

# Chapter 6

## Public Opinion and the Media

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# Enduring Questions: *Public Opinion*

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- Proper role in policy making
- Origins
- Polarization or moderation

# Proper role of Public Opinion in Policy Making

- ***Types of publics***
  - The mass public
  - The many issue (attentive) publics
- ***Types of policy making*** (ch. 13)
  - Majoritarian
  - Rival interest group
  - Client interest group (iron triangle)
  - Entrepreneurial

# Origins of Political Attitudes

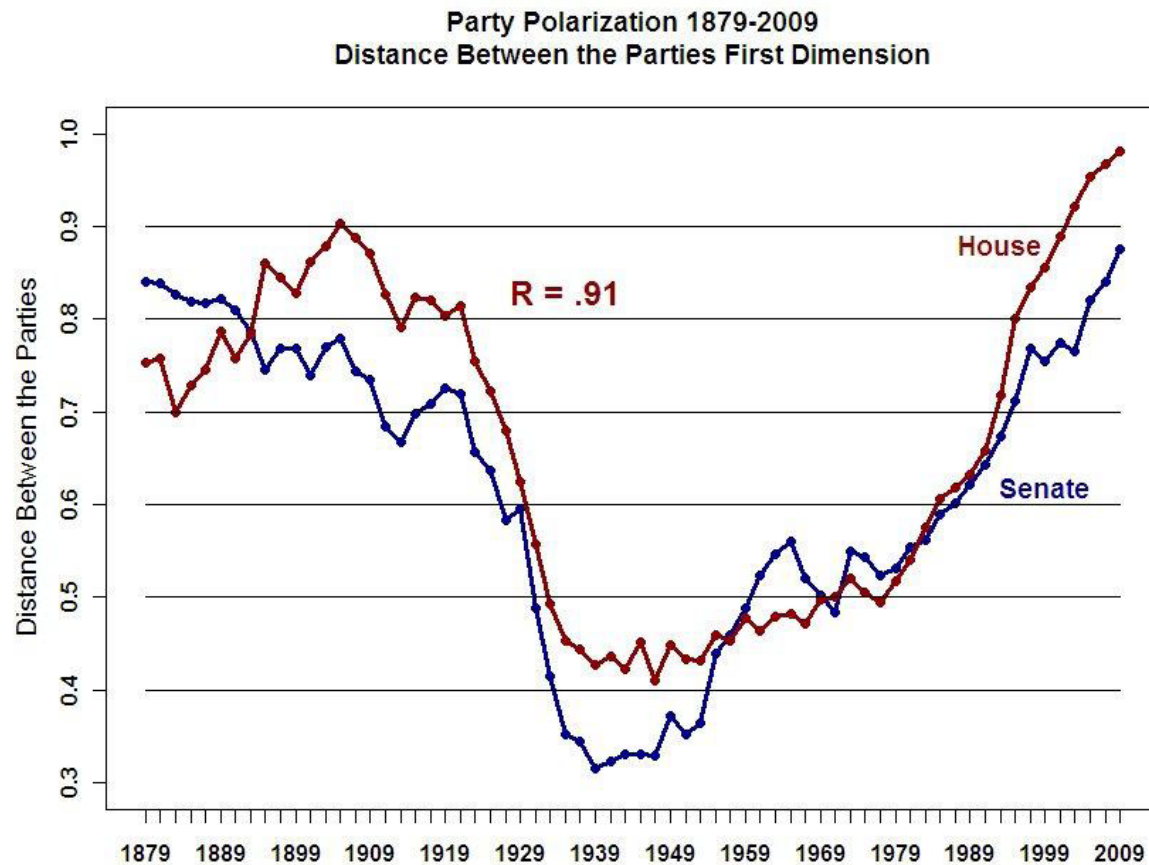
- ***Primary-groups***
  - Family
  - School
  - Job
- ***Secondary-groups***
  - Party
  - Region
  - Gender
  - Age
  - Race/ethnicity
  - Religion

# The Disconnect in U.S. Politics

- U.S. political **elites** are polarized
- But the **mass public** is far less so

-- Morris P. Fiorina and Samuel J. Abrams. 2009.  
*Disconnect: The Breakdown of Representation  
in American Politics*

# Elite Polarization

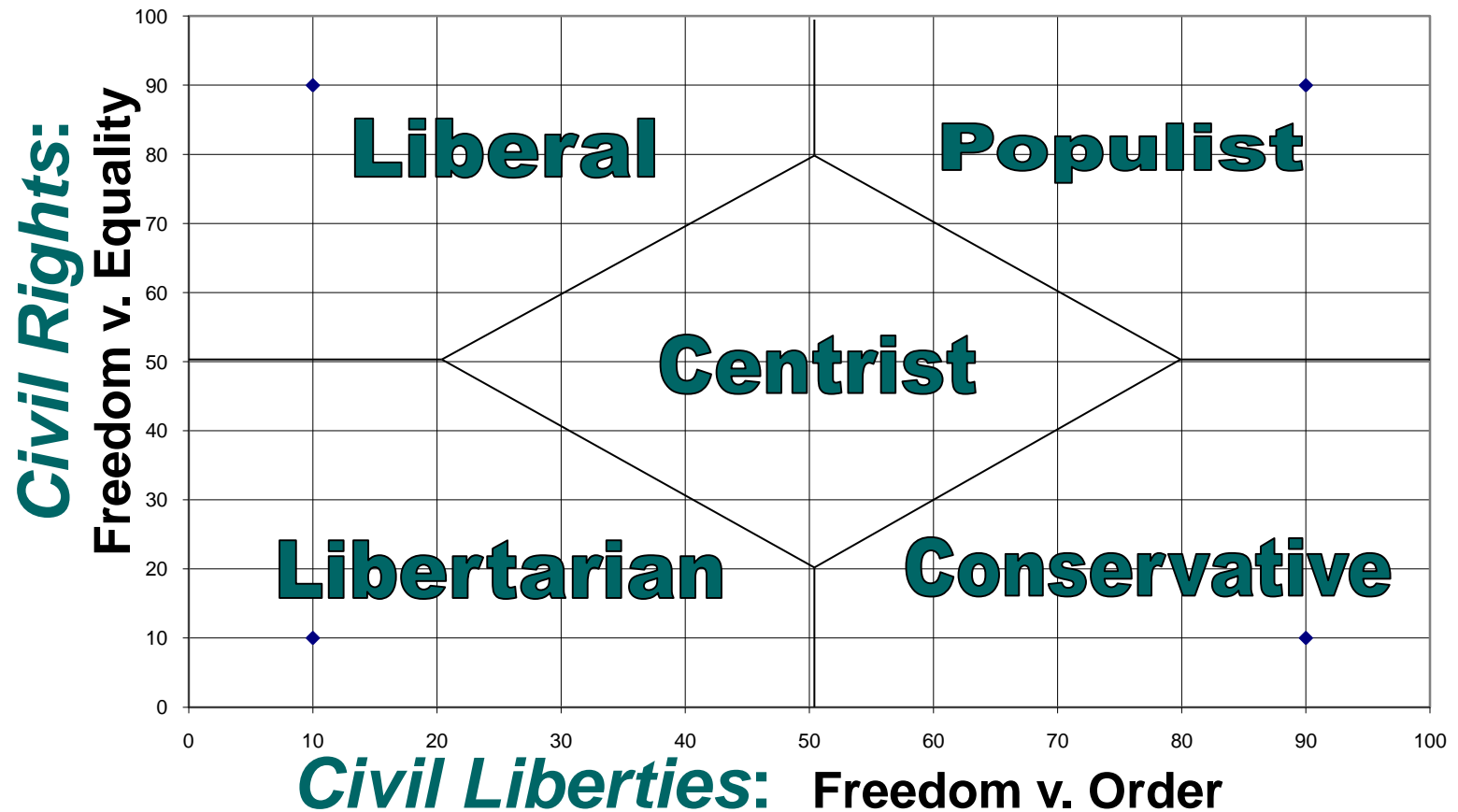


# The Moderate-Majority Thesis

1. “Americans are *closely divided, but we are not deeply divided ....*”
2. “We divide evenly in elections (or sit them out entirely) because:
  - a) we instinctively seek the center
  - b) while parties and candidates hang out on the extremes.”

-- Morris P. Fiorina, Samuel J. Abrams, and Jeremy C. Pope.  
2005. ***Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America.***

# Ideological Variation





# Enduring Questions: *Mass Media*

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- *Changes*
- *Bias*

# Changes in the Mass Media

- **Technology → fragmentation**

- *Print*

- Newspapers
    - News magazines
    - Direct mail

- *Electronic*

- Telegraph
    - Radio: news v. talk
    - Television: network v. cable
    - Movie
    - Internet: Web 1.0 & 2.0

- **Ownership**

- Domestic v. foreign
  - Independent v. corporate

# Bias in the Media

- **Selecting what to cover: agenda setting & priming**
- **Framing the context**
- **Distorting the content**
  - *Partisan/ideological*
    - *Owners & advertisers*
    - *Editors*
    - *Reporters*
  - *Commercial*
  - *Infotainment*

# The Minimal-effects Model

- **Factors: cognitive dissonance** and
  - Anchor of past beliefs
  - Perceptual screening of
    - New information
    - Information sources
- **Examples: partisan misperceptions** of
  - Reagan's Iran-Contra Affair
  - Clinton's Monica Lewinsky Affair
  - Obama's citizenship and religion