Computational Social Science Proposal
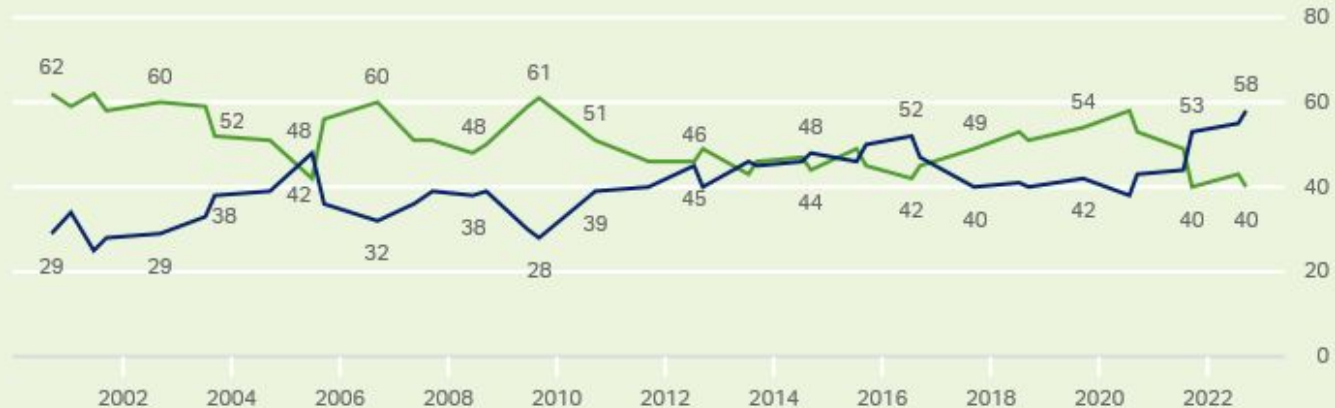
Katie Widner Sanchez

June 6, 2023
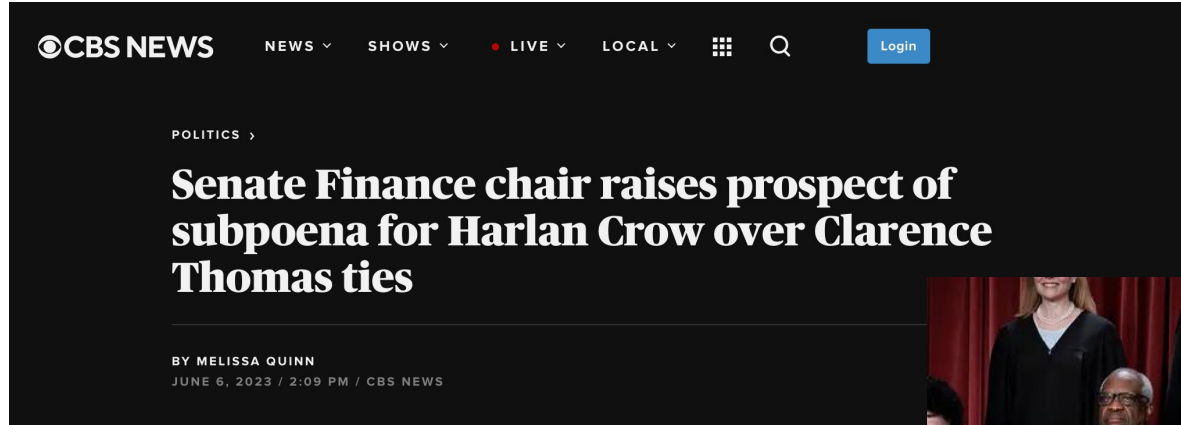
Puzzle

Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Supreme Court is handling its job?

— % Approve — % Disapprove

GALLUP

Puzzle

POLITICS ›

Senate Finance chair raises prospect of subpoena for Harlan Crow over Clarence Thomas ties

BY MELISSA QUINN
JUNE 6, 2023 / 2:09 PM / CBS NEWS

Image via Pro Publica

Research Question

- What is the nature of public opinion of the US Supreme Court? To what extent is legitimacy a frame in evaluations of the Court?

Theory

- The Supreme Court is highly ideological (Segal and Spaeth 2002; Gibson 2015)
- The Court lacks an electoral connection (Caldeira 1992)
  - Justices are appointed for life and face little accountability
- The Court lacks enforcement mechanisms (Rosenberg 2008)
- The Court needs diffuse support to function (Bartels 2012)

Central tension: The Supreme Court is an ideological institution which needs diffuse public support to operate; this public support hinges on the idea that the Court is apolitical or "above" partisan politics
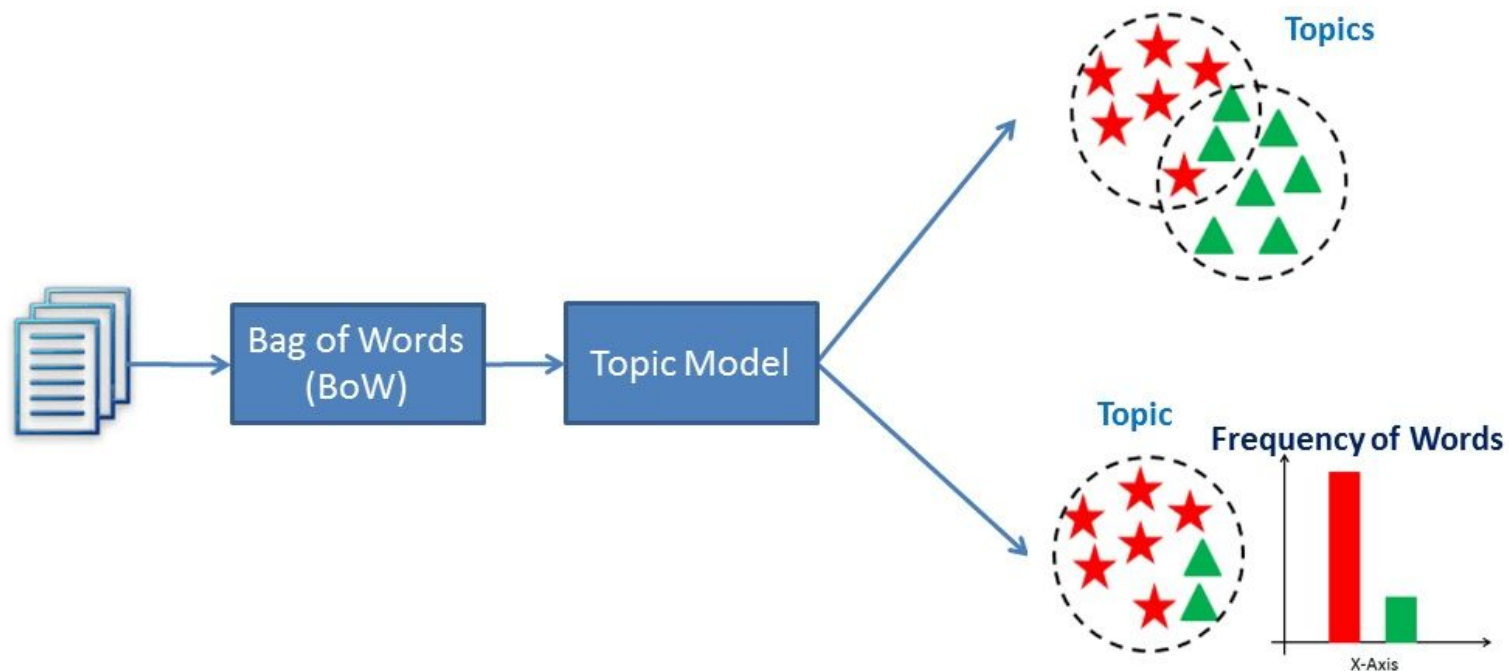
Literature

Image via Litmaps

Empirical Design

- Text analysis of New York Times op-ed coverage of Supreme Court
  - Principal component analysis → latent semantic analysis
- What components explain the variability in New York Times op-ed coverage of the United States Supreme Court over the past three years?
- What frames emerge when examining these articles?
  - Which terms are most frequently utilized?

Latent Semantic Analysis

Image via Data Camp

Next Steps

- Pull data from New York Times API
- Clean data
- Pre-process (create tokens, remove stems)
- Perform analysis
- Continue developing project next semester in Dr. Cordell's course