JANUS DEMOCRACY

TRANSCONSISTENCY AND THE GENERAL WILL

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PREFACE

A few years back I was having a conversation with an older gentleman—let's call him Jim. The conversation turned to politics and Jim told me that he's upset with our government's out of control spending. He wanted the government to balance the budget. I told Jim that Medicare is the fastest-growing area of government expenditures and asked him if he would favor a reduction in Medicare spending. He strongly opposed the suggestion and said, "I don't want rationing." He wanted unlimited health care because he'd likely need it in the coming years. He volunteered a program that he wanted cut; he said, "We need to get rid of welfare." I didn't quibble. He proposed a reduction in spending that would move him closer to his stated policy preference. But I did tell him that eliminating welfare would not balance the budget on its own, we could eliminate all welfare spending and we would still be over budget. I asked him about military spending. That is an area that takes up a very large proportion of the federal budget. He said, "We need to increase spending on the military. We have to be prepared for the terrorists." I told him increasing spending would not balance the budget. He replied, "We can use the money we saved from welfare." All right. The savings from welfare gets transferred to the military budget. I informed Jim that we are now over budget by the same amount we started at. I asked, "Are there any other programs you want to see cut?" He replied, "I don't know." It was an honest answer.

The other way to balance the budget is with additional revenues. I asked him if he would support tax increases. He replied, "Absolutely not!" Knowing that most Americans are willing to support tax increases on the wealthy, I presented him that option. He said, "We shouldn't punish the job creators." I said, "Jim that doesn't balance the budget." He replied, "I don't have the solutions. That's why educated people like you should find them." My conversation with Jim is important because he is fairly typical. He has policy preferences, but they are not well developed. When they are combined they don't yield the results that Jim himself would prefer. How do our elected officials deal with voters like Jim? The answer is that our political elites and our political institutions do a very good job of reflecting the Will of the People.

Most Americans want the deficit reduced and the federal budget to be balanced. Our political leaders made an earnest effort to develop a plan to

accomplish this objective. The Bowles-Simpson Commission was a bipartisan committee that created a plan to balance the federal budget. In some sense it is a simple problem. We have to reduce expenditures, increase revenues, or some combination of the two. The plan included cuts to national defense and Medicare, along with other reductions throughout the federal budget. In addition, the plan called for a variety of tax increases, including Social Security and gasoline tax increases. It called for reductions in tax deductions, like the mortgage interest deduction, aimed at increasing federal revenues. If fully implemented, the plan would balance the federal budget. This would seem like precisely the type of plan most Americans would support, except they don't. The Bowles-Simpson plan was abandoned because Republicans opposed the tax increases and Democrats opposed the reductions to Medicare and other programs. Most Americans support the Republican Party's commitment to lower taxes and a smaller government with fewer services. Most Americans also support the Democratic Party's opposition to reductions in favored programs and their support for higher taxes on the wealthy to pay for the programs. It is a true reflection of the "general will" to propose a plan that most Americans would support and to abandon that same plan because most Americans would oppose it. Jim wants us to balance the budget, but he will oppose cuts to national defense and Medicare and will oppose any tax increases on principle. He would oppose the plan to balance the budget. In a very real sense Jim has exactly the government that he wants. The problem is he doesn't like it. More than that, he's angry about it. He's tired of the gridlock. He's frustrated by it. He wants solutions. When a solution is offered he gets angrier. Why is the government proposing solutions that he doesn't like? He concludes that the government isn't listening to him. When candidates like Donald Trump say, "Our leaders are stupid," Jim agrees. We can feel sorry for Jim because of his lack of understanding, but we must also have some sympathy for our public officials. There isn't a solution that the public will like. The public is angry because of our problems. They want the problems fixed and they oppose the solutions.

More recently, I presented my students with a short video clip of the recent military coup in Egypt. After the coup, violence erupted when the military called for a vote on the new constitution. I asked my class, should the United States intervene in Egypt's internal political conflicts? One student immediately said, "No, it's not our job." The violence occurred because the Muslim Brotherhood, which had won the previous election by majority vote, was now banned from participating in the constitutional election because the military, with US support, declared the Brotherhood a terrorist organization.

The Muslim Brotherhood claimed to be a legitimate political party and, more than that, democratically elected by popular vote. I asked the student, "So you want the Muslim Brotherhood to take over?" The student quickly replied, "No." The student has an opinion about US intervention in foreign conflict—it's not our problem. The student also has an opinion about terrorist groups—we need to stop them. Within a matter of seconds opposition to US intervention morphed into support for US intervention. In politics we call that a flip-flop. I inquired further, "So you now think it's a good idea for the United States to intervene in Egypt?" The reply, "No." He hadn't abandoned the first opinion, he just added a second contradictory one. "There're no good options," he finished.

This sincere desire for two contradictory and incompatible goals is called *transconsistency*. I argue that this transconsistency stems from the pragmatic nature of Americans' worldview. Pragmatism is antifoundational, it lacks a core set of absolute principles. This is true for most Americans. This isn't to say we don't have ideologues. We certainly do, but rabid ideologues are not common and most Americans can be both liberal and conservative. The philosophy of William James and the pragmatists has become part of the American Ethos, even though most Americans have never heard of him. His type of pragmatism leads to precisely the dialetheial paradoxes that Graham Priest has postulated. A dialetheial paradox occurs when a statement and the negation of that statement are both true. In public opinion it occurs when a majority wants and doesn't want a particular policy.

Jim wants a balanced budget as a matter of principle. He also opposes tax increases as a matter of principle. More practically he is scared by terrorism and wants increased expenditures to keep him safe. He needs health care and opposes any limits to the amount that will be spent on providing for the services that he will need to live a longer life. He doesn't have the money himself, but he does feel the government should provide him with these services. Jim will never be satisfied because there isn't a viable solution that he would ever support.

Being uninformed is part of the public's problem. Without accurate information, the public prefers policies that don't produce what the public desires. But the issue is deeper than just simple ignorance. Americans have contradictory and incompatible preferences. What is truly remarkable about the American political system with its federalism and its checks and balances is that voters, in some sense, get exactly what they want. As a people we can elect a president who expands Medicaid because we believe that everyone should be able to see a doctor if they are ill, but we can elect a governor who

will oppose Medicaid expansion in our state because we are outraged by excessive government spending. We can elect a president who wants to reduce our foreign involvement and reduce our military expenditures, and we can simultaneously elect a Congress that wants to send additional troops abroad and increase the military budget. When the public is at odds with itself, it can elect a government at odds with itself. Our government is divided because we are divided. This is the nature of American democracy.

The book's title was inspired by the Roman god Janus. Janus is not a two-headed monster. Janus is a guardian who stands at the gate but who looks both forward and backward. He has one head with two faces. His bicephaly isn't two distinct things, it is one thing that consists of two opposites. Each face may speak something different but both faces represent the will of the majority. This seems like an apt analogy when describing the role of "the People" in our democratic system.

Methodologically, this book similar to McClosky and Zaller's *The American Ethos*. It presents an argument about the fundamental nature of public opinion by presenting evidence from public opinion polls to support the argument. It is not designed to be a rigorous test of a hypothesis where data is used to accept or reject a null hypothesis within a particular confidence interval. It is more philosophical and attempts to inject theoretical insights from philosophical works into the discipline of public opinion research. These two disparate disciplines converge when they attempt to determine what constitutes the general will. In a democracy, it is the general will that is supposed to govern. But what is the nature of the general will, not just in the abstract, but actually based on the evidence we have at hand?

This work attempts to inject some philosophy into the study of public opinion and to inject some empirical evidence into philosophical controversies. As such, it is neither a pure philosophical work, nor a purely empirical analysis of public opinion. It is one author's attempt to bridge the divide between two very different disciplines. Two arguments are presented. The first is that transconsistency causes Americans to be unhappy with their government. The second is that transconsistency causes backlashes in American electoral politics. Are there other variables that might cause dissatisfaction with government or electoral backlashes? Sure, but the purpose of this work is to present a plausible case for transconsistency, and to allow others to follow up with more rigorous empirical testing. Current methods fall short of being able to measure dialetheial paradoxes in public opinion, but I present some recommendations for survey researchers who would like to tackle the question themselves. Scientific progress occurs in small steps and this book is designed to open the door to

alternative explanations for observable phenomena, not definitively answer the question of dialetheial paradoxes in public opinion once and for all.

Chapter 1 defines transconsistency and reviews the public opinion literature on the topic of public competence. Converse argues that large proportions of the American public have what he calls "not-attitudes," because they lack ideological constraint and response stability. I argue these are not "nonattitudes" they are "bi-attitudes." The public may, and often does, want two incompatible goals to be accomplished simultaneously. Achen and Bartels argue that American electoral outcomes are like a coin toss. I argue that Americans prefer both heads *and* tails at the same time, but the forced choice of an election makes them choose between heads *or* tails. Americans are competent enough to know which party won the presidential election. If they flipped a head in one election, they will select a tail in the next because they desperately desire the opposite of what they desired before. If they can't get both at the same time, they will make sure to alternate between the two desired options. This accounts for the persistent losses of the president's party during midterm congressional elections. I'm not suggesting that most Americans switch parties from one election to the next, but rather that enough Americans switch their partisan vote choice to change the overall majority from favoring one party to favoring the other. There is ample evidence to suggest that elected officials do respond to public opinion and they attempt to give the public what they want. Those who ignore public demands suffer losses at the polls. But the public is perpetually dissatisfied because they have contradictory and incompatible goals that can't be obtained at the same time.

Chapter 2 details Graham Priest's theory of dialetheial paradoxes. A dialetheial paradox occurs when a sentence and the contradiction of that sentence are both true. In public opinion, when a majority supports and a majority opposes a policy a dialetheial paradox has occurred. Individuals do not need to be aware of their contradictions for the contradictions to exist. The question-wording effect, public ignorance, value pluralism, issue saliency, and framing can all cause dialetheial paradoxes to occur. This means that political opponents on opposite sides of an issue can both claim the mantle of majoritarian legitimacy. When both sides have the majority, both sides try to use the bandwagon effect to increase their majority. The result is a closely divided electorate that is prone to backlashes. When one side wins, there is an immediate reversal because a majority also supported the other side but could not accurately express itself with the forced choice of an election.

Chapter 3 begins by describing the two types of pragmatism that exist in the theoretical literature. It is the second more subjectivist type of pragmatism

that fosters transconsistency in public opinion. Its founder, William James, believes that reality can be willed into being with mere assertion and that expediency should always override consistency. He supports taking "moral holidays" from professed values, and is a true opportunist. His disconnect from objective reality and his total disregard for consistency seems to be prevalent among America's political actors and among the public itself. The philosophy of William James appears to be at the core of Americans' general will.

Chapter 4 discusses social issues. On issues such as evolution, same-sex marriage, racial discrimination, and freedom of speech most Americans are on both sides of the debate. Changing how a question is framed can turn majority support into majority opposition. Making one value more salient than another value also can flip majorities. With a majority on both sides, political opponents can both claim the mantle of majoritarian legitimacy.

Chapter 5 discusses health care, welfare, environmental policy, government regulations, the federal budget, and campaign financing. On these domestic policy issues, there are majorities on both sides of the debates. Ideological values seem to conflict with practical concerns. Americans dislike the costs, but like the benefits of many government programs. Because the costs and benefits go together, Americans can like and dislike the same policy.

In chapter 6 Americans' views on foreign policy are addressed. Americans are both interventionist and isolationist. They prefer whatever is in the American interest, but aren't really sure what that is. They'll support foreign interventions to protect America, but they don't like the high costs of such efforts and oppose foreign intervention. They have values—values that they readily abandon when it is expedient to do so. They are not firm believers in promoting democracy, stopping dictators, or preventing genocide. They take "moral holidays" just as the philosophy of William James promotes. Because large proportions of Americans do not pay attention to international events, they can be persuaded in either direction on many foreign policy issues.

Not every instance of a contradiction in public opinion is a "true contradiction." In chapter 7, the issues of amending the Constitution to ban same-sex marriage, abortion, gene therapy, off-shore oil drilling, and the Iraq War are reviewed. On these issues both supporters and opponents claimed majority support, but at least one side, and sometimes both, make misleading claims. This does not mean that there isn't an underlying paradox, only that the case isn't as clear cut as in earlier examples.

Chapter 8 discusses the current state of public opinion research and makes some suggestions for improvement. Forced-choice questions force respondents to choose between A *or* B, but many respondents might prefer A

and B, even though A and B are completely incompatible with each other. If congressional representatives are pragmatists and voters are pragmatists, then measuring government responsiveness to public opinion by using ideological scorecards would be the wrong approach. We wouldn't expect pragmatists to be ideologically consistent or ideologically coherent. In addition, using only roll call votes to measure our elected officials' preferences leaves out the votes that never happen. Partisan leaders might prevent a vote on issues where moderate members of their party might support disfavored legislation or oppose favored legislation. Moderates may never get a chance to register their pragmatic preferences, thus making it appear as though ideological polarization is worse than it actually is. Measurement error is likely a serious problem in ideological scorecards. Using filter questions to remove uninformed respondents isn't 100 percent effective at what it is attempting to do, but even if we could isolate the views of only the most informed Americans, that small group would not be representative of the general will.

Chapter 9 introduces the most interesting paradox of all. Americans want a government that is responsive to public opinion, but the more democratic the political institution is the more Americans dislike it. Americans are most unhappy with the institutions that are the most responsive to their wishes. When two policies are incompatible, but the public wants both, there is an incentive for politicians to make unrealistic promises and to peddle in misinformation. Pragmatic politicians will say and do whatever will help them win, and this strategy seems to pay off electorally. They know that "agreeable fancy" is more popular than the truth and that they are in a popularity contest. The public becomes disappointed when their fanciful desires aren't fulfilled. The result is adoption of popular policies that are soon followed by popular backlashes against those same policies. On many issues, the public wants to have it both ways and elites must find a way to satisfy these competing desires. Dialetheial paradoxes in public opinion are one possible explanation for the persistence of congressional losses for the president's party in midterm elections. When the public opposes the policies they support, they must take immediate action to stop what they wanted to happen from happening. Federalism allows our government to oppose itself when the partisan composition of the federal and state governments is different. Separation of powers allows the government to oppose itself when the branches of government are controlled by parties that oppose each other. Voters can make this self-opposition occur by ticket splitting. Even when rates of ticket splitting are low, there are still a sufficient number of electoral split decisions to make self-oppositional government routine. In addition, individual politicians often find themselves

"flip-flopping" on important political issues. In an attempt to respond to public opinion, these politicians find themselves sacrificing consistency for the sake of popularity. They are Jamesian pragmatists who do and say whatever is expedient. Our political institutions are at odds with each other because Americans are at odds with themselves.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

1. Introduction

Americans are given plenty of choices. White bread or wheat bread? Save our money or spend our money? Democrat or Republican? Even vote or stay home? We can choose which we prefer and select that option. If we have so many choices, why are we so unhappy? Aren't we getting exactly what we want? Doesn't getting what we want make us happy? The answer is no. Americans are often forced to choose between this or that, but many Americans want this *and* that. When this and that are mutually exclusive, one or the other, and we want both, either choice leads to dissatisfaction.

Janus Democracy is the story of a deeply tormented, confused, and angry public. It is a public at odds with itself. Public opinion research shows us that the public will very often provide majority support for a policy proposal and, simultaneously, provide majority opposition to that same proposal. Political elites have become adept at using polling and focus groups to frame questions in a manner that will yield their preferred outcome. This means politicians on one side can claim that the majority of Americans support their proposed policy. It also means that opposing politicians with a diametrically different policy preference can also claim that the majority of Americans support their proposed policy. Both supporters and opponents of a policy can both claim the mantle of majoritarian legitimacy. This book argues that the majority of the public does indeed have opposite and conflicting preferences on a large variety of issues of social and political importance.

These incompatible preferences lead to dissatisfaction. When people want the opposite of what they want, they will get angry when get what they desired. Everyone is familiar with the cliché "You can't have your cake and eat it too." Quite a large number of people want to have their cake and want to eat their cake. If they eat it, they will be upset because they no longer have it. If they save it for later, they will be upset because they would rather eat it now. Irrespective of their choice, they will be dissatisfied with the decision.

This is much more than simply regretting a decision and changing one's mind. This is about incompatible preferences and our democratic political system's remarkable ability to simultaneously express clashing preferences. We could say people are inconsistent and just move on, but this is far too dismissive given the importance of the issues involved. We can ignore inconsistent people,

or simply claim they don't know what they are saying. But when it comes to democracy, the People can't be ignored without abandoning a concept that is essential to democratic governance. The Will of the People is paramount in a democracy. The public, therefore, is not inconsistent, it is *transconsistent*. It is both for *and* against. Understanding the public in this way may seem peculiar, but democracy is a peculiar thing and transconsistency seems to fit the evidence at hand.

People are transconsistent when they adopt two incompatible values, beliefs, attitudes, or preferences. Values are the ideals that people hold dear and allow them to differentiate between right and wrong (Glynn, et al. 1999). But, these values can conflict within a single individual. Beliefs are the underlying assumptions that allow people to understand the world around them. But, "Sometimes an individual's own belief systems clash, producing a state of psychological tension known as cognitive dissonance" (Glynn, et al. 1999, 104). At other times, the people don't realize their belief systems clash and, rather than experiencing cognitive dissonance, they simply maintain two incompatible beliefs simultaneously. Attitudes are predispositions and represent general feelings about particular objects. When these attitudes are expressed they become opinions. When opinions are based on contradictory values and beliefs, the opinions will also be contradictory.

Transconsistency in public opinion occurs when there is a subset of individuals who support and oppose one policy option or when there is a subset of individuals who support one policy and also support an opposite and incompatible policy, such that that subset can, when added to both supporters only and opponents only, produce a majority on both sides of the issue. Transconsistency is the manifestation of dialetheial paradoxes in public opinion. The philosopher Graham Priest argues that dialetheial paradoxes do indeed exist, and he was the first to coin the term *transconsistent*. These paradoxes occur when a statement and the contradiction of that statement are both true (Priest 2006). Priest's logic is compelling, and there is evidence to suggest that these paradoxes can be found in American public opinion. At a fundamental level this occurs because Americans are a pragmatic people. Rather than being bound to rigid ideologies, most Americans are practical minded. They will support whatever seems expedient. Expediency, however, comes at the expense of consistency. The Jamesian version of the pragmatic philosophy has been criticized for being opportunistic and unmoored from reality, but it is this variety that best describes the general will of Americans.

This book is an attempt at interpretive theorizing, not an attempt to empirically establish a causal relationship between pragmatism and survey

results. For that, more and more nuanced surveys would need to be conducted. Nevertheless, an initial review of current polling on a number of important issues does suggest that pragmatism is at the core of the American psyche. Throughout the book the term *pragmatism* is used in its more technical and philosophical sense. *Pragmatism* typically refers to practical mindedness, but it is more than that as well. It is a distinct philosophical school of thought that is antifoundational, relies on situational ethics, and focuses on expediency as a decision-making principle. William James, and the pragmatists who follow his school of thought, are often accused by critics as being inconsistent. When two divergent views or preferences are held simultaneously, it may be better to claim that the individual is transconsistent—they want two opposite things at the same time.

In large measure Americans have short memories about the past and are shortsighted about the future. Recent considerations often outweigh previous judgments, and Americans probably don't fully understand the possible consequences of their decisions. This short attention span contributes to their transconsistency because they confront problems without historical perspective or long-range planning. Whatever seems best in the moment becomes their preferred course of action.

This presents some challenges for people who are concerned about the political competency of ordinary Americans. The empirical evidence is firmly established. Americans know some things, but don't know other things. The academic debate then splits along two subjective lines. The first argues that Americans know a few things, but mostly they are grossly ignorant about basic facts and are incapable of making good decisions. Subscribers to this school of thought would have us question democracy as a form of government. The second argues that Americans don't know many things, but what they do know provides them with sufficient information for making good decisions. Subscribers to this theory believe that democracy is safe in the hands of ordinary people.

This debate about public competency, while interesting, misses the point. Knowing what people know doesn't explain why they are they are dissatisfied with their government. However, the competency question does explain, partly, why Americans are capable of being on two sides of the same debate. The lack of basic information can lead to a policy preference that is incompatible with a preferred outcome or with other policy preferences. The public might very well claim to want something they don't actually want. When the government adopts their preferred policy, the public might very well get upset because it's not what they wanted. Competent or not, they're upset with what

the government is doing or not doing. There's also the normative consideration. Even incompetent people have a right to express themselves. That's a question of basic civil liberties. Less certain is whether they have a right to influence government, and some would argue they don't.

THE INCOMPETENT PUBLIC

In the United States, most Americans oppose "welfare" but support "aid to the poor." They want to decrease spending on foreign aid and increase spending on foreign aid. They want to amend the Constitution but oppose changing it. They oppose regulations that harm businesses but they also support regulations that protect the public. Contradictory findings like these have puzzled students of public opinion for decades. On too many issues there doesn't seem to be any there "there." The public just doesn't make any logical sense. This leads many to conclude that the public simply has no idea what it is talking about.

Zaller believes there is no such thing as a "true attitude" that can be found by survey researchers (Zaller 1992, 35). These "non-attitudes" are often attributed to public ignorance, response instability, and a lack of ideological constraint (Converse 1964; Converse 1970). Each of these issues has been the subject of much academic research and debate. These problems force us to wonder if democracy is the best form of government, or even a plausible form of government.

Ignorance. The evidence is clear, most Americans know very little about politics and many don't have any interest in politics at all. Most Americans can't identify which party is in control of Congress. This "makes it difficult for voters to assign credit or blame for their performance" (Somin 2016, 30). They are notoriously bad at estimating how much is spent on various programs, and they overestimate the cost of some programs, like the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, while underestimating the cost of others, like Social Security. They are ignorant about the basic structure of government and can't identify many of the rights citizens have or the limits that the Constitution imposes on the government. They don't know what is in specific pieces of legislation, like the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009, and attribute legislation to the wrong elected official—many believe the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) was enacted during the Obama administration. A majority of Americans incorrectly believed that President Bush claimed there was a "link between Saddam Hussein and the September 11 attacks" (Somin 2016, 50). Voters can't hold their elected officials responsible if they can't identify

their elected officials, don't know what is in legislation, and don't know which elected officials supported which government programs.

The situation is worse than just not knowing who is responsible for what. It means the public holds public officials responsible for occurrences that are beyond the official's control. "When voters endure natural disasters they generally vote against the party in power, even if the government could not possibly have prevented the problem" (Lau and Redlawsk 2006, 154). Because they punish incumbents for "droughts, floods, and shark attacks . . . most retrospective voting of all kinds is more a matter of kicking the dog than of rationally assessing blame or credit" (Lau and Redlawsk 2006, 133). They reward or punish incumbents based on their income growth, but this only holds true for income growth during "the six months leading up to Election Day" (Lau and Redlawsk 2006, 172). It does not hold true for income growth during the entire term the incumbent has held office, which is what a rational public would do if it was holding an elected official responsible for their economic policies.

Bryan Caplan argues that, "voters are worse than ignorant; they are, in a word, *irrational*—and vote accordingly" (Caplan 2007, 2). They dismiss unwanted information and prefer bad economic policies. In doing this they harm not only themselves but everyone in society—even those who are well informed and rational. Caplan alludes to the problem of transconsistency: "The median voter wants protection. Protection makes the median voter worse off. But the median voter does *not* want to be worse off" (Caplan 2007, 142). He blames voter ignorance for not understanding and not wanting to understand what would make them better off. Ignorance is only part of the problem; however, there are also deep and conflicting values that won't be affected by gaining more information. Americans have conflicting goals and will be dissatisfied no matter which goal is chosen.

Both Caplan and Lau and Redlawsk believe that voter ignorance leads to bad policies. Caplan argues that prejudice against immigrants and free trade causes the government to adopt policies that make the whole country worse off (Caplan 2007). In the 1970s California experienced a tax revolt and voters passed Proposition 13, which lowered property taxes. This caused major cuts in spending by state and local governments—including cuts in the forest service and fire protection services. When uncontrollable wildfires erupted after several years of drought conditions, experts concluded that there were insufficient firefighters to fight the blazes and that funds to remove dead trees were drastically reduced in the years preceding, which exacerbated the problem. Many residents got lower property taxes only to have their house burn down because of cuts in government provided services (Lau and Redlawsk 2006).

Voter ignorance might not make any difference if the ignorant answered questions randomly, or voted randomly, so that the votes of the ignorant would simply cancel out and only the decisions of the well-informed proved decisive for producing a majority. Unfortunately, public opinion is full of systemic errors. Althaus found that, "the aggregate opinions of ill-informed respondents are usually more one sided than those of the well informed" (Althaus 2003, 60) and since most of the public is not well informed the misinformed choice would carry the day. Caplan found that the public has antimarket bias, antiforeign bias, make-work bias, and pessimistic bias. The uninformed don't answer randomly; they have very real prejudices that lean toward producing suboptimal outcomes (Caplan 2007).

Caplan asks, if voters are irrational about political decisions, are they irrational about economic decisions? He says they are not. His rational irrationality argument says that "If agents care about both material wealth and irrational beliefs, then as the price of casting reason aside rises, agents consume less irrationality" (Caplan 2007, 123). Because the price of casting an irrational vote is nearly zero, one vote won't usually change the election outcome, people remain irrational. But when they stand to make or lose money, they become rational very quickly. The problem with this theory, as with most rational choice models, is that perfect information doesn't exist. If people knew that mortgage-backed securities were full of toxic assets, no one would have invested in them. If people knew the housing market was going to crash in 2008, no one would have purchased a house in 2006. People make bad economic decisions all the time, even at the expense of losing their entire life savings. As long as we live in a world where scoundrels are willing to deceive people in order to make a profit, misinformed decisions will occur (Akerlof and Shiller 2015). Many economists would argue that once the scoundrels are found out, people stop doing business with them. Sure, but by then many people have gotten swindled and there's another scoundrel ready to sell them something else. If someone can benefit from deceiving others, then that person will have an incentive to propagate misinformation and poor decisions will be made by those who were deceived. This ignorance and irrationality problem goes beyond just political decision making.

Lau and Redlawsk point out something very important about decision making for anyone who is interested in democracy.

> Evaluation and choice are not the same thing. Evaluation is about making a judgment on some dimension of interest about an object regardless of how many objects are being evaluated, while choice is

> inherently about selecting from a set of alternatives. Choice is about commitment, choosing between two or more objects (candidates), and often carries with it a (conscious or unconscious) justification of why one is chosen over the other(s). (Lau and Redlawsk 2006, 160)

Public opinion polls allow us to understand which objects are favored or disfavored. When there is a clear majority on an issue the choice should be simple. When a strong majority favors a policy a democratic government should adopt it. When a strong majority disfavors a policy a democratic government should reject it.

But the issue gets complicated when there are competing majorities. What happens when there is a majority that supports and a majority that opposes the same policy? Achen and Bartels, in their study of elections conclude that "election outcomes are mostly just erratic reflections of the current balance of partisan loyalties in a given political system. In a two-party system with competitive elections, that means that the choice between the candidates is essentially a coin toss" (Achen and Bartels 2016, 35). This conclusion is largely correct, but the question is why? They argue that political preferences stem from social identities, but this doesn't explain the randomness they found in their results. Identities just don't change often enough to explain why we have two major parties locked in a perpetual and closely contested battle, where they regularly switch places from majority to minority status. This book argues that the coin toss nature of public choice occurs because the public is transconsistent on many of the most important issues affecting our country. When their evaluation of an issue supports two contradictory positions, then their choice is a coin toss. The theory of dialetheial paradoxes allows for individuals to favor both heads and tails, or disfavor both heads and tails. This theoretical insight fills in a gap that was left open by Achen and Bartels.

Consistency.   Elites have been found to be more knowledgeable, to be more internally consistent, to have more stable responses over time, and to be more ideological than the masses (Marrietta 2012; Chong and Druckman 2007b; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Jennings 1992; Zaller 1992; Converse 1970; Converse 1964). Converse argues political elites and those with higher levels of education have more ideological constraint; that is, there is a very high and predicable correlation between different idea elements. For example, "if a legislator is noted for his insistence upon budget balancing and tax-cutting, we can predict with a fair degree of success that he will also tend to oppose expansion of government welfare activities" (Converse 1964, 210). But a voter

who supports tax cutting may also support the expansion of government welfare programs, and thereby lack ideological constraint. Among the general public there is less likely to be a set of responses that would fit neatly into the ideological camps (Converse 1964).

Response instability is when the same respondent gives different answers at different times. Converse found that only 20 percent of respondents had stable attitudes from one election to the next on issues for which one would not expect a rapid change. He argues the public has "non-attitudes" because "it seemed implausible that large proportions of the American population . . . had shifted their beliefs from support of creeping socialism to defense of free enterprise, and that a correspondingly large proportion had moved in the opposite direction, forsaking free enterprise for advocacy of further federal incursions into the private sector" (Converse 1970, 171). Some respondents will state they have "no opinion," but most are "fabricating an opinion" on matters they don't know or care about (Converse 1970, 176). Converse concludes that most Americans aren't responding to survey questions through an ideological lens that would lead to both response stability and ideological constraint. If Americans are pragmatic, there is no reason for us to expect ideological consistency or response stability.

This lack of consistency, however, is not a "non-attitude." It is a real reflection of competing goals held by ordinary people. A Republican legislator may support lower taxes and fewer social services. A Democratic legislator may support higher taxes and more social services. But voters may support lower taxes and more social services. Those voters have what we might call a "bi-attitude." If those voters had to choose between the two partisan legislators, they have reasons to support or oppose either, and neither will provide exactly what they prefer. Beyond that, irrespective of who they vote for, or who wins the election, the voters will have reasons to be dissatisfied with the result. Those voters will get something they don't want with either choice.

Zaller's observation that people can absorb contradictory information and not realize that there is contradiction is important (Zaller 1992). Surveys have found that conflicting majorities exist on many social and political questions. McClosky and Zaller noticed that on some issues a majority of Americans would support an idea in the abstract and oppose it in practice (McClosky and Zaller 1984). Most Americans support "the basic principles of democracy when they are put in abstract terms," but "that consensus does not exist on more concrete questions involving the application of democratic principles" (Prothro and Grigg 1960, 284). Specifically, "Many Americans endorse equal opportunity as an abstract value but fail to accept the specific

measures that seem necessary to bring it about in practice" (McClosky and Zaller 1984, 83). In the 1940s, for example, overwhelming majorities believed that black children should have the same chance to get a good education as white children. Yet, large majorities opposed the integration of the schools (McClosky and Zaller 1984). Paradoxically, a majority supported a good education for African Americans and a majority opposed the admission of African Americans to the good schools. To be fair, maybe they supported the "separate but equal" doctrine as a principle. Yet, they opposed equal funding as a practical matter of taxation. "A third of white respondents to the GSS who both endorsed school desegregation and lived in all-white neighborhoods believed that whites have the right to keep blacks out of their neighborhoods" and 85 percent opposed busing for the purposes of integration (Hochschild and Einstein 2015, 23). They had no objection to school integration per se. It's just that they wanted the ability to keep blacks out of their neighborhoods, and they opposed bussing that would bring blacks into their neighborhood schools. They believed blacks should be treated fairly and as equals, but also that they should be allowed to discriminate against blacks because of their race. In this way they can claim to not be racist, while still holding racist views. Findings like these demonstrate that Americans are capable of marvelous duplicities. They can support something in the abstract and oppose it in practice. They may also support a policy in practice while opposing it on principle.

Many of the uninformed, and even some of the informed, are likely to "flip-flop" because respondents tend to answer questions from momentary considerations (Lockerbie and Borrelli 1990; Zaller 1992; Lodge and Tabor 2013). This means that a prominent news story will impact responses to questions. This suggests that public opinion is highly malleable and that support or opposition to policies depends more on superficial momentary considerations rather than well considered analysis of problems. Zaller had an important insight when he found that people are exposed to all types of information designed to persuade them in one direction or another, but that "most people on most issues are relatively uncritical about the ideas they internalize. In consequence, they fill up their minds with large stores of only partially consistent ideas, arguments, and considerations" (Zaller 1992, 36). However, most respondents probably don't recognize their own inconsistencies. The following occurs because they are unaware:

> A person may react angrily to a news report of welfare fraud and then,
> a few weeks later, become equally distressed over other news reports of
> impoverished children and homeless families. Thus, people may have

one reaction to an issue that would cause them to favor it and another
that would cause them to oppose it, but—and here is the heart of the
argument—for most people, most of the time, there is no need to rec-
oncile or even to recognize their contradictory reactions to events and
issues. (Zaller 1992, 93)

Issue saliency will cause respondents to support and oppose the same policy at
different points in time based on different considerations (Zaller 1992). Rather
than dismissing the public as inconsistent "flip-floppers," it may be better to
argue that the public is transconsistent. In Zaller's welfare example the same
person has reasons to support welfare programs and reasons to oppose them.
If it's impossible to create a completely fraud-proof system, then we are left
with two options that we might be dissatisfied with. We can have a program
that helps the needy, but some people will abuse the system and squander our
tax dollars; or we can have no welfare program and some deserving needy
people will go hungry. Neither of the two options may be what we want, and
this is upsetting.

Alvarez and Brehm effectively add nuance to Zaller's insight. These con-
tradictions occur because on some issues Americans might be ambivalent or
equivocal. They argue that, "Ambivalence results when respondents' expecta-
tions or values are irreconcilable, such as we have demonstrated in the area of
abortion policy for those respondents who believe both in a woman's right to
autonomy over her body and that human life begins before birth" (Alvarez and
Brehm 2002, 58). In addition, "Equivocation means literally to speak with two
voices. . . . Equivocal respondents want both expectations (e.g., bureaucracies
should be both responsive and equitable), but see no contradiction or trade-off
between them" (Alvarez and Brehm 2002, 58). Not being able to perceive the
contradiction does not mean that their two expectations aren't contradictory.
Dialetheial paradoxes exist because on many issues Americans are ambivalent
or equivocal. They want to have it both ways even though having it both ways
is an impossibility.

It is more than just being inconsistent, however. There is an illiberal
element to American public opinion. A majoritarian democracy would
threaten our liberal democracy. Many Americans are perfectly willing to
deny freedom of speech, or the right to vote, or to run for office to disfavored
groups. McClosky and Zaller found that, "popular support for freedom of
speech *in the abstract* is overwhelming," but in practice, "many Americans—
and in some cases a majority—refuse to tolerate groups or ideas that they
find threatening, offensive, or otherwise objectionable" (McClosky and Zaller

1984, 36). Whether it's communists, atheists, women, African Americans, or homosexuals, polls have found less support for disfavored groups having the same rights as favored groups.

Commitment to these values varies by levels of political knowledge. "Exposure to the elite political culture—whether measured by an individual's level of political knowledge, participation, or education—is significantly correlated with support for both clear democratic and clear capitalistic norms" (McClosky and Zaller 1984, 239). For McClosky and Zaller, that means that elites are stricter adherents to the ideological values of freedom and equality than the masses. A majoritarian democracy might very well threaten our individual liberties.

THE COMPETENT PUBLIC

Many authors argue that the public doesn't need to know everything in order to be politically competent, they just need to know enough or know someone who knows enough and use that person as a guide. By using heuristics, a rule of thumb or shortcut, voters can gain sufficient information to make competent decisions even if they are unable to answer some basic questions of political knowledge. Some also argue that while individual respondents are inconsistent, the aggregated preferences of the masses are both consistent and rational.

Ignorance.   Samuel Popkin disagrees with the "non-attitudes" hypothesis. He states, "Voters may not have specific or even accurate knowledge about the details of legislation or public policy, but they have deeply held views that influence their reactions to public policy" (Popkin 1994, 106). He argues that voters have "low-information rationality" (Popkin 1994, 7). This occurs because voters use "information shortcuts and rules of thumb" to make rational decisions even with very limited information about the issues and candidates (Popkin 1994, 7). He is directly at odds with researchers who use the voters' lack of information to argue that voters can't make good decisions.

> It is certainly true that most citizens do not know many of the basic facts about their government, but assessing voters by civics exams misses the many things that voters *do* know, and the many ways in which they can do without the facts that the civics tradition assumes they should know. Further, the focus on voters' lack of textbook information about many political issues underestimates just how much information they pick up during campaigns and from conventions.

> This misinformation approach is a red herring. It focuses on what voters don't know instead of on what they do know, who they take their cues from, and how they read candidates. (Popkin 1994, 21)

Despite not knowing basic facts they can rely on opinion leaders to rapidly discern where they should stand on an issue. Individual voters come to trust certain elites with whom they largely agree, and when a new issue arises those elites can inform the voters without the voters having had to do any of the difficult information gathering themselves. They rely on elites to gather the information and take their cues from these trusted sources.

Stimson makes exactly this claim:

> Without any information flow whatsoever on the topic of politics (or just about anything else), one can form a view of what is good or bad simply by adopting the views of someone else who does pay attention. . . . If you adopt someone else's view of politics—and the view adopted was responsive to what was going on in Washington—then notwithstanding the broken line of cause and effect, *your view will be orderly and responsive to what really happened*. (Stimson 2015, 38)

Since elite opinion is more consistent and stable than mass opinion, when the masses follow elites mass opinion is also consistent and stable. If people simply parroted others' views and only had one source of information, this might hold true. So where do the heuristics come from?

Partisanship is one of the primary cues. It represents a running tally of past performance and voters take this into consideration when making decisions about who to support and what positions they should take. In addition, the candidate's race, religion, and gender can provide cues about the candidate's likely policy preferences. Endorsements of candidates by various groups and constituencies also send a signal to voters. Voters know they agree or disagree with certain groups so information about who those groups support provides information. Finally, voters care about more than just policy positions. They also care about character, trustworthiness, and competence. Voters might vote against a candidate that is more closely aligned with their own policy preferences if that candidate seems dishonest or incompetent. They might also do this if they are voting strategically. For example, they may vote for a less-preferred candidate in a primary if they believe that candidate has a better chance of success in the general election. This does not mean they voted for the "wrong" candidate. It means that trivia-type questions didn't fully measure what went into the voter's decision-making process (Popkin 1994).

Of course, even experts don't know everything, but "experts are better able to discriminate between relevant and irrelevant cues" (Lau and Redlawsk 2006, 160). They are better able to determine which information shortcuts will aid in their decision-making process. This puts a damper on the heuristics argument for public competency. If the uninformed take their cues from unreliable sources, then heuristics won't substitute for actual knowledge. Lau and Redlawsk don't view this as a serious problem. They find that the typical voter votes correctly approximately 70 percent of the time. That is, they voted for the candidate they would have voted for under conditions of full information.

> This high level of correct voting certainly validates the efficiency of heuristic-based information processing that underlies our view of human nature. Moreover, it challenges those critics who hold that democracies' problems stem primarily from people not having the motivation to gather the information to be able to figure out what is in their best interest. Most people, most of the time, can make this calculation, at least in presidential elections. (Lau and Redlawsk 2006, 86)

For Lau and Redlawsk this is good enough, indeed it may be better than having more information. "At least in politics, more information does not always result in better decisions. In fact, it often results in worse decisions" (Lau and Redlawsk 2006, 218). Because human beings have limited cognitive abilities and limited memory abilities, they can experience information overload. They find that a deep information search performs less well than a shallow information search when it comes to selecting the correct candidate (Lau and Redlawsk 2006).

They acknowledge, however, that those 30 percent of voters who voted incorrectly do not make random mistakes—it's not a coin toss, at least not exactly. Because voters are influenced by what they can remember at the time of making the decision they can be influenced by campaign advertising. Recalling Zaller's "top of the head" responses, we know that issue saliency can impact a voter's choice. By making one issue more salient than another, or more easily remembered at the time the vote is cast, campaigns can get voters to vote against the voter's own stated preferences. If a voter prefers heads and tails equally, or dislikes both equally but is bombarded with pro-heads advertising for two weeks before they make their choice, there will be a greater probability of choosing heads.

Modern campaigns have become very adept at microtargeting. In today's information age, data about Internet searches, television programs watched, purchases made, and demographic variables are readily available to advertisers

who seek to sell their products or services to those that are most likely to purchase their wares. The advertisements people are exposed to on the Internet, cable television, and satellite radio are not random. They are targeted at specific costumers. People who search for a new car online get advertisements from automobile manufactures and local car dealers. People who look at real estate online receive advertisements from mortgage companies, furniture stores, moving companies, and remodeling companies. Campaign strategists from both major parties have access to the same information that any other potential advertiser has.

Democratic campaign professionals know that a white Republican woman who drives a Prius and lives with an African American man is easier to persuade to vote Democratic than a white Republican man who lives in rural Nebraska and holds a hunting license. Republican campaign professionals know that a white Democratic man who is a union member, lives in the rust belt, has only a high school degree, and visits Alt-Right websites is easier to persuade to vote Republican than an African American Democrat who lives in Boston, has a PhD, and is a member of the Sierra Club. Knowing what they know, today's campaign professionals can target *individuals* to receive precisely the message that will get them to flip their usual vote choice. They can send that person ten pieces of direct mail, call them five times, and purchase ads that will appear when they watch their favorite program. Furthermore, this bombardment has precisely the effect it is supposed to have. People, who would by ordinary measures tend to vote for one party, in fact vote for the party that does not align with their overall stated preferences. In 2004, George W. Bush's presidential campaign developed and sent out a piece of direct mail to a group of three hundred voters. Why put so much effort into such a small mailing? Because those three hundred voters have exactly the right characteristics to suggest that they might be John Kerry voters with a high propensity to vote for Bush, if Bush tells them the right thing. With five hundred voters here and one thousand voters over there, each being microtargeted, election outcomes can be changed. The Bush campaign "made it a priority of knowing how to rile up a voter who stood with Bush on only a single issue" (Issenberg 2016, 140).

> Minnesotans who received federal farm subsidies were almost certain to get a piece of mail arguing that Bush's free-trade position would not damage the state's sugar beet economy. . . . Moderate Republicans in the Philadelphia suburbs learned about Bush's support for the Clean Skies Initiative, which the campaign presented as a policy of pragmatic environmentalism. (Issenberg 2016, 139)

Today's campaign professionals make a living knowing how to persuade potential voters in the same way that advertisers know how to persuade potential customers.

Those who don't understand real-world on-the-ground politicking might very well analyze a particular voter's survey responses and find that on nine issues the voter supports John Kerry's position and on one issue they support George W. Bush's position. If that voter cast his vote for Bush, they would conclude the voter made the wrong choice. The reality is that the voter might have been subject to a microtargeting campaign and made their vote choice on the one issue that they were bombarded with advertisements on. There is nothing nefarious about the practice or anything "wrong" about the vote choice. On Election Day that one issue was the single most important thing on the mind of that voter, who selected the option he or she most preferred at the time. Wrong choices on ballots refer to inaccuracies in the data collection process, like a voter who attempts to vote for Al Gore, but accidently votes for George Bush because the holes on the butterfly ballot don't line up next the correct name.

Partisanship, like religious affiliation, may be a core part of one's social identification. It structures one's values, preferences, and allegiances. But, "One may vote for a Republican candidate and yet feel part of a Democratic team" (Green, et al. 2002, 8). Some voters do switch their partisan vote choice from one election to the next, even if their own party ID remains constant. It may not be many voters that do this, but if a small number in closely contested districts and states do switch, it can change electoral outcomes and transfer control of the government from one party to the other. Partisan allegiances may be very strong, but they are not static. Effective campaigns can find the exact individuals that are the most likely to switch and compel them to do that very thing. Blue-collar whites who live in the rust belt are typically Democratic voters, but in 2016 enough of those voters abandoned the Democrats to support Republican Donald Trump to change the electoral map (Brownstein 2017). When the margins are narrow, a small number of vote switchers in a few key places can make all the difference.

One reason why voters seem incompetent is nothing more than a relic of the fact that individuals are both persuadable and pragmatic. Popkin is correct when he says campaigns matter. The reason people are dissatisfied is because circumstances change. In the first example above, our Bush voter will soon find he disapproves of the president's performance because, as those nine other issues become more salient, he opposes Bush's positions. We could argue that this voter should have known better, but many people have a mix of liberal

and conservative positions. Sometimes they are on both sides of one issue and will be dissatisfied no matter who they vote for or what policy the government enacts. This helps explain, at least in part, why the president's party loses seats during midterm elections.

Since the beginning of the Democratic and Republican two-party system, starting in 1862, the president's party has typically lost seats in the House and Senate in midterm elections. There have been only 3 exceptions in those 76 consecutive midterm elections. In 1934, the popular FDR saw his Democratic majority increase in the House and Senate. In 1998, Republican impeachment efforts backfired and Clinton's Democrats gained seats in the House and broke even in the Senate, neither gaining nor losing seats. In 2002, not long after the 9/11 attacks, Bush's Republicans gained seats in both the House and Senate. These exceptions can be explained because they occurred during major and unusual events in our society—the Great Depression, a presidential impeachment hearing, and a foreign attack on American soil. If the public were "flipping a coin" each election cycle, there would be no pattern at all. Half the time the president would gain seats and half the time the president would lose seats. In reality, after selecting a head there is 96 percent probability of selecting a tail next. Some argue that this is explained by the larger turnout in presidential as opposed to midterm elections. The larger turnout election brings in more minority voters and gives Democrats an advantage. The smaller turnout election is disproportionally white and this favors Republicans. But this doesn't explain why the phenomena affects both parties. When the larger turnout favors Republicans (2004), the smaller turnout favored Democrats (2006). It's clearly not a coin toss if there is a predictable pattern and turnout doesn't consistently favor one party over the other. There's something deeper going on.

The evidence is clear, most Americans can't identify which party is in control of Congress (Somin 2016). Yet, they almost always vote against the president's party after supporting that party two years earlier. They seem to almost always want the opposite of what they previously selected. They do know which party controls the White House, they know some basic differences between the two parties, and for many scholars that's enough information for voters to competently choose a candidate.

Lupia, for example, also argues that the public is competent. Just because Americans can't correctly answer survey questions that ask about political facts, this does not mean they are "incompetent when formulating political opinions or casting important votes" (Lupia 2016, 9). He makes two important claims. The first is that not all information is useful and that incorrect information can actually reduce one's level of knowledge. The second is that one doesn't need

to know everything in order to be competent. As long as the person knows enough of the necessary facts they can make a good decision. The problem with traditional lists of what a voter should know is that they don't really measure the items that make a person politically competent. Because a "cue is a piece of information that can take the place of other information as the basis of competence at a particular task" people can use cues to replace information they don't have. True, they may not be able to correctly answer some trivia-type questions about American politics, but they can use shortcuts to make the correct decisions. If they know some basic policy differences between Democrats and Republicans and they are given information about which candidates represent each political party, as most general election ballots provide, they have enough information to make a competent decision. His research suggests that, "voters who appear to be uninformed can cast the same votes they would have cast if they had access to very detailed information" (Lupia 2016, 52).

Lupia makes a critical error when he defines values as "concepts or beliefs about desirable end states or behaviors that transcend specific situations" (Lupia 2016, 110). He says, "Values provide a structure that helps to organize a person's attitudes and preferences. Because values are more general and held more deeply than many attitudes or preferences, they also tend to be more resistant to change (Lupia 2016, 112). Unfortunately for Lupia, there is ample evidence to suggest that values are highly transitory and fleeting, they do depend significantly on the situation. Different values come into play in different circumstances so that values are much less a guiding force than an ex post rationalization for a preferred option. If it's true that most Americans are pragmatists, then most Americans aren't being driven by a core set of values. Some pragmatists do and believe whatever is expedient in a particular situation. Change the situation and their values change as well. They use values to justify a preferred choice, often to hide self-interested behavior behind a veneer of moral righteousness.

Confederate apologists often argue that the Civil War was not about slavery, it was about state's rights. They believe, as a matter of principle, that states should be free to make the laws that best suit their local circumstances. Prior to the Civil War, Ohio had passed a law granting freedom to any slave that made it into Ohio's jurisdiction. Southerners fought strongly for the Fugitive Slave Act, an act that would overrule state laws and impose federal mandates on states that prefer not to return fugitive slaves (Gerstle 2015). If it's a matter of principle, why didn't southern states defend Ohio's sovereignty over a tyrannical federal government? The answer is simple. Our "core values" are nothing more than excuses for achieving our desired ends. As such they

can't be used to guide policy preferences. Many pragmatists decide what is expedient and then justify or rationalize their choice.

Consistency.   While Converse and others found that respondents are inconsistent, Page and Shapiro argue that "over a period of time, each individual will have a central tendency of opinion, which might be called the 'true' or *long-term preference*, and which can be ascertained by averaging the opinions expressed by the same individual at several different times" (Page and Shapiro 1992, 16). This is the miracle of aggregation. If a person chooses vanilla ice cream 90 percent of the time and chocolate ice cream 10 percent of the time, it would be fair to say the person prefers vanilla ice cream. Stimson argues that public opinion isn't arbitrary or capricious, if one studies public opinion on particular issues over time, one finds that change is slow and steady. While individual respondents might be flip-flopping from one survey iteration to the next, the overall picture is a slow progression of opinion change in one direction rather than rapid changes in both directions (Stimson 2015).

Stimson, like Caplan, alludes to a transconsistent public. He finds that, "Americans on average are symbolically conservative and operationally liberal" (Stimson 2015, 98). This means, in essence, Americans are ideologically conservative but pragmatically liberal. His research demonstrates that over 20 percent of Americans are what he calls "conflicted conservatives" (Stimson 2015, 103). "Lots of people," he says, "think of themselves as conservatives and act like liberals" (Stimson 2015, 103). They are not ideological in the sense of being strong adherents to conservative principles, they actually prefer liberal policies, but the conservative value system resonates with this subset of the population and they identify with it. This means they can be wooed to vote for conservative politicians, but when that politician begins to implement their conservative agenda they will recoil because it isn't what they wanted—they wanted liberal policies. So why didn't they vote for liberal candidates in the first place? Well, they will in the next election. But, once liberal policies are being enacted, they will recoil because it violates their preferred set of values. The typical trope is that they are inconsistent, but this group, in fact, wants both—and they are continuously disappointed when they don't get both. They get one and attempt to rectify the situation by choosing the other the first chance they get.

We're left with a methodological question. The methods used by Stimson and Page and Shapiro demonstrate that the public is consistent. The methods used by Converse, Zaller, and Althaus demonstrate the public is inconsistent. It seems that Page and Shapiro make two critical mistakes. First, they argue

that respondents who give flippant or inconsistent answers to survey questions don't pose a serious problem, "so long as they are scattered randomly across the population" (Page and Shapiro 1992, 28). These respondents would cancel each other out and not impact majority opinion. But what if they are not scattered randomly? Or, even worse, what if the "wrong" people cancel each other out? If uninformed people answer randomly, because they don't know what they are talking about, then the majority decision will reflect the opinions of the informed population. The problem is that the most highly informed and knowledgeable people on political matters are also the most ideological. Conservative ideologues and liberal ideologues will cancel each other out and majority opinion will rest on the subset of the population that knows the least about the question at hand. Both Althaus and Caplan are correct, there is systemic bias—the least informed do not answer randomly. In addition, the least informed tend to prefer different policies than the most informed, while the most informed split along ideological lines. We end up with policies being driven by the most ignorant among us. More than that, they prefer and don't prefer the policies they choose.

The second mistake made by Page and Shapiro is to eliminate the framing effect in their methodology. "Framing effects occur whenever altering the formulation of a problem, or shifting the point of view of an observer, changes the information and ideas the observer will use when making decisions" (Popkin 1994, 82). Because this occurs Page and Shapiro argue that, "The only safe way to identify opinion change . . . is to compare answers to *identical survey questions*" (Page and Shapiro 1992, 28). This eliminates the question wording and framing effects. Of course, the public will be consistent when you eliminate the very thing that would cause them to give a different answer. The problem is that the real world doesn't work that way. The way a question is phrased or framed does impact the response and politicians have become very adept at using the words that will elicit their preferred response from the public. Liberals and conservatives who oppose each other on a particular policy can both elicit majority support for their mutually exclusive positions. It is by comparing different questions that we can see that the public is often on two sides of the same debate.

Stimson's own research demonstrates that dialetheial paradoxes exist in public opinion. The public is transconsistent.

> Because both sides of the puzzle are reliably true, commentators on
> both sides of American politics can always make the case about the
> "real" America, even while disagreeing fiercely with one another.

> Look at symbolic ideology, and it is true that conservatism dominates
> liberalism. Look at preferences for what government does, and it is
> true that preferences most of the time favor more rather than less.
> (Stimson 2015, 98)

Stimson is transconsistent when he says Americans are "pragmatic ideologues"
(Stimson 2015, 178). Pragmatists, as I'll review in chapter 3, don't have ideo-
logical values. Stimson's case for consistency in public opinion is to argue
that the public is consistently inconsistent. It would be better to argue that
the public is transconsistent—they want two contradictory things at the same
time. It's a subtle but important distinction.

VALUE PLURALISM

The argument made here goes one step further than Stimson's and fully
embraces value pluralism. Value pluralism refers to the claim that "funda-
mental values are plural, conflicting, incommensurable in theory, and uncom-
binable in practice" (Galston 2002, 30). The concept was first developed
by Isaiah Berlin who noticed that, "not all the supreme values pursued by
mankind now and in the past were necessarily compatible with one another"
(Berlin 1991, 8). This could create conflict between civilizations but more
important for our purposes here is the observation that "Values may easily
clash within the breast of a single individual" (Berlin 1991, 12). Value plu-
ralism recognizes, "the fact that human goals are many, not all of them com-
mensurable, and in perpetual rivalry with one another" (Berlin 1969, 171).
This creates an internal struggle between competing ethical goods that is not
easily, if ever, resolved.

Some theorists advocate using different values to make judgments on
different issues (Walzer 1983). This can become a serious problem when moti-
vated reasoning occurs. Individuals might selectively use various ethical prin-
ciples to justify a self-serving end. They may use a particular value to justify
a self-serving action and reject that same value when others benefit (Lebo
and Cassino 2007; Kunda 1990; Lodge and Taber 2013). Instances of moti-
vated reasoning are prevalent in our political system. For example, "Under
President George W. Bush, Democratic senators aggressively defended the
use of the filibuster, while Republican senators vigorously opposed it. Under
President Barack Obama, the two sides essentially flipped. Republican senators
vigorously defended the use of the filibuster, which was sharply opposed by
Democrats" (Posner and Sunstein 2015, 2). Or, "Consider a lawsuit brought by

the attorneys general of Nebraska and Oklahoma, seeking to block Colorado's legalization of marijuana possession on the ground that federal law criminalizes possession. These same attorneys general have argued that the Affordable Care Act is unconstitutional because it violates states' rights" (Posner and Sunstein 2015, 3). Their belief in the principle of states' rights seems to come and go depending on the issue at hand. Empirical evidence suggests that partisans easily "flip-flop" as a result of motivated reasoning (Posner and Sunstein 2015).

Value pluralism means that respondents might have inconsistent and incompatible values, and that these values are selectively held on different issues of concern. Respondents with plural values will lack ideological constraint because the respondent is ideologically inconsistent between answers. The respondent will sometimes accept an ideological justification for a policy and other times reject the same ideological justification for a different policy, or the respondent will use different justifications to accept and reject the same policy.

Most Americans, including a majority of both whites and blacks, believe that merit should determine a person's place in society. Those who are more meritorious—those who display superior talent or effort—should receive more rewards than those with less merit. However, a majority of both whites and blacks readily abandon merit as a selective mechanism when a race-based preference benefits their own group. Most Americans also support the hereditary distribution of wealth in direct contradiction to their distribution by merit value (Longoria 2009). When Americans want two contradictory things we can say they are transconsistent. They do actually want both, even if the two preferences are incompatible.

Specifically, this occurs because different values are applied when the situation or issue is changed. Someone might support racial segregation, not because they are racist, but because it is a matter of states' rights and states should be allowed to make these decisions for themselves based on what the majority of the residents of that state prefer. If a state were to legalize same-sex marriage, this same person might call for a federal constitutional amendment prohibiting same-sex marriage, not because they are homophobes, but because laws should be uniform across the country and because states should not do as they please just because a local majority supports it. This self-serving rationality may not be surprising, but it leads to contradictions at best and hypocrisy at worst.

Whereas others have found that people are inconsistent over time, the argument made here is that people are inconsistent simultaneously—they are transconsistent. Some Americans will support both the liberal position and the conservative position when dealing with a particular issue at one point in

time. This occurs because value pluralism allows the same individual to hold contradictory and incompatible values when presented with real-world decisions. For example,

> Many of the inconsistencies in American racial attitudes point to a deep contradiction between two values that are at the core of the American Creed: individualism and egalitarianism. Americans believe strongly in both. One consequence of this dualism is that political debate often takes the form of one consensual value opposing the other. . . . The poll data reveal a "positive" pro-civil rights agreement when only egalitarian questions are at stake, but a "negative" anti-civil rights consensus when an issue also infringes on basic notions of individualism. Thus, on the central issues involving racial discrimination and Jim Crow practices, American public opinion is powerfully against discrimination. Expressed attitudes on these issues have been consistently "liberal," and even the white South has joined the national consensus. The general agreement dissolves, however, when compulsory integration and quotas are involved. Many whites deeply resent such efforts, not because they oppose racial equality, but because they feel these measures violate their individual freedom. (Lipset 1996, 128)

In this way, majorities can be both for and against the same policy. Unfortunately for Lupia, if our values are plural and contradictory, they can't be used to organize our attitudes and preferences. Of course, he's aware that "our values need not be consistent with one another" (Lupia 2016, 111). But the implication of this is that our attitudes and preferences will be just as fleeting and contradictory as our values and therefore can't be used to consistently guide government policy. Values can be used to justify government policy (in either direction) and this, in the end, may be the best we could do.

DOES THE GOVERNMENT RESPOND TO PUBLIC OPINION?

The knowledge held by the public and the consistency of public opinion would be irrelevant if government policy didn't respond to public opinion. If elites make the decisions and the elites are both knowledgeable and consistent, then the ignorance and inconsistency of the public doesn't matter in the production of public policy. However, if elites respond to public pressure, then policies would be guided by public opinion, at least indirectly. The evidence suggests that elected officials attempt to conform to the public's demands, even if many in the public can't identify which leader supports which policy. Public opinion has an

impact on government policy not because the public can choose the politicians that support their preferred policies, although they usually can, but because politicians gather polling information and conform to majoritarian demands in the hopes of winning the next election. At the state level, states with conservative voters have more conservative policies and states with liberal voters have more liberal policies (Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1993). When public opinion changes public officials take notice and government policy changes as a result (Stimson 2015; Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002; Page and Shapiro 1983).

Somin undermines his own argument when he discusses the political fight over segregation in the 1950s South. He claims more knowledge might be used by an electorate with bad values to harm a minority group.

> If the racist majority increases its knowledge of the activities of government officials, it can more effectively identify and punish any who are "slacking off" in their persecution of the despised minority. . . . In the Jim Crow-era South, for example, political leaders sometimes adopted more discriminatory policies against African Americans than they personally favored in order to satisfy racist public opinion. . . . Wallace ran his first campaign for governor in 1958 as a relative racial moderate. As a result, he was defeated because of what the voters perceived as his insufficient commitment to white supremacy. A chastened Wallace decided that he would never allow a political opponent to "out-nigger me again" and duly adopted a more segregationist line in future campaigns, which were more successful. (Somin 2016, 79)

Anecdotes and empirical evidence suggest the same thing. Political leaders adopt views that will help them win elections. As a result there is a link between public opinion and government policy. The People do a reasonably good job getting what they want from government, despite lacking basic information that would seem to be necessary to effectively make correct choices given their own preferences.

More recently, Eric Cantor, the House majority leader, lost to a political novice in a primary election. This occurred despite Cantor's 50 to 1 fundraising advantage, very high name recognition, and years of successful campaign experience. He lost because his priorities changed over time. His focus as majority leader was party building, strategizing, organizing, and fundraising. He ignored his local constituents who remembered the Cantor of old who would meet with them and prioritize local district concerns over national Republican Party concerns. His constituents were very clearly aware of Cantor's priorities and they didn't like it. In his quest to become a national

leader Cantor forgot where he came from and his own constituents ousted him as a result. Then, as if to prove his constituents were correct, he left before his term was completed to take a million dollar job offer, leaving his constituents without a representative at all. The public pays attention and they vote accordingly (Bell, Meyer, and Gaddie 2016).

The public is capable of holding elected officials accountable. When politicians don't do what their constituents demand, they lose elections. As a result, our elected leaders, Cantor aside, do everything they can to please their constituents. They promote and attempt to enact policies that the voting public will favor. We have a public that gets what it wants from government, yet they seem to be dissatisfied because "the government doesn't listen to the American people" (e.g., see table 1.1). It seems that the American public is so ignorant that they don't even realize that the government is doing what the people are demanding. If transconsistency in public opinion is true, then the public doesn't want what the public wants, which is why they're not getting what they wanted.

TABLE 1.1 *Public Opinion Has Too Little Influence*

And now a question about the power of different groups in influencing government policy, politicians, and policy makers in Washington. Do you think public opinion has too much or too little power and influence in Washington?[1]

Too much	13%
Too little	82%
About right (Volunteered)	2%
Not sure/Refused	3%

If the leaders of our nation followed the views of public opinion polls more closely, do you think the nation would be better off, or worse off than it is today?[2]

Better off	68%
Worse off	25%
No difference (Volunteered)	3%
No opinion	4%

Sources

1. Survey by: *Harris Poll,* April 2011. Retrieved 7 March 2013 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *Gallup Poll*, September 2011. Retrieved 7 March 2013 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

DISCONTENT

There are two reasons people get angry. The first is when they want something and don't get it. The second source of dissatisfaction occurs when people want two opposite things and can't have both. Think of the human baby, people in their native state before the effects of civilization take hold. They are all impulse and instinct. If you give the baby a lollypop, that child will be happy because he or she has a sweet treat. Take the lollypop away and you get rage, anger, dissatisfaction, wailing sadness, and a deep and profound sense of loss. It's a calamity of horrific proportions to the child, who's perceiving an injustice of epic magnitude. For goodness's sake, give that lollypop back to the baby! What happens when you return the lollypop? The baby flings it at you in a blind rage! That's what you get for taking it away. The baby doesn't even want it anymore. Age moderates our natural impulses, but doesn't eliminate them. We learn how to restrain our impulses, but they continue to exist and they continue to guide our behavior.

One is reminded of a song written by one of America's greatest music composers and made famous by Marilyn Monroe. Irving Berlin wrote,

> Here's what's wrong with you
> After you get what you want you don't want it.
> If I gave you the moon, you'd grow tired of it soon.
> You're like a baby, you want what you want when you want it.
> But after you are presented with what you want, you're discontented.
> You're always wishing and wanting for something
> When you get what you want, you don't want what you get,
> And though I sit upon your knee, you'll grow tired of me,
> 'cause after you get what you want,
> You don't want what you wanted at all.
>
> (Kimball and Emmet 2001, 220)

Berlin's songs have become iconic precisely because they speak to fundamental aspects of human nature. People that don't want what they want are destined to be unhappy. This simultaneous wanting and not wanting is called transconsistency, and it is embedded in the general will. Give people what they want and they'll be unhappy because it's not what they wanted. Don't give people what they want and they'll be unhappy because they're not getting what they want.

Gurr argues that discontent arises from relative deprivation. Relative deprivation is "the tension that develops from a discrepancy between the

'ought' and the 'is' of collective value satisfaction" (Gurr 1970, 22). In other words, there are things that we want but do not have as a society. There is a perpetual gap between the "is" and the "ought" when the "ought" is unattainable. When the "ought" is a list of contradictory and incompatible "oughts," it is not possible to furnish all of them in a sensible way. This leads to frustration that is directed toward our political system. Our elected officials are caught in a perpetual cycle of attempting to provide the public with what it desires, but because the various desires are incompatible with each other they cycle through success and failure. Success in providing one desire constitutes a failure in providing a contradictory desire. Gurr's relative deprivation is more like perpetual deprivation.

DEMOCRACY

There is a story about one of Adlai Stevenson's supporters exclaiming during one of his campaign speeches, "Every thinking man is for you!" To which Stevenson replied, "That's not enough, I need a majority!" There's no documented proof that this ever occurred, but there's no proof that it didn't happen either. Perhaps it's an urban legend told in political circles. Still, its persistence tells us something about how many elites have come to view the public. The public might very well be ill-informed, capricious, ignorant, undemocratic, and dangerous. But we still need them to be part of our political process. If for no other reason, elites need to win elections.

George Gallup and Elmo Roper believed that, "regular public opinion surveys would cure many of the ills of the modern polity by combating the deleterious effect of unresponsive legislatures, political machines, and pressure groups" (Igo 2007, 121). We could finally know what it was that the public believed and what they wanted. Armed with this information, reformers could pressure public officials to obey the Will of the People or suffer electoral defeat. Gallup wasn't worried about public competency, "In speech after speech, article after article, Gallup cited his faith in the people to make good decisions" (Igo 2007, 122).

Others disagree. Brennan argues that, "universal suffrage incentivizes most voters to make political decisions in an ignorant and irrational way, and then imposes these ignorant and irrational decisions on innocent people" (Brennan 2016, 20). Even if people have a right to harm themselves, they don't have a right to harm others and this is precisely what democracy allows people to do. They can use the authority of the state to harm, "better informed and more rational voters, minority voters, citizens who abstained from voting,

future generations, children, immigrants, and foreigners who are unable to vote but still are subject to or harmed by that democracy's decisions" (Brennan 2016, 22). This makes democracy a poor form of government, and Brennan advocates for an "Epistocracy [which] means the rule of the knowledgeable" (Brennan 2016, 27).

Can we trust ordinary citizens to govern? Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Madison, Jefferson, Paine, Burke, Dewey, Lippmann, and many others have tried to answer this question from ancient times to the present. Lupia makes a very important point as it relates to this question, "Competence is defined with respect to a task" (Lupia 2016, 34). We have to ask ourselves competent at what? What are we asking the public to do with regard to political decision making? Selecting policies and selecting leaders to make the policies for us isn't the same thing.

Achen and Bartels seem to be on the right track when they argue that public choice often appears to be a coin toss. If a respondent prefers heads *and* tails, forcing the respondent to choose doesn't fully capture the respondent's preference. But Popkin is also correct with his claim that campaigns matter. The choice between heads and tails isn't random, it can be influenced and there is a pattern of decision making. If one prefers both heads *and* tails, but selects heads because they had to choose one, then at the next opportunity they'll select tails in an effort to express their equally strong preference for the opposite choice.

"Millions of people, having moved away from supporting government spending in the late 1970s, were moving back in support in the late 1980s" (Stimson 2015, 30). We know public opinion changes over time and that minority opinion can become the majority opinion. But what accounts for these relatively quick backlashes against seemingly popular proposals? One possibility is that transconsistency causes political backlashes. When people want two opposite things and are given a choice between the two, one of the two will win because a choice was forced. But the reality remains—the public wants both! Having chosen one their top priority is to choose the other at the next available opportunity. The forced choice of elections and the forced choice of many survey questions mask an underlying truth. *In many cases the public wants two incompatible options at the same time.*

2. The Theory of Dialetheial Paradoxes in Public Opinion

In his groundbreaking work on race relations in America Gunnar Myrdal explained the deep conflict within American society. From his perspective as an outsider he noted how the conflict between liberty and equality created a paradoxical culture in the United States. Americans put their highest ideals into the laws, but they also have a rebelliousness rooted in individualism that causes them to have little respect for the laws. An American who says, "he will not obey laws other than those which are 'good' and 'just,' as soon as the discussion turns to something which in his opinion is bad and unjust, will emphatically pronounce that 'there ought to be a law against . . .' To demand and legislate all sorts of laws against this or that is just as much part of American freedom as to disobey the laws when they are enacted" (Myrdal 1944, 17). This type of self-contradictory attitude often seems self-serving and hypocritical, but it is a profound insight into the character of American culture.

Public opinion surveys have found that conflicting majorities exist on many social and political questions. McClosky and Zaller noticed that on some issues a majority of Americans would support an idea in the abstract and oppose it in practice (McClosky and Zaller 1984). The survey results presented in this book are not original. This book offers a meta-analysis of polls conducted by many organizations on a wide variety of issues. It takes a step back, looks at the accumulation of results, and attempts to identify areas where the public seems to be deeply conflicted. What is new is the concept of transconsistency as it relates to public opinion. It is also argued that this transconsistency creates dissatisfaction and explains the electoral backlashes that are typical in American elections.

This chapter details and develops the theoretical framework that is used to explain how exactly it is that a majority can support and a majority can oppose the exact same policy at a single point in time. The theory of dialetheial paradoxes developed by Graham Priest explains the process by which these contradictions occur. Question wording, ignorance, value pluralism, issue saliency, and framing are the mechanisms whereby individual respondents are shown to sometimes support and sometimes oppose the same policy. This occurs because Americans are a pragmatic people and are perfectly willing to trade off consistency for the sake of expediency.

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DIALETHEIAL PARADOXES

Graham Priest defines a dialetheial paradox in this way, "A *dialetheia* is a sentence, *A*, such that both it and its negation, ¬*A*, are true. . . . Assuming the fairly uncontroversial view that falsity just is the truth of negation, it can equally be claimed that a dialetheia is a sentence which is both true and false" (Priest 2013). This can mean that two contradictory statements are simultaneously true or that one sentence is true and false at the same time. Dialetheists would accept both conclusions simultaneously despite the seeming incompatibility.

The logical paradoxes are the paradoxes of self-reference. These can be divided into two types: the semantic and set theoretic. Semantic paradoxes include the liar's paradox, "This sentence is not true." If it's not true that it's not true, then it's true (Priest 2006). Dialetheialists like Dowden argue that, "the Liar sentence is both true and false" (Dowden 1984, 125). The set theoretic paradoxes include Russell's paradox, "R is the set of all sets that don't contain themselves." If R doesn't contain itself, it contains itself. Priest argues that "the Russell set is both a member of itself and not a member of itself" (Priest 2006, 96). Dialetheists would simply accept both elements of the contraction as true and move on. This book considers the set theoretic variety and applies it to public opinion.

A dialetheial paradox must rise to the level of "true contradiction." For Priest, "true contradictions" are "sentences such that both they and their negations are true" (Priest 1984, 153). Many seeming paradoxes may be the result of using imprecise language. For example, the sentences "Janice is inside the room" and "Janice is outside the room" contradict each other. If Janice was standing in the doorway, it could be argued that she is in and out of the room at that moment. It would be a "true contradiction" only if Janice was fully inside and fully outside of the room simultaneously. It would not be a paradox to say, Janice was in the room five minutes ago, but now she is outside the room. Janice moved from one place to another. If people change their minds, this not a contradiction in and of itself.

However, people have values, beliefs, attitudes, and preferences that contradict their other values, beliefs, attitudes, and preferences. In politics, we could come up with quite interesting conundrums. If the majority opposes majority rule, then their preference is minority rule. In this instance minority rule is the majoritarian preference. You can also have a group of activists deciding to hold an "anti−free speech" rally. The anti−free speech advocates would be practicing free speech. And if pro−free speech advocates were against this rally, they would implicitly join the anti−free speech crowd. The

self-reference leads to political paradox. Majority rule is minority rule. Free speech supports censorship. These, of course, are contrived examples but they are not inconceivable.

France has recently faced exactly this type of political paradox. Islam, and religion in general, is perceived by many to be a type of dictatorial mind control. Freedom requires breaking free from the dictates of religious leaders to form one's own opinions. Public schools banned the wearing of the hijab because they were attempting to assimilate new immigrants and because many believed the immigrants should be freed from the shackles of their religion. Students were banned from expressing their views through their attire so that they may become "more free."

Leon Festinger believes that two idea elements are consistent when one logically follows from the other. Two ideas are inconsistent, or dissonant, when there are "nonfitting relations among cognitions" (Festinger 1962, 3). It's as simple as two ideas not going together because they conflict with each other. He also believes that instances of dissonance are fairly common, "Very few things are all black or all white; very few situations are clear-cut enough so that opinions or behaviors are not to some extent a mixture of contradictions. Thus, a Midwestern farmer who is a Republican may be opposed to his party's position on farm price supports; a person buying a new car may prefer the economy of one model but the design of another" (Festinger 1962, 5). Human beings have competing goals, interests, and preferences; sometimes our goals, interests, and preferences are odds with our other goals, interests, and preferences.

The theory of dialetheial paradoxes creates the framework that is necessary to understand the contradictions in public opinion. Some contradictions are not "true contractions" but merely a consequence of using imprecise language, while other contractions are "true contradictions" where the public can be for and against the same policy. Because individuals can be both for and against a particular policy, they can be in the room of all supporters and in the room of all opponents, they are in two rooms at the same time and this is a "true contradiction."

THE THEORY OF DIALETHEIAL PARADOXES IN PUBLIC OPINION

Naive set theory has faced criticism because it can result in paradoxes. "According to naïve theory, a set just is the extension of an arbitrary condition, and that's that" (Priest 2006, 29). In other words, any defined collection can be designated as a set. Naive set theory allows dialetheial paradoxes to occur

because the basic premise of public opinion is to collect responses from individuals and then to categorize those responses into sets of individuals who favor or oppose particular propositions or statements.

The public consists of all the individuals in the society under study. Typically, a random sample is selected and statistical procedures can yield a level of confidence that our sample reflects the true proportion in the population. We can never be 100 percent certain that our sample will match the true preference of the population, but we can get closer to 100 percent as the sample increases in size. At the upper end the sample would not be a sample, but would include the entire population.

When we say, "The majority of Americans believe X" or "The majority of Americans support candidate Y" we include a confidence interval. The most accurate way to describe a poll result would be say, "We are 95 percent confident that the interval of 77 percent to 83 percent contains the true percentage of support, or our interval of 77 percent to 83 percent would encompass the true percentage 95 percent of the time." The mass media typically report this as, "80 percent of Americans support X, +/−3%."

Our concern is with how different respondents fall into different subsets. The sample is the set of all respondents,

> All respondents = {A, B, C,. . .}

The set of all respondents can be divided into subsets based on demographics, attitudes, survey responses, etc.

> A = {$a1, a2, a3, \ldots$}
> B = {$b1, b2, b3, \ldots$}
> C = {$c1, c2, c3, \ldots$}

Counting the number of responses for a given variable and dividing it by the total number of respondents gives us the percentage of respondents in a given subset. We are typically interested in majority opinion, though plurality and minority opinion can also be of interest.

The dialetheial paradox occurs because one or more respondents fall into more than one of the subsets, that is to say the subsets are not mutually exclusive. For simplicity, let us say the set of all respondents consists of three respondents: A, B, and C.

> All respondents = {A, B, C}

Where A is an ideological conservative, B is nonideological, and C is an ideological liberal.

A and C have high levels of political information. A and C are not influenced by issue saliency, framing, or any type of question-wording effect. A and C have ideological constraint and response stability. B, on the other hand, has none of these characteristics. B is ignorant of basic information, is influenced by the manner a question is presented, is ideologically inconsistent, and often changes his mind.

Respondent B agrees with the statement, "Government regulations destroy jobs because they make it difficult for businesses to operate." Respondent B also agrees with the statement, "We need environmental regulations because I want drinking water that is safe for human consumption." The result is a dialetheial paradox where among our three respondents there is a majority for the pro-business position and a majority for the pro-environment position.

> Pro-business = {A and B}
> Pro-environment = {B and C}

The majority of this public is on both sides of the debate. In public opinion, survey results may indicate that a majority supports a policy and that a majority opposes the same policy. Despite being contradictory both statements are true.

Converse would argue that this is a "non-attitude" (Converse 1970), but it is really a "bi-attitude." Respondent B wants to have it both ways. When a new environmental regulation is being proposed, he doesn't like the fact that it will make it difficult or impossible for some businesses to continue to operate, he doesn't like that some people will lose their jobs. He does like it when the nation's drinking water, and his water in particular, is safe to drink and he supports regulations that will ensure he has safe drinking water. He may, or may not, realize that the regulation that keeps his drinking water safe is the same regulation that will cause the polluting factory to shut down. He wants the polluting factory to continue to operate and he wants clean drinking water, but he can't have both at the same time. Respondent B is transconsistent. If the pro-environment candidate wins and the regulation becomes law, respondent B will be unhappy when the factory closes and people lose their jobs. If the pro-business candidate wins and the regulation does not become law, respondent B will get upset when he finds out the drinking water was polluted and is causing harm to Americans. This is not a far-flung example, the recent events in Flint, Michigan demonstrate how these two preferences come into direct conflict.

When a majority gets what it wants, it could well happen that a majority will be angry with the result and prefer something else. The theory of dialetheial paradoxes expands on Condorcet's discoveries and shows that this could be true even if there are only two alternatives. If a voter both supports and

opposes the same policy and the voting mechanism accurately measures the voter's preference by not creating a "forced choice," then a majority can be had both supporting and opposing the same policy. Public opinion polls have a capability that elections don't—they can, when done correctly, accurately measure public support and opposition to specific proposals.

Priest's theory creates a corollary to the Condorcet Paradox. Condorcet was skeptical of democracy because voting procedures could lead to voting cycles where one majority is overruled by a different majority in perpetuity, leading to instability in the decision-making process. In Condorcet's example three voters (1, 2, 3) are given three choices (A, B, C) and must decide in a series of pair-wise elections, where each choice is paired against each of the others.

Policy Option	Voter 1	Voter 2	Voter 3
First Choice	A	B	C
Second Choice	B	C	A
Third Choice	C	A	B

There is a 2 to 1 majority that favors A > B, a 2 to 1 majority that favors B > C, and a 2 to 1 majority that favors C > A. No matter what the majority chooses in one pair-wise election, the majority will prefer a different option when that choice is paired against the other remaining option. Riker has found that as the number of voters and choices increases the probability of a voting cycle occurring also increases (Riker 1988, 122). Arrow discovered that there is no method of solving the "voting paradox" without violating at least one of the four essential principles of democracy he put forward (Arrow 1967). Procedurally, there is no democratic mechanism for choosing among options that is immune from perverse outcomes or instability.

A Dialetheial Paradox can occur with only two choices.

Voter	A	B	C
Supports	X	X/-X	-X
Opposes	-X		X

If voter B votes "yea" and "nea" when X is voted on, both sides have the majority. As a result, both supporters and opponents of X would have the majority at the same time. The voting rule could attempt to limit B to one vote, but this would not be an accurate depiction of the individual's preference. It would be an artificial constraint placed on a person who is of two minds on the issue. If one is attempting to gain a true reflection of public opinion, one must allow the individual to vote as he or she pleases.

Limiting an individual to only two options and only one vote, would prevent the problem of dialetheial paradoxes from manifesting itself. In our two-party system with one person, one vote we've created a procedural process to protect us from contradictory decision making—no matter how conflicted a person might be that person only gets one vote. But multiple elections for various levels of government reintroduces the problem. Perhaps an individual supports candidate A for reason *X* and supports candidate B for reason *Y*. These "cross-pressured" voters can simultaneously support different sides (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954). A person could vote for a Republican at the federal level and a Democrat at the state level, or they may support a Democrat for president and a Republican for Congress. "Cross-pressured" voters have been shown to be far more likely to engage in split-ticket voting (Mulligan 2011). They also delay their choice because they have difficulty deciding among the two options (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1944). As it happens, candidates A and B might oppose each other on a particular policy and this voter has now supported a candidate that is for a policy and a candidate that is against it. In the same election for one office a voter might have reasons to support the incumbent and reasons to support the challenger. It could well happen that the voter likes both candidates or dislikes both candidates. In this way their vote choice would not be a true indication of their preference, they might be deeply conflicted.

While there are many reasons to support or oppose candidates, the argument made here is that individuals may be both for and against the same government policy. An accurate reflection of the "general will" would remove the artificial procedural barriers to expressing one's views. It would allow people to be both for and against candidates and policies, if they are in fact deeply conflicted over the matter. Public opinion polling removes that procedural barrier. Polls can, and often do, show that the majority can be for and against the same policy. When this happens we can say that the public is transconsistent. The public desires two incompatible things and we cannot, without injecting our own values and beliefs, claim that the public "really" wants one or the other. The public wants to have it both ways.

Some philosophers believe there can be no such thing as a "true contradiction." Jamie Whyte argues, "Statements are contradictory when the truth of one entails the falsity of the other, when, if one is true, the other must be false. 'Jack is fat' and 'Jack is not fat' are thus contradictory. That is what 'contradictory' means. And because that is what it means, there cannot be contradictory facts" (Whyte 2005, 109). In these cases the empirical evidence can

demonstrate the veracity of the facts, only one of the two statements can be true. Only one is really a fact. But Whyte continues with regard to opinions,

> The only sense in which the world is full of contradiction is that it is full of contradictory opinions and statements. And so it is also full of error. If opinions are contradictory then one of them is false. Contradict yourself and you are sure to be wrong. Not caring about contradiction is the same as not caring about the truth. (Whyte 2005, 111)

In what sense can someone's opinion be wrong? What do you value more freedom or security? Which is the "wrong" choice? Can someone want both? Unlike a fact an opinion is a matter of preference and preferences cannot be correct or incorrect. We can agree that someone may be mistaken about the facts, but to say their opinions are "wrong" is a stretch.

Whyte may argue that, "it is impossible for contradictory statements both to be true" (Whyte 2005, 169). According to Priest, this objection

> is just plain wrong. Many, in fact most, of us believe in contradictions. The person who has consistent beliefs is rare. If someone has never found that their beliefs were inconsistent, this probably means that they just have not thought about them long enough (or may be suffering from Orwellian "doublethink" or Sartian "bad faith"). It may be suggested that when one discovers that one's beliefs are inconsistent one changes them. *Maybe* so, but this is irrelevant. More to the point, it might be suggested that dialetheism requires us to have not just inconsistent beliefs, but consciously inconsistent beliefs, and that this is impossible: one cannot believe two inconsistent sentences in the same "mental" breath. Again, this is just plain false. The moment one realises [*sic*] that one's beliefs are inconsistent, one does not *ipso facto* cease to believe the inconsistent things: rather, it becomes a problem, and often a very difficult one, of how to revise one's beliefs to produce consistency. (Priest 2006, 96)

We can't assume that all cases of contradiction will be realized by the individual, nor can we assume that if realized that the contradiction will be corrected. This is an important point. A contradiction is still a contradiction, even if the person is entirely unaware of their contradictory views.

Psychologists have studied these contradictions and have developed a useful terminology to make sense of the phenomena. "Plasticity in choices and opinions is closely related to attitudinal inconsistency. Whereas *plasticity* usually refers to a discrepancy in how people answer two versions of

the same question, *inconsistency* refers to a discrepancy between two related attitudes (attitude-attitude inconsistency) or between an attitude and a corresponding behavior (attitude-behavior inconsistency)" (Plous 1993, 58). Both plasticity and inconsistency would cause dialetheial paradoxes to form in public opinion.

In the 1960s Frank Westie found that, "Virtually everyone in the sample (97 per cent or more) agreed that everyone should have equal opportunities to get ahead, that all people should be treated as equals in the eyes of the law, that people should help each other in times of need, that children should have equal educational opportunities and that everyone should be judged according to his own individual worth" (Westie 1965, 530). Many of the respondents, however, held inconsistent views; they supported these ideas in principle, but rejected them when applied to African Americans. Only 12.6 percent of the sample was entirely consistent, supporting both the principle and its application in practice. When respondents were asked about an inconsistency between their stated principles and the practical applications of those principles, they adjusted their views so that the two would no longer be inconsistent. "In most cases the respondent adjusted the specific valuation so that his disagreement with the specific item did not really seem, to him at least, to violate the precept set forth in the general form" (Westie 1965, 536–37). In this way they could maintain their allegiance to their stated values, while still violating their stated values.

Pragmatists, as I'll discuss in the next chapter, won't maintain an allegiance to their stated values. For some people consistency is not a desired objective. They will fully embrace contradictory values, beliefs, and attitudes and not revise them, even in the face of total incompatibility. They will support whatever seems expedient in that moment. Because Americans are pragmatic there are many examples of transconsistent preferences in public opinion.

Various conflicting attitudes manifest themselves through the question wording effect and other related phenomena. Because of ignorance many Americans may not understand the consequences of their decisions, or they might be basing their opinion on gross misunderstandings of facts, but this does not mean they don't believe what they believe or prefer what they prefer. Value pluralism means that respondents might have inconsistent and incompatible values, and that these values are selectively held on different issues of concern. Respondents with plural values will lack ideological constraint because the respondent is ideologically inconsistent between answers. The respondent will sometimes accept an ideological justification for a policy and other times reject the same ideological justification for a different policy, or the respondent will use different justifications to accept and reject the same policy.

Issue saliency causes particular considerations to drive the response. However, as different issues become more prominent response instability occurs. Because of this some respondents may report to favor a policy, later report to oppose the same policy, and still later support it again. Issue saliency is itself caused by value pluralism. Framing changes the context in which a question is being asked. Because framing can emphasize some values over others (value pluralism) or emphasize some issues over others (issue saliency), different frames can cause different responses to be reported on the same topic. It is important to note that some contradictions are not "true contradictions," while others certainly are.

THE QUESTION WORDING EFFECT

How a question is asked will produce different answers from respondents (Zaller 1992). For example, a 1985 survey found that 63 percent of Americans wanted to increase spending on "assistance to the poor," but only 19 percent wanted to increase spending on "welfare." This was because the term *welfare* tapped into notions of wasteful government spending, while "assistance to the poor" didn't (Smith 1987). Some might claim that it is not possible for one person to have two incompatible opinions, but this is not correct. There is no requirement that individuals be consistent, rational, logical, informed, or decisive. Indeed, many individuals lack these traits. Cognitive dissonance only occurs if a person is confronted with or realizes there is a conflict, not every individual will "put two and two together." When a person has two incompatible preferences they are transconsistent. The public is transconsistent when there is a majority on both sides of an issue. Simply changing the terminology used to describe a policy will change the level of support for that policy; sometimes majority support becomes majority opposition.

PUBLIC IGNORANCE

One reason for contradictions in public opinion is public ignorance. In many instances the public is simply misinformed and base their answers on inaccurate perceptions. There are countless examples of Americans lacking knowledge of basic facts. According to Shenkman, "millions are grossly ignorant of the basic facts involving the most important issues" (Shenkman, 2008, 3). In a large-scale review of questions measuring civic knowledge Delli Carpini and Keeter found that, "only 13 percent of the more than 2,000 political questions examined could be answered correctly by 75 percent or

more of those asked, and only 41 percent could be answered by more than half the public" (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, 101). Althaus questions the usefulness of public opinion polls in measuring public sentiments and believes that, "the primary culprit is not any inherent shortcoming in the methods of survey research. Rather, it is the limited degree of knowledge held by ordinary citizens about public affairs and the tendency for some kinds of people to be better informed than others" (Althaus 2003, 10).

It is also clear that "more people participate in politics than are informed about it. For example, although voters are more informed than nonvoters, many still remain ignorant about the issue stands of candidates and parties" (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, 43). Dividing the public into the informed and uninformed may lessen the contradictions, but will not eliminate them if some of the uninformed decide to become politically active. Some people believe that one of the biggest problems in contemporary American politics is that many misinformed people are highly active in the political arena (Hochschild and Einstein 2015).

It has been shown that providing policy-specific information to respondents changes the responses to questions regarding those policies. However, the effect is only present for the most informed respondents. Those with very little political information generally are not influenced by policy-specific information when it is provided (Gilens 2001). This suggests that when uninformed respondents are corrected and asked to reevaluate a preference, many of them are likely to change their mind. But if the uninformed respondent is simply given the correct information in passing, it is not absorbed in a manner that would cause a change in indicated preferences. Worse still, some "citizens overly value supportive evidence while finding reasons to dismiss out of hand evidence that challenges their prior attitudes" (Lodge and Tabor 2013, 150). This has a stabilizing effect on public opinion, but only because the views of the misinformed would become ossified and resistant to facts. Psychologists have found that "it is nearly impossible for people to avoid biases in perception. Instead, people selectively perceive what they expect and hope to see" (Plous 1993, 15). In other words, contradictory evidence isn't even perceived by the observer. Creating an informed public would be an extraordinarily difficult undertaking.

This is compounded by the problem of "rational ignorance." According to Downs it may be irrational for individuals to acquire information when there is very little chance that the individual will have an impact on the collective choice (Downs 1957). If each individual has incentives to remain uninformed and all the individuals make that choice, the result is a mass public that is

uninformed. The problem for the American public is that "they often do not take in enough information to make a rational calculation of their interests" (Shenkman 2008, 50). For example, only 28 percent of Americans are able to name more than one of the freedoms guaranteed in the First Amendment. But, 52 percent can name more than one of "The Simpsons" cartoon family. Just 0.1 percent are able to name all five of the freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment, while more than 22 percent can name all five of "The Simpsons" (McCormick Foundation 2006). Politics may not be a top priority for most Americans.

In 1992, "the names of the two presidential candidates were almost universally known," but "substantial minorities could not correctly identify where the candidates and parties stood on [the] issues" (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, 103). Mistakes in matching issue positions can lead to inaccurate perceptions of candidate positions. Voters may mistakenly believe that a candidate reflects their own preferences more than that candidate actually does, or they may believe that a candidate does not reflect their own preferences even when that candidate does. This perceived agreement and perceived disagreement, in contrast with actual agreement, may give advantages to the "wrong" candidate because voters do prefer candidates that are closer to them on the issues (Kenski and Jamieson 2006).

Dialetheial paradoxes can occur if a significant proportion of the public lacks the information to make an informed decision. The public may be on two sides of an issue because some individuals may lack the relevant facts. An individual might want to decrease foreign aid and also increase foreign aid, if that individual is unaware of current spending levels. That same individual might refuse to believe that foreign aid is only 1 percent of the federal budget. In this manner conflicting majorities would exist on policy questions. These are real preferences. They are misinformed preferences, but they are preferences none the less.

How can a person who doesn't know what they are talking about be deeply conflicted? As long as they desire two incompatible things at the same time, the conflict is there whether they realize it or not. A person who lacks important relevant information can still have desires and preferences. Also, there is no requirement that people be reasonable in their preferences. People can demand things from their government, even if they lack important information, and often acquiring the relevant information won't change their desires.

At present, the costs of the services the government provides exceeds the revenues that the government takes in from taxes, fees, and duties. Yet, there

is nothing stopping anyone from calling their congressperson to demand lower taxes and more services. Governments that are responsive to public pressure might very well bankrupt themselves in an attempt to satisfy the People. Detroit, Puerto Rico, Greece, and other examples demonstrate that governments do often attempt to provide their citizens with what they demand, but often can't without also harming the very people who are making the demands.

These different competing preferences can come to pass because of different and incompatible values that are internalized by single individuals. More will be said about Jamesian pragmatism in chapter 3, but it is not the case that pragmatists are completely devoid of values. It is more the case that they have multiple competing values that they can bring to bear in different situations. When a person receives their property tax bill they can value limited government and prefer lower taxes with fewer social services. If that same person were to lose their job, they could value the importance of the welfare state and prefer an expansive government that regulates the economy and provides for those in need by taxing the wealthy. The underlying values are there, but the situation changes the saliency of some values over others. It remains the case, however, that the competing values and preferences don't disappear, they simply coexist are at utilized selectively. Americans can value both and prefer both, even when the values and preferences are at odds with each other.

VALUE PLURALISM

Value pluralism is the idea that values are many, conflicting and incompatible. Individual people have a plethora of values that they draw on to inform their beliefs and opinions. Many people, however, do not realize that their values are incompatible with their other values. Some people may realize their values are incompatible but not care to resolve the issue. They happily vacillate from one value to another without any concern about consistency. Pragmatists don't have a core set of values that they rigidly adhere to. For them, values are justifications for preferred ideas or actions. The will use one value to justify one preference and use an incompatible value to justify another preference. The result is incompatible preferences, or preferences that don't correspond to their other stated values. Again, these values and preferences are very real, it is simply that the two can't be had at the same time while remaining consistent. When this occurs, the public becomes transconsistent.

The United States is the same country that amended the Constitution to prohibit the sale of alcohol, only to repeal the ban several years later. A rapidly shifting opinion is not a paradox in and of itself, but it may be the

manifestation of an underlying paradox. Americans value piety, but they also value their freedom, and these two values sometimes conflict. Thus, Americans may support banning a practice they wish to continue practicing. For example, most Americans believe it is "morally wrong" to alter one's genes, but most Americans would go ahead with altering their genes if doing so would cure them of a "fatal disease." Ethics go by the wayside because Americans value living. What's more important, piety or life? What if both are equally valued? Holding contradictory values can lead to dialetheial paradoxes when both values are deeply held and some of the respondents have not fully considered the implications of holding the two views simultaneously. When people seek expediency, they will adopt values to suit their needs and then adopt different values when their needs change. This too can result in transconsistency.

ISSUE SALIENCY

Issue saliency can cause respondents to support and oppose the same policy at different points in time because some issues gain in importance over others (Zaller 1992). During the BP oil disaster support for offshore oil drilling decreased, and at one point most Americans opposed more offshore oil drilling. Once the disaster was over, meaning no longer on the nightly news, support for oil drilling rebounded and a majority supported the practice once again (Pew Research Center 2011). The change in support for oil drilling is not a dialetheial paradox because it is not a "true contradiction." Public opinion temporarily shifted and then returned to be generally supportive of offshore drilling, as it was before the crisis. If Janice leaves the room momentarily, but then returns, we can't say she's in two places at once. If public opinion shifts often enough on a subject, we can say that the opinion is unstable or that the public does not consistently support a policy. The problem is that government policies must be adopted and maintained over periods of time. Excessive responsiveness to public opinion could lead to mercurial and capricious shifts in policy based on momentary considerations. This would be problematic, but it isn't a paradox.

What is paradoxical is support for more oil drilling and simultaneous support for environmental protection. People prefer lower fuel costs, and since increasing the supply will lower the price, people support increased drilling. But the lower price would encourage more consumption of fuel, and burning the fuel damages the environment. Yet most Americans value environmental protections generally and the reduction of greenhouse gasses specifically. These competing values are selectively brought to mind under different

circumstances, yet both of these values are important and both of them are desired. The shift in opinion brought about because of issue saliency is itself the result of value pluralism.

Americans truly want an abundant and cheap supply of oil. Americans truly want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. But the two desires are incompatible. More of one means less of the other and this causes dissatisfaction. Are clean energy vehicles available? Yes, but they are still prohibitively expensive for most consumers. Inexpensive *and* nonpolluting are still at odds with each other. Americans want both and they are not being provided, each of the two available options gives us something we don't want. We can have cheap and polluting or clean and expensive, but so far cheap and clean are out of reach.

It's probable that one day cheap and clean will be available, but once that happens we'll ask ourselves: Why isn't it cheaper? Why isn't it cleaner? Dissatisfaction with the status quo is perpetual because Americans are constantly striving for new and better. Every year millions of Americans upgrade their cellular devices, not because there is anything wrong with their old phone, but because there is a new and better one out there. Our wastefulness damages the environment and the cycle of dissatisfaction continues.

FRAMING

Framing refers to the process of placing questions in a context. By changing the context of a question respondents may answer differently. In the 1980s, for example, most Americans did not support US policies to overthrow governments in Latin America; but most Americans supported efforts to stop the spread of communism. When anticommunist rebels are attempting to overthrow a Latin American government, public opinion is on both sides of the issue. Similarly, when a government regulation is framed as harmful to business, most Americans oppose the regulation. When that same regulation is framed as necessary to protect children, most will support it. The frame will change the answer even though the same policy is being considered.

Current research doesn't doubt whether a different frame can yield a different result, but there is some question as to whether the quantity of frame exposure or the frame's consistency with strongly held values will impact how influential the frame will be (Chong and Druckman 2007a). While framing is likely to have the largest effect on people with low levels of political information, it may be that in certain instances the opposite will be true. Chong and Druckman suggest that some frames are more effective on highly knowledgeable people who can comprehend the frame and use it as a cue for decision

making (Chong and Druckman 2007b). This means no one is immune from the effects of framing and that frames can influence the decisions of both the elites and the masses to varying degrees.

Framing effects occur because Americans have competing goals and preferences. They allow us to see the different and competing desires that Americans have. Transconsistent opinions occur because Americans have conflicting goals. When a majority of Americans prefer one option and a majority of Americans also prefer a competing and contradictory option, then we can say that a dialetheial paradox exists in public opinion. As long as a subset of the population would like to have it both ways, it is possible for there to be a majority on both sides.

APPLICATIONS

The existence of dialetheial paradoxes in public opinion would allow political actors to exploit pluralistic ignorance in an effort to persuade the public and manufacture consent.

> *Pluralistic ignorance* is a form of erroneous social inference that is at once both a cause and a consequence of literal inconsistency between private attitudes and public behaviors. The term *pluralistic ignorance* was coined by Floyd Allport (1924) to describe the situation in which virtually all members of a group privately reject group norms yet believe that virtually all other group members accept them. . . . He argued that people do not act on attitudes unless they believe those attitudes are shared. Thus, in the extreme case, when everyone believes that everyone else holds an attitude that, in fact, no one holds, the result is a complete attitude-behavior disjunction. (Miller 2000, 103)

By claiming that the majority supports their preferred policy political actors motivate citizens who might otherwise not be compelled toward political action. The difference here is not that the majority doesn't hold the position that they are believed to hold, but that there is a majority on both sides of the debate. With safety in numbers both opponents and proponents claim to have majority support, and both gain legitimacy through the democratic ideal of majority rule.

Politicians frame and reframe issues in an attempt to persuade the public to support their preferred position on that issue. "Each side has the potential to draw voters away from its opponents using frames for its own position that may also appeal to the other side's voters" (Chong and Druckman 2007b,

114). To that end polling is used strategically by political actors to "enhance the effectiveness of their messages" (Jacobs 2011, 197). According to Jacobs,

> survey research has been used by presidents and their aides to pinpoint the words, symbols, and arguments that will resonate with Americans and rally their support for White House proposals. In effect, presidents seek to seize the mantle of responsive democracy by responding to public opinion that has been primed, framed, and managed to support proposals that majorities of Americans might not otherwise favor. (Jacobs 2011, 203)

Importantly however, "Presidential efforts to shape public attitudes often face countervailing opposition from rival partisans and political actors, who possess their own institutional resources and interests" (Jacobs 2011, 203). The point is that opponents and proponents of a policy can both claim the mantle of majoritarian legitimacy. Each side can construct the survey question in such a way, or frame it in such a way, as to yield a favored result (Lockerbie and Borrelli 1990). Each side makes a compelling claim, a claim that resonates with the public. The public is transconsistent when it supports both sides.

On the issue of same-sex marriage Hatalsky has found that, "after three years of exhaustive qualitative and quantitative research that those in the middle are grappling with a series of unresolved, conflicting internal values and complex beliefs when it comes to marriage" (Hatalsky 2011, 2). Hatalsky emphasizes that, "Most Americans think that marriage is about commitment, obligation, and responsibility" (Hatalsky 2011, 2). The problem is that

> Advocates have often focused on rights and benefits, not commitment, when talking about why gay couples want to marry. This mismatch may have exacerbated an existing disconnect in the minds of the middle, perpetuating the notion that gay couples want to marry for different reasons than other couples, or worse, implying that gay couples don't truly understand what marriage is about. When asked in our poll why "couples like you" might want to get married, 58% said "to publicly acknowledge their love and commitment to each other." Only 22% chose "for rights and benefits, like tax advantages, hospital visitation, or sharing a spouse's pension." (Hatalsky 2011, 3)

This is important because, "people who believe gay couples want to marry for commitment overwhelmingly support allowing them to do so. But people who believe gay couples want to marry to obtain a set of rights largely oppose allowing those couples to marry" (Hatalsky 2011, 5). Hatalsky tested this

hypothesis and "found that a message entirely based on the commitment framework was extremely effective. A solid 61% described it as convincing" (Hatalsky 2011, 5). Advocates for same-sex marriage are therefore encouraged to use the more effective love and commitment frame rather than the less effective rights and benefits frame. Changing the frame can change majority opposition into majority support for a desired policy. Elites have become highly skilled at using this type of research to influence public opinion. They have discovered that they can change *what* people think about issues by changing *how* they think about issues.

This is not manipulation in the ordinary sense, rather it is strategic persuasion. A person has been manipulated "if she is fooled by misinformation and changes her views on that basis" (Fishkin 2011, 33). For Klemp manipulation requires lying, concealment, or distraction. Whereas, "In *strategic persuasion*, the speaker's efforts to induce agreement are oriented toward winning. . . . Strategic speakers seek not to achieve mutual understanding but to successfully convince others to adopt *their* view or to agree with *their* proposed course of action" (Klemp 2001, 71). With strategic persuasion a speaker is not willing to revise their own views, may use insincere arguments to win, and is willing to use facts and arguments selectively (Klemp 2001, 72). But this is not the same as lying, misinforming, concealing, or distracting. Even if most Americans support a policy because they are misinformed, or report an opinion on a subject they know nothing about, it is not dishonest for a politician to say that most Americans support the policy. If in using a different frame a majority opposes that same policy, another political actor could truthfully claim most Americans oppose that same policy. Neither the proponents nor opponents are guilty of manipulation, they are simply using "spin" to persuade the public to adopt their preferred choice.

This entails the strategic use of the "bandwagon effect" by politicians and political activists. The bandwagon effect occurs when individuals adopt the majority position after having been informed of the majority's preference. Studies have shown that the bandwagon effect can increase the size of the majority by 5 to 8 percent from where it would have been when respondents don't know the majority's preference (Simon 1954; Nadeau, Cloutier, and Guay 1993; Rothschild and Malhotra 2014). Both proponents and opponents of a policy can attempt to expand the majority they already hold by simply informing the public that the majority supports their position.

Because of dialetheial paradoxes in public opinion politicians on opposing sides of an issue could both claim to have the support of the majority of Americans. When both sides of a debate have majority support

we can expect a public that is closely divided on the issue and a winner that is determined by the mobilization of its supporters through strong persistent advertising of one majoritarian view over the other. Each side will have its committed followers and the winner will temporarily gain enough of the deeply conflicted voters to win. Shortly thereafter, however, some of those that selected the candidate or policy will begin to oppose the very same candidate or policy because they also favored the opposition. After the "forced choice" between two parties or policy positions, some voters or survey respondents will switch sides because they may have had equally strong support for the alternative but were unable to select both due to artificially created decision rules. This would account for the persistent losses by the president's party in midterm congressional elections, split-ticket voting, divided government, and the persistence of the two-party system in the United States. Each party has majority support for their respective views and policy preferences. A winner emerges only temporarily due to issue saliency and framing. In other words, a majority can be systematically created only to be opposed by another systematically created majority, and so on, ad infinitum.

3. The Perils of Jamesian Pragmatism

The previous chapter defined dialetheial paradoxes and explained that transconsistency stems from them. It also provided a mechanism for us to observe dialetheial paradoxes in public opinion. The question-wording effect, framing, value pluralism, issue saliency, and public ignorance often demonstrate that there is a majority on two sides of the same issue. On some issues, Americans don't have "non-attitudes" they have "bi-attitudes." There can be a majority that supports a policy and a majority that opposes it. This chapter argues that transconsistency is common because Americans are a pragmatic people. More specifically, Jamesian pragmatism seems to be widespread in our politics and it is this type of pragmatism that flatly rejects consistency as a desired end.

It is useful to divide Americans into two groups: ideologues and pragmatists. Ideologues are a significant minority, but most Americans are pragmatists. What further diminishes the power of American ideologues is, of course, they divide along ideological lines. Liberals and conservatives are the largest factions, but there are also libertarians and communitarians. Separately, each of them are fairly small minorities, but they are able to drive our political debates and steer the country in one direction or the other. But in which direction should the country go? The majority, who are pragmatists, decide. This majority is not bound to any one ideological position. They seek solutions to problems and decide among the various options. The options are often being pushed by one of our ideological factions.

The consequence of this is that sometimes the country adopts liberal policies and sometimes the country adopts conservative policies. Communitarian and libertarian policies sometimes also enter the debate, but tend to have lower levels of success in being enacted. Enough has been written about these ideologies that there is no need to go into any great detail in explaining what they stand for, what they believe, and what their goals are. Our concern is with the pragmatists who ultimately decide our public policies.

To understand just how pragmatism influences public opinion we must first review the most important elements of this very American philosophy. The term *pragmatism* was first used by William James, who was expanding on some notions first introduced by Charles Peirce. Later, John Dewey would become the public face of pragmatism with his focus on the real-world problems of

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his day. This chapter explores the philosophy of pragmatism by describing the two types of pragmatism common in the literature. It is the second, more subjective, type of pragmatism that seems to be more prevalent in our politics. Far from solving the problem of inconstancy and incoherence, pragmatism can exacerbate it. Whereas ideologues can ignore facts that don't mesh with their worldview, pragmatists can make up "facts" to suit their purposes.

TYPES OF PRAGMATISM

When attempting to define pragmatism one encounters a serious dilemma. Pragmatism, and its key elements, is defined differently by different theorists. Joas is correct in stating that "Pragmatism is not a unified school grouped around a clearly identifiable author" (Joas 1993, 60). For Talisse and Aikin, "there is no distinctive philosophical thesis common to all versions of pragmatism" (Talisse & Aikin, 2011, 13). This is no surprise since pragmatism is considered to be antifoundational, fluid, flexible, and perspectival, making the very idea of a firm definition contrary to the pragmatic philosophy itself.

Students of pragmatism have often noted the variations among pragmatic authors (Shalin 2011; McDermid 2006; Rescher 2000). Attempts to categorize different varieties of pragmatism depend on which particular elements are choosen to base the division on. One basic division is between the "neo-pragmatists" and "classical pragmatists," which is simply a temporal division (McDermid 2006, 2). Some divide "the pragmatist tradition between the nominalist and subjective pragmatism of Dewey and James and the realist and objectivist pragmatism of Peirce and Mead" (Shalin 2011, 79). Others discuss an "objectivistic" pragmatism and a "relativistic" pragmatism (Rescher 2000, 68). This does provide us with a starting point even though pragmatists often disagree among themselves over what exactly pragmatism is. Regardless of where one places individual authors, there is a definite objectivist/subjectivist division within pragmatism.

Because of this it is beneficial to divide pragmatism into two related, but different, types. The first is Type I pragmatism, which is strongly empirical and objective. Type I pragmatists include Charles Peirce and John Dewey. This type manifests itself in public opinion when Americans rely on empirical evidence to make decisions, and when practical considerations win out over ideological considerations. The second is Type II pragmatism, which is more theoretical and subjective. Type II pragmatists include William James and Richard Rorty. This type of pragmatism manifests itself in public opinion when Americans use incorrect, or make-believe "facts" to support a preferred outcome, or when

Americans take a "moral holiday" from deeply held values in order to achieve a more desirable result. We must account for both types of pragmatism in order to gain a complete understanding of the concept.

TYPE I PRAGMATISM

Charles Peirce was the first to develop what would later become known as pragmatism. He did this as part of his effort to develop a new anti-Cartesian philosophy. Descartes is best known for his maxim, "I think, therefore I am." This developed because Descartes was concerned about the nature of reality. How do we know when something is real? Are sense perceptions enough for us to define the real? Descartes imagined a world where our sense perceptions could be mere illusions. In that world, what use would our sense perceptions be? Our only source of knowledge would have to come from within us, and the only thing that we could know for certain was that we were thinking and with that, at least, we could know we existed.

The problem with this thought experiment is that once a person starts to question reality we quickly devolve into radical skepticism where nothing at all could ever be proven, even one's own existence. To prevent us from falling into the trap of radical skepticism, Descartes introduced foundationalism as a principle that would find beliefs that were a priori to our experiences (Bacon 2012, 19). Pragmatists reject this foundationalism. According to Janet Horne,

> Traditional, rationalist-based ethics relies on *a priori* criteria for decision making. These exist independently of the immediate situation. Thus, criteria precede events in time. In contrast, pragmatic ethics are based on temporally based judgments of the consequences of results of actions and decisions. Criteria are created in time. (Horne 2001, 150)

That is there are no permanent or fixed guidelines for determining what is real. Instead, pragmatism makes decisions based on the anticipated consequences of those decisions without holding firm to any one theory of action or belief. "The empiricists held that knowledge of the world is derived not from *a priori* principles but from sensory experience" (Bacon 2012, 36). The pragmatists favored, "radical empiricism, in which propositions would be evaluated by their observable, their demonstrable, consequences rather than by their antecedents" (Posner 2004, 144). Under pragmatism we could not retreat into our own imaginations to find proof of the real, we could only rely on the material world as we actually experienced it to form our judgments.

Peirce understands the difference between objective reality and one's perceptions of reality, "that perceptions are not absolutely determinate and singular is obvious from the fact that each sense is an abstracting mechanism" (Peirce 2011a, 30). Our senses have already clouded the objective reality that exists beyond us. "In perception, where we know a thing as existing, it is plain that there is a judgment that the thing exists, since a mere general concept of a thing is in no case a cognition of it as existing" (Peirce 2011a, 30). He believes that people decide what is real and what isn't as a matter of cognition.

In addition, people may form beliefs that may or may not be true. Peirce suggests, "for as soon as a firm belief is reached we are entirely satisfied, whether the belief be true or false" (Peirce 2011b, 42). This introduces the concept of fallibilism into pragmatic theory. That is, if one acknowledges that one can be mistaken, one can't claim anything with certainty. As a result pragmatism takes on a wishy-washy character of indeterminacy that is frustrating to rationalists and foundationalists.

> Peirce acknowledges objections to this account of truth. He notes that it may appear to identify the real with what is *thought* to be real. . . . He insists on the difference between what any particular community might happen to think and what inquiry in general will eventually conclude, this is no indication of its truth. (Bacon 2012, 26)

The claim that "we might be wrong" would not come as any surprise to most people, but it does undercut one of the key elements of foundationalism in philosophy because foundationalism requires that at least some things be absolutely certain.

Still, Type I pragmatism is grounded in the real world and Peirce believes that the best way to understand the real world is through science.

> Such is the method of science. Its fundamental hypothesis, restated in more familiar language, is this: There are Real things, whose characters are entirely independent of our opinions about them; those Reals affect our senses according to regular laws, and, though our sensations are as different as are our relations to the objects, yet, by taking advantage of the laws of perception, we can ascertain by reasoning how things really and truly are; and any man, if he have sufficient experience and he reason enough about it, will be led to the one True conclusion. The new conception here involved is that of Reality. (Peirce 2011b, 46)

Even though people may perceive things differently and even though people can be in error there is an objective reality out there that can be found out by anyone

using the correct methodology. Peirce puts it succinctly when he says, "We may define the real as that whose characters are independent of what anybody may think them to be" (Peirce 2011c, 61). That is, independent of any one person's, possibly mistaken, perceptions there is the true reality as it really exists.

John Dewey is another of the classical pragmatists that can be considered to be Type I. Dewey defined pragmatism as, "a philosophy which finds the ultimate measure of intelligence in consideration of a desirable future and in search for the means of bringing it progressively into existence" (Dewey 2011, 121). For Dewey a key component of pragmatism is "the doctrine of the value of consequences" (Dewey 1931, 25).

Like Peirce, he is antifoundationalist:

> For Dewey, appeals to fixed universal principles that seek to transcend or circumvent the realm of lived experience are obstructive and pernicious artifices which prevent us from developing the kind of intelligence required to adequately orient, justify, and defend our most vital principles. (Kadlec 2007, 13)

Dewey is concerned with the world as it is, "From Dewey's perspective, those who insist on abstract and universal Truths have little to offer when it comes to actively engaging the world in which we live" (Kadlec 2007, 21). He believes that philosophy must concern itself with real problems of everyday life and that we must pay attention to the practical consequences of our actions: "From a pragmatist perspective, the terms of these concrete advantages and disadvantages include considering the consequences of proposed courses of action" (Horne 2001, 152–53). Although there are no, "first principles or foundational beliefs" in Dewey's philosophy, "There are, rather, beliefs which we steer by, and our confidence in them is provisional" (Bacon 2012, 50). Once again we see the pragmatic commitment to fallibilism.

> Every proposition concerning truth is really in the last analysis hypothetical and provisional, although a large number of these propositions have been so frequently verified without failure that we are justified in using them as if they were absolutely true. But, logically, absolute truth is an ideal which cannot be realized, or as James says "bagged," and until it is no longer possible to make other observations and other experiences. Pragmatism, thus, presents itself as an extension of historical empiricism, but with this fundamental difference, that it does not insist upon antecedent phenomena but upon consequent phenomena. (Dewey 1931, 24)

That people can form beliefs and that they can modify their beliefs is a principle component of pragmatism. This indeterminism emerges from the practicality of the American mind-set. While discussing empiricism and instrumentalism he says,

> That is the reason for our insistence on the teleological phase of thought and knowledge. If it must be teleological in particular and not merely true in the abstract, that is probably due to the practical element which is found in all the phases of American life. . . . It is beyond doubt that the progressive and unstable character of American life and civilization has facilitated the birth of a philosophy which regards the world as being in continuous formation, where there is still place for indeterminism, for the new, and for a real future. (Dewey 1931, 33)

Americans can't be limited by stable principles or absolute truths because it would limit our ability to find innovative solutions to philosophical, political, or technological problems.

At the core of Dewey's pragmatism is his disagreement with the "spectator theory of knowledge [that] has at its heart the mistaken distinction between the world and our experience of it, one which modern science has shown to be false" (Bacon 2012, 50). Unlike Descartes, Dewey is unwilling to separate reality from the person perceiving it, but he is firmly committed to empiricism.

Both Peirce and Dewey associated pragmatism with the natural sciences because of their devotion to empiricism (Bacon 2012, 15). They both sought to answer questions through the scientific method. In fact, "Dewey calls the method of inquiry which provides well-founded beliefs the 'method of science,' the method of testing hypotheses by reference to evidence" (Bacon 2012, 51). For Peirce and Dewey the truth of our beliefs could be discovered through science and real world observable evidence. For Type I pragmatism there is an objective empirically grounded reality out there that can be discovered with the right methodology.

TYPE II PRAGMATISM

Initially, William James seems to follow the ardently empiricist view advocated by Peirce. James is antifoundationalism and critical of Cartesianism. He says,

> A pragmatist turns his back resolutely and once for all upon a lot of inveterate habits dear to professional philosophers. He turns away

> from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad
> *a priori* reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended
> absolutes and origins. He turns towards concreteness and adequacy,
> towards facts, towards action and towards power. (James 1907, 51)

He seems to support the scientific method, "*True ideas are those that we can val-
idate, corroborate and verify. False ideas are those that we cannot*" (James 2011a,
80). He doesn't want to waste his time with inconsequential debates: "The
pragmatic method in such cases is to try to interpret each notion by tracing its
respective practical consequences. What difference would it practically make
to any one if this notion rather than that notion were true?" (James 1907, 45).
If the differences had no practical consequences, then pragmatism would view
the differences as irrelevant.

James is committed to the doctrine of fallibilism, "we have to live to-day
by what truth we can get to-day, and be ready to-morrow to call it falsehood"
(James 1907, 223). He acknowledges that there is a difference between reality
and our perceptions of reality. "Not *being* reality, but only our belief *about*
reality" (James 1907, 250) is a limitation of our natural cognitions. As such
we should always be open to revising our beliefs.

Despite this, William James was the author who threw pragmatism down
the rabbit hole of philosophy. "James' understanding of pragmatism is in con-
trast decidedly anti-positivist. For him the practical consequences of belief are
not exclusively those which can be observed, but *any* kind of consequence in
the life of the believer" (Bacon 2012, 29). This antipositivism takes James into
the realm of subjectivism. "James allows that the meaning of a belief can legit-
imately include the psychological consequences of holding that belief" (Bacon
2012, 29). What we end up with is a narrow solipsism where each individual
defines his or her own truth and reality.

He "opposed the notion of absolute or universal truths, which he termed
monism" (Woodward 2001, 93). Instead he believed there could be many truths,
a plurality of truths, "Our account of truth is an account of truths in the plural"
(James 2011a, 85). Remarkably, he claims the truth is anything that is useful,

> since almost any object may someday become temporarily important, the
> advantage of having a general stock of *extra* truths, of ideas that shall be
> true of merely possible situations, is obvious. We store such extra truths
> away in our memories, and with the overflow we fill our books of ref-
> erence. Whenever such an extra truth becomes practically relevant to one
> of our emergencies, it passes from cold-storage to do work in the world,

and our belief in it grows active. You can say of it then either that "it is useful because it is true" or that "it is true because it is useful." Both these phrases mean exactly the same thing, namely, that here is an idea that gets fulfilled and can be verified. Truth is the name for what starts the verification-process, use is the name for what completes it. (James 2011a, 81)

In this way, the truth is disconnected from any type of empirical grounding. It is a flat abandonment of Type I pragmatism.

James goes on to argue that reality itself is malleable saying, "existing realities may be *changed*" (James 1907, 53). For James,

The most fateful point of difference between being a rationalist and being a pragmatist is now fully in sight. Experience is in mutation, and our psychological ascertainments of truth are in mutation—so much rationalism will allow; but never that either reality itself or truth itself is mutable. (James 1907, 226)

The import of the difference between pragmatism and rationalism is now in sight throughout its whole extent. The essential contrast is that *for rationalism reality is ready-made and complete from all eternity, while for pragmatism it is still in the making, and awaits part of its complexion from the future.* On the one side the universe is absolutely secure, on the other it is still pursuing its adventures. (James 1907, 257)

He is denying an objective reality and replacing it with a subjective reality: "To claim that certain truths now possess it, is simply to say that when you think them true and they are true, then their evidence is objective, otherwise it is not. But practically one's conviction that the evidence one goes by is of the real objective brand, is only one more subjective opinion added to the lot" (James 2011b, 99). James believes that your version of "objective" is created by your own subjective inclinations. "We create the subjects of our true as well as of our false propositions" (James, 1907, 254), implying that reality is entirely determined by the individual and his or her choices about what to believe.

Richard Rorty goes so far as to say that even science is a form of literature (Bacon 2012, 15). Pragmatism "views science as one genre of literature—or, put the other way around, literature and the arts as inquiries, on the same footing as scientific inquiries. Thus it sees ethics as neither more 'relative' or 'subjective' than scientific theory" (Rorty 1982, xliii). This view results directly from his rejection of the correspondence theory of truth. "To sum up the line I am taking about Kuhn and his critics: the controversy between them is about whether science, as the discovery of what is really out there in

the world, differs in its patterns of argumentation from discourses for which the notion of 'correspondence to reality' seems less apposite (e.g., politics and literary criticism)" (Rorty 1979, 332). He concludes,

> In the view that I am recommending, we might, in an imaginary age in which consensus in these areas was almost complete, view morality, physics, and psychology as equally "objective." We might then relegate the more debatable areas of literary criticism, chemistry, and sociology to the realm of the "non-cognitive," or "interpret them operationalistically," or "reduce" them to one or another "objective" discipline. The application of such honorifics as "objective" and "cognitive" is never anything more than an expression of the presence of, or the hope for, agreement among inquirers. (Rorty 1979, 335)

This is similar to James's view that your "objective" evidence is only your own subjective belief. Or more harshly, that your science is your own make-believe and that puts it on equal ground with anyone else's fictional make-believe. "We conceive a given reality in this way or in that, to suit our purpose, and the reality passively submits to the conception" (James 1907, 251). For James, humans can will a reality into being like a genie with supernatural powers. "James endorsed a metaphysical pluralism and an epistemic anti-evidentialism specially designed to leave room for the unruly, the inexplicable, and even the mystical" (Talisse & Aikin 2011, 12). In Type II pragmatism our own thoughts create the reality irrespective of empirical evidence, and "objective" is merely in the eyes of the beholder.

Michael Bacon highlights exactly this issue with Jamesian pragmatism, " 'The Will to Believe' focuses on the psychological states of believers by seeking to justify the claim that there are some circumstances in which one has the right to believe a proposition even if there is insufficient evidence to do so" (Bacon 2012, 31). One does not need to use his or her intellect for decision making, but rather can justify believing whatever one chooses. "James fleshes out his claim that belief is not purely a matter of the intellect and that one is sometimes justified in believing, in the absence of evidence" (Bacon 2012, 32). This claim irrevocably unhinges pragmatism from its empirical moorings.

Given this amazing power, on what grounds are we to decide what is true and what is real? For James the answer is whatever is expedient. He argues, "Any idea upon which we can ride, so to speak; any idea that will carry us prosperously from any one part of our experience to any other part, linking things satisfactorily, working securely, simplifying, saving labor; is true for just so much, true in so far forth, true *instrumentally*" (James 1907, 58). He admits that what is expedient will change from situation to situation:

> 'The true,' to put it very briefly, is only the expedient in the way of
> our thinking, just as 'the right' is only the expedient in the way of
> our behaving. Expedient in almost any fashion; and expedient in the
> long run and on the whole of course; for what meets expediently all
> the experience in sight won't necessarily meet all farther experiences
> equally satisfactorily. (James 1907, 222)

He audaciously goes on to say, "concrete truths in the plural need be recognized only when their recognition is expedient" (James 2011a, 89−90). Thus, one could deny the truth simply because it is inconvenient to acknowledge it. James believes we should believe whatever it seems to us better to believe, " 'What would be better for us to believe!' . . . Ought we ever not to believe what it is *better for us* to believe? . . . Pragmatism says no" (James 1907, 77). Bacon puts it very succinctly, "James . . . thinks of the truth in terms of what he calls its 'cash value.' In other words, whereas Peirce maintains that the truth is independent of us and our needs and interests, James thinks truth is tied to what, in some sense, we find useful to believe" (Bacon 2012, 34). Of course, that's not empiricism. If the evidence suggests that the earth is a sphere, but my life is threatened unless I recant and claim it is flat, then it would be expedient for me to claim it is flat. Unfortunately, this does not make the proposition true. Type II pragmatism is subjectivist to the fullest extent possible. It claims one person's "objective" is someone else's "subjective" and that one can rightly choose to believe whatever he or she wishes and call it true without any basis in empirical facts, as long as it is expedient to do so.

CRITIQUE OF JAMES

James explicitly says that our beliefs should depend on what is beneficial. "I said just now that what is better for us to believe is true *unless the belief incidentally clashes with some other vital benefit*" (James 1907, 77). And the only possible threat to our self-created truths is our other self-created truths: "The greatest enemy of any one of our truths may be the rest of our truths" (James 1907, 78). He can even believe in absolutes if it serves his purposes, but "My belief in the Absolute, based on the good it does me, must run the gauntlet of all my other beliefs" (James 1907, 78). This allows Type II pragmatism to adopt foundationalism if it is expedient to do so, but only if it can survive the challenge from other beliefs. At this extreme, pragmatism is so antifoundationalist that not even antifoundationalism can serve as a foundation for pragmatism.

His fallibilism seems to devolve into the type of radical skepticism that Descartes had sought to avoid. He may or may not give up the absolutes of foundationalism, "But as I have enough trouble in life already without adding the trouble of carrying these intellectual inconsistencies, I personally just give up the Absolute. I just *take* my moral holidays; or else as a professional philosopher, I try to justify them by some other principle" (James 1907, 78–79). Without reservation he is saying he can believe and justify whatever he pleases even if it conflicts with his other beliefs. Rescher states, "James is one of philosophy's few real opportunists—that is, someone who rejects the need to worry about consistency when it conflicts with the desiderata of the moment" (Rescher 2000, 23). When faced with an inconsistency James reiterates, "for I fully believe in the legitimacy of taking moral holidays" (James 1907, 79). For James there is no need to even attempt to reconcile his contradictory beliefs because he can take "moral holidays" from his beliefs and replace them with other beliefs to suit his needs.

Among his beliefs is that agreements don't have to be adhered to. "Such is the large loose way in which the pragmatist interprets the word agreement. He treats it altogether practically. He lets it cover any process of conduction from a present idea to a future terminus, provided only it run prosperously" (James 1907, 215–16). If an agreement is no longer expedient, it is discarded like yesterday's rubbish.

According to the "pragmatic maxim," "the meaning of a concept is a matter of the practical effects of acting in accordance with it" (Bacon 2012, 9); this means meanings are always debatable. You can't trust this type of pragmatist. If someone you are interacting with is constantly changing the meaning of words, you can't predict their behavior nor can you rely on them to keep their word. Let's take, for example, the situation of a cheating spouse. Being cheated on is one of the most devastating events that can occur to a person. Infidelity destroys the trust that is an absolutely essential necessity for close personal relationships. Certainly, open marriages exist whereby both partners accept relations outside of the marriage. If both partners agreed to the arrangement, then the trust necessary for their continued interaction isn't compromised. However, this is not the usual case. Typically, one partner is taken by surprise by the actions of the other partner. "You did what?" and "I can't believe you did that!" are usual responses.

If the cheater was a pragmatist, they might, at the moment of facing hostility from their partner, attempt to change the definition of the word *infidelity*. "What do you mean by *cheating*?" Or, "What exactly qualifies as *sex*?" Or as Bill Clinton famously said, "It depends on what the meaning of the word 'is'

is." On the question of whether or not he had a sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky, Bill Clinton stated,

> It depends on what the meaning of the word 'is' is. If the—if he—if 'is' means is and never has been, that is not—that is one thing. If it means there is none, that was a completely true statement. . . . Now, if someone had asked me on that day, are you having any kind of sexual relations with Ms. Lewinsky, that is, asked me a question in the present tense, I would have said no. And it would have been completely true. (House Document 105–310 1998, 125)

According to this pragmatic logic if a person is asked, "Are you having an affair?" that person can "truthfully" answer "no," because at that moment they are answering questions and not, in that moment, engaged in a sexual act with someone other than their spouse. Now if the person was asked, "Have you had a sexual encounter with someone who isn't your spouse in the past twenty-four hours," that would be a different question with a correspondingly different "truth." Of course, for the pragmatist there is no need to stop there. It could be that an "affair" must include multiple encounters and a "one-night stand" does not count as an "affair." Or maybe it can only be considered an "affair" if it involves an emotional connection with the person involved. In that case, frequenting prostitutes would not be "cheating" by that person's definition.

These are all important questions and it would make rational sense for people to be clear about the meanings of these words before they take their marriage vows. But it may also make sense, from the pragmatic perspective, to leave the definitions open to reinterpretation depending on some unknown future situation. The pragmatist might say, "Now on the wedding day, under those particular circumstances, it made the most sense to make the vow of fidelity. However, a few weeks later at the party where I met that very attractive person, under those circumstances my definition of *fidelity* is subject to change." This is not to say that a pragmatist won't agree that infidelity is wrong. Pragmatists might even agree that constantly changing the definitions of words might have negative consequences for themselves or others. But you can't trust pragmatists to not change the definition of words when their circumstances change.

The inherent problem with this philosophy is that circumstances are perpetually changing. Pragmatists may subscribe to one definition of the word in one situation and subscribe to a different definition of the word in another situation. The meaning is always dependent on *their own* circumstances of the moment. When pragmatists are considering the possible consequences of their

actions, they may consider the consequences for themselves and also the consequences for others. They may even consider the consequences for humanity, and make a decision that would be good for humanity as a whole. However, they are operating based on *their own* definition of what is good for themselves, others, or humanity. James's pragmatism leads to solipsism because the pragmatist's actions are always viewed from their own construction of reality.

This version of pragmatism can be dangerous if applied. "How many women's hearts are vanquished by the mere sanguine insistence of some man that they must love him! He will not consent to the hypothesis that they cannot. The desire for a certain kind of truth here brings about that special truth's existence" (James 2011b, 104). This is a recipe for stalking and harassment. If a woman says, "I think you're a creep and I want you to leave me alone," and the man replies, "but I know you love me and if I keep insisting it will become true," then that man has crossed the line into delusional thinking. James says it will become reality, it will become true, with the assertion of it. But the problem remains that some pragmatists will construct their own realities irrespective of what they are being told and, more importantly, irrespective of facts.

Bertrand Russell criticizes pragmatists for, "the divorce which they make between *fact* and *truth*" (Russell 1966, 122). The problem with "the pragmatic account of truth" is "that no one takes any interest in facts" (Russell 1966, 123). For pragmatists, it is "useless to think about facts"; they "therefore return to fictions with a sigh of relief, and soothe our scruples by calling them 'realities'" (Russell 1966 123). For the pragmatists, "In order to judge whether a belief is true, it is only necessary to discover whether it tends to the satisfaction of desire" (Russell 1966, 92). That means it is "true" if you want to believe it.

> The skepticism embodied in pragmatism is that which says, 'Since all beliefs are absurd, we may as well believe what is most convenient.' This is by no means a new contention. . . . Skepticism is of the very essence of the pragmatic philosophy: nothing is certain, everything is liable to revision, and the attainment of any truth in which we can rest securely is impossible. (Russell 1966, 105)

Russell holds that what is "true" and what is "useful to believe" may be two different things but, "there certainly seem to be few cases, if any, in which it is clearly useful to believe what is false" (Russell 1966, 120). But for the pragmatist "the belief that A exists may be 'true' even when A does not exist" (Russell 1966, 129). This is where the issue of delusion comes to the fore because a pragmatist will make claims of truth without any basis in fact or

reality. "In pragmatism the assumption is that the beliefs which we *persist* in holding must be true. It is then pointed out how very unreasonable our grounds often are for persisting in a belief, and this fact, instead of being used to throw doubt on the belief, is used to discredit reasonableness" (Russell 1966, 100).

For Russell this goes against the very foundations of science. "The essential novelty of pragmatism is that it admits, as a ground of belief, *any kind* of satisfaction to be derived from entertaining the belief, not merely the theoretic satisfaction which is sought by science" (Russell 1966, 96). Because persistence in a belief makes it "true" for the pragmatists, Russell says, "The Aristotelians who opposed Galileo and refused to give weight to his experiments had faithfully obeyed the precepts revived by William James" (Russell 1966, 85). But this is not how science verifies truth at all.

> When *science* says that a hypothesis works, it means that from this hypothesis we can deduce a number of propositions which are verifiable, i.e. obvious under suitable circumstances, and that we cannot deduce any propositions of which the contradictories are verifiable. But when *pragmatism* says that a hypothesis works, it means that the effects of believing it are good, including among the effects not only the beliefs which we deduce from it, but also the emotions entailed by it or its perceived consequences. This is a totally different conception of 'working,' and one for which the authority of scientific procedure cannot be invoked. (Russell 1966, 129)

In science the truth cannot be made, it must be discovered. The truth exists before our understanding of it; it is not created by our will. No amount of willing or believing will make the sun revolve around the earth.

Finally, for Russell this definition of truth does not even serve the pragmatist's own purpose. "In ordinary logic, if the belief in the Absolute is true, it follows that the Absolute is a fact. But with the pragmatist's meaning of 'true' this does not follow; hence the proposition which he proves is not, as he thinks, the one from which comforting consequences flow" (Russell 1966, 125). If the good consequences come from the existence of something, the belief in that something is not sufficient on its own without its actual existence. "But unfortunately, this gives a merely mundane conclusion, namely, that belief in God is true, i.e. useful, whereas what religion desires is the conclusion that God exists" (Russell 1966, 125). Saying something is true because it useful for us to believe it is not the same thing as saying something exists, which is what most people are actually looking for in determining its truth. "The

pragmatist attempt to ignore this distinction fails, it seems to me, because a basis of fact cannot be avoided by pragmatism, and this basis of fact demands the *usual* antithesis of 'true' and 'false' " (Russell 1966, 126). In other words, we still need to figure out what is real, and can't be satisfied with what we'd simply prefer to believe.

> The attempt to get rid of 'fact' turns out to be a failure, and thus the old notion of truth reappears. And if the pragmatist states that utility is to be merely a *criterion* of truth, we shall reply first, that it is not a useful criterion, because it is usually harder to discover whether a belief is useful than whether it is true; secondly, that since no *a priori* reason is shown why truth and utility should always go together, utility can only be shown to be a criterion at all by showing inductively that it accompanies truth in all known instances, which requires that we should already know in many instances what things are true. Finally, therefore, the pragmatist theory of truth is to be condemned on the ground that it does not 'work.' (Russell 1966, 130)

Thus, by the pragmatists own criteria Russell argues it can never be expedient to disconnect truth from real facts. Sometimes facts might not be useful or expedient, but this does not prevent them from being true. Therefore, Russell says, "on fundamental questions of philosophy I find myself wholly opposed to it" (Russell 1966, 126).

This is an objection that has been raised many times since, including by several pragmatists. W. V. Quine criticizes James's "notorious defense of wishful thinking" (Quine 1981, 32). James "might argue that comfort is an experience, and comfort is a predictable consequence of belief in God, and the predicted comfort is indeed forthcoming, thus confirming the belief. To argue this would be to confuse belief in God with existence of God" (Quine 1981, 32). Richard Rorty remarks that James, "runs together the truth of a sentence (which, unless it contains a referent to a time, is eternally true or eternally false and cannot 'become' true) with the expediency of believing a sentence to be true" (Rorty 1998, 295). This confusion between beliefs and truths, or reality and perceptions, has led to the harshest criticisms leveled toward pragmatism.

Even Dewey was critical of this type of pragmatism. Indeed, "Dewey's reality consisted of observable objects" starkly separating him from the "wishful thinking" of James (Quine 1981, 33). Dewey suggests that subjectivism is un-American but also that pragmatism is the result of American egoistic individualism.

> Subjectivism is an old story in philosophy; a story which began in
> Europe and not in America. But American philosophy, in the systems
> which we have expounded, has given to the subject, to the individual
> mind, a practical rather than an epistemological function. The indi-
> vidual mind is important because only the individual mind is the
> organ of modifications in traditions and institutions, the vehicle of
> experimental creation. One-sided and egoistic individualism has left
> its imprint on our practices. (Dewey 1931, 35)

It is egotistical to view the world as completely malleable to one's own wishes.
And yet, this seems to be where James's pragmatism leads. It is a view that
isn't shared by other well-known pragmatists.

For Habermas, "This supposition of an objective world that is inde-
pendent of our descriptions fulfills a functional requirement of our process of
cooperation and communication. Without this supposition, everyday practices,
which rest on the (in a certain sense) Platonic distinction between believing
and knowing unreservedly, would come apart at the seams" (Habermas 2000,
41). Without an objective world beyond any one person's description of it there
could be no discussion of "what-is-true and what-is-held-to-be-true" between
individuals (Habermas 2000, 41).

The problem for these pragmatists is their rejection of the "correspon-
dence theory of truth." In principle, they reject the notion that truth must cor-
respond to an objective empirically based reality independent of an individual's
perceptions. Rorty believes that philosophers are "led astray" by the "idea that
truth is a matter of correspondence to reality" (Rorty 2000, 5). Critics argue
that this opens the door for fantasies to be imagined as true.

Let's take another example, that of genocide. Most observers would label
genocide a crime against humanity. Absolutists would argue that genocide is
always wrong. Radical pragmatists must leave room for the possibility that
under some particular circumstances it might not be wrong. They might
claim that those circumstances are as yet unknown to them and that they
couldn't, at present, think of a situation where it might be justified, but they
would have to leave it open for reinterpretation at a later date. Radical prag-
matists might try to redefine genocide to suit their immediate circumstances,
or worse, if they agree to a specific meaning, argue that genocide isn't wrong
in particular circumstances. Nicholas Rescher criticizes the views of James
and Rorty because of their "free and easy 'anything goes' parochialism" and
because they sought to "liberate our thought from impersonal constraints in
the interests of achieving an outcome whose acceptability is subjectivistic,

personalistic, and relativistic" (Rescher 2000, 65). They lack any firm commitments to any particular ethical principles, they are amoral.

James is aware of the criticisms leveled at his philosophy. "It is accused of being a doctrine of caprice," he says (James 1907, 257–28). Referring to the source of others' critique, "I once wrote an essay on our right to believe, which I unluckily called the *Will* to Believe. All the critics, neglecting the essay, pounced upon the title. Psychologically it was impossible, morally it was iniquitous. The 'will to deceive,' the 'will to make-believe,' were wittily proposed as substitutes for it" (James 1907, 258). Of course, it is the will to make-believe. Once truth and reality are completely subjective and all morals relative to the individual antifoundationalism mutates into a farce where words have no definite meanings and all actions are justified.

Yet this doesn't seem to bother James,

> And first let me say that it is impossible not to see a temperamental difference at work in the choice of sides. The rationalist mind, radically taken, is of a doctrinaire and authoritative complexion: the phrase '*must* be' is ever on its lips. The bellyband of its universe must be tight. A radical pragmatist on the other hand is a happy-go-lucky anarchistic sort of creature. (James 1907, 259)

James's radical pragmatism places no restraint whatsoever on any type of consistency that makes our social lives possible. He can willy-nilly reinterpret words, actions, beliefs, truths, and even reality based on whatever seems momentarily expedient.

To fully grasp just how absurd this type of pragmatism becomes when taken to its logical conclusion, one needs to consider the pragmatic paradox. Now, a true pragmatist might see that attempting to redefine terms like *infidelity* or *genocide* to suit particular circumstances makes them look bad. This true pragmatist might have to acknowledge that pragmatism itself might not be the best philosophy to employ under given circumstances, that there might be situations where being absolutist would have good consequences for themselves and others. They have to abandon pragmatism to save it.

Richard Posner applies this very trick when elaborating on legal pragmatism,

> Legal pragmatism is not always and everywhere the best approach to law. Whether one says that in some circumstances formalism is the best pragmatic strategy or says simply that in some circumstances formalism is a better approach to law than pragmatism is, the

important point is that a pragmatic mindset is not always the best
thing for judges or other members of the legal profession to cultivate.
(Posner 2004, 150)

Here Posner is claiming that pragmatists who carefully consider the conse-
quences of their actions may choose to not use pragmatism if another method
is more expedient. Pragmatism simultaneously becomes a self-destroying and
a self-realizing school of thought. A true pragmatist might reject pragmatism
when it is expedient to do so, thus faithfully adhering to pragmatic logic. This
simultaneous acceptance and rejection is a dialetheial paradox.

James pays lip service to the idea that consistency is important for prac-
tical reasons. He says, "Our ideas must agree with realities, be such realities
concrete or abstract, be they facts or be they principles, under penalty of endless
inconsistency and frustration" (James 1907, 211). He goes on,

> Names are arbitrary, but once understood they must be kept to. We
> mustn't now call Abel 'Cain' or Cain 'Abel.' If we do, we ungear our-
> selves from the whole book of Genesis, and from all its connexions
> [*sic*] with the universe of speech and fact down to the present time.
> We throw ourselves out of whatever truth that entire system of speech
> and fact may embody. (James 1907, 214)
>
> Yet in the choice of these man-made formulas we cannot be capri-
> cious with impunity any more than we can be capricious on the com-
> mon-sense practical level. We must find a theory that will *work*; and
> that means something extremely difficult. (James 1907, 216)

Although he acknowledges this problem, we can't be certain that he isn't
merely saying this because it was expedient to do so. If it became expedient to
redefine reality yet again, he could simply take his "moral holiday" from con-
sistency. The moment James declared that truth and reality could be redefined
according to what is expedient and that he could alternately use one belief or
any other contradictory belief based on what was temporarily expedient, we
could no longer trust him. This is a person who will say and do anything to
suit his purposes.

According to Perry, "pragmatism is not a Machiavellian philosophy of
expedience, which cast principles. Instead, it demands that we judge principles
by their broad consequences. In this light, no contradiction need exist between
morality and expediency" (Perry 2001, vii). They judge principles based on
the consequences of having those principles and choose among the various
principles depending on whichever principle seems the most expedient in that

moment. So, it's not that they don't have principles but simply that they will abandon their principles and adopt others when it becomes expedient. This is their moral code. They can do as they please and justify it with a principle that suits their purpose. Later, they can abandon the principle if it becomes inconvenient. For the nonpragmatist a principle is a guideline, not an excuse.

Then, according to Posner, "despite the emphasis it places on consequences, legal pragmatism is not a form of *consequentialism*, the set of philosophical doctrines (most prominently utilitarianism) that evaluates actions according to the value of their consequences: the best action is the one with the best consequences" (Posner 2004, 148). Pragmatism must be quite remarkable to place enormous energy evaluating beliefs and actions according to their consequences and yet not be a form of consequentialism. Many critics view James's pragmatism to be in line with utilitarianism. "To say that a theory is useful is to say that it has some (desirable or beneficial) consequences," which is precisely what utilitarianism endorses (McDermid 2006, 145). When someone chooses *x* over *y* because *x* will yield better consequences than *y*, they are measuring the utility of *x* compared to *y*.

Pragmatic apologists have been busy attempting to redefine pragmatism by completely abandoning the foundations of pragmatism. Now they would argue, "But pragmatism is antifoundational! We can change the meaning based on this new reality where pragmatism was criticized. You can't criticize our foundations because we reject foundations as a matter principle!" We can't trust pragmatists because there is no *there* there. When your definitions, values, and realities fluctuate according to momentary circumstances you lose the stability that is necessary for functional social interaction with others. Type II pragmatists turn order into chaos. They are just as anarchic as James boasts.

PRAGMATISM IN AMERICAN POLITICS

Moving now to the political realm we can see how it is that Type II pragmatism manifests itself in American politics. Many of our elected officials are pragmatists. They seem to have shifting and unstable preferences, and they seem to take positions on the basis of expediency. Indeed, pragmatism may be necessary for their success: "Even given strong ideological commitments, over the long term most successful politicians are pragmatists" (Hochschild and Einstein 2015, 129). We find that both Republicans and Democrats sometimes "flip-flop" on important issues (Posner and Sunstein 2015). During the 2016 presidential primary, Hillary Clinton changed her position on trade policy and Marco Rubio changed his position on immigration reform. These

"flip-flops" are often called out by the opponents of the accused flip-flopper. In most cases, they are accused of no longer being trustworthy on the issue, and often they are accused of being opportunists who lack principles. Typically, the flip-flop occurs because the politician is facing pressure from groups that prefer a position at odds with the politician's stated preference, and that politician strongly desires their approval.

Pragmatists are a very democratic lot. "The influence of democracy in promoting pragmatism is visible in almost every page of William James's writing. There is an impatience with authority, an unwillingness to condemn widespread prejudices, [and] a tendency to decide philosophical questions by putting them to a vote" (Russell 1966, 106). For James, "A thing which simply *is* true, whether you like it or not, is to him as hateful as a Russian autocracy; he feels that he is escaping from a prison, made not by stone walls but by 'hard facts,' when he has humanized truth, and made it, like the police force in a democracy, the servant of the people instead of their master" (Russell 1966, 107). "Such men, both for good and evil, expect the world to be malleable to their wishes. . . . Hence arises a disbelief in those 'hard facts' which pragmatists tend to deny" (Russell 1966, 108). Herein lays one of the most pernicious consequences of pragmatism. Facts that are not expedient can be simply rejected and a new "truth" supplanted instead of the facts.

People frequently contradict themselves, but according to Festinger they attempt to minimize the dissonance they experience when they become aware of their contradiction. Take, for example, a "habitual cigarette smoker who has learned that smoking is bad for his health" (Festinger 1962, 5). The dissonance will be alleviated if he stops smoking, but alternatively,

> He might change his "knowledge" about the effects of smoking. This sounds like a peculiar way to put it, but it expresses well what must happen. He might simply end up believing that smoking does not have any deleterious effects, or he might acquire so much "knowledge" pointing to the good effects it has that the harmful effects become negligible. If he can manage to change his knowledge in either of these ways, he will have reduced, or even eliminated, the dissonance between what he does and what he knows. (Festinger 1962, 6)

The logical inconsistency remains, but the person uses psychological tricks to avoid or overcome the dissonance. In the end, voters and politicians are human beings, and as such they are not always logically consistent. Part of the reason that misinformation spreads, and the reason it is used to justify policy preferences, is because human beings are finding ways to reduce their

dissonance. For many people, the way to justify a preferred policy is to stop knowing particular facts.

If one relies on campaign contributions from the oil industry to win elections, and the scientific evidence suggests that this industry is causing irreparable harm to the environment that we rely on to survive as a species, then the facts can be rejected. Politicians will claim "climate change isn't real," "the scientists are making things up because they are liberals," and "even if we admit there's a problem, God will fix the environment so we don't need to concern ourselves with such things." The people who rely on a profitable oil industry to finance their livelihoods will reject facts that are not expedient for them to believe, and pragmatism says they can create a new "truth" that they find more expedient than the empirical evidence. They believe freedom includes the freedom to believe whatever one wishes, irrespective of facts or consistency.

The term *pragmatism* is often used "pejoratively; in the case especially of politicians, the pragmatist does not stand on principle but will do whatever it takes to succeed" (Bacon 2012, 8). This would include denying what one said. In ordinary life, we find it frustrating when someone denies what we heard that person say. But we don't typically record all of our conversations and have no proof that the statement was said other than our own recollections. In public life today, however, and especially as a person becomes more prominent, one can expect to be recorded in all manner of public interactions. This means we often have examples of people saying things they later regret saying. But to deny saying them takes a particular kind of pragmatic audacity.

Take Newt Gingrich, for example. In 1993 he supported an individual mandate as an alternative to the Clinton health care plan. Indeed, he was recorded on Meet the Press, where he stated that he supported requirements that people purchase health insurance in the same way they are required to purchase automobile insurance. Then in 2011, after President Obama made the individual mandate a key element of the Affordable Care Act, Newt Gingrich was once again on Meet the Press, where he was presented with his nearly twenty-year-old statement. When asked if what he advocated wasn't the same thing as what was in the president's proposal, he first denied it but then continued to say, per the transcript and video recording:

> REP. GINGRICH: Well, I agree that all of us have a responsibility to pay—help pay for health care. And, and I think that there are ways to do it that make most libertarians relatively happy. I've said consistently we ought to have some requirement that you either have health insurance or you post a bond . . .

MR. GREGORY: Mm-hmm.

REP. GINGRICH: . . . or in some way you indicate you're going to be held accountable.

MR. GREGORY: But that is the individual mandate, is it not?

REP. GINGRICH: It's a variation on it.

MR. GREGORY: OK.

(Meet the Press, 15 May 2011)

Unfortunately for Mr. Gingrich, the sentiment among his fellow Republicans at that time was that the individual mandate, the requirement that you have health insurance, was an attack on our personal liberties. But he went on and claimed that the Republican plan was just as bad. "I don't think right-wing social engineering is any more desirable than left-wing social engineering" (Meet the Press, May 15, 2011). How could one of the party's leaders betray one of their own by siding with the opposition? After causing an uproar among his fellow Republicans, Newt Gingich later said, "I do not support a mandate," and continued, "So let me say on the record, any ad which quotes what I said on Sunday is a falsehood" (Fox News, May 18, 2011). That's right! He considers quoting what he said to be "a falsehood." Pragmatists can construct new realities irrespective of evidence. The problem for Mr. Gingrich was that he was supposed to be against something he was previously for. He made the mistake of remaining consistent in his policy views regarding individual mandates. He either had to say that the individual mandate was wrong, and that therefore he was wrong in 1993 (which would make his judgment suspect), or that the individual mandate is correct, and that therefore the opposition is correct. He was twice on the record as saying he supported something, which we should believe to be a lie because he "in truth" doesn't support it. It is one thing to say you changed your mind and have a new opinion, but it is quite another to say that a direct quote is a falsehood and that the person quoting you is a liar. A pragmatist will claim without shame, "I never said what you heard me say," even when you have a recording of them saying it.

Or take his competitor for the Republican nomination in 2012, Mitt Romney. Romney had repeatedly stated that President Obama didn't "create the recession, but he made it worse." This exact statement was made in several different venues on several different occasions. When Sue Kroll, an NBC News reporter, asked Romney, "You continue to say the economy is worse, but

unemployment is lower than it was in 2009, the stock market was tumbling, it's now above 12,000 and it is growing slowly . . . how can you continue to say that things are worse when they really aren't worse?" Romney replied, "I didn't say that things are worse" (The Rachel Maddow Show, July 1, 2011). A recession is two consecutive quarters of economic decline. The economy was growing, not continuing to decline. When presented with reality, Romney admitted that the economy was not worse. But this went against his previous statements, which as a matter of political strategy were expedient. To defeat an opponent it makes sense to claim that person is doing a bad job, or making an already bad situation worse. Then you must claim that you would do a good job and make the situation better. This is done to present yourself as a preferable alternative. This may have been a convincing argument for many people, until Romney himself admitted the economy wasn't really worse. His political strategists were attempting to create a "new reality," but when the "real reality" was presented in the form of a question the candidate slipped up and became less persuasive. You can only believe in falsehood for so long before the truth becomes undeniable.

A rationalist would claim that once something is said, those words from that point forward have been spoken. But a pragmatist would deny this, "Thus, just as pragmatism faces forward to the future, so does rationalism here again face backward to a past eternity" (James 1907, 227). Pragmatists are not backward looking. What was said may or may not be true—they can create "new realities" where the words were never uttered and the "truth" is that such words were never spoken. Only pragmatists can call you a liar when you quote them.

Taken to its extreme, this freedom to redefine reality may become tyrannical. Bertrand Russell, in his criticism of Dr. Schiller, states, "with his theory of truth, persecution can actually make a doctrine true which would otherwise be false, since it can make a doctrine 'useful to our lives' " (Russell 1966, 108–09). Threatening to kill people if they refuse to believe in a favored deity, ideology, or system of government can make it useful for them to believe it. One could get a large majority to believe certain things by making it in the self-interest of the people to believe it. The problem is that "the excessive individualism of the pragmatic theory of truth is inherently connected with the appeal to force" (Russell 1966, 109). "This philosophy, therefore, although it begins with liberty and toleration, develops, by inherent necessity, into the appeal to force and the arbitrament of the big battalions" (Russell 1966, 110).

But even when persuasion doesn't come at the edge of a sword, it can be done through other means. Activists can use their resources to make other people believe their version of "reality." They can intentionally mislead the

public to achieve a desired outcome (Hochschild and Einstein 2015). The pragmatic philosophy might be beneficial if we are talking about Type I pragmatism that is committed to objective empirical evidence and the search for good consequences. But it could be quite dangerous if we are talking about Type II pragmatism, with its subjective redefinitions of truth and reality.

THE PRAGMATIC MASSES

Most Americans believe that right and wrong depends on the situation. This belief is at the core of the pragmatic philosophy. It is these "flip-floppers" who would account for the conflicting majorities. Whether they realize it or not, millions of Americans are Type II pragmatists. They feel no need to remain consistent, they freely make up "facts" to suit their purposes, and they create alternate realities that are as real to them as your reality is to you. In true Jamesian fashion, they will believe whatever is most useful for them to believe.

In addition to being pragmatic themselves, Americans also want their politicians to be pragmatic. An overwhelming majority would prefer to have a president who seeks "practical solutions" to problems. When it comes to cooperating with undemocratic governments, most Americans believe it is "wrong but necessary" to do so (e.g., see table 3.1). Many Americans are willing to abandon absolute principles in favor of solution-oriented decision making. They are willing to take "moral holidays" when their best interest is served by engaging in a "wrong" action. Although pragmatists seem very democratic, they are perfectly willing to abandon democracy when it becomes expedient to do so. The "rightness" or "wrongness" of an action is of secondary importance to the necessity or usefulness of it.

With pragmatism there can be multiple interpretations of what is right. It is also possible for an action to be right in some cases and wrong in others, or right when committed by some and wrong when committed by others, because of the individual circumstances of each actor.

It could be that in particular situations pragmatism can have negative consequences. In other words, it may not be the best approach for solving particular problems, even according to its own methods. There is a subjectivist strain in pragmatism, what is here referred to as Type II pragmatism, that abandons empiricism in favor of make-believe or wishful thinking. This element of pragmatism is pernicious in its consequences because it can justify lying for the sake of expediency. It is bad when one deludes oneself, but worse

TABLE 3.1 *Pragmatism in the Mass Public*

As I read a pair of statements please tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own views—even if neither is exactly right. (1) There are things that are just wrong regardless of the situation. (2) What is right or wrong almost always depends on the situation.[1]

There are things that are just wrong regardless of the situation	43%
What is right or wrong almost always depends on the situation	54%
Don't Know	2%

What are you looking for in a US president? Please tell me how important each of the following are to you in looking for a US president. Would you say extremely important, very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important? Ability to find practical solutions to major problems.[2]

Extremely important	41%
Very important	49%
Somewhat important	8%
Not too important	1%
Not at all important	1%
Don't know	1%

Do you think it's right, wrong but sometimes necessary, or always wrong for the U.S. to cooperate with harsh, undemocratic governments in order to fight terrorism?[3]

Right	17%
Wrong but sometimes necessary	64%
Always wrong	13%
Don't know	5%

Sources

1. Survey by: *Public Religion Research Institute, Millennials, Religion and Abortion Survey*, April 2011. Retrieved 29 March 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *Civil Society Institute, Views on Political Leadership Survey*, February 2008. Retrieved 29 March 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *Public Agenda Foundation*, Confidence in US Foreign Policy Index Poll, January 2006. Retrieved 29 March 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

when politicians are attempting to create a mass delusion through willful manipulation or deceit.

Type II pragmatism pervades our politics, and public opinion seems to conform to its extreme subjectivism. The public is willing to hold inconsistent views and make judgments with little regard for empirically based objective reality. They are transconsistent when they hold values, beliefs, attitudes, and opinions that are directly at odds with their other values, beliefs, attitudes, and opinions. They are willing to take "moral holidays" from their values when circumstances make it expedient for them to do so. One of the reasons we can have majorities on both sides of an issue is because many Americans are Jamesian pragmatists.

4. Social Issues

Jamesian pragmatism provides the philosophical underpinnings of transconsistancy. James's philosophy embraces contradictions and, rather than attempting to reconcile incompatible claims, it argues that these incompatible contradictions are both true. Because most Americans are pragmatists, this allows dialetheial paradoxes to exist in public opinion. Some people will be on two sides of the debate, even when the two opposing views are incompatible.

The evidence shows that Americans are transconsistent on a number of social issues; opposing majorities are to be had on opposite sides of particular debates. Americans have conflicting and incompatible values that are used to guide, or justify, their policy preferences. When these values conflict they adopt incompatible preferences. Because Americans are a pragmatic people, they abandon one set of values when a situation makes it more expedient to emphasize other values or concerns.

What follows is a description of public opinion on a variety of social issues. On evolution, racial discrimination, and other issues, a majority of Americans are on both sides of the question. They are transconsistent because they support two opposing views of the world; they may also support and oppose the same policy when the question is presented differently. Both alternatives are "what the public believes," even when the two are incompatible with each other.

EVOLUTION

There is a cliché about not comparing apples and oranges. Apples should be compared to other apples and oranges should be compared to other oranges. Now imagine if we wanted to find out what a person's favorite fruit was and we asked them if they prefer apples or oranges. Some will prefer apples and some will prefer oranges. But what if there is some subset of the population that likes both apples and oranges. Let's say they hold apples and oranges in equal regard. Asked, "Are apples your favorite fruit?" the person would say yes. Asked, "Are oranges your favorite fruit?" the person would also say yes. It could happen that supporters of apples would claim that apples are America's favorite

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fruit and that supporters of oranges would claim that oranges are America's favorite fruit. Both would be correct. A dialetheial paradox exists in public opinion when there is a subset of the population on both sides of a particular issue and that subset can make a majority on both sides. This is exactly what happens when Americans are asked about Darwin's theory of evolution. This issue is important because the question of teaching creationism in the public schools has sometimes become a hot-button political issue. In addition, we would like to know how much support there is for empirically based arguments as compared to religious, or ideologically based arguments. Is the public, like William James, ready to abandon empirically based objective reality?

The theory of evolution and creationism are incompatible with each other—they're apples and oranges. Evolution claims that humans descended from ape-like ancestors and became a distinct species two hundred thousand years ago. Planetary scientists and geologists have estimated that the earth itself is approximately 4.5 billion years old. Young earth creationists claim that God created the earth within the past 10,000 years and that God placed humans on the earth in their present form.

Evolutionary biologists make no claims regarding divinity. They simply present the evidence they have accumulated and form a conclusion based on observation and experimentation. Supporters of evolution by and large believe that it is a natural process; only a minority believe evolution was divinely produced. Those that support creationism cite religious reasons for their rejection of evolution; only a tiny minority rejects evolution because of a lack of sufficient evidence. These two groups are operating on different perceptual planes—one group uses empirical evidence, the other uses divine inspiration to make sense of the world.

Americans aren't really sure which view is correct and as a result there is majority support for both propositions. A full 36 percent of Americans don't have an opinion on the issue and can't decide between the two options. Among registered voters 27 percent believe that both accounts of human existence are true. Nearly half of all Americans believe that it is possible to believe in both Darwin's theory of evolution and divine creation by God. This suggests that significant numbers of Americans believe both of the two conflicting accounts. This is the transconsistent subset. The only way both accounts can be "true" is if they adopt a Jamesian version of "reality" that is subjective to the extreme.

This group that believes in both accounts simultaneously is responsible for creating a dialetheial paradox on this question. When asked a "forced-choice" version of the question, a majority of Americans state that they believe evolution is the best explanation for the origins of life and they believe

evolution is probably true. When a slightly different "forced-choice" question is asked, this time referencing the Bible, only 33 percent support evolution and 57 percent believe that the Biblical account is the actual explanation for the origins of life (e.g., see table 4.1). When forced to choose, the group that believes in both accounts will sometimes give one answer and sometimes give the contrary; thereby producing a majority on both sides of the question. If one recalls the Janice metaphor from chapter 2, we can say that the public is inside and outside of the room at the same time. The public accepts evolution and the public rejects evolution.

This is not what Converse called a "non-attitude" (Converse 1970), it is a "bi-attitude." Zaller's observation that people can absorb contradictory information and not realize that there is a contradiction is important (Zaller 1992). Some Americans go to school, learn about the theory of evolution in science class and, because they believe the teacher is smart and the explanation seems plausible, accept evolution as true. Some of these same Americans then go to church where the minister tells them a different story of human existence. Because the minister is someone they trust, who reveals Truths with a capital *T*, they believe the religious account of human existence is true. Then several years later a pollster calls them out of the blue and asks which of the two accounts they believe. If "both" is an option, they'll choose that. If not, they will choose one at random. Really, they hadn't given it much thought at all and now they just give a reply. This lack of consideration, however, does not mean that they have not fully absorbed the two competing views and fully accepted both.

The earth cannot be simultaneously 4.5 billion years old and only 10,000 years old. We can't evolve from ape-like ancestors and be placed on earth in our present form. Some individuals see the two accounts as incompatible (because they are) and choose from the two the one that seems more plausible to them. Others accept both and may form a peculiar synthesis that God is responsible for evolution, which is interesting because evolutionary biologists don't make any such claims. Nor does the Book of Genesis read: "First God amino acids. Then He combined the acids to form single cell organisms. God then gave the cells the ability to photosynthesize energy and this created algae, which eventually evolved into all the plant life we see today." Neither biologists nor theologians claim that "both" are the actual account. Yet both groups can truthfully claim that a majority of Americans support their view by referencing the corresponding poll. A dialetheial paradox exists when there is a majority that supports both of two contradictory views—the public is transconsistent on the origins of human life.

TABLE 4.1 *Americans' Views on Evolution*

Do you, personally, believe in the theory of evolution, do you not believe in evolution, or don't you have an opinion either way?[1]

Believe in evolution	39%
Do not believe in evolution	25%
No opinion either way	36%
No opinion	1%

(Asked to registered voters) Which do you think is more likely to actually be the explanation for the origin of human life on Earth? . . . The theory of evolution as outlined by Darwin and other scientists. The Biblical account of creation as told in the Bible. Are both true?[2]

The theory of evolution as outlined by Darwin and other scientists	21%
The Biblical account of creation as told in the Bible	45%
Both	27%
Don't know	7%

Do you think it is possible to believe in both Darwin's theory of evolution and divine creation by God, or is it not possible to believe in both?[3]

Yes, possible to believe in both	49%
No, not possible to believe in both	41%
Depends (Volunteered)	3%
Don't Know/No answer	7%

(Asked of those who said humans and other living things have evolved over time) And do you think that humans and other living things have evolved due to natural processes such as natural selection, or a supreme being guided the evolution of living things for the purpose of creating humans and other life in the form it exists today?[4]

Due to natural processes	54%
Supreme being guided evolution	38%
Don't know/Refused	8%

(Asked of those who do not believe in evolution) What is the most important reason why you would say you do not believe in evolution?[5]

I believe in Jesus Christ	19%
I believe in the almighty God, creator of Heaven and Earth	16%
Due to my religion and faith	14%
I believe in what I read in the Bible	12%
I'm a Christian	9%

(cont'd on next page)

Table 4.1 (cont'd)

Not enough scientific evidence to prove otherwise	14%
I don't believe humans come from beasts/monkeys	3%
No reason in particular	2%
No opinion	3%

Now as I read a few statements please tell me whether you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree or completely disagree with each one. . . . Evolution is the best explanation for the origins of human life on earth. [6]

Completely agree	24%
Mostly agree	29%
Mostly disagree	14%
Completely disagree	27%
Don't know/Refused	5%

Do you believe that the theory of evolution is definitely true, probably true, probably false, or definitely false?[7]

Definitely true	21%
Probably true	36%
Probably false	16%
Definitely false	25%
No opinion	3%

Which do you think is more likely to actually be the explanation for the origin of human life on earth: evolution . . . or . . . the Biblical account of creation? (If "the Biblical account of creation," ask) And by this do you mean: that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh as described in the Book of Genesis or that God was a divine presence in the formation of the universe?[8]

Evolution	33%
God created the world in six days	44%
God was a divine presence	13%
None of the above (Volunteered)	3%
Don't know	6%
Refused	1%

Sources

1. Survey by: *Gallup Organization. Gallup Poll*, February 2009. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

Table 4.1 Sources (cont'd)

2. Survey by: *Fox News. Fox News Poll*, August 2011. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *Time. Time/SRBI Poll*, October 2006. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

4. Survey by: *Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. Pew Research Center General Public Science Survey*, August 2014. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

5. Survey by: *Gallup Organization. Gallup Poll*, May, 2007. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

6. Survey by: *PRRI, American Academy of Religion, Ford Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation. PRRI/AAR Religion, Values & Climate Change Survey*, September 2014. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

7. Survey by: *Cable News Network. CNN/ORC International Poll*, September 2011. Retrieved August 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

8. Survey by: *NBC News. NBC News Poll*, March 2005. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 4.2 *Religious Liberty*

Next I am going to read some basic American rights. For each one, please indicate whether this is crucial to your own sense of freedom, very important but not crucial, somewhat important, or not important at all. How about . . . freedom of religion?[1]

Crucial	55%
Very important but not crucial	39%
Somewhat important	5%
Not important at all	1%

How important is it to you to live in a country where . . . there is freedom of religion for religions other than your own? Is it very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not important at all?[2]

Very important	85%
Somewhat important	10%
Not too important	2%
Not important at all	2%
Don't know/Refused	1%

Table 4.2 (cont'd)

In America today, do you believe that the right of religious liberty is being threatened, or not?[3]

Yes	54%
No	41%
Don't Know/Refused	5%

Which statement comes closer to your view? . . . Freedom of religion should be protected even if it goes against government laws. Government laws should be observed without exception even if it restricts freedom of religion.[4]

Freedom of religion should be protected even if it goes against government laws	74%
Government laws should be observed without exception even if it restricts freedom of religion	26%

Sources

1. Survey by*: Gallup Poll*, November 2003. Retrieved 10 April 2016 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by*: Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, July 2006. Retrieved 10 April 2016 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *Public Religion Research Institute Religion and Politics Tracking Survey*, May 2014. Retrieved 10 April 2016 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

4. Survey by: *Knights of Columbus/Marist Poll*, May 2012. Retrieved 10 April 2016 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 4.3 Same-Sex Marriage

I'm going to reread those issues and please tell me if you are for or against each issue. . . . Same-sex marriage . . . Are you for or against . . . same-sex marriage?[1]

For	44%
Against	42%
Undecided	14%

(Asked of registered voters) The US Supreme Court could decide that same-sex couples have a constitutional right to marry, which would have the effect of legalizing same-sex marriage throughout the country. Would you support or oppose the Supreme Court taking this action?[2]

Support	56%
Oppose	38%
Don't know	5%

Do you think that state and local officials and judges who issue marriage licenses but have religious objections to same-sex marriage should be required to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples, or should they be exempt from issuing them?[3]

Exempt from issuing them	41%
Required to issue them	56%
Don't Know/Refused	3%

In your opinion, a US Supreme Court decision legalizing same-sex marriage would be: good for religious freedom, harmful to religious freedom, or have no lasting impact on religious freedom?[4]

Good	8%
Harmful	31%
No impact	54%
Don't know	7%

Sources

1. Survey by: *Suffolk University/USA Today Poll*, July 2015. Retrieved 10 April 2016 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *Quinnipiac University Poll*, May 2015. Retrieved 10 April 2016 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *Associated Press/GfK Knowledge Networks Poll*, October 2015. Retrieved 10 April 2016 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

4. Survey by: *First Amendment Center, State of the First Amendment Survey*, May 2015. Retrieved 10 April 2016 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

Conservatives view the issue of same-sex marriage as a religious question. They value tradition and worry about the moral decay of society. In response to the Supreme Court decision legalizing same sex marriage across the United States, Republican legislatures have passed religious freedom bills. Most Americans would seem to support these bills. Fifty-five percent of Americans believe that freedom of religion is a crucial right; 85 percent believe it is very important to protect everyone's religious freedom; 54 percent believe religious liberty is being threatened in today's society; and 74 percent believe freedom of religion should be protected, even if it goes against government laws (e.g., see table 4.2). They seem to value the freedom of the individual more than laws created by the government.

Liberals view the issue of same-sex marriage as a civil rights question. They believe that everyone's rights should be protected by the government, including the rights of LGBT individuals. Most of the public would seem to agree with this position. Fifty-six percent of Americans support the Supreme Court decision legalizing same-sex marriage across the United States; 56 percent believe that county clerks with religious objections should be required to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples; and 54 percent believe that the Supreme Court decision will have no impact on religious freedom.

There is a majority that believes that one's religion is more important than government laws and should be protected, but there is also a majority that says government laws should be followed despite religious objections. This occurs because the People are closely divided on the issue. Forty-four percent support same sex marriage; 42 percent oppose same-sex marriage; and 14 percent are undecided (e.g., see table 4.3). It is these undecided respondents that can flip the majority depending on how the issue is framed. They value religious freedom and seem to support the notion that divine law supersedes positive law. But they also respect Supreme Court decisions and believe people should follow the law despite religious objections.

One should note that the religious freedom questions are abstract. Americans support religious freedom as an ideological value. When they are asked specifically about same-sex marriage different considerations apply. Then they seem to support marriage equality, in part because they don't view same-sex marriage as a threat to religious freedom. Both liberals and conservatives frame the question in a way that yields majority support for their positions, even though they are directly at odds over the legalization of same-sex marriage and over the enforcement of national laws.

On the issue of same-sex marriage, the public is transconsistent. A majority believes that divine law should override positive law. A majority also believes that positive law should override divine law. They believe that people should be free to practice their religion without government interference and also that the government should force religious objectors to follow the law. These two ideas are directly at odds with each other, yet both have majority support.

RACE

Americans' views on race are truly bizarre. Americans want to live in a society where everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed in life, and they believe that government policy should serve that purpose. A large majority of Americans acknowledge that African Americans face at least some discrimination in our society. They also believe that discrimination and not providing everyone an equal chance to succeed in life are serious problems (e.g., see table 4.4). However, they would oppose laws that are designed to reduce discrimination against African Americans. Most Americans believe that everyone, including African Americans, have an equal chance to succeed and that the system is basically fair. A large majority believes that the difficulty that African Americans have in succeeding is not the result of discrimination, but rather the result of their own personal failings (e.g., see table 4.5).

It is nonsensical to believe that discrimination exists and that everyone has an equal chance to succeed. By definition, if someone is being discriminated against, they don't have an equal chance to succeed. Discrimination creates unfairness. To argue that discrimination exists and that the system is fair is either absurd, or it means that Americans believe discrimination against African Americans makes the system fair. Either would be ridiculous. Americans as an aggregate simultaneously believe that not everyone has an equal chance to succeed and that everyone has an equal chance to succeed. This is precisely what is meant by a dialetheial paradox. The statement and the contradiction of that statement are simultaneously true.

In principle Americans believe that everyone should be given a fair chance to get ahead in life. They acknowledge that we don't live up to our principles, that discrimination occurs, and that not everyone has an equal chance to succeed. When policies are suggested to reduce discrimination in practice most Americans suddenly believe the system is already fair and that remedies are unnecessary. Some go so far as to believe that remedies would create "reverse discrimination" and thereby create unfairness from an already fair system. It is strange to believe that discrimination is a problem and that reducing discrimination would create

an injustice for the discriminator. When harmers claim they are being harmed when they are not allowed to commit the harm, we have entered a parallel universe where only self-interested behavior seems to reign.

Jamesian pragmatism allows new "facts" to be made up when circumstances change. In this case a system we know is unfair is considered fair as soon ending the unfairness is proposed. A Type I pragmatist would, based on the evidence, admit that discrimination against African Americans exists. A white Type II pragmatist would, faced with the prospect of losing an advantage in life, not admit that any unfairness has occurred. Since not discriminating against African Americans would cause them harm, they construct a new reality where life is fair and everyone has an equal chance—even though they admit discrimination happens. It's impractical to give up an advantage, and claiming it's a fair advantage has positive consequences for the discriminator.

FREE SPEECH

As a core American value freedom of speech is highly regarded. Overwhelming majorities believe that freedom of speech is extremely important during elections, and they don't want Congress limiting their freedom of speech during elections. They believe that freedom of speech is more important than limiting corporate and union spending in elections. A huge majority believes that those with deeply offensive views should be allowed to express those views and that people should be allowed to criticize a religion (e.g., see table 4.6).

Support for freedom of speech declines dramatically when obscene, offensive, or objectionable material is at issue. A large majority would prohibit the burning of the American flag (e.g., see table 4.7). Their love of freedom conflicts with their love of country. Most would support blocking indecent material from the Internet, including pornography. Their freedom conflicts with their piety. Americans are split as to whether supporters of terrorism should have free speech rights. In principle, they support free speech. As a practical matter giving terrorist groups freedom of speech allows them to recruit new terrorists and pose a danger to society. In this case, our ideological values conflict with more practical concerns.

On the issue of free speech the public is transconsistent. They believe that offensive speech should be protected, and they also believe that offensive material should be censored. On this issue, conflicting values and practical considerations create a dialetheial paradox in public opinion. In the end, Americans seem to want to have it both ways.

TABLE 4.4 *Discrimination Is a Problem*

Now, please tell me how important it is for you that your local area be each of the following. Is it very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important? . . . A place where all types of people have equal opportunity to get ahead.[1]

Very important	76%
Somewhat important	18%
Not very important	2%
Not important at all	3%
Don't know/Refused	1%

Here is another series of statements on some different topics . . . Our society should do what is necessary to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed. Do you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree, or completely disagree?[2]

Completely agree	51%
Mostly agree	35%
Mostly disagree	8%
Completely disagree	4%
Don't know/Refused	3%

Now I am going to read some goals that some people say the government should work toward to help people get ahead economically. For each one I read, please tell me if you believe this is one of the most important goals the government should work toward. . . . Ensuring equal opportunity.[3]

One of the most important	33%
Very important	46%
Somewhat important	14%
Not too important	3%
Not important at all	3%
Don't know	1%

How much discrimination do you think there is today against people in the United States who are of each of the following races or origins? . . . A lot of discrimination, some discrimination, only a little discrimination, no discrimination at all . . . Black or African American.[4]

A lot of discrimination	26%
Some discrimination	47%
Only a little discrimination	20%
No discrimination at all	6%
Refused	1%

(cont'd on next page)

Table 4.4 (cont'd)

Now I'm going to read you a couple pairs of statements. Please tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own views—even if neither is exactly right. The first pair is . . . It is not really that big a problem if some people have more of a chance in life than others and the second pair is . . . One of the big problems in this country is that we don't give everyone an equal chance in life.[5]

It is not really that big a problem if some people have more of a chance in life than others	39%
One of the big problems in this country is that we don't give everyone an equal chance in life	54%
Both equally (Volunteered)	1%
Neither (Volunteered)	3%
Don't know/Refused	3%

How serious a problem do you think racial discrimination against blacks is in this country—a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, not too serious, or not at all serious?[6]

Very serious	37%
Somewhat serious	37%
Not too serious	16%
Not at all serious	9%
No opinion	1%

Sources

1. Survey by: *Allstate, National Journal. Allstate/National Journal Heartland Monitor Poll*, February 2015. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. Pew Research Center for the People & the Press Values Survey*, April, 2012. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *Pew Economic Mobility Project. Pew Economic Mobility and the American Dream Survey*, March 2011. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

4. Survey by: *Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center Survey of Multiracial Americans*, February 2015. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

5. Survey by: *PRRI. Public Religion Research Institute Race, Class and Culture Survey*, August 2012. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

6. Survey by: *CNN/ORC International Poll*, June 2015. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 4.5 *Everyone Has an Equal Chance to Succeed*

Do you think new civil rights laws are needed to reduce discrimination against blacks, or not?[1]

Yes, needed	40%
No, not needed	58%
No opinion	2%

In general, who do you think has a better chance of getting ahead in today's society—white people, black people, or do white people and black people have about an equal chance of getting ahead?[2]

White people	34%
Black people	5%
Equal	59%
Don't know/No answer	3%

Do you think the economic system in the United States is basically fair, since all Americans have an equal opportunity to succeed, or basically unfair, since not all Americans have an equal opportunity to succeed?[3]

Fair	52%
Unfair	45%
Don't know/No answer	4%

(Asked to likely voters) Do you think Americans generally have an equal opportunity to succeed or do not have an equal opportunity to succeed?[4]

Have an equal opportunity to succeed	59%
Do not have an equal opportunity to succeed	39%
Don't Know/Refused	1%

Which of these two statements comes closer to your own view, even if neither is exactly right? Racial discrimination is the main reason why many black people cannot get ahead these days. Blacks who can't get ahead in this country are mostly responsible for their own condition.[5]

Racial discrimination is the main reason why many black people can't get ahead these days	30%
Blacks who can't get ahead in this country are mostly responsible for their own condition	68%
Refused	3%

Sources

1. Survey by: *Gallup Organization. Gallup Poll*, June 2015. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

Table 4.5 Sources (cont'd)

2. Survey by: *CBS News. CBS News Poll*, March 2014. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *New York Times. New York Times Poll*, December 2014. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

4. Survey by: *Reason Foundation, Arthur N. Rupe Foundation. Reason-Rupe Poll*, September 2012. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

5. Survey by: *Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center Survey of Multiracial Americans*, February 2015. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 4.6 *Americans Support Free Speech*

The First Amendment became part of the US (United States) Constitution more than 200 years ago. This is what it says: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances." Based on your own feelings about the First Amendment, please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: The First Amendment goes too far in the rights it guarantees.[1]

Agree	13%
Disagree	81%
Don't know	6%

Which of the following do you think is more important? Protecting your personal right to free speech during an election where you can support or oppose any candidate or issue as you so choose. Congress placing limits on corporate and union spending on election campaigns.[2]

Free speech	65%
Limit spending	25%
Don't know/Refused	10%

How personally important an issue is protecting your First Amendment right to Free Speech during elections? Would you say: Important, very important, somewhat important, not important at all?[3]

Very important	85%
Somewhat important	13%
Not Important At All	2%

Table 4.6 (cont'd)

Do you consider the banning of books, movies, or TV (television) programs about candidates during (election) campaigns a violations of First Amendment free speech rights?[4]

Yes	68%
No	21%
Don't know/Refused	11%

Would you approve or disapprove of Congress limiting your right to free speech during elections for President or Congress?[5]

Approve	7%
Disapprove	90%
Don't know/Refused	4%

Do you think freedom of speech should mean that people should have the right to say what they believe even if they take positions that seem deeply offensive to most people or people should have the right to say what they believe, except when they want to say things that seem deeply offensive to most people?[6]

People should have the right to say what they believe even if they take positions that seem deeply offensive to most people	71%
People should have the right to say what they believe, except when they want to say things that seem deeply offensive to most people	26%
Don't know	3%
Refused	1%

Currently there is a controversy about criticizing religions. Which position is closer to yours? People should have the right to publicly criticize a religion, because people should have freedom of speech. The government should have the right to fine or imprison people who publicly criticize a religion, because such criticism could defame the religion.[7]

People should have the right to publicly criticize a religion, because people should have freedom of speech	89%
The government should have the right to fine or imprison people who publicly criticize a religion, because such criticism could defame the religion	9%
Don't know/No response	2%

Sources

1. Survey by: *State of the First Amendment Survey*, June 2012. Retrieved 13 April 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

Table 4.6 Sources (cont'd)

2–5. Survey by: *McLaughlin & Associates Survey*, February 2010. Retrieved 13 April 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

6. Survey by: *Associated Press/National Constitution Center/GfK Poll*, August 2012. Retrieved 13 April 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

7. Survey by: *PIPA/Knowledge Networks Poll*, May 2009. Retrieved 13 April 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 4.7   *Americans Want to Limit Offensive Speech*

The Federal Communications Commission is considering a proposal to provide free Internet access to anyone, anywhere in the United States. However, under the proposal, the government would block access to material it deemed indecent or obscene. Do you favor or oppose the FCC's proposal?[1]

Strongly favor	38%
Mildly favor	16%
Mildly oppose	12%
Strongly oppose	28%
Don't know/Refused	5%

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? The government should be allowed to fine television broadcasters who air profane or obscene words spoken as part of spontaneous, unscripted material.[2]

Strongly agree	30%
Mildly agree	20%
Mildly disagree	17%
Strongly disagree	30%
Don't know/Refused	4%

Now, I'd like to get your views on some issues that are being discussed in the country today. All in all, do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose making it more difficult to access pornography on the Internet?[3]

Strongly favor	34%
Favor	22%
Oppose	20%
Strongly oppose	19%
Don't know/Refused	5%

Table 4.7 (cont'd)

In presenting material that some view as objectionable or offensive, do you think the entertainment industry is within its constitutional rights of free speech or do you think the industry has gone beyond constitutional guarantees of free speech?[4]

Within rights of free speech	46%
Beyond guarantees of free speech	48%
Don't know/Refused	6%

Would you say you are for or against each of the following? Allowing burning the American flag because it's a form of free speech.[5]

For	19%
Against	77%
No opinion	4%

Here is another series of statements on some different topics. Freedom of speech should not extend to groups that are sympathetic to terrorists. Do you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree, or completely disagree?[6]

Completely agree	28%
Mostly agree	21%
Mostly disagree	25%
Completely disagree	22%
Don't know/Refused	4%

Sources

1–2. Survey by: *State of the First Amendment Survey*, July 2008. Retrieved 13 April 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *Public Religion Research Institute LGBT Issues & Trends Survey*, November 2013. Retrieved 13 April 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

4. Survey by: *Pew News Interest Index Poll*, March 2005. Retrieved 13 April 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

5. Survey by: *Judicial Confirmation Survey*, March 2005. Retrieved 13 April 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

6. Survey by: *Pew Research Center for the People & the Press Values Survey*, April 2012. Retrieved 13 April 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, we have seen how the public is often on two sides of a variety of social issues. On the issue of evolution most Americans believe that Darwin's theory is probably true. They seem to be guided by the empirical evidence and material world, as a Type I pragmatist would. They also believe the Biblical account of creation and seem to ignore empirical evidence re this belief. Their religious motives seem to dominate their thinking. A large proportion of Americans believe it is possible to believe in both views on the origins of human life even though they are wholly incompatible. Some create a synthesis of the two views that is supported by neither scientists nor theologians. They use Jamesian make-believe, or wishful thinking, to imagine new realities where the two views are both "true."

On the issue of same-sex marriage most Americans support the Supreme Court decision legalizing same-sex marriage and believe that the law should be followed despite religious objections. This is consistent with an ideological commitment to the rule of law. The public also strongly supports religious liberty and believes that religious liberty should be protected even when it conflicts with the law. This is consistent with an ideological commitment to religious freedom. This "flip-flop" occurs because the public is closely divided on the issue of same-sex marriage and some of the undecided can be compelled to one side or the other depending on the context of the question.

Americans know that discrimination against African Americans occurs. This is consistent with Type I pragmatism's reliance on empirical evidence. However, most Americans believe that African Americans have an equal chance of succeeding and believe that failures in succeeding are African Americans' own fault. Consistent with Type II pragmatism, many Americans abandon reality and create new "facts" to support a preferred outcome—in this case the preservation of the status quo. They strongly support providing people with an equal opportunity, they acknowledge that the system doesn't treat everyone fairly, but will expediently believe that the system is fair when faced with the prospect of losing an advantage.

Americans are strongly supportive of freedom of speech. This is an important ideological value. But their support diminishes and sometimes becomes opposition when disfavored groups or practices are concerned. Because allowing a disfavored group to speak its mind could potentially allow them to recruit more people and become more politically powerful, it is rational to attempt to limit that group's ability to increase their numbers. Denying freedom of speech to a disfavored group reduces the influence of that group; it is expedient to limit their expression of ideas. It is also rational to limit

or prohibit disfavored practices because it would yield the preferred outcome. Americans seem to very easily abandon their own stated values.

What we find is that the majority can be on two sides of the same issue. This means that both proponents and opponents of a particular policy can legitimately claim that they have the support of a majority of Americans. Because we live in a democracy, they argue their perspective should carry the day. Under these circumstances a democratic system of government produces contradictory results. Political actors on opposing sides of an issue can both claim the mantle of majoritarian legitimacy.

The following pairs of statements can be made by political opponents to support their respective positions:

- Most Americans believe that Darwin's theory of evolution is probably true.
- Most Americans believe that the Biblical account of creation explains the actual origin of human life.
- Most Americans support the Supreme Court decision legalizing same-sex marriage. Most Americans believe public officials should obey the decision despite their religious objections to it.
- Most Americans support religious liberty and believe their religious liberty is being threatened. Americans believe that freedom of religion should be protected even if it violates the law.
- Most Americans believe that African Americans face discrimination and they believe that not providing everyone with an equal chance to succeed is a big problem.
- Most Americans believe that Africans Americans have an equal chance of getting ahead and that the economic system is fair.
- Most Americans support freedom of speech. Most Americans don't want their freedom to be limited even when they make offensive statements.
- Most Americans want to ban flag burning. Most Americans support government proposals to block access to indecent or obscene material.

Each of these statements is true. They describe views that are held by a majority of the public. Not every case of contradictory public opinion is a "true contradiction," but there is sufficient evidence to suggest that dialetheial paradoxes exist in public opinion. When this occurs, we can say that the public is transconsistent. On many issues, there is a majority on both sides of incompatible claims or proposals. Politicians and activists use this knowledge to frame questions in a manner that would support their favored position. Before we consider the implications this has for democratic systems, we'll turn next to contradictions in domestic policy.

5. Domestic Policy

This chapter presents additional evidence to support the theory of dialetheial paradoxes by exploring domestic policy issues. On issues such as health care, government regulations, environmental protections, the federal budget, and campaign finance, Americans often find themselves conflicted. These conflicts lead to majorities on both sides of the debate on these issues. Political leaders on opposing sides of these issues can both claim that the majority of Americans support their position. Differences in question wording, issue saliency, and issue framing can cause public opinion to shift dramatically. This allows political leaders to exploit these effects for political advantage. Both supporters and opponents of a policy will adopt rhetoric that will appeal to the majority of the public. We can say that the public is transconsistent when they are on both sides of particular debate. True to Jamesian pragmatism, differences in context will yield different preferences and incompatible ideas are both accepted without regard for consistency or coherence.

HEALTH CARE

The question-wording effect means that using synonyms can sometimes change how a respondent answers a question. This is precisely what happens when "Obamacare" is replaced with "Affordable Care Act." Twenty-nine percent of Americans have positive feelings toward "Obamacare," but only 22 percent have positive feelings about the "Affordable Care Act." Forty-six percent have negative feelings about "Obamacare," compared with 37 percent who have negative feelings about the "Affordable Care Act." Importantly, 30 percent of Americans didn't know enough about the "Affordable Care Act" to form an opinion, while only 12 percent didn't know enough about "Obamacare" to form an opinion (Liesman 2013). Because more people have heard of "Obamacare," that term yields stronger positives and negatives compared to the "Affordable Care Act." In Kentucky, 57 percent of residents have an unfavorable view of "Obamacare," but only 22 percent have an unfavorable view of "Kynect," the state's health-care exchange created by the ACA (Dann 2014). It is troubling to find that using synonyms can alter support for government policies; this suggests public opinion is not entirely based on substantive differences in the content of policies.

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Another interesting feature about this policy issue is that most Americans opposed the law in principle, at least up until 2017 (e.g., see table 5.1). They were concerned about government overreach, because the law goes against the American values of limited government and laissez-faire economics. However, they didn't want the subsidies ended (e.g., see table 5.2). Because ending the subsidies would mean that low- and moderate-income people would no longer be able to afford health insurance, the practical consequences of repealing the law would be negative. Most Americans don't want the government to stop helping those in need with their health insurance. A small majority opposed the new health-care law and supported eliminating it. At the same time, a small majority opposed repeal and wanted its subsidies continued. The conflict between ideologues and pragmatists is front and center in this dialetheial paradox. When Republicans claim that most Americans don't like the law, they are correct. When Democrats claim that most Americans don't want the law repealed, they are correct. Both proponents and opponents of the ACA have a majority of Americans on their side.

On the day before Donald Trump was inaugurated, a remarkable "flip-flop" occurred. A CNN/ORC poll found that for the first time since 2010, more Americans supported the ACA than opposed it (Agiesta 2017). In the first month of the new administration, as Republicans were publicly discussing replacement plans, public opinion shifted decisively. Support for the ACA reach an all-time high of 54 percent (Fingerhut 2017). This is the nature of transconsistency. There is a macrolevel framing effect. While President Obama was in office, there was zero probability of repeal; Obama would veto any congressional action to that effect. In this context pluralities and small majorities opposed the ACA. The very moment that the ACA was facing the real possibility of repeal, public opinion shifted and a majority supported the law. In that different context opposition became support. No matter what is in place now, the alternative is preferred. When they have it, they oppose it. If they are about to lose it, they want to keep it. This is a public that will not be satisfied. They will be unhappy with the law and unhappy without it. This occurs because they want two incompatible things. They like the benefits that the ACA provides, but they don't like the increased costs—insurance mandates, higher deductibles and premiums, and so on. This is perfectly rational. We like benefits, we don't like costs; we want benefits without costs.

Misinformation and Jamesian make believe also plays a role in the public's thinking about the ACA. "About 3-in-10 say that the law hasn't actually helped anyone in the US, including 58% of Republicans who feel that way. The law undoubtedly helped reduce the share of uninsured Americans, with

TABLE 5.1 *Most Americans Oppose the Affordable Care Act*

Now, I'd like to rate your feelings toward some people and organizations, with one hundred meaning a very warm, favorable feeling, zero meaning a very cold, unfavorable feeling, and fifty meaning not particularly warm or cold. You can use any number from zero to one hundred, the higher the number the more favorable your feelings are toward that person or organization. If you have no opinion or never heard of that person or organization, please say so. Would you say you are unable to give an opinion of . . . the Affordable Care Act or Obamacare, or have you never heard of . . . the Affordable Care Act or Obamacare?[1]

Warm 51–100	35%
Cool 0–49	54%
Not particularly warm or cold 50	9%
Never heard of/Don't know/Refused	2%

In general, how do you feel about the (2010) health-care law known as Obamacare? Do you think the law should stay in place or would you get rid of it?[2]

Keep the law in place	41%
Get rid of the law	51%
Don't know	8%

The new (2010) health-care law requires all Americans who can afford it to have some form of health insurance or else pay a penalty. If the Supreme Court rules that the government can require Americans to buy health insurance, how concerned are you that would mean the government can require Americans to buy other things it decides people should have? Very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned, not at all concerned?[3]

Very concerned	54%
Somewhat concerned	17%
Not very concerned	11%
Not at all concerned	16%
Don't know	2%

Sources

1. Survey by: *Democracy Corps Poll*, December 2013. Retrieved 26 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *Fox News Poll*, October 2013. Retrieved 26 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *Fox News Poll*, April 2012. Retrieved 26 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

the uninsured rate reaching historic lows following the implementation of some parts of the law" (Agiesta 2017). An NPR/Ipsos poll found that 54 percent of Democrats and Independents correctly knew that the number of uninsured Americans decreased, while only 41 percent of Republicans knew this fact (Kodjak 2017). Part of the reason costs have not been reduced is because there are no limits on end of life care. There are no "Death Panels" denying coverage to terminally ill patients. Half of Americans don't know whether there are limits or not, while a plurality of Republicans believe that such limits are in place (Kodjak 2017). This group believes they are being denied coverage, even though they are not. They oppose the part of the plan that would reduce the costs and they are upset because the costs remain high. They are also upset because they believe the cost reduction plan is in place and they don't like it. Millions of people who did not previously have health

TABLE 5.2 *Most Americans Don't Want the ACA Repealed or Subsidies Ended*

Now thinking about the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, what do you think Congress should do now about the health-care law? Repeal the law so it is not implemented at all, wait and see how things go before making any changes, provide more money to ensure it is implemented effectively?[1]

Repeal the law so it is not implemented at all	38%
Wait and see how things go before making any changes	35%
Provide more money to ensure it is implemented effectively	23%
Don't know/Refused	5%

The US Supreme Court is deciding a case that could undermine the entire (2010) health-care law by blocking federal subsidies that help some low- and moderate-income Americans pay for their health insurance. Do you think the court should or should not take this action?[2]

Should	38%
Should not	55%
No opinion	8%

Sources

1. Survey by: *United Technologies/National Journal Congressional Connection Poll*, November 2013. Retrieved 26 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *ABC News/Washington Post. ABC News/Washington Post Poll*, May 2015. Retrieved 13 August 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

insurance now have it, yet a large number of Americans believe no one benefited. Again, for those who believe there are no benefits and lots of costs, opposition to the law and support for repeal is rational. When they are told millions now have benefits, the standard reply is to claim the media is lying and that liberal bias is being expressed. It's simply not expedient to believe such things, if one seeks to oppose the ACA. Many of those same people also believe they are now being denied end of life care, this too is an expedient thing to believe if you want to oppose it. For some, your empirical evidence is a lie and their make-believe is "reality." For a subjectivist, their reality is as real to them as your reality is real to you.

A majority of Americans, including 58 percent of Republicans, support repeal "only if replacements can be enacted at the same time" (Agiesta 2017). They don't like the law but, but they don't want to lose the benefits that are in the law. The Republican proposal, dubbed the American Health Care Act (AHCA), would have decreased the number of Americans insured by 32 million in ten years because of cuts to Medicaid and increased costs for senior citizens by raising the cap that insurers can charge them (CBO 2017). Fifty-six percent of registered voters opposed the AHCA, and only 17 percent approved (Quinnipiac 2017). A small majority in the House opposed the AHCA, and Speaker Ryan removed the bill from consideration. A similar plan was defeated in the Senate, thus ending Republican efforts to repeal and replace the ACA. Congress seems to have been swayed by public pressure to keep the ACA, just as they were swayed by public pressure to repeal it before 2017.

Americans want to have the problem of high costs and lack of coverage fixed, but their lack of accurate information makes it difficult to gain support for various proposals. Can a person who doesn't know what they are talking about be truly conflicted? Yes, they can be. A person's lack of information won't change what they ultimately prefer, even when their preferences are incompatible. For people who abandon objective reality in favor of subjective reality, like William James promotes, empirical evidence isn't relevant. For this group—and it's a large group—more information, more facts, and more evidence will not shift their opinion. People who are unmoored from objective reality are more likely to be transconsistent. William James supported the scientific method and opposed the scientific method. He said we shouldn't change the definitions of words because it makes words meaningless, and also that we should change the definitions of words whenever it is expedient to do so. They may never have read the philosophy of William James, but millions of Americans follow his anarchic transconsistency.

This is not to say that there are not real problems in our health-care system, or that there are real solutions to these problems of one variety or another. Health-care policy experts have many ideas. But from the perspective of public opinion, it may be very difficult, perhaps impossible, to please the majority. Every benefit has an associated cost, and the opposition party will relentlessly focus on the costs to enhance their own standing. Both parties engage in this tactic. The costs make Americans oppose the various plans and the benefits make Americans support the various plans; since costs and benefits go together every plan is supported and opposed. When the political context, or macrolevel frame, emphasizes the costs and benefits at the same time, it is possible, if not probable, that majority support and opposition will occur at the same time.

WELFARE

The question-wording effect creates a dialetheial paradox on the issue of welfare programs. In a 1985 survey 63 percent of Americans wanted to increase spending on "assistance to the poor," but only 19 percent wanted to increase spending on "welfare" (e.g., see table 5.3). This was because the term *welfare* tapped into notions of wasteful government spending, while "assistance to the poor" didn't (Smith 1987). While government spending is a practical concern, one phrasing of the question taps into the value of charity and the other phrasing taps into the value of frugality. A synonym referring to the same object or government program seems to confuse the public and is an example of plasticity in opinion. This is a "true contradiction," because it is clear that there is a solid majority for and against the same government action. In this case a rose by any other name would not smell as sweet, because the name matters.

There are a number of programs designed to help the poor with cash, housing, food, and medical care. These include unemployment insurance, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF, formerly AFDC), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps), Section 8 vouchers, and Medicaid. It should make no difference whether the set of programs is called "welfare" or "assistance to the poor," because both terms refer to the same set of programs. The dialetheial paradox occurred because some of the respondents switched positions when the set of programs was renamed, even though there was no actual change in the contents of the set. Liberals who would like to expand antipoverty programs and conservatives who don't both have majority support for their respective views.

ENVIRONMENT

Support for more oil drilling and simultaneous support for environmental protection is a dialetheial paradox. As a practical matter people prefer lower fuel costs and even support regulations that would lower the price of fuel (e.g., see table 5.4). Additional drilling would increase the supply and lower the cost. However, this would encourage more consumption of fuel. Burning the fuel damages the environment, yet most Americans value environmental protections generally and the reduction of greenhouse gasses specifically. Half of Americans believe that the government should "strengthen regulations when it comes to environmental protection." A full 77 percent said they "support federal regulations which require industries to decrease their greenhouse gas emissions" (e.g., see table 5.5). Americans want safe drinking water and air that isn't toxic; it's a pragmatic concern for one's own well-being. These competing preferences for more oil drilling and a clean environment are selectively brought to mind under different circumstances. Sometimes one is favored and other times the contradictory alternative is favored. The two preferences, however, are not compatible with each other. The Republicans who support additional oil drilling and the Democrats who support stronger environmental regulations both have a majority on their side.

TABLE 5.3 *Antipoverty Programs*

Are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on welfare?[1]

Too little	19%
About right	33%
Too much	45%
Don't Know	4%

Are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on assistance to the poor?[2]

Too little	63%
About right	25%
Too much	10%
Don't Know	2%

Sources

1–2. Survey by: *General Social Survey 1985*, February 1985. Retrieved 29 January 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 5.4 *Support for Oil Drilling and Lowering the Price of Fuel*

As I read some possible government policies to address America's energy supply, tell me whether you would favor or oppose each. Would you favor or oppose the government . . . allowing more offshore oil and gas drilling in US waters?[1]

Favor	56%
Oppose	40%
Don't Know	4%

Please say whether you would favor or oppose taking each of the following steps to attempt to reduce the price of gasoline. How about imposing government price controls on the cost of gasoline?[2]

Favor	53%
Oppose	45%
No opinion	2%

Do you think the federal government should—or should not—regulate the price of gasoline?[3]

Yes, should	53%
No, should not	43%
No opinion	4%

Sources

1. Survey by: *Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. Pew Research Center for the People & the Press Political Survey*, December 2014. Retrieved 14 August 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *Gallup/CNN/USA Today Poll*, October 2005. Retrieved 20 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *Gallup Poll*, May 2008. Retrieved 6 February 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 5.5 *Americans Support Environmental Regulations*

Now let me read you two more statements some people on both sides of the issue make. Some people say: Scientists at the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) are the most qualified people to decide how to protect the public from pollution, not politicians in Congress. EPA scientists say that failing to update these standards would lead to more than 10,000 additional deaths and 50,000 additional asthma attacks every year. And by failing to update smog standards to reflect

Table 5.5 (cont'd)

the most recent research, Congress would be keeping parents in the dark about the true impact of pollution on their children. Congress should hold polluters accountable for their actions and let the EPA do its job, not let some polluters off the hook. Other people say: Given the weak economy, now is the worst time for the EPA to enact costly regulations that kill jobs. These new rules are unrealistic and unattainable. Under these rules, most of the country would be considered out of compliance and would essentially be closed to new or expanded manufacturing businesses. That would result in millions of American jobs being shipped to countries like India and China. Congress should stop the EPA because we shouldn't be creating new barriers to job creation when our country is trying to recover from a recession. Now that you've heard more about this issue let me ask you again, do you believe Congress should stop the EPA from updating these standards or not?[1]

Strongly believe Congress should not stop the EPA	43%
Somewhat believe Congress should not stop the EPA	21%
Somewhat believe Congress should stop the EPA	8%
Strongly believe Congress should stop the EPA	19%
Don't know/Refused	9%

Now let me read you two arguments some people on both sides of the issue make. Some people say: Scientists at the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) are the most qualified people to decide how to protect the public from carbon pollution, not politicians in Congress. The EPA is taking a commonsense approach, requiring polluters to do what is affordable to reduce emissions, something they've been doing for other forms of pollution for decades. Updating these standards will save lives and reduce asthma attacks. Congress should hold polluters accountable for their actions and let the EPA do its job, not let some polluters off the hook. Other people say: The Obama administration is trying to impose a backdoor cap-and-trade energy tax through the EPA. Their plan would impose more burdensome regulations that will cost American businesses hundreds of billion dollars, lead to higher gas and electricity prices for consumers, and cause businesses to ship tens of thousands of American jobs to India and China. Congress should stop the EPA because we need to make government smaller, not create new government bureaucracy and regulation. Now that you've heard more about this issue let me ask you again, do you believe Congress should stop the EPA from updating these standards on carbon dioxide or not?[2]

Strongly believe Congress should not stop the EPA	40%
Somewhat believe Congress should not stop the EPA	20%
Somewhat believe Congress should stop the EPA	12%
Strongly believe Congress should stop the EPA	23%
Don't know/Refused	5%

Table 5.5 (cont'd)

Would you support federal regulations which require industries to decrease their greenhouse gas emissions?[3]

Yes	77%
No	15%
Don't know	8%

Should the federal government strengthen regulations, keep current regulations as they are, or reduce regulations when it comes to environmental protection?[4]

Strengthen regulations	50%
Keep current regulations as they are	29%
Reduce regulations	17%
Don't know/Refused	4%

We have an obligation to be good stewards of the environment by supporting stricter environmental laws and regulations. Do you: Completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree, completely disagree?[5]

Completely agree	35%
Mostly agree	51%
Mostly disagree	6%
Completely disagree	6%
Don't know/Refused	2%

Sources

1. Survey by: *American Lung Association Survey*, June 2011. Retrieved 12 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *American Lung Association Survey*, February 2011. Retrieved 12 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *Research!America/APHA Attitudes Toward Public Health Survey*, October 2004. Retrieved 12 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

4. Survey by: *Pew Research Center for the People & the Press Political Survey*, February 2012. Retrieved 12 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

5. Survey by: *Faith and Global Policy Challenges Survey*, September 2011. Retrieved 12 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Government regulation is another area where context matters. Most Americans believe that "taxes and regulations" present an obstacle to success. Most are worried that "there will be too much regulation of business by the government." A large majority agreed with the statement, "that the US (United States) government needed to be more business-friendly, in that it is much easier to build a factory in China but almost impossible to do so these days in America largely because of regulations." A majority opposes regulations on tobacco products. Most Americans "disapprove of a new law that gives the federal government power to regulate the manufacturing and marketing of cigarettes and other tobacco products" (e.g., see table 5.6). Overall, there is an ideological hostility toward regulation.

This hostility diminishes when the safety and well-being of Americans is an issue. This is particularly true when the regulation is aimed at protecting children. A majority believed that "government regulation is needed to protect consumers, workers or the environment." Most Americans would support these regulations even if it cost them more money. Most Americans support regulations that protect children from tobacco and violent video games. They strongly support "giv[ing] the Food and Drug Administration the authority to regulate tobacco products and their marketing," because "much of that marketing directly impacts kids." A strong majority supports the banning of smoking in all public places because they are concerned about the health effects of secondhand smoke. A majority even supports the "government placing limits on television advertising for junk food that is aimed at children, similar to existing limits on tobacco and alcohol ads" (e.g., see table 5.7). By adding a specific context opposition to regulation becomes support for regulation.

The issue, however, is that these regulations that Americans support are precisely the regulations that many businesses oppose. The environmental regulations are the reasons why it is easier to build a factory in China. The increased cost of compliance is the reason businesses oppose environmental regulations, it impacts their bottom line. Restrictions on the marketing, sale, and use of tobacco reduce the profitability of tobacco companies. Limiting the sale of violent video games and the marketing of junk food would reduce profits for computer game and snack food companies. It is a "true contradiction" to oppose regulations that are bad for business, while at the same time supporting those regulations because they protect people from the products or externalities that businesses produce.

This suggests that respondents do not fully consider the consequences of making particular choices. It also means that liberals and conservatives can both claim to have the majority of Americans on their side even when they are directly at odds with each other over the issue of government regulations that impact businesses.

FEDERAL BUDGET

When it comes to taxing and spending Americans are decidedly confused. Most Americans support and most Americans oppose spending cuts. Most Americans support and most Americans oppose tax increases. In addition, most Americans grossly overestimate the amount of money that is spent on particular programs. This leads to unrealistic solutions to the problem of balancing the federal budget.

A strong majority of Americans believe that "big government" is a threat to their country. They also tend to believe that the best way to improve the economy is to cut taxes and reduce government spending (e.g., see table 5.8). In the abstract they believe that the government should have a limited role. They want lower taxes and fewer government services. They don't believe the government should provide people with health care or be concerned with income inequality. There is even support for a less active foreign policy, which would suggest less spending would be needed for military operations (e.g., see table 5.9).

When the issue of budget cuts is put in a specific context, however, support for reducing spending plummets. Americans oppose cuts to national defense, Medicare, Social Security, and food stamps (e.g., see table 5.10). With regard to spending on health care, scientific research, national defense, policing, fire protection, education, and space exploration, a majority of Americans believed that spending levels were insufficient or about right, only a small minority believed that spending needed to be cut (e.g., see table 5.11). When Congress instituted automatic budget cuts that would take effect if a budget agreement wasn't reached, most Americans believed the plan would cause a crisis or major problems. On a large range of issues Americans don't like the idea of reducing current spending levels. These findings are consistent with findings from the Pew Research Center, which found that a majority of Americans did not support decreasing funding for all of the nineteen areas of spending considered in the study. Indeed, Americans supported an increase in funding for education and veteran's benefits (Pew Research Center 2013). Americans' ideological values come into direct conflict with their pragmatic concerns, they are very willing to abandon their "guiding principles" because

these values aren't a real constraint on behavior when something else seems more expedient.

Consistent with the idea of a smaller government offering fewer services, Americans strongly support lower taxes. They are not willing to pay more in taxes to reduce the cost of private health insurance or to increase insurance coverage. They oppose increasing entry fees to the national parks and oppose taxes on soft drinks and junk food. They oppose raising income, sales, or property taxes in order to cover government employee pension and health-care plans. A majority supports lowering taxes on dividend income, which is primarily paid by wealthier Americans (e.g., see table 5.12). Most Americans are uncomfortable with the idea of increasing taxes in an effort to balance the federal budget.

Consistent with the preference for not cutting government programs, most Americans support raising taxes and fees to cover their cost. This is especially true if the taxes are levied on upper-income individuals (e.g., see table 5.13). They also support the idea of an internet sales tax to avoid budget cuts. A majority would support reducing the mortgage interest deduction to increase federal revenue and lower the deficit. Most Americans support eliminating tax deductions targeted toward gas and oil companies. When faced with a looming budget crisis, Americans would support higher taxes in order to avoid cuts to the programs and services they enjoy.

The United States has a structural budget deficit. That means that under our existing tax policy federal revenues are insufficient to cover the combined cost of all federal expenditures. In one sense Americans are getting exactly what they want; they have low taxes and they can keep getting all of the services they are used to receiving. But this is precisely what leads to a budget deficit. In order to reduce the deficit and balance the budget most Americans would support a combination of tax increases and budget cuts (e.g., see table 5.14).

The Bowles-Simpson plan provided for exactly this type of solution. The bipartisan committee created a plan to increase taxes and reduce government spending. The plan included cuts to national defense and Medicare, along with other reductions throughout the federal budget. The plan also called for a variety of tax increases, including Social Security and gasoline tax increases. It called for reductions in tax deductions, like the mortgage interest deduction, aimed at increasing revenues. If fully implemented, the plan would balance the federal budget (Bowles and Simpson 2013). This would seem like precisely the type of plan most Americans would support.

Unfortunately, Americans are trapped in a dialetheial paradox when it comes to government budgeting. To summarize, Americans ideologically prefer a smaller government with fewer services and lower taxes. They also

TABLE 5.6 *Opposition to Government Regulations*

Please tell me if you believe this is a major obstacle, a minor obstacle, or not much of an obstacle in the way of people getting ahead: taxes and government regulations.[1]

Major obstacle	58%
Minor obstacle	27%
Not much of an obstacle	12%
Don't know/Refused	3%

Which worries you more that there will be too much regulation of business by the government, or not enough regulation of business by the government?[2]

Too much regulation	62%
Not enough regulation	31%
No opinion	8%

Former Apple CEO (chief executive officer) Steve Jobs once said that the US (United States) government needed to be more business-friendly, in that it is much easier to build a factory in China but almost impossible to do so these days in America largely because of regulations and unnecessary costs. Do you agree or disagree with that statement?[3]

Agree	68%
Disagree	26%
Don't know/Refused	6%

Do you approve or disapprove of a new law that gives the federal government power to regulate the manufacturing and marketing of cigarettes and other tobacco products?[4]

Approve	46%
Disapprove	52%
Don't know	2%

Sources

1. Survey by: *Allstate/National Journal Heartland Monitor Poll*, September 2012. Retrieved 8 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *Gallup Poll*, November 2012. Retrieved 8 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *New Models National Brand Poll*, February 2012. Retrieved 12 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

4. Survey by: *Gallup Poll*, June 2009. Retrieved 8 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 5.7 *Support for Government Regulations*

Which of the following statements comes closer to your point of view? Government regulation usually does more harm than good. Government regulation is needed to protect consumers, workers or the environment.[1]

Government regulation usually does more harm than good	44%
Government regulation is needed to protect consumers, workers or the environment	56%
Refused	1%

As you may know, hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking," is a process used to develop deposits of natural gas recently discovered in many regions of America. Environmentalists and some residents living near drilling operations worry that fracking can contaminate drinking water sources and worsen climate change. The oil and natural gas industry maintains the process is safe and can create jobs and promote energy independence. Which of the following comes closest to your view of what the federal government should do on this issue? Ban fracking altogether because it's not safe for the environment, increase regulation of fracking to protect the environment, but not ban it, or reduce regulation of fracking to encourage more natural gas (NG) production?[2]

Ban fracking altogether	15%
Increase regulation, but not ban	53%
Reduce regulation to encourage NG production	25%
Neither/Other (Volunteer)	1%
Don't know/Refused	7%

Please tell me whether you would strongly support, moderately support, moderately oppose, or strongly oppose each of the following. Local regulations requiring any newly constructed home to be more energy efficient. These regulations would increase the initial cost of a new home by about $7,500, but save about $17,000 in utility bills over 30 years.[3]

Strongly support	41%
Moderately support	33%
Moderately oppose	11%
Strongly oppose	12%
Not sure/Refused	3%

Table 5.7 (cont'd)

Please tell me whether you would strongly support, moderately support, moderately oppose, or strongly oppose each of the following. Local regulations requiring electric utilities to produce at least 20 percent of their electricity from wind, solar, or other renewable energy sources. It would cost the average household about $8.50 a month.[4]

Strongly support	37%
Moderately support	32%
Moderately oppose	15%
Strongly oppose	13%
Not sure/Refused	3%

Which of the following statements comes closer to your point of view? Statement A: We should give the Food and Drug Administration the authority to regulate tobacco products and their marketing. The tobacco companies spend more than $13 billion dollars every year marketing their deadly products, and much of that marketing directly impacts kids. The marketing restrictions included in the bill will help prevent tobacco companies from addicting our children. Statement B: We should not give the Food and Drug Administration the authority to regulate tobacco products because the marketing restrictions included in the proposed bill would be an unconstitutional limitation on free speech and restrict the right of tobacco companies to market their products to adults who choose not to smoke.[5]

Statement A, strongly	55%
Statement A, not so strongly	18%
Statement B, not so strongly	9%
Statement B, strongly	16%
Don't know	3%

Do you favor or oppose the government placing limits on television advertising for junk food that is aimed at children, similar to existing limits on tobacco and alcohol ads?[6]

Favor	55%
Opposed	42%
Don't know	2%
Refused	1%

Do you think the government should be able to prevent the sales or rentals of violent video games to children under 18, or not?[7]

Yes, should be able to prevent	68%
No, should not be able to prevent	31%
No opinion	2%

Table 5.7 (cont'd)

Should smoking in all public places be made totally illegal, or not?[8]

Yes, made illegal	59%
No, not made illegal	38%
No opinion	2%

Sources

1. Survey by: *Duke University Climate Change Survey*, January 2013. Retrieved 8 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *United Technologies/National Journal Congressional Connection Poll*, May 2012. Retrieved 2 February 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *Yale University/Gfk Roper Environmental Issues Survey*, September 2007. Retrieved 12 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

4. Survey by: *Yale University/Gfk Roper Environmental Issues Survey*, September 2007. Retrieved 12 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

5. Survey by: *FDA Regulation of Tobacco Survey*, May 2007. Retrieved 13 April 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

6. Survey by: *Health Pulse of America Survey*, September 2005. Retrieved 13 April 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

7. Survey by: *First Amendment Center Poll*, October 2010. Retrieved 8 March 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

8. Survey by: *Gallup Poll*, July 2011. Retrieved 6 February 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 5.8 *Americans Support Budget Cuts*

In your opinion, which of the following will be the biggest threat to the country in the future big business, big labor, or big government?[1]

Big business	26%
Big labor	8%
Big government	64%
No opinion	2%

Table 5.8 (cont'd)

Now I'm going to read you some pairs of statements. After I read each pair, please tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own view, even if neither is exactly right. First statement: The best way to improve our economy and create jobs is to invest more to put people to work, develop new industries, and help businesses grow in expanding, new areas. Second statement: The best way to improve our economy and create jobs is to cut government spending and cut taxes so businesses can prosper and the private sector can start creating jobs.[2]

First statement strongly	34%
First statement not strongly	8%
Second statement not strongly	7%
Second statement strongly	44%
Both (Volunteer)	3%
Neither (Volunteer)	2%
Don't know/Refused	2%

Sources

1. Survey by: *Gallup Poll*, November 2011. Retrieved 21 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *Democracy Corps/Campaign for America's Future Poll*, July 2010. Retrieved 21 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 5.9 *Americans Prefer Smaller Government*

Do you think it is the responsibility of the federal government to make sure all Americans have health-care coverage, or is that not the responsibility of the federal government?[1]

Yes, government responsibility	44%
No, not government responsibility	54%
No opinion	2%

If you had to choose, would you rather have a smaller government providing fewer services, or a bigger government providing more services?[2]

Smaller government, fewer services	51%
Bigger government, more services	40%
Depends (Volunteer)	4%
Don't know/Refused	6%

Table 5.9 (cont'd)

Do you think it is or is not the responsibility of the government to reduce the differences in income between people with high incomes and those with low incomes?[3]

It is the government's responsibility	29%
It isn't the government's responsibility	67%
Don't know/Refused	4%

Generally speaking, would you say you favor smaller government with fewer services, or larger government with more services?[4]

Smaller government, fewer services	56%
Larger government, more services	38%
No opinion	7%

I'm going to read you some pairs of statements that will help us understand how you feel about a number of things. As I read each pair, tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own views—even if neither is exactly right. It's best for the future of our country to be active in world affairs. We should pay less attention to problems overseas and concentrate on problems here at home.[5]

Be active in world affairs	32%
Concentrate on domestic affairs	61%
Neither/Both equally	7%
Don't know/Refused	1%

Sources

1. Survey by: *Gallup Poll*, November 2012. Retrieved 9 March 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *Pew Research Center for the People & the Press Political Survey*, September 2012. Retrieved 31 March 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *Reason-Rupe Poll*, September 2012. Retrieved 31 March 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

4. Survey by: *ABC News/Washington Post Poll*, August 2012. Retrieved 19 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

5. Survey by: *Pew Social Trends Poll*, July 2011. Retrieved 26 February 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 5.10 *Americans Oppose Spending Cuts*

Do you think each of the following taxes and fees are acceptable or not acceptable to avoid further spending cuts? Cuts to defense spending?[1]

Acceptable	43%
Not acceptable	54%
Unsure	2%

Do you think each of the following taxes and fees are acceptable or not acceptable to avoid further spending cuts? Cuts to Medicare?[2]

Acceptable	18%
Not acceptable	80%
Unsure	2%

Do you think each of the following taxes and fees are acceptable or not acceptable to avoid further spending cuts? Cuts to Social Security?[3]

Acceptable	13%
Not acceptable	86%
Unsure	1%

I'm going to read you some government programs whose spending could be cut to reduce the federal budget deficit. As I read each one, please tell me if you think spending on that program should be cut back a lot, some, or not at all to reduce the deficit. What about Medicare, the medical program for the elderly?[4]

A lot	4%
Some	14%
Not at all	81%
Don't know/Refused	1%

To help reduce the federal budget deficit, do you think government spending on food stamps that go to low-income families should be cut or not?[5]

Yes/Cut	28%
No/Not cut	66%
Don't know/No answer	5%

Sources

1–3. Survey by: *McClatchy/Marist Poll*, December 2013. Retrieved 19 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

4. Survey by: *United Technologies/National Journal Congressional Connection Poll*, October 2013. Retrieved 19 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

5. Survey by: *Quinnipiac University Poll*, September 2013. Retrieved 19 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 5.11 *Americans Oppose Budget Cuts*

If you were making up the budget for the federal government this year (2011), would you increase spending, decrease spending or keep spending the same for health care?[1]

Increase spending	41%
Decrease spending	24%
Keep spending the same	30%
Don't know/Refused	5%

Please tell me if you would favor or oppose substantial changes to the program. Significantly cut federal funding for medical and scientific research.[2]

Favor	26%
Oppose	72%
Not sure	2%

Should federal spending on medical research using embryonic stem cells be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?[3]

Increased	33%
Decreased	23%
Same	36%
Don't know/No answer	8%

Do you think that we should increase our spending on national defense, keep it about the same, or cut it back?[4]

Increase	13%
Keep about the same	53%
Cut back	30%
Don't know/Refused	4%

As you may know, last year (2011) Congress and the President (Barack Obama) agreed to a program to reduce the federal deficit that some people call the "fiscal cliff." Unless Congress and the president reach an agreement within the next few weeks, tax rates will automatically rise in January (2013) for almost all Americans, and major spending cuts will automatically occur next year in most government spending programs, including military programs. If those automatic tax increases and spending cuts occur next year, do you think that would cause a crisis, major problems, minor problems, or no problems at all for the United States?[5]

Crisis	24%
Major problems	44%
Minor problems	24%
Not a problem	7%
No opinion	1%

Table 5.11 (cont'd)

Now I am going to read you some of the specific spending cuts proposed in the House Republicans' budget for this year (2011). After I read each one, please tell me whether you favor or oppose it. It cuts funding to local government, which will mean further loss of middle-class jobs in police, fire, and teaching and likely higher local property taxes.[6]

Strongly favor	9%
Somewhat favor	13%
Somewhat oppose	25%
Strongly oppose	49%
Don't know/Refused	5%

I am going to read out a list of some proposals for reducing the national budget deficit. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each idea. End money for commercial space flight.[7]

Strongly agree	23%
Tend to agree	19%
Tend to disagree	23%
Strongly disagree	26%
Don't know/Not sure	9%

We are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I'm going to name some of these problems, and for each one I'd like you to tell me whether you think we're spending too much money on it, too little money, or about the right amount. Are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on the space exploration program?[8]

Too much	35%
About right	42%
Too little	16%
Don't know	7%

Another possible area for reductions lies in salaries and financial benefits the Defense Department pays to military personnel. Some people say reducing salaries and benefits would not be fair to military families, risk hurting morale and make recruitment more difficult. Others say that military personnel get very generous benefits and, like other Americans, they need to do their share to deal with the current budget crisis. Since 1982 military pay has risen faster than private-sector pay. Military wage increases could be capped at half a percentage point below an average of private-sector wage increases. This would save $2 billion a year. What is your position on this proposal?[9]

Favor	41%
Oppose	57%
Don't know/Refuse	2%

(Sources on next page)

Table 5.11 Sources

1. Survey by: *Pew Research Center for the People & the Press Political Survey*, February 2011. Retrieved 15 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *Bloomberg Poll*, March 2011. Retrieved 16 February 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *CBS News Poll*, Deccember 2010. Retrieved 23 February 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

4. Survey by: *Pew Research Center for the People & the Press Political Typology Survey*, February 2011. Retrieved 15 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

5. Survey by: *CNN/ORC International Poll*, November 2012. Retrieved 20 March 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

6. Survey by: *Democracy Corps Poll*, February 2011. Retrieved 10 February 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

7. Survey by: *Ipsos-Public Affairs/Reuters Poll*, December 2010. Retrieved 17 February 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

8. Survey by: *General Social Survey*, Mar, 2010. Retrieved March 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

9. Survey by: *PIPA/Knowledge Networks Poll*, April 2012. Retrieved 17 February 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 5.12 *Americans Support Lower Taxes*

Would you find it acceptable or unacceptable for you to pay higher taxes so that health insurance companies cannot deny you coverage or charge you higher premiums based on pre-existing conditions?[1]

Acceptable	24%
Unacceptable	71%
Depends (Volunteer)	3%
Not applicable (Volunteer)	1%
Don't know/Refused	1%

Table 5.12 (cont'd)

Do you think each of the following taxes and fees are acceptable or not acceptable to avoid further spending cuts? Increase fees at national parks?[2]

Acceptable	39%
Not acceptable	59%
Unsure	2%

As I read some policies that have been considered by some cities and states around the country, please tell me whether you would favor or oppose each. Raising taxes on sugary soft drinks and unhealthy foods?[3]

Favor	35%
Oppose	64%
Don't know/Refused	1%

Would you rather have more government services if that meant more taxes, less government services in order to reduce taxes, or services and taxes about as we have them now?[4]

More services/More taxes	20%
Less services/Reduce taxes	47%
Services and taxes as now	29%
No opinion	4%

Would you rather have more government involvement in addressing the nation's problems if that meant more taxes, less government involvement in addressing the nation's problems in order to reduce taxes, or government involvement and taxes about as we have them now?[5]

More involved/More taxes	13%
Less involved/Reduce taxes	53%
Involvement and taxes as now	31%
No opinion	2%

Some state and local governments are finding they do not have enough money to fund government employee retirement benefits, including pensions and health-care benefits. If your city or state faced this situation, would you favor or oppose this as a way to help fund government employee retirement benefits? Raising property, sales, or income taxes.[6]

Favor	26%
Oppose	73%
Don't know/Refused	1%

Table 5.12 (cont'd)

Based on what you have heard or read, please say whether you favor or oppose each of the following proposals as part of an economic stimulus bill. How about reducing the taxes people pay on dividends they get from stocks they own?[7]

Favor	58%
Oppose	37%
No opinion	5%

How comfortable are you with the idea of increasing tax revenues to reduce the federal deficit that would include such things as increasing taxes on gasoline, limiting deductions on home mortgages over five hundred thousand dollars, and changes to corporate taxes? Are you very comfortable, somewhat comfortable, somewhat uncomfortable, or not comfortable at all?[8]

Very comfortable	10%
Somewhat comfortable	29%
Somewhat uncomfortable	23%
Not comfortable at all	36%
Not sure	2%

Sources

1. Survey by: *Reason-Rupe Poll*, December 2013. Retrieved 19 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *McClatchy/Marist Poll*, December 2013. Retrieved 19 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *Pew Research Center for the People & the Press Poll*, October 2013. Retrieved 19 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

4–5. Survey by: *Gallup Poll*, September 2013. Retrieved 19 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

6. Survey by: *Reason-Rupe Poll*, September 2013. Retrieved 19 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

7. Survey by: *Gallup/CNN/USA Today Poll*, January 2003. Retrieved 19 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

8. Survey by: *NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll*, November 2010. Retrieved 19 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 5.13 *Americans Support Higher Taxes*

Undoing sequester cuts could mean other government spending will have to be reduced. Would you still support undoing the sequester budget cuts if it meant raising taxes on upper-income families by eliminating deductions or credits?[1]

Yes, would still support undoing them	73%
No, would no longer support undoing them	25%
Don't know/Refused	2%

Do you think each of the following taxes and fees are acceptable or not acceptable to avoid further spending cuts? Increase the Social Security tax for high-wage earners?[2]

Acceptable	66%
Not acceptable	30%
Unsure	4%

Do you think each of the following taxes and fees are acceptable or not acceptable to avoid further spending cuts? Tax Internet sales?[3]

Acceptable	57%
Not acceptable	39%
Unsure	5%

Under sequestration a second round of across the board federal budget spending cuts is scheduled to take effect. Would you prefer to go ahead with the across the board spending cuts to the federal budget as originally scheduled or to reopen negotiations over spending cuts and replace some with increases to taxes and fees?[4]

To go ahead with the across the board spending cuts to the federal budget as originally scheduled	39%
To reopen negotiations over spending cuts and replace some with increases to taxes and fees	51%
Unsure	9%

As you may know, some people have proposed that one way to reduce the deficit is to limit the tax credits and deductions that reduce people's taxes. As I read each, tell me if you think the deduction should be reduced for all taxpayers, reduced only for taxpayers earning more than $250,000 per year, or not reduced for any taxpayers. What about the deduction for interest on home mortgages?[5]

Reduced for all taxpayers	35%
Reduced for taxpayers earning over $250,000 per year only	23%
Not reduced for any taxpayers	34%
Don't know/Refused	7%

Table 5.13 (cont'd)

Currently there are certain tax deductions that only oil and gas companies receive when they prepare their corporate income taxes. One proposal is to repeal these targeted tax deductions. Enacting this would raise $2 billion in extra revenue in 2011 and $2 billion in 2015. Do you think this change would be acceptable, just tolerable, tolerable only if delayed until 2015, not tolerable?[6]

Acceptable	54%
Just tolerable	19%
Tolerable only if delayed until 2015	8%
Not tolerable	13%
Don't know/Refused	6%

Sources

1. Survey by: *United Technologies/National Journal Congressional Connection Poll*, December 2013. Retrieved 19 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2–3. Survey by: *McClatchy/Marist Poll*, December 2013. Retrieved 19 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

4. Survey by: *McClatchy/Marist Poll*, December 2013. Retrieved 18 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

5. Survey by: *United Technologies/National Journal Congressional Connection Poll*, October 2013. Retrieved 19 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

6. Survey by: *PPC/Knowledge Networks Survey*, October 2010. Retrieved 19 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 5.14 *Most Americans Prefer a Combination of Spending Cuts and Tax Increases*

In your view, what is the best way to reduce the federal budget deficit? Should we mostly focus on cutting major programs, mostly focus on increasing taxes, or should we do a combination of both?[1]

Cutting major programs	20%
Increasing taxes	7%
Combination of both	63%
Deficit is not a priority/Don't focus on deficit (Vol.)	1%
Don't know/Refused	9%

Table 5.14 (cont'd)

Overall, what do you think is the best way to reduce the federal budget deficit—by cutting federal spending, by increasing taxes, or by a combination of both?[2]

Cut federal spending	33%
Increasing taxes	4%
Combination of both	60%
Don't know/No answer	4%

If Congress does pass, and the president (Barack Obama) signs, legislation to act on each of the following issues, please tell me how pleased or disappointed you would be. Reducing the federal deficit, even if that means raising taxes and cutting spending. Would you be very pleased, somewhat pleased, somewhat disappointed, or very disappointed if Congress passes and the president signs legislation on this?[3]

Very pleased	20%
Somewhat pleased	34%
Somewhat disappointed	21%
Very disappointed	20%
Don't know/Refused	5%

Sources

1. Survey by: *Pew Research Center for the People & the Press Political Survey*, December 2013. Retrieved 19 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *CBS News/New York Times Poll*, September 2013. Retrieved 19 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *United Technologies/National Journal Congressional Connection Poll*, November 2013. Retrieved 19 January 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

oppose cuts to existing programs because of practical considerations. They would rather have tax increases than reduce the amount that is currently spent on existing government services. But they oppose tax increases because they'd rather have a smaller government with fewer services. The Bowles-Simpson plan was abandoned because Republicans opposed the tax increases and Democrats opposed the reductions to Medicare and other programs. Most Americans support the Republican Party's commitment to lower taxes and a smaller government with fewer services. Most Americans also support the Democratic Party's opposition to reductions in favored programs and their support for higher taxes on the wealthy to pay for the programs. It is a true reflection of the "general will" to propose a plan that most Americans would support and to abandon that same plan because most Americans would oppose it.

Another issue that makes solving the structural deficit problematic is public ignorance. Many Americans grossly overestimate the amount that is spent on particular budget items (CNN 2011). A majority of Americans could not identify Social Security or national defense as the top two areas of government spending. Indeed, "only 14 percent correctly named Social Security and 37 percent named defense as one of the top two" (Kaiser Family Foundation 1994). Amazingly, "four-in-ten Americans (40 percent) thought welfare was one of the two largest areas of federal spending" (Kaiser Family Foundation 1994). By underestimating the amount spent on Social Security and national defense and overestimating the amount spent on welfare programs, foreign aid, and PBS, the public has unrealistic expectations and unworkable solutions to budgetary problems.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Americans believe that corporations and unions should have the same free speech rights as individuals, which is what the Supreme Court ruled in *Citizens United v. FEC*. Most Americans also believe that campaign donations are a form of freedom of speech and presumably should be protected as such (e.g., see table 5.15). However, solid majorities favor campaign finance limits (e.g., see table 5.16). Contrary to the decision in *Citizens United*, most Americans believe that super PACs should be illegal. Most Americans believe that placing limits on campaign donations is more important than protecting individuals', corporations', or unions' rights to freely support political campaigns. This directly contradicts the poll that indicated that freedom of speech is more important than campaign limits. In principle, Americans support freedom

TABLE 5.15 *Americans Oppose Campaign Limits*

Now please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statements. Corporations and labor unions should have the same free speech rights that individual citizens have in supporting political candidates.[1]

Strongly agree	39%
Mildly agree	22%
Mildly disagree	10%
Strongly disagree	24%
Don't know/Refused	5%

Turning to the issue of (election) campaign contributions, do you consider money given to political candidates to be a form of free speech protected by the First Amendment to the constitution, or not?[2]

Yes, free speech	57%
No, not	37%
No opinion	7%

Sources

1. Survey by: *State of the First Amendment Survey*, July 2010. Retrieved 13 April 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *Gallup/First Amendment Center Poll*, October 2009. Retrieved 13 April 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 5.16 *Americans Support Campaign Limits*

Now I'm going to read you some pairs of statements. After I read each pair, please tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own view, even if neither is exactly right. First statement: I'm more likely to vote for a candidate for Congress who says we should have commonsense limits on the amount of money people can contribute to political campaigns because there is too much money in politics. Second statement: I'm more likely to vote for a candidate for Congress who says we should not limit the amount of money people can contribute to political campaigns because that undermines free speech.[1]

First statement strongly	59%
First statement not strongly	14%
Second statement not strongly	9%
Second statement strongly	13%
Both (Volunteered)	*
Neither (Volunteered)	3%
Don't know/Refused	2%

Table 5.16 (cont'd)

Organizations known as super PACs (political action committees) can raise and spend unlimited amounts of money on behalf of candidates they support. Supporters say this is a form of free speech while opponents say this allows groups or wealthy individuals to have unfair influence. Do you think it should be legal or illegal for these super PACs to operate?[2]

Should be legal—strongly	9%
Should be legal—somewhat	16%
Should be illegal—somewhat	16%
Should be illegal—strongly	52%
No opinion	6%

Recently the US (United States) Supreme Court reversed certain campaign finance laws on the basis that they violated free speech, and ruled the first amendment allows unrestricted corporate and union spending on campaign advertisements. Do you approve or disapprove of the Supreme Court decision?[3]

Approve	27%
Disapprove	53%
Don't know	19%

Thinking about political (election) campaign contributions and free speech, which is the greater priority for you, personally—placing limits on how much individuals, corporations or unions can contribute to political campaigns or protecting individuals, corporations, or unions rights to freely support political campaigns?[4]

Placing limits on campaign contributions	52%
Protecting right to support campaigns	41%
No opinion	7%

* means that 0% of respondents chose this response.

Sources

1. Survey by: *Democracy Corps/Public Campaign Action Fund Poll*, April 2012. Retrieved 13 April 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *ABC News/Washington Post Poll*, March 2012. Retrieved 13 April 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll*, February 2010. Retrieved 13 April 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

4. Survey by: *Gallup/First Amendment Center Poll*, October 2009. Retrieved 13 April 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

of speech and they believe that campaign donations are a form of protected speech. In practice, they believe that interest groups generally, and unions and corporations specifically, have too much influence in our political process and they support limits on campaign donations. Opponents of campaign finance limits argue that most Americans don't want freedom of speech curtailed, especially during elections, and that most Americans believe campaign donations are a form of speech. Proponents of campaign finance limits argue that most Americans support limits on campaign donations, that most Americans oppose *Citizens United*, and that most Americans believe that super PACs should be illegal. Opponents and supporters of campaign finance limits both have the support of a majority of Americans.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, we have seen how the public is often conflicted on a wide variety of domestic policy issues. When it comes to the Affordable Care Act most Americans oppose the policy on principle because they do not believe it is the government's job to provide health care to citizens who may need it. But most Americans don't want the act to be repealed because they don't want those benefiting from the program to lose their health insurance. Americans believe in limited government and self-reliance, they also value charity and providing for the less fortunate. These ideological commitments lead them to be on both sides of the antipoverty debate. Americans support more oil drilling because they want lower prices on gasoline, but they also want to preserve the environment and lower greenhouse gas emissions. In this case, they support a policy that is directly at odds with another policy they support. They oppose government regulations that harm businesses, but support government regulations that keep them and their children safe. The problem is that these regulations are one in the same. In principle, they want a smaller government with lower taxes and fewer services. In practice, they don't want to lose the benefits they are accustomed to receiving and would support higher taxes to keep them as they are. In chapter 4, we learned that most Americans don't want their freedom of speech to be curtailed during elections. In this chapter, we added that most Americans believe that campaign contributions are a form of speech. However, they support campaign finance limits that would presumably limit the speech they didn't want curtailed.

On a number of domestic policy issues the majority can be on two sides of the same debate. This means that both proponents and opponents of a particular policy can legitimately claim that they have the support of a majority

of Americans. Because we live in a democracy, they argue their perspective should carry the day. The American public is transconsistent because they want to have it both ways.

The following pairs of statements can be made by political opponents to support their respective positions:

- Most Americans oppose the Affordable Care Act.
- Most Americans don't want the Affordable Care Act to be repealed.
- Most Americans oppose increased spending on welfare.
- Most Americans support increased spending on assistance to the poor.
- Most Americans support additional oil drilling.
- Most Americans support stricter environmental regulations that would limit greenhouse gas emissions.
- Most Americans oppose regulations that harm businesses.
- Most Americans support regulations that keep them and their children safe.
- Most Americans support budget cuts and lower taxes.
- Most Americans oppose cuts to the government programs they enjoy and support tax increases to keep them funded at current levels.
- Most Americans don't want their freedom of speech curtailed during elections and they believe campaign contributions are a form of free speech.
- Most Americans support limits on campaign contributions.

This evidence suggests that dialetheial paradoxes exist in public opinion. On many issues, there is a majority on both sides of incompatible claims or proposals. Before we consider the implications of this on democratic political systems, we'll turn next to contradictions in foreign policy.

6. Foreign Policy

Americans are both isolationist and interventionist in foreign policy. They will give different responses to foreign policy questions depending on the particular circumstances involved. This is very much in line with the pragmatic way of thinking, yet there are ideological commitments that also motivate the public. Sometimes Americans will support and oppose the same policy because they are misinformed, because the issue is framed differently, or because different issues are made more salient by adding certain words to the question being asked.

Ideologically, Americans tend to be isolationist and would prefer that our government focus on problems here at home. If the United States is threatened, however, they will support interventions aimed at protecting the American public. Self-interest seems to guide the public's foreign policy preferences, but this self-interest cuts in both directions. Americans are willing to intervene and get involved in foreign conflicts to protect American interests, but they oppose the high costs of intervention (lives and treasure) because it is against our interests. The result is that proponents and opponents of a particular foreign policy action can often both acquire majority support by claiming that their own view is in our best interest.

ABSTRACT FOREIGN POLICY VALUES

On questions of foreign policy Americans respond to certain types of abstract questions based on their own values and concerns. As a general rule, most Americans aren't warmongers. Indeed, there is a strong isolationist pull in American public opinion. Most Americans would prefer diplomatic resolutions to our international concerns, rather than military interventions. An overwhelming 74 percent would prefer that America focus on problems at home rather than promote freedom and democracy abroad (e.g., see table 6.1). Most Americans don't believe the United States should topple dictatorships. This suggests that there is an inward-looking American public that isn't too concerned about the problems faced by outsiders. Nor do they feel compelled to promote the values of freedom and democracy elsewhere in the world. On the other hand, there are instances where Americans feel compelled to

intervene. In the case of genocide, 70 percent of Americans believe we should deploy American troops to stop a government from massacring its own people. There are some events that are so horrendous that we have a moral obligation to intervene.

ISOLATIONISM

The generally isolationist tendencies are applied to many concrete situations. Americans prefer a diplomatic solution to the conflict over the Iranian nuclear program. Regarding Syria, most Americans don't believe the United States should intervene when chemical weapons are used in a foreign country's civil war. Even if more than 100,000 people are killed in a conflict, this is not sufficient reason for the United States to get involved. Most Americans don't believe we should get involved in Iranian elections; this is consistent with the paltry support for promoting democracy. A supermajority believes that the United States should stay out of the civil unrest occurring in Egypt, and that it should not attempt to shape the government of Egypt. Most Americans don't believe the United States should assist Taiwan if it declared independence from China (e.g., see table 6.2). This too is consistent with Americans' lack of support for overthrowing dictators and promoting democracy abroad; helping Taiwan seems like getting involved in a civil war. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine most Americans opposed getting involved in the dispute. In particular, they opposed selling weapons to the Ukrainian government. Again, promoting democracy and stopping authoritarianism are not top priorities for most Americans. There is a strong "it's not our problem" tendency in the minds of most Americans.

RWANDA

If most Americans believe we have a moral obligation to stop genocide, how do we explain our response to Rwanda? The ideological commitment to stop genocide vanishes when Rwandans are concerned. When the word *genocide* is removed from the question and the word *Rwanda* is added, support for intervention becomes opposition. Most Americans oppose sending ground troops to stop the killing and they don't believe the United States has a responsibility to intervene. Importantly, most Americans don't believe America's vital interests are at stake in Rwanda (e.g., see table 6.3). Suddenly, genocide is no longer sufficient reason to send in ground troops. There is

a 10 percent jump in opposition when the words *ground troops* are in the question, because such an action would put Americans at risk. That's something Americans are not eager for. When ethnic cleansing became a problem in Kosovo, most Americans believed that our lack of response in Rwanda was a good reason not to intervene there either. If we allow one genocide, we might as well allow some more. Americans resort to their isolationist tendencies or, as suggested by Jamesian pragmatism, they decide to take a "moral holiday" on the matter. One can't help but notice the remarkable similarity between Zaller's finding that Americans supported equal rights for African Americans while simultaneously opposing integration of the schools (McClosky and Zaller 1984). Abstract values are one thing, practical solutions are something else. Americans often don't live up to their own ideals because they prefer not to.

NICARAGUA

Perhaps the single best example of a dialetheial paradox in public opinion is with regard to Americans' support/opposition for aid to the Contra rebels in Nicaragua. We know that one reason contradictions exist in public opinion is because of public ignorance. Studies indicate that plasticity, or conflicting responses to two versions of the same question, increases the less the respondents know about an issue (Plous 1993). A *Time* magazine poll in 1986 found that 58 percent of Americans agreed with the statement, "The United States should aid the rebels in Nicaragua in order to prevent communist influence from spreading to other countries in Central America." That same poll found that only 34 percent favored, "efforts to help the rebels in Nicaragua fight against the government troops in that country" (Lockerbie and Borrelli 1990). By removing the word *communist* from the question the same set of respondents no longer supported US intervention in Nicaragua (e.g., see table 6.4). Tellingly, a full 38 percent of Americans stated that they knew "nothing at all" about U.S. support for the Contra rebels. Without the issue of communism being brought to mind some of the respondents changed their stated preference for the same policy. Most Americans supported aiding the rebels and most Americans did not support aiding the rebels. A dialetheial paradox exists in this case because issue saliency causes some uninformed respondents to give a different answer to the same question when asked differently. Both supporters and opponents of aiding the rebels could claim that a majority supported their respective positions.

TABLE 6.1 *Foreign Policy Values*

Which comes closer to your view—even if neither is exactly right? . . . The best way to ensure peace is through military strength. Good diplomacy is the best way to ensure peace.[1]

The best way to ensure peace is through military strength	30%
Good diplomacy is the best way to ensure peace	58%
Both/Neither (Volunteer)/Don't know/Refused	12%

Please tell me which of the following statements comes closer to your point of view. . . . Statement A: America is doing too much in other countries around the world, and it is time to do less around the world and focus more on our own problems here at home. Statement B: America must continue to push forward to promote democracy and freedom in other countries around the world because these efforts make our own country more secure.[2]

Focus on problems at home	74%
Continue to promote democracy in other countries	22%
Depends/Some of both (Volunteer)	3%
Not sure	1%

Should the United States try to change a dictatorship to a democracy where it can, or should the United States stay out of other countries' affairs?[3]

Change to democracy	15%
Stay out	72%
Depends (Volunteer)	7%
Don't know	6%

There has been some discussion about the circumstances that might justify using US (United States) troops in other parts of the world. Please give your opinion about some situations. Would you favor or oppose the use of US troops . . . to stop a government from committing genocide and killing large numbers of its own people?[4]

Favor	70%
Oppose	28%
Not sure	2%

Sources

1. Survey by: *Pew Research Center for the People & the Press Political Survey,* July 2015. Retrieved 6 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

(sources cont'd on next page)

Table 6.1 Sources (cont'd)

2. Survey by: *NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll,* September 2013. Retrieved 6 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *CBS News/New York Times. CBS News/New York Times Poll*, September 2013. Retrieved 12 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

4. Survey by: *Chicago Council on Global Affairs. Chicago Council Survey 2012*, May 2012. Retrieved 6 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 6.2 *Support for More Isolationist Policies*

(Asked of registered voters) Would you prefer military intervention against Iran's nuclear program or a negotiated settlement to reduce its nuclear potential?[1]

Military intervention	13%
Negotiated settlement	77%
Don't know	10%

(Asked of registered voters) Do you think the United States has a moral obligation to intervene militarily in another country's civil war when chemical weapons are used.[2]

Yes	39%
No	56%
Don't know	5%

(Asked of registered voters) Do you think the United States has a moral obligation to intervene militarily in another country's civil war when more than 100,000 people are killed?[3]

Yes	33%
No	59%
Don't know	8%

Do you think the US (United States) government should openly support the demonstrators who are protesting the recent election in that country, or do you think the US should not directly intervene in the situation in Iran?[4]

Openly support	24%
Not directly intervene	74%
No opinion	1%

Table 6.2 (cont'd)

Which of the following two statements better describes your opinion of how the US should respond to the civil unrest in Egypt? The US should do more to try to shape the government in Egypt and promote an end to violence. The US should mostly stay out of events in Egypt and allow the people there to resolve their differences.[5]

The US should do more	16%
The US should mostly stay out	78%
Don't know/refused	6%

If a declaration of independence by Taiwan leads to military hostilities, should the US (United States) intervene on behalf of Taiwan?[6]

Yes	32%
No	60%
Not sure	9%

(Asked of registered voters) Do you think the United States should—or should not—be more involved in the situation in Ukraine?[7]

Should	32%
Should not	61%
Don't know	7%

In response to the situation involving Russia and Ukraine, would you favor or oppose the United States . . . sending arms and military supplies to the Ukrainian government?[8]

Favor	41%
Oppose	53%
Don't know	6%

Sources

1. Survey by: *Quinnipiac University Poll*, April 2015. Retrieved 6 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2–3. Survey by: *Fox News Poll,* September 2013. Retrieved 6 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

4. Survey by: *CNN/Opinion Research Corporation Poll*, June 2009. Retrieved 6 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

Table 6.2 Sources (cont'd)

5. Survey by: *United Technologies, National Journal. United Technologies/National Journal Congressional Connection Poll*, July 2013. Retrieved 17 May 2016 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

6. Survey by: *Hope & Fear: American and Chinese Attitudes Toward Each Other Survey*, August 2007. Retrieved 6 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

7. Survey by: *Fox News. Fox News Poll*, July 2014. Retrieved 12 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

8. Survey by: *Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. Pew Research Center for the People & the Press Political Survey*, Feb, 2015. Retrieved 12 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 6.3 *Genocide in Rwanda*

In order to stop the killing in Rwanda, do you favor or oppose the United States sending in ground troops?[1]

Favor	28%
Oppose	61%
Don't know/ No answer	11%

In your view, should the United States do more to reduce the violence in the African nation of Rwanda, or don't you feel this way?[2]

Do more	34%
Don't feel this way	51%
Not sure	15%

Do you think the United States has a responsibility to do something to stop the killing in Rwanda, or doesn't the United States have this responsibility?[3]

Has responsibility	34%
Does not have responsibility	51%
Don't know/No answer	15%

Do you think America's vital interests are at stake in Rwanda, or not?[4]

Yes	18%
No	63%
No opinion	19%

Table 6.3 (cont'd)

Now I am going to read you several arguments that are sometimes made about the situation in Kosovo. For each one, tell me if you find the argument convincing or unconvincing. There are many areas of the world where atrocities and even genocide have been committed, such as Rwanda and the Sudan, and we have not intervened there. Until we are ready to intervene in a consistent way, it is best to simply stay out of such situations, including Kosovo.[5]

Convincing	53%
Not convincing	42%
Don't know	4%

Sources

1. Survey by: *CBS News. CBS News Poll,* June 1994. Retrieved 17 May 2016 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *Time, Cable News Network. Time/CNN/Yankelovich Partners Poll*, May 1994. Retrieved 17 May 2016 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *CBS News. CBS News Poll,* June 1994. Retrieved 17 May 2016 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

4. Survey by: *ABC News/Washington Post. ABC News/Washington Post Poll,* June 1994. Retrieved 17 May 2016 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

5. Survey by: *Program on International Policy Attitudes, University of Maryland. Kosovo Survey*, May 1999. Retrieved 17 May 2016 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 6.4 *Support for Contra Rebels in Nicaragua*

Do you agree or disagree with these statements about US policy in Nicaragua and Central America? The United States should aid the rebels in Nicaragua in order to prevent communist influence from spreading to other countries in Central America.[1]

Agree	58%
Disagree	29%
Not sure (Volunteer)	13%

Do you favor or oppose US efforts to help the rebels in Nicaragua fight against the government troops in that country?[2]

Favor	34%
Oppose	41%
Not sure (Volunteer)	26%

Table 6.4 (cont'd)

The United States is currently involved in helping rebels—sometimes known as Contras—fight against the government troops in Nicaragua. Is this something you know a lot about, something about, or nothing about at all?[3]

A lot	7%
Something	54%
Nothing at all	38%
Not sure (Volunteer)	26%

Sources

1–3 Survey by: *Time/Yankelovich Clancy Shulman Poll,* April 1986. Retrieved 6 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 6.5 *Support for "Nuclear Freeze" with the Soviet Union*

Do you favor or oppose the United States agreeing to a "nuclear freeze" with the Soviet Union—that is, putting a stop to the testing, production and installation of additional nuclear weapons by both sides?[1]

Favor	72%
Oppose	21%
No opinion	7%

(Asked of those who favored or had no opinion about US agreeing to a nuclear freeze) What if a nuclear freeze would result in the Soviet Union having somewhat greater nuclear strength than the United States—would you favor or oppose such a freeze?[2] (Note: Those who opposed freeze in general [21%] were included here in "oppose" category.)

Favor	30%
Oppose	60%
No opinion	10%

There's been a lot of discussion about a nuclear freeze—a proposed halt to the testing, production, and installation of additional nuclear weapons. Have you been paying much attention to the issue of a nuclear freeze, or not?[3]

Yes	53%
No	45%
No opinion	2%

Sources

1–3 Survey by: *CBS News/New York Times Poll*, May 1982. Retrieved 6 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

SOVIET NUCLEAR FREEZE

A similar flip in public opinion was also observed when the "nuclear freeze" with the Soviet Union was a major issue in 1982. An overwhelming 72 percent of Americans supported the nuclear freeze (e.g., see table 6.5). However, if the nuclear freeze would give the Soviet Union somewhat greater nuclear strength, then most Americans would oppose the freeze. The decision to support or oppose an arms agreement rests on whether or not Americans would be made better off. Importantly, 45 percent of Americans admitted that they haven't been paying much attention to the issue. Supporters of the agreement could claim that most Americans support the deal. Opponents of the agreement could claim that the deal gives the Soviet Union an advantage and that therefore most Americans oppose the agreement. This poll was especially fascinating because it demonstrates that individual respondents can be made to flip positions when new considerations are introduced. Much rests on how one defines "nuclear strength." The fuzzy concept could refer to nuclear ability, nuclear capability, active stockpiles, reserve stockpiles, the number of launch ready warheads, the total equivalent megatons of the entire arsenal, and so on. Disagreement over this definition could lead one person to claim the United States gains an advantage, and another person to claim the USSR gains an advantage. And the public, nearly half of which aren't paying attention, could be persuaded in either direction with exposure to one view over the other. Both supporters and opponents of the agreement could legitimately claim to have the majority of the public on their side, based solely on their own assessment of who's advantaged by it. If the public is told that X is good for them, they will support it. If the public is told $\sim X$ is good for them, they would support that too. They don't really know what is good for them, but whatever it is, that's what they want. So long as there is disagreement over what is good for America, there will be a public on two sides of the debate.

FOREIGN AID

In too many instances the public is simply misinformed. They base their policy preference on inaccurate perceptions. This is true for a wide variety of foreign policy questions. In the same way most Americans overestimate how much the government spends on welfare programs domestically, they overestimate the US share of aid to poor countries by rich countries. They overestimate the

number of US troops in certain UN endeavors, and they overestimate the UN budget ("Vox Americani"). These incorrect perceptions can cause the public to have policy preferences that are not based on reality. With correct information, the public would choose differently and have different policy preferences.

For example, in 1995 spending on foreign aid in America was approximately 1 percent of the annual budget. That same year a *Time* magazine/CNN poll found that 73 percent of Americans supported cutting foreign aid. This occurred because Americans grossly overestimated the amount of money spent on foreign aid. When Americans were asked to estimate the percent of the federal budget that is devoted to foreign, a PIPA poll that year found that the average response was 18 percent. Only 7 percent of respondents correctly answered less than 1 percent. A *Washington Post*/Kaiser Foundation poll that year found an average answer of 26 percent, with only 1 percent of respondents giving the correct answer. The PIPA poll asked Americans to state their preferred level of spending on foreign aid, and the median response was 5 percent of the budget. When respondents were told that the actual amount spent was 1 percent of the budget, "only 18 percent said that this would be too much" (Kull and Destler 1999, 123–26).

The statement "most Americans want to cut foreign aid" and the statement "most Americans want to increase foreign aid by a factor of five" are contradictory and simultaneously true. These are stated preferences. A supermajority of 73 percent did in fact state they want less spending. The average preferred amount of spending was 5 percent, or five times current levels. The contradiction occurred because the public had no idea what it was talking about. Their preferred outcome was based on incorrect assumptions. Some might conclude that this is not a "true contradiction," but rather an instance of imprecise descriptive language. If we said instead, "The *uninformed public* wants to decrease foreign aid" and "the *informed public* does not want to decrease foreign aid," we solve the contradiction. However, a true reflection of the "general will" cannot exclude the opinions of the uninformed and still be a real representation of the public's sentiments. Researchers should not by fiat declare that the opinions of the uninformed shouldn't count. The misinformed should have the same right to express themselves as anyone else. If the public doesn't know what it's talking about, we might end up with a public that wants contradictory policies. Contradiction reflects their actual sentiment about the issue. This is why we say the public is transconsistent rather than inconsistent. It's a real opinion, even if it is misinformed.

SYRIA

The recent conflict in Syria is complicated. Americans don't feel compelled to get involved in another country's civil war, even when hundreds of thousands are getting killed. That's someone else's problem. But there is very strong support for a "military campaign" against "Islamic militants" in Syria (e.g., see table 6.6). Terrorism is everyone's problem, including ours. However, that support plummets when the words *ground troops* are added. Support hovers around 50 percent, and the majority can go either way in a particular poll; no longer is the strong majority present (e.g., see table 6.7). Since having U.S. casualties would be against our interest, the public becomes much more skeptical of intervention when American loss of life is made salient with the explicit use of the words *ground troops*. Changing the options, however, can allow pollsters to regain the strong majority. Given the choice between a "large number of U.S. ground forces," a "limited number of U.S. ground forces," or "not sending U.S. ground forces at all," only 30 percent don't want any ground forces at all. A solid 59 percent wants at least some ground forces. Changing the frame, making some issues more or less salient, or changing the respondent's options can make or break a majority on questions of military action by the United States.

The conflict in Syria has caused hundreds of thousands of Syrians to flee their country. Most of those refugees are migrating to Europe, and the mass migration is causing a problem. Most Americans support taking in some of the refugees, but most Americans oppose it. The question-wording effect is conspicuously present. Americans support "taking in some of the refugees" in response to the "crisis in Europe." Europeans aren't scary people and we'd like to help them. Should "Syrian refugees" be allowed to enter the United States? Most Americans say no (e.g., see table 6.8). There are concerns about Islamic terrorism and self-interest overrides our moral obligations to help the victims of war. To understand why this question-wording effect occurred, one only needs to ask the public about immigration from various regions. Most Americans believe we are accepting the right amount of immigrants from Europe but "too many" immigrants from the Middle East. But what if we resettled only "Christian refugees from Syria?" Most Americans prefer to not accept any Syrian refugees regardless of their religious identity. This is a dialetheial paradox. The refugees going to Europe and the Syrian refugees are the same group. Changing the identifier changes our willingness to accept this set of people.

In this case, misinformed respondents help the liberal case. Liberals are more likely to believe, for the sake of equality and justice, that we should provide assistance to those in need. If they framed the issue as "helping our friends in Europe" or "providing relief to the crisis in Europe," then the public would be sympathetic. An informed respondent in this case is aware that the European migrant crisis refers to Syrians fleeing their country and migrating to Austria, Germany, Greece, and other European nations. Knowing this they would be more likely to oppose assistance to Europe. The conservative focus on safety and stability gains majority support, but only if the public knows that they are being asked about Syrian migrants. Some authors have argued that conservatives are more likely to peddle in misinformation (Hochschild and Einstein 2015). But in this case peddling in misinformation, or obfuscation, would help the cause of liberal minded humanitarianism. If you want to help widows and orphans, don't tell Americans they are from the Middle East.

CONCLUSIONS

Americans have values that they rely on to make decisions on foreign policy questions. As a general rule, they are isolationist and more concerned with problems at home. In Ukraine, Taiwan, Iran, Egypt, and Syria there seems to be little appetite for American intervention. But there are instances where the public favors intervention. In the abstract, Americans believe we should intervene to stop genocide. They also believe we should use military force to stop Islamic terrorists. In the first instance, we have a moral obligation to stop an atrocity; in the second we have a pragmatic concern for self-preservation.

Unfortunately, the moral obligation to stop genocide doesn't extend to Rwanda. In that case, Americans retreat to their more isolationist tendencies. When the issue isn't framed as genocide, support becomes opposition. Both supporters and opponents of intervention in Rwanda could find a majority to support their preferred position. The framing effect also impacted Americans' views on aiding the Contra rebels in Nicaragua. In the 1980s Americans believed we should stop communism for ideological reasons, and they supported U.S. aid to anticommunist rebels. When the word *communism* was removed from the question, most Americans did not support aiding the Contra rebels. Many Americans didn't know anything at all about the rebels, which explains why they so easily flip-flop on the question. They rely on cues to decide how to answer the question. Both supporters and opponents of U.S. aid to the Contras could find a majority to support their respective positions.

TABLE 6.6 *Islamic Militants*

Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the US military campaign against Islamic militants in Iraq and Syria?[1]

Approve	63%
Disapprove	26%
Don't know/Refused	11%

(Asked of registered voters) Which of the following statements about Islamic extremist groups like ISIS (operating in Syria and Iraq) do you agree with more? . . . We should use our military strength to destroy Islamic extremist groups once and for all. We should accept that we cannot destroy Islamic extremist groups by using military force.[2]

Use force to destroy	57%
Accept that we cannot destroy with force	30%
Neither (Volunteer)	8%
Don't know	5%

Sources

1. Survey by: *Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. Pew Research Center for the People & the Press Political Survey*, July 2015. Retrieved 6 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *Fox News. Fox News Poll*, May 2015. Retrieved 6 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 6.7 *Ground Forces in Syria*

Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose sending more US troops to Iraq and Syria to combat ISIS (Islamic militants)?[1]

Strongly favor	15%
Favor	36%
Oppose	24%
Strongly oppose	20
Unsure	5%

Do you favor or oppose the United States sending ground troops into combat operations against ISIS (Islamic militants) forces in Iraq and Syria?[2]

Favor	47%
Oppose	51%
No opinion	2%

Table 6.7 (cont'd)

When it comes to combating ISIS, the Islamic State group (operating in Syria and Iraq), do you support the United States sending a large number of US ground forces, sending a limited number of US ground forces, or not sending US ground forces at all?[3]

Sending in a large number of US ground forces	24%
Sending in a limited number of US ground forces	35%
Not sending US ground forces at all	30%
Unsure	10%

Sources

1. Survey by: *McClatchy. McClatchy/Marist Poll*, July 2015. Retrieved 6 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *CNN/ORC International Poll*, August 2015. Retrieved 6 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *McClatchy. McClatchy/Marist Poll*, July 2015. Retrieved 6 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 6.8 *Syrian Refugees*

Do you favor or oppose the United States taking any of the following actions in response to the migrant crisis in Europe? Taking in some of the refugees.[1]

Favor	55%
Oppose	44%
Don't know	1%

I am going to read you a list of possible threats to the vital interests of the United States in the next ten years. For each one, please tell me if you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat or not an important threat at all? Large numbers of refugees trying to come to Europe and North America.[2]

Critical threat	52%
Important but not critical threat	32%
Not an important threat at all	16%

Thinking about the migrant crisis in Europe . . . Do you support or oppose admitting 10,000 Syrian refugees to the US over the next year?[3]

Support	41%
Oppose	53%
Don't know	7%

Table 6.8 (cont'd)

Do you think the United States currently allows too many or too few immigrants to enter the country from each of the following places, or is the current level of legal immigration about right? Europe[4]

Too many	28%
Too few	15%
Current level is about right	53%

Do you think the United States currently allows too many or too few immigrants to enter the country from each of the following places, or is the current level of legal immigration about right? Middle East[5]

Too many	54%
Too few	10%
Current level is about right	32%

Which of the following do you think is the best approach for the US to take with refugees fleeing the civil war in Syria? . . . Proceed with the plan to resettle 10,000 refugees without religious screening, resettle only Christian refugees from Syria, do not accept any Syrian refugees into the US?[6]

Proceed with the plan to resettle 10,000 refugees without religious screening	28%
Resettle only Christian refugees from Syria	11%
Do not accept any Syrian refugees into the US	53%
Not sure	8%

Sources

1. Survey by: *CNN/ORC International Poll*, September 2015. Retrieved 6 April 2016 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *Gallup Poll*, February 2016. Retrieved 6 April 2016 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *Quinnipiac University Poll*, September 2015. Retrieved 6 April 2016 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

4–5. Survey by: *Associated Press. Associated Press/GfK Knowledge Networks Poll,* December 2015. Retrieved 17 May 2016 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

6. Survey by: *Bloomberg Poll*, November 2015. Retrieved 6 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

Americans are self-interested and they want what is best for America. Unfortunately, what is best isn't always clear. Most Americans support a nuclear freeze with the Soviet Union, because stopping the testing and production of nuclear weapons seems like a safe thing to do. If they are told the USSR would gain an advantage from such a deal, the very same people who supported the idea would flip and reject the idea. Both supporters and opponents of the nuclear freeze can claim they have majority support by also claiming their position is "better for America."

A lack of basic accurate information means that Americans are willing to make policy judgments based on gross misperceptions of reality. They support reductions in foreign aid because they overestimate the amount that is spent on it. When asked to specify the appropriate amount, it is five times current spending levels. Those who want to decrease foreign aid and those want to increase it both have a majority on their side.

Syria is complicated. Americans don't want to get involved in another country's civil war, but they do want to use military force to stop Islamic terrorists. The problem, of course, is that the terrorists are involved in the civil wars in both Syria and Iraq. Americans believe we should take in some of the refugees that are fleeing to Europe, but that we shouldn't take in Syrian refugees. Support for taking in the refugees depends entirely on whether or not the word *Syrian* is used. Because, perhaps unbeknownst to many Americans, the refugees fleeing to Europe happen to be Syrian. Supporters and opponents of admitting the refugees can both find polls that show a majority supports their position.

The public is transconsistent on many foreign policy questions. The competing ideological and pragmatic concerns create contradictions that can cause a majority of Americans to be both for and against a particular action. Much depends on how the issue is framed, which issues are salient, and what Americans know, or think they know, about the situation at hand.

The following pairs of statements can be made by political opponents to support their respective positions:

- Most Americans think we should send in troops to stop genocide.
- Most Americans oppose sending troops to Rwanda.
- Most Americans believe the United States should aid the rebels in Nicaragua.
- Most Americans do not support aiding the rebels in Nicaragua.
- Most Americans support a nuclear freeze with the Soviet Union.
- Most Americans oppose a nuclear freeze with the Soviet Union.

- Most Americans want to cut foreign aid.
- Most Americans want to increase foreign aid by a factor of five.
- Most Americans believe we should take in some of the refugees fleeing to Europe.
- Most Americans believe we shouldn't admit Syrian refugees into the United States.

What we find overall is an American public that is largely disengaged and misinformed on foreign policy issues. As a result, they can be easily persuaded in one direction or the other. They are both isolationist and interventionist, depending on the issue at hand. There are ideological commitments that Americans are willing to defend through the use of military force, but democracy isn't one of them. They are willing to help those in need, just not Rwandans and Syrians. The public is concerned with the consequences of taking particular actions, and they prefer policies that will benefit the United States. Ultimately, they want Americans to be safe and to be made better off. This suggests a pragmatic evaluation of foreign policy questions by the American public. They are prepared to take a Jamesian "moral holiday" from their ideals if an action doesn't seem expedient. If there are apparent costs or negative consequences associated with a particular choice, public support for the action declines.

7. Not Quite Paradoxes

Not every instance of a contradiction in public opinion is a "true contradiction." Sometimes there is room for interpretation of the question. Sometimes political activists are disingenuous in their claims of majority support by focusing on only one part of their overall agenda. Sometimes politicians conflate morality with legality, leading to false conclusions based on a true premise. Sometimes people change their minds; this isn't a paradox, but it could be an indication of some other preference that is lying beneath the surface and capable of overriding other preferences people have. Sometimes the circumstances matter. Under some conditions a policy will be favored, while under different conditions it won't. While both sides of a political debate can claim majority support, sometimes at least one side isn't being entirely honest about the public's actual position. On the issues of amending the Constitution to ban same-sex marriage, abortion, gene therapy, offshore oil drilling, and the Iraq War each side claimed majority support, but at least one side, and sometimes both, make misleading claims.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT BANNING SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

In recent years, support for same-sex marriage has increased dramatically in the United States. However, as recently as 2004, a majority of Americans favored amending the Constitution to ban same-sex marriage. Yet when pressed 56 percent did not think it was "an important enough issue to be worth changing the Constitution for" (e.g., see table 7.1). This may or may not be a "true contradiction," because it depends on how we interpret the responses. If we interpret the results to mean that Americans supported the Constitutional amendment, but did not feel strongly about it, then there is no contradiction. But if a person really believed that banning same-sex marriage was not "worth changing the Constitution for," then they should not support amending the Constitution unless they are somehow creating a distinction between "amending" and "changing," which makes little sense. If two people have a business contract together and one requests an amendment to the contract they are ipso facto requesting a change to the agreement. In 2004, a politician who supported amending the Constitution to ban same-sex marriage would have the majority

of the public on his or her side. At the same time a politician who did not think the Constitution should be changed to ban same-sex marriage would also have the majority of the public agreeing with him or her. If this is not a dialetheial paradox, it certainly is very close to being one.

ABORTION

Abortion has been a controversial issue for generations. This debate is characterized by ideological extremists influencing our political system and a mass public that is far more pragmatic—meaning the circumstance matter. The pro-choice ideologues want abortion to be legal in all circumstances because the decision rightfully belongs to the potential mother in any and all cases. It's her body, she decides. The pro-life ideologues believe that abortion should be illegal in all circumstances because life begins at conception and it is never acceptable to kill a human life. It's always wrong, end of story. The public is somewhere in the middle. Most Americans believe that partial-birth abortions are wrong and should be prohibited. Most Americans believe that if a woman is raped, or if the life of the mother is in jeopardy, then abortion is acceptable (e.g., see table 7.2). The acceptability of abortion, for most Americans, depends on the circumstances. In some cases, it is acceptable, in others it is not.

If a politician took the majoritarian pragmatic approach and supported the moderate position of permitting abortions in some circumstances but opposing them in others, she would find herself in dire straits. Pro-choice groups would attack the politician for interfering with a woman's right to make her own decisions about her own body. Pro-life groups would attack the politician for supporting the killing of children. The politician would be opposed by two groups of activists. In order to win, a candidate for office needs allies and supporters. Pragmatically, it would be better to choose a side and have one group supporting and one group opposing their candidacy. Having two groups opposing is worse than having only one. This means that our political debates on this issue become dominated by ideological extremists, because it is pragmatic for a politician to choose one extreme or the other. Recall the pragmatic paradox. A radical pragmatist might adopt an absolutist value when it is expedient to do so; they adhere to pragmatism by rejecting pragmatism.

When the pro-choice activists claim that most Americans don't want raped women to be forced to carry their rapist's child, they are correct. Since the opposition desires a ban in all circumstances without exception, the majority is on the pro-choice side. When the pro-life activists claim that most Americans don't want 8.9-month-old fetuses killed during delivery, they are

correct. Since the opposition desires legal abortion in any and all circum-
stances, the majority is on the pro-life side. A politician who supported the
rape exception would be accused of "killing babies" by pro-life activists and
politicians. If they also supported a ban on partial birth abortions, they would
be accused of "taking away women's rights" by pro-choice activists and poli-
ticians. There isn't a position that a politician can take that won't cause them
hostility from at least one group of activists. Taking the middle ground that
is supported by most Americans will cause them to face opposition from both
groups of activists. Faced with this reality, it makes sense to gain the support
of loyal and motivated activists from one side and be opposed by fewer people.

In this instance, public opinion is squarely in the middle; only a small
fraction take the extreme always-legal or always-illegal position. Our pol-
iticians and political activists, however, adopt the extremist position and
exaggerate their level of support by selectively using support for one policy
preference and omitting opposition to the remainder of their agenda. While
both sides claim majority support, they are both a bit disingenuous. But this
too can cause dissatisfaction. If the public prefers the moderate sometimes-legal
and sometimes-illegal approach, depending on the circumstances, and their
only choice is between two, no exceptions extremes, always legal or always
illegal, then they are right to be dissatisfied with both options. No matter who
wins, they get an extreme they don't want. In this case, it would be rational
to seek divided government so that neither group can get what it wants, and,
hopefully, the middle ground prevails.

GENE THERAPY

The social issues that become controversial in American society do so because
Americans are faced with difficult moral or ethical questions. For example,
most Americans believe that it is morally wrong to alter human genes, and they
believe it is "against God's will." But they support changing their own genes
and allowing others to change theirs, if they can cure "fatal" or "incurable"
diseases by doing so (e.g., see table 7.3). Americans value piety, but they also
value living. Confronted with a choice, living seems to win out. But the
political and legal question is ambiguous. A politician who stated, "I believe
it is morally wrong to alter human genes, and I support a ban on these types
of genetic experiments" would seem to have majority support for her position.
A politician who stated, "People ought to be allowed to change their genes to
cure fatal diseases, and I oppose a ban on these treatments" would also seem
to have majority support for her position.

Is this a "true contradiction?" Probably not. It merely suggests that some Americans are likely to engage in immoral behavior if it serves their interests. Call it the "it's wrong, but I'm doing it anyway" approach to decision making. Indeed, there is an entire literature in psychology devoted to the attitude-behavior gap (LaPier 1934; Corey 1937; Wicker 1969; Darley and Batson 1973). Many people willingly engage in behavior they themselves believe to be wrong or immoral. Like William James they take their "moral holidays" when it becomes expedient to do so. It is important to note that the question posed was whether the action was immoral, not whether the action should be prohibited. In this instance the politician supporting the ban falsely extrapolated from a true premise. It is true that most people believe it is wrong, but it isn't true that most people want to ban gene therapy. Because some respondents may believe it is wrong and believe they should be allowed to commit the wrong, there is a majority on both sides of the debate.

These morality-legality conflicts are not new in America. Whether the issue is slavery, the prohibition of alcohol, abortion, or genetic engineering Americans have found themselves debating the morality and legality of many important issues. A rapidly shifting opinion is not a paradox in and of itself, but it may be the manifestation of an underlying paradox. Americans value piety, but they also value their freedom and these two values sometimes conflict. Americans may support banning an immoral practice, but they may also wish to continue practicing the behavior they voted to prohibit. Holding contradictory values can lead to dialetheial paradoxes when both values are deeply held and some of the respondents have not fully considered the implications of holding the two views simultaneously. It could very well happen that an individual believes that a particular action is immoral and that the action should be banned because of it. That same individual might also believe that it is not the government's job to tell people how to live their lives and oppose banning the action because he or she finds it beneficial or enjoyable.

OFFSHORE OIL DRILLING

Because of issue saliency a prominent news story can impact how respondents answer questions. For example, the BP oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 caused a temporary shift in public support for off-shore oil drilling. In September of 2008, support for offshore oil drilling was 67 percent. That figure remained in the mid- to upper 60s until 2010. During the height of the crisis in June 2010, 52 percent of Americans opposed offshore oil drilling, while only 44 percent supported the practice. By March of 2011, support for offshore oil

drilling had rebounded to 57 percent with only 37 percent opposing it (Pew Research Center 2011). This suggests that public opinion is highly malleable and that the support or opposition to policies depends more on superficial momentary considerations rather than well-considered analysis of problems.

The change in support for oil drilling, while interesting, is not a dialetheial paradox because it is not a "true contradiction." Public opinion temporarily shifted and then returned to be generally supportive of offshore drilling, as it was before the crisis. Recalling the analogy from chapter 2, if Janice leaves the room momentarily, but then returns, we can't say she's in two places at once. If public opinion shifts often enough on a subject we can say that the opinion is unstable or that the public does not consistently support a policy, but it is not a paradox. While pro–oil drilling and anti–oil drilling activists could claim majority support at different points in time, they could not do so at the same time. As discussed in chapter 5, however, support for more oil drilling and simultaneous support for reducing greenhouse gas emissions is a true contradiction, because the oil drilled will be processed and burned, thereby emitting the greenhouse gas emissions most Americans oppose.

What is interesting about this example is that the circumstances make people think twice about their favored position. When their favored position seems to yield direct and immediate negative consequences, then they will change their position. This does not bode well for those who are attempting to convince the public that our society should take action to combat climate change. The public would need a constant stream of climate-related catastrophe in order to be compelled to action. Of course, if the situation gets that bad it will already be too late to solve the problem. In order to convince people a levy is necessary, we might have to wait until their homes are underwater.

IRAQ

Framing is method that can be used to yield different responses from survey participants. Framing refers to the process of placing questions in a context. By changing the context of a question, respondents may answer differently. For example, a Pew Research Center poll in 2003 found that 68 percent of Americans supported "taking military action in Iraq to end Saddam Hussein's rule," but that number dropped to 43 percent when respondents were asked if they supported "taking military action in Iraq to end Saddam Hussein's rule, even if it meant that US forces might suffer thousands of casualties" ("Majority"). The first question lacks an apparent context, though the 9/11 attacks were a recent memory, and the "War on Terror" was likely a top story in

TABLE 7.1 *Amending the Constitution to Ban Same-Sex Marriage*

Would you favor or oppose an amendment to the US Constitution that would allow marriages only between a man and a women?[1]

Favor	59%
Oppose	35%
Don't know	6%

Do you think defining marriage as a union only between a man a woman is an important enough issue to be worth changing the Constitution for, or isn't it that kind of issue?[2]

Important enough	38%
Not that kind of issue	56%
Don't know	6%

Sources

1–2. Survey by: *CBS News/New York Times Poll*, March 2004. Retrieved 28 January 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 7.2 *Americans' Views on Abortion*

Now I am going to read some specific situations under which an abortion might be considered. For each one, please say whether you think abortion should be legal in that situation, or illegal. When the pregnancy was caused by rape or incest?[1]

Legal	83%
Illegal	14%
Depends (Volunteer)	1%
No opinion	3%

Which comes closest to your view on abortion—abortion should always be legal; should be legal most of the time; should be made illegal except in cases of rape, incest, and to save the mother's life; or abortion should be made illegal without any exceptions?[2]

Always legal	26%
Legal, most of the time	19%
Illegal, with exceptions	42%
Illegal, without any exceptions	10%
Not sure	3%

Table 7.2 (cont'd)

Now I would like to ask your opinion about a specific abortion procedure known as "late-term" abortion or "partial birth" abortion, which is sometimes performed on women during the last few months of pregnancy. Do you think this procedure should be legal or illegal?[3]

Legal	17%
Illegal	75%
Don't know/Refused	8%

Sources

1. Survey by: *CNN/ORC International Poll*, August 2012. Retrieved 10 February 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll*, April 2013. Retrieved 10 February 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life Survey*, August 2007. Retrieved 10 February 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 7.3 *Genetic Engineering*

Do you think altering human genes is morally wrong, or don't you feel this way?[1]

Yes, morally wrong	53%
No	39%
Not sure	9%

Do you think altering human genes is against God's will, or don't you feel this way?[2]

Yes, against God's will	58%
No	36%
Not sure	6%

Suppose you were told after an examination of your genes that you were going to get one of these incurable diseases, would you go ahead with the treatment to have your genes changed or not?[3]

Would go ahead with treatment	57%
Would not	33%
Not sure	10%

Table 7.3 (cont'd)

Now let me ask you some questions about genetic engineering. Some people are worried about this science, arguing that in changing the basic makeup of people's cells, it is like playing God. But let me ask you, if it is possible to cure people with fatal diseases by altering their genes, do you feel they ought to be allowed to go ahead with such treatment, or do you think it is going too far?[4]

Ought to be allowed to go ahead	64%
Is going too far	24%
Not sure	12%

Now I'd like to ask about something you may not have heard about before—genetic engineering. This is the science of altering genes, which are the building blocks of life for humans, animals, and plants. Genetic engineering changes genes to produce particular characteristics in living things. If it is possible to cure people with fatal diseases by altering their genes, do you feel they ought to be allowed to do this, or do you think this is going too far?[5]

Allowed	65%
Going too far	28%
Don't know	7%

Sources

1–2. Survey by: *Time/CNN/Yankelovich Partners Poll*, December 1993. Retrieved 25 February 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3–4. Survey by: *Business Week/Harris Poll*, November 1985. Retrieved 25 February 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

5. Survey by: *Great American TV Poll #2*, January 1991. Retrieved 25 February 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 7.4 *American's have General Support for/Positive View of the Iraq War*

Would you favor or oppose having US (United States) forces take military action against Iraq to force Saddam Hussein from power?[1]

Favor	72%
Oppose	24%
No opinion	5%

Table 7.4 (cont'd)

Do you think that the US (United States) should or should not use military action involving ground troops to attempt to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq?[2]

Should	73%
Should not	22%
Not sure	5%

Do you approve or disapprove of the United States taking military action against Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein from power?[3]

Approve	78%
Disapprove	19%
Don't know/No answer	3%

All in all, considering the costs to the United States versus the benefits to the United States, do you think the war with Iraq was worth fighting, or not?[4]

Worth fighting	70%
Not worth fighting	27%
No opinion	4%

Do you think the United States is heading for the same kind of involvement in Iraq as it had in the Vietnam War, or do you think the United States will avoid that kind of involvement this time?[5]

Same as Vietnam	42%
Will avoid that	52%
Already in it	3%
No opinion	3%

Sources

1. Survey by: *ABC News Poll*, 18 December–19 December 2001. Retrieved 24 March 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *Time/CNN/Harris Interactive Poll*, 19 December–20 December 2001. Retrieved 20 June 2013 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *CBS News Poll*, 26 April–27 April 2003. Retrieved 6 March 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

4. Survey by: *ABC News/Washington Post Poll*, 27 April–30 April 2003. Retrieved 9 February 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

5. Survey by: *ABC News/Washington Post Poll, June 2005*. Retrieved 6 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

TABLE 7.5 *Americans have a General Opposition to/Negative View of the Iraq War*

In view of the developments since we first sent our troops to Iraq, do you think the United States made a mistake in sending troops to Iraq, or not?[1]

Yes	62%
No	37%
Don't know/Undecided	2%

Would you say that the initial decision to send US (United States) troops to Iraq in 2003 was a smart thing to do or a dumb thing to do?[2]

Smart	38%
Dumb	59%
Mixed (Volunteer)	2%
No opinion	1%

Do you think the result of the war with Iraq was worth the loss of American lives and other costs of attacking Iraq, or not?[3]

Worth it	24%
Not worth it	67%
Don't know/No answer	9%

Do you think that getting involved with Iraq in the Middle East is a lot like getting involved in Vietnam in the 1960s, in which a small commitment at first can lead to years of conflict without clear results, or is that not such a good comparison?[4]

Lot like Vietnam	64%
Not a good comparison	32%
Don't know/No answer	4%

Sources

1. Survey by: *CNN/ORC International Poll*, September 2013. Retrieved 6 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *CNN/ORC International Poll*, March 2013. Retrieved 6 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *CBS News Poll*, November 2011. Retrieved 12 March 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

4. Survey by: *CBS News Poll*, January 2007. Retrieved 12 March 2014 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

the news. The second question creates a qualifier, a war with US casualties. By adding concreteness to the question, majority support becomes majority opposition. Indeed, as casualties increased support declined. Some supporters of the war were getting an outcome they didn't prefer, a war with American casualties. If there were some type of military intervention in which no Americans died, that would have been largely acceptable over a longer period of time.

When the war was initiated in 2001 upward of 70 percent of Americans supported the decision to invade Iraq (e.g., see table 7.4). Two years later 70 percent believed the war was worth fighting. In 2005, most Americans believed we could avoid another Vietnam in Iraq. By 2013, the vast majority of Americans believed sending troops to Iraq was a mistake and that it was a "dumb thing to do." Most believed it was not worth the cost and that the Iraq War was a lot like Vietnam (e.g., see table 7.5). Changing one's mind isn't paradoxical, but we do have to question the public's decision-making ability. There was strong support for a decision the public would later regret. Some would argue that the public was deliberately mislead, but even if we assume that the intelligence failures were honest mistakes, we can't get around the fact that misinformed people sometimes make bad decisions. When a misinformed public makes a decision that is implemented through government action, then the consequences of poor decision-making impact everyone in the society. In the case of the Iraq War, large numbers of Americans mistakenly believed that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction; this may account for the widespread support of the war. The problem is "that acting in accord with false knowledge can get people killed" (Hochschild and Einstein 2015). This isn't an argument against listening to the public or following or its directives, but it is an argument that says the public might be unhappy when the government does what the public said it wanted the government to do. A misinformed person will get upset when their actions don't lead them to their desired results or when their actions lead to unexpectedly negative consequences.

CONCLUSIONS

Just because a politician or activist organization claims that a majority of the public supports their cause doesn't mean it is necessarily so. Typically, there is some kernel of truth to the claim, but the politician or interest group may be exaggerating their level of support by only focusing on the circumstances under which they have the winning argument or by framing the debate in a way that favors their position while omitting important and relevant facts that would

lead to a contrary conclusion. Sometimes support is only temporary support and not indicative of a firm commitment to a specific policy.

The following pairs of true statements could be used by political opponents who claim support for their respective positions, but one side, and sometimes both, are misleading the public in some way regarding the public's level of support for their position.

- Most Americans believe the Constitution should be amended to ban same-sex marriage.
- Most Americans do not believe the Constitution should be changed to ban same-sex marriage.
- Most Americans don't want partial-birth abortions to be legal.
- Most Americans don't want the victims of rape and incest to be forced to carry the pregnancy to term.
- Most Americans believe genetic engineering is immoral and against God's will.
- Most Americans want the ability to change their genes to treat otherwise incurable or fatal diseases.
- Most Americans support offshore oil drilling (at time x).
- Most Americans oppose offshore oil drilling (at time $x + 1$).
- Most Americans support taking military action in Iraq to end Saddam Hussein's rule.
- Most Americans oppose taking military action in Iraq that would lead to thousands of US casualties.

While each statement is true, the pairs of conflicting statements often leave out something very important about the policy debate or about where the public actually stands on a particular issue.

8. Limitations of Survey Research

Dialetheial paradoxes exist, but the current state of public opinion polling does a poor job of capturing the views of the deeply conflicted people in our society. Some people want to have it both ways. This tension will not exist on every issue, or even perhaps most issues, but on at least some issues Americans don't want A or B, they want A *and* B. This is sometimes the case, even on issues where we know that A and B are wholly incompatible.

Some might argue that the general will is not real, yet survey researchers conduct polls and respondents provide answers to questions they are asked. There is something there. As long as people have ideas in their brains, there is at least some reality to the general will. It is all our individual ideas put together collectively. We can admit that the general will is an abstract construct. But our society is full of abstract constructs that we have nevertheless decided to use as the basis of our civilization. Take, for example, the idea of natural rights. At one point in time natural rights did not exist. Today we say that you have a right to live and that you own your own body. During the Inquisition it was believed that God owned your body and the Church had a right to kill you. Those that argue natural rights don't exist do so because they have a political agenda and your natural rights are impeding their progress. Take also the concept of private property. At some point in time there was no such thing as private property. During the age of feudalism and economic mercantilism there was no private property—everything belonged to the monarch. Monarchs could appoint dukes and lords to oversee their lands, and the peasants were permanent renters. The land, trees, animals, everything belonged to the king through divine will. Those who argue that private property doesn't exist have a political agenda. They seek to appropriate, or reappropriate, possessions held by others. Likewise, those who argue there is no such thing as the general will may be the type of people who really don't want the masses to have political influence. The world in which the general will doesn't exist is the world in which elites, whether they are monarchs, clergy, corporate CEOs, or some other protected class, dominate the lives of the vast majority of the population. It's a tyrannical world we don't want to live in.

To be fair, the world that is governed by the general will could be quite dangerous. We don't need to believe that, when aggregated, collective

preferences will produce a deeper wisdom than each of the individuals could have accomplished on their own. When individuals are misinformed, the aggregation of individual preferences will be based on misinformation. The public might very well be wrong. Take the example of opinion on the Iraq War. The war had tremendous support. Later, the public itself believed it was a dumb thing to do. Despite this, we should give the public what it wants even when the public is mistaken.

We need to figure out what the public wants and here we find a very real problem. Many of the questions that are being asked don't accurately capture the general will. This isn't true in all cases. In cases where there is broad consensus, it's not difficult to figure out what the public desires. In cases where the public is closely divided, we have much more difficulty. Trying to figure out what the public wants is especially difficult in cases where large swaths of the population are cross pressured. In some cases, not all, the public wants two incompatible things. Public opinion polls often ignore this possibility.

FORCED-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Specifically, the forced-choice question, as the name implies, forces the respondent to give one answer over another. Researchers who use this device entirely omit the possibility that the respondent prefers both. Rather than forcing a respondent to choose between A *or* B, researchers must be prepared for the possibility that the respondent prefers A *and* B. This might be the case even when A and B are incompatible with each other. Today's forced-choice questions must include "both" as on option. Based on Graham Priest's important theoretical insights and some of the observations presented in existing polling data, "both" is a likely preference for at least some subset of the population on at least some issues of public concern.

Forced-choice questions do mimic the forced choice of elections in a two-party system, but they do not capture the underlying public sentiment. We may have gotten a decision, but we haven't captured what the public wants. You would expect "coin-toss" type results (Achen and Bartels 2016) from a trans-consistent public. Voters who simultaneously desire less regulation because it produces jobs and more environmental protections because it produces safe drinking water are on both sides of the current debate. Faced with two options they like or two options they dislike, a forced choice is like a coin toss. The underlying reality is that the public might have very good reasons to be on both sides of the political conflict. They may want heads *and* tails.

QUESTION WORDING

Some researchers might argue that the problems found in this book could all be resolved if we simply designed better questions. If survey questions are framed the right way, or written the right way, we could figure out what the public really wants. The problem, however, isn't the questions that researchers are asking. The problem is that many people have competing values, preferences, and desires that aren't compatible with each other. Many people might believe in their right to preserve their cultural traditions. But, some cultures might believe that women are inferior to men. Some cultures practice female genital mutilation as a rite of passage. Some cultures don't allow women to drive motor vehicles. Some cultures might believe that blacks are inferior to whites. Slavery and segregation were cultural traditions in many places for long periods of time. Many people who support preserving cultural traditions might very well oppose most, if not all, of the traditions listed above. They would not support letting others preserve their cultural traditions.

One possible approach is to ask respondents a series of questions designed to get them to reevaluate their stated position. Respondents who oppose regulations because they believe that regulations are harmful to businesses could be asked the follow-up question, "Would you still oppose the regulation if that regulation was necessary to make sure everyone had safe drinking water?" Respondents who support environmental protections could be asked, "Would you still support environmental regulations if it meant an increase in the unemployment rate and higher costs for consumers?" If large numbers of respondents are "flip-flopping" in both directions, there could be an underlying dialetheial paradox. Researchers must be prepared for a majority on both sides.

MEASURING IDEOLOGY

Although a majority of Americans are willing to identify themselves as having an ideological perspective (20% liberal, 34% conservative), only a very small proportion are strongly ideological (9% very liberal, 13% very conservative). A 40 percent plurality of Americans claim to be moderates and another 5 percent don't know their ideology if they have one at all (e.g., see table 8.1). It is the moderates and the "don't knows" that would account for the conflicting majorities we find on many issues. These are respondents who could be on either side of a debate.

Previous research has demonstrated that a subset of the American population is "cross-pressured" and therefore not ideologically consistent. For example, an African American churchgoer may support the liberal position on civil rights and income redistribution, but support the conservative position on abortion and gay rights. A poor white person may support the liberal position on welfare policy and the conservative position on affirmative action. These "ideological mismatches" occur because people have competing and conflicting goals, and "these goals can be complex, contradictory, and overlapping (Weeden and Kurzban 2014, 43). These are the individuals who would not fall neatly into our ideological categories. They are the self-described moderates.

Achen and Bartels found "that representatives' voting behavior was not strongly constrained by their constituents' views" (Achen and Bartels 2016, 66). What they mean by saying this is that Democratic representatives and Republican representatives had very different voting records even when both representatives represented districts that had ideologically similar constituents. One should note, however, that strongly liberal districts elected liberals and strongly conservative districts elected conservatives (Achen and Bartels 2016). The issue of a mismatch was with the group of more moderate districts. But if Americans aren't ideological, as was argued in chapter 3, that would be the wrong way to measure the match between their preferences and their vote choice. We're putting people on a scale they don't belong on. There's no reason to expect that a pragmatic population would fit neatly into anyone's ideological scorecard. If our most successful politicians are pragmatists (Hochschild and

TABLE 8.1 *Americans' Ideology*

In general, would you describe your political views as liberal, moderate, or conservative? Is that very or somewhat liberal/conservative?[1]

Very liberal	9%
Somewhat liberal	11%
Moderate	40%
Somewhat conservative	21%
Very conservative	13%
Don't Know	5%

Source

1. Survey by: *Al Jazeera America/Monmouth University Poll*, January 2015. Retrieved 11 March 2016 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

Einstein 2015) and the majority of Americans are pragmatists (Longoria 2016), then there may very well be a match between the nonideological philosophies of voters and representatives.

If that's the case, how do we explain the apparent gap between voters and representatives? Measuring a member of Congress's ideology through their roll call voting record produces a number of inaccuracies. First, some bills never get voted on because they were successfully killed in committee or otherwise stopped by partisan leaders. This is something partisan leaders regularly do when they know they would lose a vote, prevent the vote and your side won't lose. Popular measures never get registered, thus falsely suggesting there's no support for it among the members themselves. More crossover voting would happen between the two sides if the two sides' leadership allowed it. In these cases, a pragmatic legislator would never be able to register their pragmatic preference because an ideologue in a leadership position won't allow it. All it takes is for the leader to threaten a less senior member with no support from the leadership PAC or party committee and the favored legislation never sees the light of day. It appears as though, through voting records, the partisans are ideologically polarized. But it could be explained, at least partly, by an increase in the power or resources available to partisan leaders. Members who might cross the party line are never given a chance to do so—artificially inflating our polarization numbers. The members appear to be more ideological than they actually are. I'm not arguing that ideologues don't exist, or that ideologues aren't pulling the parties further apart. I am arguing that the effects may be exaggerated by the data that is being collected.

Second, the use of roll call votes misses the nitty-gritty of committee work. John Cornyn voted against a spending bill because, as an ideological matter he opposes out of control spending; his vote registers as conservative. But in committee Cornyn added millions of dollars worth of earmarks for favored projects; analysts don't count these liberal subcommittee votes, thereby exaggerating the ideological coherence of members of Congress. I argue that both actions, support for individual earmarks (in committee) and opposition to earmarks in general (on the floor) are part of a pragmatic and transconsistent element in our politics. Expediency drove both decisions, they were attempts to gain favor with constituents, party leaders, donors, lobbyists, and so on. We could argue about which of these have the most influence, but cross pressures will tend to produce messy results. The messiness isn't captured if we only count floor votes.

Ideological polarization can't coexist with ideological incoherence. If Americans are ideologically incoherent, and evidence suggests that they are, we

shouldn't be able to place them on an ideological scale that measures anything meaningful. We can certainly ask respondents about their views on certain policy issues, but transforming those views into an ideological score would be inappropriate for a pragmatic public that isn't ideologically motivated. Too much depends on which policies are chosen to be included in the index. A different set of policy questions would yield different scores, suggesting that measurement error is a serious problem in ideological scorecards.

CANDIDATE SELECTION

Scholars have found that there is a gap between voters' stated preferences on policy issues and their vote choice. About 30 percent of voters don't select the correct candidate, given their own policy preferences (Lau and Redlawsk 2006). But the theory of dialetheial paradoxes suggests that there might be other contradictory preferences that the survey researcher missed. A cross-pressured and pragmatic voter might very well appear to miss the mark, not because they voted for the wrong candidate, but because both candidates offered some of their preferred policy preferences and not others.

Because our assessment of what a voter prefers depends on the questions we ask, it's likely that a different set of questions would yield different preferences. On a particular issue a different frame might very well yield a preference for the opposite policy. Under these circumstances, it would be very difficult to determine what the "wrong" vote choice is. Too much depends on the frame or context of the questions we ask.

FILTER QUESTIONS

A significant proportion of the population may not have enough information at their disposal to make informed choices on questions of public policy. Although most respondents will volunteer an "I don't know" answer when asked a question about a topic they are not familiar with, approximately 20 percent will give an answer despite not having information about the topic (Schuman and Presser 1980).

To get around this problem some survey researchers include "filter questions" to weed out uninformed respondents. Doing this can dramatically change the results of the poll (Bishop, Oldendick, and Tuchfarber 1983). Attempting to separate the opinions of the informed from the opinions of the uninformed creates two publics, neither of which are representative of

the whole. If a researcher is concerned with public opinion, then the preferences of the uninformed should be given as much status as the preferences of the informed public. Discounting, or removing, the preferences of some and elevating, or considering only, the preferences of others would create artifice and bias in polling. A value neutral researcher should not give more weight to some types of respondents over others. The ignorant and misinformed have as much a right to express their views as anyone else. Otherwise, one has not measured the "general will."

Some argue that when people are willing to give an opinion about matters they know nothing about that this is a "pseudo-opinion" (Bishop, Oldendick, Tuchfarber, and Bennett 1980). Many respondents will give opinions about fictitious policies that don't exist (Bishop, Tuchfarber, and Oldendick 1986; Payne 1951). Amazingly, 5 percent to 10 percent of respondents will claim to have an opinion on a fictitious policy even when a filter question is presented in an effort to weed out respondents that don't have opinions on a topic (Bishop, Oldendick, Tuchfarber, and Bennett 1980). Under these circumstances, it is very easy for a respondent to give contradictory answers, and it seems there will inevitably be a subset that will state an opinion even on matters for which they have no basis for judgment. Even if researchers wanted to remove these respondents from the sample in an effort to avoid dialetheial paradoxes, there may not be a methodological method to do so.

It is not a "pseudo-opinion" even if the respondent is addressing a preference about fictitious policies. The straw man argument creates fictitious villains, or policies, that can then be criticized and opposed. Fears of the government "taking away your guns" or "taking away your Social Security" or "creating death panels who want to kill your grandmother" are compelling motivators precisely because Americans don't want these actions to occur. These rhetorical tools, while based on fictitious claims, tap into real preferences that people have. While we would wish that the public could recognize the fictitiousness of the policy, it is still an indication of a real underlying preference.

On questions of opinion, the only objective measure we have is the responses given to particular questions. We have to take respondents at their word when they claim to oppose gun control or support same-sex marriage. There is no objective measure other than the expressed preference. When they give answers that are incompatible with their other answers, we must accept the possibility that they might actually prefer incompatible or contradictory policies. There is no law of human behavior that says people must be rational, logical, or consistent. They might very well want and not want something.

EXPRESSIVE RESPONSES

The weekend after Donald Trump's inauguration, the major political dispute had to do with the size of the crowd that attended the event. Photographs showing the 2017 presidential inauguration and the 2009 presidential inauguration side by side clearly showed that the 2009 crowd was larger. There could be all kinds of reasons why this was the case. It could be Donald Trump in 2017 was less popular than Barrack Obama in 2009. It could be that the Trump photo was taken earlier in the day, before the crowd was fully assembled. It could be that because Washington, DC and its surrounding suburbs are largely Democratic strongholds, fewer locals attended the event and Republicans had to make a larger effort to get there given that they have to travel farther to attend. No matter the reason, the photographs unambiguously displayed two different scenarios: a large crowd and a small crowd.

An experiment by Schaffner and Luks found that Trump supporters were far more likely to give the wrong answer about which photograph displayed a larger crowd.

> We showed half of them a crowd picture from each inauguration and asked which was from Trump's inauguration and which was from Obama's. If the past is any guide, we would expect that Trump supporters would be more likely to claim that the picture with the larger crowd was the one from Trump's inauguration, as doing so would express and reinforce their support for him. . . . For the question about which image went with which inauguration, 41 percent of Trump supporters gave the wrong answer; that's significantly more than the wrong answers given by 8 percent of Clinton voters and 21 percent of those who did not vote. (Schaffner and Luks 2017)

Trump voters select the picture with the larger crowd as a method to express their support for their preferred candidate. But what if we simply asked people a fact-based question, leaving politics aside?

> For the other half, we asked a very simple question with one clearly correct answer: "Which photo has more people?" Some of these people probably understood that the image on the left was from Trump's inauguration and that the image on the right was from Obama's, but admitting that there were more people in the image on the right would mean they were acknowledging that more people attended Obama's inauguration. Would some people be willing to make a clearly false

statement when looking directly at photographic evidence—simply to support the Trump administration's claims? Yes... 15 percent of people who voted for Trump told us that more people were in the image on the left—the photo from Trump's inauguration—than the picture on the right. We got that answer from only 2 percent of Clinton voters and 3 percent of nonvoters. Even when the photographic evidence was directly in front of them and the question was straightforward, one in seven Trump supporters gave the clearly false answer.... Clearly, some Trump supporters in our sample decided to use this question to express their support for Trump rather than to answer the survey question factually. (Schaffner and Luks 2017)

It could be that some partisans have severely distorted perceptions, or it could be that they know the correct answer and intentionally choose the incorrect answer in order to express a political sentiment.

As it turns out, the latter possibility is very likely. Bullock et al. found that "Partisan divergence in surveys ... measure the joy of partisan "cheerleading" rather than sincere differences in beliefs about the truth" (Bullock, et al. 2015, 521). Their experiment paying respondents for correct answers decreased the partisan gap in fact based questions by 55 percent to 60 percent. When they add a financial incentive for "don't know" responses, the gap was reduced by 80 percent compared to the control group that was not given a financial incentive to answer correctly. This suggests "that partisan divergence in responses to these questions is driven by expressive behavior and by respondents understanding that they do not actually know the correct answers" (Bullock, et al. 2015, 522). In other words, the respondents knew that they didn't know the correct answers, but were unwilling to admit it unless they had a financial incentive of a few dollars to do so. Bullock et al. discovered "that even modest payments substantially reduce the observed gaps between Democrats and Republicans, which suggests that Democrats and Republicans do not hold starkly different beliefs about many important facts" (Bullock, et al. 2015, 522). Many partisans do not actually believe what they are saying when they make false or inaccurate claims. While some Republicans may have genuinely believed that Barrack Obama was born in Kenya, most might have merely said so to express their partisan hostility to a Democratic president.

Consistent with Jamesian pragmatism, many people are perfectly willing to make things up to promote their cause or malign an opponent. It also suggests that Americans might not be as ignorant as many surveys suggest. They know the facts, but aren't willing to admit it when the facts cut against their

partisan team. If respondents are giving insincere responses to questions, then we can't take their answers at face value. Bullock et al. proposed that, "when survey reports of attitudes have expressive value, they may be inaccurate measures of true attitudes" (Bullock, et al. 2015, 561). If this were true, then they might not be on two sides of the same issue—there could be "false positives" in one direction or another.

The research by Schaffner and Luks and by Bullock, et al. measure survey responses to items for which there is an objective right and wrong answer. Opinion-type questions can't be right or wrong. Some people believe that regulations are bad because they harm businesses and also that regulations are good because they protect the environment. What do people value more, having a job or having clean drinking water? People value both, but our surveys and electoral system make them choose. Expressive responses do not eliminate value pluralism. The cross pressures and contradictions can still be there even if some people are insincere.

Rather than undermining the theory of dialetheial paradoxes and trans-consistency in public opinion, expressive responding might actually reinforce the argument made throughout this book. If the public doesn't want what the public says it wants, this is all the more reason to suggest the theory is accurate. If the government does what the public says it wants, the public might get upset because it's not what it wanted. But if the government doesn't do what the public says it wants, then the public will be upset because the government doesn't do what it said it wanted the government to do. If people don't want what they asked for, then you didn't give them what they wanted when you gave them what they asked for. This would be your fault. In precisely this way the People blame the government when the government obeys the Will of the People.

If respondents say they thought abortion should be illegal in all circumstances, but really they were just expressing their view that it was immoral—not that it should actually be illegal—then they might get upset when abortion services get restricted. In addition to expressive survey responses there can also be expressive voting (Fiorina 1976; Copeland and Laband 2002). This person might vote for a candidate who promised to ban all abortions in all circumstances and then be upset because they didn't really want it banned, they just think it's immoral and they voted for the candidate that shared their values. Isn't that what we asked? No, it isn't. If we reinterpret people's words, then ultimately words would have no meaning. If the public tells us that it wants something and then the government provides the public with what it said it wanted, and then the public gets upset because it didn't want it, then no one

is to blame but the public itself. Expressive responding and expressive voting only serves to increase widespread dissatisfaction with our political system. Doing what the public says it wants might very well make the public angry, but the alternative is to not listen to what it says. Table 1.1, at the outset of this book, demonstrates that not listening to the public and not following opinion polls closely is a source of dissatisfaction among the public. If elites determine that there is a difference between what the public "really wants" and what the public "says it wants," then the public might have every reason to be upset with elites who do as they please instead of listening to the People.

CONCLUSIONS

The question wording, framing, and issue-saliency effects all demonstrate that the public can often vacillate between two competing positions. Forced-choice questions attempt to determine what the public desires by placing two competing positions side by side and forcing a respondent to choose. But this method ignores the possibility that some respondents might very well support both positions, even when the two options are contradictory and incompatible. Many scholars use various methods in their attempts to measure the ideology of legislators and voters, but pragmatists lack an ideology and to the extent that voters and elected officials are pragmatic, an ideological scale would not be the best method to determine if there is a gap between the People's preferences and government actions. Voters do a pretty good job of selecting the candidates that most match their own positions on the issues, but because question wording, framing, and issue saliency can all affect respondents' policy preference, a mismatch between their responses and their vote choices might be more illusionary than real. Of course, very few people are expected to agree with their representative on every single issue, but because people can be on both sides of a particular issue, extrapolating a "wrong" vote choice based on one version of a policy question might be misleading. Filter questions are not able to weed out all of the uninformed or misinformed respondents, but even if they could we would not be capturing the general will if we only considered the opinions of our most informed citizens. The opinions of all citizens, informed or not, are valuable and worthy of expression. Expressive responding is a real possibility in survey research; some people will knowingly make false statements or endorse a view they may not wholeheartedly support. To not take respondents seriously, however, is precisely the type of elitism that many in the mass public find frustrating. When elites are dismissive of the masses, discontent can boil over.

9. Janus Democracy

Early in the American republic there waged a philosophical battle centered around the proper role that citizens should play in their government. Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine had starkly different views concerning the People. Burke believed that elected representatives should act as trustees and not blindly follow the will of the masses; instead they should use judgment to do what is best for society even if it goes against popular sentiment. He did not believe the masses had an inalienable right to participate in the political process, and he viewed the revolution in France as mob rule. For Burke, the monarchy and aristocracy created stability in Britain precisely because it was not subject to the general will. He was an elitist supporter of tradition (Levin 2014; Burke 1999).

Thomas Paine, on the other hand, was a liberal revolutionary. He wrote *Common Sense*, which sparked the movement for American independence from Britain. He then went to France and participated in the French Revolution. While there he wrote the *Rights of Man*, which defended the French Revolution and railed against Burke's claims. Paine supported a unitary government where all the power resides with the elected representatives of the people, without checks and balances to stifle the majoritarian process. He supported the delegate model of representation, where elected officials simply reflected the general will. Paine was an unapologetic populist, who called for the immediate and rapid destruction of old tyrannies (Levin 2014; Paine 1986; Paine 1970).

If the general will can be on both sides of an issue, it can't be much of a guide to public policy. Delegates would be on both sides of the debate. Trustees, however, could choose a side and serve the public interest even when popular opinion was against them. The problem, of course, is that trustees might be inclined to ignore the public, and the public wants a government that is responsive to its wishes. The public prefers delegates.

The contradictory nature of the general will leads to the perpetual dissatisfaction of the American public. More simply, you can't have your cake and eat it too. Eating the cake causes dissatisfaction because you no longer have the cake. Keeping the cake for later causes dissatisfaction because you want to eat it now. The majority might very well want something and not want it. Most Americans might both support and oppose the same policy. The public

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might be unhappy when the government does what the public wanted it to do and herein lies the final paradox. Most Americans want a government that is responsive to their wishes, but the more democratic the institution is the more Americans dislike it.

JANUS DEMOCRACY

It is worthwhile to repeat a point made in chapter 1. Most Americans support populist democracy. They would like to have a government that responds to public opinion and they believe the nation would be better off if public opinion held more sway (e.g., see table 9.1). Eighty-two percent of Americans believe that public opinion has too little power and influence in our government. Sixty-eight percent believe the nation would be better off if our leaders followed public opinion more closely. In addition, the vast majority of Americans say they could not live in an undemocratic country. All this comes from a public that isn't too concerned when foreigners live under a dictatorship, from a public that is grossly misinformed about many basic facts, and from a public that strongly supported the Iraq War only to later believe it was a dumb idea.

This belief about the proper role of the public is at odds with a very important fact. The more democratic the political institution is, the more the public dislikes it. An amazing 82 percent disapprove of Congress, the only branch of our federal government that is directly elected by the people themselves (e.g., see table 9.2). Since Republicans currently control the Congress, the Republican Party earns 75 percent disapproval, while the Democratic Party earns 63 percent disapproval. Our president is elected indirectly through an Electoral College system where some votes are worth more than others. The primary process for presidential elections is also indirect. The parties assign each state a number of delegates based on rules they create. The Democratic Party includes elected officials and party leaders as "super delegates" that have no obligation to follow their state's primary results—in essence, elites get a voice separate from the masses. The Republican Party has some winner-take-all states, where supporters of a losing candidate in that state don't get their voice heard at all. In short, there is disproportionality and disconnect from popular majorities at several stages in the process of electing the president. The president gets 50 percent disapproval, which is much better than Congress. Although this number can fluctuate dramatically during times of crisis, the president typically has higher approval ratings than Congress. Membership in the Supreme Court is through appointment and the public has no say in who becomes a member directly or indirectly, except in so far as they can indirectly

choose the chooser. The Supreme Court earns only 41 percent disapproval. A review of approval ratings for the three branches of government shows that, historically, Congress gets the lowest ratings, the president fluctuates but typically has better ratings than Congress, and the Supreme Court gets the highest ratings (Jones 2014). Although we threw off the yoke of monarchy more than two centuries ago; Americans seem to be quite happy with inherited political power. Queen Elizabeth earns an 81 percent favorability rating by

TABLE 9.1 *Americans Want the Government to Be Responsive to Public Opinion*

And now a question about the power of different groups in influencing government policy, politicians, and policy makers in Washington. Do you think public opinion has too much or too little power and influence in Washington?[1]

Too much	13%
Too little	82%
About right (Vol.)	2%
Not sure/Refused	3%

If the leaders of our nation followed the views of public opinion polls more closely, do you think the nation would be better off, or worse off than it is today?[2]

Better off	68%
Worse off	25%
No difference (Vol.)	3%
No opinion	4%

Do you think you could live in a country without democracy?[3]

Yes, who needs it	5%
Yes, as long as I'm rich	4%
No	69%
I already do	15%
Don't know	8%

Sources

1. Survey by: *Harris Poll*, April 2011. Retrieved 7 March 2013 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2. Survey by: *Gallup Poll*, September 2011. Retrieved 7 March 2013 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

3. Survey by: *60 Minutes, Vanity Fair. 60 Minutes/Vanity Fair Poll*, February 2012. Retrieved 12 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

the American public. Only 6 percent have an unfavorable view of the Queen. The less say the public has in who holds a political office, the more it likes that office. The public is the most dissatisfied with the political institutions over which it has the most influence, yet the public wants a government that is more responsive to its wishes.

The public can't be satisfied because on a wide array of issues the public is on both sides of the debate. A majority supports the theory of evolution and a majority supports the Biblical account of creation. Most Americans believe that discrimination exists, but a majority also believes everyone has an equal chance to succeed. Most Americans opposed the Affordable Care Act in principle, but pragmatically they don't want the program to end because they don't want people to lose their health-care subsidies. On issues of government spending Americans tend to oppose "welfare," but they support "assistance to the poor." They want a smaller government with fewer services and lower taxes, but they oppose cuts in every major spending area and would rather have tax increases than cuts to their services. They support regulations that will protect the public from harm, but they oppose regulations that hinder businesses. Of course, the same regulation that protects the public hinders the business producing the harmful product. Americans support freedom of speech, they believe that campaign contributions are a form of speech, and they believe that corporations should have the same free speech rights as individuals. Americans are also willing to limit the speech of groups they don't like, they want campaign contribution limits, and they believe super PACs should be illegal.

TABLE 9.2 *Dissatisfaction with Democratic Political Institutions*

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job?[1]

Approve	14%
Disapprove	82%
Don't know/No answer	5%

(Asked of registered voters) Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Republicans in Congress are handling their jobs?[2]

Approve	17%
Disapprove	75%
Don't know/No answer	8%

Table 9.2 (cont'd)

(Asked of registered voters) Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Democrats in Congress are handling their jobs?[3]

Approve	29%
Disapprove	63%
Don't know/No answer	7%

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president?[4]

Approve	47%
Disapprove	50%
Don't know/No answer	3%

Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Supreme Court is handling its job?[5]

Approve	52%
Disapprove	41%
Don't know/No answer	7%

We'd like to get your overall opinion of the leaders of some foreign countries. As I read each name, please say if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of these people—or if you have never heard of them. . . . Queen Elizabeth of Great Britain.[6]

Favorable	81%
Unfavorable	6%
Never heard of	3%
No opinion	10%

Sources

1. Survey by: *Gallup Organization. Gallup Poll*, August 2015. Retrieved 12 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

2–3. Survey by: *Quinnipiac University Polling Institute. Quinnipiac University Poll*, July 2015. Retrieved 12 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

4. Survey by: *American Research Group. American Research Group Poll*, August 2015. Retrieved 12 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

5. Survey by: *Cable News Network. CNN/ORC International Poll*, May 2015. Retrieved 12 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

6. Survey by: *Cable News Network. CNN/ORC International Poll*, January 2014. Retrieved 12 September 2015 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

On issues of foreign policy the public is often disengaged and misinformed. As an abstract question they tend to oppose war and would prefer a United States that focuses on domestic concerns rather than problems faced by foreigners. If threatened, however, Americans embrace an interventionist approach to foreign policy. But because they often lack the relevant information they often make ill-informed choices and can be persuaded in either of two opposite directions depending on how the issue is framed. They will support proposals that benefit the United States and oppose proposals that harm the United States, but don't really know which is which, and they may find themselves both supporting and opposing the same policy.

On other issues, there might not be a "true contradiction," but there are still reasons for the public to feel discontent. A majority believes abortion should be legal and a majority believes abortion should be illegal, depending on the circumstances. Because the public is in the middle and political leaders are at the extremes, neither the pro-choice position nor the pro-life position really captures the public sentiment. Neither group of activists consider circumstances when taking their "in all cases" position on the issue. It also happens that the public makes choices it later regrets. A large majority supported the Iraq War only to think it was dumb thing to do a decade later. Some politicians will misconstrue public opinion to achieve their own ends. While most Americans believe that genetic engineering is immoral, they want the lifesaving treatments that can be made available through that science. They are willing to take "moral holidays" when it is expedient to do so. Politicians who cite moral outrage to ban the practice are falsely extrapolating from a true premise.

Survey researchers are well aware of the question wording, framing, and issue saliency effects. They often attempt to carefully create questions to avoid these problems, however, these "problems" are actually endemic to human psychology. Some people are deeply conflicted and contradictory. An accurate measure of their opinion would not overcome the contradiction, but allow it to be expressed. This true and accurate reflection of their opinion might in fact lead to opposing majorities on particular issues. When this happens, we can say that the public is transconsistent because they actually do prefer two opposing options.

THE ROLE OF INFORMATION

Some of the contradictions discussed in the earlier chapters occurred because the public is misinformed. If the public had the correct information, then perhaps the contradictions would vanish. This is unlikely for several reasons. Pragmatic politicians may have an incentive to keep people misinformed.

In order to achieve a desired result, it may make sense to make up "facts" to support claims that would persuade the public to adopt the desired position. In addition, ideological commitments create echo chambers. When one's group identity rests on not believing an empirically true fact or on believing a "fact" that is demonstrably false, then individuals will not be persuaded by giving them correct information. In other words, both pragmatists and ideologues may hold positions that are not grounded in reality.

This can be dangerous. According to Hochschild and Einstein, "the misinformed are difficult to move, the active use of misinformation can have devastating consequences, and some politicians have an incentive to keep people active but misinformed" (Hochschild and Einstein 2015, 44). What should be more alarming is that misinformation is not confined to the lower classes or less well educated. False information about the link between autism and vaccines seems to have taken hold in many well-educated and affluent communities (Hochschild and Einstein 2015). The upper class and the lower class, the well educated and the less well educated, and the politically active and the politically inactive are all capable of being misinformed.

The root cause is quite simple. The information that people receive may not be accurate. But, solving the problem may be nearly impossible. Political actors are either ideologues like Bernie Sanders and Ted Cruz or they are pragmatists like Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. The fact that these candidates constituted the final four in our most recent presidential primaries should tell us that both ideologues and pragmatists are significant players in our political process. It also tells us that Americans are more pragmatic than ideological, and this is translates into more votes for pragmatic politicians. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to trust pragmatists because they will say and do whatever is necessary to achieve their objective, or if the situation changes they will not adhere to previous commitments. Yet, these qualities are precisely what makes them successful. Those who believe ideologues dominate our political process should keep in mind that pragmatists are willing to adopt ideological positions when it is expedient for them to do so; they can masquerade as an ideologue if it helps them win. This book focused on pragmatists, and especially Jamesian pragmatists, because this group seems to be responsible for the dialetheial paradoxes found in public opinion. They say, do, and believe whatever is expedient and are unconcerned with consistency.

When the public is receiving false "facts" from their leaders they will be prone to accepting incorrect information. Many Americans who believe false claims, "link it to their partisan identity, are emotionally invested in their position, and have been encouraged to maintain this stance by partisan

elites" (Hochschild and Einstein 2015, 123). Can an engaged and civic-minded public overcome the deficiencies of their leadership? It's unlikely. The public is more likely to receive information that is being actively pushed than they are to seek out information themselves. When they do seek out information, they are likely to search for information that supports their view rather than information that may contradict their view (Stroud 2008). The politically engaged, qua information seekers, may be just as misinformed as those who never acquired any information at all. All of this makes misinformation widespread and difficult to mitigate.

This lack of information can cause dialetheial paradoxes in public opinion. When a budget item is grossly overestimated the majority may wish to reduce the expenditure and support spending an amount that is higher than current spending levels. When they are unfamiliar with international actors they may support a plan to intervene on their behalf and oppose a plan to do the same. Slight variations in question wording on an unfamiliar topic can change majority support into majority opposition and our political leaders have become very adept at using polling data to frame issues in a way that favors their own preferred position.

We have a type of chicken and egg problem. Are the leaders misinforming the public or are the leaders reflecting the views of a misinformed public? In either case, the result is the same. A politics that is devoid of decision making that is based on true and accurate information. People with inaccurate information are unlikely to make good decisions, except in cases where they accidentally choose an action that benefits them.

Why is the public susceptible to misinformation? The answer is because everyone is. Let's say that A and B are incompatible policies and also that there is a subset of the population that supports A and B. If candidate X is offering A and B, while candidate Y is telling them they can't have both, that they have to choose between A or B, or that to have more of A they must also take less of B and vice versa, then candidate Y is telling the truth, but it's not something this subset finds appealing. Candidate X is being dishonest, or is misinformed themselves, in either case they are offering this subset exactly what they are seeking. They will vote for candidate X because with X, even if X doesn't deliver, there's at least the possibility of receiving what they want. Candidate Y closed off the option; candidate Y isn't even going to try to satisfy their desires. Let's say candidate X wins the election, but because policies A and B are incompatible they can't fulfill their promises. The people who selected candidate X get angry. X doesn't deliver what they want. The next election candidate Y returns and says, "I told you that you can't have both. You have

to choose A or B and I say B is the better choice." Candidate X retorts, "I can give you both A and B, I just need more time; candidate Y will only give you B, but I will give you A and B." The public no longer trusts X to deliver, but X is offering at least the possibility of delivering while Y cuts off any possibility. X wins again. Unreasonable demands create a cycle of dissatisfaction where politicians fail to deliver on their promises, but also were the people keep electing them because the promises open up a possibility, while the reality is definitely not preferred. A pragmatic politician will soon find that honesty is not the best policy. The truth may be unpopular and they are in a popularity contest.

PERPETUAL DISSATISFACTION

Politicians regularly have to deal with all kinds of people. As such they often have remarkable insights that most others may miss. Adlai Stevenson on reflection said, "You will find that the truth is often unpopular and the contest between agreeable fancy and disagreeable fact is unequal" (Stevenson 1958, 386). Agreeable fancy might very well have majoritarian support while a grasp on reality is limited to a select few. This does not bode well for democracy. If our expectations are based on fanciful ideas, we'll be disappointed when our desires aren't fulfilled.

Many people want to be physically fit while at the same time having a diet high in junk food and low on exercise. It explains why gimmicky weight loss pills are still being purchased by thousands of Americans. The promise of, "Eat anything you want and still lose weight! There's no need to exercise!" is so very appealing. They can have it all, for $19.95 plus shipping and handling. Human beings are not born reasonable. Deep down in the recesses of our brains that we have learned to suppress there is a primal drive that makes us susceptible to "agreeable fancy." Moreover, some people are more susceptible to false hopes and misinformation than others—although no one is entirely immune.

Sometimes dissatisfaction occurs when people want two opposite things and can't have both. This simultaneous wanting and not wanting is called transconsistency. It is embedded in the general will and it fosters discontent with democratic institutions. Perversely, government responsiveness to public opinion is the very action that causes the public to be dissatisfied with their government. Our government is set up in such a way as

> to refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through the
> medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern
> the true interest of their country, and whose patriotism and love of

> justice, will be the least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial
> considerations. Under such a regulation, it may well happen, that the
> public voice, pronounced by the representatives of the people, will be
> more consonant to the public good, than if pronounced by the people
> themselves. (Madison 1961, 82)

It was designed to not listen to the masses when the elites have decided an
alternate action is in the public interest. Madison and the other founders would
rely on Burkean trustees to curb popular sentiment in the new republic.

One source of dissatisfaction lies in the simple fact that sometimes our
elected representatives, or their appointees, choose not to give us what we want.
Prohibitions on burning the flag, mandating prayers in the public schools,
requiring universal background checks on gun purchases, and banning Syrian
refugees from entering the country are policies that are desired and not given.
When the Supreme Court issued its *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, most
Americans still supported segregation. Many Americans, and southern whites
in particular, were enraged.

Sometimes the public doesn't get what it wants because our elites have
a true interest in protecting the rights of minority groups who might be
oppressed by majoritarian impulses. At other times our elites have been "cap-
tured" by narrow-minded profiteers who use the laws to privately gain at
public expense. In either case, not getting what they desire causes widespread
dissatisfaction.

The second source of dissatisfaction is more problematic than the first.
In the first instance the government can provide us with what we want and
chooses not to. In the second case, the government can't provide what we want
because it is not actually possible. This first scenario can be solved with direct
democracy. If public opinion strongly favors an action, the action is carried
out. Initiatives and referenda are designed to give the people more power over
the government. They can circumvent their elected representatives and get
what they want. But if what they want isn't actually possible, then in that
case direct democracy doesn't increase happiness it increases dissatisfaction.

In California, the people wanted lower taxes and passed Proposition
13 in 1978 to limit property taxes. As a result, California went from having
the highest per pupil expenditures in the nation to having school districts
in financial peril because of inadequate resources (Ellis 2002). The people
of California value education and want excellent schools so they passed
Proposition 98 in 1988 to mandate a minimum level of public expenditures on
schools. It required that 39 percent of the state budget be spent on education

during the first two years and required spending increases to keep pace with growing enrollments in subsequent years. During a recession, however, when state revenues decrease dramatically, this would cause the legislature to make major cuts in other programs and services because they cannot reduce education funding from the previous year's amount. The legislature intervened and asked California voters to approve Proposition 111 in 1990 to allow the legislature to reduce education funding when state revenues decreased with the provision that it be paid back later when revenues increased again. Because Californians did not like the idea of drastic reductions in other services to protect education funding they passed Proposition 111 (Miller 2015). Propositions 13, 98, and 111 demonstrate that California voters pass laws without fully understanding the consequences. They then have to pass more laws to fix the laws they previously passed. It also demonstrates that elites can act as an important check on the uninformed Will of the People. In true Madisonian fashion the legislature had to step in and make a better decision than the people could make on their own.

But this elitist check on the people can be subverted, just as Madison predicted it could. Madison declared, "On the other hand, the effect may be inverted. Men of factious tempers, of local prejudices, or of sinister designs, may, by intrigue, by corruption, or by other means, first obtain the suffrages, and then betray the interests of the people" (Madison 1961, 82). Today, corporations and interest groups can hire petition management firms to collect signatures to bypass the legislature and place their own legislation on the ballot. They hire law firms, public relations consultants, advertising agencies, and telemarketers to persuade the public to vote for their legislation by spending millions of dollars on their own campaign—not for public office but for public laws (Ellis 2002). The public could very well be duped into supporting legislation that benefits an elite few.

It would be incorrect to argue that the government is unresponsive to the Will of the People. The reality is more complicated than that. There are many examples of the government changing its policies as a result of public pressure. But the government does not *always* respond to public pressure. Sometimes the People get what they want, sometimes they don't. Let's start with something that takes a tremendous amount of public support to occur—a constitutional amendment like Prohibition.

In order to understand Prohibition one needs to know that, "By 1830, the average American over 15 years old consumed nearly seven gallons of pure alcohol a year—three times as much as we drink today—and alcohol abuse (primarily by men) was wreaking havoc on the lives of many" (Burns and

Novick 2011). Because alcoholism was a major social ill, groups of reformers were sprouting up throughout the country attempting to alleviate the problem. "In the early 1850s, 13 states passed prohibitions on the sale of hard liquor," but "these bans were in most cases soon rescinded" (Moore and Gerstein 1981, 9). Their struggle continued and "By 1916, prohibitionist laws of various sorts had been established (mainly by referendum) in 23 states" (Moore and Gerstein 1981, 10). We see in our state level prohibition laws a pattern of popular support followed by popular repeal. This pattern was followed at the national level with the adoption of the Eighteenth Amendment and its repeal with the Twenty-first Amendment.

This experience with Prohibition demonstrates two things. First, the government was responsive to the wishes of the electorate in its attempt to solve a problem. Voters and legislators supported the amendment. Second, there was a whiplash back and forth in public sentiment over the issue causing government action to repeal the law. The pattern occurred at both the state and federal levels across several decades. The same voters and legislators that supported prohibition later supported its repeal. This is precisely what one should expect from a transconsistent public. They want the government to ban alcohol consumption because it solves a problem, but they also don't like it when the government tells them what they are and are not allowed to drink. The government responded in grand fashion.

Or, let's take the example of political machines, political organizations that are dominated by powerful "bosses." These bosses would buy public support through patronage. Some voters were given city jobs in exchange for voting and campaigning for the boss. Campaign donors were given lucrative city contracts in exchange for a kickback. But these schemes were very expensive for voters who were not the beneficiaries of the graft. As a result, reformers began making serious electoral challenges to the dominant machines and several reforms were enacted as a way to stave off opposition (Gerstle 2015). The government does often attempt to respond to public pressure in an effort to alleviate discontent.

In chapter 5, evidence was presented that suggests that the public is transconsistent on health-care policy. When the ACA was firmly in place most Americans opposed the law; the moment repeal became imminent most Americans supported it. How did our political leaders respond to this shift in opinion? Donald Trump said, "I see it happening with Obamacare. People hate it, but now they see the end is coming and they're saying, 'Oh, maybe we love it.' There's nothing to love, it's a disaster folks. So, you have to remember that." (CSPAN February 27, 2017). Politicians make promises to win elections, they

promise to give the People what the people desire. Once elected the People no longer desire the policies they supported, or more precisely they also opposed the policies they were supporting but they couldn't express it with the forced choice of an election. In many cases, when elites do what they said they would do the inevitable result is public backlash because the People didn't want what they wanted. In this case the public wants to keep the ACA and the Congress, the branch most influenced by direct public pressure, decided not to repeal it. The law remains largely intact, despite the eventual elimination of the tax penalties for not acquiring health insurance. Chapter 1 noted that the public gets upset when the government doesn't respond to their wishes. But their wishes might be the opposite of whatever the government is doing. The public isn't going to remember that they hate it, as Trump requests. A majority wants to keep it, and they get upset if they are about to lose it. This is true even though a majority wanted to get rid of it when they had it.

Achen and Bartels were worried about, "the fundamental indeterminacy of public preferences" that "is sometimes evident even on highly salient issues" (93). They cite a Houston referendum on abolishing affirmative action programs. Supporters and opponents of affirmative action both realized that they could win the referenda if the question on the ballot used their own respectively preferred frame. The city council chose the frame that yielded a win for affirmative action. Opponents of affirmative action filed a lawsuit claiming that version of the question should be deemed illegal. Let's say the anti–affirmative action activists had their question on the ballot. Achen and Bartels ask, "would that result have been more or less legitimate than the actual, opposite result? The doctrine of 'direct democracy' provides no sensible way to answer such questions" (95).

If you are willing to believe in a transconsistent public, then the correct answer is that the public wants *and* doesn't want affirmative action. They like the idea of giving people an equal opportunity and they don't like the idea of people being discriminated against. Minorities, qua supporters of affirmative action, claim that minorities should be given an equal opportunity because whites discriminate against them. Whites, qua opponents of affirmative action, claim that whites should be given an equal opportunity because affirmative action discriminates against them. Each side is pragmatically choosing the policy that favors their group interest. The public wants everyone to be treated fairly. The problem is not the public or the general will, the problem is the factions fighting for limited resources. The public wants both sides to win.

Elites, whether they are politicians or political scientists, have been looking at a number of issues and trying to figure out if the public prefers

one alternative *or* another. Sometimes the public wants *both* alternatives even though the two choices are mutually exclusive. The problem is solved by taking away the "or" and replacing it with an "and." If we take a forced-choice question and add a third option, "both," then both could very well carry the day. For decades the federal government simultaneously taxed tobacco to reduce its use and reduce cancer rates (a worthy goal) and also subsidized tobacco farmers to keep their farms solvent (also a worthy goal). Elites need to find "everybody wins" strategies by sometimes simultaneously adopting polices that are at odds with each other.

Some elites may be worried about being rational and logical, but the public is very often neither and the policies elites seek, if they want them to conform to the general will, need not be either. Give the public what it wants and let them suffer the consequences. There are elites who have a sense of noblesse oblige and believe they have a responsibility to protect the masses from themselves, but such arrogant elitism will not make them popular. To be popular elites must give the people what they want. Achen and Bartels (2016) poignantly point out that there has been a steady march of democratization throughout American history. Every crisis of authority yields reforms that devolve more and more power away from the elites and toward the masses.

When the public wants things that can't be provided, they will be upset and blame the elites for not providing it. In order to maintain their control elites must yield at least some of their authority in an effort to prevent an insurrection. Each appeasement lasts a few decades until once again the public becomes frustrated by their inability to get what they want. If the public wants a pink unicorn, and we know we can't provide it, there is an easy solution. One set of elites can offer them a brown unicorn and another set of elites can offer a pink horse. The public won't like either option, but they will go round and round between the two and our political and social elites can rest assured that the system has been temporarily stabilized. When the next crisis of authority erupts we can offer mail-in ballots or online voting or any other seemingly democratizing tool to appease them once again.

The previous reforms and the ones that will follow have been and will be co-opted by elites to serve elite purposes (Achen and Bartels 2016). If that's the case, there's no reason for elites to worry about giving the masses too much power. The direct primary gave the masses more power; they, not party elites, could select the nominee. But it also gave elites more power; because primaries became more expensive to contest, the wealthiest donors increased their influence over the process. Everybody wins! The initiative process gives the masses more direct power over public policy. But it is now dominated by

initiative management firms that charge wealthy donors, or wealthy businesses, or wealthy interest groups money to collect petition signatures, engage in mass advertising to persuade the public, and thereby bypass the elected officials charged with protecting the common good. Everybody wins!

Gurr had some prescient insights into the nature of rebellion and revolution: "When men's ideational systems prove inadequate to their purposes, and particularly when they become intensely and irremediably discontented because goals are unattainable by old norms, they are susceptible to new ideas which justify different courses of action" (Gurr 1970, 194). A democratic and capitalist society might, in their frustration, consider socialism, nationalism, or fascism as alternative methods of acquiring their goals. The People have exactly the government they deserve. Given the wants that they want, their uninformed biases, and their mercurial policy preferences, there's no shame in elites giving the masses exactly what the masses want. In the end, they'll get the "democracy" that suits them best, which might be no democracy at all.

PERSISTENCE OF THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM

Because of federalism and checks and balances, the contradictory majoritarian impulses can manifest themselves simultaneously. The Janus-faced majority can oppose itself using a governmental system that opposes itself. Each of the two major parties can develop a platform that is supported by a majority of Americans and yet be directly opposed to each other. For example, a majority of Americans would prefer to have a smaller government, with lower taxes, that provides fewer services. This would lead them to support the Republican Party. However, a majority of Americans would rather have tax increases than to see a reduction of their existing services. This would lead them to support the Democratic Party.

If a majority of Americans vote for the Republican Party in one election and the party begins to pass the legislation it promised to pass because most people like the proposals, an outraged majority would vote for the Democratic Party in the next election. When the Democratic Party begins to pass the legislation it promised to pass because most people like the proposals, an outraged majority could vote for the Republican Party in the next election. Dialetheial paradoxes in public opinion are one possible explanation for the persistence of congressional losses for the president's party in midterm elections. When the public opposes the policies they support, they must take immediate action to stop what they wanted to happen from happening.

Deeply conflicted voters could split their ticket and vote for both Democrats and Republicans in the same election. A voter who believes that poor people should be able to see a doctor if they are in need, could vote for President Obama and the Democratic Party because they support the expansion of Medicaid through the Affordable Care Act. If this same voter believes it is not the government's job to provide health care, or opposes tax increases to provide health care to the poor, they could in the same election vote for a Republican governor who vows not to expand Medicaid in their state. In the 2016 presidential election, there were twenty-three congressional districts that voted for Hillary Clinton, a Democrat, and for a Republican member of Congress. Only three of those Republicans won by less than 5 percent, suggesting it wasn't a close contest (Wolf 2017). Even with low levels of ticket splitting nationally, there are significant numbers of Americans who voted for Hillary Clinton and for a Republican Congress that would try to stop her from seeing her agenda through. If a majority supports and opposes the same policy, our governmental system can support and oppose it. This aspect of federalism and checks and balances allows both sides of a conflicted majority to have its way.

POLITICAL "FLIP-FLOPS"

Sometimes individual politicians will find themselves opposing policies they themselves are proposing or reversing previously held positions. These "flip-flops" are often mocked by commentators, but a politician who is seeking to please the majority will often find he must support and oppose the same policy in order to make most people happy. In 2004, John Kerry was ridiculed for saying in a debate, "I actually did vote for the $87 billion before I voted against it" (Baxter 2004, 24).

In 2010, Senator John Cornyn supported a ban on congressional earmarks ("No Change" 2010). He said, "Earmarks are a symptom of wasteful Washington spending that the American people have said they want reformed" (Rucker and Kane 2010, A20). Cornyn called a press conference where he stated that the spending bill was "an outrage" (Patel 2010) and that he would "vote against the bill" because of the earmarks (Rucker and Kane 2010, A20). Cornyn himself, however, had requested more than $100 million in earmarks in the legislation he was now opposing (Patel 2010). In another interview he admitted, "I did request earmarks that I think are individually defensible" ("No Change" 2010). During the press conference he found himself opposing earmarks he himself had requested when he said, "We will reject any earmarks

requested by us or anyone else" (Lightman 2010). Cornyn, who believes that earmarks are a symptom of wasteful government spending, requested earmarks that he believes are individually defensible and voted against his own requests. Indeed, he was "outraged" by them.

Before we are too hard on politicians who "flip-flop" or who oppose their own legislation, we must keep in mind that they are simply succumbing to public pressure and this is something that we want to happen in a democracy. Congressman X may support putting earmarks in legislation because his constituents like the idea of a drug rehab center, or a research facility for children with leukemia, or more support for our veterans. These are social goods that most people would support. But because most people oppose "out of control government spending" they are "outraged" when "pork barrel" projects are inserted into legislation. Responsiveness to public opinion forces politicians to be on both sides of the same issue because the majority is on both sides of the issue.

One of the more entertaining instances of contradictory opinions being expressed by a political candidate was Herman Cain's position on abortion. In July 2011 Herman Cain said the following during an interview on Fox Business:

STOSSEL: A quick question on one more hot subject: abortion.

CAIN: Yes.

STOSSEL: You're against it.

CAIN: I'm pro-life from conception. Yes.

STOSSEL: Any cases where it should be legal?

CAIN: I don't think government should make that decision. I don't believe that government should make that decision.

STOSSEL: People should be free to abort a baby?

CAIN: I support life from conception. No, people shouldn't be just free to abort because if we don't protect the sanctity of life from conception we will also start to play God relative to life at the end of life.

STOSSEL: So I'm confused on what your position is.

CAIN: My position is I'm pro-life period.

STOSSEL: If a woman is raped, she should not be allowed to end the pregnancy?

CAIN: That's her choice. That is not government's choice. I support life from conception.

STOSSEL: So abortion should be legal?

CAIN: No, abortion should not be legal. I believe in the sanctity of life.

STOSSEL: I'm not getting it. I'm not understanding. If it's her choice that means it's legal.

CAIN: No.

(Fox Business July 15, 2011)

Cain was simultaneously expressing the pro-life and pro-choice positions. He believes that abortion should not be legal and, also, that women should decide for themselves without the government making that decision for them. In an interview with CNN's Piers Morgan several months later Cain once again provided a contradictory and incoherent answer to the abortion question.

MORGAN: Abortion. What's your view of abortion?

CAIN: I believe that life begins at conception. And abortion under no circumstances. And here's why—

MORGAN: No circumstances?

CAIN: No circumstances.

MORGAN: Because many of your fellow candidates—or certainly some of them qualify that.

CAIN: They qualify but—

MORGAN: Rape and incest.

CAIN: Rape and incest.

MORGAN: Are you honestly saying—again, it's a tricky question, I know.

CAIN: Ask the tricky question.

MORGAN: But you've had children, grandchildren. If one of your female children, grandchildren was raped, you would honestly want her to bring up that baby as her own?

CAIN: You're mixing two things here, Piers?

MORGAN: Why?

CAIN: You're mixing two things here—

MORGAN: That's what it comes down to.

CAIN: No, it comes down to it's not the government's role or anybody else's role to make that decision. Secondly, if you look at the statistical incidents, you're not talking about that big a number. So what I'm saying is it ultimately gets down to a choice that that family or that mother has to make. Not me as president, not some politician, not a bureaucrat. It gets down to that family. And whatever they decide, they decide. I shouldn't try to tell them what decision to make for such a sensitive issue.

(CNN October 19, 2011)

Herman Cain was not an elected official and he had never run for political office before. Part of his appeal was that he was the "pizza guy." He was just another American who happened to have a successful business and wanted to improve his country. But he actually held contradictory positions and could not reconcile his "pro-life abortion under no circumstances" belief with his "small government let people make their own choices" belief. Most of his opponents seized on Cain's incoherence in an attempt to make him look ridiculous. But the point that is made throughout this book is that many Americans, just like Herman Cain, have contradictory and incoherent views. They hold positions that are directly at odds with their other positions. Sometimes they simultaneously support and oppose the exact same policy without quite realizing their own inconsistency. Because public opinion is so essential to democratic governance, it is better to call the public transconsistent. They hold contradictory views, but these views cannot be dismissed or ignored, they must be taken seriously and considered together.

Donald Trump is another example. Whether we like or dislike him there is no doubt that the man is a political phenomenon. His opponents and the media have made concerted efforts to point out his contradictions. He has been for and against abortion rights, for and against Hillary Clinton, for and against admitting Syrian refugees into the United States, for and against gun control, for and against universal health care, for and against taxing the rich, for and against using violence against protesters, and for and against the use of torture on prisoners (Marsh, Begg, and Beachy 2016). Trump is a Type II pragmatist who, like William James, is totally unconcerned with consistency.

> Mr. Trump is most effective when he simply says the opposite of what he said before. In part, that's because Mr. Trump's contradictions are loud and confident. ("I love Hispanics!" he tweeted on Thursday, Cinco de Mayo, along with a picture of him with a taco bowl.) But it is also because when a person says something as well as its opposite, his listeners can infer that he *really believes* whichever statement they wish him to believe. That contradictions are particularly useful to Mr. Trump also tells us something about what some people find appealing about him. Indeed, it reveals an even deeper contradiction. Mr. Trump's explicit lack of authenticity is what makes him so authentic. He is like a walking oxymoron. (Lynch 2016)

He boldly makes statements that are patently false. He claims, "Hispanics love me" and "women love me," when polls show overwhelming majorities of both groups have an unfavorable view of him. His early support in the primary process was due to his success with voters who had an education level of high school or less. When attempting to persuade this group to vote for him he says, "I went to an Ivy League school. I'm very highly educated. I know words. I have the best words" (CSPAN December 30, 2015). They conclude that he is smart, which is reinforced by Trump's claims that our leaders are "stupid" (CSPAN December 30, 2015). He does not say, "Having attended prestigious universities, I have developed an extensive vocabulary," because this would be perceived as elitist and he is clearly following a populist and pragmatic strategy.

Donald Trump admits outright that his bombastic rhetoric is part of an electoral strategy to gain votes and media attention and that he will change his demeanor once his goal is accomplished. He said, "As I get closer and closer to the goal it's going to get different. . . . I will be changing very rapidly. I am very capable of changing into anything I want to change to" (Fox News February 10, 2016). He later said to the same interviewer, "My tone is going to change as soon as I finish the victory. . . . I want to win and I'll be so presidential you won't believe it. I will be the most boring . . . she won't want to interview me anymore" (Fox News April 3, 2016). This ability to change one's tone or change one's positions is at the heart of pragmatism. Words are said because they are an expedient means to an end; once the end is accomplished different words can be said even if they conflict with what was said before. After winning the election he, in fact, didn't change his tone. That too was said out of expediency and then discarded when it was no longer useful.

Hillary Clinton also demonstrated her pragmatic bona fides. In an interview with Charlie Rose about her private e-mail server and subsequent

FBI investigation Rose asked, "Was it wrong?" Clinton replied, "Well, it was wrong because—look at what it has generated" (Charlie Rose. July 18, 2016). The rightness or wrongness of an action is dependent on the consequences. This is how a pragmatist views the world. Had the consequences been different it would not be wrong. Actions are not inherently right or wrong, they become right or wrong later or become right or wrong based on the anticipated consequences at that moment. Recall that antifoundationalism and an emphasis on consequences are key features of the pragmatic philosophy.

Political and social theorists, philosophers, and anyone concerned with democracy must be worried about the events that are unfolding in American politics. According to Lynch, "The most disturbing power of contradiction is that its repeated use can dull our sensitivity to the value of truth itself. That's particularly so given that most Americans live in a digital world that both makes it easier and harder to figure out what is true" (Lynch 2016). While blatant falsehoods present their own issues, contradictory truths only expand the scope of the dilemma faced by American democracy.

The beginning of this book used the example of Janice. A dialetheial paradox exists if Janice is simultaneously inside and outside a particular room. When it comes to opinions about social or political issues, some people might be both for and against a particular policy. Herman Cain, like many other Americans, found himself expressing the pro-life and pro-choice position in the same breath. These are two opposite and contradictory beliefs. As long as some segment of the population is both "for" and "against" a policy, polls can capture a majority on both sides of the debate. Survey researchers have tried to overcome this problem through the use of "forced-choice" questions or "deliberative polling" where respondents are prodded into choosing one option or the other after being presented with the two opposing arguments. They also add filter questions to remove problematic respondents from the survey, effectively silencing these respondents from having a voice in the public arena. These techniques, however, reflect nothing more than a researcher's need to find a definitive answer to what the public wants. The reality is that on many issues the public may want opposite things. An accurate reflection of the "general will" or "Will of the People" needs to accept the reality that the public may in fact be deeply conflicted and supportive of opposing positions. The public is transconsistent.

When individual politicians "flip-flop" or when our political institutions are at odds with each other it isn't because something has gone wrong. An accurate reflection of the general will will be transconsistent when some segment of the population is both for and against particular policies. When

the public is for and against a choice, our political leaders and our government should be for and against that choice. Politicians who embrace these contradictions will gain widespread support. Our political institutions are at odds with each other because Americans are at odds with themselves. This goes far beyond the liberal-conservative dichotomy. Some people are deeply conflicted and hold contradictory views. When they express themselves they make contradictory statements. It is one of the most democratic elements of our political system. When a conflicted and contradictory public produces a conflicted and contradictory government we have achieved the pinnacle of democratic responsiveness to the Will of the People.

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Combining political philosophy with a study of political behavior, Richard T. Longoria examines the contradictory nature of public opinion on policy issues. He argues that public opinion is often characterized by dialetheial paradoxes—when a statement and the contradiction of that statement are both held to be true. For example, a voter may express a desire for a balanced federal budget but also be against reducing entitlement programs, increasing taxes, or any other solution to achieve that goal. Longoria focuses on various social issues and domestic and foreign policies to explore these types of contradictory and incompatible preferences, arguing that they stem from the pragmatic nature of Americans' worldview, which prefers expediency over consistency. These inconsistencies are typically called "non-attitudes," but Longoria suggests it would be better to call them "bi-attitudes." When people have internalized the contradictions and believe in both ideas even when the two are incompatible, they are being transconsistent rather than inconsistent. Transconsistency, Longoria concludes, leads to perpetual dissatisfaction with the political system because the government often attempts to satisfy the incompatible preferences of a two-faced public.

Richard T. Longoria is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and the author of *Meritocracy and Americans' Views on Distributive Justice*.

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