional system)

TWO PARTIES: CULTURE AND NATURE OF PARTIES

- widespread agreement over the fundamentals of the government promote consensus and stability
- example: in many European nations, significant elements of the electorate have changed fundamental aspects of the nature of government (e.g. strong socialist and communist movements)

PARTIES HAVE PROMOTED TWO PARTIES

- agreement on fundamentals and a willingness to compromise is essential to the function of two parties since each must represent relatively diverse interests (hence the non-ideological nature of the parties)
- American political parties have, through their history, shown a willingness to adapt to new conditions in the electorate. To co-opt issues of successful third parties, to shift platforms to try to match shifts in the electorate to achieve electoral success, etc.

THINK ABOUT PARTIES IN THE LAST DECADE...

- Democrats have tried to redefine themselves; they are now doing this around the Obama presidency
- Republicans are doing the same; they must reorganize and redefine themselves (or perhaps continue to contrast themselves) in order to win majorities again (and the presidency)

ELECTIONS AND CAMPAIGNS

- linking process between the people and those who represent them
- we care about elections because they have something to do with how we are represented

THE FUNCTIONS OF ELECTIONS

- most political change in the United States comes about through elections
- we replace people that we don't like with people that we do like

in a democracy, elections serve different but related functions:

- fill public offices and organize governments
- allow people with different views and policy agendas to come to power and pursue policy "mandates"
 - can't blame Bush for doing what he said he would do, you elected him!
- ensure that the government remains accountable to the people
 - if not doing what you're supposed to be doing, you are not re-elected
- legitimate governments (symbolic)

Elections generally allow us to avoid:

- riots
- general strikes
- coup d'etats

TWO DIFFERENT KINDS OF ELECTIONS

Primary Elections

- used to select party candidates to run for elected office in the general election
- in a closed primary, you can only vote if you're a member of the party
- in an open primary, you can vote even if you're not a member of the party
 - helps those who are registered as independents
 - dilutes the strength of party voters

General Election

- used to fill an elective office

ELECTIONS CAN TAKE DIFFERENT FORMS:

- Initiatives allow citizens to propose legislation and submit it to popular vote
 - purely citizen driven; legislation comes from bottom and is voted on
 - Referendum allows the legislature to submit proposed legislation for popular approval
 - comes from lawmakers, then people vote for it
 - legislators escape blame if legislation fails
 - Recall elections allow citizens to remove someone from office
-
- not allowed in all the states
 - states can adopt varying forms of elections

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

- presidential election held every four years on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November
- process usually begins even before the previous election ends
- electoral votes based on number of senators and representatives
- if candidate wins plurality of popular election in state, all electoral votes are awarded to nominee
- slate of electors of candidate who won gets to vote in the electoral college in December
- states must certify results, then electors get to go
- rarely electors decide to cast votes for the other candidate

GETTING THE NOMINATION

- primary process is different
- must get nomination from party through primary process
- can be open, closed, or a caucus

Caucus

- state party leaders select delegates to the national convention
 - usually pick ideologically driven candidates (reason Huckabee/Obama won Iowa Caucus)
 - need a majority, not a plurality; when Edwards wasn't going to win, supporters voted for Obama
 - happens behind closed doors; not democratic, not meant to include the general public
-
- primaries and caucuses did not become important until after 1972
 - after Watergate Scandal, politics seen as corrupt
 - thought party machine was dominating who was being picked for party's nomination
 - people with money used to pick the candidate they wanted, candidates who didn't support their personal interests would not get the donations required to be a serious candidate
 - decided to make the process more democratic --> primaries

- Democrats and Republicans have different primary/caucus processes

5) in the Democratic system, delegates are awarded proportionally (not "winner take all")

6) get delegates based on the number of popular votes acquired through the primary

13) Republican system is winner take all; much faster

14) the Democrats also have "super delegates"

15) group of officials set aside to offset any sort of insurgency

16) make sure most status-quo general election candidate is put on ballot

17) just in case primaries/caucuses get out of hand

WHY CHANGE THE RULES?

- before primaries and caucuses, delegates were loyal to the party machines
- the increasing number of independents were becoming increasingly dispassioned with both parties
- in order to find a more appealing nominee for the growing middle, they changed the rules
- is this what the primaries have provided? not really
- if intent was to remove corruption, the primary system does that; democratizes it

RESULTS OF REFORMS

- however, candidates have become more ideological
 - caucuses obviously do this, but both open and closed primaries support more ideological candidates
 - think they have best shot at winning, have best shot at beating the other party
 - because primary process eliminated corruption, issue-driven voters tirelessly promote certain candidates
 - candidates are closer to the people in terms of their views; however, they are more responsive to the group of ideological party loyalists (who are there for their own personal issues) (have loudest voices)
 - even if their nominee isn't selected, the candidate will respond to them because they want loud voices
-
- decentralizes parties; weakens them because they don't choose their candidates anymore

TRENDS/ISSUES IN PRIMARIES

- wanted primaries to happen quickly
- regional primaries ("Super Tuesday")
- front-loading of primaries (70% of all primaries before March of election year)
- campaigning is expensive; if all primaries occur quickly, candidates with resources are in an advantageous position; rewards status quo candidates

NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

- once parties figure out who their candidates are, they hold national conventions
- held in the summer of the presidential election year
- transformed from deliberative bodies to PR events

- 1830s-1950s: party leaders sent uncommitted delegates to national conventions and bargained with political candidates
- Today: voters, not party leaders, hold decision-making power

CAMPAIGNS

- usually the establishment candidate wins the party's nomination
- the primary process is very resource-intensive
- due to front-loading, only well resourced candidates will get passed initial stage
- this tends to favor the establishment candidate

- challenger is the party that is out of power
- incumbent is the sitting president of the party of the sitting president

- challenger usually attacks
- incumbent defends his record

WILSON'S FOUR COMPONENTS OF THE CAMPAIGN

1) Tone

- positive or negative
- people like positive campaigns
- ideally, party wants to attack but be positive

2) Theme Development

- usually the candidate with the best theme wins
- Bush in 2004: "Stay the course" (no flip-flopping)

3) Timing of the campaign

- John McCain won the nomination early; had lots of time to plan campaign
- Obama got to the finish line, then had to turn around and start over

Target

- who is the campaign trying to appeal to?
- both must appeal to the middle
- Bush went after middle-aged suburban women concerned about national security
- McCain went after these women (who liked Hillary) with Sarah Palin
- Obama got them back with war/economy

ELECTORAL COLLEGE & PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

- the Electoral College was a compromise created by the Framers to ensure that the president was chosen intelligently and with the input of each of the states
- the number of electors is determined by the federal representation for each state

CONGRESS, THE STATES, AND APPORTIONMENT

- two senators per state and at least one representative per state
- how house seats are selected depends on the population of the state (based on census)
- the number of house seats is capped at 435; as states grow, they get more seats

APPORTIONMENT: WHO APPORTIONS?

- the states are constitutionally mandated to conduct elections
- this includes the drawing of district lines for the House of Representative
- the state legislature and governors draw the district lines

Apportionment - giving out number of seats, figuring out how those seats are going to be represented by district through the drawing of district lines; e.g. sixteen house seats, sixteen districts

Malapportionment

- the drawing of house districts that are uneven so that votes are not equal across districts
- in the South, had largely populated districts vs. very rural districts
- this is illegal because it makes votes less equal on the basis of drawing lines

Gerrymandering

- drawing district lines to help particular candidates win
- not always illegal

Illegal Gerrymandering

- drawing district lines unevenly so that votes are not equal across districts
- also, drawing district lines based on race (majority minority districts)