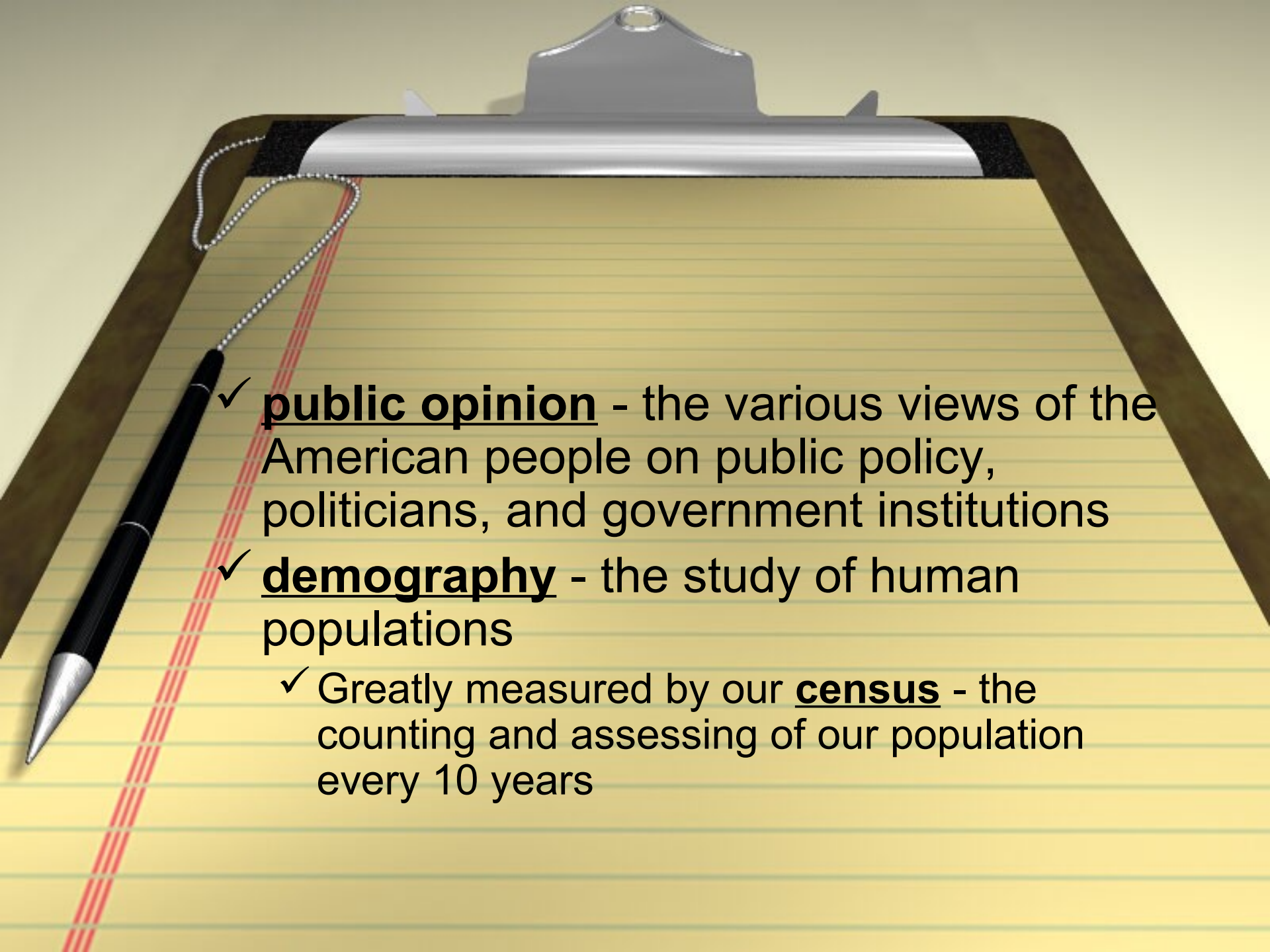
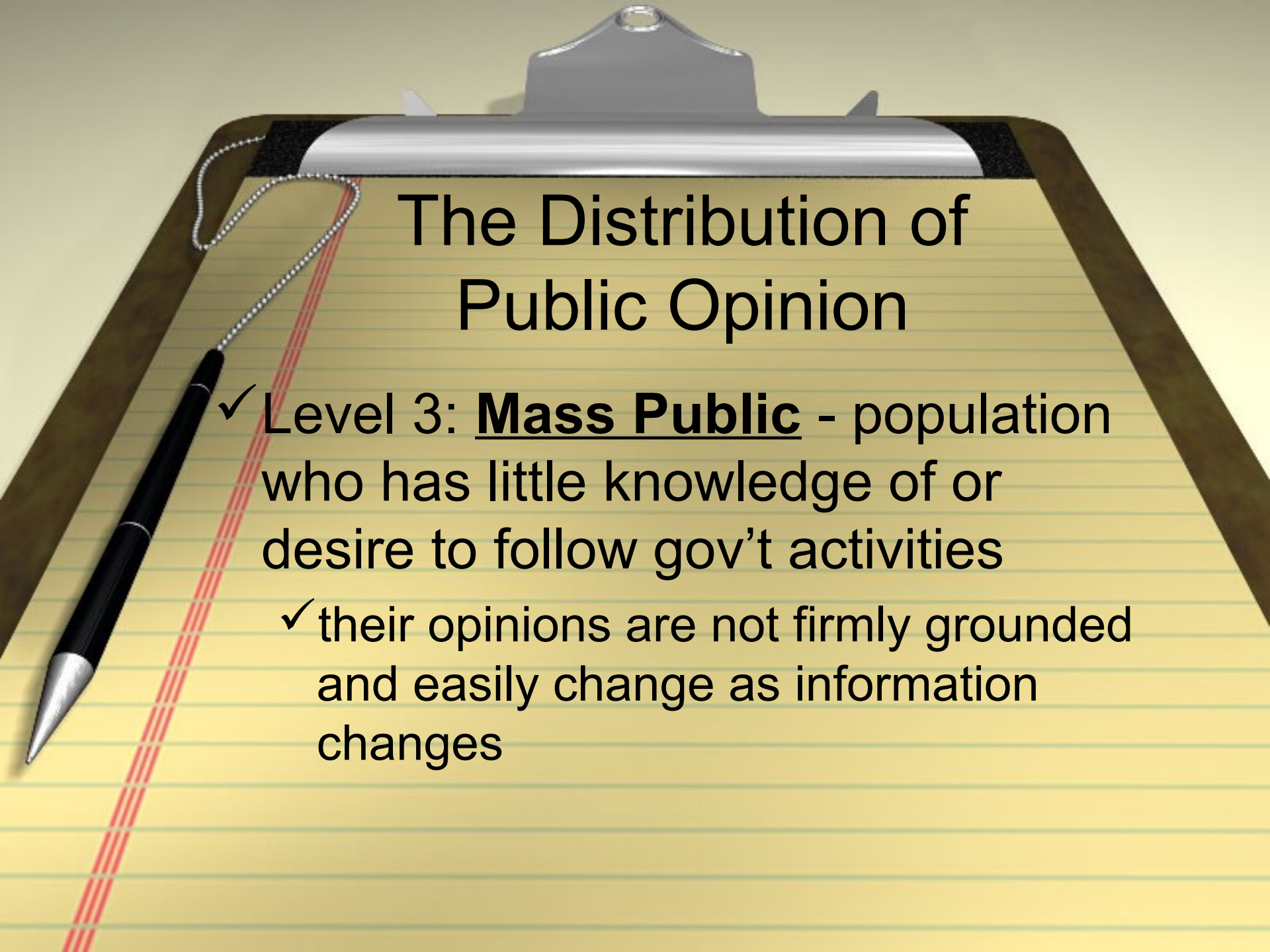


Public Opinion and Political Action

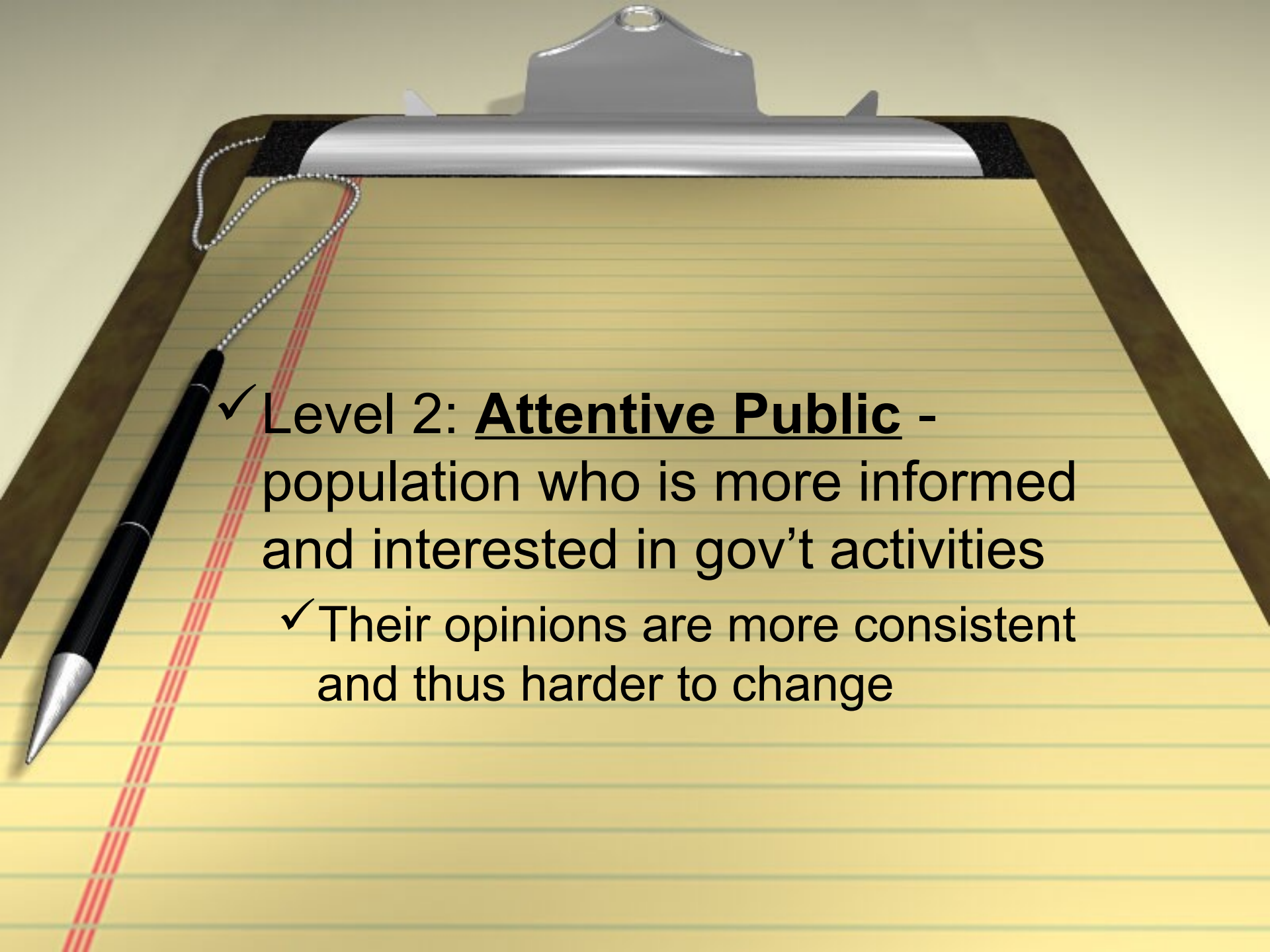
AP UNIT TWO

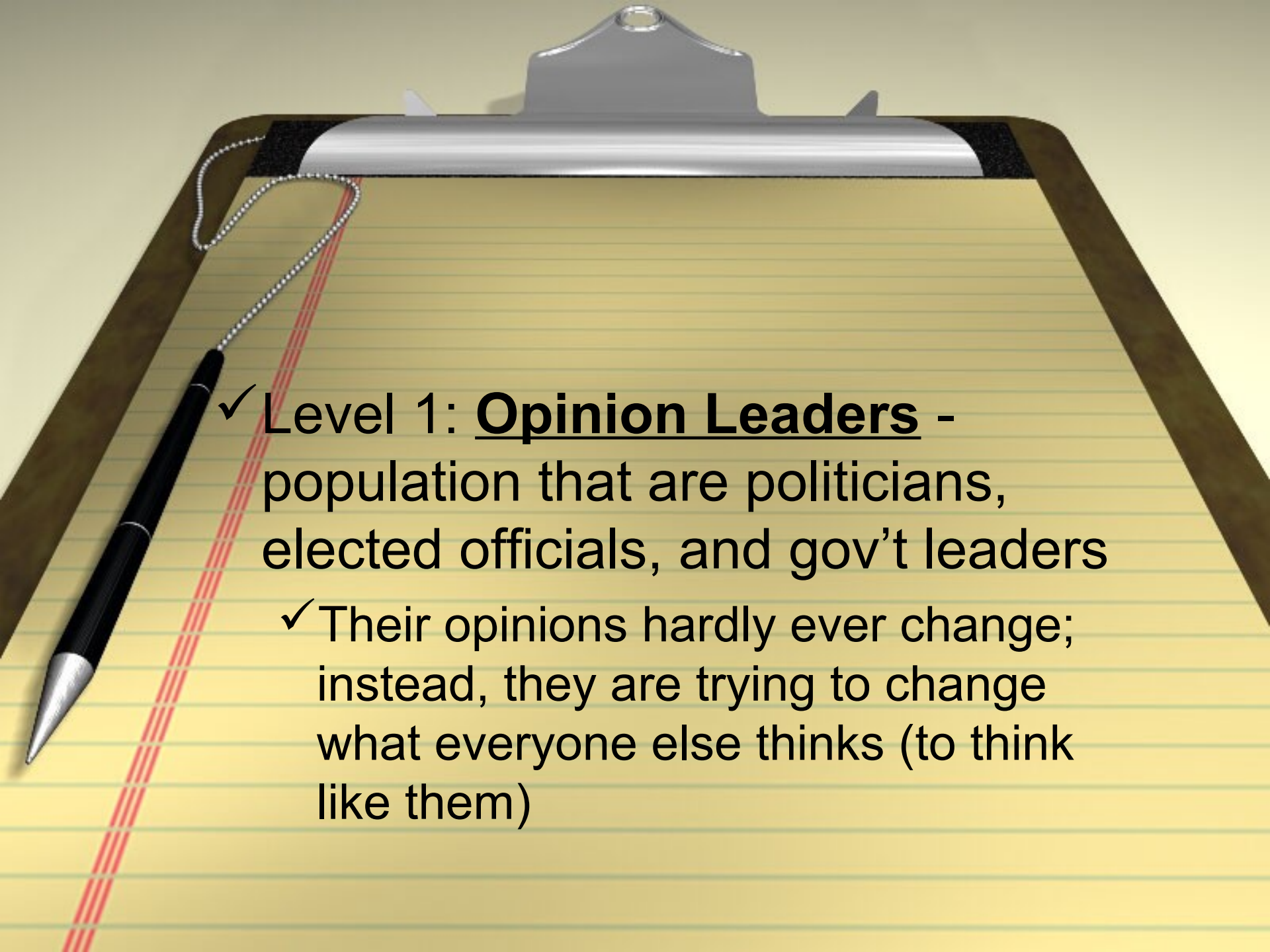
- 
- ✓ **public opinion** - the various views of the American people on public policy, politicians, and government institutions
 - ✓ **demography** - the study of human populations
 - ✓ Greatly measured by our **census** - the counting and assessing of our population every 10 years

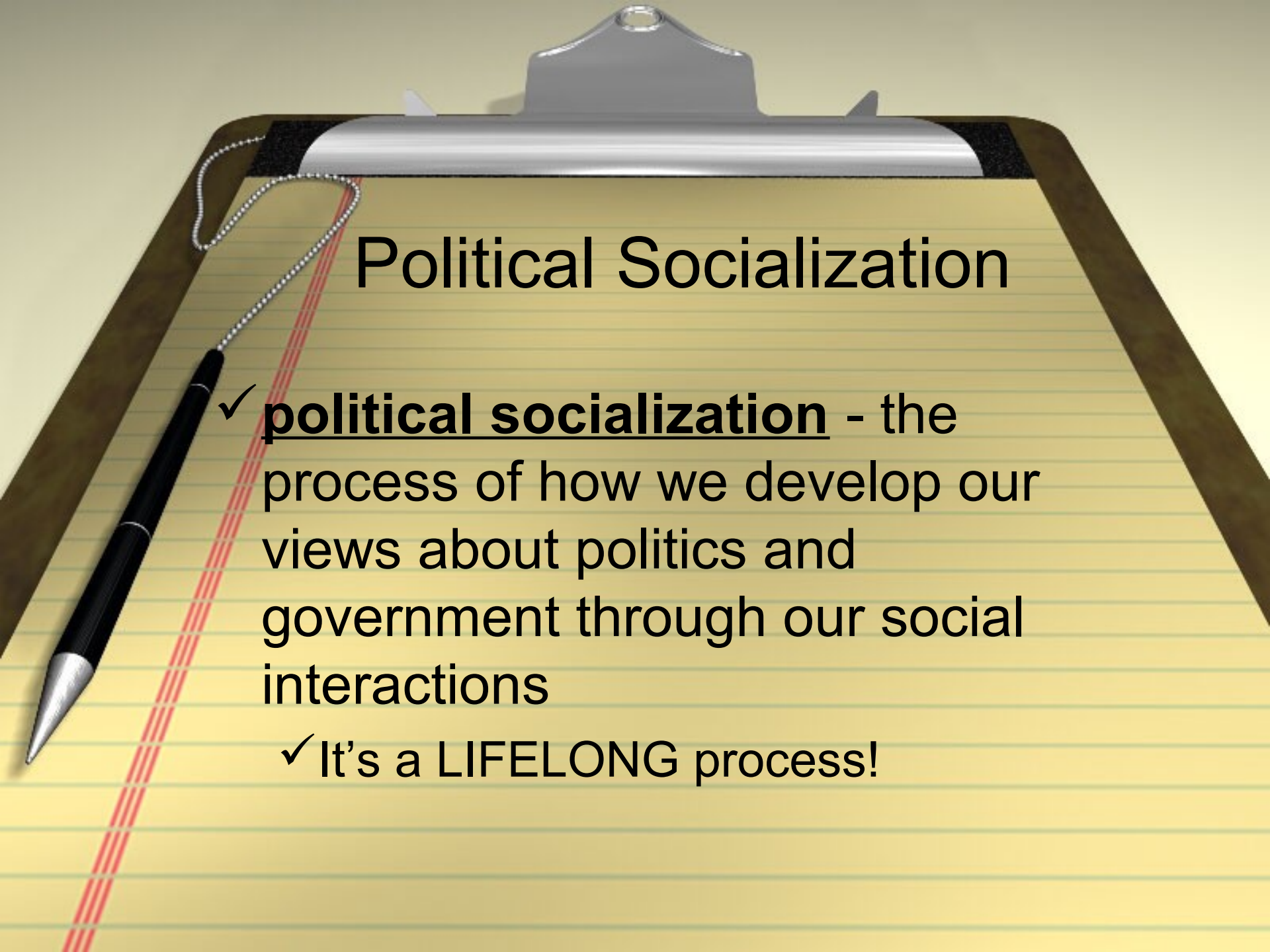


The Distribution of Public Opinion

- ✓ Level 3: **Mass Public** - population who has little knowledge of or desire to follow gov't activities
 - ✓ their opinions are not firmly grounded and easily change as information changes

- 
- ✓ Level 2: **Attentive Public** - population who is more informed and interested in gov't activities
 - ✓ Their opinions are more consistent and thus harder to change

- 
- ✓ Level 1: **Opinion Leaders** - population that are politicians, elected officials, and gov't leaders
 - ✓ Their opinions hardly ever change; instead, they are trying to change what everyone else thinks (to think like them)



Political Socialization

✓ **political socialization** - the process of how we develop our views about politics and government through our social interactions

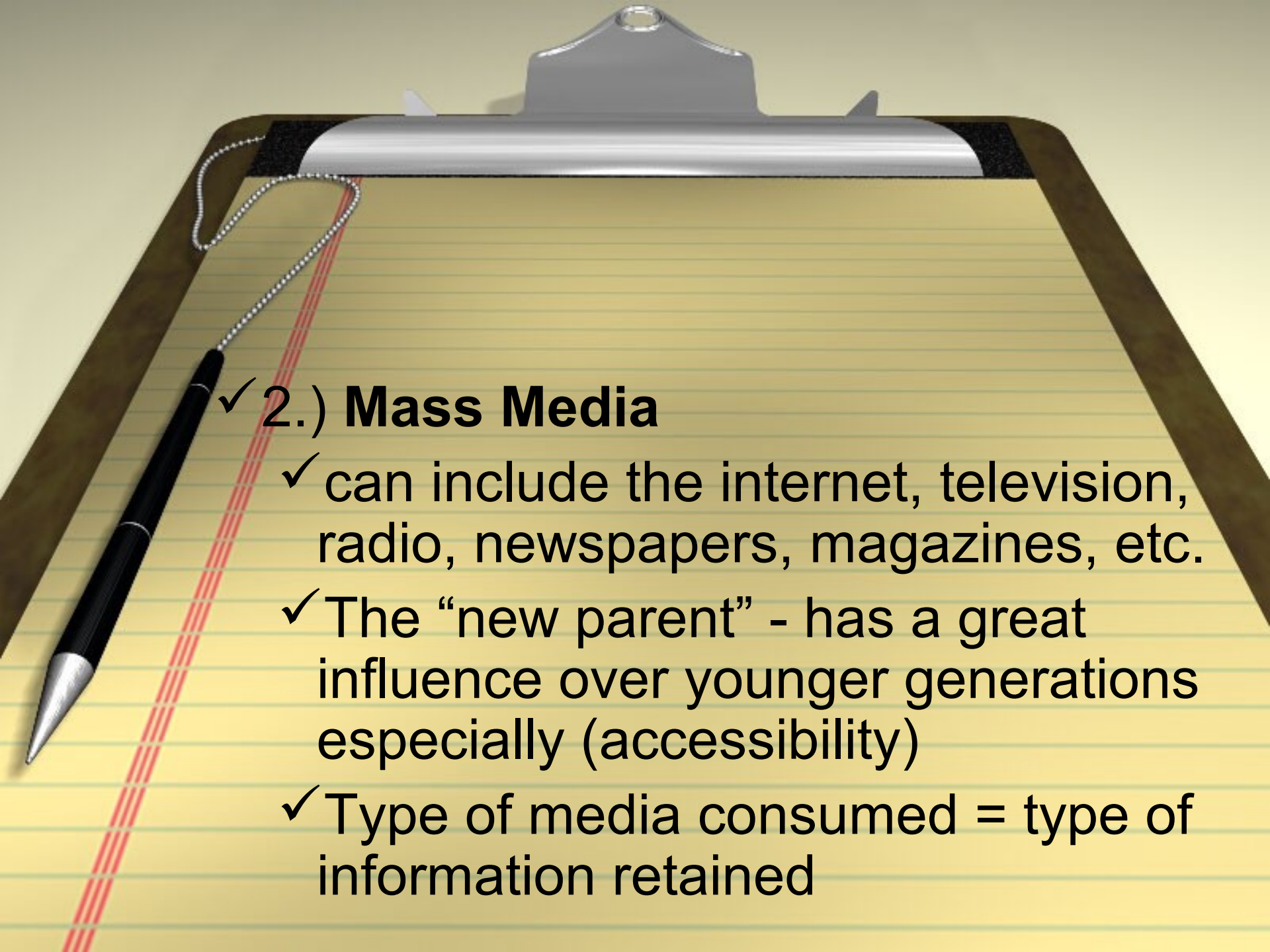
✓ It's a LIFELONG process!



Factors of Political Socialization

✓ 1.) **Family_**

- ✓ Very influential due to one's prolonged and direct exposure to family values
- ✓ people tend to hold similar political views as their parents



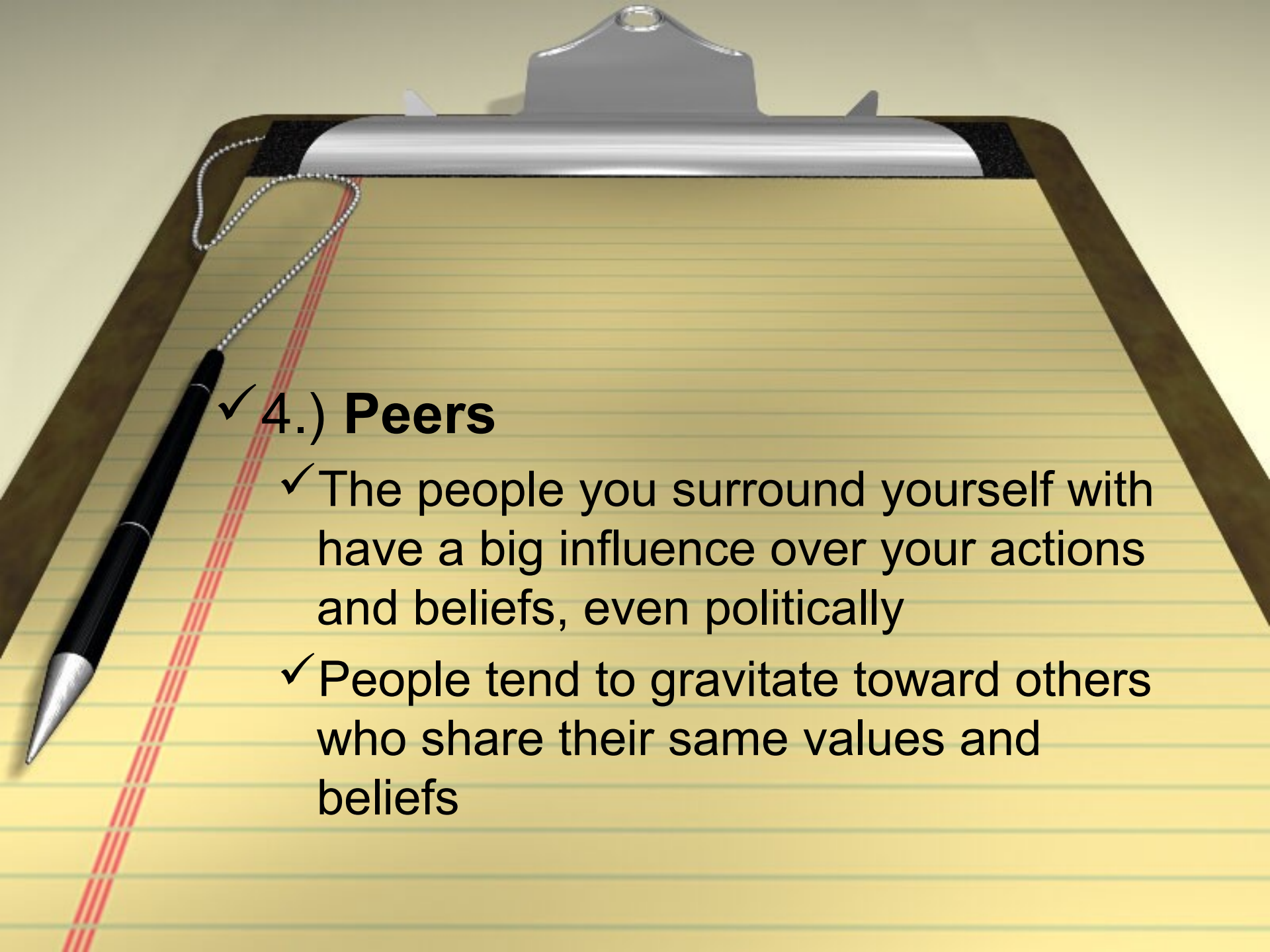
✓ 2.) **Mass Media**

- ✓ can include the internet, television, radio, newspapers, magazines, etc.
- ✓ The “new parent” - has a great influence over younger generations especially (accessibility)
- ✓ Type of media consumed = type of information retained



✓ 3.) **Schools**

- ✓ Provide lessons on national pride, history, and what it means to be a good citizen
- ✓ Open exchange of political ideas in a broad setting
- ✓ People who are more educated tend to get more politically involved (voting especially)



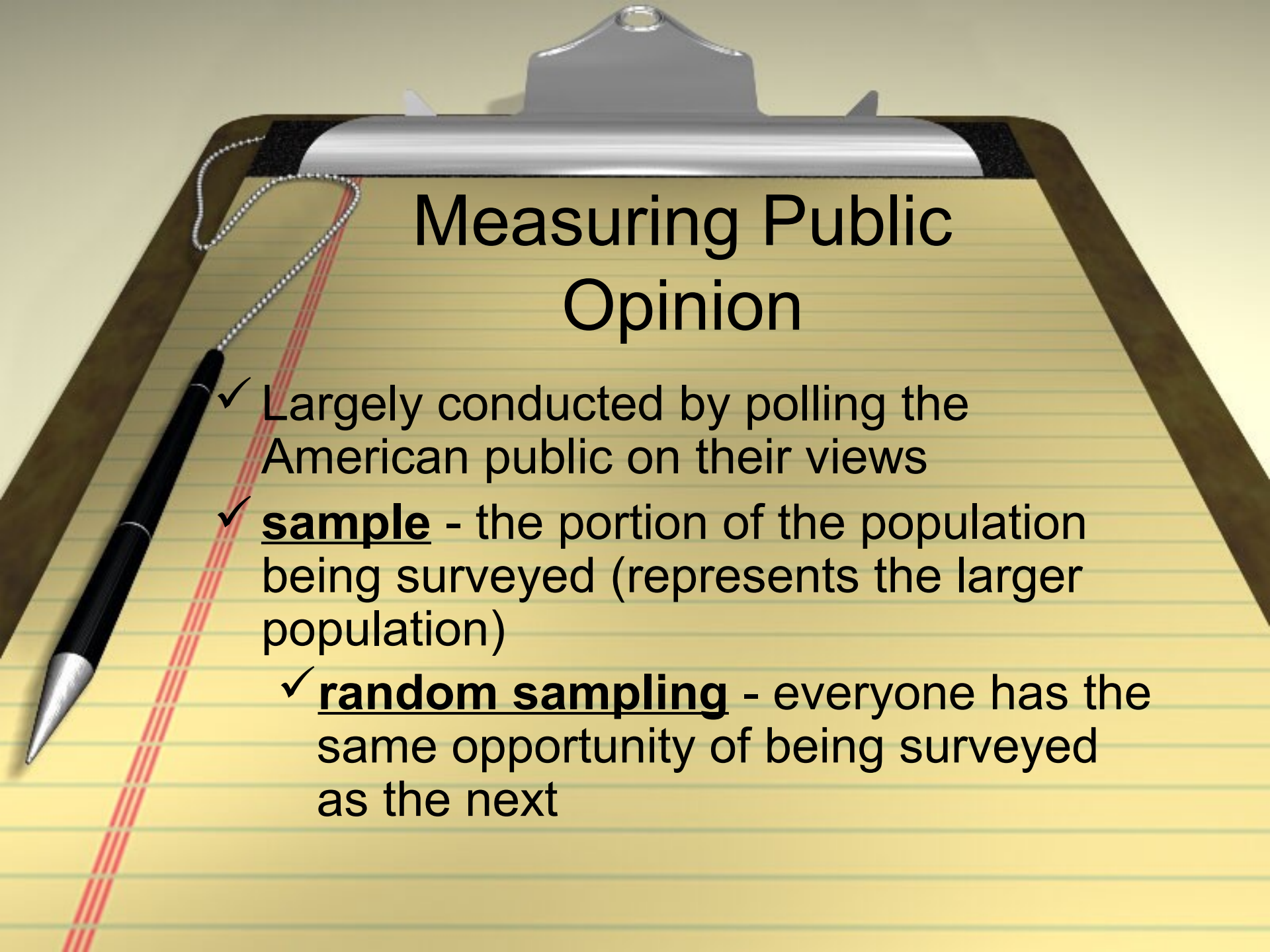
✓ 4.) **Peers**

- ✓ The people you surround yourself with have a big influence over your actions and beliefs, even politically
- ✓ People tend to gravitate toward others who share their same values and beliefs



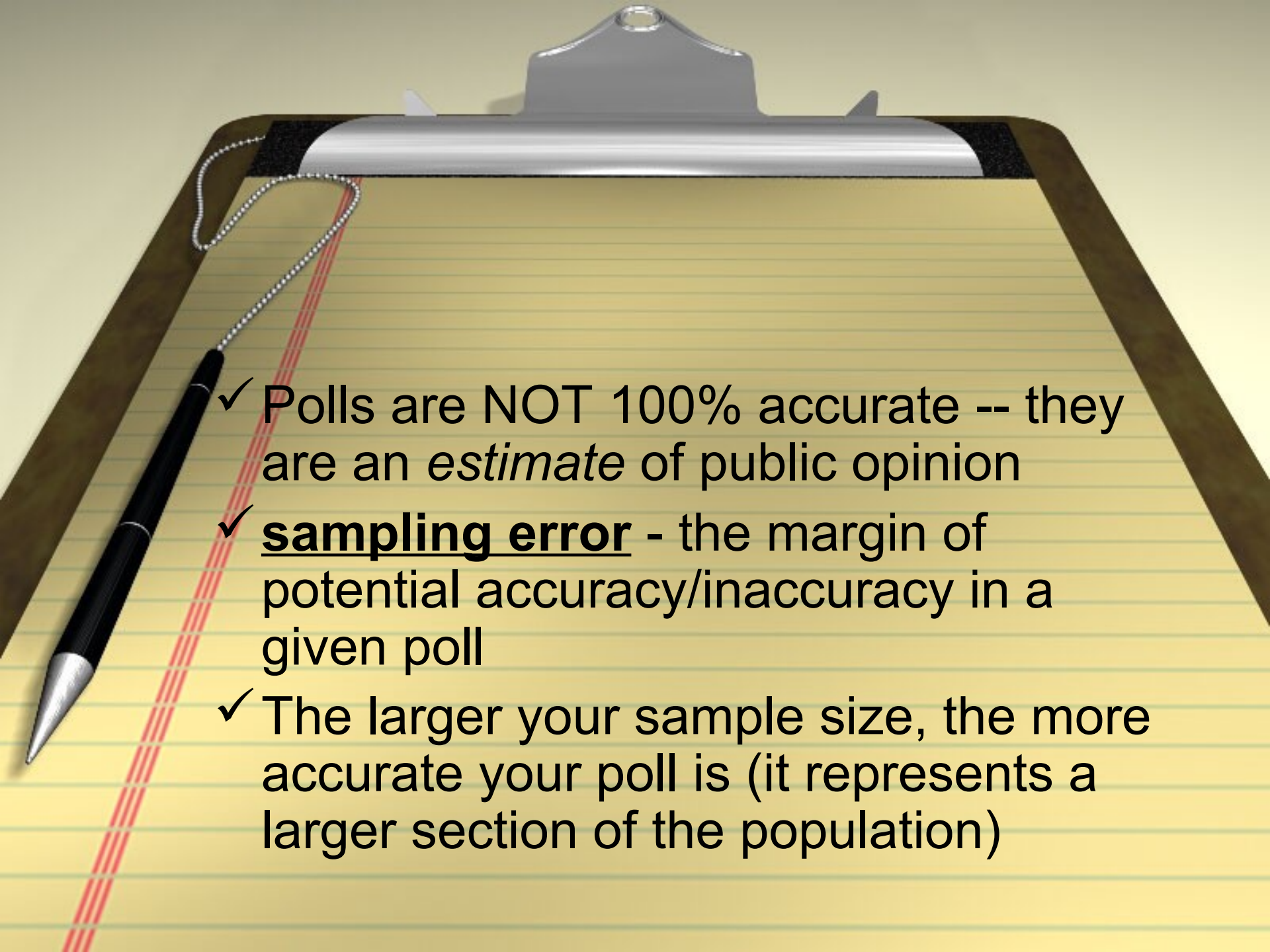
✓ 5.) Religion

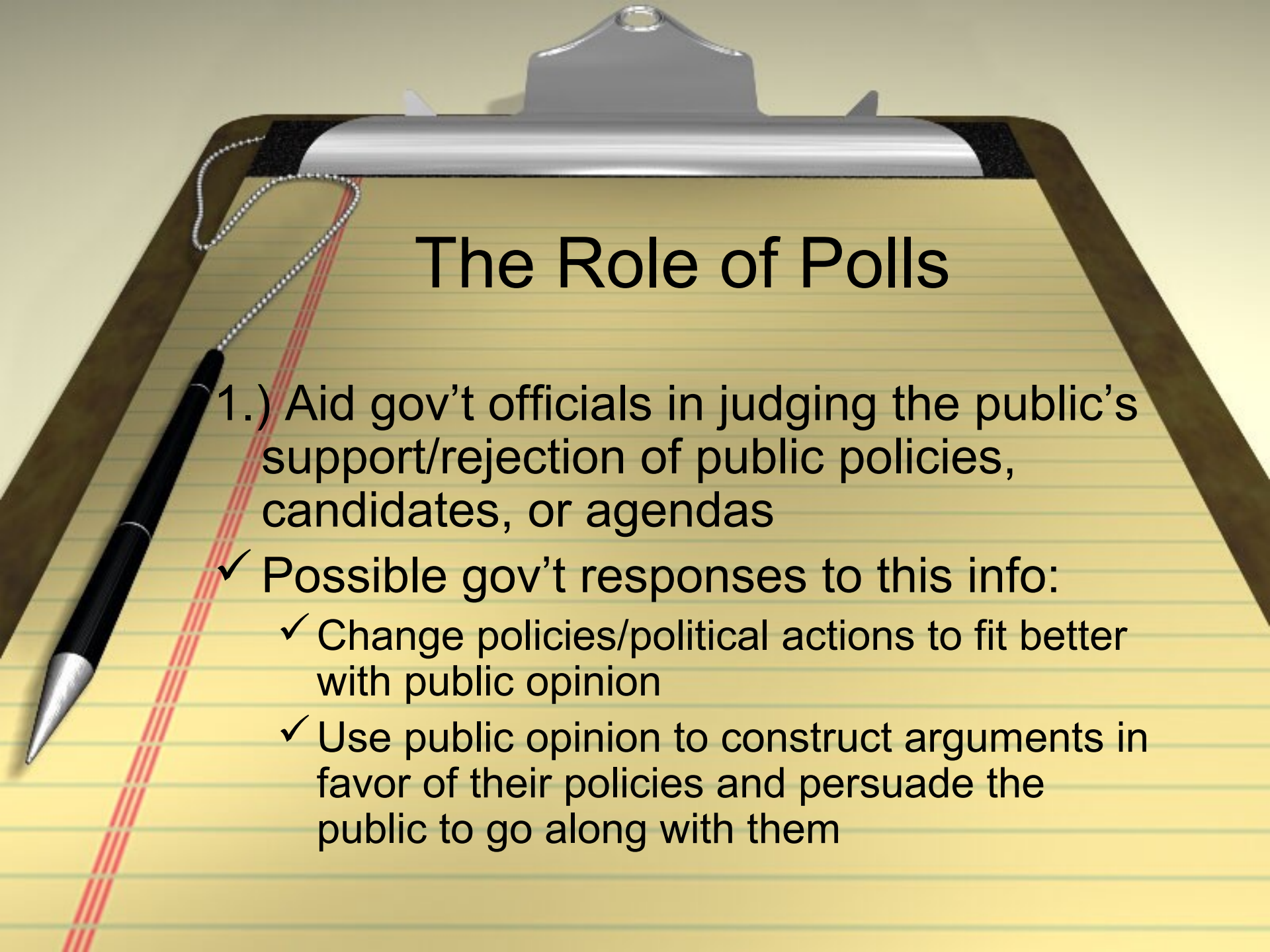
- ✓ Religious beliefs/morals often intersect with political issues and public policy
- ✓ People with strong personal beliefs will often want to align their political and religious beliefs



Measuring Public Opinion

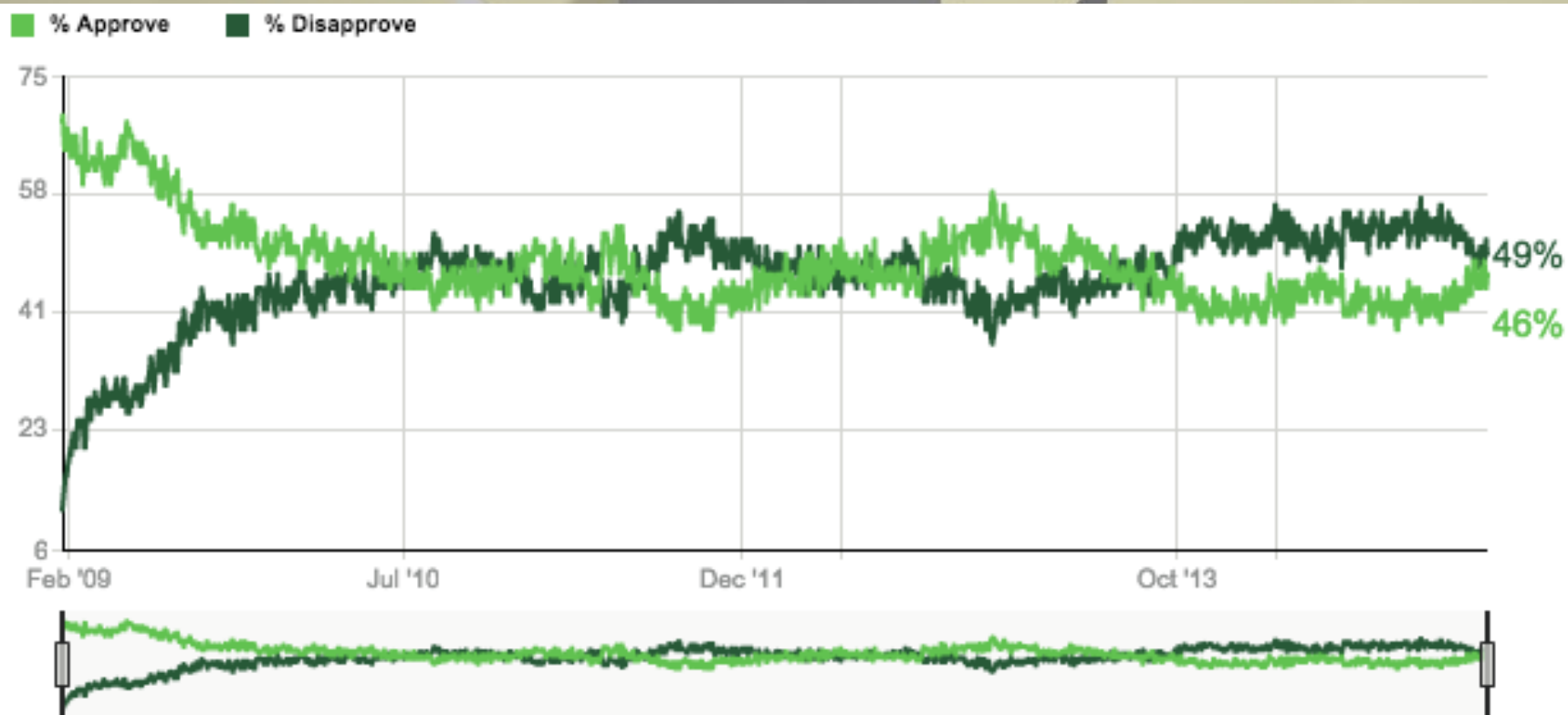
- ✓ Largely conducted by polling the American public on their views
- ✓ **sample** - the portion of the population being surveyed (represents the larger population)
- ✓ **random sampling** - everyone has the same opportunity of being surveyed as the next

- 
- ✓ Polls are NOT 100% accurate -- they are an *estimate* of public opinion
 - ✓ **sampling error** - the margin of potential accuracy/inaccuracy in a given poll
 - ✓ The larger your sample size, the more accurate your poll is (it represents a larger section of the population)



The Role of Polls

- 1.) Aid gov't officials in judging the public's support/rejection of public policies, candidates, or agendas
 - ✓ Possible gov't responses to this info:
 - ✓ Change policies/political actions to fit better with public opinion
 - ✓ Use public opinion to construct arguments in favor of their policies and persuade the public to go along with them



Gallup tracks daily the percentage of Americans who approve or disapprove of the job Barack Obama is doing as president. Daily results are based on telephone interviews with approximately 1,500 national adults; Margin of error is ± 3 percentage points.

Average Approval Ratings for U.S. Presidents by Year in Office, 1945-2015

Year in office	Average approval rating (%)	Number of presidents
First	64.4	12
Second	56.0	12
Third	54.9	12
Fourth	51.5	10
Fifth	51.1	8
Sixth	45.5	8
Seventh	46.5	5
Eighth	46.7	5

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Congressional Job Approval Ratings: 2001-2015

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

■ % Approve



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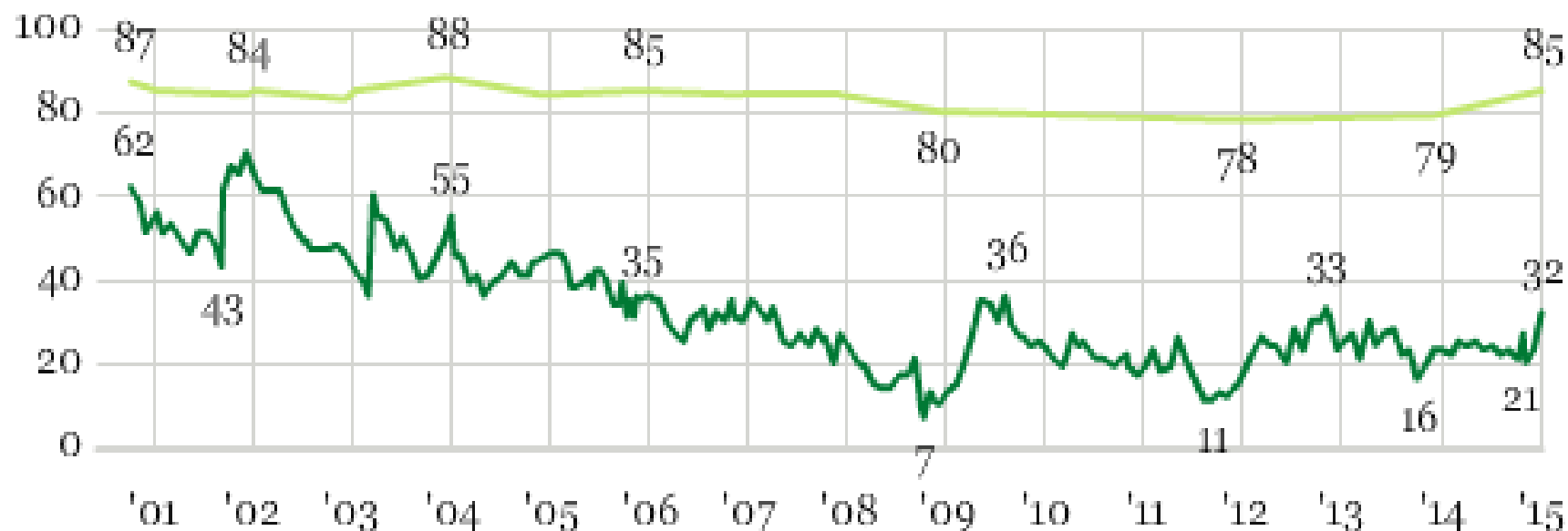
Personal Satisfaction vs. National Satisfaction

In general, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in your personal life at this time?

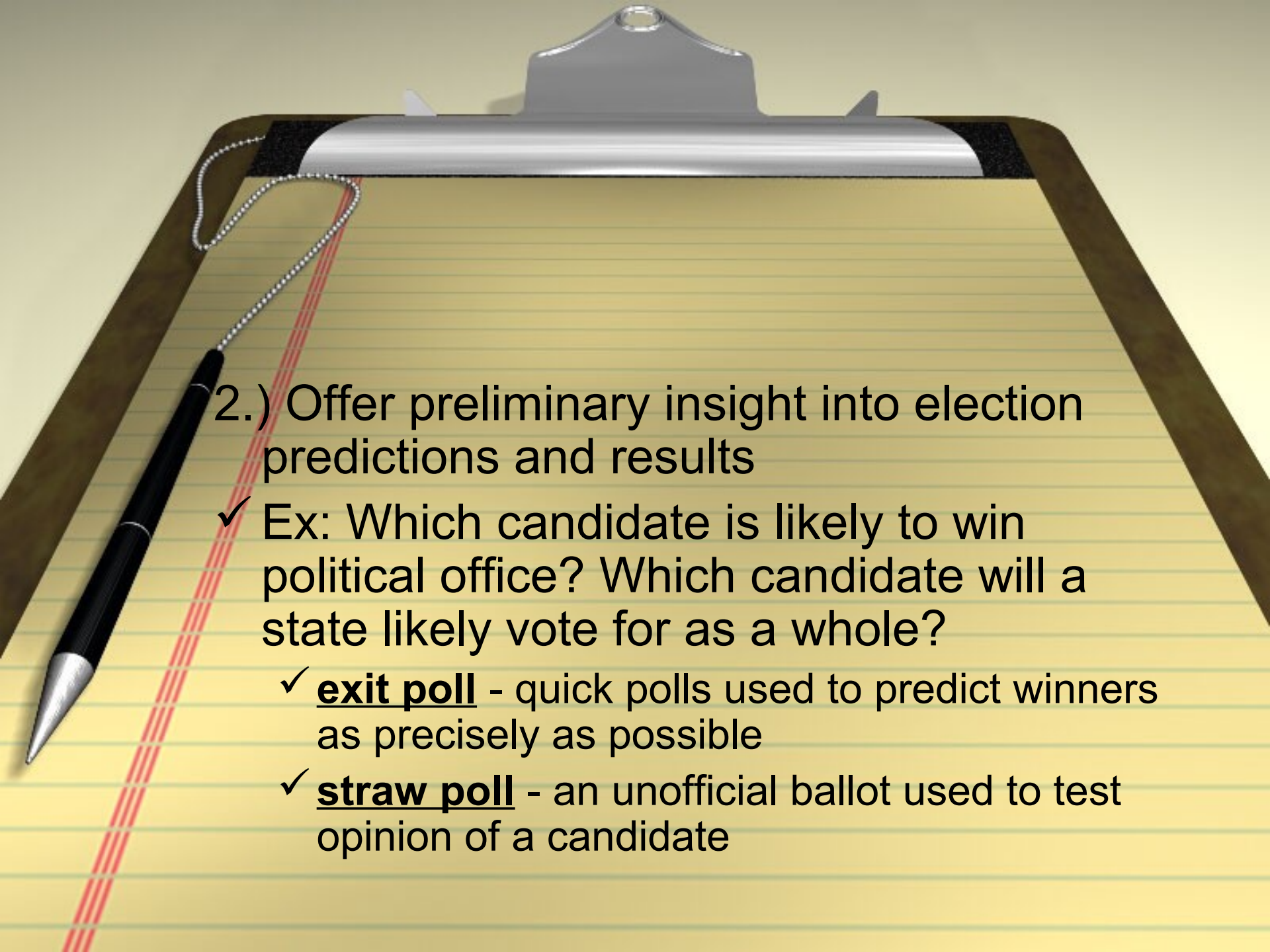
In general, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in the United States at this time?

■ % Satisfied with direction of U.S.

■ % Satisfied with personal life



Latest figures from Jan. 5-8, 2015



2.) Offer preliminary insight into election predictions and results

✓ Ex: Which candidate is likely to win political office? Which candidate will a state likely vote for as a whole?

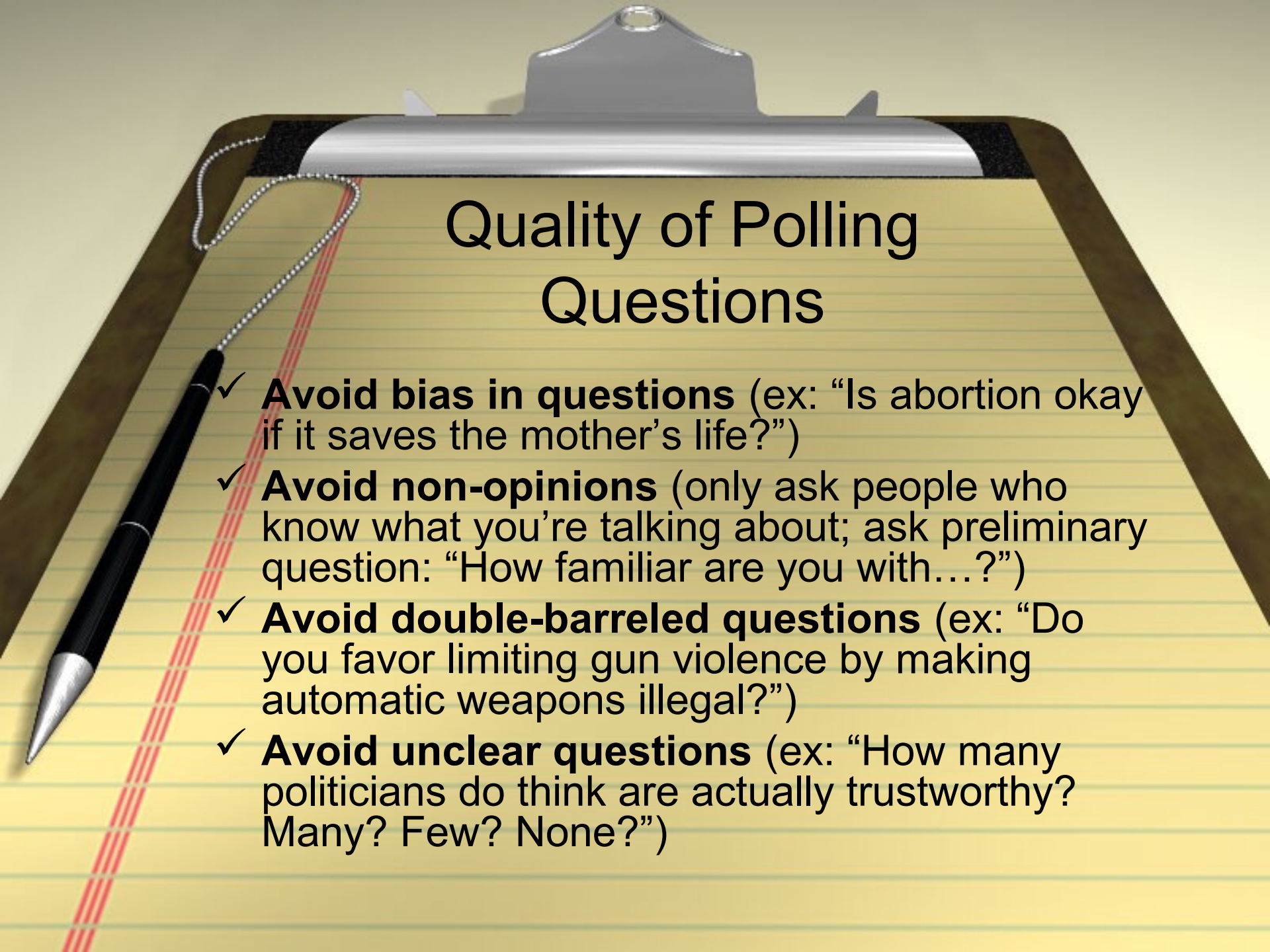
✓ **exit poll** - quick polls used to predict winners as precisely as possible

✓ **straw poll** - an unofficial ballot used to test opinion of a candidate



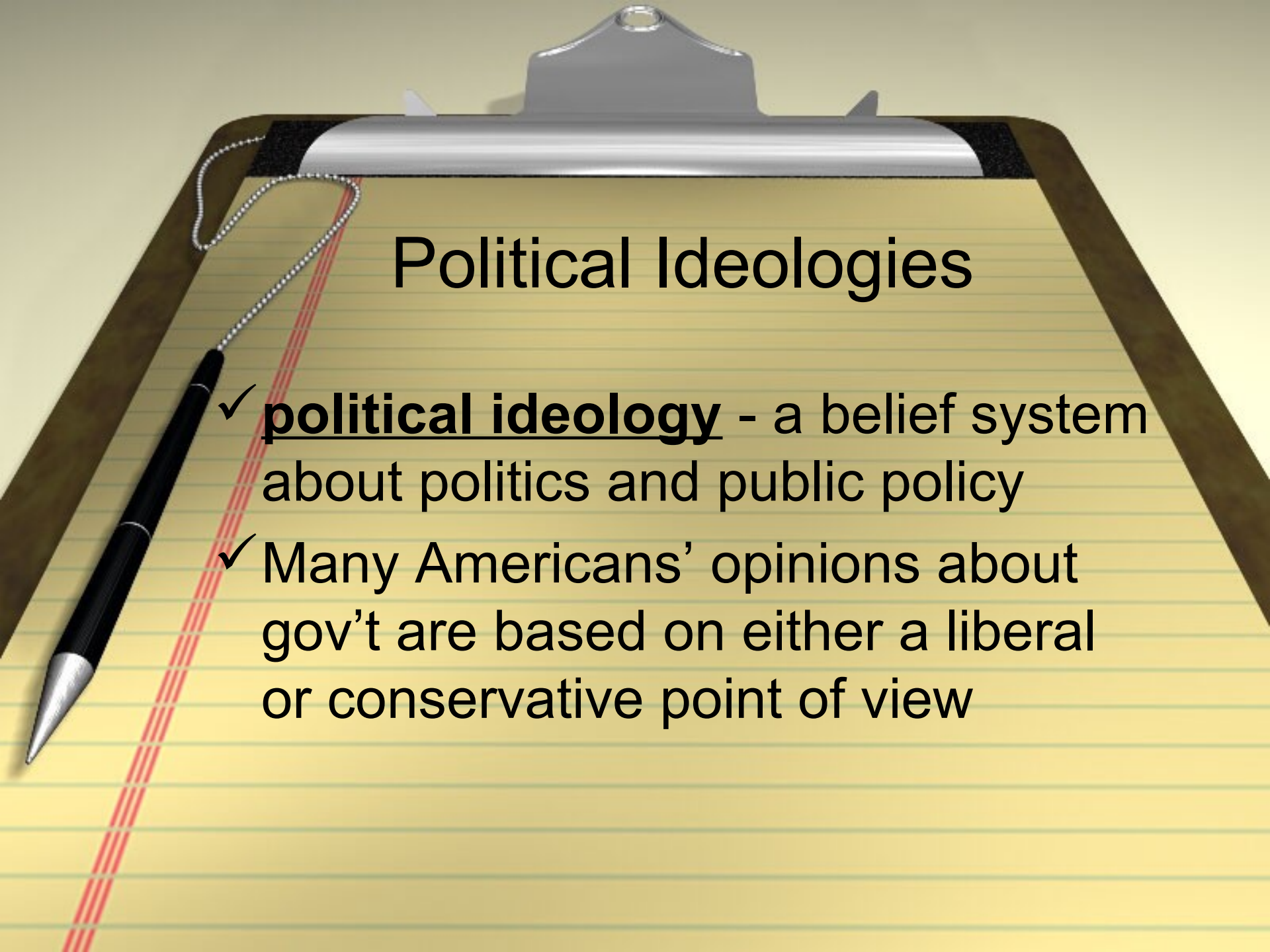
✓ 3.) Reveal the public's knowledge of government and politics

- ✓ the American public (especially the younger public) is largely ill-informed on current political events, gov't functions, and geographical locations
- ✓ Have grown increasingly distrustful of gov't to do what's best for them (question: is it cynicism or realism?)



Quality of Polling Questions

- ✓ **Avoid bias in questions** (ex: “Is abortion okay if it saves the mother’s life?”)
- ✓ **Avoid non-opinions** (only ask people who know what you’re talking about; ask preliminary question: “How familiar are you with...?”)
- ✓ **Avoid double-barreled questions** (ex: “Do you favor limiting gun violence by making automatic weapons illegal?”)
- ✓ **Avoid unclear questions** (ex: “How many politicians do think are actually trustworthy? Many? Few? None?”)



Political Ideologies

- ✓ **political ideology** - a belief system about politics and public policy
- ✓ Many Americans' opinions about gov't are based on either a liberal or conservative point of view



Liberalism

- ✓ The individual has freedom to make choices on their own
- ✓ Less gov't control of personal life
- ✓ More gov't regulation of economy/business
- ✓ Social justice - ensuring everyone is on an "equal playing field"
- ✓ More likely to support drastic changes in public policy (and to change with the times)



Liberals and Public Policy

- ✓ Spend less on the military; less military intervention on foreign soil
- ✓ Tax the rich more (they pay their “fair share” of tax burden)
- ✓ Favor an larger, active national gov’t
- ✓ Gov’t regulates big business to keep them from taking advantage of the public
- ✓ Pro-choice (abortion), pro-gun control
- ✓ Spend money on social programs for poor and disadvantaged; affirmative action for equality
- ✓ Gov’t bolsters economy and businesses when they fails



Conservatism

- ✓ An individual's choices affect society
- ✓ More gov't control of personal life
- ✓ Less gov't control of economy/business
- ✓ Individuals succeed through competition
(not everyone will be on the same level)
- ✓ Support slow, gradual policy changes
(less likely to change over time)



Conservatives and Public Policy

- ✓ Spend more on the military; favor military intervention on foreign soil
- ✓ Don't tax the rich more (they invest in entrepreneurship, businesses, and the economy)
- ✓ Favor a less-involved, smaller national gov't
- ✓ Gov't regulation of big business will stifle success
- ✓ Pro-life (abortion), anti-gun control
- ✓ Spend less money (do not favor expensive programs); anti-affirmative action ("reverse racism")
- ✓ Gov't needs to let economy and businesses fail; they will right themselves if left alone

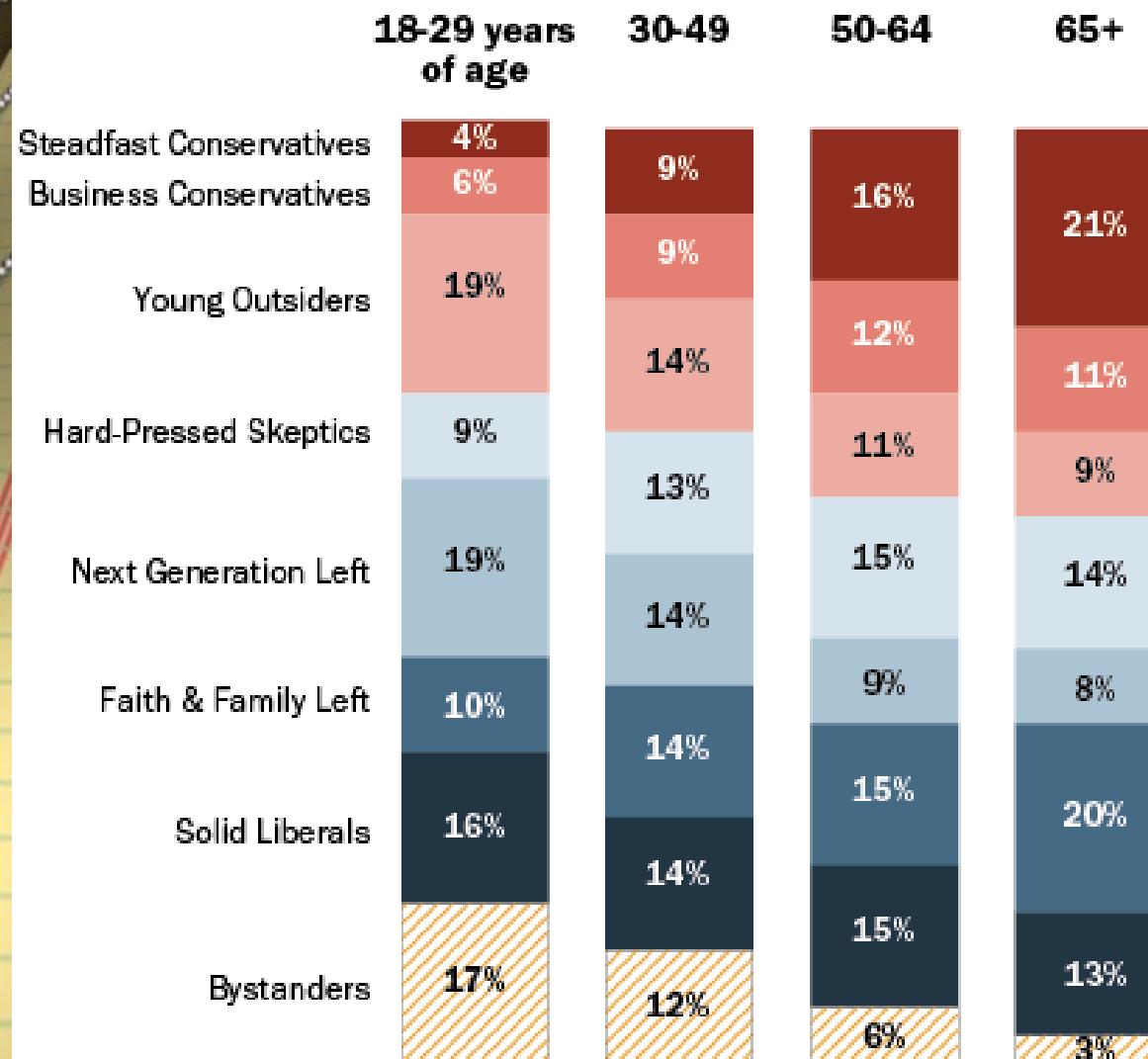


A Few Trends in Ideology

- ✓ Liberal base: the young, minority groups, women, incomes <\$50,000, Jewish/religiously unaffiliated...
- ✓ Conservative base: the older, White/Caucasian, men, incomes >\$50,000, Protestant Christians...
- ✓ **gender gap** - women are more liberal than men and will vote Democrat because they support social programs and not military spending

Political Typologies Shift with Age

Percent of Americans in each age bracket who are...

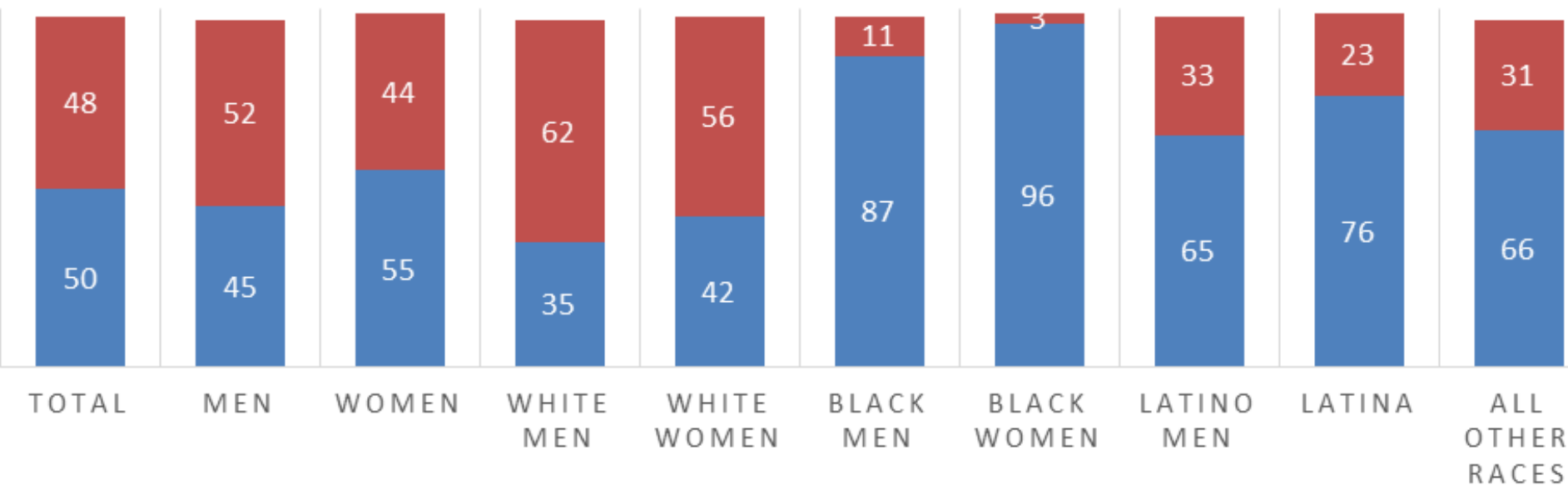


Source: 2014 Political Typology

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

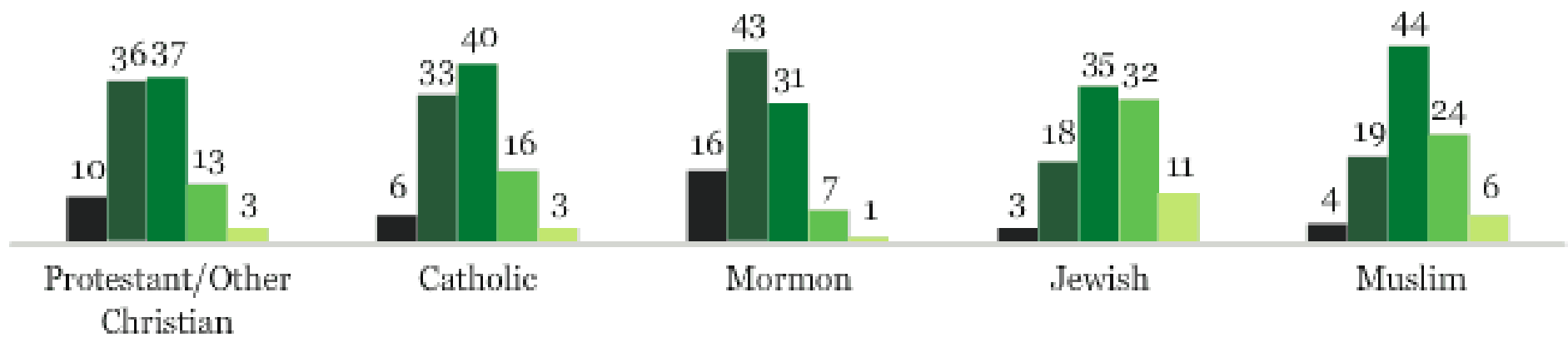
2012 ELECTION: EXIT POLL DATA BY GENDER, RACE/ETHNICITY

■ % DEM (Obama) ■ % GOP (Romney)




Ideology Among U.S. Religious Groups, Gallup Daily Tracking, 2009

■ % Very conservative ■ % Conservative ■ % Moderate ■ % Liberal
■ % Very liberal



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Political Participation


- ✓ **political participation** - the actions of citizens to influence public policymaking and politics
- ✓ Two main types: conventional and unconventional participation



Conventional Participation

✓ Includes:

- ✓ VOTING
- ✓ Contacting public/gov't officials
- ✓ Running for political office
- ✓ Campaigning for candidates
- ✓ Signing petitions



Unconventional Participation

✓ Includes:

- ✓ Participating in political **protests** - influencing policy through dramatic/unconventional tactics
- ✓ **civil disobedience** - conscious breaking of laws that are deemed unjust