

How do people form opinions?

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Outline

- Last week we talked about opinion in an abstract sense
- This week we review that briefly
- Then we'll talk about opinion in a concrete, psychological way

Review of Last Week

- “Public opinion” has many meanings
 - Aggregation
 - Majoritarian
 - Discursive/Consensual
 - Reification

Review of Last Week

- Democracy requires equal citizen participation
- Citizens are the best judge of their own interests (?)
- Competence is required for the right to participate

Review of Last Week

- Rational government depends on:
 - Pursuit of self-interest
 - Well-specified preferences

Review of Last Week

- Four models of representation
 - Promissory
 - Anticipatory
 - Gyroscopic
 - Surrogate

Definitions

- Attitude
- Preference
- Opinion?

Definitions

- Attitude
- Preference
- Opinion?
- Do citizens have attitudes or preferences?

Zaller's Model

- Receive
- Resist
- Accept
- Sample

Processing Models

- Memory-based (MB) Processing
- Online (OL) Processing

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- Online (OL) Processing
- Are MB and OL compatible?

Processing Models

- Memory-based (MB) Processing
- Online (OL) Processing
- Are MB and OL compatible?
- Which seems more reasonable?

Implications of Processing Models

- Opinion stability
- Susceptibility to influence
- Answering survey questions

Complications

- What about affect?

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- Explicit and implicit attitudes

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- Do people have “true” attitudes?

Complications

- What about affect?
- Explicit and implicit attitudes
- Do people have “true” attitudes?
- Who appears knowledgeable?

Attitudes

- Structure
- Function
- Strength

Attitude Structure

- Intra-attitudinal structure
 - Tripartite model
 - Expectancy Value Model
 - Belief Systems
 - OL/MB differences?
- Inter-attitudinal structure
 - More on this next week

Attitude Function

- Object appraisal
- Others?
 - Knowledge/Frame of reference
 - Instrumental/utilitarian
 - Symbolic

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 - Social adjustment
 - Ego defense

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 - Ego defense
- Most of these are just “expressive”

Attitude Strength

- Types
 - Experiential (meta-attitudinal)
 - Operative
 - Structural
- Impacts
 - Stability
 - Impact

Forms of Attitude Strength

- Accessibility
- Cognitive structure
- Ambivalence
- Importance
- Certainty
- Extremity?

Information

- Information

- Heuristics

Information

- Information
 - Do citizens need information to form opinions?
 - Does Dahl's idea of competence require information?
- Heuristics

Information

- Information
 - Do citizens need information to form opinions?
 - Does Dahl's idea of competence require information?
- Heuristics
 - Do heuristics work in place of information?

