

PUBLIC OPINION

Dr. Patrick F. Larue

University of Texas at Dallas

PRELIMINARIES

- Public Opinion: attitudes held by the citizens about political issues, events, leaders, and institutions
- Attitudes: Psychological constructs that involves a response to a stimulus in an individual's environment

Three types of attitudes:

- Affect
- Evaluation
- Cognition

PRELIMINARIES

- Public Opinion: attitudes held by the citizens about political issues, events, leaders, and institutions
- Attitudes: Psychological constructs that involves a response to a stimulus in an individual's environment

Three types of attitudes:

- Affect
- Evaluation
- Cognition

PRELIMINARIES

- Public Opinion: attitudes held by the citizens about political issues, events, leaders, and institutions
- Attitudes: Psychological constructs that involves a response to a stimulus in an individual's environment

Three types of attitudes:

- Affect
- Evaluation
- Cognition

AFFECT

Describes an emotional reaction to a stimulus:

- Likes and Dislikes
- Happiness and Sadness
- Joy and Anger

Example:

- On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being strongly dislike, and 10 being strongly like, tell me how you feel about Donald Trump as President of the United States?
- Which of the following words describes how you feel about Donald Trump as President? Happy, Angry, Sad, Thrilled, Scared, Really scared, Deathly afraid

EVALUATION

Evaluation involves an assessment about the (un)desirability about an object:

- (Un)Desirability
 - (In)Equity
 - (Un)Fair
 - (In)Justice
- Effectiveness
 - (In)Competance
 - (Un)Responsive
- Trends
 - Better or worse

EVALUATION

Evaluation involves an assessment about the (un)desirability about an object:

- (Un)Desirability
 - (In)Equity
 - (Un)Fair
 - (In)Justice
- Effectiveness
 - (In)Competance
 - (Un)Responsive
- Trends
 - Better or worse

EVALUATION

Evaluation involves an assessment about the (un)desirability about an object:

- (Un)Desirability
 - (In)Equity
 - (Un)Fair
 - (In)Justice
- Effectiveness
 - (In)Competance
 - (Un)Responsive
- Trends
 - Better or worse

EVALUATION

Evaluation involves an assessment about the (un)desirability about an object:

- (Un)Desirability
 - (In)Equity
 - (Un)Fair
 - (In)Justice
- Effectiveness
 - (In)Competance
 - (Un)Responsive
- Trends
 - Better or worse

EVALUATION

Evaluation involves an assessment about the (un)desirability about an object:

- (Un)Desirability
 - (In)Equity
 - (Un)Fair
 - (In)Justice
- Effectiveness
 - (In)Competance
 - (Un)Responsive
- Trends
 - Better or worse

EVALUATION

Evaluation involves an assessment about the (un)desirability about an object:

- (Un)Desirability
 - (In)Equity
 - (Un)Fair
 - (In)Justice
- Effectiveness
 - (In)Competance
 - (Un)Responsive
- Trends
 - Better or worse

EVALUATION

EXAMPLES

- Do you believe that the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) will be good for economic growth in the United States, bad, or something else?
 - Very good
 - Good
 - Neither good nor bad
 - Bad
 - Very bad
- Do you think that the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States would help racial tensions in the United States, hurt, or something else?
 - Significantly help
 - Slightly help
 - Neither help nor hurt
 - Slightly hurt
 - Significantly hurt

Cognition is about knowledge

- Awareness about an object
- Level of knowledge about an object (Quantity)
- Degree of knowledge about an object (Quality)

COGNITION

EXAMPLES

- What is Medicare?
 - A program run by the government to pay for elderly people's health care.
 - A program run by the government to pay for low income people's health care.
 - A private health insurance plan sold to anyone in the United States.
 - A private, non-profit organization that runs free health care clinics.
- Who is the current President of France?
 - Francois Hollande
 - Marine Le Pen
 - Nicholas Sarkozy
 - Dominique Strauss-Kahn

COGNITION

ISSUES

Importance of cognition:

- Difference between what people know, and what they *think* they know.
- Cognitive bias/Perceptual Screening

Creating opinion:

- Rational model: Cognition → Evaluation → Affect
- Irrational model: Affect → Evaluation → Cognition

COGNITION

ISSUES

Importance of cognition:

- Difference between what people know, and what they *think* they know.
- Cognitive bias/Perceptual Screening

Creating opinion:

- Rational model: Cognition → Evaluation → Affect
- Irrational model: Affect → Evaluation → Cognition

COGNITION

ISSUES

Importance of cognition:

- Difference between what people know, and what they *think* they know.
- Cognitive bias/Perceptual Screening

Creating opinion:

- Rational model: Cognition → Evaluation → Affect
- Irrational model: Affect → Evaluation → Cognition

COGNITION

ISSUES

Importance of cognition:

- Difference between what people know, and what they *think* they know.
- Cognitive bias/Perceptual Screening

Creating opinion:

- Rational model: Cognition → Evaluation → Affect
- Irrational model: Affect → Evaluation → Cognition

CHARACTERISTICS OF ATTITUDES

- **Direction** - whether the attitude is positive or negative
- Strength - the degree of conviction of an attitude
- Duration - the lifespan of an attitude
- Centrality - the extent to which an attitude is correlated to other attitudes

CHARACTERISTICS OF ATTITUDES

- Direction - whether the attitude is positive or negative
- Strength - the degree of conviction of an attitude
- Duration - the lifespan of an attitude
- Centrality - the extent to which an attitude is correlated to other attitudes

CHARACTERISTICS OF ATTITUDES

- Direction - whether the attitude is positive or negative
- Strength - the degree of conviction of an attitude
- Duration - the lifespan of an attitude
- Centrality - the extent to which an attitude is correlated to other attitudes

CHARACTERISTICS OF ATTITUDES

- Direction - whether the attitude is positive or negative
- Strength - the degree of conviction of an attitude
- Duration - the lifespan of an attitude
- Centrality - the extent to which an attitude is correlated to other attitudes

CHARACTERISTICS OF ATTITUDES

- Direction - whether the attitude is positive or negative
- Strength - the degree of conviction of an attitude
- Duration - the lifespan of an attitude
- Centrality - the extent to which an attitude is correlated to other attitudes

ORIGINS OF ATTITUDES

PROCESSES OF POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

- Political Socialization: the process of developing political attitudes
- Development occurs through four venues (agents):
 - Family
 - Schools/Education
 - Social circles
 - Political environment
- Each has a different effect

MODELS OF SOCIALIZATION

Two different models:

- Agent-based model:
 - Family (greatest importance)
 - Schools/Education
 - Social circles
 - Political environment (least importance)
- Life-cycle model:
 - Early childhood (0-7)
 - Late childhood (7-13)
 - Teenage/Adolescence (13-25)
 - Adulthood (25+)

MODELS OF SOCIALIZATION

Two different models:

- Agent-based model:
 - Family (greatest importance)
 - Schools/Education
 - Social circles
 - Political environment (least importance)
- Life-cycle model:
 - Early childhood (0-7)
 - Late childhood (7-13)
 - Teenage/Adolescence (13-25)
 - Adulthood (25+)

COLLECTING PUBLIC OPINION

- The Instrument

- The Afrobarometer
- ANES
- Pew

- Sampling

- Collecting all opinion is ideal
- But that is time/cost prohibitive
- So a sample is taken to collect opinion
- Survey sample: A smaller segment of the population used to determine aggregate opinion

COLLECTING PUBLIC OPINION

- The Instrument
 - The Afrobarometer
 - ANES
 - Pew
- Sampling
 - Collecting all opinion is ideal
 - But that is time/cost prohibitive
 - So a sample is taken to collect opinion
- Survey sample: A smaller segment of the population used to determine aggregate opinion
 - Probability sample
 - Sample size
 - Margin of error

MEASUREMENT

LEVELS OF MEASUREMENT

- Nominal level
 - Sex: Male or Female
 - Religion: Baptist, Catholic, Atheist, Buddhist, etc.
- Ordinal level
 - Agreement: Strongly agree, agree, neither, disagree, strongly disagree
 - Education: High school diploma, some college, Bachelors, Master's, Doctorate
- Interval level
 - Ideology: 1-100; 1 meaning very liberal, 100 meaning very conservative
 - Hours of media viewership: 0-3, 3-6, 6-10, 10+

MEASUREMENT

LEVELS OF MEASUREMENT

- Nominal level
 - Sex: Male or Female
 - Religion: Baptist, Catholic, Atheist, Buddhist, etc.
- Ordinal level
 - Agreement: Strongly agree, agree, neither, disagree, strongly disagree
 - Education: High school diploma, some college, Bachelors, Master's, Doctorate
- Interval level
 - Ideology: 1-100; 1 meaning very liberal, 100 meaning very conservative
 - Hours of media viewership: 0-3, 3-6, 6-10, 10+

MEASUREMENT

LEVELS OF MEASUREMENT

- Nominal level
 - Sex: Male or Female
 - Religion: Baptist, Catholic, Atheist, Buddhist, etc.
- Ordinal level
 - Agreement: Strongly agree, agree, neither, disagree, strongly disagree
 - Education: High school diploma, some college, Bachelors, Master's, Doctorate
- Interval level
 - Ideology: 1-100; 1 meaning very liberal, 100 meaning very conservative
 - Hours of media viewership: 0-3, 3-6, 6-10, 10+

MEASUREMENT

PROPERTIES OF MEASUREMENT

- **Reliability**
- Validity
- Precision

MEASUREMENT

RELIABILITY

- Would you like your salary to be higher?
- Which University is the best in DFW?

MEASUREMENT

RELIABILITY

- Would you like your salary to be higher?
- Which University is the best in DFW?

MEASUREMENT

RELIABILITY

- Should abortion be allowed in cases of rape, incest, or when the life of the mother is in danger?
- Do you believe that the media is telling you the truth about the stories they report?

MEASUREMENT

RELIABILITY

- Should abortion be allowed in cases of rape, incest, or when the life of the mother is in danger?
- Do you believe that the media is telling you the truth about the stories they report?

MEASUREMENT

PROPERTIES OF MEASUREMENT

- Reliability
- **Validity**
- Precision

MEASUREMENT

VALIDITY

What is your religious preference?

- Protestant
- Roman Catholic
- Jewish
- Other
- None

MEASUREMENT

VALIDITY

- What is your religious preference?
- Do you ever attend religious services, apart from occasional weddings, baptisms, and funerals?
- If no, regardless of whether or not you attend religious services, do you ever think of yourself as belonging to a particular religious denomination?
- If yes to either, then which religious denomination?

MEASUREMENT

VALIDITY

- What is your religious preference?
- Do you ever attend religious services, apart from occasional weddings, baptisms, and funerals?
- If no, regardless of whether or not you attend religious services, do you ever think of yourself as belonging to a particular religious denomination?
- If yes to either, then which religious denomination?

MEASUREMENT

VALIDITY

- What is your religious preference?
- Do you ever attend religious services, apart from occasional weddings, baptisms, and funerals?
- If no, regardless of whether or not you attend religious services, do you ever think of yourself as belonging to a particular religious denomination?
- If yes to either, then which religious denomination?

MEASUREMENT

VALIDITY

- What is your religious preference?
- Do you ever attend religious services, apart from occasional weddings, baptisms, and funerals?
- If no, regardless of whether or not you attend religious services, do you ever think of yourself as belonging to a particular religious denomination?
- If yes to either, then which religious denomination?

MEASUREMENT

PROPERTIES OF MEASUREMENT

- Reliability
- Validity
- **Precision**

MEASUREMENT

PRECISION

- On a scale of 1-100, with 1 meaning strongly disagree, and 100 meaning strongly agree, please tell me how much you support Donald Trump's plan to build a wall along the US/Mexico border.
- We would like to know roughly your income. Please tell me, do you have money, or do you not have money?

PUBLIC OPINION EFFECTS

PRELIMINARIES

Central tenet of defining democracy is elections

- This means that the policy preferences of citizens are reflected in the policies adopted by the government
- This is known as “policy responsiveness”

But, how does this mechanism work?

PUBLIC OPINION EFFECTS

THE ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL

- Political leaders create policies that reflect public opinion because elections are utilized as a tool of the public to remove them in the future.
- This requires that:
 - The public is knowledgeable of what their representatives are doing
 - The public is willing to remove their representatives from office in elections

PUBLIC OPINION EFFECTS

THE ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL

Are we willing to remove officials from office?

- Political leaders create policies that reflect public opinion because elections are utilized as a tool of the public to remove them in the future.
- This requires that:
 - The public is knowledgeable of what their representatives are doing
 - The public is willing to remove their representatives from office in elections

PUBLIC OPINION EFFECTS

THE SALIENCE MODEL

So if we are willing to challenge, and challenge well, then Congress should be responsive all the time, right?

- Responsiveness depends on issue salience
- So hypothetically:
 - As salience increases, then responsiveness increases
 - As salience decreases, then responsiveness decreases

Does issue salience matter?

PUBLIC OPINION EFFECTS

THE SALIENCE MODEL

So if we are willing to challenge, and challenge well, then Congress should be responsive all the time, right?

- Responsiveness depends on issue salience
- So hypothetically:
 - As salience increases, then responsiveness increases
 - As salience decreases, then responsiveness decreases

Does issue salience matter?