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# The Activated Opinion – Accountability Link

World Bank Annenberg Summer Institute  
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# Roadmap



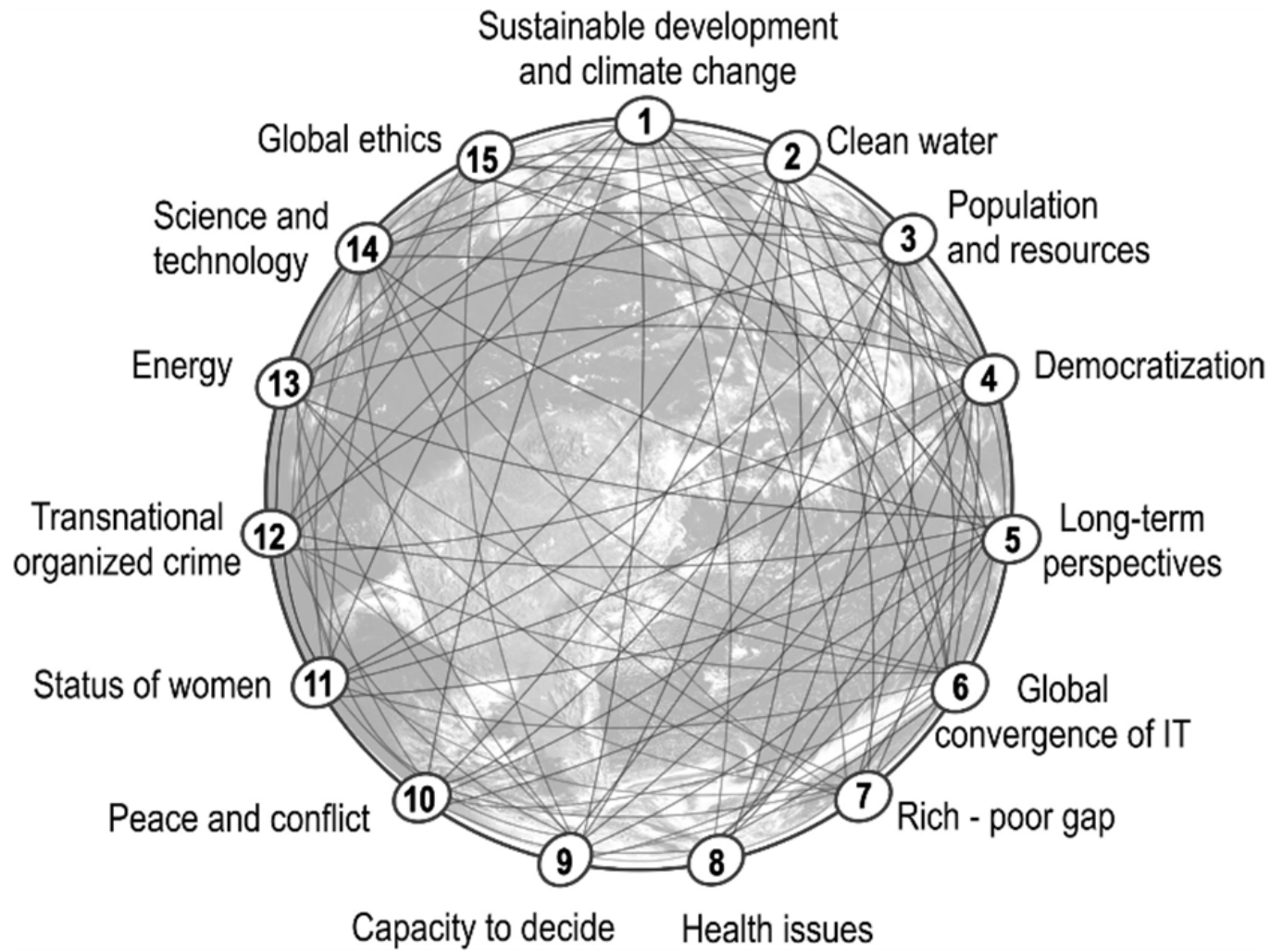
- > Problems abound
- > Some are reflected in policies, many are not
- > Activated public opinion is an often untapped resource
- > Public opinion is more than polls and surveys
- > The public opinion-accountability link varies by publics, mode of expression, influence, and authority
- > Public opinion is activated by
  - > Turning spectators into participants
  - > Linking frames to predispositions
  - > You!

# Roadmap

⇒ Problems abound



# Problems (Millennium Project)



# Problems (J.F. Rischard)

## Sharing our planet (global commons)

- Global warming
- Biodiversity and ecosystem losses
- Fisheries depletion
- Deforestation
- Water deficits
- Maritime safety and pollution

## Sharing our humanity (global commitments)

- Fighting poverty
- Peacekeeping, conflict prevention
- Education for all
- Global infectious diseases
- Digital divide
- Natural disaster prevention

## Sharing our rulebook (global regulation)

- Reinventing taxation
- Biotechnology
- Global finance
- Illicit drugs
- Trade, investment, competition
- Intellectual property
- International labor and migration

# Wicked Problems (H. Rittel)

- ⇒ Most social problems: inequality, political instability, death, disease, famine, global climate change
- ⇒ No single definition (poverty in East LA vs. Sierra Leone).
- ⇒ No clear “success” or “failure”: wicked problems bleed into one another.
- ⇒ “Better” or “worse” solutions, not “true” or “false.”
- ⇒ No single template or “best practice”
- ⇒ Always more than one explanation
- ⇒ Every wicked problem is a symptom of another wicked problem
- ⇒ No technical solutions (humans invent and contribute to wicked problems)
- ⇒ There is minimal leeway for a “trial and error” approach; every proposed solution is “one-shot”
- ⇒ Every wicked problem is unique

# Human Problems, Human Solutions

- ⇒ Some problems have technical solutions
- ⇒ Most problems are more complex
  - ⇒ Specifically, most problems require an understanding of political processes and contexts.



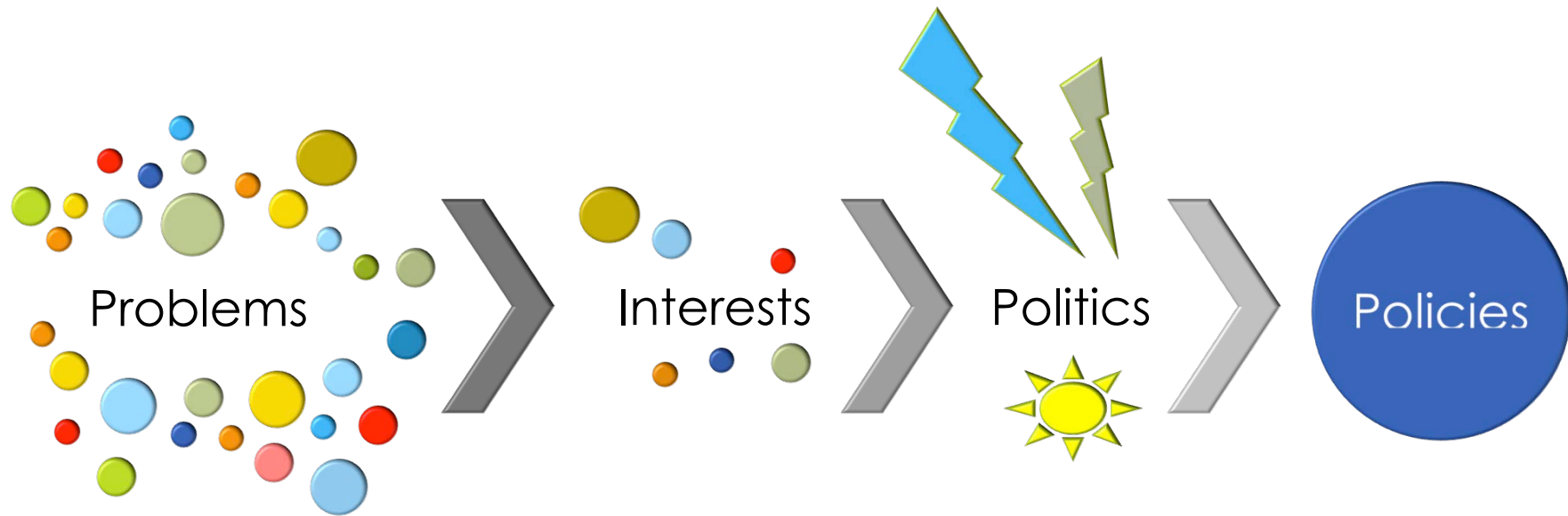
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- ⇒ Problems abound
- ⇒ Some are reflected in policies, many are not

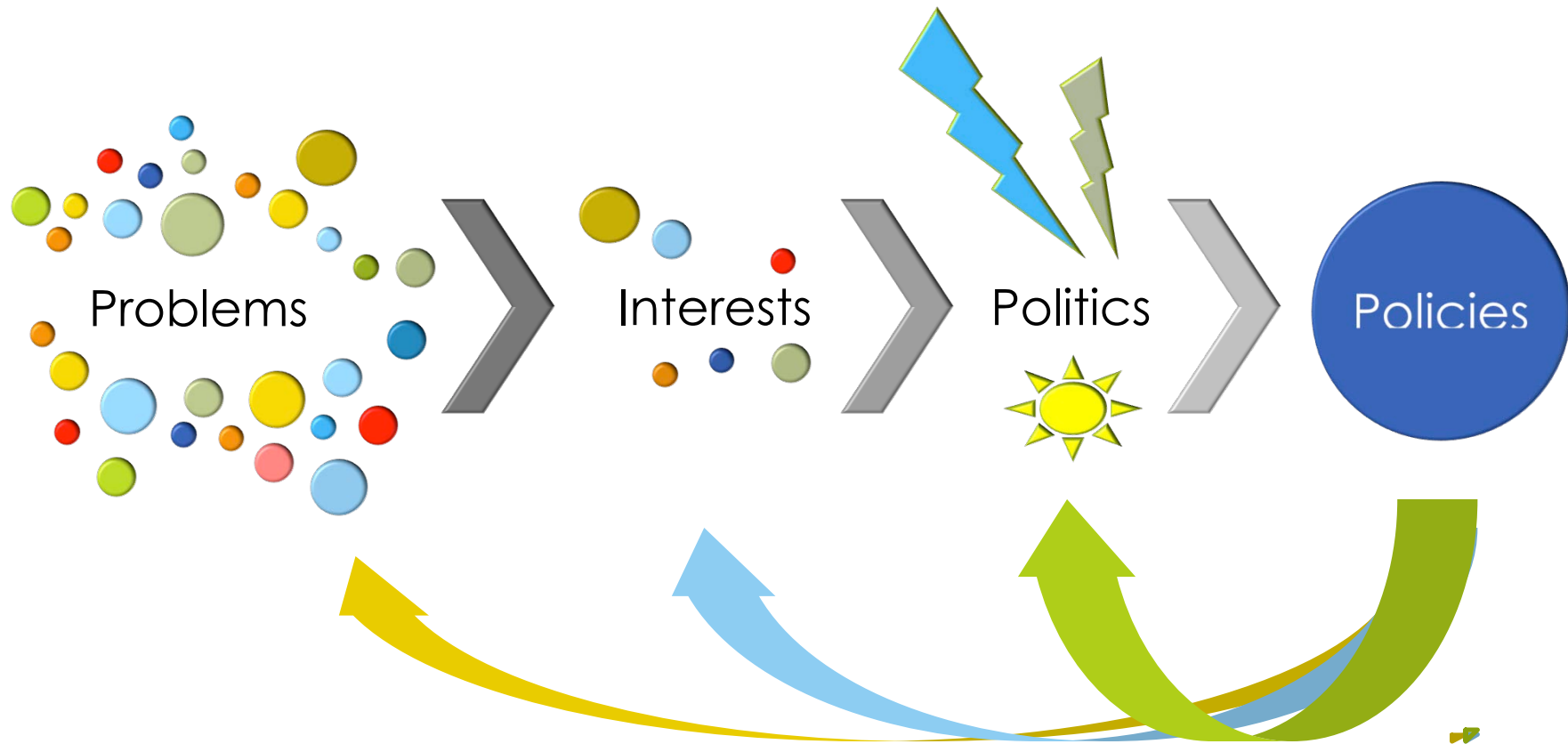




# From Problems to Policies



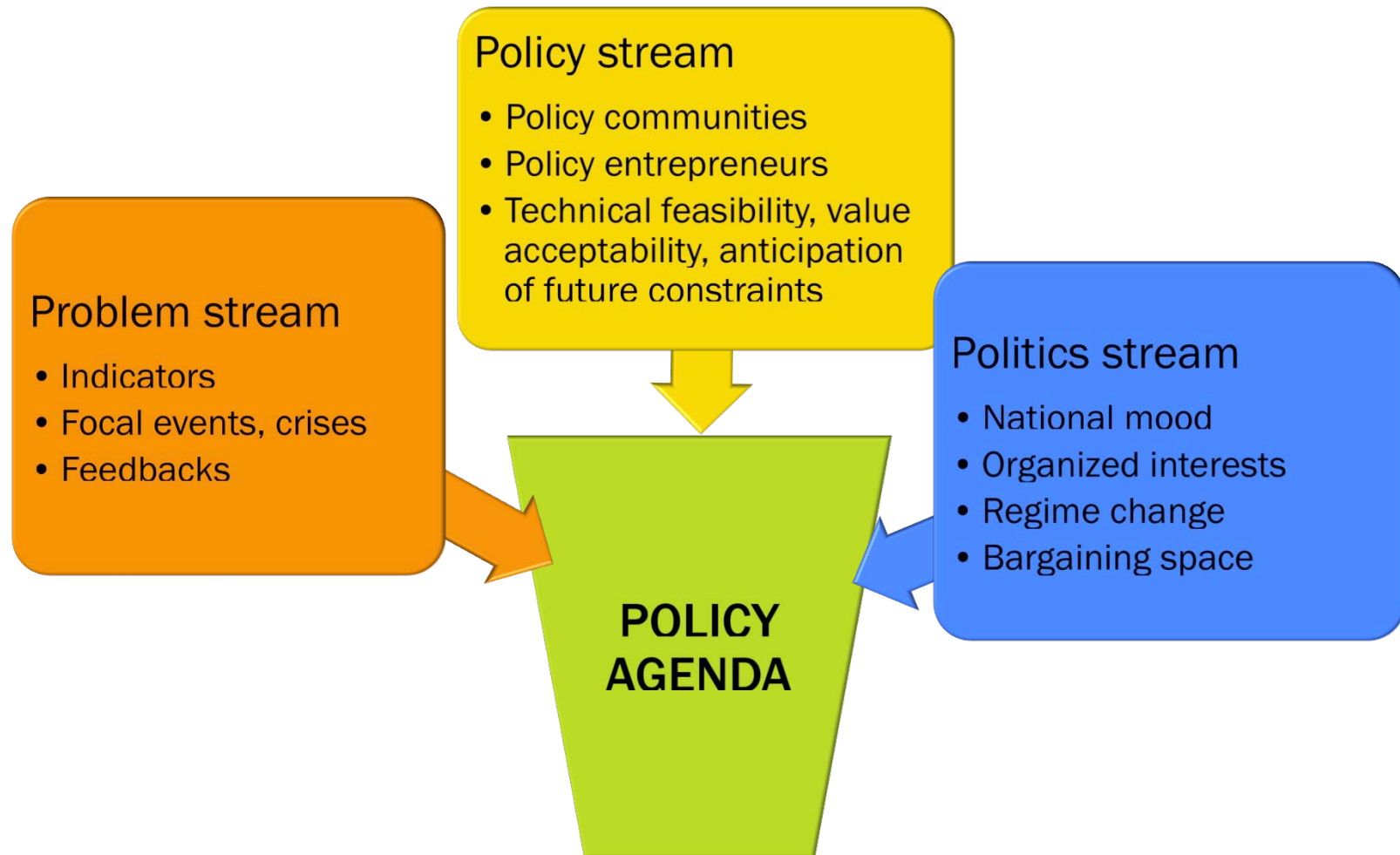
# From Problems to Policies



# From Problems to Policies



# Agenda-Setting and Governance

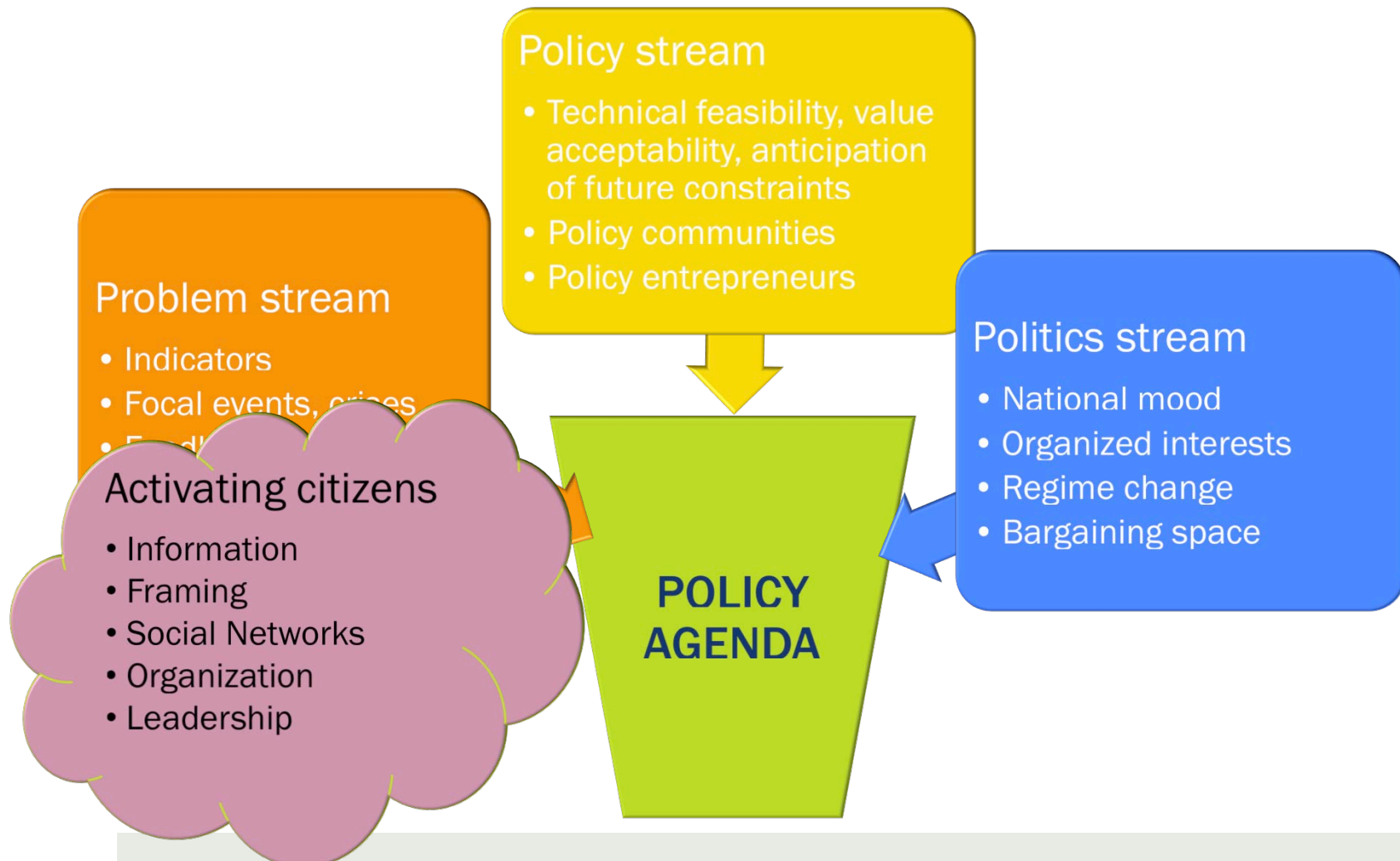


# Roadmap

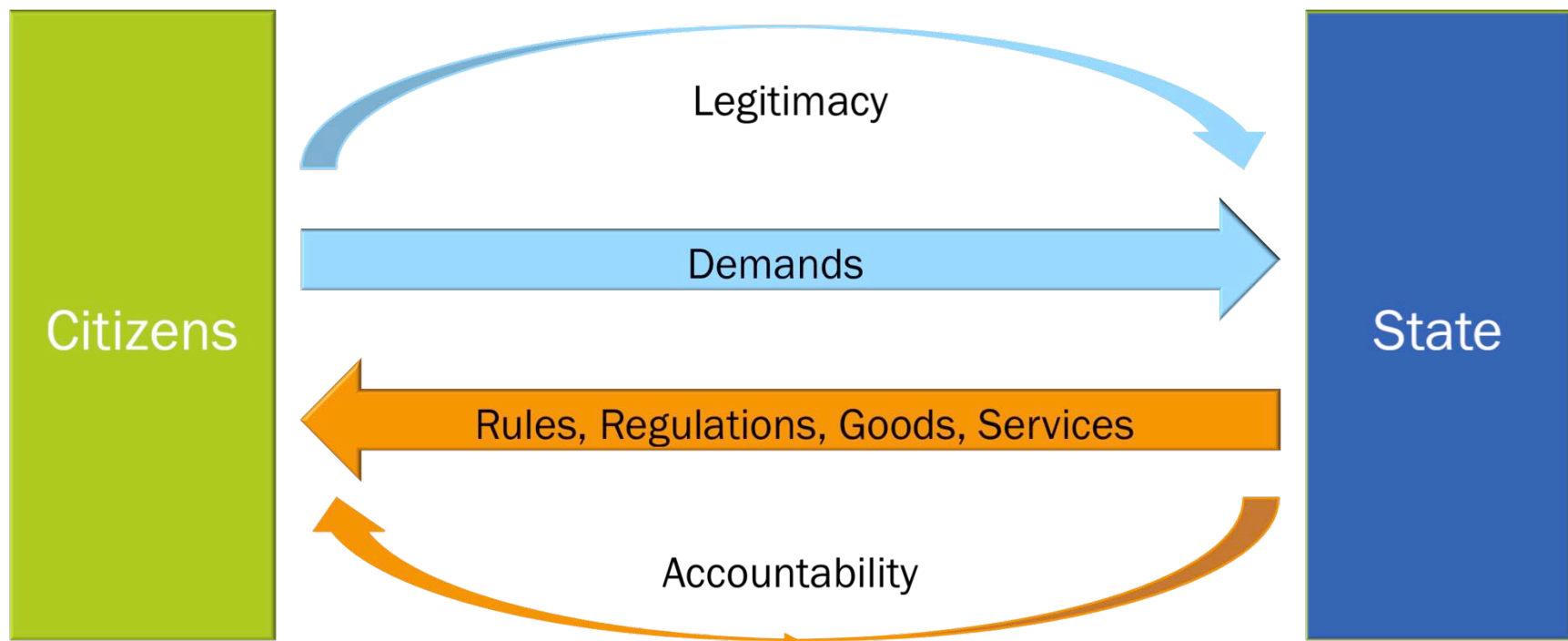
- ⇒ Problems abound
- ⇒ Some are reflected in policies, many are not
- ⇒ Activated public opinion is an often untapped resource



# Agenda-Setting and Governance



# Between States and Citizens



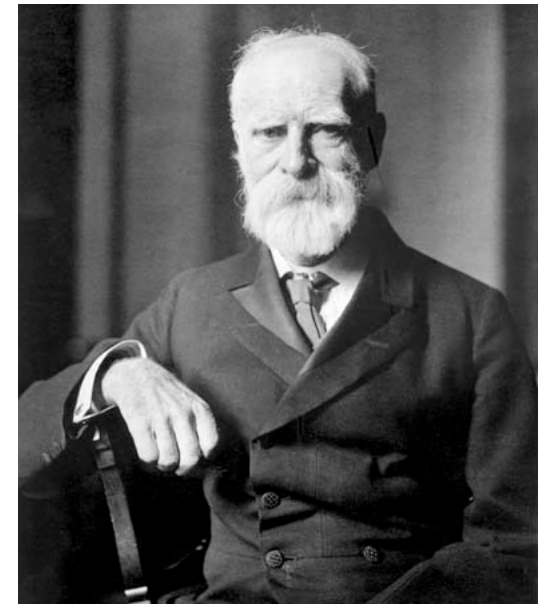
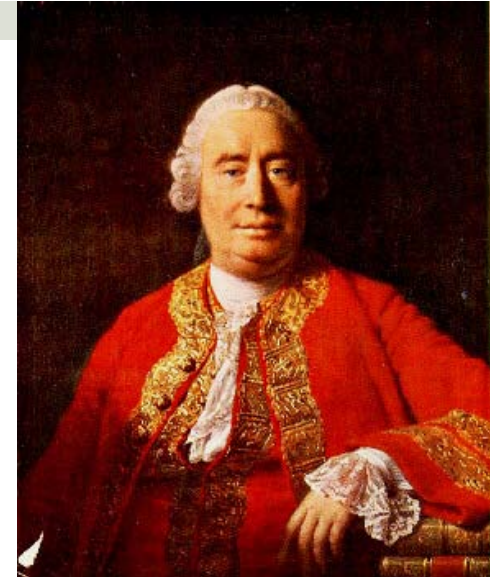
# The Missing Accountability Link





# The Public Opinion Link

- ⇒ David Hume (1741): “It is therefore, on public opinion only that government is founded.”
- ⇒ James Bryce (1895): “Towering over Presidents and State governors, over Congress and State legislatures, over conventions and vast machinery of party, public opinion stands out, in the United States, as the great source of power, the master of servants who tremble before it.”

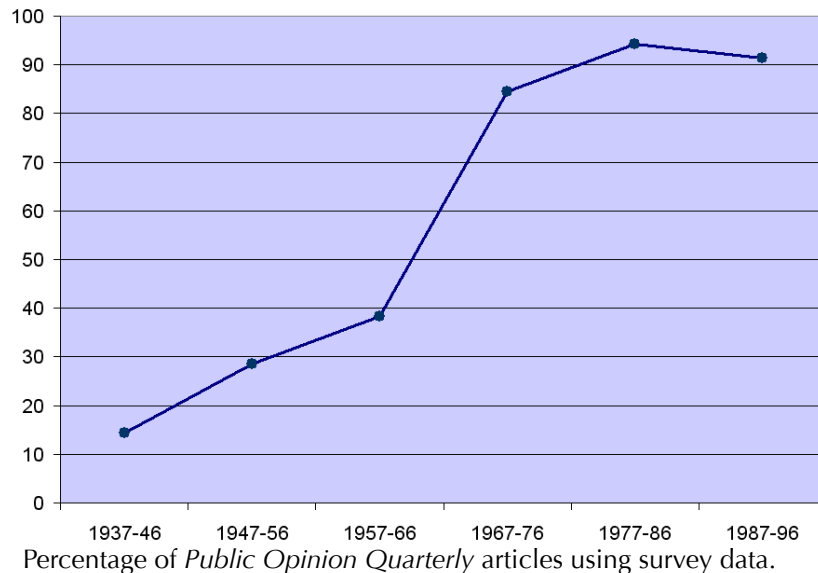


# Roadmap

- ⇒ Problems abound
- ⇒ Some are reflected in policies, many are not
- ⇒ Activated public opinion is an often untapped resource
- ⇒ Public opinion is more than polls and surveys



# Public Opinion in Practice



- ⇒ Philip Converse (1987): “It is exactly this kind of ‘one person, one vote’ tally of opinions as routinely reported today by polls and surveys which has now become the consensual understanding of the world around as to a baseline of public opinion.”
- ⇒ John Zaller (1992): “Virtually everyone now takes survey responses as constituting public opinion.”

# Normative Force of Surveys

- ⇒ Archibald Crossley (1937): “Scientific polling makes it possible within two or three days at moderate expense for the entire nation to work hand in hand with its legislative representatives, on laws which affect our daily lives. Here is the long-sought key to “Government *by the people.*”
- ⇒ Sidney Verba (1996): “Surveys produce just what democracy is supposed to produce—equal representation of all citizens.”

# *Public Opinion Quarterly* Wordle, 1937-1959



Source: <https://blogs.rti.org/surveypost/>

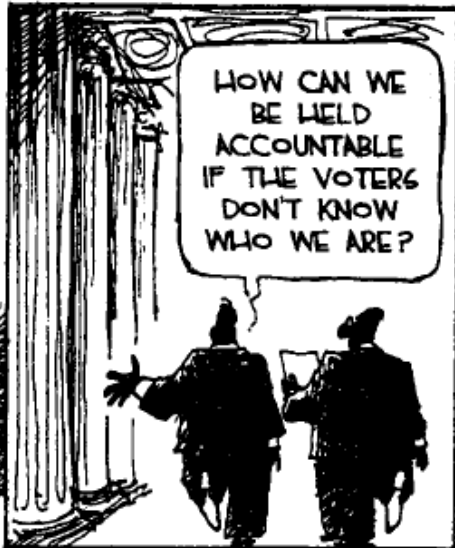


# *Public Opinion Quarterly* Wordle, 1990-2012

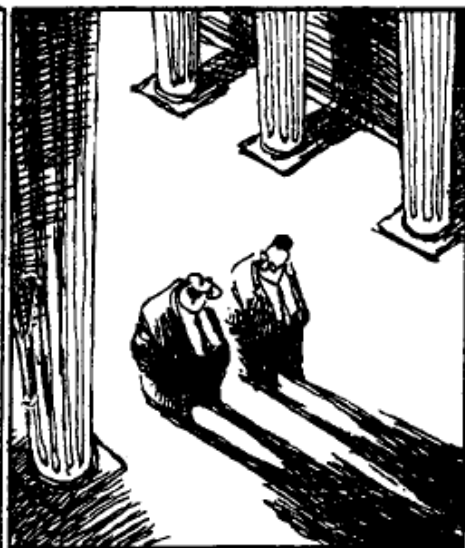


Source: <https://blogs.rti.org/surveypost/>

THIS SURVEY SHOWS THAT MOST PEOPLE CAN RECITE THE THEME SONG FROM GILLIGAN'S ISLAND, BUT CAN'T NAME THEIR CONGRESSMAN



HOW CAN WE BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE IF THE VOTERS DON'T KNOW WHO WE ARE?



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# Defining Public Opinion

- ⇒ “*Vox Populi* may be *Vox Dei*, but very little attention shows that there has never been agreement as to what *Vox* means or as to what *Populus* means.” (Henry Maine)
- ⇒ “... those opinions held by private persons which governments find it prudent to heed.” (V.O. Key)



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# *Public Opinion*

- > Affairs related to state, government, political institutions.
  - > Issues of common concern, open and accessible to all.
  - > Formed by communicative networks, group dynamics, social institutions
  - > Competing conceptions:
    - > Aggregative (what does citizen X + Y + Z + ... think?)
    - > Majoritarian (what do 50% +1 persons think?)
    - > Normative (what would the public think, under ideal conditions?)
    - > Constructed (what can the public be led to think?)
-

# Varieties of Public *Opinion*

## TECHNIQUES

Oratory/rhetoric

Printing

Crowds

Petitions

Salons & coffeehouses

Revolutions

Strikes

General elections

Modern newspapers

Letters to officials and editors

Sample survey

Email, bulletin boards, chatrooms

Blogs, tweets, social media

## PERIOD

5<sup>th</sup> century, BC

16<sup>th</sup> century

17<sup>th</sup> century

late 17<sup>th</sup> century

late 17<sup>th</sup>/early 18<sup>th</sup> c.

late 18<sup>th</sup> century

19<sup>th</sup> century

19<sup>th</sup> century

mid-19<sup>th</sup> century

mid-19<sup>th</sup> century

1930s

1990s

21<sup>st</sup> century

# Roadmap

- ⇒ Problems abound
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- ⇒ Public opinion is more than polls and surveys
- ⇒ The public opinion-accountability link varies by publics, mode of expression, influence, and authority



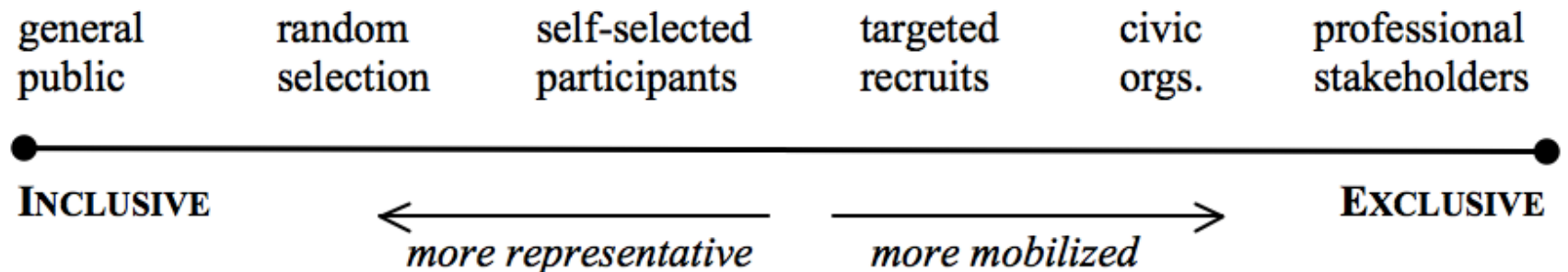
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# Four Key Dimensions of Public Opinion

- ⇒ What kind of public?
  - ⇒ What mode of expression?
  - ⇒ What kind of influence?
  - ⇒ How transformative?
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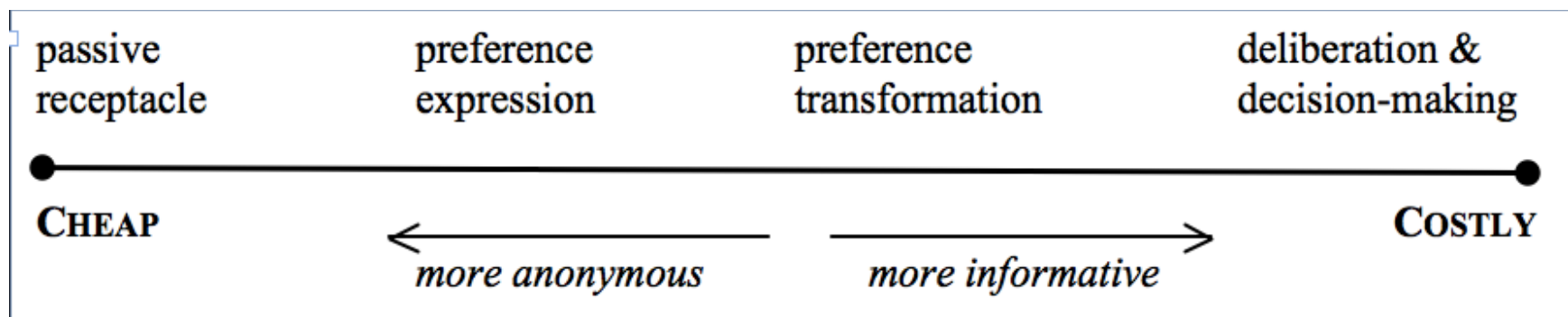
# What Kind of Public?

- ⇒ Varieties of “public”
- ⇒ Representativeness / mobilization trade-off



# What Mode of Expression?

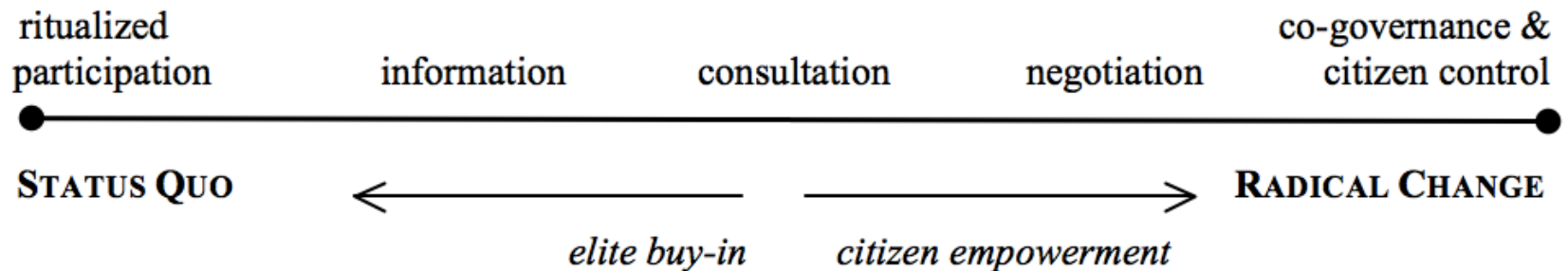
- ⇒ Varieties of costly participation
- ⇒ Upward information; downward risk trade-off
- ⇒ Substantive will or signal for change?





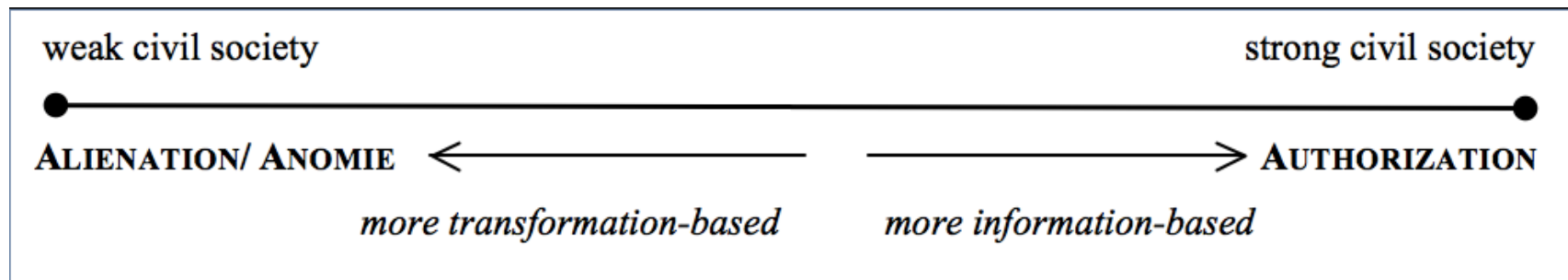
# What Kinds of Influence?

- ⇒ Varieties of pressure on elites
- ⇒ Elite assent and citizen power trade-off
- ⇒ Local vs. national government



# How Authorized a Public?

- ⇒ Varieties of public will
- ⇒ Civil society as a potentiator of public will
- ⇒ Mobilizer: information vs. transformation



# Roadmap



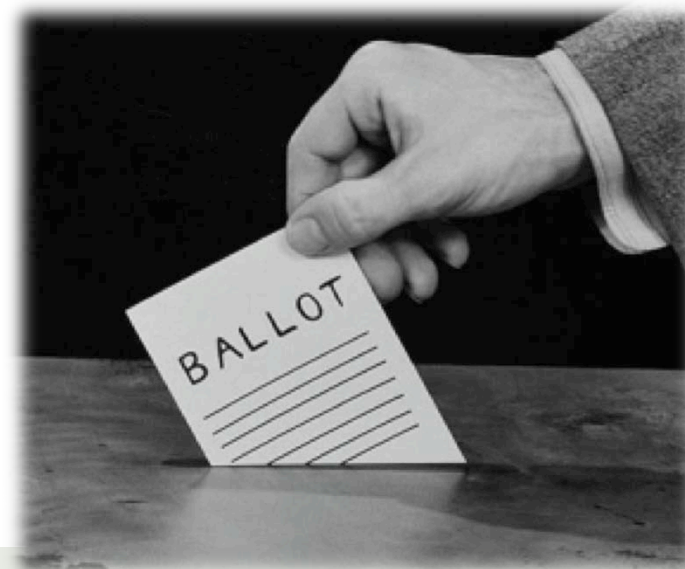
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# How Does Public Opinion Become Activated?

## ⇒ Calculus of Voting

⇒  $\Pr(\text{Vote}) = \text{Benefit} - \text{Cost} + \text{Random error}$

⇒ Material benefits  $\approx 0$



# Participatory Inputs

- ⇒ Motivation
- ⇒ Means
- ⇒ Mobilization
- ⇒ Context



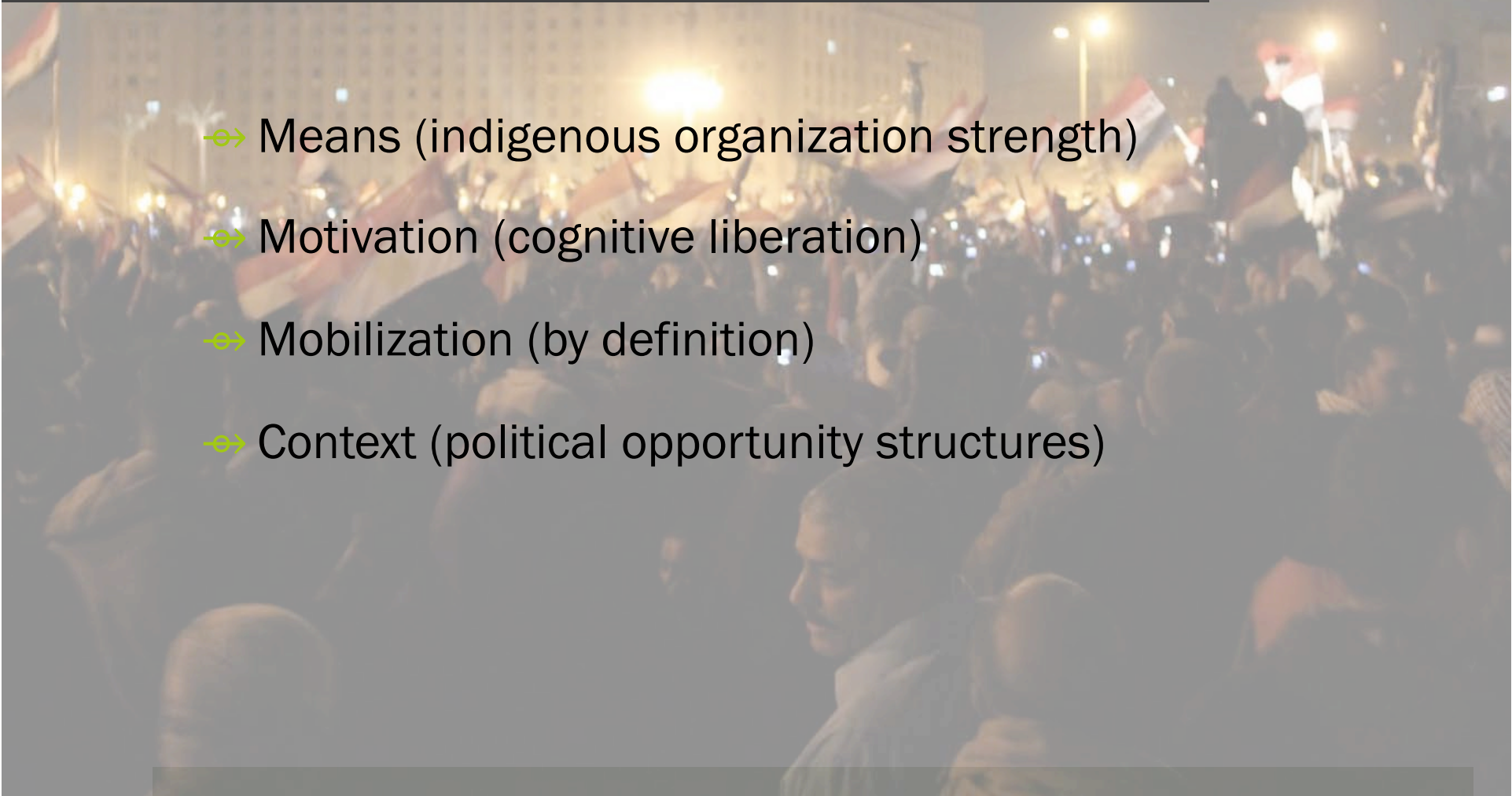
# Participatory Inputs: Electoral Process

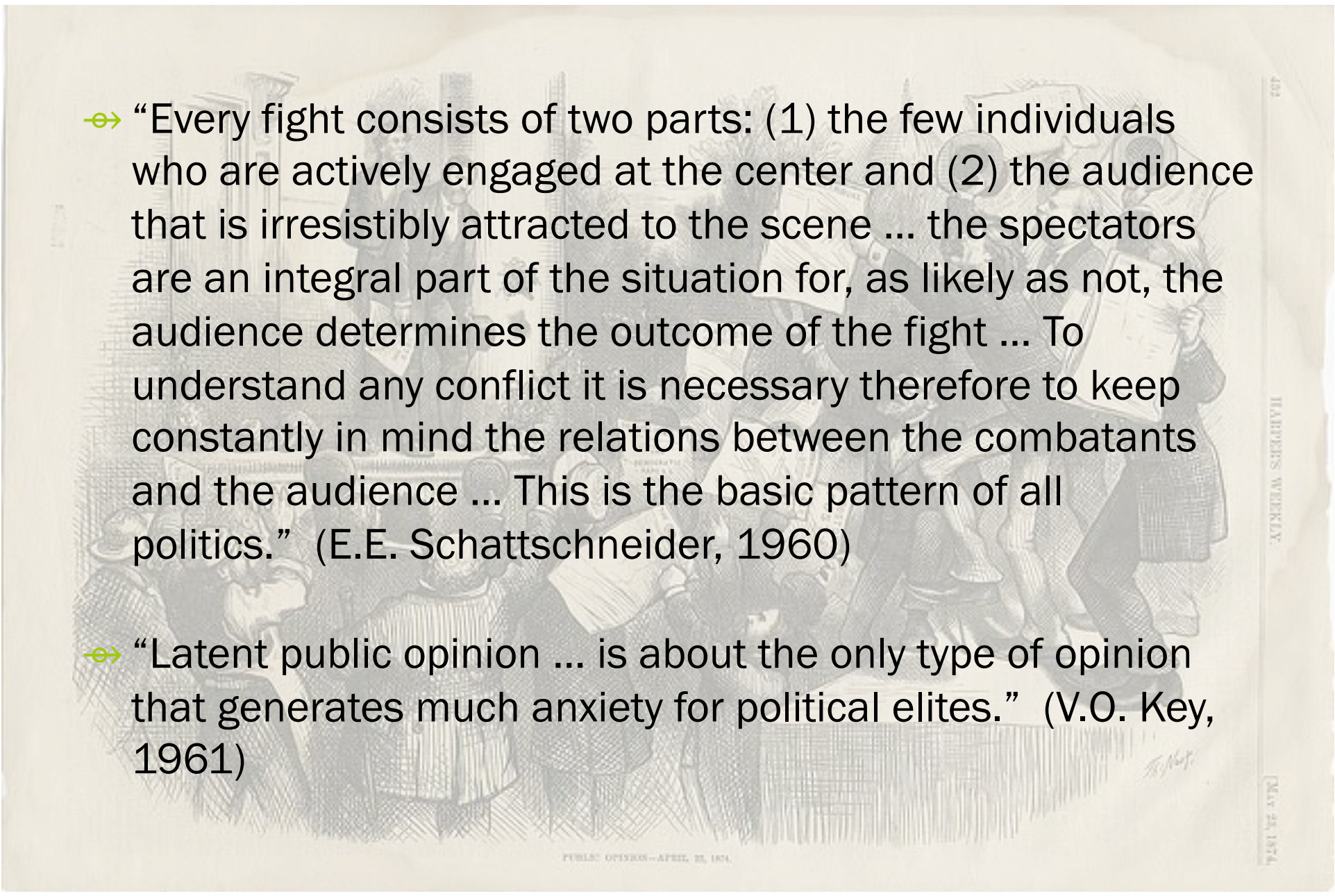
- ⇒ Motivation: “get rascals out of office”
- ⇒ Means: money, civic skills, language
- ⇒ Mobilization: get-out-the-vote drives
- ⇒ Context: “change” in 2008



NONPARTISAN	NONPARTISAN	NONPARTISAN
CITY	CITY	CITY
FOR MAYOR	FOR MAYOR	FOR MAYOR
<b>1</b> FIRST CHOICE <small>Vote for One</small>	<b>2</b> SECOND CHOICE <small>(This must be different from your first choice.) Vote for One</small>	<b>3</b> THIRD CHOICE <small>(This must be different from your first and second choices.) Vote for One</small>
ELEANOR ROOSEVELT	ELEANOR ROOSEVELT	ELEANOR ROOSEVELT
BOOKER T. WASHINGTON	BOOKER T. WASHINGTON	BOOKER T. WASHINGTON
DIEGO RIVERA	DIEGO RIVERA	DIEGO RIVERA
ARTHUR MILLER	ARTHUR MILLER	ARTHUR MILLER
SHIRLEY HORN	SHIRLEY HORN	SHIRLEY HORN
BRUCE LEE	BRUCE LEE	BRUCE LEE

# Participatory Inputs: Politics by Other Means

- e→ Means (indigenous organization strength)
  - e→ Motivation (cognitive liberation)
  - e→ Mobilization (by definition)
  - e→ Context (political opportunity structures)
- 



⇒ “Every fight consists of two parts: (1) the few individuals who are actively engaged at the center and (2) the audience that is irresistibly attracted to the scene ... the spectators are an integral part of the situation for, as likely as not, the audience determines the outcome of the fight ... To understand any conflict it is necessary therefore to keep constantly in mind the relations between the combatants and the audience ... This is the basic pattern of all politics.” (E.E. Schattschneider, 1960)

⇒ “Latent public opinion ... is about the only type of opinion that generates much anxiety for political elites.” (V.O. Key, 1961)



# Collective Action Thresholds

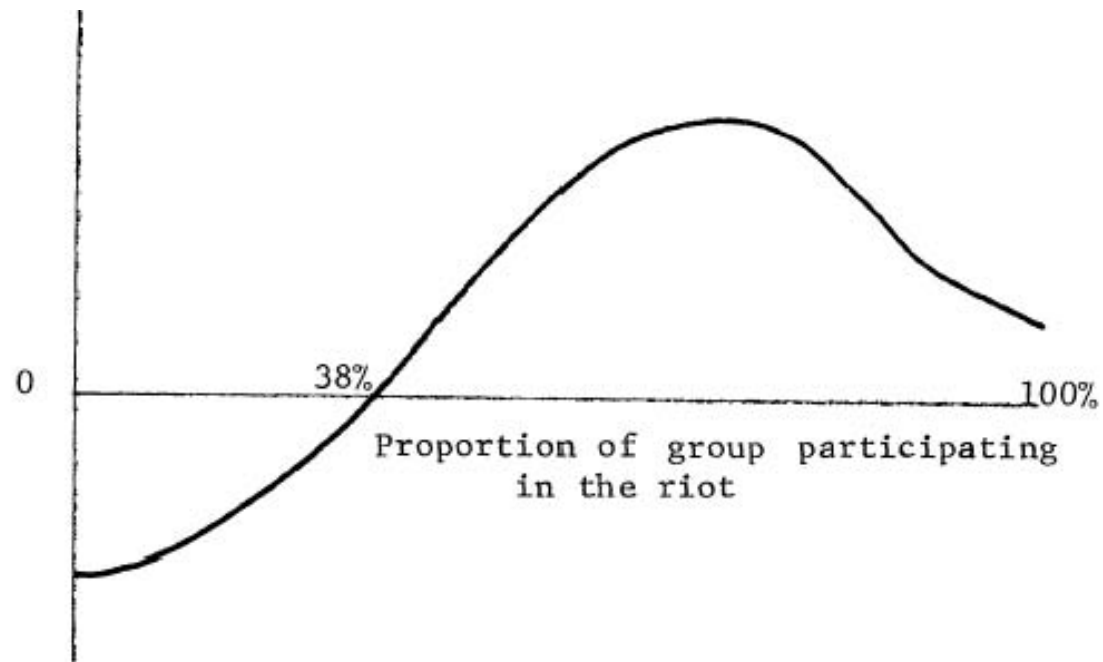
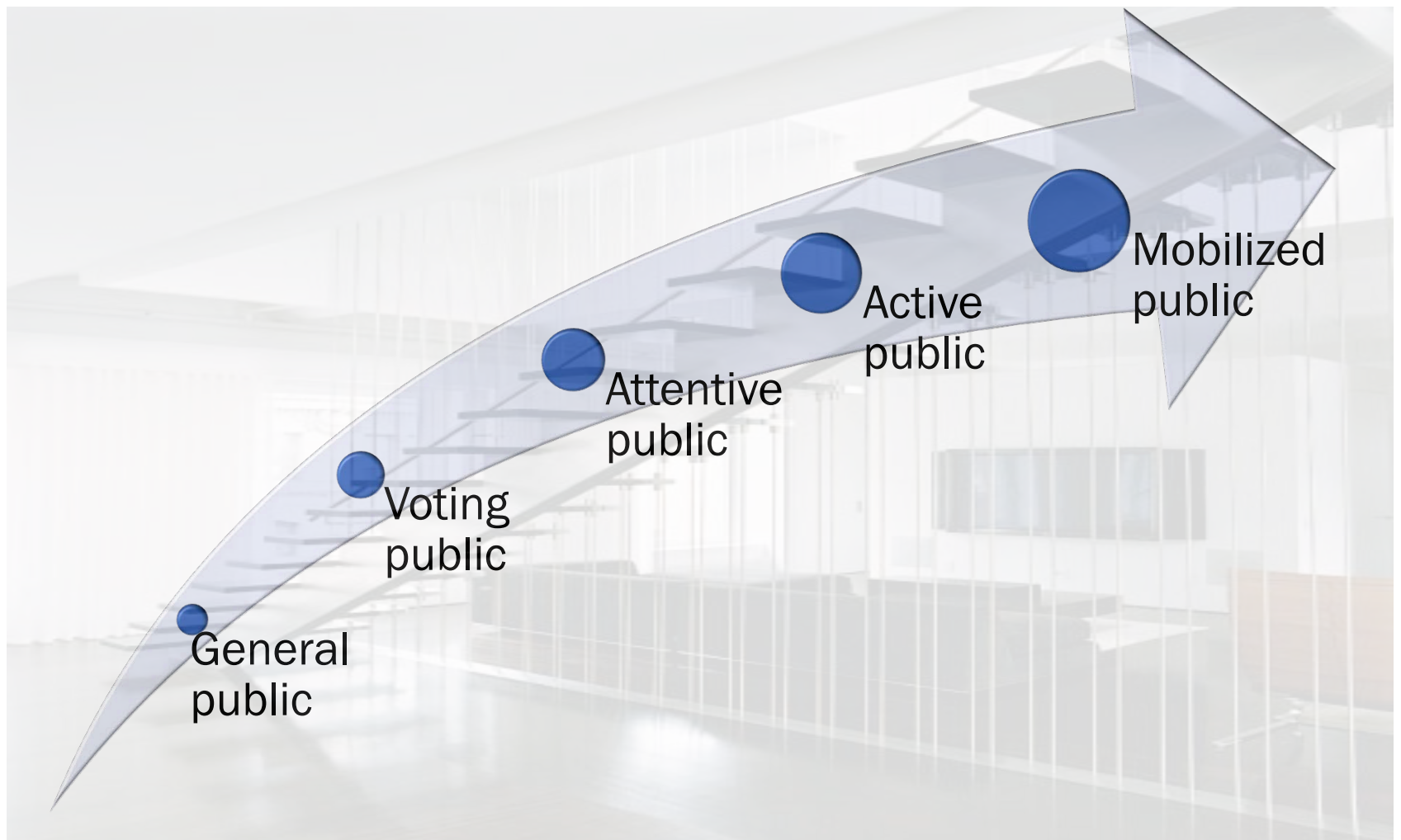


FIG. 3.—Net benefit to an individual, with threshold 38%, of joining a riot, plotted against the proportion of the group participating. (Total benefits minus total costs.)

# Stairway of Mobilization



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# The Psychology of Survey Response



messages

Awareness

Predispositions

=

+

Considerations

“In my opinion  
...”



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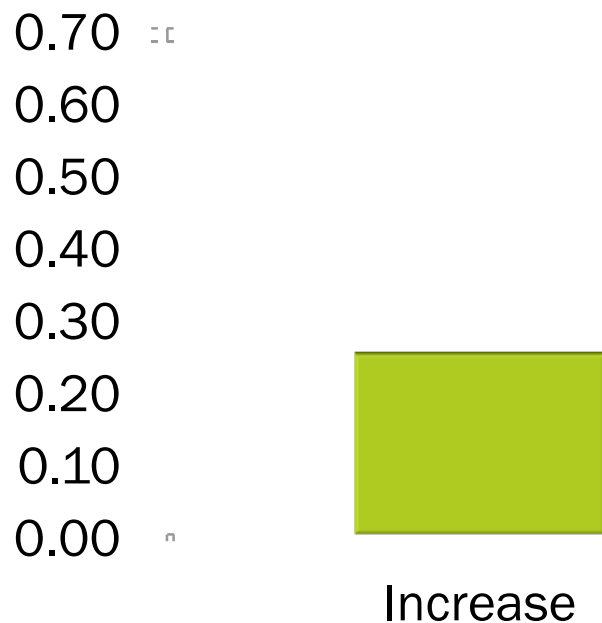
# Framing

- Defines problems
- Diagnose causes
- Make moral judgments
- Suggest remedies

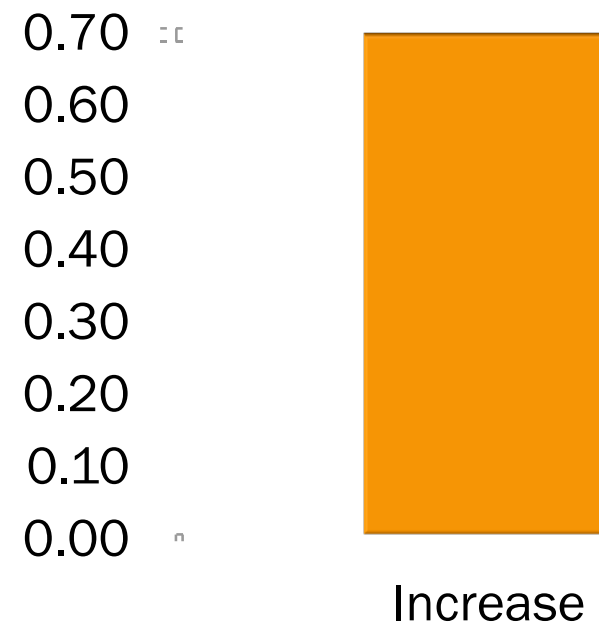


# Should federal spending on ... [X] ... be increased, decreased, or kept the same?

X = “welfare programs”

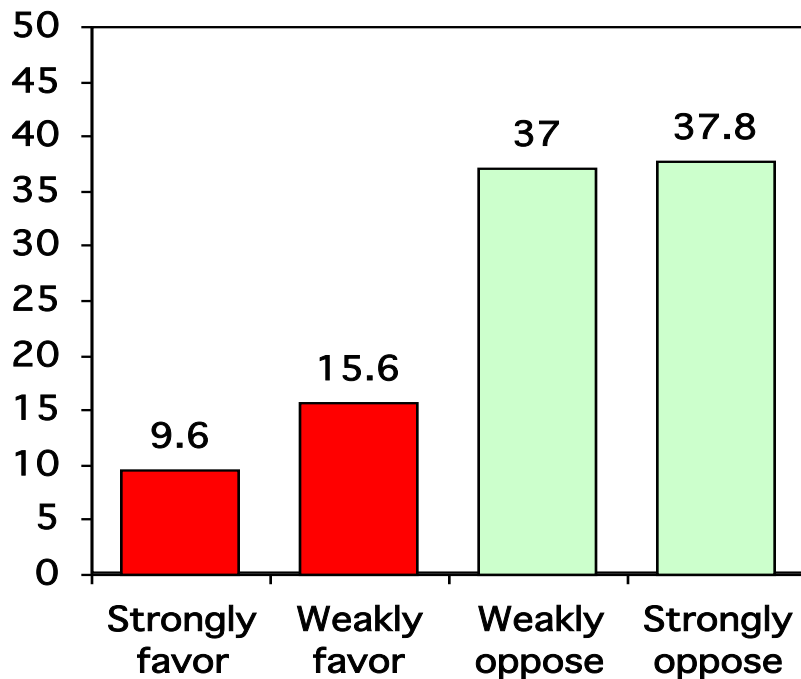


X = “programs that care for the poor.”

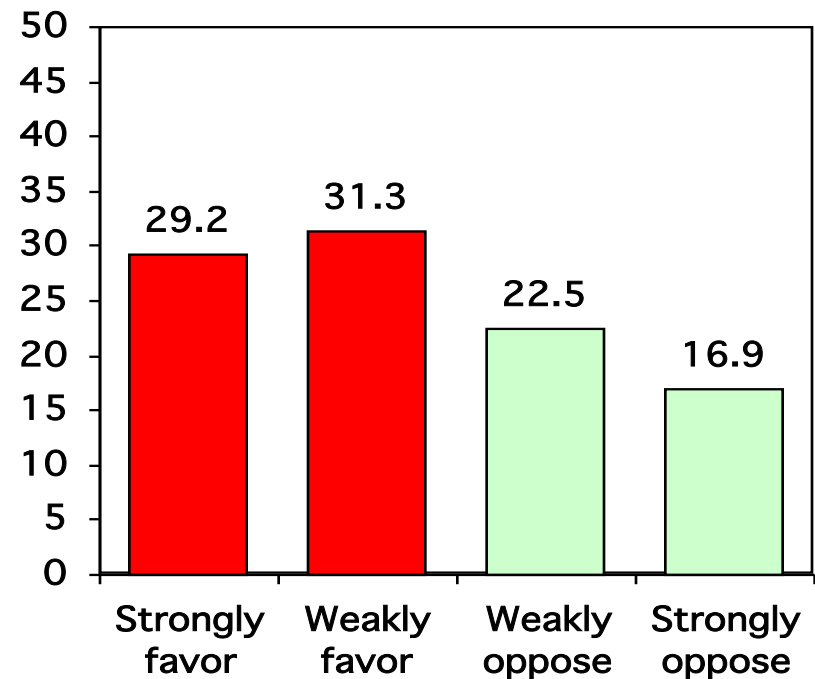


# Whites' Opinions on Affirmative Action in University Admissions

**Frame A:** Give blacks' preference



**Frame B:** Make extra effort



# Framing Health Care

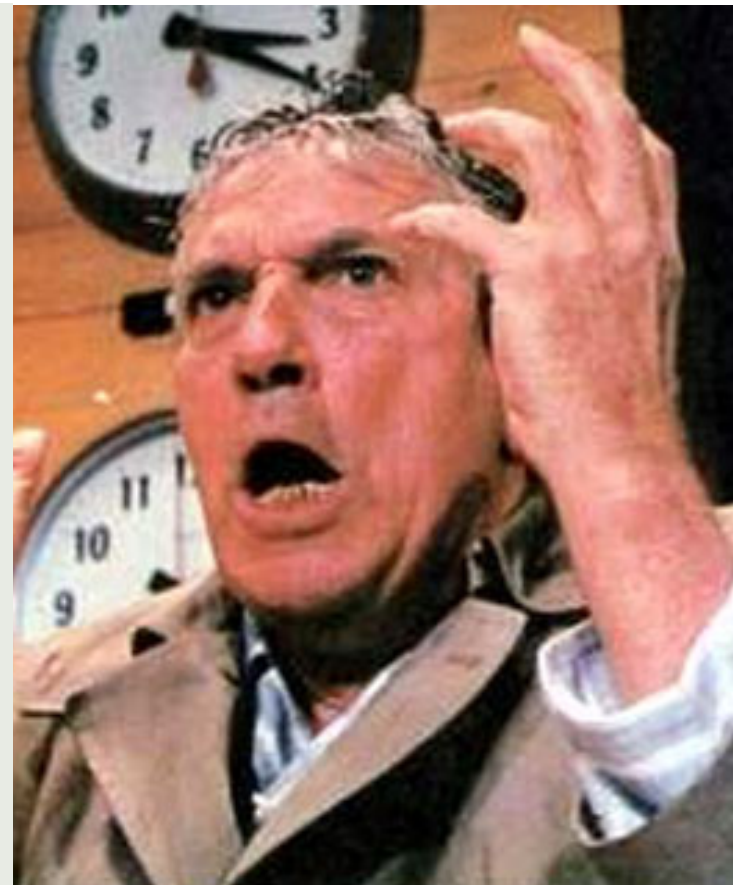
- ⇒ Access, quality, cost?
- ⇒ Societal right
- ⇒ Community obligation
- ⇒ Employer responsibility
- ⇒ Market commodity
- ⇒ Professional service





# Collective Action Frames

- Action oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate social movement activities and campaigns
- injustice frame
- Identity frame
- agency frame



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# Where You Come in

- ⇒ [Leadership is] “taking responsibility for enabling others to achieve purpose in the face of uncertainty.” (Marshall Ganz)
  - ⇒ “A leader ... is like a shepherd. He stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go out ahead, whereupon the others follow, not realizing that all along they are being directed from behind.” (Nelson Mandela)
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# A Few Key Ingredients

- ⇒ Map out types of publics, participatory inputs, and degrees of influence.
  - ⇒ Figure out local, political context and individuals.
  - ⇒ Enlist and sustain institutional partnerships – educational, media, civil society, movement orgs.
  - ⇒ Catalyze thresholds: from spectators to participants
  - ⇒ Deploy frames (injustice, identity, agency); connect them to core values and deep emotions.
-

# Digging Deeper ...

