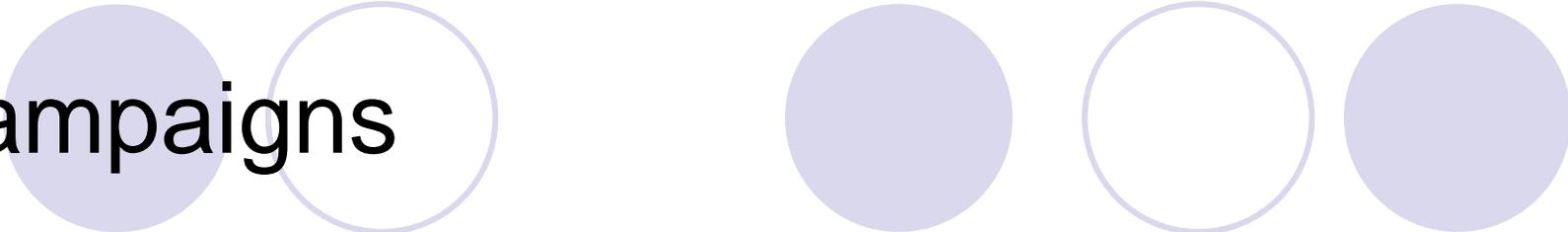
The slide features several decorative circles. At the top, there are three overlapping circles: a white one on the left, a solid light purple one in the middle, and another solid light purple one on the right. Below the title, there are two solid light purple circles on the left and one white circle with a light purple outline on the right.

Introduction to the American Political Process

Public Opinion



Campaigns

- Campaign Effects

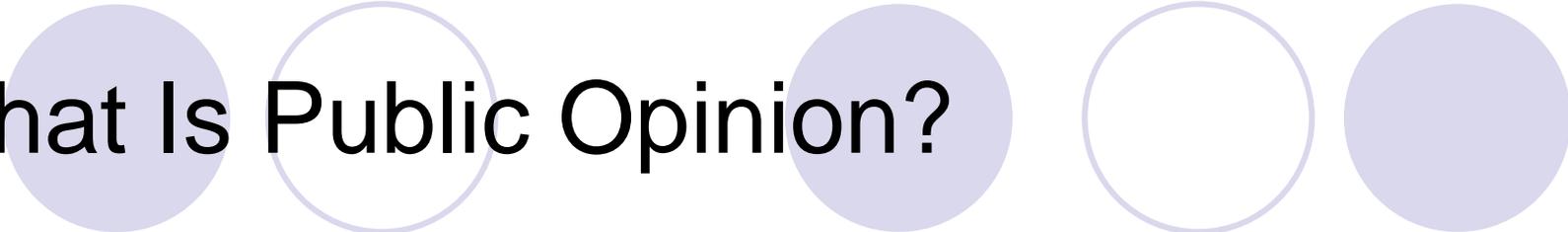
- Predictive Models

- <http://fairmodel.econ.yale.edu/vote2004/>

- Mobilization vs. Conversion

The Importance of Public Opinion

- Democratic systems designed to facilitate participation by the mass public
- America is a *representative* democracy
 - How much do we really want citizens to make their voice heard?
 - Are they qualified to do so?



What Is Public Opinion?

- Definition:
 - “Those opinions held by private persons which government finds it prudent to heed.”
- How Should We Measure Public Opinion?
 - Political participation?
 - Interest Groups?
 - Opinion Polls?

Survey Research I: Random Sampling

- Who to Interview?
- Random Sampling
 - Select respondents at random
 - Sampling error and the confidence band
- What happens when you don't sample randomly?

Bad Things!

1936 Literary Digest Poll



- 10,000,000 Ballots
- 2,376,523 Returned
 - Predicted Vote for FDR: 41%
 - Actual Vote for FDR: 63%

**Problem: Non-Random Sample
(more Republicans)**

Vote.com Poll (March 2004)

- Iraq a year later, was it worth it?
 - Yes: 81% (11,500 votes)
- Was The House Budget Committee Right To Endorse Bush's Push For Further Tax Cuts?
 - Yes: 86% (5,000 votes)

Should We Believe These Results?

- Are Bush's Campaign Ads with 9/11 Images Distasteful?
 - No: 80% (28,000 votes)
- Is John Kerry's Senate Voting Record A Liability In His Bid For President Of The United States?
 - Yes: 87% (23,000 votes)

Vote.Com February 2000 Poll



- Vote for Keys: 23% - Vote for Gore 10%
- Vote for Giuliani: 91% - Vote for H. Clinton 9%

Survey Research II: Questionnaire Design



- Question Wording
- Question Order

Question Wording



- Not-so-subtle effects

- **1982 Ohio Governor**

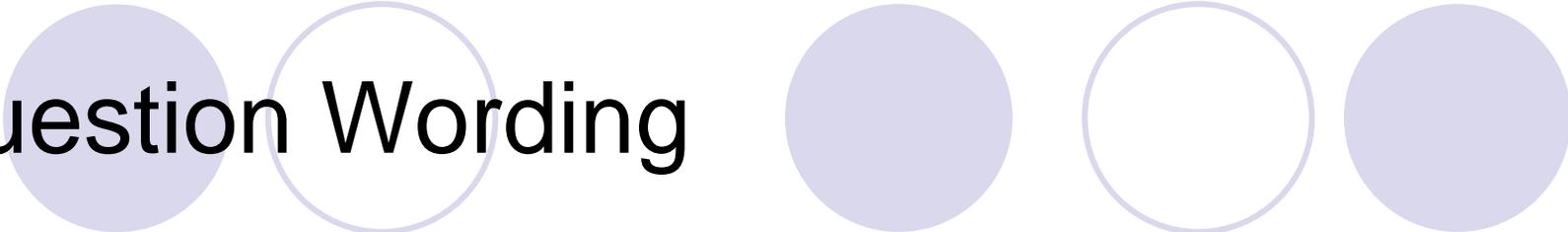
1. Do you Support Jerry Springer for Governor?
2. As you may know, in 1974 Jerry Springer, who had gotten married six months earlier, was arrested on a morals charge with three women in a hotel room. Do you support Jerry Springer for Governor?

- Push Polling

Public Opinion

	Should Federal Spending on Welfare Programs Be...	Should Federal Spending on Assistance to the Poor Be...
Increased	24%	44%
Kept Same	19%	33%
Decreased	57%	22%

Question Wording



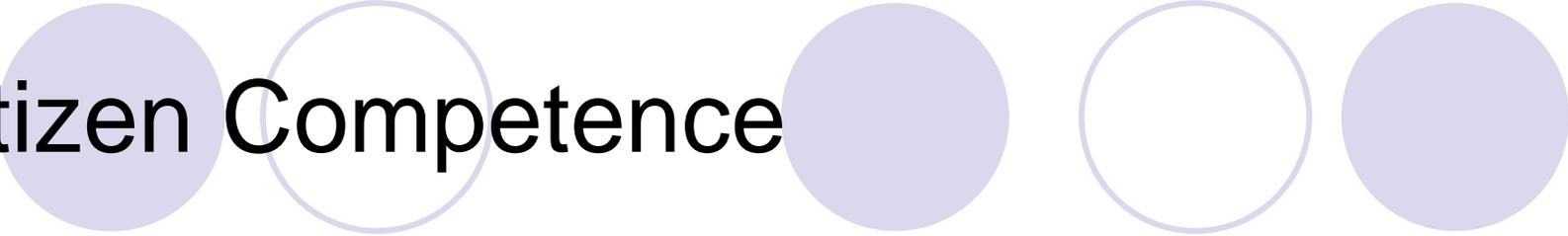
- Subtle Effects
 - Spending on social programs
- Respondent Options
 - Carter Example
- Important point: Need to pay close attention to just what it is that is being asked in opinion polls

Other Questionnaire Effects



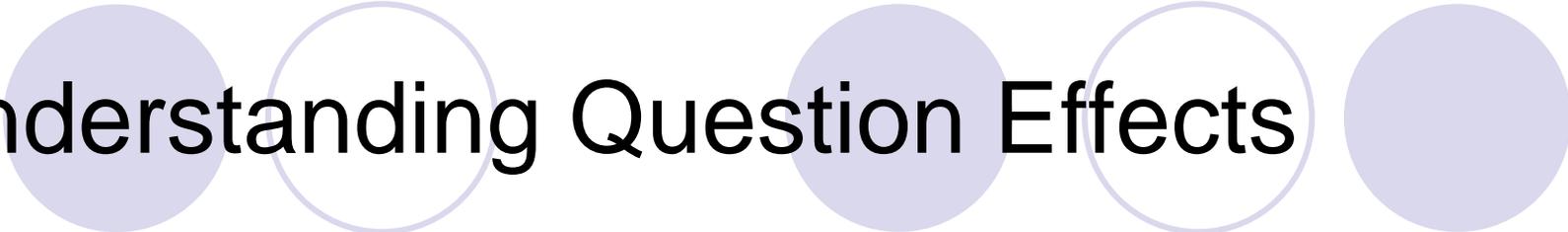
- Question Order
- Communism Question:
 1. Do you think the U.S. should let Communist reporters from other countries come in here and send back to their papers the news as they see it?
 2. Do you think a Communist country should let American newspaper reporters from other countries come in and send back to America the news as they see it?

Citizen Competence



- Questions of competence
 - Public opinion depends on wording of questions
 - Low information?
 - Hastert – 35%
 - Thompson – 14%
 - Rational ignorance?
- Another Solution: Zaller

Understanding Question Effects



- The “Big Head” Model

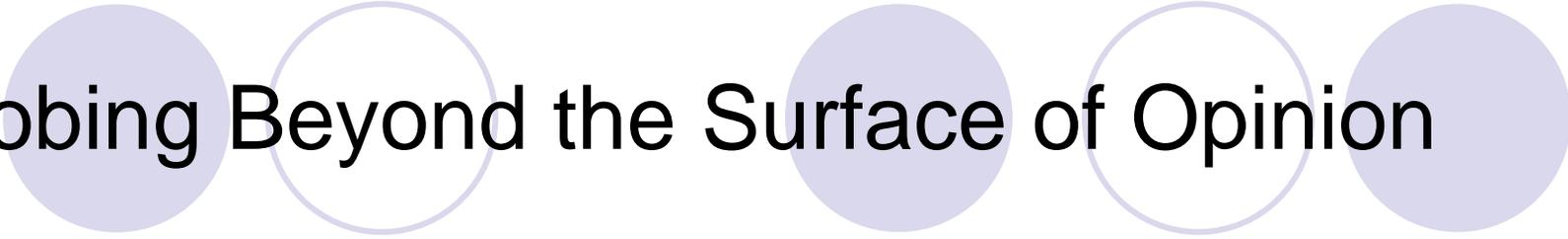
- Why do effects occur?

- How do we decide on an answer?

- Framing and Priming

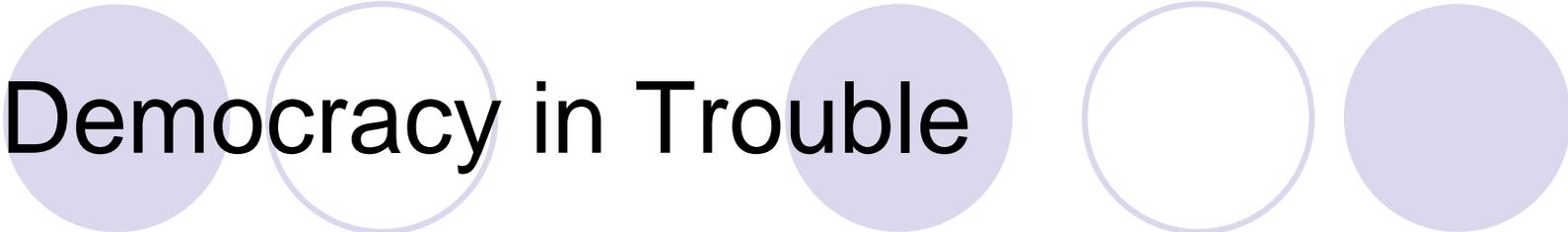
- Framing: How do you look at an issue?

- Priming: What is important?



Probing Beyond the Surface of Opinion

- Issue Salience and Strength
- The “Mushiness Index”
- Ginsberg



Is Democracy in Trouble

- What Do We Expect from Citizens?
- Public Opinion Constrains Politicians
- Political Participation

Case Study: The Politics of Abortion

- Question Wording Effects
- Strength of Opinion

Abortion Opinion: 1965-1991

