

# Kansas Association of Public Information Officers

Quarterly Meeting Agenda – June 21, 2007 – Lawrence, KS

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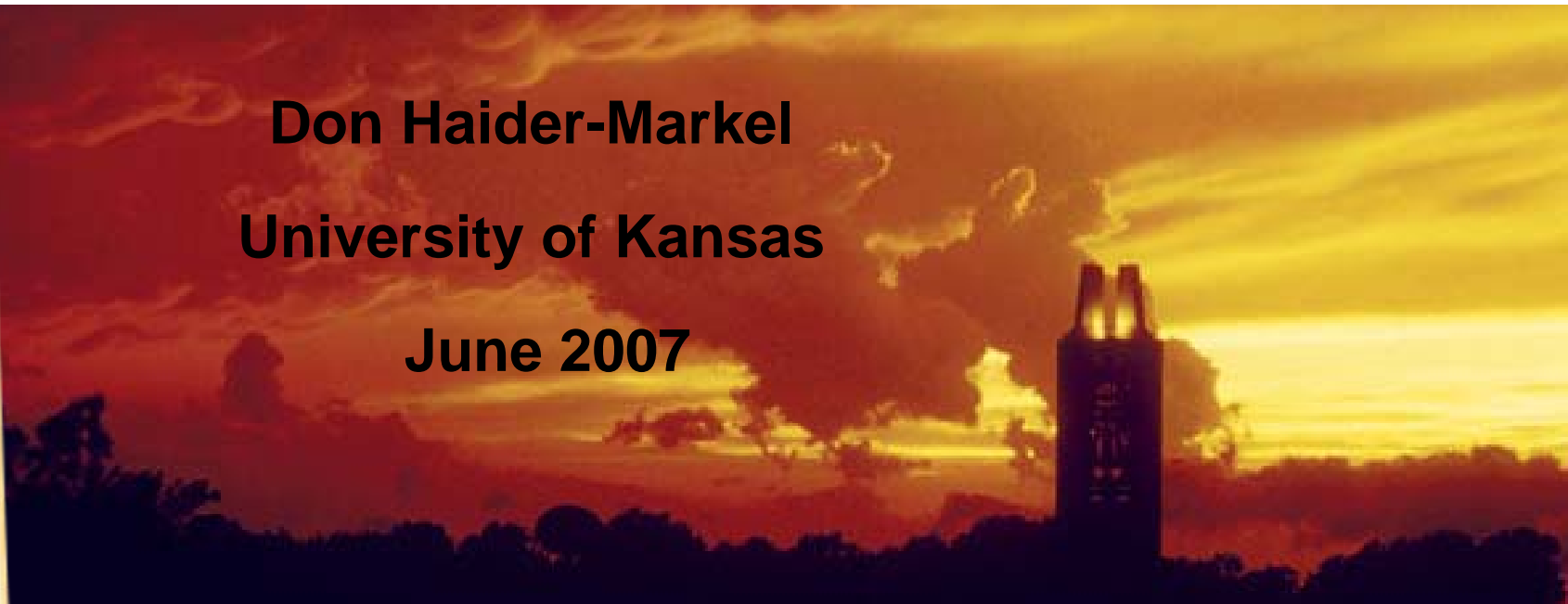
1. Welcome by Mike Hall
2. Lunch information by Tom Erickson
3. Professional Development Session:  
*“Public Opinion Influences on Public Policy and Vice Versa” by Don Haider-Markel*
4. Break before regular meeting
5. Introductions
6. Board of Directors’ reports
  - a. President
  - b. Vice-President
  - c. Secretary
  - d. Treasurer
7. Committee reports (future meetings)
8. New business
9. Next meeting
  - a. Mark your calendars for September 5 in Wichita - more information to follow
  - b. Professional development session to be determined

Kansas Association of Public Information Officers



# **Public Opinion and Public Policy**

**Don Haider-Markel**  
**University of Kansas**  
**June 2007**





# Understanding Public Opinion

- What do we mean by public opinion?
- Many definitions
  - Perhaps best understood as “the aggregated beliefs or preferences of a population at a given point in time”
  - Most often in the context of candidate support, political issues, and public policy
- What do we mean by public policy?
  - Any action (or inaction) by government to address some perceived public problem.



# How do we measure public opinion?

- Elections: November 2006
- Constituency input: letters, phone calls
- Knowledge of politicians and activists
- Historical patterns and culture
- Population demographics
- Party support: parties registration and identification
- Survey research based on random or non-random samples



## In Practice

- All of these methods are used
- Vary in terms of being good indicators
- Surveys/polls not always the best
- Problems with surveys
  - Opinion may be surface level
    - Underlying beliefs/values not assessed
  - Intensity often not measured
  - Opinion only exists when asked
    - Research suggests little previous thought



## Connecting Opinion to Policy

- In a democratic political system we tend to believe this is automatic
  - Campaigns, election outcomes, policymaking process
- But forms of government, institutions, and rules can confound or enhance the connection
  - Candidates and parties
- Measurement: Majority opinion versus simple change or shift in opinion
- Level of measurement: district, state, nation



## The Research: National

- Most prevalent: Testing Congruence
  - Strong link when significant opinion change over time (Page and Shapiro 1983)
  - Laws, policy proposals, even court decisions
- Opinions on some issues show majority support, but policy inconsistent
  - These are the areas where the simple aggregation of opinion becomes problematic (gun control example in a moment)

**Table 3. Frequency of Congruence for Opinion Changes of Different Sizes**

Size of opinion change	Direction of policy change					
	Congruent		Noncongruent		Total	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
6-7 percentage points	53	(25)	47	(22)	21	(47)
8-9	64	(32)	36	(18)	22	(50)
10-14	62	(32)	38	(25)	29	(65)
15-19	69	(22)	31	(10)	14	(32)
20-29	86	(18)	14	( 3)	9	(21)
30+	100	(10)	0	( 0)	4	(10)
	65	(147)	35	(78)	100	(225)

**Table 5. Frequency of Congruence by Issue Salience**

Proportion responding "don't know" at T2 (%)	Direction of Policy Change					
	Congruent		Noncongruent		Total	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
15+	56	(14)	44	(11)	13	(25)
10-14	61	(25)	39	(16)	22	(41)
6-9	70	(48)	30	(21)	36	(69)
1-5	73	(40)	27	(15)	29	(55)
	67	(127)	33	(63)	100	(190)

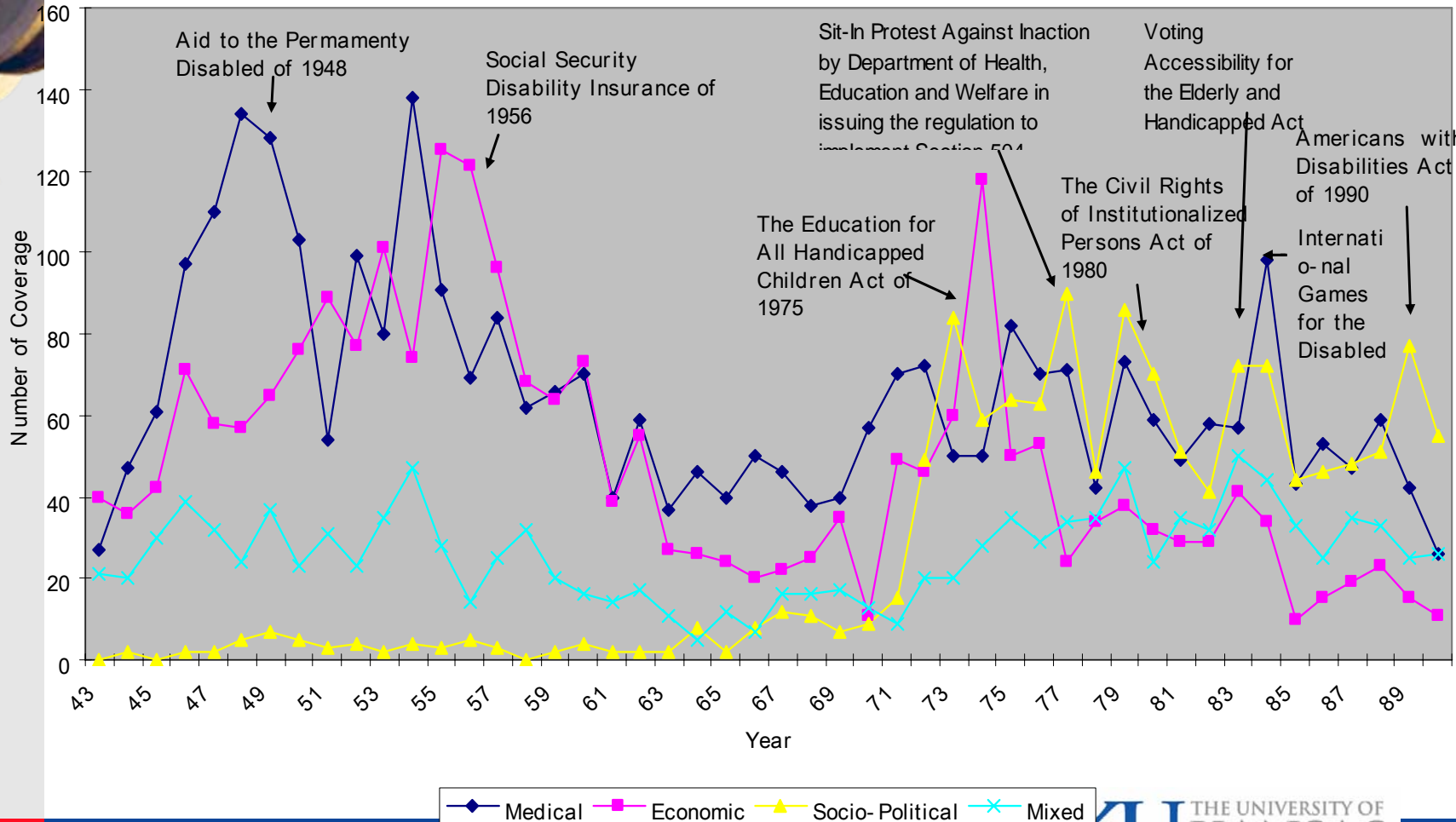


# The Research: National

- Additional Elements
  - Issue Attention
    - Public and Institutions
    - As one institution pays more attention to an issue, others may follow
    - Media can play important intervening role
    - Media can also focus attention on one dimension of an issue versus another

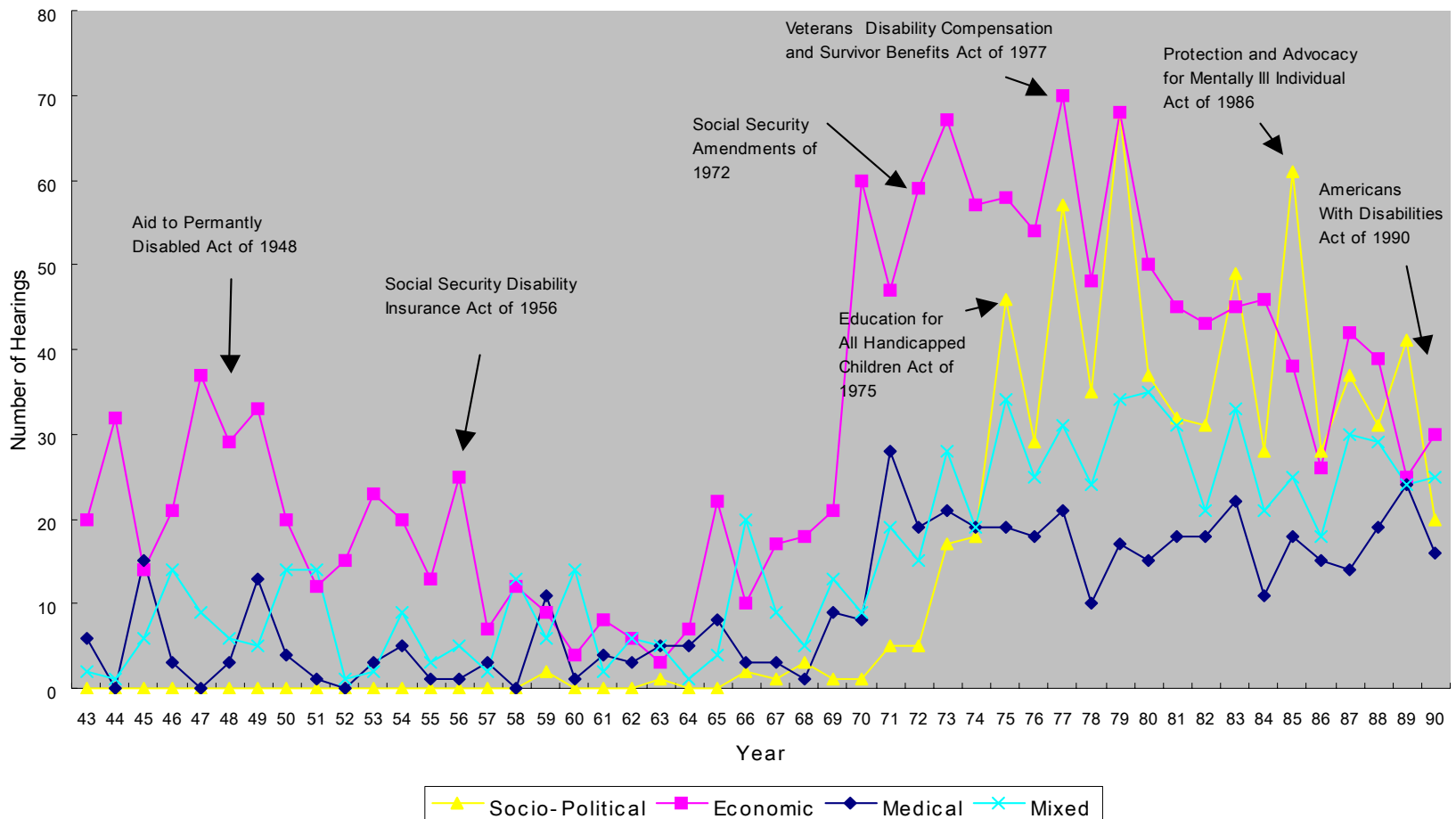
# Example: Disability Policy

Figure 1  
Coverage of Disability Issue in the *New York Times Index*, 1943 to 1990



# Example: Disability Policy

**Figure 2**  
**Number of Congressional Hearings on Disability Issue, 1943 to 1990**



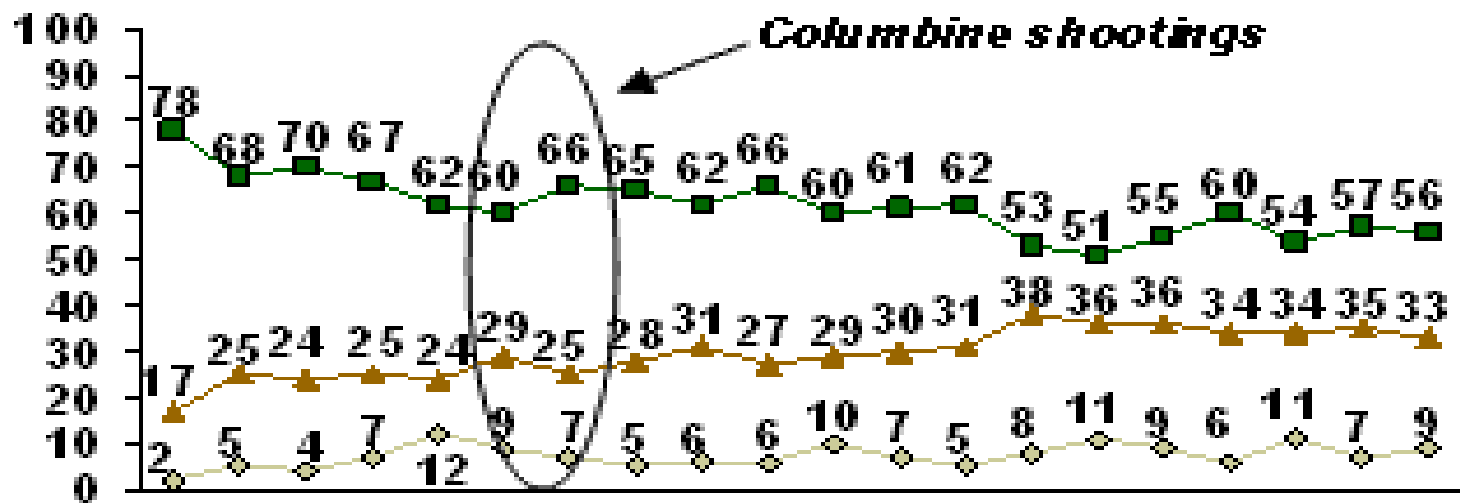


## The Research: National

- Additional Elements: Importance of Political Parties
  - One Example: Gun Control
    - Public opinion
    - Public policy not congruent

*In general, do you feel that the laws covering the sale of firearms should be made more strict, less strict, or kept as they are now?*

■ % More strict    ◇ % Less strict    ▲ % Kept as now



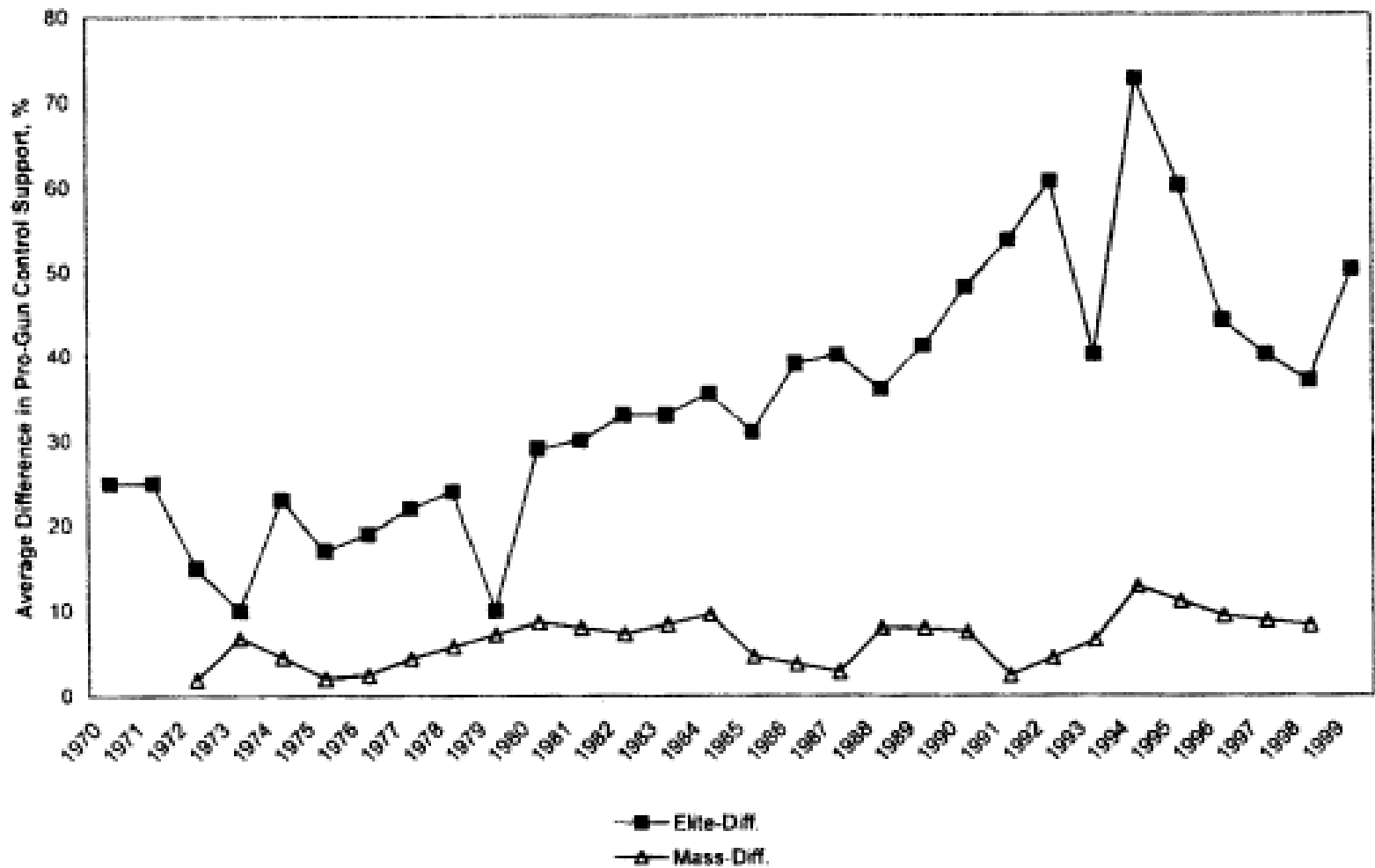
1990 Sep 10-11  
 1991 Mar 21-24  
 1993 Mar 12-14  
 1995 Apr 17-19  
 1999 Feb 23-24  
 1999 Apr 8-9  
 1999 May 26-27  
 1999 Jun 23-24  
 1999 Dec 15-17  
 2000 Apr 3-4  
 2000 Apr 9-12  
 2001 May 7-9  
 2002 Oct 5-7  
 2003 Oct 11-14  
 2004 Jan 6-8  
 2005 Oct 9-11  
 2006 Oct 11-14  
 2006 Oct 13-16  
 2006 Oct 19-22



## The Research: National

- Why Incongruent?
  - Issue Evolution/Party Realignment
  - Three components
    - Issue is salient
    - Elites are divided
    - Masses are divided

## PARTISAN DIFFERENCE IN PRO-GUN CONTROL SUPPORT: ELITE AND MASS OPINION, 1970-1999



## Granger Causality Between Elite and Mass Opinion

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Elite Democrats on Gun-Control----→	28.0596 (.0000)	Mass Democrats on Gun-Control
Mass Democrats on Gun-Control----→	4.5109 (.0242)	Elite Democrats on Gun-Control
Elite Republicans on Gun-Control----→	5.6181 (.0116)	Mass Republicans on Gun-Control
Mass Republicans on Gun-Control----→	.4313 (.6556)	Elite Republicans on Gun-Control

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Note: Numbers are  $F$  statistics with probabilities in parenthesis. The arrows indicate possible Granger causal relationships. The number of observations for each issue is: gun control issues 25. Results are similar from one to five year lags.



## The Research: National

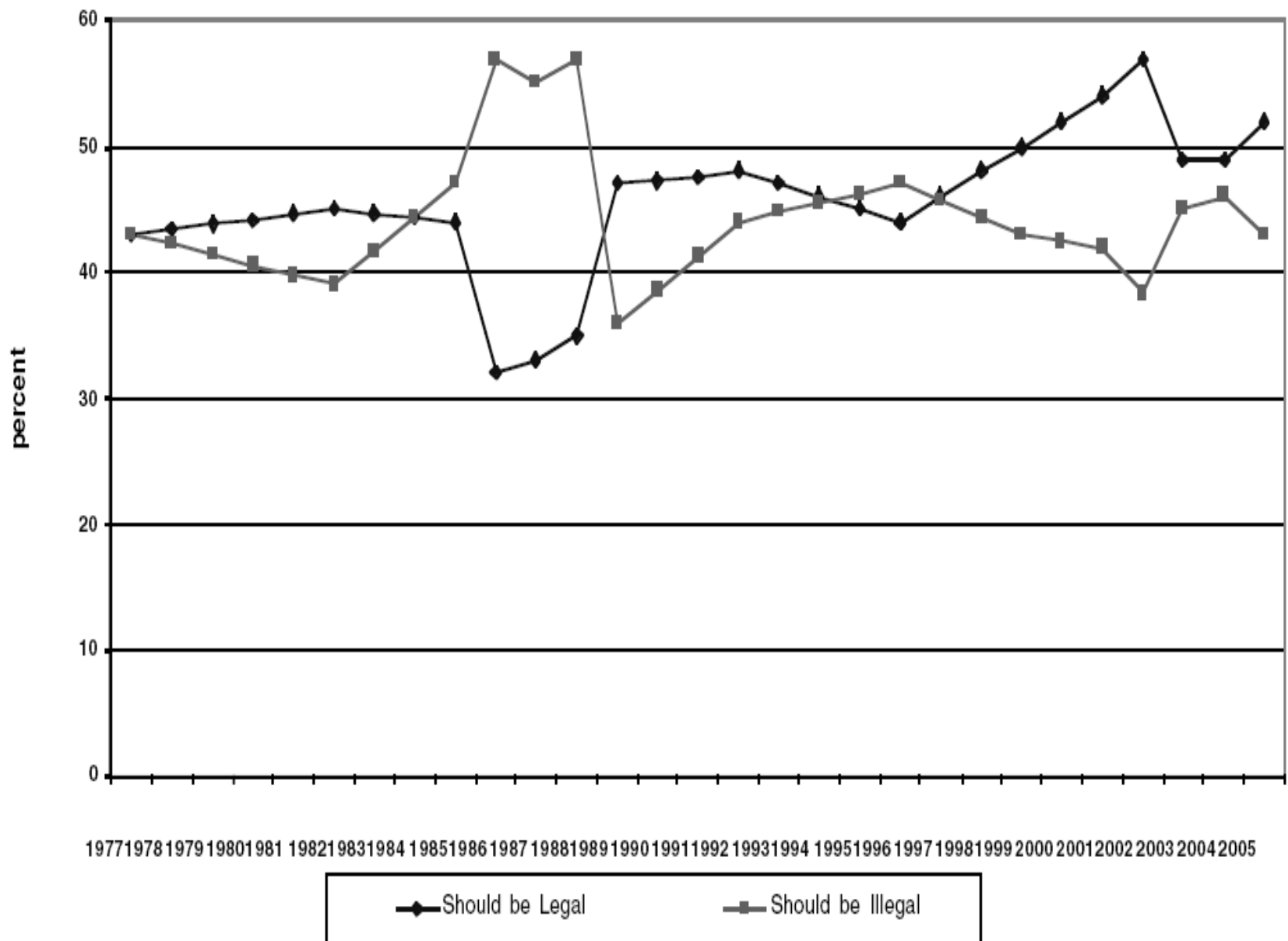
- Additional Considerations
  - Opinion Manipulation: can we ever be confident that citizen preferences are true and not the result of elite manipulation?
  - Issue Framing: Elites and Media
    - Thus, congruence might simply be the result of elites influencing the preferences of the public (Stone, Riker, Zaller)
  - Actions of Government: Law, rules, Court decisions: 2 examples on issue where opinion seems difficult to move

# Gays in the Military: Clinton Invests

Do you think homosexuals should or should not be hired for each of the following occupations? (ARMED FORCES)

Jun. 17-20, 1977	Gallup	51	38
Oct. 12-15, 1989	Gallup	60	29
Jun. 4-8, 1992	Gallup	57	37
Aug. 27, 1992	PSRA/Newsweek	59	36
Nov. 19-20, 1992	Gallup	48	44
Jun. 4-8, 1993	NBC/WSJ	47	43
Feb 3-4, 1994	PSRA/Newsweek	58	35
Nov. 21-24, 1996	Gallup	65	29
July 28-30, 1998	PSRA/Newsweek	66	30
Feb. 8-9, 1999	Gallup	70	26
Mar. 9-10, 2000	PSRA/Newsweek	69	25
May 10-14, 2001	Gallup	72	23
May 19-21, 2003	Gallup	80	18
May 2-5, 2005	Gallup	76	22

# PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD THE LEGALITY OF SAME-SEX RELATIONS: 1977-2005





## The Research: Subnational

- Congressional Districts: Reps and Voters
  - Traditional models: constituency characteristics and roll call voting (since 1960s)
  - Simulated opinion measures (1970s)
  - Strong links in this research
  - Representatives voting patterns are shaped by general ideology of their districts as well as opinion on specific issues; but only one factor



# The Research: Subnational

- **State and Local Level**: predicting policy adoption
  - Traditionally matching demographics of the population to policy adoption
  - Increasingly better measures of state opinion; but general measures work well (Erikson, Wright, and McIver; Norrander; Norrander and Wilcox; Brace et al.)
    - Every year more refined measures of Ideology and opinions on specific issues (abortion, death penalty, gay civil rights)
    - Recent research finds little change in general ideology over time in the states; coincides with demographic changes
  - City and County: few polls, but demographic models work well
  - Opinion is a good predictor of policy, but not as strong as interest groups and other factors



# Additional Issues

- Institutional Bias and Tyranny of the Majority
  - Congress and Electoral College
  - Consider that residents of small states have more of a voice than residents of large states: ND, AK, VT, and WY don't have population for even one Electoral College vote or Rep. in House
  - CA is 70 times more populous than the smallest states; because of limited EC, one CA vote in six is dumped—CA shorted 9 EC votes, which is like taking away all of CO's EC votes
  - Put another way, the most populous states have 55% of the nation's population, but only 44% of the share of electoral College votes; similar for congressional seats
  - NY has 31 EC votes, and it takes 15 rural states to equal NY state's population, but those 15 states have 59 EC votes



# Institutional Bias

- **Senate:** residents of WY and AK have 72 times more clout per capita than residents of CA
- Senators from the 26 smallest states represent 17.8% of the nation's population, but constitute a majority of the US Senate (52)
- Add to this the fact that rural voters are increasingly conservative Republicans while urban voters are increasingly liberal Democrats; Suburbs lean Democrat, but often split
- So system enhances the clout of small rural states that favor conservative positions and one party



# Direct Democracy and Public Opinion

- In states with citizen initiative processes (24) policy more closely reflects preferences of the median voter
- However, minority groups tend to lose in direct democracy contests
- From 1972 to 2005 there were 143 gay civil rights initiatives and referenda. Of these measures 79% were anti-gay civil rights in their intent, mostly repealing existing antidiscrimination laws or banning the passage of gay civil rights. In sum, 71% of measures resulted in losses for supporters of gay civil rights (anti-minority outcome).



## Final Thoughts

- Fairly consistent findings: opinion can shape policy and visa versa even in Representative Democracy
- Institutional design sometimes thwarts majority preferences
- But this is not always a bad thing: can protect minority interests
- We can design institutions to better reflect opinion
- Be Aware of the problems in measuring opinion

KAPIO Meeting Minutes  
Wichita, Kansas  
June 21, 2007

Board in attendance: Mike Hall, President; Tom Erickson, Vice President; and Ilena Spalding, Treasurer

Board Absent: Melissa Mundt, Secretary

- A. Welcome by City of Wichita Mayor Carl Brewer (Mike)
- B. Attendee introductions (Mike)
- C. Lunch information (Tom) - Jason's Deli provided by the City of Wichita
- D. Professional Development Session - presented by Sharon Watson and Trooper Ron Knoefel (Mike)  
"Communicating After The Storm"
- E. Break
- F. Regular Meeting
- G. Approval of Meeting Minutes – 1<sup>st</sup> (Wayne), 2<sup>nd</sup> (Kari) - Minutes Approved
- H. Board of Director's reports
  - a. President (Basic PIO course offered in November)
  - b. Vice President (KAPIO Toolbox coming soon, Pittsburg event FYI)
  - c. Secretary – Melissa absent
  - d. Treasurer (Financial statement, sign in sheet, shirts \$30.00 per shirt, organization memberships available)
- I. Committee reports
  - a. Awards Selection (Progress and committee chair announcement)
  - b. Professional Development --- NEW! (announcement seeking five interested members to serve, contact Mike with interest by Friday, September 21 by 5 PM)
  - c. Nomination---NEW! (announcement seeking three interested member to serve, contact Mike with interest by Friday, September 21 by 5 PM)
- J. New business
  - a. Elections
    - i. By-laws amendment

K. Next meeting

- a. Mark your calendars for December 5 in Hays at the Hays Medical Center (2220 Canterbury, Hadley Rooms 2 and 3) at 11 am – more information to follow
- b. Professional development session to be determined