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Rescuing Intuitions: Income Inequality Begets Liberal Shifts in Public Mood
Codebook

From Kelly-Enns 2010 codebook:

mood

The mood series was taken from Stimson (1999), with updated data taken from his website (http://www.unc.edu/~jstimson/resource.html). We utilize the 2006 annual version of his mood series. Older versions of the measure are not archived on his website, but a detailed description of the creation of the series is there, along with the most recent update to the series.

unemployment

This is the percent of the civilian labor force unemployed using the official Bureau of Labor Statistics annual estimate. Unemployment data can be found at http://www.bls.gov.

inflation

This is the official rate of inflation calculated based on the CPI-U series. We calculate the inflation rate as the percent change in the year over year average CPI-U index with the index equal to 100 in 1982-1984. Inflation data can be found at http://www.bls.gov.

policy

The policy series is taken from Erikson, MacKuen & Stimson (2002), updated through 2006 by the authors. This measure examines important policy change by focusing on the crucial public laws identified by David Mayhew (2005). From this list, laws related to domestic policy with national impact are coded as to whether they were viewed as expanding (liberal) or contracting (conservative) government at the time they were passed. Laws that were ambiguous in their expansion versus contraction of government were coded as neutral and do not contribute to the policy change captured in this measure. Liberal legislation is counted +1, conservative legislation -1, and exceptionally important laws (as defined by Mayhew) are counted +2 or -2. Each year since 1947, a score is produced by summing liberal minus conservative legislation—this is annual policy change. The current level of policy is produced by accumulating annual policy change over time. A net liberal shift in policy produces a positive change in this policy measure. Since the late 1940s, the most important policy changes have usually led to government expansion. In essence, then, the debate in the United States has not been literally about the contraction versus expansion of government, but about whether government should expand in response to the problems that develop in an increasingly complex society. Given this, it is better to examine the accumulation of policy relative to the long-term trend of government expansion. Our variable policy is a detrended version of cumulative policy change.

gini

This is the gini coefficient of family income inequality. Values range from 0 to 1, with higher scores indicating more inequality. The data are from the U.S. Census Current Income Reports Historical Tables available at http://www.census.gov.

mood lowinc and mood highinc

In order to generate a measure of the public's policy mood by income group, we used all questions used in Stimson's (1999) measure of policy mood for which individual data are available. Relying on data from the Roper Center, the General Social Survey, and the American National Election Study we were able to obtain 76 distinct questions, which were each asked multiple times between 1956 and 2006. In total, our measure of mood combines information from 1,032 survey questions. Prior to generating mood by income level, we first generated an aggregate mood series using these questions. Following Stimson, we calculated the percent offering a liberal response divided by the percent offering a liberal response plus the percent offering a conservative response and combined the series into a single overtime measure with Stimson's dyad ratios Wcalc algorithm.1 Our aggregate series correlates with Stimson's mood series at an impressive r=0.85.2 Thus, we are confident that the questions we have used produce a valid proxy of Stimson's policy mood. In order to generate a separate mood series for each income group, for each survey question we calculated the percent of liberal respondents divided by the percent of liberal respondents plus the percent of conservative respondents for the lowest, middle, and highest income groups. These income groups correspond with the lowest 20 percent, middle 60 percent, and highest 20 percent income levels reported in the survey. Of course, income group categories offered in surveys do not always correspond exactly with income quintiles. Thus, in most cases we actually selected income categories that corresponded with lower incomes than the lowest 20 percent and higher incomes than the highest 80 percent of respondents. This strategy was used to ensure that whenever possible, our income groups are based on more extreme income percentiles than we suggest. In the few surveys where the lowest and highest income groups needed to extend beyond the lowest or upper quintile, coding was done to ensure that the number of respondents in the high or low income category never exceeded 30 percent. The variables in our dataset refer to the lowest 20 percent (mood lowinc) and highest 20 percent (mood highinc). As with general mood, higher values indicate liberal mood, and scores can theoretically range from 0 to 100. The Policy Mood by income group series were originally developed for two projects. We suggest citing both works when using these data.

My additions:

Trust

This is a measure of trust in government. It comes from the Pew Research Center. It is comprised of information from the following sources: Pew Research Center, National Election Studies, Gallup, ABC/Washington Post, CBS/New York Times, and CNN Polls. From 1976 on, it is a moving average. It measures what percentage of the population that trusts the government to do what is right, "just about

always/most of the time."
http://www.people-press.org/2014/11/13/public-trust-in-government/

Preferences: Eqwith -- Should government reduce income differences.
This comes from the General Social Survey (GSS). The following is the structure of the question: Some people think that the government in Washington ought to reduce the income differences between the rich and the poor, perhaps by raising the taxes of wealthy families or by giving income assistance to the poor. Others think that the government should not concern itself with reducing this income difference between the rich and the poor. Here is a card with a scale from 1 to 7. Think of a score of 1 as meaning that the government ought to reduce the income differences between rich and poor, and a score of 7 meaning that the government should not concern itself with reducing income differences. What score between 1 and 7 comes closest to the way you feel? (CIRCLE ONE).

I took this data, coded all entries as 1-7 or NA and dropped out any NAs. I then took an average across participants to get a yearly measure.

https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/variables/243/vshow