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## Data Visual Final Project

When I first saw the prompt was about dissent, my mind went to polling. Perhaps it is because I follow politics excessively, but polling is how I conceptualize splits in our population. If you follow polling enough however, you come to know that it is erratic. Small changes in how a poll is worded, when it is asked, how it is asked, can change the results. Thus, you generally want to look at many polls. I wanted to integrate these ideas into a single visual: a visual that lets you cycle through various polls.

I found a dataset from FiveThirtyEight<sup>1</sup> that seemed to meet my needs. It was a collection of various polling on gun related issues collected throughout February. I took in their data and did a bit of preprocessing on it. This mainly meant removing extraneous variables. It also meant reformatting some data so that it displayed better (e.g. changing the name of something so it was more legible).

I also needed a way to visualize the data. The way I went about it was a bit conventional, but effective. It, essentially, is a variant on bar and line plots. In it, I generated a grid with 100 squares. Each square represents 1 percent. I then fill the grid with the correct amount of squares. The idea originally was inspired by water pitchers. I imagined filling a water pitcher to certain percentages. This was because it was one of the more intuitive means of showing how much space is filled. When generating the squares I wanted to make a contrast between opposing and supporting so I colored them red and green respectively. Afterwards, I was still unsatisfied with the colors, so I shaded them by value. The squares get lighter as you go up in percentages. My intention was for the shades to represent how “hardcore” the person felt about the issue. Thus, issues with low support seem like they have intense support, while issues with a lot of support look like they have varied support. I also was unsure if the squares were the best way of expressing my design. Thus, I included the option of displaying them as bars instead. This gives users different ways of seeing the same split.

I wanted to have a lot of interactivity within this visual. That is why I also included the option to show how Democrats and Republicans feel. Thus, I generated new colors schemes

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<sup>1</sup> <https://github.com/fivethirtyeight/data/blob/master/poll-quiz-guns/guns-polls.csv>

(blue and red respectively) that showed how partisans felt in that one poll. Users can cycle through the various options. There were also various polls on the same issue. I wanted to replicate polling process a bit, so I had the animation randomly select an appropriate poll whenever an issue is chosen. Users can thus generate different grids and see the variance of the polls in real time. This reflects the realities of polling, where you may get different results based off different samples every time. Along with all this, I also had text load up which would give you some extra information on what. I did not get everything I wanted in. I wanted the button text to change color when that button was clicked. I especially wanted this for the different modes and views. However, I was not able to work this out. Thus, I generated more text to show the current mode states. Overall, I used a lot of functions in the creation of my visual. I would try to start at the smallest level (eg building 1 square) and then build out (eg building 100 squares).

This project strives to combine polling into a single visual. It strives to show the uncertainties that are inherent to the process. More broadly, it strives to show how dissent is an abstract and changing thing. We could say there is a lot of dissent in gun control, but it depends on what issue. Even within that issue, the dissent is not even: it varies in size and it varies in intensity. I wanted a visual that could show this. While my visual does not tell the most complicated story, I think it tells a good one. One about how our splits change. How at one moment we may be evenly divided, but at the next united.