



Research Article

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The relationship between public opinion, decision-makers, and public policy in American democracy

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the relationship between public opinion and the decision-making process in American democracy. People's attitudes on different issues should be considered in the policy-making process as an indicator of the health of representative democracy. To evaluate these interactions, I reviewed approximately forty academic articles that address the opinion-policy relationship and elite polarization. In conducting this analysis, I identify a reciprocal dynamic in which public opinion influences political leaders and policy outcomes. The evidence also supports my expectation that elite polarization plays a role in shaping public opinion. I found that polarization of the political elite influences public opinion and policy outcomes of Congress. Summing up, it can be concluded that decision makers in some issues don't react to public opinion but to the public resonance of their attitudes. In the future, efforts should focus on gathering more information about the strength of elite polarization's impact on public opinion across different issues, causal inferences about responsiveness, and how this phenomenon influences the quality of American democracy.

Keywords: public opinion, decision-makers, public policy, democracy.

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