

# **Political Culture, Ideology and Public Opinion**

## **I. Political Culture**

### **A. Definitions and Sources**

### **B. American Political Culture**

## **II. Political Ideology**

### **A. Liberalism**

### **B. Conservatism**

## **III. Public Opinion**

### **A. Definition and Measurement**

### **B. Influences on Public Opinion**





# Political Culture: Definition and Sources

- **Political Culture: widely shared beliefs, values and norms concerning the relationship of citizens to government and to one another.**
- **Political Socialization: The process by which we are taught and develop our individual and collective political beliefs**



# Political Culture: Definition and Sources

- **Political Socialization**
  - **Individually via Family, Schools, Church, Peers, Media, Civic and Political Activity**
  - **Collectively via major political and historical events (e.g., Pearl Harbor, Vietnam, Watergate, September 11 and War on Terror)**
- **Phases of Life and Generational Effects**



# Elements of American Political Culture

- **Liberty**
- **Democracy**

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- **Political Equality**
- **Individualism**
- **Justice and the Rule of Law**
- **Capitalism and Free Enterprise**
- **Nationalism, Optimism, and Idealism**
  - **“The American Dream”**



# Political Ideology: Liberalism and Conservatism

- **Ideology: A comprehensive, integrated set of views about government and politics.**
- **Liberals favors using government to**
  - **reduce economic inequalities,**
  - **champion the rights of the disadvantaged,**
  - **and tolerate a more diverse range of social behaviors.**
- **Also the rich should be taxed at higher rates to finance government programs.**

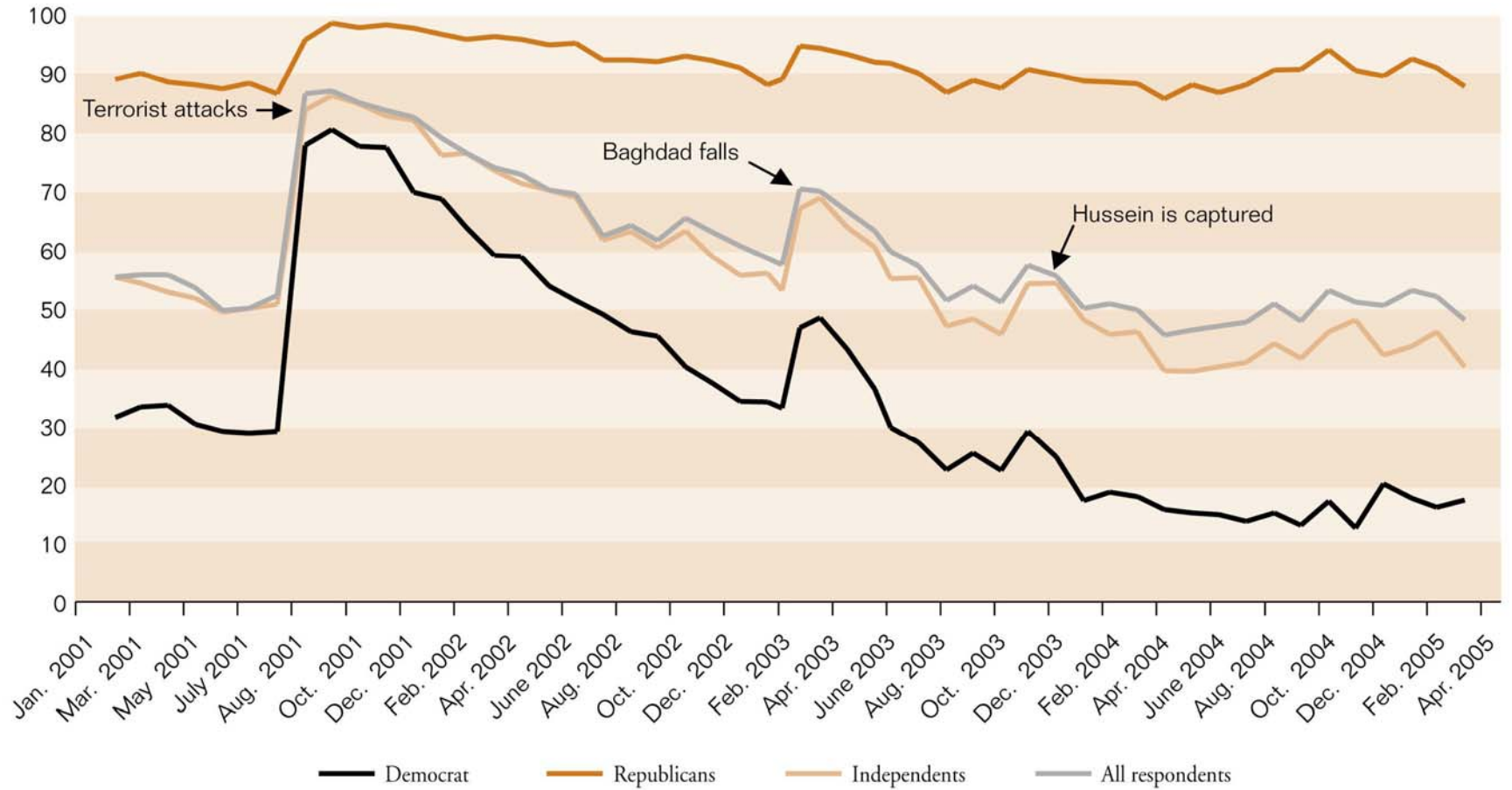


## Political Ideology: Liberalism and Conservatism

- **Conservatives...**
  - **distrust government**
  - **and have greater faith in private enterprise and free markets**
  - **BUT...they are willing to use government to enforce traditional moral standards.**
  - **They favor a larger military and a more assertive pursuit of national self-interest.**
- **Also advocate lower taxes to stimulate growth and to restrict the government's capacity to finance programs.**

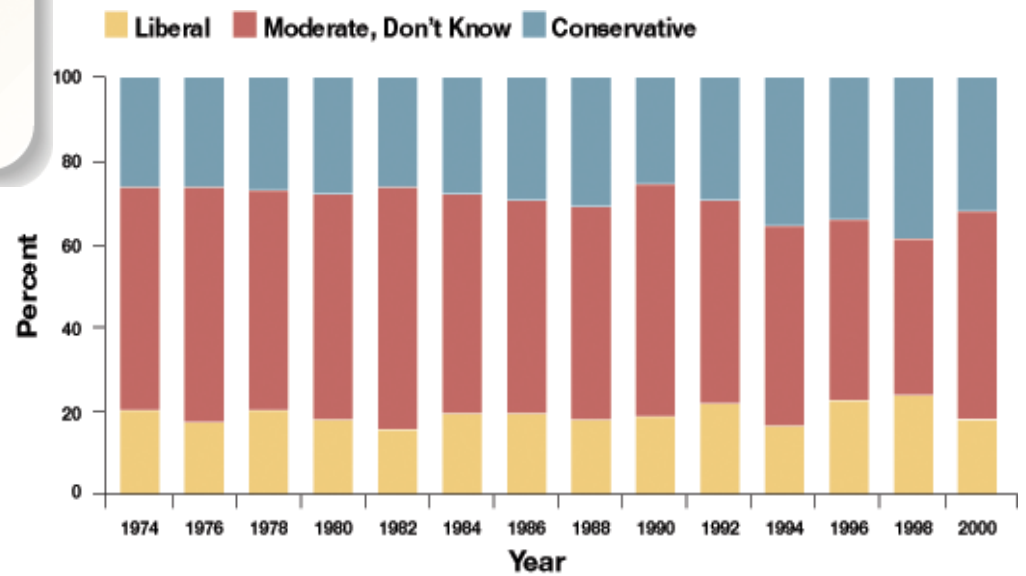
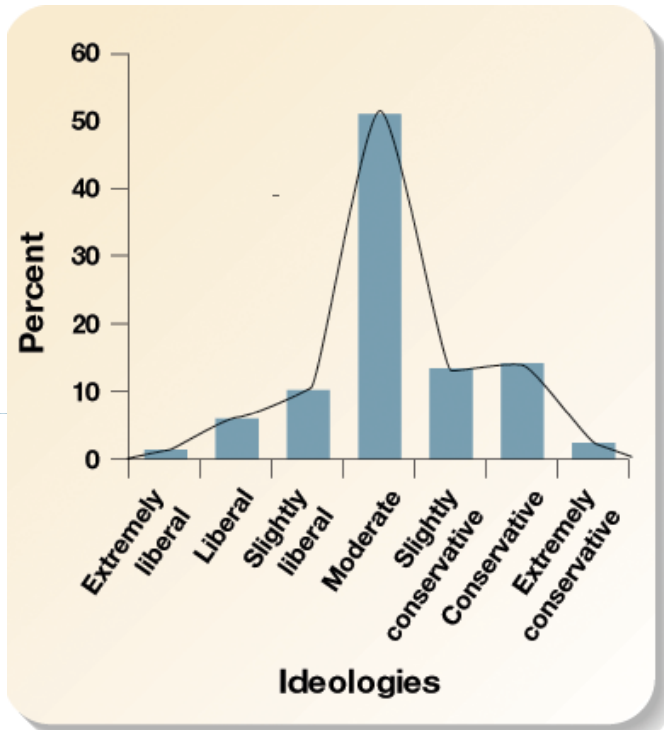
**Figure 10-3** Partisan Attitudes Strongly Influenced Evaluations of George W. Bush's Performance as President

Percentage approving (monthly averages)



Sources: Two hundred and forty Gallup and CBS News/*New York Times* polls, February 4, 2001, to April 21, 2005.

# American's Ideological Distributions





# Public Opinion: Definition and Measurement

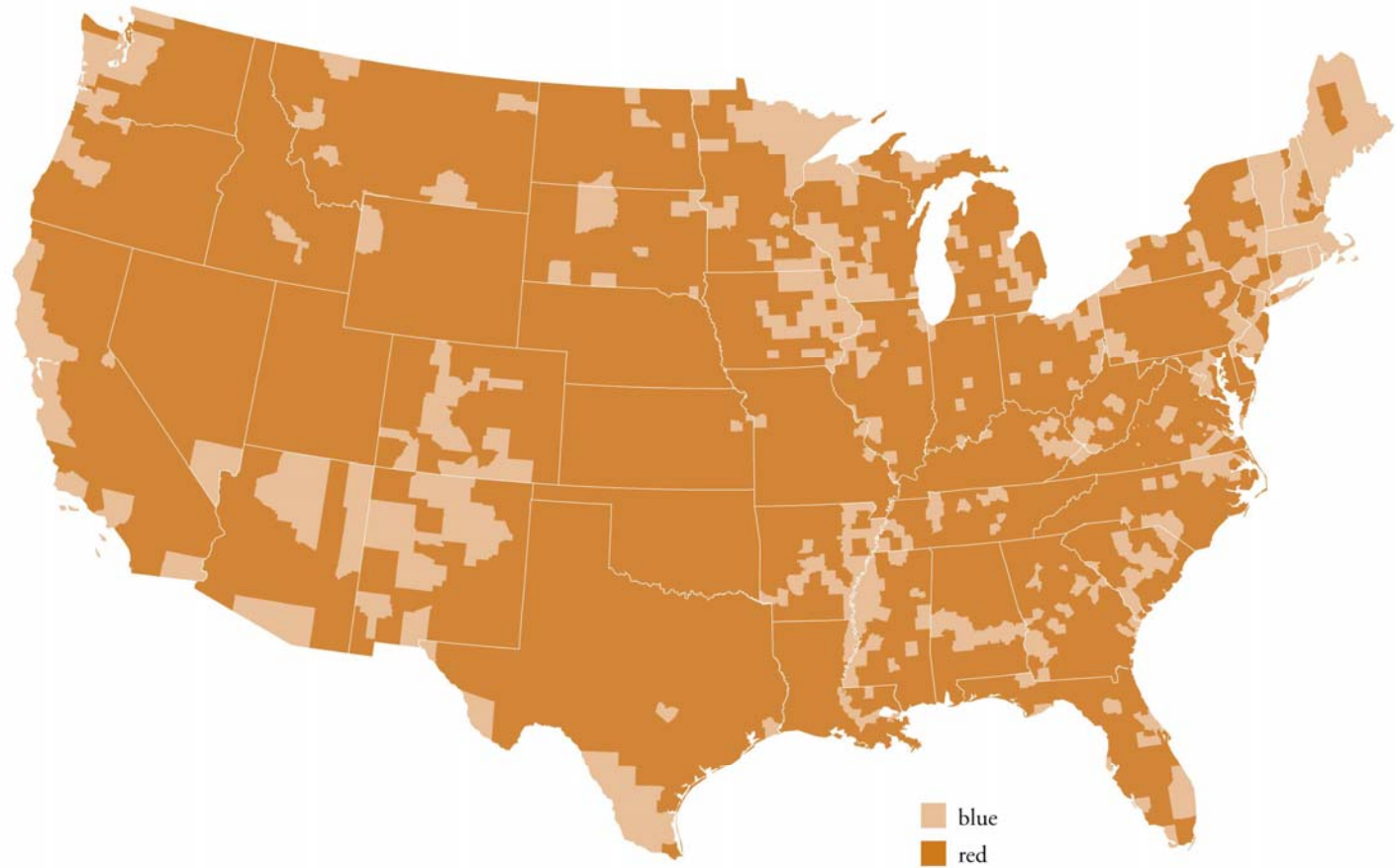
- **Public Opinion: The opinions held by private persons which government feels it prudent to heed (V.O. Key)**
- **Accurate (Scientific) Opinion Polling:**
- **Random Sample**
  - Everyone has equal chance of being included
  - Only need 1200-1500 *regardless* of size of population
  - Self-selected/straw polls NOT accurate
- **Carefully Worded Questions**
  - No bias and clearly differentiates alternatives
- **Actually Seeks the Truth**
  - Advocacy and 'Push Polls'
- ***Polls just a snapshot and may be wrong!!!***



# Factors Influencing Public Opinion

- **Race and ethnic differences**
- **Religious differences**
- **Gender**
- **Social and economic differences**
- **Regional differences  
(urban/suburban/rural)**
- **ISSUE FRAMING**

## Map 10-1 Presidential Election Results, 2004



*Sources:* Center for the Study of Complex Systems, University of Michigan, and the GeoVISTA Center, Pennsylvania State University.

*Note:* Pundits dwelt on the red-state (Bush), blue-state (Kerry) division after the 2004 election, but this red-county, blue-county map offers a better picture of regional political differences. The map shows more red than blue territory because Bush did better in the more thinly populated rural areas while Kerry did better in the densely populated urban areas. If the map is adjusted for population density the balance of red and blue is nearly even.