“American” Political Values: Do We Actually Agree?
Alissa F. Stollwerk, Ph.D Candidate, Department of Political Science

Research Questions
– Does support for political values differ across the 50 states?
– Are state policies responsive to political values?

Political Values

What are political values?
– “Overarching normative principles and belief assumptions about government, citizenship, and American society” (McCann 1997).
– Ideas such as limited government, moral traditionalism, and equality.
– More specific than partisanship or ideology but broader than issue-specific opinion.

Why are political values important?
– Shape public opinion on issue-specific attitudes.
– Play an important role in political discourse.

Data and Methods

Data:
American National Election Study (2008)
– Moral traditionalism (4 questions)
– Equality of Opportunity (6 questions)
– Limited Government (3 questions)

Cooperative Congressional Election Study (2013)
– Moral traditionalism (4 questions)
– Equality of Opportunity (3 questions)
– Egalitarianism (5 questions)
– Individualism (4 questions)
– Limited Government (4 questions)

Methods: Multilevel Regression with Poststratification (MRP)

Model state-level estimates from a national poll:
– Estimate individual responses to public opinion questions as a function of each individual’s demographic information and state of residence in a multilevel model.
– Post-stratify the estimated responses by state-level population using demographic and geographic information from the US Census.

Mapping “American” Values

Support for Traditional Moral Values, by State and Age:

Opposition to Egalitarianism, by State and Age:

Support for Limited Government, by State and Age:

Are States Consistent in their Values?

Modeling Policy Responsiveness

Do state-level policies respond directly to state-level support for political values?

Or, do political values shape state-level policy by shaping issue-specific opinion?

Policy Responsiveness Results

Bivariate Responsiveness? (Mostly) Yes:

Multivariate Responsiveness? No:

Predicting Policy on Civil Unions

Predicting State Support for Civil Unions