

AP Seminar Week 3 Readings

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Author Note

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This document is an exercise for PS811-Introduction to R and reviews each reading assigned for Week 3 of the Fall 2020 AP Seminar class, PS904.

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Logistics

I used R (Version 4.0.2; R Core Team, 2020) and the R-package *papaja* (Version 0.1.0.9997; Aust & Barth, 2020) for this exercise.

Assigned Readings for Week 3 of AP Seminar

The assigned readings for Week 3 were Zaller (1992) , Zaller (2012), and Kinder (1998). Each work discusses important aspects of mass public opinion.

Zaller (1992) incorporates existing scholarship in public opinion and psychology to build a comprehensive model demonstrating how individuals form political opinions in the form of a Bayesian updating model, which we call the RAS model for Receive, Accept, Sample. The model is then scaled up to explain how mass public opinion is largely shaped by exposure to elite discourse on issues through each individuals' political awareness, generally facilitated by the media. Zaller tests this model using NES survey data, applying the RAS to a broad range of issues, including racial equality, the Vietnam War, and presidential approval (Zaller, 1992).

In 2012, Zaller returns to the topic to address criticisms of the RAS model and update it to account for group interest voters and political parties as political organizers. He explains that ideologies are packaged together and sold to voters by political parties in order to create coalitions, appease interest groups, and fundraise. This explains Converse (2006) 's findings that the majority of the public does not have an underlying belief structure. He again uses NES data to test this updated version of the RAS model (Zaller, 2012).

Kinder (1998) reviews the literature on public opinion for The Handbook of Social Psychology. He addresses many topics within public opinion, including its definition,

35 Democratic citizenship, how opinion is formed, and the importance of social context.
36 Notably, Kinder posits challenges of democracy can be resolved through “miracles of
37 aggregation” - individuals may be ignorant but the public is made wiser through shared
38 knowledge and he proposes a more central focus on ideas borrowed from psychology of
39 framing, group consciousness, and identity to explain political behavior. Kinder’s book
40 chapter serves as a meta-analysis to synthesize and focus scholarship within public opinion
41 (Kinder, 1998).

References

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