

**AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION  
AND WORLD WAR II**

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# **PUBLIC OPINION AND WORLD WAR II: A REANALYSIS**

1. Opinion polls have been studied at the macro level but we know little about micro-level opinion.
  - 1930s and 1940s saw the birth and development of opinion polling (Gallup, Roper, NORC)
2. Most work has been done by historians and pollsters in the 1940s and 1950s
3. World War II is an important topic for discussion – what we know about public opinion and war, we have learned from war failure (Korea, Vietnam) or and/or short-term excursions (Gulf Wars, Afghanistan)
4. There is room for analysis of old micro-level data using modern theories and methods of data analysis

# PUBLIC OPINION AND WORLD WAR II: UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Survey data exists which allows us to examine several interesting topics:

1. Sentiment missing from public opinion polls: Sample design may exclude particular types of opinions.
2. Questions related to the IR literature on the Democratic Peace
  - Position of leaders vis-à-vis citizens on questions of war
  - Rally effects before knowledge of “rally around the flag”
  - Election of 1940
3. The evolution of the New Deal coalition: the interaction of economic and foreign policy issues
  - High SES are internationalist, but do not support FDR
  - Low SES are isolationist, but support FDR
  - Baum and Kernell (2001) suggestive
4. Questions of Consent
  - Generating support for the draft
  - Domestic dissent: conscious objectors and foreign sympathizers
  - Civil liberties – compare to McCarthy Era/Post 9/11 Era
5. Structure of support for intervention
  - Ethnic identity (religion, national identity)
  - Racial Prejudice (Japan vs. Germany)
  - Self-interest
6. Evolving internationalism
  - Mobilizing support for post-War U.S. role in international system.

## SAMPLING SCHEME: MODIFIED PROBABILITY VS. QUOTA

1. Modern opinion poll sampling done using a modified probability method.

2. Opinion Polls in US before 1950s were conducted using Quota sample with non-random respondent selection

- Lots of variation in specific methods, but all contain certain predetermined proportions of the population of people from certain segments of the population
- Goal was “descriptively representative sample”
- Use of “quota controls,” but lots of interviewer discretion
- Example: Roper Quotas:

➤ Census Region }  
➤ Size of Place } Strata Selection

➤ Gender }  
➤ Age (Over/Under 40) } Interviewer Discretion (w/in Quota #s)  
➤ Occupation }  
➤ Economic Class }

3. Quotas abandoned in the U.S. in the 1950s

# QUOTA SAMPLING

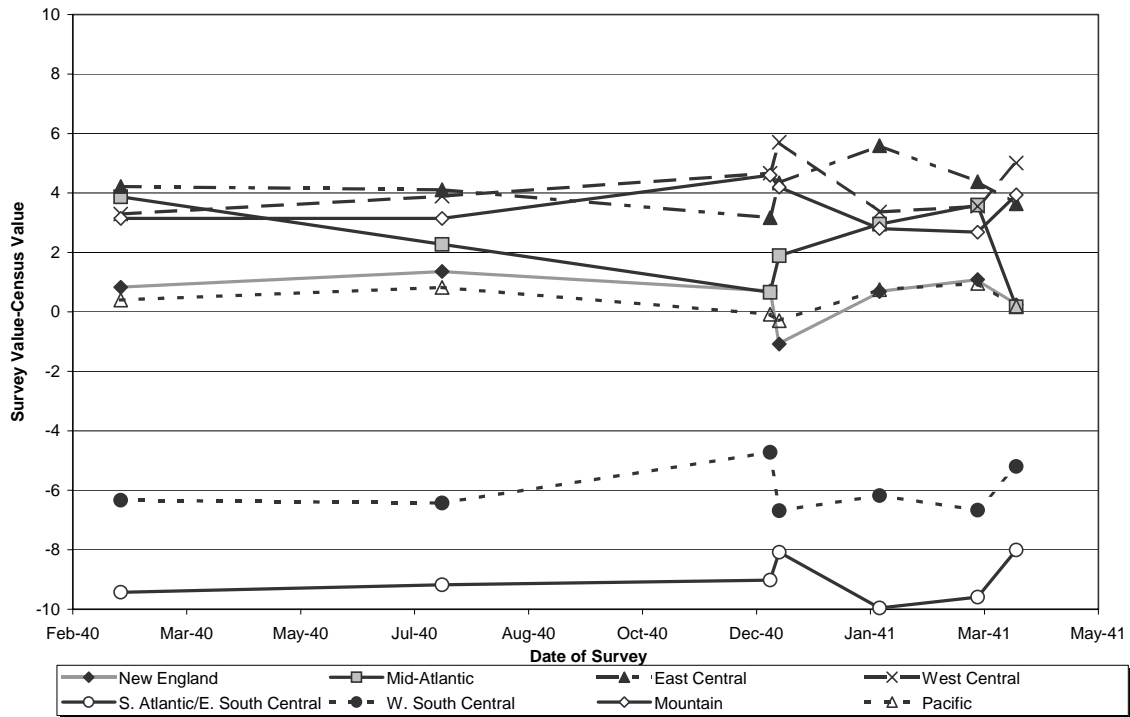
## 1. Problems with quota sampling

- Non-random selection of individual respondents:  
Interviewers free to select own respondents
  - Approachability bias: highly educated, high SES

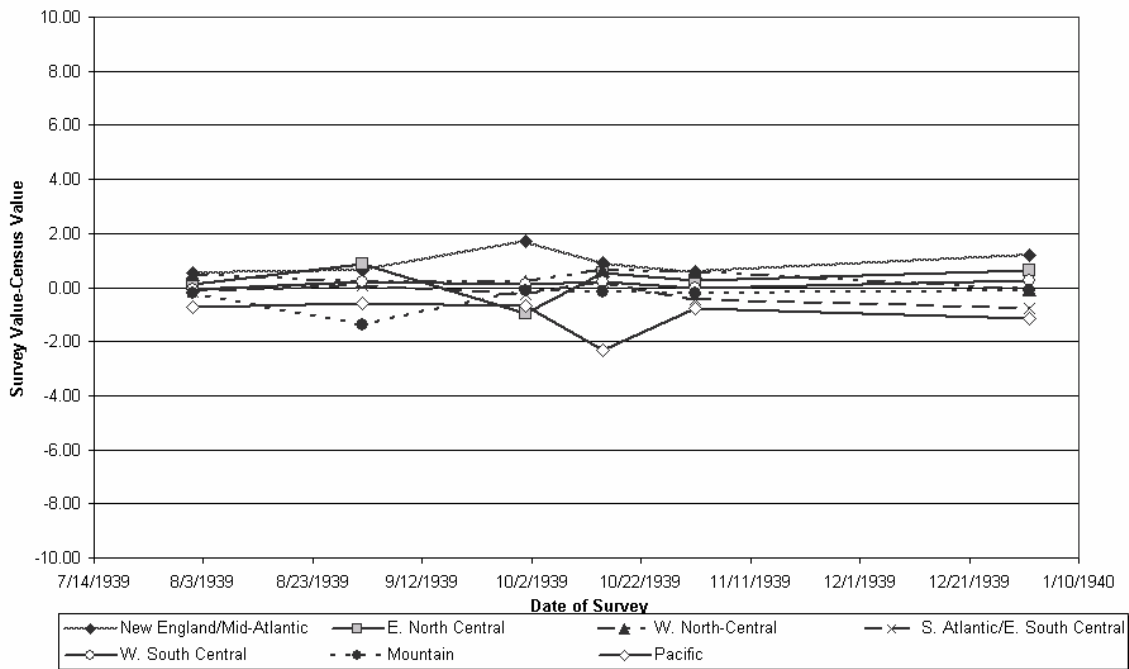
	Census (1940)	OPOR 201 (March 1940)	OPOR 802 (July 1940)
Less than HS	56.6%	30.3%	33.6%
Some HS	16.3%	19.8%	17.6%
HS Grad	16.7%	20.9%	21.9%
Some College	6.0%	13.9%	13.2%
College Grad +	4.4%	15.1%	13.7%

- Bias sometimes built into quota.
  - Gallup interested in predicting elections; group are in proportion to votes they cast in elections, not population (underrepresented Southerners, Blacks, and women)
- Quota categories not integrated
- Clustering

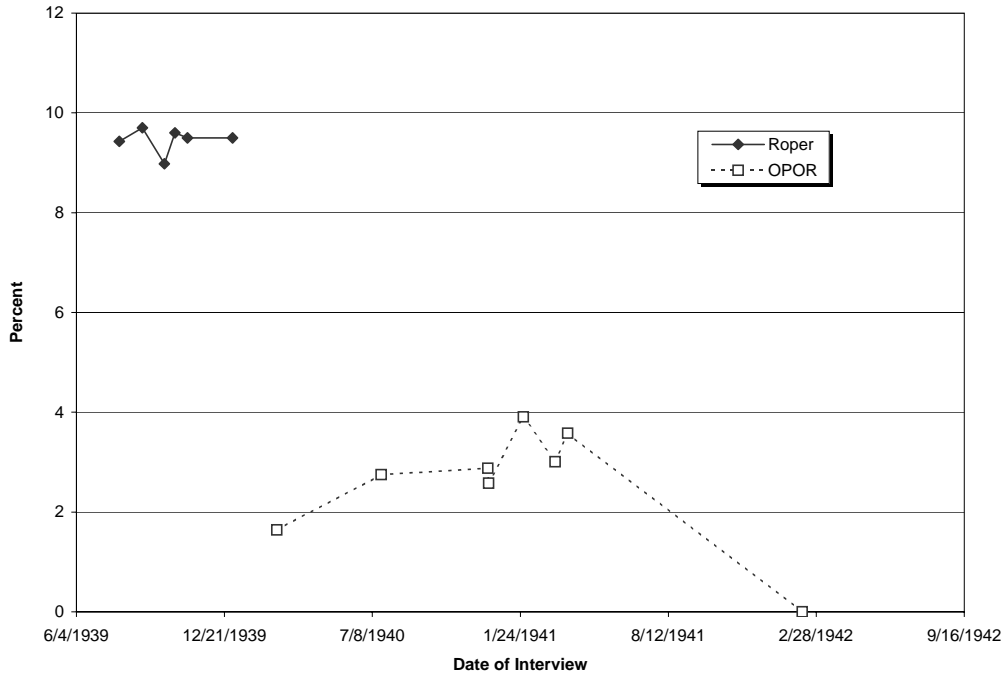
Deviation from Population - OPOR Region



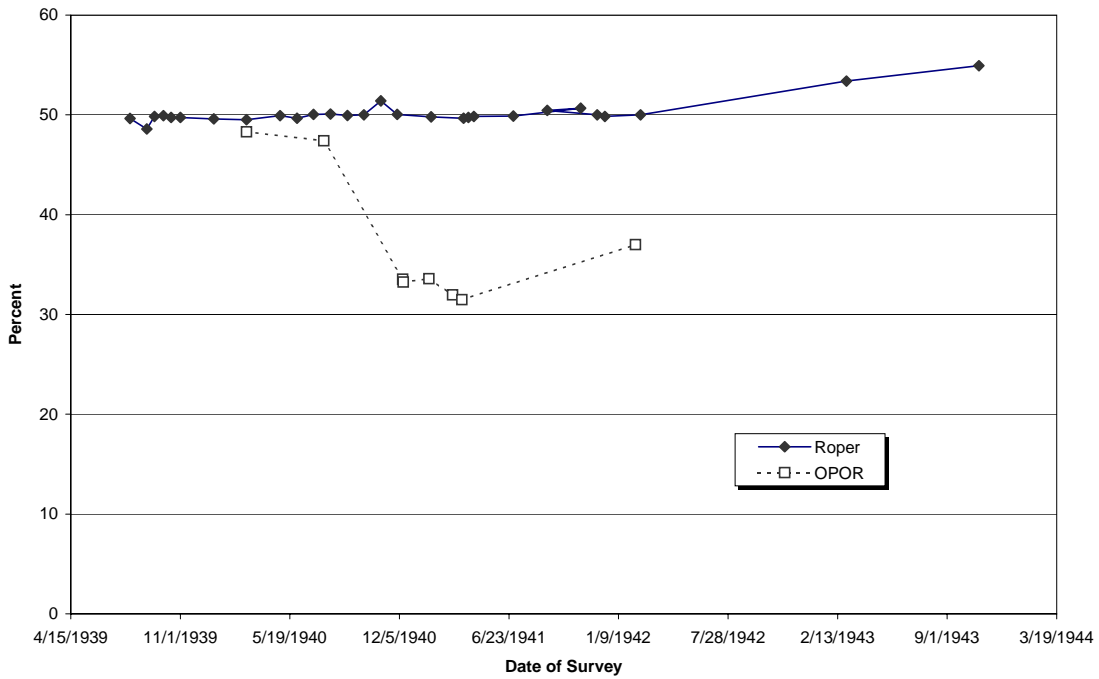
Deviation from Population - Roper Region



Percent Black



Percent Female in Sample



# DATA

## 1. Roper/Fortune

- Not many demographic indicators:
  - No measure of education
  - Age is coded as over/under 40
  - “Negro” is a subset of economic class
- Little over-time comparability in question wording
- Large samples

## 2. Gallup (AIPO)

- Demographic indicators best of 3 sources, but ...
  - Age for Gallup estimated for 1937 to 1941
  - Small sample of Blacks (~4% of the sample)
  - Gender imbalance (by design): 65-70% men
- Some over-time comparability in question wording
- Samples fairly large (not as large as Roper)

## 3. Office of Public Opinion Research (OPOR)

- Fieldwork done by Gallup from 1939-1942, so many of the same sampling concerns
  - But ... Supplemental sample of Southerners, including an oversample of African-Americans in some surveys
- Some over-time comparability in question wording
- Question-wording experiments

## 4. National Opinion Research Center (NORC)



# HOW CAN WE DEAL WITH THIS DATA (AGGREGATE LEVEL)?

## 1. Post-Stratification Weights

- To correct Systematic Sample Selection Bias:
  - Weight based on Census Data.
  - Assume that systemic bias is orthogonal to unmeasured bias
  - Non-respondents are identical to respondents
  - Seems appropriate to correct for gender and regional imbalance
- To correct Systematic Interviewer Bias
  - Perhaps education captures random effects; post-stratify on education
- Bottom Line: Create post-stratification weights based on census data

## 2. Incorporate auxiliary information:

- look to eras when probability surveys and quota control surveys are in use at same time
  - May 1948 US – NORC (prob.) vs. AIPO (quota) 3 states
  - April 1992 UK – British NES (prob.) vs. MORI (quota)
    - Quota sample, but does not suffer from same problems as 1930s and 1940s
- Look at similarities and differences across surveys

## HOW CAN WE DEAL WITH THIS DATA (INDIVIDUAL LEVEL)?

1. Include controls for quota measures and education, where available
  - Adjusts for systematic bias (sample selection and interviewer)
  - Ignores interactive effects; add interactive terms where theoretically appropriate
  - Use weights instead? (Gelman and Winship say no, others say yes)
2. Include fixed effects for individual interviewers
  - Adjust for systematic inter-interview variation in response patterns
  - Preliminary analysis suggests including effects does not make much difference.
  - Limitations: Interviewer effects allow us to account for variation *across* interviewers, but what if all interviewers have the same bias in ways we can not measure?

## EXAMPLE: AGGREGATE PUBLIC OPINION

### OPOR Mid-Atlantic Sample, March 1941

Education Level	Gender	
	Male	Female
Grade School	29%	14%
Some High School	13%	6%
High School Graduate	14%	12%
Some College or higher	2%	1%

### Mid-Atlantic, 1940 Census

Education Level	Gender	
	Male	Female
Grade School	34%	31%
Some High School	7%	7%
High School Graduate	5%	7%
Some College or higher	2%	2%

1. “Which of these two things do you think is more important for the United States to try to do: To keep out of war ourselves, or to help England win, even at the risk of getting into the war.”
2. Mid-Atlantic Sample
  - 33 percent – more important to keep out of war;
  - 67 percent – more important to help England win.
3. Women and the low educated less supportive of England
4. Mid-Atlantic Sample weighted to reflect the true pop. proportions
  - 37 percent – more important to keep out of war;
  - 63 percent – more important to help England win.

## EXAMPLE (CONTINUED)

Bias is in the same direction in all Census Regions

	Opinion( Sample)	Opinion(Corrected)
New Eng	0.58	0.56
Mid-Atl	0.67	0.63
E Cent	0.62	0.61
W Cent	0.70	0.70
South/SW	0.83	0.80
Rocky Mts	0.74	0.73
Pac Coast	0.71	0.70

But... There is a Regional imbalance in the data

	Sample	Census
New Eng	7.53	6.38
Mid-Atl	27.66	23.85
E Cent	22.31	17.77
W Cent	16.26	12.60
South/SW	12.00	27.98
Rocky Mts	5.85	3.14
Pac Coast	8.39	7.36

So, we get the right answer for the wrong reasons:

**Uncorrected Opinion: 65% Support**

**Corrected Opinion: 65% Support**

**But biases don't always cancel out:**

1. "Do you support FDR"
  - Southerners and low educated are more supportive; women are less supportive
  - Uncorrected: 75% support; Corrected: 79% support
  
2. "Have you been following discussions about Lend Lease?"
  - Southerners, low educated and women follow less
  - Uncorrected: 72% follow; Corrected: 65% follow

# THE PLACE OF ETHNIC IDENTITY

Examine questions of ethnic identity

- Out-group: Little information on feelings toward domestic groups; some information on feelings towards Germans and Japanese
- In-group: Some information on respondents' parents' birthplace
  - OPOR – Measured pretty consistent
  - NORC – Measured pretty consistent
  - Gallup – Measured occasionally

# ETHNOCENTRISM: OUT-GROUP FEELINGS

## Roper August 1939

Of the people now in the U.S. who were born in foreign countries, which nationality would you say has made the best citizens? Which the worst?

### Best:

Germans:	13%
English:	10%
Irish:	6%
Scandinavians:	5%
Swedes:	4%

### Worst:

Italians:	22%
Jews:	6%
Germans:	4%
Sicilians:	3%
Japanese:	2% (6% on the pacific coast)

# ETHNOCENTRISM

## Roper August 1939

	~Axis Worst	Axis Worst	Difference
If England and France go to war against the dictator nations should we:			
Percent saying No			
Sell Them Food?	17	12	5
Sell them war supplies	38	28	10
Send our army and navy abroad to help	73	63	10
Percent saying Yes			
Should we tend strictly to our own business and go to war only to defend our own country from attack	88	85	3
Percent saying No			
Do you think there are any international questions affecting the U.S. so important to us in the long run that our government should take a stand on them now, even at the risk of our getting into war?	70	64	6

Note: 26% say Axis countries make the worst citizens (22% Italians; 4% Germans). Most of pro-Allies sentiment is driven by anti-Italian feelings, but direction is the same for anti-German feeling.

# ETHNOCENTRISM

## MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

Regression: Controls for Age, Gender, Region, Urban/Rural Designation, Class/Race

DV = Isolationism Scale (mean of 5 items)  
 0=anti isolationism/1=isolationism)

Italians Worst:	-0.05 (0.01)**
Germans Worst:	-0.04 (0.02)*
Germans Best:	0.00 (0.01)
English Best:	-0.08 (0.01)**
Restrict Rights of Jews in America:†	0.03 (0.01)**

\*\*= $p < .01$  \*= $p < .05$

† Question Wording:

1. In the United States the Jews have the same standing as any other people, and they should be treated in all ways exactly as any other Americans
2. Jews are in some ways distinct from other Americans but they make respected and useful citizens so long as they don't try to mingle socially where they are not wanted
3. Jews have somewhat different business methods and therefore some measures should be Taken to prevent Jews from getting too much power in the business world
4. We should make it a policy to deport Jews from this country to some new homeland as fast as it can be done without inhumanity



# THE ROLE OF ETHNIC IDENTITY

1. Surveys do not measure closeness to own ethnic group, but they do sometimes measure where the respondent's parents were born.
2. We can separate out people whose parents were born in Axis countries, Allied Countries, other foreign countries, and the U.S.
3. Look at effect of ethnic background on attitudes toward War.

## EUROPEAN THEATER

Date	Axis Parents	Allied Parents
<b>Help England vs. Stay Out</b>		
January 28, 1941 (half sample)	-0.17 (0.04)**	0.13 (0.05)**
March 12, 1941	-0.20 (0.03)**	0.10 (0.03)**
March 28, 1941	-0.20 (0.03)**	0.04 (0.03)
<b>Defeat Germany vs. Stay Out</b>		
January 28, 1941 (half sample)	-0.11 (0.04)*	0.03 (0.05)
<b>Willing to Fight in Europe if U.S. Gets Involved?</b>		
March 12, 1941	-0.11 (0.03)**	0.08 (0.03)**

## PROXIMATE QUESTIONS

Date	Axis Parents	Allied Parents
<b>The U.S. should fight Preemptive Wars?</b>		
March 12, 1941	-0.10 (0.03)**	0.04 (0.03)
<b>U.S. Should Risk War to Keep Japan Down</b>		
March 28, 1941	-0.07 (0.03)*	0.06 (0.03)
<b>Defend Latin America if Attacked by European Power?</b>		
March 28, 1941	-0.04 (0.02)*	0.01 (0.02)

\*\*=p<.01 \*=p<.05

Note: I performed some tests to see if DK had an effect; largely not (tests with MNL)

## GENDER GAP

Schuman (1972) used data from the 1971 Detroit Area Study to examine the meaning of opposition to the Vietnam War.

- Schuman asked respondents, “was a mistake to get involved in Vietnam?” Those who answer “yes” are asked, “why?”
- Women, blacks, and older respondents were more likely to take a “pragmatic isolationist” position than an ideologically driven dovish position.
- Women were likely to have reservations about American involvement because they were uncomfortable with the deaths of American soldiers.

On A July 1940 Survey, respondents were asked, “Which of these two things do you think is the more important for the United States to try to do? To keep out of war ourselves or to help England win, even at the risk of getting into the war.” They were then asked, “why?”

- Gender gap exists on the base Question: 42% of men vs. 30% of women say we should help England.
- Gender gap on not only whether to help England, but *why* we should stay out.

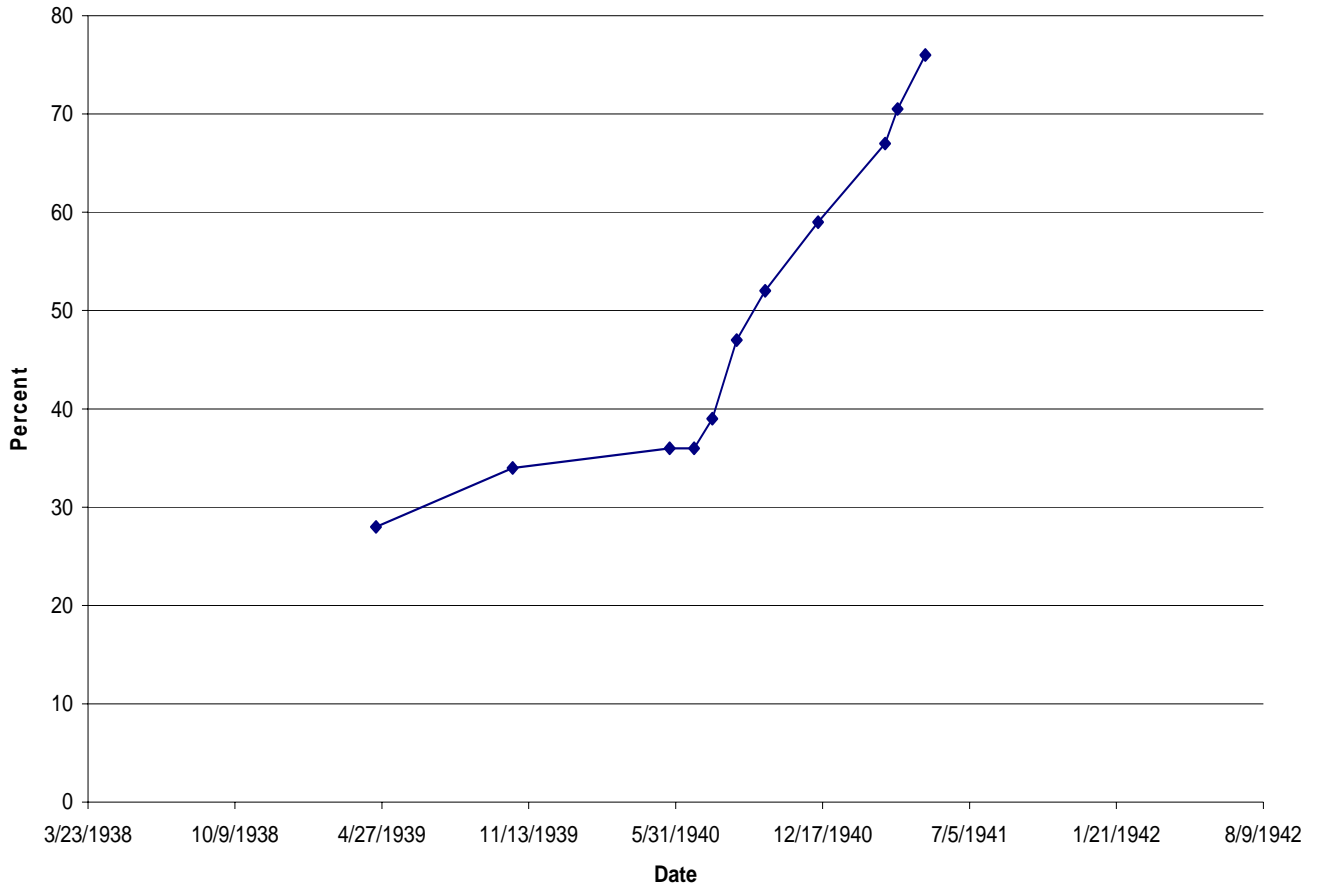
Consider those respondents who said it was more important to keep out:

- Significant differences by Gender ( $p < .002$ )<sup>1</sup>
  - For Women, top three answers are:
    - “Mind our own business” (16%)
    - “Futility of war” (11%)
    - “Don’t want to send our boys over to be killed” (11%)
  - For Men, top three answers are:
    - “Mind our own business” (17%)
    - “Futility of war” (6%)
    - “We have nothing to gain by going in” (6%)

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<sup>1</sup> This difference is not driven by non-response; groups have identical DK rates

**Help Allies vs. Stay Out of War:  
Percent Saying Its More Important to Help Allies**

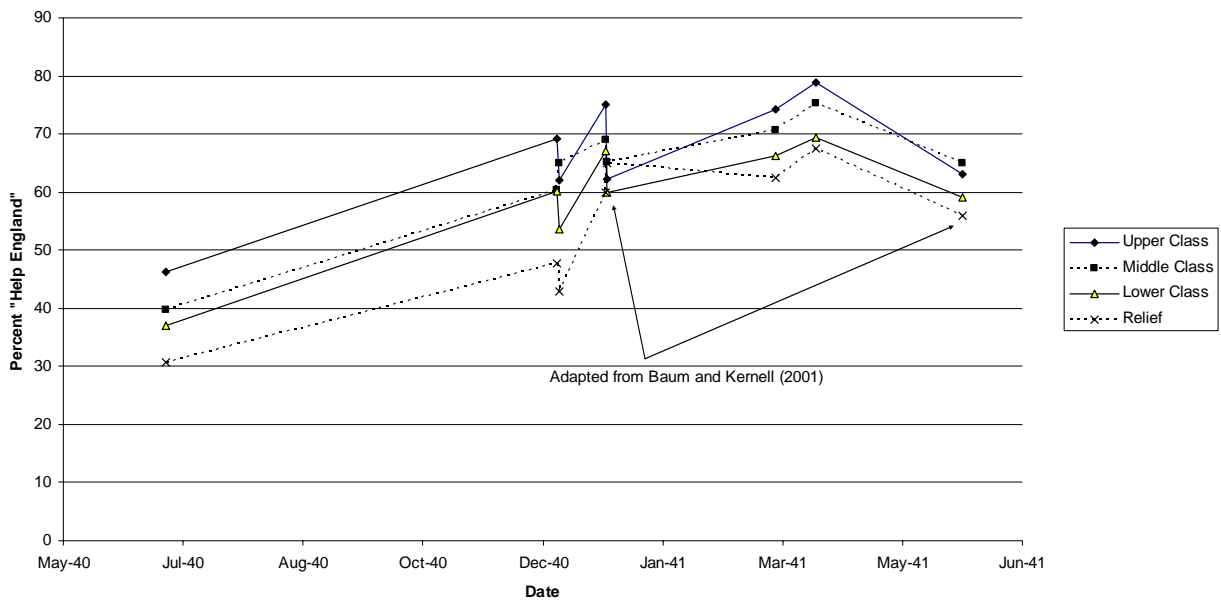


# CLASS DIFFERENCES ON QUESTIONS OF WAR

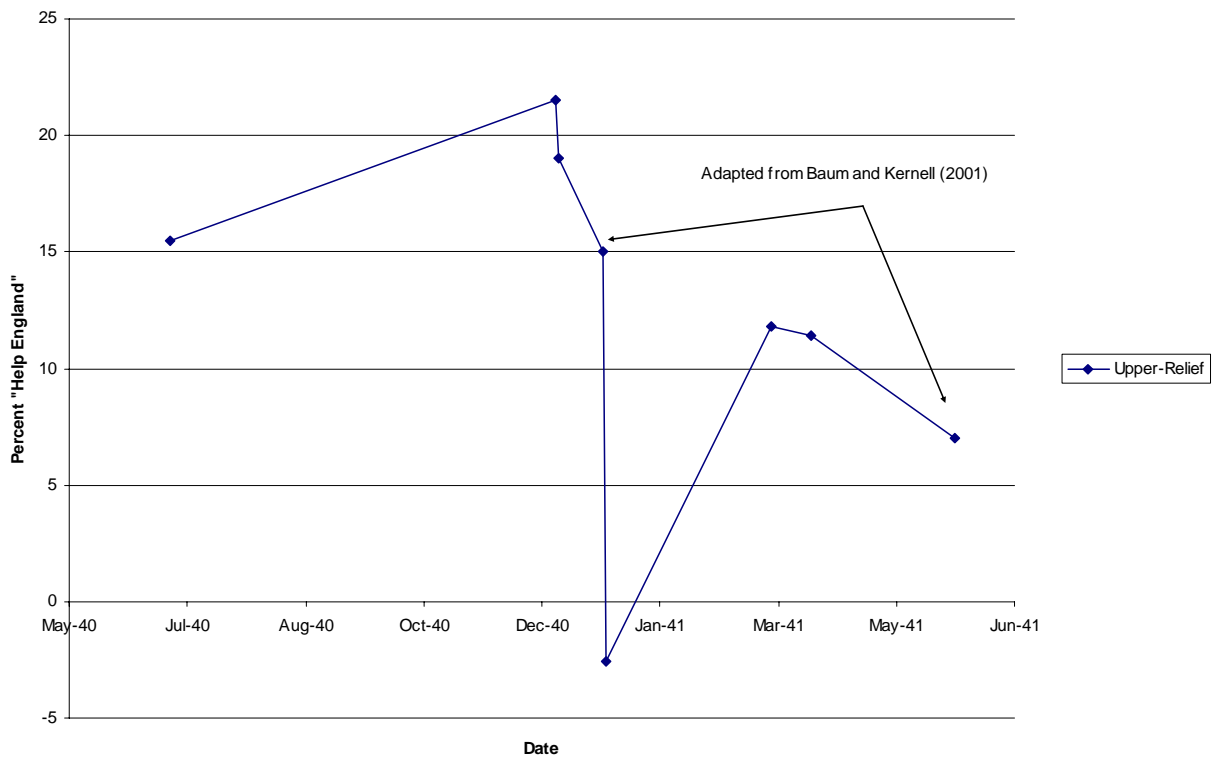
## Roper August 1939

	Upper	U. Middle	L. Middle	Lower
If England and France go to war against the dictator nations should we:				
		Percent saying No		
Sell Them Food?	11	13	15	20
Sell them war supplies	30	32	35	39
Send our army and navy abroad to help them	62	70	71	73
		Percent saying Yes		
Should we tend strictly to our own business and go to war only to defend our own country from attack	81	85	89	89
		Percent saying No		
Do you think there are any international questions affecting the U.S. so important to us in the long run that our government should take a stand on them now, even at the risk of our getting into war?	65	69	67	71

Help England vs. Stay Out



Help England vs. Stay Out of War



# SUPPORT FOR DRAFT AND SUPPORT FOR FDR

## Roper October 1939

“Would you favor a term of compulsory military service for all young men of 18 or 19?”

Total saying “yes” or “yes, if necessary” – 47%

Men 49%; Women 44%

Black 66%; White 45%<sup>2</sup>

	Upper	U. Middle	L. Middle	Lower
Percent Supporting Draft	44	43	44	50
	N. East	Midwest	South	West
Percent Supporting Draft	48	34	60	44

“Under the circumstances, do you think it would be better to have a new President in 1940, or to have Roosevelt remain in office?”

### All Respondents

DK	13
New President	39
Keep FDR	47

	N. East	Midwest	South	West
Percent Saying Keep FDR	40	35	67	43

	Upper	U. Middle	L. Middle	Lower
Percent Saying Keep FDR	26	39	45	59

### Breakdown in Support for FDR by Support for Draft

	Upper	U. Middle	L. Middle	Lower
Support Draft	34	45	50	59
Oppose Draft	18	34	42	58

<sup>2</sup> In south, 58% of Whites, 71% of Blacks support Draft

## NEXT STEPS

1. Correct aggregate public opinion series on interventionist attitudes
  - Indications are that it will make little difference; canceling biases
2. Examine Shifting Sentiment on pre-war intervention
  - What moves opinion?
  - Do different groups respond to external events differently?
3. More questions of ethnic identity
  - Religious Identity
    - Religion – Measured consistently for all organizations but Roper
    - Church attendance – Measured several times
4. Measure Media/Information Effects
  - A lot has been written about FDR's leadership – see if respondents who hear his speeches behave differently than those who do not
  - Sometimes respondents are asked their “favorite columnists” – perhaps I can back out the nature of the message to which they are exposed
  - Political information (factual questions) is sometimes measured – look for information effects.