

Chapter 34

The Psychological Underpinnings of Political Behavior

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If social psychology's goal is to understand how people interact with and influence one another, the domain of politics offers a wonderful context in which to develop and test basic theory. In fact, a focus on politics has been central to social psychology since its birth. Kurt Lewin, Stanley Milgram, Solomon Asch, and many of our field's founders were motivated by the experience of Nazi Germany and sought to understand how authority figures and tendencies to conform to social norms could produce barbaric behavior (see Allport, 1985). Allport (1954) illuminated the nature of racial prejudice. Zimbardo's research clarified how assigning people to roles in a prison system could elicit shocking behaviors from them (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973). Kelman (1982, 1983) and Ross (Hackley, Bazerman, Ross, & Shapiro, 2005) have shed light on international conflict. Countless studies of attitude change have used persuasive messages on political issues, illuminating the processes that induce variation in such attitudes over time. In these and other ways, the study of thinking about political matters and of the causes of political actions has been at the center of our discipline for decades.

Many scholars would argue that these studies of social relations were not studies about politics that were meant to illuminate the causes and consequences of political cognition and behavior. Instead, these observers would say, those studies *used* politics as a convenient device for basic research. Asch was not interested in politics, they would say; he was interested in conformity. Milgram was not interested in violence; he was interested in obedience. Zimbardo was not interested in prisons; he was interested in social roles.

In fact, however, the research of these pioneers illuminated important aspects of how political cognition and action unfold. This was probably a matter of great pride for Asch, Milgram, and Zimbardo. When asked why he chose a career in psychology, Robert Zajonc said it was to understand the human mind in ways that can help to prevent future wars (Thorpe, 2005). Indeed, research has

documented a great deal about the dynamics of political cognition and action, even if not yet providing tools to assure world peace.

This chapter tells the story of some of this research. Not addressed are topics of obvious relevance that chapters on politics in earlier editions of this Handbook have reviewed (Kinder, 1998; Kinder & Sears, 1985; Tetlock, 1998) and topics dealt with in other chapters in this edition of the Handbook (e.g., Jost & Kay, this volume; Yzerbyt & Demoulin, this volume). This chapter's focus is instead on the citizens of democratic nations, and this focus brushes off the table many fascinating political topics well worth the attention of social psychologists, including relations between governments, citizen life in nondemocratic nations, and more. In focusing on the domestic political affairs of Americans, the chapter seeks to illuminate the value of the study of politics for social psychology and to bring into focus many lessons learned about the basics of human nature and social relations as revealed through the careful study of this domain.

The next sections offer an overview of the field of political psychology and of the philosophical issue that guides this selective review of the literature: the requirements that citizens of a democracy may need to meet for the nation to thrive. The chapter then describes research findings on the determinants of people's decisions about whether to vote or not, people's decisions about which candidate to vote for, people's decisions about when to express their political preferences via other behaviors, and much more, always asking whether the empirical evidence suggests worry about the future of democracies or confidence in their longevity.

OVERVIEW OF POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Political psychology is a thriving field of social scientific inquiry in its quest to understand the cognitive and social

underpinnings and consequences of behaviors that entail the exercise of social power and the governance of collectives of people. Much political psychology explains political phenomena by taking a social-psychological perspective. Scholars could instead adopt an economic perspective, for example, attributing significant political events to economic forces that are typically easily observable (e.g., Alt & Chrystal, 1983). In contrast, political psychologists place emphasis on unobservable psychological processes unfolding in the minds of political actors and on the nature of social interaction among them.

In practice, two somewhat different forms of political psychology exist (see Krosnick, 2002). Some of this work attempts to understand political phenomena by applying theories that have already been developed through research done in psychological laboratories. Findings regarding mediation and moderation of real-world effects have often led to extensions and revisions of the inspiring psychological theories. Other political psychology research involves the development of completely new theory to provide psychological accounts of political phenomena, often without building on existing psychological research. The empirical testing and refinement of these new theories also contributes to basic understanding of how the mind works and how social interaction takes place.

A series of handbook publications document the vitality and longevity of the field. The first *Handbook of Political Psychology* was published in 1973 (edited by Jeanne Knutson), and new volumes have been published regularly since then (Borgida, Federico, & Sullivan, 2009; Hermann, 1986; Iyengar & McGuire, 1993; Monroe, 2002; Sears, Huddy, & Jervis, 2003). Two books of collected key readings in the field have been published (Jost & Sidanius, 2004; Kressel, 1993). The journal *Political Psychology* has been in print since 1979. Articles on political psychology often appear in the top journals of social psychology and political science. Courses on political psychology are routinely offered at colleges and universities around the world. Since 1978, the International Society of Political Psychology (ISPP) has been the field's professional association, sponsoring annual conferences and coordinating publication, outreach, and educational opportunities. Since 1991, the Summer Institute in Political Psychology has trained almost 1,000 young scholars and professionals in the field.

REQUIREMENTS OF DEMOCRACY

A guiding principal of much work in political psychology is the notion that for a democratic nation to survive and

thrive, its government must be "by the people and for the people." Put simply, government should do what its citizens want done. One mechanism to encourage this outcome is for citizens to communicate their desires to government. If government knows what actions its population supports and what actions it opposes, policy can be designed accordingly, to be faithful to the public's will.

For such communication to occur and to be helpful, three conditions must be met: (1) citizens must have real attitudes toward government policy options; (2) those attitudes must be expressed behaviorally; and (3) those attitudes must be wise. Such behavioral expression can occur in many ways. One is voting in elections. However, voting for a particular candidate for president of the United States does not clearly and precisely indicate support or opposition for particular government actions. Voting is at best a blunt instrument with which to direct government policy making in a crude way. To the extent that candidates differ in their likely policy pursuits, voting for one over others can increase the likelihood that government will pursue particular policy directions. But a vote for one candidate does not, in itself, clearly communicate which policies a voter wishes to see enacted.

A second blunt mechanism of sending signals to government is the expression of approval or disapproval of political actors in national surveys. The news media routinely conduct surveys of representative samples of Americans and ask for performance appraisals of the president and of the U.S. Congress, as well as of governors, senators, and other legislators. If the public gives a thumbs up, this can be taken as endorsement of a politician's policy pursuits and thereby perpetuate them, and a thumbs down can similarly send a message requesting redirection.

One alternative approach that can be much more targeted and clear is participation in grassroots activism. A citizen can write a letter directly to the president or to a Congressional representative or can telephone the representative's office to express a preference. A citizen can write a letter to the editor of a newspaper or magazine, which may ultimately appear in print. Or a citizen can post a message on an Internet blog.

Another approach is to support the activities of lobbying organizations, who send such messages on behalf of many citizens. The National Rifle Association, Greenpeace, The American Civil Liberties Union, and numerous other such organizations exist importantly to pressure government to take particular actions on specific policy issues. Citizens who support these organizations by giving money to them and by participating in organized letter-writing campaigns, marches on the Capital steps, and get-out-the-vote efforts facilitate the expression of specific policy desires.

Lastly, citizens can send messages by answering policy-focused questions in national surveys that are widely publicized by the news media. These surveys offer opportunities to express positive or negative attitudes, and government officials are aware of such measurements of public opinion and often commission their own such measurements, so surveys constitute a pipeline for transferring public desires to government.

Much of the research done in political psychology informs an understanding of these processes. To what extent and under what circumstances do citizens have genuine attitudes toward government policy options? To what extent and under what circumstances are those attitudes well informed? To what extent and under what circumstances do citizens express their policy preferences behaviorally? This chapter reviews some of this evidence and considers its implications for the future of democratic governments.

Reconsidering Americans' Competence

Many analysts of the psychology of mass politics have made the observation that most Americans know little or nothing about national and international politics (e.g., Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1993, 1996; Kinder & Sears, 1985). Any such claim about the engagement and competence of democratic citizens has tremendously important implications for the health and longevity of a nation. If democratic government is to be by the people and for the people, the hands of a nation's citizens must be on the country's steering wheel. If this is true, and yet if most citizens are looking somewhere other than the road ahead most of the time while driving, the chances of disaster are far from minimal.

Are most Americans uninformed about most matters facing their government? Certainly, a great deal of empirical evidence has been put forth for decades to support this claim. Since the earliest scientific surveys of the American public, researchers asked quiz questions and have given respondents poor grades.

According to one review of many national surveys, almost all respondents were familiar with the president, and majorities recognized the names of some senators, but fewer than 50% of citizens recognized many other office holders and candidates (Kinder & Sears, 1985). Likewise, according to another review of survey results (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1993), large majorities of respondents knew the name of the current vice president and their governor and of various well-publicized leaders of foreign countries, and majorities knew the party affiliation of the president, knew which party had the most seats in the House of Representatives, and knew whether the Republican party

was more conservative than the Democratic party. But minorities were familiar with various prominent U.S. senators and Congressional representatives or recognized the names of other foreign leaders.

In terms of the process of government, a large majority knew how many terms a person could be elected president of the United States, but minorities knew how long a senator's term in office lasts, who nominates federal judges, and the percent of Congressional votes that are needed to override a presidential veto (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1993).

On specific policy issues, numerous surveys have documented rampant lack of knowledge. For example, although huge majorities of national survey respondents knew who would pay for the savings and loan bailout in 1990, knew that oil was in short supply in 1974, knew what happened at Three Mile Island in 1974, and knew in 1985 that the federal budget deficit had increased since 1981, small minorities could explain in 1986 what *Roe v. Wade* was about, knew the percent of poor people who were children, knew in 1980 what acid rain is, or knew in 1979 what thalidomide is (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996).

However, important new developments in political psychology raise questions about whether this sort of evidence convincingly documented a pervasive lack of essential knowledge among American citizens. To make claims about how knowledgeable Americans are about political matters, one would ideally first specify a universe of knowledge that people "should" possess to be competent at directing a nation. Then, one would randomly select a sample of pieces of information from that corpus and build questions to tap whether members of a representative sample of Americans possess each sampled bit.

This has never been done. Numerous surveys of representative samples of Americans have asked quiz questions to gauge possession of facts. However, no scholarly effort has begun by defining a universe of knowledge that those questions supposedly represent, and scholars have very rarely offered rationales for why they chose the question topics they did rather than others instead.

No doubt, it would be possible to design a test that most Americans would fail, asking about such obscure matters as the history of economic policy making in Peru. Likewise, it would be possible to design a test that most Americans would pass, asking who is currently serving as president of the United States, the name of the building in which the president usually sleeps when in Washington, D.C., and the month and day on which terrorists flew airplanes into the World Trade Center. Before claims are made about how knowledgeable Americans are about politics, this arbitrary quality of testing must be overcome. But to date,

it has not. Any test of political knowledge can reveal how many people possess the specific facts sought by the test items, but generalizing from those items to the universe of knowledge seems tenuous.

Even if past survey questions assessing public knowledge are assumed to have addressed a representative sample of topics, the evidence thus produced cannot be trusted, because of the way the questions were constructed and administered. Two types of questions have been asked in surveys: closed-ended and open-ended. In closed-ended questions, respondents have usually been asked to choose from one of various offered response options, as in this example (see <http://www.americancivilliteracy.org/resources/quiz.aspx>):

Which of the following are the inalienable rights referred to in the Declaration of Independence?

- A. life, liberty, and property
- B. honor, liberty, and peace
- C. liberty, health, and community
- D. life, respect, and equal protection
- E. life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness

Educational testing research documents that performance on such items hinges not only on the respondent's familiarity with the question's subject matter but on how difficult the "distractor" response options are (e.g., Kline, 1986). For anyone who majored in American Politics in college, reading options A–D in this context might induce a smile. The distractors are all structurally similar to the right answer (naming three "rights"), and they are all plausible. But for people who have heard about the Declaration of Independence only very occasionally in school and have never read it, this might be a much tougher question.

What if the question were asked this way instead:

Which of the following are the inalienable rights referred to in the Declaration of Independence?

- A. to own a boat, to laugh occasionally, and to have a good meal daily
- B. to have a pet, to sleep in a bed every night, and to breathe air daily
- C. to live, to learn, and to love
- D. to vacation in a country away from home, to chop vegetables with a knife, and to get regular haircuts
- E. life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness

This question might bring smiles to the faces of all survey respondents, or worse, might lead respondents to wonder about the researchers' competence or seriousness

or both. Yet answers to such a question would also most likely indicate that the vast majority of Americans possess this piece of knowledge.

Pointing out such a basic element of test theory (that item difficulty hinges on the difficulty of the foils in a closed-ended question) might seem silly. But no empirical effort justifies the selection of distractors used in political knowledge quizzes. Most likely, no set of distractors is "optimal"—difficult distractors will yield poorer performance than easy distractors. Thus, closed-ended questions cannot be used to assess proportions of people who do or do not know a particular fact sufficiently well to receive credit for it.

One way to circumvent this challenge is to ask open-ended questions instead, thus avoiding the need to specify any answer choices. Numerous national surveys for decades have included such questions and have suggested that most Americans lack political knowledge. For example, the American National Election Studies (ANES) has asked questions like this:

Now we have a set of questions concerning various public figures. We want to see how much information about them gets out to the public from television, newspapers and the like . . . William Rehnquist—What job or political office does he NOW hold?

Recently, new revelations have cast doubt on findings produced using such questions. A new investigation revealed that using open-ended answers to decide whether a respondent has possession of a piece of information is tricky business—a subjective judgment call in many cases (Gibson & Caldeira, 2009). Some respondents clearly give what sounds like a correct answer (e.g., "He is Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court"), and others clearly give an incorrect answer (e.g., "He is CEO of General Electric"), but many people give answers that are not exactly correct but would be considered by many observers to be close enough to count, such as:

- Supreme Court justice. The main one.
- He's the senior judge on the Supreme Court.
- He is the Supreme Court justice in charge.
- He's the head of the Supreme Court.

Yet, the ANES has coded these sorts of answers as incorrect. Furthermore, answers that are in the ballpark but were not right on the money (e.g., "He's a judge") were coded as incorrect (Krosnick & Lupia, 2008). This approach to coding has no doubt contributed to a misleading portrait of Americans as having less information about politics than they really possess.

That's not all. The measurement of political knowledge has been misleading because of its reliance on verbal questions. Almost all of the survey questions assessing knowledge of government officials have provided their names and asked respondents to indicate their job titles or have provided job titles and asked for names. However, people are sometimes significantly better able to identify a person when shown a photograph instead of the person's name, and sometimes, people are significantly better able to identify a person using a name rather than a photo (Prior, 2009a).

Furthermore, whereas performance on the verbal questions was better among more educated people—people more interested in politics, Whites, and males—performance on questions using photos was unrelated to education, gender, and race, and political interest was more weakly related to questions using photos than questions using names (Prior, 2009a). Also, people who prefer visual media (such as television) for learning political information performed better on quiz questions offering pictures and words than did people who prefer only verbal media (such as newspapers), whereas performance on verbal questions did not vary depending on medium preference (Prior, 2009b). Thus, how knowledge is measured affects conclusions about who possesses it, but no particular measurement method (e.g., verbal or visual or verbal plus visual) is obviously superior to others.

Another problem with knowledge measurement results from the use of interviewers, who have administered the most frequently studied knowledge questions in respondents' homes. In such situations, researchers hope that characteristics of the interviewer will not influence respondents' answers to questions. But unfortunately, this is not the case for attitude measurement (e.g., Anderson, Silver, & Abramson, 1988a, b; Davis, 1997), nor is it true for measurement of political knowledge. African American respondents perform significantly better on political knowledge quizzes when interviewed by an African American interviewer than when interviewed by a White interviewer, although race of interviewer seems not to influence the performance of White respondents (Davis & Silver, 2003). Davis and Silver (2003) attributed the effect of interviewer race on test performance by African Americans to stereotype threat (Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999), though framing the quiz as a test or "not a test of any kind" did not alter the impact of interviewer race.

Yet another problem in measurement of knowledge involves handling "don't know" responses. Like most surveys, the ANES surveys have routinely instructed their interviewers to allow respondents to volunteer that they do not know the answer to a quiz question about political knowledge and to record that. Interviewers could instead

have encouraged respondents to answer under those circumstances. When this is done, the number of respondents who answer accurately increases notably, more than would be expected by chance alone (Mondak & Davis, 2001; see also Barabas, 2002). Thus, some respondents who were in fact knowledgeable did not reveal it in most past surveys.

Another inherently psychological challenge to knowledge assessments is limited motivation during survey interviews. Some respondents who think and talk often about politics may find it easy to answer knowledge quiz questions correctly with little effort. But for other respondents, answering a quiz question correctly requires some cognitive work, to search their long-term memories and evaluate the diagnosticity of the information they retrieve. Furthermore, paying money to respondents for each correct answer they gave significantly increases the proportion of correct answers given—gigantically among people who expressed a moderate interest in politics and not at all among people who were highly interested in politics (for whom correct answering was presumably effortless) and among people with no interest in politics (who presumably could not offer a correct answer no matter how much effort they devoted to the task) (Prior & Lupia, 2008).

Another study illuminated people's capacity to become informed by giving some survey respondents 24 hours before they had to answer quiz questions, while a control group was asked to answer right away. Providing the extra time caused a substantial increase in the proportion of correct answers given by people with moderate political interest (Prior & Lupia, 2008). Thus, people can manifest higher levels of knowledge if given the opportunity to become better informed. When people need to become informed to make an important political decision, they can do so by gathering new information. So surveys should perhaps measure not what people know today but what they can know tomorrow.

The most fundamental criticism of research chastising Americans for their apparent lack of political knowledge asks whether it really matters that citizens lack knowledge. Some scholars have argued that a useful political knowledge test should tap a person's understanding of "what government is and does" (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1993, p. 1182), as well as who political leaders are and what political parties stand for. But according to our account of the requirements of an effective democracy, focus should not be on knowing the name of the vice president or which political party controls the Congress or how many years a senator's term in office lasts or how a filibuster works. Rather, citizens simply need to know what they want government to do and to send signals to that effect.

Such signals are easy to send by attending a rally or making a contribution to a lobbying group, even without knowing anything about the people running government or the process by which they govern. Likewise, signals can be sent by answering survey questions asking for specific opinions on policy issues, regardless of broad knowledge about what government is and does. To send a signal via voting for president, people might simply need to know whether they are satisfied with current government policy (e.g., “Is abortion legal now, and is that the way I want the law to be?”) and know the political party of the incumbent. Satisfaction would lead to voting for the incumbent’s party’s candidate, and dissatisfaction would lead to voting against that party’s candidate.

Likewise, voting on a referendum can be done competently by knowing whether it is endorsed by political figures or groups that a citizen knows and trusts and does not require specific information about the technical details of the issue at stake (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998). This line of argument illustrates a broader point: Much of the knowledge sought by quiz questions asked in surveys is not needed by voters for them to perform their duties competently. So lack of knowledge does not indicate inability to perform adequately and responsibly (Lupia, 2006).

In sum, new insights in this literature and new lines of inquiry have cast new light on the old question of citizen competence. Clearly, some Americans lack some specific pieces of knowledge, but precisely how many people lack any given piece of knowledge is probably impossible to determine. Consequently, political psychologists should abandon making claims about absolute levels of knowledge in the electorate altogether and should assess public competence in other ways. Fortunately a great deal of research has done so, and that work is reviewed in the remainder of this chapter.

CAUSES OF BEHAVIOR

Why do People Vote?

One of the most fundamental questions challenging political psychologists is why citizens in a democratic country vote. Any discussion of turnout must begin with acknowledgment of an equation proposed by Downs (1957) that has powerfully shaped scholars’ thinking in this arena:

$$R = (B)(P) - C + D$$

in which R is the total reward a citizen will gain from voting; B is the benefit a person thinks will accrue from having the citizen’s preferred candidate win; P is the

person’s perception of the probability the citizen’s one vote will change the election outcome; C is the cost to the individual of voting in terms of time, money, and other resources; and D is the psychic satisfaction the person would gain from voting (Ferejohn & Fiorina, 1974; Riker & Ordeshook, 1968). If R is positive, the citizen is assumed to gain a reward from voting that outweighs the costs and will therefore participate in the election. The more positive R is, the more likely an individual is to vote. In any large election, the probability of casting the deciding vote is thought to be infinitesimally small and is likely to be perceived as such: much, much smaller than the costs of voting (e.g., Chamberlain & Rothschild, 1981). Therefore, the sense of satisfaction gained from voting (D) must make up any deficit caused by the cost and provide sufficient incentive for a citizen to participate.

This equation illustrates the “paradox of voting” (Ferejohn & Fiorina, 1974; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). Voting yields benefits only when supported by collective action, so most people should never pay the costs, because their effort will never assure the acquisition of benefits. The mystery, then, is why so many people vote. This surprising behavior is sometimes claimed to be evidence that voters are inherently irrational (though see Ferejohn & Fiorina, 1974).

Turnout can also be analyzed from a slightly different formal point of view, presuming that it is a function of people’s motivation to vote, their ability to vote, and the difficulty of the act of voting for them:

$$\text{Likelihood of voting} = (\text{Motivation to vote}) \times (\text{Ability to vote}) \times (1 - \text{Difficulty of voting})$$

in which all three predictors are coded to range from 0 (meaning no motivation, ability, or difficulty) to 1 (meaning maximum motivation, ability, or difficulty). The more motivation or ability people have, the more likely they are to turn out on Election Day, whereas the more difficult voting is for people, the less likely they are to vote. The multiplicative feature of this equation means that high motivation or high ability or low difficulty is not sufficient to assure turnout—a deficit in any area may be sufficient to undermine a person’s turnout.

Motivation to vote can come from a strong preference for one candidate over that person’s competitor(s). But motivation can also come from the belief that being a responsible citizen requires that a person vote, from pressure from one’s friends or family to vote, or from other sources outlined later. The ability to vote refers to people’s capacity to (1) make sense of information about political events and candidates to form a candidate preference; (2) understand and meet requirements for eligibility to vote

legally; and (3) implement the required behavior to cast a ballot. Difficulty refers to conditions outside the voter's mind (e.g., the convenience of registration procedures, the physical closeness of a polling location to a person's home). Downs' (B) (P) term and (D) term are components of motivation, and his (C) term is a part of difficulty (1957). But motivation and difficulty have other components as well, as the research we have reviewed illustrates.

The existing literature addresses: (1) the factors that encourage or discourage registration, a necessary precursor to the act of voting; (2) the associations between turnout and various demographics, a person's social location, a person's psychological dispositions, and characteristics of a particular election contest; and (3) the impact of canvassing, polling, and election outcome projections on turnout. These literatures are reviewed next.

Registration

The costs of registering to vote are among the most significant reasons why many Americans fail to go to the polls on Election Day. To register, citizens must learn and follow a set of rules about how and when to register, and when a person moves from living in one residence to another, it is often necessary to take action to establish legitimate voting registration status at the new location. Turnout varies a great deal from state to state, and much of this variation appears to be attributable to variation in the difficulty of voter registration procedures (Kelley, Ayres, & Bowen, 1967; Kim, Petrocik, & Enokson, 1975). Indeed, registration requirements appear to impose such substantial barriers to turnout that if all such requirements were eliminated, turnout might rise by as much as 7% to 9% nationally (Mitchell & Wlezien, 1995; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980; c.f., Nagler, 1991).

Barriers to Registration People are less likely to register and to vote if they live in a place that imposes more, or more difficult, registration requirements. Such requirements have included annual reregistration, literacy tests, and early cutoff dates for registering before an election (e.g., Shinn, 1971; c.f., Katosh & Traugott, 1982). Other barriers include the accessibility of physical locations where citizens are permitted to register, the number of hours during which citizens can register, and whether citizens can register during evenings or on weekends (Caldeira, Patterson, & Markko, 1985; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980). Interestingly, laws requiring employers to allow employees time off from work to vote do not appear to increase registration, suggesting that work requirements are not a serious impediment (Sterling, 1983).

Registration drives, wherein nonpartisan and partisan groups encourage people to register, attempt to reduce the

difficulty of the registration process. Interestingly, people registered via registration drives usually vote at lower rates than do people who registered on their own (Cain & McCue, 1985; Hamilton, 1977; Vedlitz, 1985). Nonetheless, registration drives do appear to increase turnout rates.

The date when registration closes is often singled out as the most prominent contemporary requirement that impedes registration. An early closing date precludes voters from registering right at the time when they are most motivated to do so: during the height of a political campaign, in the very weeks just before Election Day. Thus, in states with early closing dates, registration is more likely among people who are chronically interested in politics and motivated to vote and less likely among people without that chronic interest but who are inspired to want to participate in an election by campaign events or by changes in local, regional, or national conditions close to Election Day. Election Day registration eliminates the closing date restriction and seems to have greatly increased turnout (Brians & Grofman, 2001; Knack & White, 2000).

Demographics

Education Citizens with more formal education are more likely to vote; each additional year of education is associated with higher turnout (e.g., Gerber, Green, & Larimer, 2008; Shields & Goidel, 1997; Tenn, 2007; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Education may impart skills that enhance a person's ability to understand how the civic process operates and how to navigate the requirements of registration. Education may also motivate people to vote by instilling civic duty, interesting them in the political process, or placing them in social settings in which voting is normative.

Verbal SAT scores are positively associated with turnout, consistent with the notion that understanding language may facilitate understanding of politics. Math SAT scores are not related to turnout, suggesting that cognitive skills in general appear not to regulate turnout. College graduates who took more social science classes have more civic duty, and these people also vote more than other graduates (Hillygus, 2005; Nie & Hillygus, 2001).

The impact of education on a person's turnout depends partly on the educational attainment and political activity of other people in that individual's environment (Helliwell & Putman, 1999; Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996). The more a person's educational attainment exceeds that of the people in that person's neighborhood, the more likely that person is to vote. Comparative educational attainment rates are much better predictors of a person's turnout than is the person's absolute educational attainment (Tenn, 2005).

Income Wealthier people vote at higher rates (Gerber, Green, & Larimer, 2008; Leighley & Nagler, 1992b; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Ulbig & Funk, 1999; c.f., Filer, Kenny, & Morton, 1993). And interestingly, when the health of the national economy declines, the citizens who are hurt most are the most likely to manifest reductions in turnout (Radcliff, 1992; Rosenstone, 1982). This relation could be due to differential motivation or ability or both. Perhaps less wealthy people have less time available to learn about elections and to cast votes than do wealthier people. Or perhaps more wealthy people perceive that they have a greater interest at stake in elections or have greater senses of political efficacy. People with higher incomes incur greater opportunity costs for spending time on politics and voting (Frey, 1971), but wealthier people may gain greater psychological or social rewards from voting (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993).

Occupation Workplace authority might be expected to create a greater feeling of social entitlement, which often translates into political participation (Sobel, 1993). However, managers and administrators have lower turnout than other professionals from the same economic class (Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980). Turnout does not seem to be influenced by the amount of decision making and power they are afforded at their workplaces, even if that power is given through democratic decisions (Elden, 1981; Greenberg, 1981). However, government employees turn out at especially high rates (Bennett & Orzechowski, 1983; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980). This could be because government employees have a clear stake in the outcomes of elections: Whether they remain employed and what they work on may be influenced by which party occupies particular public offices (Bennett & Orzechowski, 1983; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980).

Age People appear to become increasingly likely to vote as they progress from early adulthood through middle adulthood; after about age 75, people become less likely to vote (Gerber, Green, & Larimer, 2008; Strate, Parrish, Elder, & Ford, 1989). In cross-sectional analyses, differences between age groups in turnout rates could be due to cohort effects: effects of historical events that occurred when a particular generation of people was a particular age and that shaped them for the rest of their lives. However, even after controlling for period and cohort effects, increasing age still appears to be associated with increased turnout until late in life.

Gender The effect of gender on turnout has changed dramatically over the years. From the beginning of women's suffrage, women voted less than men (Arneson &

Eels, 1950; Glaser, 1959). And until the 1980s, women felt less efficacious and were less informed and politically interested and involved than men (Schlozman, Burns, & Verba, 1999; Verba, Burns, & Schlozman, 1997). Since the mid-1980s, though, women have voted at the same rate as men, and sometimes at even higher rates (e.g., Leighley & Nagler, 1992a; Schlozman, Burns, Verba, & Donahue, 1995; c.f., Gerber, Green, & Larimer, 2008).

Mobility Residential mobility seems to depress turnout (Highton, 2000; Squire, Wolfinger, & Glass, 1987). Just after moving, people are less able to vote, because they must figure out how to reregister with a new address and must make time to do so amidst an inevitably busy postmove life. Longer moves do not seem to depress turnout more (Highton, 2000).

Residency People who live in rural areas are more likely to vote than are people who live in urban areas (Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980). Farmers vote at substantially higher rates than would be expected based on their levels of education and income (Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980), perhaps because they see direct links of federal farming policies to their livelihoods. In contrast, farm laborers vote at very low rates that are unaccounted for solely by socioeconomic factors (Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980), perhaps because of their high residential mobility.

Race Whites have voted at higher rates than some other racial groups (Uhlener, Cain, & Kiewiet, 1989). For example, turnout among African Americans has been relatively low. During the 1950s and 1960s, African American turnout increased sharply because discriminatory voter registration laws were relaxed, feelings of efficacy increased due to the civil rights movement, and mobilization efforts by political parties were increased (Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1993). As a result, African American turnout increased by 35 percentage points in only 15 years (Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1993). As a result, African Americans have had similar, or often even higher, turnout than Whites after controlling for education and income (e.g., Bobo & Gilliam, 1990; Leighley & Vedlitz, 1999; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980; c.f., Gerber, Green, & Larimer, 2008). But Latinos and Asians have manifested lower turnout rates than Whites, even after controlling for socioeconomic status (Aoki & Nakanishi, 2001; Barreto, 2005; Shaw, de la Garza, & Lee, 2000; Uhlener, Cain, & Kiewiet, 1989).

Social and Psychological Factors

Neighborhood Characteristics Living in a higher status neighborhood encourages political participation by people of higher socioeconomic status but decreases participation

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among less educated citizens (Huckfeldt, 1979). This may occur because people compare themselves with others around them and are motivated to participate in politics if they feel unusually qualified to have influence.

Turnout is also influenced by the match between one's political party affiliation and the affiliations of one's neighbors. Republicans vote at unusually low rates when they live in heavily Democratic areas, perhaps because perceived lack of local social support for one's views makes voting seem futile. Interestingly, turnout among Democrats is less affected by the party affiliations of their neighbors (Gimpel, Dyck, & Shaw, 2004). Living in politically diverse environments tends to depress turnout (Costa & Kahn, 2004; McClurg, 2006; Mutz, 2002a, b).

Marriage Married (and partnered) couples vote at higher rates than singles (Kingston & Finkel, 1987; c.f., Stoker & Jennings, 1995). The turnout of married citizens increases faster than the turnout of unmarried citizens as people grow older (Stoker & Jennings, 1995; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980). Perhaps politically motivated people inspire less motivated spouses to vote, either through explicit persuasion efforts or simply by exposing the spouse to political information. Divorce greatly increases turnout among Whites (perhaps simply due to increased free time), though not among African Americans or Hispanics (Sandell & Plutzer, 2005).

Participation in Civic Organizations Voluntary involvement in social organizations can inspire turnout by motivating and enabling people through increasing civic skills (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). The more a person is engaged in cooperative work with others, the more appealing casting a vote may appear to be.

Group Solidarity People who say that their lives are intrinsically tied to other members of their social group (especially if that group is disadvantaged) turn out at higher rates than do people lower in group solidarity (Miller, Gurin, Gurin, & Malanchuk, 1981). People with high solidarity could have higher motivation to vote because they are concerned with issues affecting their group, or their strong social connections to members of that group could give them skills that better enable them to vote.

Trust People who are especially trusting of others are more likely to vote (Cox, 2003; Timpone, 1998a). Perhaps distrustful people think of the political system as corrupt, which might sap their motivation to participate. During some recent decades, Americans' trust in people and in the federal government has declined significantly (Levi & Stoker, 2000; Miller, 1980), but these declines seem not to

be responsible for decreasing turnout (Hetherington, 1999; Wolfinger, Glass, & Squire, 1990).

Contagion Some people might choose to vote because they think that their decision to do so might inspire other like-minded people to vote as well (Quattrone & Tversky, 1984). Voters might also presume that their own behavior is diagnostic of the behavior of like-minded others, even if the former does not cause the latter. So voting may be perceived to provide an indication of a heightened chance of victory by one's preferred candidate (Acevedo & Krueger, 2004). Consistent with this reasoning, people are more confident that their preferred candidate will win an election in the moments just after they cast their own vote than during the moments just before casting their vote (Frenkel & Doob, 1976; Regan & Kilduff, 1988). And remarkably, a single person's decision to turn out can produce a "cascade" of turnout within that person's social network (Fowler, 2005; see also Coleman, 2004).

Strength of Party Identification People who identify more strongly with a political party are more likely to vote (Gerber, Green, & Larimer, 2008; Ulbig & Funk, 1999).

Political Efficacy Citizens who have a great sense of political efficacy turn out more (Accock, Clarke, & Stewart, 1985; Craig & Maggiotto, 1982; Ulbig & Funk, 1999). This is true for both internal efficacy—the belief in one's capability to understand and participate in politics—and external efficacy—the belief in the responsiveness of political institutions to citizen involvement (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993).

Knowledge The more a citizen has to work to determine candidates' ideological positions, the higher the person's information costs and the less likely that person is to vote (Gant, 1983; Panning, 1982).

Personal Importance of Policy Issues If voting is a way to express policy preferences, then one might imagine that people who possess many strong preferences on policy issues may be especially motivated to turn out. And indeed, the more policy issues that citizens attach great personal importance to, the more likely they are to intend to vote prior to an election, and the more likely they are to successfully carry out that intention on Election Day (Visser, Krosnick, & Simmons, 2003).

Civic Duty People who believe that all citizens have the obligation to vote go to the polls more than those who do not hold this belief (Knack, 1992; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). Presumably, civic duty is a source of motivation to turn out.

Habit Voting is a habitual behavior, meaning that voting once increases the likelihood of voting again (Gerber, Green, & Shachar, 2003; Plutzer, 2002), for several possible reasons. First, the social and psychological forces that inspired voting the first time may have enhanced impact directing future voting decisions (Gerber, Green, & Shachar, 2003; Verba & Nie, 1972). After being successfully mobilized to vote once, a citizen may attract repeated mobilization efforts at the times of subsequent elections (Goldstein & Ridout, 2002). Voting may be self-reinforcing, meaning that the social and psychic rewards one enjoys after voting once may be memorable and motivating at the times of subsequent elections (Gerber, Green, & Shachar, 2003; Plutzer, 2002). And the act could change a person's self-perception into one of an active, civically engaged individual. Finally, by voting once, a voter might realize the ease of doing it and may therefore be less inhibited from doing it again.

Patience The costs of voting are entailed before Election Day (e.g., learning about the candidates, registering), whereas the benefits of voting are not reaped until after the act is performed (e.g., feeling virtuous, seeing one's preferred candidate win). Not surprisingly, then, turnout is greater among people who are patient and willing to wait for bigger rewards later instead of preferring smaller rewards sooner (Fowler & Kam, 2006).

Altruism Voting may sometimes be done selflessly, to help other people. That is, people could reasonably believe that the election of their preferred candidate will help many other people by increasing the chances of the passage of legislation that will yield good outcomes for those individuals. Consistent with this reasoning, people who are highly altruistic are especially likely to turn out on Election Day (Fowler, 2006; Knack, 1992; Jankowski, 2004).

Religiosity People who attend church regularly are especially likely to vote (Gerber, Green, & Latimer, 2008).

Personality Extraverts are especially likely to vote, as are people high in emotional stability (Gerber, Green, & Latimer, 2008). One might imagine that people with authoritarian personalities might be especially likely to vote, because voting is a behavior commanded (or at least requested) and organized by government authorities. However, Lane (1955) found that the degree to which people scored high in authoritarian personality did not predict whether or not they voted.

Genetics A large proportion of the variance in turnout might be explained by individual genes (Fowler, Baker,

& Dawes, 2008). Identical twins manifest turnout that is much more similar than is manifested by nonidentical twins (see also Fowler & Dawes, 2008). Genes may influence turnout by shaping any of the psychological factors discussed previously.

Characteristics of a Particular Election

Strength of Candidate Preference The bigger the gap between a person's attitude toward one candidate and the person's attitude toward a competing candidate, the more likely the person is to vote (Holbrook, Krosnick, Visser, Gardner, & Cacioppo, 2001; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). However, this gap is much less consequential if the citizen likes both candidates than if the citizen dislikes one or both candidates (Holbrook, Krosnick, Visser, Gardner, & Cacioppo, 2001).

Candidate Similarity in Policy Preferences The more similar to one another the competing candidates appear to be in terms of their policy preferences, the less likely citizens are to vote in a race, because the outcomes would not differ much in utility (Abramowitz & Stone, 2006; Plane & Gershtenson, 2004). Further, the more dissimilar a citizen is from the most similar candidate running in a race in terms of policy preferences, the less likely the citizen is to vote (Plane & Gershtenson, 2004; Zipp, 1985). Distance from the closest candidate appears to be a more powerful determinant of turnout than similarity between the candidates (Zipp, 1985).

Closeness of the Race Many observers have speculated that the closer a race appears to be prior to Election Day, the more likely voters are to believe that their votes might determine the election outcome. And the belief that one's vote matters enhances turnout (Acevedo & Krueger, 2004). So when preelection polls suggest a race is likely to be a blowout, turnout may be depressed as a result. This notion has received some empirical support (Matsusaka, 1993; Patterson & Caldeira, 1983). Campaign efforts are usually greatest in areas in which a race is close (Cox & Munger, 1989), and such campaign expenditures increase turnout (Caldeira & Patterson, 1982; Patterson & Caldeira, 1983). Even after controlling for expenditures, however, the apparent closeness of the race can influence turnout (Cox & Munger, 1989; c.f., Foster, 1984; Knack & Kropf, 1998).

Negative Advertising Negative ads criticize one candidate while sometimes praising a competitor. One theory asserts that negative campaigns encourage cynicism about candidates and apathy among citizens, which demobilizes them (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Min, 2004). Another perspective argues instead that negative ads strengthen

attitudes toward candidates (either positive or negative) and create more interest in a campaign (Freedman & Goldstein, 1999; Goldstein & Freedman, 2002; Wattenberg & Briens, 1999). A third line of theoretical reasoning has asserted that negative ads exert no overall effect on turnout, because they depress turnout among some individuals and stimulate it among others (Clinton & Lapinski, 2004; Lau & Pomper, 2001; Martin, 2004).

Different methods investigating the effects of negative ads on turnout have yielded different results. Support for the demobilization hypothesis has mostly been produced by experimental work that showed participants sets of television news stories with positive and negative ads in the commercial breaks (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon, & Valentino, 1994). Furthermore, archival analysis of 34 U.S. Senate Races indicated that in races with lots of negative advertising, turnout was about two percentage points less than in races with neither positive nor negative advertising, and turnout in those latter races was about two percentage points less than in races dominated by positive advertising (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995).

In contrast, experiments embedded in surveys of nationally representative samples of adults and more detailed correlational studies of real elections failed to turn up any evidence that negative ads discourage turnout (Clinton & Lapinski, 2004; Freedman & Goldstein, 1999; see also Lau, Sigelman, Heldman, & Babbitt, 1999).

The inconsistency of these findings may be due in part to differences across types of negative advertisements. People may distinguish between negative information presented in a reasonable manner and negative information presented as mudslinging—the former may increase turnout, whereas the latter may not (Kahn & Kenney, 1999).

Other Campaigns Turnout in a particular race can be affected by events that occur in other, simultaneous campaigns. For example, the appearance of an unconventional and surprisingly popular candidate, such as Ross Perot when he ran for president in 1992, can inspire disaffected citizens to vote when they otherwise would not have done so (Lacy & Burden, 1999). Furthermore, presidential, gubernatorial, and senate elections and ballot propositions can sometimes increase the rate at which people cast votes in other races by attracting particular people to the polls (Abramowitz & Stone, 2006; Campbell, 1960; Cover, 1985; Jackson, 2002).

Effects of Canvassing, Polling, and Election Outcome Projects

Canvassing Canvassing efforts involve asking or encouraging people to vote and can have substantial

effects on turnout. Knocking on doors and reminding people to vote seems to be the most effective (Green, 2004a; Green, Gerber, & Nickerson, 2003; Gerber & Green, 2000a, 2005; Michelson, 2003). Mailing or delivering a written encouragement to people seems to be less effective (Gerber & Green, 2000a, 2005; Gerber, Green, & Green, 2003). Canvassing may enhance turnout because it helps citizens determine where to go to vote, reminds them about the election date to permit advance planning, enables citizens by giving them information about the candidates and issues, or induces citizens to make oral commitments to participating in the election, which can be self-fulfilling.

Despite enormous amounts of money paid for telephone calls to potential voters by campaigns and other organizations, such calls seem to have no effects on turnout at all (Cardy, 2005; Gerber & Green, 2000a, b, 2001, 2005; Green, 2004b; McNulty, 2005).

Preelection Polls Prior to elections, survey researchers often conduct polls to gauge the popularity of the competing candidates. These “horse race” polls are often heavily covered by the news media and might influence turnout, especially if the polls show that a race is not as close as citizens thought. Surprisingly, however, one experimental test of this hypothesis found no evidence that such polls influence turnout (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1994).

Predictions of Election Outcomes on Election Day Some observers have posited that if the new media project the outcome of an election before the polls have closed all across the country, some citizens may be discouraged from casting votes. Some studies suggest that Election Day forecasting of election results has no effect on turnout (Epstein & Strom, 1981). But other studies suggest that Election Day forecasting of election results does slightly depress turnout (Crespin & Vander Wielen, 2002; Delli Carpini, 1984; Jackson, 1983).

Being Interviewed for a Political Survey A number of studies have explored the possibility that interviewing citizens about politics prior to an election may inspire them to vote at a higher rate. Such an interview may enhance feelings of efficacy and civic duty and might activate a desire to avoid the guilt of not voting. An extensive interview might also remind people of reasons why they might want to vote. Consistent with this reasoning, participating in a preelection survey does increase turnout, sometimes dramatically (Granberg & Holmberg, 1992; Yalch, 1976). Even participating in an extremely short survey simply asking people whether they plan to vote on Election Day has the capacity to increase turnout (Greenwald, Carnot, Beach, & Young, 1987; c.f., Smith, Gerber, & Orlich, 2003).

Conclusions

Some of the findings reviewed earlier are consistent with the general notion that a person will vote if the information and time costs of doing so are outweighed by the benefits of potentially casting the deciding vote and the rewards (or avoided costs) from voting. And the literature is also consistent with the general claim that citizens' decisions about whether to vote are a function of their motivation to vote, ability to vote, and the difficulty of the task. Many of the factors discussed so far might affect more than one of these general classes of mediators. For instance, a high level of education could motivate an individual to vote and might enable the person to vote or might decrease the costs of voting. Moving frequently could reduce people's ability to vote (because they may not have had time to acquire the needed information about local candidates and issues) and could make it harder for a person to figure out where to vote, thus increasing costs.

Why do Some People Decide to Pressure Government?

Citizen activism in democratic societies can guide government policy making in numerous ways. People can do work to help elect candidates with whom they agree on policy issues (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). They can support interest groups that lobby legislators on particular issues (Cigler & Loomis, 1995; Hansen, 1991). And in the extreme, citizens can join together and catalyze social movements to demand more radical social change (Smelser, 1962).

A great deal of research has explored why particular citizens choose to join particular groups to direct government in particular ways (see Baumgartner & Leech, 1998). Underlying all of this work is the notion that people who share a common interest have an incentive to work with one another to pursue and protect that interest. But many people share common interests with one another and yet do not collaborate as activists. Therefore, driven importantly by Olson's (1965) landmark work, scholars have sought to identify the costs and benefits of participating, presuming that action only occurs when the latter outweigh the former (e.g., Salisbury, 1969). Past work has focused especially on the impact of selective incentives, solidary and purposive rewards, beliefs about a group's ability to succeed, the individual's access to necessary resources, and many more factors (e.g., Dahl, 1961; Finkel, Muller, & Opp, 1989; Olson, 1965).

One way to analyze issue-focused activism begins by decomposing the set of citizens within a society who share the common desire to see a particular public policy enacted. Among these people, the most effort would pre-

sumably come from staff members employed by interest group organizations devoted to lobbying elected representatives. Somewhat less effort would be expected from members of what might be called the "active public," people who voluntarily give their time and money to groups, attend rallies, and write letters. And other citizens could be called "passive sympathizers," people supportive of groups' efforts but who do nothing to help.

Who Acts?

The existing literature on activism points to a number of important determinants of whether a person will be among the active public or among the passive sympathizers at any given moment in time. Some factors are attributes of the individual. For example, people with more necessary resources available (e.g., free time and disposable income) are less taxed by participation (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Highly educated people are better equipped with civic skills, which presumably confer a sense of confidence that one's efforts can be successful and make a difference (Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). And people who care deeply about a particular policy issue or who link their own identities to a group affected by the issue are most likely to participate (Hinkle, Fox-Cardamone, Haseleu, Brown, & Irwin, 1996; Krosnick & Telhami, 1995; Miller, Gurin, Gurin, & Malanchuk, 1981; Morris & Mueller, 1992; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995).

The Coordination of Collective Action

The behavior of interest group coordinators also helps determine when people will be politically active. For example, recruitment efforts are terrifically consequential; people are much more likely to participate when invited to do so than when they must invest the effort to locate a group to join and a strategy for doing so (Gamson, 1975; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995; Walker, 1991). Groups can offer selective incentives, tangible rewards (e.g., discounted goods or services) that only active members can receive (Gamson, 1975; Olson, 1965). Groups can also take steps to demonstrate that they are effective in influencing policy (Moe, 1980; Opp, 1986) and to convince people that their participation will make a real difference in enhancing the group's chances of success (Muller, Dietz, & Finkel, 1991).

Real-World Conditions

Changes in real-world conditions can inspire activism as well. Societies may evolve into comfortable states of equilibrium, which are punctuated by occasional disturbances (Truman, 1951). When a disturbance causes a decline in people's quality of life, they are motivated to rectify the situation, at times through political activism. Thus, an important motivator is the sense of dissatisfaction with

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undesirable current life circumstances and the concomitant desire to change them (Barnes & Kaase, 1979; Chubb, 1983; Dalton, 1988; Gamson, 1975; Loomis & Cigler, 1995; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993).

This theme is especially prominent in the social movements' literature. The French Revolution, the Civil Rights movement, and other such movements all emerged in response to dissatisfaction with governmental policies or social structures that appeared to treat people unfairly (e.g., Smelser, 1962). Likewise, interest groups have often formed to oppose newly created government programs that disadvantaged the group or to oppose other citizen groups that took actions with which the group disagreed (Baumgartner & Leech, 1998; Loomis & Cigler, 1995; Walker, 1991). And Hansen (1985) demonstrated that when people suffered serious economic hardships, they were especially likely to join activist groups that could help alleviate the hardships.

Less prominent in this literature is a somewhat different notion: that *satisfaction* with current circumstances and the desire to defend them can also motivate activism. Various scholars have argued that when people face threats of undesirable economic, social, or political changes in the future, they are especially likely to join others to protect the status quo (Hansen, 1985; Loomis & Cigler, 1995; Moen, 1992). In other words, it may not be necessary for life circumstances to take a turn for the worse before people will become active. The appearance that things may become worse in the future may be effectively motivating as well.

When it comes to democratic politics, citizens can experience various types of threats. One is "policy change threat"—the perception that a politically powerful individual or individuals are mobilizing to change a public policy that one supports. Perceptions of policy change threat should come about when a citizen, upon surveying the political landscape, becomes aware that a single individual or group of people are taking action to change a policy that the citizen does not want to see changed. For example, a newly elected president may express a commitment to changing a law. An election can shift the leadership of the Congress from one political party to the other, thereby giving special legislative power to a group that places priority on changing a law. Or powerful social groups outside of government, such as commercial firms or professional associations, can initiate public efforts to change a law that governs their operation. By their actions, these agents threaten losses to citizens who disagree with the proposed change, and these threats may inspire activism (see, e.g., Diamond, 1995; Loomis & Ciglar, 1995; MacKuen, 2000; Marcus, Neuman, & Moen, 1992). Indeed, interest group fundraisers routinely send direct mail solicitations pointing out threats of undesirable policy changes to motivate people to join their organizations (Godwin, 1988).

Many studies suggest that threat inspires activism. Gusfield (1963) documented how the temperance movement emerged because the Protestant middle class perceived lower-class urban immigrants to have compromised the moral character of society and threatened to do so further. The threat of nuclear war inspired political activism among people who perceived that threat most powerfully (Fiske, Pratto, & Pavelchak, 1983; Tyler & McGraw, 1983). The perception that the quality of the environment was threatened and was likely to decline in the future has inspired activism as well (McKenzie-Mohr et al., 1995).

Other evidence consistent with the notion that threat inspires activism involves trends over time in public support for environmental lobbying groups. Controlling for many factors (including aspects of interest group behavior) and correcting for inflation, financial contributions to such groups were higher during the Reagan and Bush administrations than during the Carter administration or during the first two years of the Clinton administration (Lowry, 1997; Richer, 1995). And membership in the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society grew much less rapidly during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations than during the Nixon and Ford administrations (Mitchell, 1979). These higher levels of activism during Republican administrations may have reflected environmentalists' perceptions of greater threat of undesirable policy change at those times.

Support for the threat hypothesis also comes from correlational evidence from surveys, experiments embedded within surveys, and field experiments (Miller & Krosnick, 2004; Miller, Tahk, Krosnick, Holbrook, & Lowe, 2009). Survey respondents who perceived a higher level of threat of undesirable policy change in the future were especially likely to have been active in expressing their policy preferences on an issue, especially if they attached a great deal of personal importance to the issue. Respondents who were given information suggesting that considerable undesirable policy change threat existed were inspired to perform such behavior in the future, again more so if they attached considerably personal importance to the issue. And participants in a field experiment who received letters describing efforts by legislators to bring about undesirable policy changes were more effective at inspiring real attitude expressive activism than were letters without this information.

Why do Some People Participate in Political Opinion Surveys?

Another way to express one's preferences on government policy issues is to participate in surveys, the results of which may be conveyed by the news media to government, thereby exerting pressure on political actors. Consistent with this logic, people who participate in surveys are more

likely to vote in elections and to express interest in politics than people who do not participate in surveys (Knack & Kropf, 1998; Voogt & Saris, 2003).

CAUSES OF POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS

How do People Decide Which Candidate to Vote For?

A huge literature has accumulated during the past 80 years at least on the factors that influence citizens' decisions about which candidate to vote for (for a partial review, see, e.g., Kinder & Sears, 1985). Books such as *Voting* (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1954), *The American Voter* (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960), *The Changing American Voter* (Nie, Verba, & Petrocik, 1979), *The New American Voter* (Miller & Shanks, 1996), *The American Voter Revisited* (Lewis-Beck, Jacoby, Norpoth, & Weisberg, 2008), and many more line the shelves of countless scholars. And countless articles have filled many journals exploring the considerations that influence citizens' candidate choices. Our selective review of some of this work emphasizes perhaps the consideration of most interest to political theorists: policy preferences. Responsible citizens, say the theorists, base votes on attitudes about what those citizens want government to do. This section of the chapter therefore reviews psychological work plumbing the depths of this issue, with special attention to moderators, and then reviews other recent work on bandwagon effects, the influence of voters' personalities, ballot layout, and the processes of information integration when making vote choices.

Policy Preferences

One mechanism by which citizens could elect representatives who implement government policies that they favor is if citizens' candidate preferences are determined in part by the match between their attitudes toward government policies (i.e., their *policy attitudes*) and their perceptions of candidates' attitudes toward those policies. This notion, referred to as *policy voting*, is consistent with the many social-psychological theories that assert that social attraction is based in part on attitudinal similarity (Byrne, 1971; Festinger, 1954; Heider, 1958).

Perceptions of Candidates' Attitudes Toward Government Policies

For a citizen to cast a vote to express an attitude on an issue of government policy, the citizen must presumably know the positions of the competing candidates on that

issue. Two different theoretical accounts attempt to explain how these perceptions might be translated into candidate choices. So-called "spatial models" propose that citizen attitudes toward a policy fall along a continuum from very favorable to very unfavorable, and perceptions of candidates can be placed on the same continuum. The candidate who is perceived to be closer to the citizen is thought to gain in appeal from this proximity (Downs, 1957). The second account is the "directional theory" of voting, which proposes that citizens like candidates who are on the same side of the neutral point as they are more than they like candidates on the opposite side of the neutral point. And the more extremely the candidate is on the citizen's side of the neutral point, the more the candidate will appeal to the citizen (Rabinowitz & Macdonald, 1989).

Adjudicating between these two models appeared for quite a while to be impossible to accomplish, because which model wins depends completely on what assumptions the researcher makes (see Lewis & King, 1999; Tomz & Van Houweling, 2008). But recently, a series of experimental studies have presented participants with descriptions of hypothetical candidates and assessed how the participants used that information when evaluating the candidates. Lacy & Paolino (2004) found evidence in favor of proximity model. Although Claassen (2009) found support for the directional model for some issues and for the proximity model for others, Claassen (2007) reported another experiment yielding evidence of proximity voting but not of directional voting. And Tomz and Van Houweling (2008) found that proximity voting was much more common than directional voting, which did occur among a small proportion of participants. Thus, these studies suggest proximity voting may be the more prevalent approach employed by citizens.

Needless to say, central components of these accounts of policy-driven votes are citizens' perceptions of the positions that candidates take on policy issues. To cast a vote based on an issue, a voter must perceive the competing candidates as taking clear and different positions on the issue. And a number of studies have yielded support for this notion (e.g., Brody & Page, 1972; Krosnick, 1988a).

Personal Importance of Policy Issues

Psychological theories suggest that the impact of any given policy issue is likely to hinge on how strong a voter's attitude is on the issue. Strong attitudes are defined as those that possess four key features: They are tenaciously resistant to change, are highly stable over time during the course of daily life, exert powerful influences on information processing and decision making, and are potent determinants of social behaviors (Krosnick & Petty, 1995). Thus, by

definition, strong policy preferences should have powerful impact on evaluations of candidates and vote choices.

A great deal of research in social psychology has explored various ways of identifying strong attitudes. For example, some investigators have examined the intensity of an individual's feelings about an attitude object (e.g., Krosnick & Schuman, 1988). Others have focused on the certainty with which people hold their attitudes (e.g., Budd, 1986). And still others have concentrated on the accessibility of attitudes, the ease with which they come to mind spontaneously during social information processing (e.g., Fazio, 1986). All of these attitude attributes, as well as a variety of others, can successfully identify attitudes that possess the four hallmarks of strength.

Although most of these attitude attributes have not yet been employed in studies of policy voting, many studies have explored the role of attitude importance, partly because many national surveys have included measures of the amount of personal importance that citizens attach to specific policy issues, thus equipping analysts to explore this matter. Attitude importance is defined as a person's subjective self-perception of the degree of personal importance attached to a particular attitude (e.g., Boninger, Krosnick, Berent, & Fabrigar, 1995; Krosnick, 1988b). To attach great personal importance to an attitude is to care passionately about it and to be deeply concerned about it. Attitude importance is thought to be consequential precisely because of its status as a subjective perception: Perceiving an attitude to be personally important presumably leads individuals to use it deliberately in processing information and making decisions.

Americans vary a great deal in the amount of personal importance they attach to their attitudes on policy issues, and small groups of citizens (rarely more than 15%) attach the highest importance to any one issue (see Anand & Krosnick, 2003; Krosnick, 1990). Importance ratings are very stable over time, as would be expected if they represent meaningful cognitive and emotional commitments to an issue (Krosnick, 1986). Importance appears to be issue specific—it is difficult to predict the importance a person attaches to one issue knowing how much importance that person attaches to another (Anand & Krosnick, 2003; Krosnick, 1990). Citizens who attach the highest level of personal importance to an issue are referred to as that issue's "issue public" (Converse, 1964; Krosnick, 1990).

As would be expected based on social-psychological theories of attitude strength, more important attitudes on policy issues are themselves more stable over time (Krosnick, 1988b) and more resistant to change (Fine, 1957; Gorn, 1975). The more importance people attach to a policy preference, the better their position on that issue predicts their vote choices (e.g., Anand & Krosnick,

2003; Bélanger & Meguid, 2008; Fournier, Blais, Nadeau, Gidengil, & Nevitte, 2003; Krosnick, 1988a; Miller, Krosnick, & Fabrigar, 2009; Visser, Krosnick, & Simmons, 2003). The more important people consider a policy issue to be, the more likely they are to mention the issue as a reason to vote for or against a candidate when asked for such reasons (Krosnick, 1988a). And the more important people consider a policy issue to be, the more impact they say it had on vote choices (Krosnick & Telhami, 1995; Miller et al., 2009). This may occur because more important policy preferences are more accessible in long-term memory (Bizer & Krosnick, 2001; Krosnick, 1989; Miller, Krosnick, & Fabrigar, 2009).

People who are passionate about a policy issue are also very emotional when processing relevant information. For example, when watching a television news story on a policy issue, people who attach more personal importance to the issue have more intense emotional reactions (Miller, Krosnick, & Fabrigar, 2009). This tendency toward emotion might raise concerns about whether issue public members can be trusted to make judgments in wise ways.

Reassuring in this regard is evidence that attaching personal importance to an issue inspires people to gather information on the issue voraciously, to think carefully and often about that information, and to become highly knowledgeable on the issue as a result (Holbrook, Berent, Krosnick, Visser, & Boninger, 2005). Issue public members manifest no evidence of bias toward remembering information with which they agree and toward forgetting disagreeable information (Holbrook, Berent, Krosnick, Visser, & Boninger, 2005). In fact, issue public members are especially likely to have accurate perceptions of where candidates stand on their issue (Krosnick, 1988a; 1990) and to accurately remember relevant information (Holbrook, Berent, Krosnick, Visser, & Boninger, 2005). The large store of accurate information that issue public members accumulate in long-term memory is highly organized in a way that facilitates information use (Berent & Krosnick, 1995).

The Projection Hypothesis

If issue-based voting depends on citizens' perceptions of candidates' issue positions, then the value of votes cast presumably depends on the accuracy of those candidate perceptions. If voters misperceive candidates, then vote choices will not clearly communicate wishes about directions for future policy making. Many researchers have explored a prediction of considerable inaccuracy in perceptions: the projection hypothesis.

Cognitive consistency theories (Festinger, 1957; Heider, 1958; Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955) suggest that candidate perceptions may be systematically distorted to

maintain cognitive harmony. Cognitive consistency exists when a voter's attitude toward the policy agrees with the perceived policy attitude of a liked candidate. Cognitive consistency also exists when a voter's own policy attitude disagrees with the perceived policy attitude of a disliked candidate. If voters believe they disagree with a liked candidate or agree with a disliked candidate, inconsistency exists. Such an inconsistency can be resolved by changing one's candidate evaluations (called *policy-based evaluation*), by changing one's policy preference (called *persuasion*), or by changing one's perception of the candidates' positions (called *projection*).

Projection is not only likely to be regulated by sentiment toward candidates but, according to balance theory, is also likely to be regulated by *unit relations* with candidates. A unit relation specifies the degree to which a voter is linked to or associated with a candidate, regardless of liking. One possible unit relation between a candidate and a voter would be determined by the voter's belief about the likelihood that the candidate will be elected (Kinder, 1978). Voters who see a candidate as likely to be elected will have a unit relation and will be disposed toward positive projection of that candidate's policy attitudes. Voters who see a candidate as unlikely to be elected will not have a unit relation and may be likely to displace that candidate's attitude away from their own (see Heider, 1958, p. 202). Alternatively, a unit relation might be established by shared political party affiliation, shared race or ethnic identity, or some other shared characteristic.

Projection may occur via a number of possible mechanisms (see Kinder, 1978). First, it may occur by *selective attention* during encoding when individuals are exposed to new information about a candidate. Voters may pay close attention to and devote extensive thought to statements that reinforce their preferred view of a candidate's attitude. Second, projection may occur as the result of *selective retention*. Citizens may strategically forget pieces of information that challenge their preferred perceptions of a candidate's attitude. Third, projection may occur through *selective rationalization*. When voters acquire a piece of information that is inconsistent with their beliefs regarding the position of a candidate on an issue, the voters may spend an unusually large amount of cognitive effort reinterpreting the information so that it is consistent with their preference (Hastie & Kumar, 1979).

Early research on social perception found evidence of a possible asymmetry in the effects of sentiment toward others. Although people clearly seemed to prefer to agree with others they like, people seemed not to be so concerned about disagreeing with disliked others (for a review, see Kinder, 1978). This may occur because people disengage from others they dislike and are therefore less aware of

and bothered by cognitive inconsistencies involving their attitudes (Newcomb, 1953, 1968). This is the theoretical justification for the *asymmetry* hypothesis in candidate perception, which states that positive projection onto liked candidates will be stronger than negative projection onto disliked candidates.

Some tests of the projection hypothesis examined cross-sectional relations between sentiment toward a candidate and agreement between a respondent's issue position and the respondent's perception of the candidate's position (e.g., Brent & Granberg, 1982; Conover & Feldman, 1982; Kinder, 1978; Shaffer, 1981). However, the cross-sectional correlations taken to be evidence of positive projection could instead be attributable to at least five other processes: (1) perspective effects (e.g., Ostrom & Upshaw, 1968); (2) policy-based candidate evaluation; (3) persuasion by liked candidates; (4) systematic variation in how candidates describe their positions to different audiences (e.g., Miller & Sigelman, 1978); and (5) the false consensus effect (Marks & Miller, 1987). Although many studies sought to overcome these confounds with cross-sectional data (Bartels, 1988; Conover & Feldman, 1986; Judd, Kenny, & Krosnick, 1983; Martinez, 1988; Otatti, Fishbein, & Middlestadt, 1988), those analyses universally rested on assumptions that are not likely to be plausible (see Krosnick, 2002). Only three studies have used testing methods not subject to these problems, and none of them yielded compelling evidence of projection (Anderson & Avery, 1978; Krosnick, 1991; Shaffer, 1981).

Thus, this literature has yielded no evidence of systematic, motivated misperception of the positions that political candidates take on policy issues. This is reassuring from a normative point of view—citizens do not appear to be distorting their images of political actors simply to satisfy a need for cognitive harmony.

Candidate Ambiguity

Election analysts have long recognized that candidates may be better off making it difficult for citizens to discern their issue positions. Candidates may win more votes through vagueness than they do by taking clear stands on policy issues (Bartels, 1988; Downs, 1957; Page, 1976, 1978; Shepsle, 1972). And indeed, ambiguity is more the norm than the exception, because candidates rarely state their positions on issues (Page, 1978; Tomz & Van Houweling, 2009). Candidates frequently endorse the “end states” they find desirable, such as peace and prosperity, but they rarely describe the policy *means* by which they would achieve those end states (McGinniss, 1969).

Is ambiguity in fact advantageous for candidates? Some studies have suggested that uncertainty about candidates'

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issue positions is counted against them by citizens when they decide for whom to vote (Alvarez, 1998; Bartels, 1986; Brady & Ansolabehere, 1989), but other studies have shown no price paid by candidates for ambiguity (Berinsky & Lewis, 2007; Campbell, 1983). A recent survey-embedded experiment with hypothetical candidates suggested that ambiguity did not discourage voters from supporting a candidate and that ambiguity can help candidates gain votes from members of their own party (Tomz & Van Houweling, 2009).

However, an important wrinkle in that experiment's findings suggests caution before presuming that its finding generalizes to real elections. In such elections, voters have much, much more information about the candidates than the experimental participants did (on only one policy issue and political party affiliations). So in real elections, voters can choose to place weight on any of a wide array of policy issues. Decisions about which issues to focus on are likely to be governed by the strength of people's attitudes on specific issues: People who hold strong favorable or unfavorable attitudes toward a policy are especially likely to use that issue as a basis for their vote choice. Among people with such strong attitudes, candidate ambiguity did reduce the chances of gaining support from a voter (Tomz & Van Houweling, 2009). So among the people who count in the situations that count, ambiguity may indeed affect a candidate's chances of victory.

Bandwagon Effects: The Influence of Social Norms

For decades, the news media have saturated the American public with the results of surveys done to measure the status of the horserace via straw polls (Broh, 1983). Scholars have long speculated that such reports might create bandwagon effects (whereby people gravitate toward popular candidates) or underdog effects (whereby people gravitate toward candidates who are not doing well). Bandwagon effects can be thought of as ordinary conformity effects, resulting either from informational social influence or normative social influence (Noelle-Neuman, 1984; Scheufele & Moy, 2000). And underdog effects might occur as the result of feelings of sympathy or empathy (Fey, 1997; Kirchgässner & Wolters, 1987; McKelvey & Ordeshook, 1985; Simon, 1954). Many laboratory experiments have found evidence of bandwagon effects (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1994; Atkin, 1969; Cook & Welch, 1940; Forsythe, Myerson, Rietz, & Weber, 1993; Mehrabian, 1998), as have correlational studies (Schmitt-Beck, 1996; Skalaban, 1988). And two experimental studies found evidence of underdog effects (Ceci & Kain, 1982; Laponce, 1966).

The Voter's Personality

Recent work has explored how voters' personalities might shape their candidate choices. People who score high in openness to experience are especially likely to have voted for Democratic candidates (Rentfrow, Jost, Gosling, & Potter, 2009). Agreeableness and openness to experience are also associated with voting for Democrats, whereas emotional stability and conscientiousness are associated with voting for Republicans (Barbaranelli, Caprara, Vecchione, & Fraley, 2006). These initial findings are likely to inspire future work illuminating their meanings.

Design of the Ballot

Ballot Layout

The 2000 U.S. presidential election called attention to many aspects of the procedure by which Americans have cast votes, one of which was the design of ballots. One especially interesting instance involved ballots in Palm Beach County, Florida, that listed two columns of candidate names on either side of a column of holes to punch. The layout of the names and holes was sufficiently confusing to induce some people who meant to vote for Al Gore to vote for Pat Buchanan instead (Agresti & Presnell, 2002; Wand et al., 2001). Thus, poor ballot design can induce unintended votes.

Candidate Name Order

At least since the beginning of the last century, seasoned political observers have believed that the ordering of candidates' names on ballots has some influence on the outcomes of elections (e.g., Harris, 1934; Wilson, 1910). These observers speculated that being listed first helps a candidate to win an election, especially when many candidates are competing, when voters are not well informed about a race for a little-known office, or when party affiliations cannot facilitate voters' selections.

Name order effects are easy to imagine. American voters are often asked to vote on many candidate races and referenda, and learning information to make informed choices would be tremendously burdensome, so it seems plausible that some voters might find themselves in voting booths without much information to yield informed choices in some races. And people might sometimes find themselves feeling torn between two competing candidates, unable to choose between them on substantive grounds.

If people feel obligated to vote under such circumstances, they may be inclined to select the first name they see in a list of candidates, creating what is called a "primacy effect" (Krosnick, 1991). People tend to evaluate objects with a confirmatory bias: People usually begin a

search of memory for information about a choice option by looking for reasons to select it, rather than reasons not to select it (Klayman & Ha, 1987; Koriat, Lichtenstein, & Fischhoff, 1980). So when considering a list of candidates, voters may search memory primarily for reasons to vote for each contender rather than reasons to vote against him or her. And when working through a list of options, people may think less and less about each subsequent alternative, because they become increasingly fatigued, and short-term memory becomes increasingly clogged with thoughts. Therefore, people may be more likely to generate supportive thoughts about candidates listed initially, biasing them toward voting for these individuals.

According to many studies, primacy effects occur often (for a review, see Miller & Krosnick, 1998; see also Brockington, 2003; Koppell & Steen, 2004; Krosnick, Miller, & Tichy, 2004). These effects appear to be less common when voters have substantive information with which to choose between the competitors: when candidates' party affiliations are listed on the ballot, when a race has been well publicized, and when an incumbent is running for reelection. Name order effects are also especially likely to occur among voters who are less educated, presumably because they are less knowledgeable about political affairs. Experimental simulations of elections have also yielded evidence of primacy effects (Coombs, Peters, & Strom, 1974; Kamin, 1958; Taebel, 1975), and these effects were weakened when participants were given other information with which to choose between candidates (Coombs, Peters, & Strom, 1974).

Through What Cognitive Processes do People Form Candidate Preference?

Memory-Based Evaluations

For decades, the process of candidate preference formation was presumed to involve the retrieval and integration of information available in memory on Election Day. Citizens were presumed to canvass their memories for positive and negative information about each candidate, use that information to derive overall attitudes toward the candidates, and support the candidate with the higher overall favorability (e.g., Kelley & Mirer, 1974). When asked what they liked and disliked about presidential candidates during the weeks before elections, many national survey respondents have generated few reasons or none at all (e.g., Gant & Davis, 1984), fueling perennial concerns among social scientists about citizen competence and the democratic process.

Consistent with the work of Norman Anderson (1981), one account of the process suggests that it is quite simple:

The voter canvasses his likes and dislikes of the leading candidates and major parties involved in an election. Weighing

each like and dislike equally, he votes for the candidate toward whom he has the greatest net number of favorable attitudes, if there is such a candidate. If no candidate has such an advantage, the voter votes consistently with his party affiliation, if he has one. (Kelley & Mirer, 1974, p. 574)

Online Evaluations

An alternative account proposes that citizens may instead form and continually update candidate preferences through an online process (Lodge, McGraw, & Stroh, 1989). Over the course of a campaign, citizens have many opportunities to learn new things about the candidates for office. From the news media, political advertisements, conversations with friends and associates, and even late night comedians, citizens learn a vast array of information about each candidate. As each new piece of information is received, its evaluative implications may be integrated into citizens' existing summary attitudes toward the candidate. Consequently, candidate evaluations may be continually updated over the course of a campaign.

A good deal of evidence suggests that citizens do indeed form their candidate preferences in this way (e.g., Lodge, McGraw, & Stroh, 1989; Lodge, Steenbergen, & Brau, 1995; McGraw, Lodge, & Stroh, 1990). This online process is especially likely when people know they will eventually need to make a judgment (Hastie & Park, 1986), which is certainly the case for citizens who anticipate participating in an election. Online candidate evaluation is also more prevalent among political experts than political novices (McGraw, Lodge, & Stroh, 1990).

This evidence puts a different spin on the finding that citizens are often hard pressed to articulate clear reasons for their candidate preferences. If citizens form such preferences online, they need not retain the specific pieces of information on which preferences are based. Therefore, it is not troubling that citizens cannot list all the considerations underlying their preferences.

Other evidence suggests that the online updating process is much more nuanced than Kelley and Mirer's (1974) simpler proposal (see Holbrook, Krosnick, Visser, Gardner, & Cacioppo, 2001). First, citizens bring an optimistic perspective with them whenever evaluating a new political candidate: They expect the best of him or her, and this expectation gives all candidates a slight edge on the positive side of neutral before citizens know anything about them. Second, first impressions are self-sustaining—the first few pieces of information that a citizen gets about a candidate have more impact on final evaluations than do pieces of information acquired later. And people place greater weight on unfavorable information than on favorable information when evaluating candidates.

Consistent with this account are experimental findings as well (Moskowitz & Stroh, 1996). In one such study,

participants read a newspaper editorial that created either favorable or unfavorable impressions of a hypothetical candidate, and then participants read about the policy positions of the candidates. When unfavorable impressions had been created initially, participants placed more weight on issues on which they disagreed with the candidate when evaluating him. When favorable impressions had been created initially, participants placed less weight on issues on which they disagreed with the candidate when evaluating him. However, creating an initial positive impression did not change the weight placed on evaluation criteria, perhaps because participants would have had positive expectations regarding the candidate even in the absence of an editorial creating such expectations. Thus, it appeared that unfavorable initial impressions were self-sustaining and especially powerful.

Interestingly, the relation of candidate preferences with the information that drives them is not unidirectional. Citizens certainly derive their candidate preferences from attributes held by the candidates that they like and dislike. But once a candidate preference begins to form, citizens adjust what they like and dislike about the candidates to rationalize their candidate preferences. Liking a candidate initially leads people to grow the number of the candidate's attributes that they like. And disliking a candidate initially leads people to grow the number of the candidate's attributes that they dislike. The longer before Election Day a citizen forms a candidate preference, the more apparent these rationalization processes are on election day (Rahn, Krosnick, & Breuning, 1994). Thus, citizens' beliefs about candidates and their candidate preferences end up more consistent on Election Day than they were at the time the candidate preferences were formed (see also Krosnick, Pfent, & Courser, 2003).

"Thin Slice" Judgments

The online and memory-based models specify different cognitive processes by which candidate evaluations can be formed, but they share the assumption that such evaluations are deliberately derived from substantive information about the candidates. Recent research suggests that candidate evaluations may also arise spontaneously and quite effortlessly on the basis of minimal information, called "thin slices" (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992). One especially provocative set of findings suggests that automatic inferences about a candidate's traits based on the candidate's facial appearance may play a role in electoral outcomes (Todorov, Mandisodza, Goren, & Hall, 2005; see Ambady & Weisbuch, Macrae & Quadflieg, volume 1).

For example, some experiment participants looked at headshot photographs of unfamiliar candidates for various

Congressional seats and were asked to guess the candidates' traits (Todorov, Mandisodza, Goren, & Hall, 2005). Candidates who were thought to appear more competent had in fact been more successful in winning past elections. Judgments of candidate competence based on facial appearance also predict subsequent election outcomes (Ballew & Todorov, 2007; Todorov, Mandisodza, Goren, & Hall, 2005). A wide array of other judgments that participants made based on candidate appearance (e.g., honesty, trustworthiness, likeability, charisma, attractiveness, age) did not predict election outcomes. These findings suggest that the automatic inferences of competence may play a role in candidate preference formation.

Other Determinants of Candidate Choices

Past studies have examined many other factors that might shape people's candidate selections, including:

- Identification with a political party (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960)
- Performance of the incumbent administration in running the country (Fiorina, 1981)
- Pursuit of the interests of particular social groups (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948)
- Perceptions of the candidates' personalities (Kinder, 1986)
- The emotions that the candidates evoke in voters (Abelson, Kinder, Peters, & Fiske, 1982).

Countless regressions have predicted candidate preferences with large arrays of such variables, and they always explained a large amount of variance—in fact, a huge amount of variance. So much that the results can often be unstable and inconsistent across different investigators' attempts to explain voters' decisions in the same election. Because the vast majority of work in this literature simply reports correlations and partial correlations of purported predictors with vote choices, evidence of the causal impact of considerations on candidate selections is not yet strong. Some attempts at discerning causal influence more directly have occurred but have led different investigators to contradictory conclusions (see, e.g., Niemi & Weisberg, 2001). The most exciting innovations in the voting literature will no doubt occur when political psychologists finally discern how and when various considerations shape candidate choices using more convincing analytic methods.

How do People Decide Which Government Policies to Favor and Oppose?

Public opinion has become a ubiquitous element of the political landscape. More than ever before, American citizens

have the opportunity to voice their views on the issues of the day. And these views are consequential: When public opinion shifts, policy shifts often follow (e.g., Page & Shapiro, 1983). This would seem to provide prima facie evidence that the U.S. political system is living up to the ideals of democracy. Before reaching that conclusion, though, one must consider how citizens form their policy preferences. As it turns out, many factors that influence these preferences, and their normative implications for democracy vary greatly.

Ideology

Given the frequency with which political elites couch policy debates in broad ideological terms, it seems quite reasonable to assume that many, if not most, citizens derive their policy preferences from a set of general ideological principles to which they subscribe. These foundational assumptions (e.g., about how society should be structured, about the proper aims of government) might be expected to provide structure to attitudes on a wide range of issues, all of which are logically related through their shared bases in the underlying ideology. Try as they might, however, social scientists have largely failed to find evidence that citizens' attitudes toward specific policies are derived from broader ideological principles (for more extensive reviews of these efforts, see Kinder, 1983, 2006; Kinder & Sears, 1985).

The quest for evidence of ideology was inspired by Philip Converse (1964). In a densely packed and enormously influential chapter, he spelled out several criteria that might indicate the degree to which citizens' policy preferences are organized into ideologically constrained belief systems. Using data from national surveys, Converse demonstrated that by every one of these criteria, the vast majority of Americans failed to exhibit anything even remotely resembling ideologically constrained belief systems.

For example, Converse demonstrated that knowing whether citizens held liberal or conservative attitudes in one policy domain offered virtually no guidance in predicting their attitudes in other domains. In fact, knowing citizens' policy positions offered only the most modest indication of what their position on the very same issue would be a couple of years later. And when asked to explain their attitudes toward the major political parties and presidential candidates, virtually none drew on ideological principles or language. From all of this, Converse concluded that very few citizens held clear political preferences that were derived in any meaningful way from broad ideological principles. And in fact, Converse said, most citizens do not even have attitudes at all toward any given policy. When pressed to offer policy opinions in surveys, people usually report what Converse called "nonattitudes," top of the head responses to questions that reflect little deliberation or understanding.

Converse's bold claims inspired a tidal wave of research, much of which sought to rehabilitate the tattered image of the American citizen. Some scholars suggested that Converse's findings were unique to the politically quiescent Eisenhower years, and that a more ideologically charged political atmosphere would lead citizens to exhibit more ideologically constrained policy preferences (e.g., Nie, Verba, & Petrocik, 1979). Others offered methodological critiques, suggesting that the apparent incoherence and instability of citizens' issue positions were a function of poorly designed survey questions (e.g., Achen, 1975; Erikson, 1979; Judd & Milburn, 1980). Still others criticized Converse's strategy of aggregating across individual citizens in search of a universal organizing structure and overlooking the possibility of idiosyncratic organizing principles (e.g., Lane, 1962, 1969, 1973; Marcus, Tabb, & Sullivan, 1974).

Thorough investigation of these critiques has, for the most part, vindicated Converse's (1964) original claims. Citizens are often quite willing to place themselves on a liberal-conservative ideological continuum, but these self-placements often reflect affective reactions to the groups and symbols associated with the terms liberal and conservative rather than endorsement of abstract ideological principles (e.g., Conover & Feldman, 1981; Valentino, Traugott, & Hutchings, 2002). Even when ideological self-placement does predict specific issue positions, it seems unwise to attribute these issue positions to derivation from broad ideological principles.

Self-Interest

If citizens usually do not derive their policy preferences from abstract ideologies, on what are these preferences based? One intuitively appealing answer is self-interest: the pursuit of immediate material benefits for oneself. Perhaps citizens develop positive attitudes toward policies from which they personally stand to benefit and develop negative attitudes toward policies that are likely to have a negative impact on their own material interests.

In fact, however, self-interest defined in this way explains astonishing little of the variance in policy preferences (for reviews, see Citrin & Green, 1990; Sears & Funk, 1991). For example, having children enrolled in public schools does not increase support for government spending on education (Jennings, 1979); being unemployed does not increase support for government interventions to ensure that everyone who wants to work has a job (Sears, Lau, Tyler, & Allen, 1980); having a potential personal stake in affirmative action policies has no impact on attitudes toward such policies (Kinder & Sanders, 1996); living in a high-crime neighborhood renders people no less supportive of laws that protect the rights of the accused

(Sears, Lau, Tyler, & Allen, 1980); and being personally affected by the Vietnam War (e.g., because one's son or daughter is currently serving in the war) had no impact on attitudes toward that war (Lau, Brown, & Sears, 1978). In these and countless other policy arenas, having a personal stake in a policy debate has virtually no impact on attitudes toward the policy.

Exceptions to this general rule do exist, and they help to clarify the conditions under which considerations of personal interests do and do not influence policy preferences. For example, smokers are much more opposed to policies that restrict smoking and policies that increase cigarette taxes than are nonsmokers (Dixon, Lowery, Levy, & Ferraro, 1991; Green & Gerken, 1989). Likewise, homeowners who stood to benefit directly from a highly publicized and concrete tax cut were more supportive of the referendum than were people who did not own homes and would not receive the tax cut (Sears & Citrin, 1982).

These are unusual cases in which the impact of a policy on individuals' immediate material interests was unusually large, salient, and certain (e.g., Mansbridge, 1990; Sears & Funk, 1991). Consistent with this interpretation, experimental manipulations that enhance the magnitude of personal costs or benefits (e.g., Green, 1988) or the salience of people's own material interests (e.g., Sears & Lau, 1983) immediately before attitudes are expressed strengthen the relation between self-interest and policy attitudes. Similarly, self-interest plays a more limited role in shaping attitudes toward policies with less clear-cut implications for the evaluators (e.g., Lowery & Sigelman, 1981). Most of the time, then, self-interest plays virtually no role in determining which policies citizens favor and which policies they oppose.

Groups, Group Identification, and Intergroup Competition

Although citizens' policy preferences rarely hinge on perceptions of their own material interests, they do often appear to depend on loyalties to social groups (for more on social groups, see Dovidio & Gaertner, this volume; Yzerbyt & Demoulin, this volume). In Converse's (1964) fruitless quest for evidence of ideological constraint, for example, he found that when citizens were asked to explain their evaluations of political candidates and parties, the most common explanations involved social groups. Some citizens may support the Democratic Party, for example, because it is "the party of the working class," whereas other citizens may favor the Republican Party because it "looks out for small business owners."

In this way, social groups sometimes provide a framework for organizing the political landscape (Brady &

Sniderman, 1985). Preferences are sometimes driven by citizens' affective reactions to the groups who are helped or hurt by a policy. For example, people favor policies that benefit groups they like and oppose policies that will benefit groups they dislike (e.g., Sniderman, Hagen, Tetlock, & Brady, 1986). In one instance, attitudes toward affirmative action were shown to be shaped by attitudes toward the social groups that would be advantaged by the policy (e.g., Kinder & Sanders, 1996; Sears, Hensler, & Speer, 1979), and this is true for an array of other policies as well, including welfare (e.g., Gilens, 1995, 1996), international relations (e.g., Hurwitz & Pefley, 1987), spending to fight AIDS (e.g., Price & Hsu, 1992; Sniderman et al., 1991), and immigration reform (e.g., Citrin, Reingold, & Green, 1990).

Policy preferences are influenced not only by attitudes toward particular groups but also by membership in such groups. For example, even among citizens who are sympathetic to the plight of working women, women who belong to and identify with this group express more consistently pro-women policies than people who do not belong to this group (Conover, 1988).

Not surprisingly, group cleavages are sometimes especially pronounced when groups are competing for scarce resources. Regardless of reality, it is understandable that citizens might think that government spending on programs to aid one group comes at the expense of spending on programs to aid other groups. Similarly, hiring policies or university admissions criteria that give preferential treatment to members of some social groups might be seen as limiting the opportunities of members of other groups. Consequently, realistic group conflict can account for important political attitudes in some contexts (e.g., Glaser, 1994; Key, 1949; Quillian, 1995).

Actual competition between groups for limited material resources is not necessary to produce intergroup conflict (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Simply perceiving group boundaries can set into motion efforts to positively distinguish one's ingroup from one's outgroup. It would be unwise, therefore, to attribute all group-centric policy preferences to actual competition for scarce resources.

Some scholars have suggested that many policy preferences are affected by a particular form of intergroup antipathy: *symbolic racism* (e.g., Sears, 1988, 1993; Sears, Van Laar, Carrillo, & Kosterman, 1997). When directed at African Americans, this form of racism is thought to be a subtler successor to the blatant, "old fashioned" prejudice of the Jim Crow era. Symbolic racism is thought to be a blend of the anti-Black affect (the residue of having been socialized in a culture that devalues African Americans) and the perception that African Americans violate traditional American values such as the Protestant work ethic,

traditional morality, and respect for traditional authority (Sears, Van Laar, Carrillo, & Kosterman, 1997). Symbolic racists are thought to hold four core beliefs: that racial discrimination is a thing of the past, that contemporary disadvantages are attributable to poor work ethic, that continuing demands for assistance are without merit, and that special advantages are illegitimate (e.g., Henry & Sears, 2002; Sears & Henry 2003).

Endorsement of this belief system does predict citizens' attitudes toward a range of race-related policies (e.g., Gilens, 1996; Kinder & Sanders, 1996; McConahay, 1986; McConahay, Hardee, & Batts, 1981; Sears, 1988, 1993; Sears, Van Laar, Carrillo, & Kosterman, 1997). For example, symbolic racism is a strong predictor of attitudes toward policies to guarantee equal opportunities for African Americans, federal assistance to African Americans, and affirmative action policies (Sears, Van Laar, Carrillo, & Kosterman, 1997). In fact, symbolic racism is often the strongest predictor of these policy preferences, overshadowing the impact of political ideology, party identification, and social welfare policy attitudes.

Work on symbolic racism and other subtle forms of prejudice has not been without controversy. Some have criticized inconsistencies in conceptualization and measurement of symbolic racism (e.g., Bobo, 1988; Schuman, Steeh, & Bobo, 1997; Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986; Stoker, 1998). Others have questioned the unidimensionality of symbolic racism (e.g., Kluegel & Bobo, 1993; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Stoker, 1998). Still others have suggested that associations between symbolic racism and policy preferences stem from content overlap in the two sets of measures and not from the causal impact of the former on the latter (e.g., Chong, 2000; Hurwitz & Peffley, 1998; Schuman, 2000; Sidanius et al., 1999; Sniderman, Crosby, & Howell, 2000). Finally, critics have suggested that measures of symbolic racism actually reflect other factors (e.g., political conservatism, endorsement of individualistic values, anti-egalitarianism, authoritarianism) that drive the observed association (e.g., Kluegel & Bobo, 1993; Sidanius, Levin, Rabinowitz, & Federico, 1999; Sniderman & Carmines, 1997; Sniderman & Piazza, 1993; Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986). Sears and his colleagues have directly addressed each of these critiques and have presented evidence they say is consistent with the original formulation of symbolic racism (Tarman & Sears, 2005).

Values

Other scholars have nominated *core values* as the bedrock principles that give rise to particular policy preferences (e.g., Feldman, 1988; Feldman & Steenbergen, 2001; Feldman & Zaller, 1992; Peffley & Hurwitz, 1987;

Rokeach, 1973; Rokeach & Ball-Rokeach, 1988; Tetlock, 1986, 2000). These scholars have assumed that “underlying all political belief systems are ultimate or terminal values that specify the end-states of public policy. These values—which may take such diverse forms as economic efficiency, social equality, individual freedom, crime control, national security, and racial purity—function as the back stops of belief systems” (Tetlock, 2000, p. 247). From this perspective, then, particular policies are supported or opposed to the extent that they uphold or challenge fundamental beliefs about desirable end states or modes of conduct.

Ample evidence is consistent with the notion that core values give rise to and constrain policy preferences (e.g., Feldman, 1988; Feldman & Zaller, 1992; Peffley & Hurwitz, 1987). When asked to justify their attitudes toward specific welfare policies, for example, citizens often spontaneously invoke core values (Feldman & Zaller, 1992; Hochschild, 1981). Indeed, according to citizens' own rationales for their policy preferences, values play a considerably larger role in the development of political attitudes than do abstract political ideologies (Feldman & Zaller, 1992). Citizens' core values predict a broad range of policy preferences (e.g., Feldman, 1988; Peffley & Hurwitz, 1987). Commitment to equality, for example, predicts attitudes toward many social policies, including welfare programs, government provision of jobs and an acceptable standard of living, and others (Feldman, 1988).

Competition between values can also shape policy preferences. Many debates about government policy pit competing values against one another, requiring difficult trade-offs (Rokeach, 1973; Tetlock, 1986). In the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, for example, new sweeping national security measures sought to enhance the safety of Americans but came at a heavy cost to personal freedom. According to the value pluralism model (Tetlock, 1986), policy preferences often hinge on the relative priority placed on competing values. Consistent with this notion, value hierarchies predict policy preferences. For example, shifts over time in the priority that Americans assigned to equality directly mirrored changes over time in support for policies designed to enhance equality (Rokeach & Ball-Rokeach, 1988).

And at the individual level, the priority placed on particular values strongly predicts attitudes toward specific policies. In one investigation, for example, participants rank ordered a set of core values according to their personal importance, and they expressed their views on a broad range of policies (Tetlock, 1986). As expected, value hierarchies strongly predicted policy preferences. The more participants prioritized freedom over national security, for example, the more strongly they opposed domestic

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C.I.A. surveillance. And the more participants prioritized a world of beauty over personal prosperity, the more strongly they opposed opening public park lands for drilling and mining to promote economic growth. Across six diverse public policies, value rankings proved to be robust predictors of individuals' policy preferences.

News Media Influence

Policy preferences are also influenced by the ways in which the media cover those issues and, in particular, by the way those issues are *framed* (for more on framing, see Gilovich & Griffin, volume 1). Framing has two relatively distinct meanings, both of which concern the way an issue or problem is presented. In the first meaning, frames refer to the narrative packaging of an issue, which highlights some elements as central to the issue and relegates other elements to the periphery (e.g., Gamson, 1992; Iyengar, 1991; Nelson & Kinder, 1996). In this way, a frame communicates the essence of an issue (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987). And indeed, framing manipulations of this sort can alter reports of public opinion (e.g., Bobo & Kluegel, 1997; Iyengar, 1991; Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997). A second, related form of framing comes from the decision-making literature and refers to "the decision maker's conception of the acts, outcomes, and contingencies associated with a particular choice" (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981, p. 453). Even when the expected value of the two courses of action is equivalent, these frames powerfully shape decisions (e.g., Kahneman & Tversky, 1981, 1986; Tversky & Kahneman, 1980, 1981, 1986).

Presidential Rhetoric

Few if any political actors have the capacity to capture the attention of the American public more reliably than sitting U.S. presidents, putting them in a prime position to shape citizens' policy preferences. And indeed, studies have documented striking examples of presidential rhetoric influencing public opinion (e.g., Barton, 1974–1975; Kernell, 1976).

The impact of presidential rhetoric on public opinion is thought to be especially strong during international crises and periods of war because (1) the president occupies a unique position of legitimacy on issues of foreign policy; (2) presidents and their administrations are typically the primary source of information regarding the country's involvement in international affairs; and (3) presidents can often make their case at the start of such crises, affording the opportunity to control the framing of the situation (e.g., Bennett, 1990; Cook, 2005; Fuchs & Lorek, 2005; Mermin, 1999; Thrall, 2000). Consistent with this notion, experimental evidence suggests that presidential rhetoric

is more consequential on issues of foreign policy than on domestic issues (Hurwitz, 1989).

Of course, the president is not always successful in swaying public opinion, even on foreign policy issues. Despite President George W. Bush's vigorous efforts to rally public support for the war in Iraq, for example, citizens rapidly turned against the administration as the initial rationale for the war was called into question, progress appeared to be stalling, and casualties mounted (Patrick & Thrall, 2007).

Not surprisingly, well-liked presidents are more effective in swaying public opinion than are less popular presidents (e.g., Kernell, 1993; Mondak, 1993; Page & Shapiro, 1984; Page, Shapiro, & Dempsey, 1987). In fact, unpopular presidents sometimes produce movement in the opposite direction of their advocacy (Sigelman & Sigelman, 1981).

Presumably in part because of this popularity effect, the impact of presidential rhetoric on citizens' attitudes sometimes depends on the political party with which citizens identify. In 1997, for example, President Clinton and his administration launched an aggressive campaign to build public support for the Kyoto treaty, an international agreement to limit levels of greenhouse gasses in an effort to curb global warming. Central to this effort was the White House Conference on Global Climate Change, a gathering of government, industry, and scientific experts who delivered presentations on the issue of global warming. These presentations, which were nationally televised, kicked off an unprecedented wave of attention to global warming.

Were the Clinton administration's efforts effective? Among fellow Democrats, they were indeed quite effective, but Republicans were not moved by Clinton's efforts (Krosnick, Holbrook, & Visser, 2000). For example, in the months preceding the White House Conference on Global Climate Change, 73% of strong Democrats believed that global warming was happening, whereas 68% of strong Republicans thought so, a gap of 5%. In the wake of the conference, those figures were 87% and 69%, a gap of 18% (Krosnick, Holbrook, & Visser, 2000). Thus, a president's effectiveness in moving public opinion appears sometimes to be limited to those members of the public who share the president's political party.

Separate from their ability to shape citizens' policy preferences, presidents can sometimes draw attention to a particular issue, increasing its apparent national importance. For example, the more attention the president pays to a particular policy domain in the State of the Union address (e.g., the economy, civil rights, foreign policy), the more concern citizens express about that domain in subsequent public opinion surveys (e.g., Cohen, 1995). Other speeches also appear to influence the perceived national importance of policy domains (e.g., Behr & Iyengar, 1985).

It is difficult to fully disentangle the effect of presidential rhetoric from the impact of the media, though. Presidential speeches set the agenda for the news media to some degree (e.g., Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Edwards & Wood, 1999; Gonzenbach, 1996; Wanta & Foote, 1994), and presidential focus on an issue is inspired partly by heightened media attention to it (Edwards & Wood, 1999; Flemming, Wood, & Bohte, 1999; Gonzenbach, 1996; Wood & Peake, 1998). But the existing evidence suggests that presidential rhetoric can contribute to judgments of national seriousness.

Personality

A number of scholars have raised the possibility that some policy preferences may be influenced by core dispositions that vary across individuals. The most widely investigated of these dispositions is authoritarianism. After a number of false starts (for a review, see Altemeyer, 1981), scholars have established a conceptually coherent and empirically validated model of authoritarianism, which is defined as an interrelated set of predispositions toward submissiveness to authority, aggression toward deviants, and strict adherence to conventional traditions and norms (e.g., Altemeyer, 1981, 1988a,b, 1996).

And indeed, a number of investigations have demonstrated that individual differences in authoritarianism predict a broad range of policy preferences. For example, relative to individuals who are lower in authoritarianism, high authoritarians are more likely to support extreme and punitive policies to deal with drugs and the spread of AIDS, more likely to minimize the importance of environmental conservation and to express hostility toward environmentalists, and more likely to blame the homeless for their circumstances (Peterson, Doty, & Winter, 1993). Authoritarians are also less tolerant of homosexuals (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998), more prejudiced against racial and ethnic minorities (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998), more likely to support restrictions on human rights (e.g., Moghaddam & Vuksanovic, 1990), and more supportive of war as a means of settling international disputes (e.g., Doty, Winter, Peterson, & Kimmelmeier, 1997).

Recent work suggests that the strength of these associations between authoritarianism and policy preferences varies depending on the immediate context. When the social order is perceived to be jeopardized—by leaders who falter, institutions that betray the trust of citizens, a polarized and divisive political atmosphere, or by other threatening circumstances—authoritarian predispositions become relevant and the policy gap between low and high authoritarians widens substantially (e.g., Feldman, 2003; Feldman & Stenner, 1997; Stenner, 2005).

A second dispositional factor related to policy preferences is social dominance orientation, or individual differences in the preference for hierarchical social systems over systems that are more egalitarian (e.g., Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994; Sidanius, Mitchell, Haley, & Navarrete, 2006). Like authoritarianism, social dominance orientation does predict policy preferences. For example, those high in social dominance orientation are less supportive of gay and lesbian rights, less supportive of women's rights, more supportive of military programs, more supportive of law and order policies, and less supportive of environmental conservation (e.g., Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994).

The conceptual and empirical similarities between authoritarianism and social dominance orientation have not escaped the notice of scholars. And indeed, the two constructs are related, though the correlations are typically relatively weak (e.g., Duckitt, 2001; Heaven & Connors, 2001; Heaven & St. Quintin, 2003). Further, multivariate analyses indicate that the two constructs each account for unique variance in policy preferences (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998; Van Hiel & Mervielde, 2002). And in some cases, the two constructs predict endorsement of different types of policies. For example, authoritarianism predicts punitive reactions to those who deviate from traditional norms, whereas social dominance orientation predicts punitive reactions to those from low status groups (e.g., Duckitt, 2001, 2006; Duckitt, Wagner, du Plessis, & Birum, 2002). And authoritarianism tends to predict socially conservative policy preferences whereas social dominance orientation tends to predict economically conservative policy preferences (Van Hiel, Pandelaere, & Duriez, 2004).

HOW DO PEOPLE DECIDE WITH WHICH POLITICAL PARTY TO AFFILIATE?

The nature and origins of party affiliation have been debated for decades. Simplifying only a little, the debate boils down to two different conceptualizations of party affiliation. Some have characterized party affiliation as a psychological attachment to a particular political party with roots in early socialization processes, whereas others have conceived of party affiliation in more rational terms, as a calculated decision based on policy positions, evaluations of party performance, and other criteria. Each of these perspectives is reviewed next.

Childhood Socialization

Partisanship took center stage in the study of political behavior with the publication of *The American Voter*

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(Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960). This conceptualization of party affiliation, which was central to what became known as the “Michigan model” of voting, was heavily influenced by social psychology. At its core was the acknowledgment that most individuals identify with particular reference groups, and that these identifications are often deeply psychologically meaningful and of great consequence. Campbell and colleagues suggested that political parties are one such reference group with which many individuals identify, and that this identification powerfully shapes political thoughts and behavior.

Campbell and his colleagues suggested that these party identifications develop through socialization processes during childhood. Much like religious affiliation, children learn from their parents to identify with a particular political party. And in part because they color the way new information is perceived, these early partisan attachments were proposed to be quite enduring (e.g., Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; Easton & Dennis, 1969; Greenstein, 1965; Hess & Torney, 1967).

For the most part the literature on political socialization supports these claims—children do tend to adopt the party identification of their parents, and these identifications do tend to be quite persistent. One of the most elaborate investigations of this issue, for example, involved a longitudinal survey of adolescents and their parents. Interviews were conducted when the children were in their late teens, and again when the children were in their mid-20s (Jennings & Niemi, 1978). The correspondence between the party identification of parents and their children was striking. Only 7% of family units involved parents who identified as Democrats or Republicans and children who identified with the other party. And for the most part this parent–child correspondence tended to persist as the children progressed from adolescence into early adulthood.

In addition to parent–child correspondence, this conceptualization of party identification also implies that partisanship should be quite stable over time. And indeed, a number of longitudinal investigations have revealed high levels of stability in party identification over several decades (e.g., Alwin, Cohen, & Newcomb, 1991; Green & Palmquist, 1994; Jennings & Markus, 1984; Sears & Funk, 1990). Although perturbations in response to extreme political circumstances have occurred, partisan orientations have tended to remain highly stable over time (for a review, see Bartels, 2000).

Partisan correspondence between parents and children is not inevitable, of course, and its occurrence is especially likely under some circumstances. For example, children are particularly likely to adopt the party identification of their parents in more politicized households, and in households in which parents have stable political attitudes themselves

(Beck & Jennings, 1991; Jennings, Stoker, & Bowers, 1999), at least in part because parents’ partisan orientations are communicated more clearly and effectively in such households (Tedin, 1980). The political times also matter. Political socialization accelerates during national elections (Sears & Valentino, 1997), primarily because these salient political events serve as catalysts for political conversations between parents and children (Valentino & Sears, 1998).

Policy Preference Correspondence

As our discussion up to this point implies, party identification has often been conceived of as “an unmoved mover” (e.g., Johnston, 2006), a bedrock predisposition that determines the way political issues and events are perceived, but it is almost never determined by perceptions of those issues and events. A very different perspective suggests that party identification is indeed determined by individuals’ assessments of salient issues, events, and individuals of the day.

This perspective is rooted in Downs’ (1957) conceptualization of party identification as a heuristic that efficiently captures the correspondence between the party platforms and an individual’s own policy preferences. Building on this foundation, some have characterized party identification as a “running tally” that summarizes the various political attitudes that citizens form over time (e.g., Fiorina, 1981). As people acquire additional information and form new attitudes, party identification presumably shifts in a Bayesian updating process (Achen, 1992). From this perspective, then, party identification is a direct function of political attitudes: Citizens identify with the party that best represents their own current political preferences.

And like a glass seen as half full or half empty, the stability of party identification (or lack thereof) has sometimes been offered as evidence for this view. That is, although stability may be the rule, scholars have provided evidence that party identification sometimes fluctuates in response to policy preferences, attitudes toward particular political candidates, and past voting behavior (e.g., Brody & Rothenberg, 1988; Fiorina, 1981; Franklin & Jackson 1983; Markus & Converse, 1979), suggesting that it is at least in part a consequence of these factors.

Reconciling these Divergent Perspectives

Is party identification an “unmoved mover,” an early-formed and enduring predisposition that shapes other political attitudes, or is it instead the product of these other political attitudes? A growing body of work suggests that the causal relation between party identification and policy attitudes can run both ways, but the former tends to have a considerably stronger impact than the latter.

Setting to rest an earlier debate, for example, it has become clear that when measurement error is taken into account, party identification is tremendously stable over long spans of time and a wide array of changing political circumstances (e.g., Carsey & Layman, 2006; Green, Palmquist, & Schickler, 2002). These findings pose a strong challenge to the notion that party identification is updated in response to currently salient policy debates, political candidates, and performance evaluations.

When party identification responds to current policy preferences, the impact is small and more than offset by the reciprocal influence of party identification on current policy preferences: Even on hot-button issues like abortion, government services, and government assistance for African Americans, citizens bring their attitudes into line with their party identification (Carsey & Layman, 2006; see also Cohen, 2003). Furthermore, the effect of immediate political events on party identification is often short-lived: Citizens usually “snap back” to their earlier party identification (Green, Palmquist, & Schickler, 2002).

All of this suggests that, just as *The American Voter* proposed, party identification appears to reflect an enduring and psychologically meaningful attachment to a group. Like other important social identities, party identification appears to be deeply entrenched. And as subsequent sections of this chapter explore more fully, party identification often has far reaching consequences for thought and behavior.

Genetics?

Scholars have recently questioned whether the transmission of party identification from parent to child may occur more directly than Campbell and his colleagues ever imagined. Specifically, recent findings of a genetic component to basic political attitudes (e.g., Martin et al., 1986; Tesser, 1993) and voting behavior (e.g., Fowler, Baker, & Dawes, 2008) raise the possibility that party identification might also be at least partially transmitted through genes. In fact, however, evidence from monozygotic and dizygotic twins suggests that correspondence between parents and children in party identification is due to socialization processes and not heredity (Alford, Funk, & Hibbing, 2005).

CAUSES OF OTHER POLITICAL JUDGMENTS

National Issue Priorities

At any moment in history, large nations face complex multiplicities of problems, and no government can make

significant headway in addressing all of them simultaneously. Consequently, choices must be made about which direction to devote legislative attention at any given time, and democratic policy makers make these decisions guided partly by the polity’s concerns and desires (e.g., Cobb & Elder, 1972; Kingdon, 1995; Walker, 1977). These decisions are shaped by many forces, including statistical indicators of national conditions, dramatic “focusing events” that call attention to those conditions, lobbying efforts by interest groups, the development of innovative technological solutions to long-standing social problems, and more.

One of these forces is “national mood” (Kingdon, 1995). Letters and telephone calls from constituents provide an impetus for a Representative to focus legislative efforts on particular issues. And news media opinion polls identifying problems that the public considers most important for the country call legislators’ attention to them and deflect their attention away from others (Cohen, 1973; Kingdon, 1981, 1995; Peters & Hogwood, 1985). Therefore, understanding the ups and downs of an issue on the legislative agenda requires understanding the issue’s ups and downs on the public’s agenda.

The most frequently used survey measure of the public’s agenda is the so-called “most important problem” (MIP) question, developed by George Gallup in the 1930s, and variants of it. Answers to the MIP question have always been remarkably diverse, including everything from the domestic economy to crime and drugs to education to moral breakdown. Only very rarely has a single problem been mentioned by even as many as one quarter of Americans over the years, and answers are very volatile, meaning that any given problem is likely to be widely cited for only a short period, after which some other problem emerges at the top of Americans’ priorities.

A look through the public opinion literature in political science, sociology, communication, and related disciplines surprisingly turns up only one widely researched explanation for the volatility in the public’s national priorities. According to the media agenda-setting hypothesis, the more attention the news media accord to a problem, the more likely Americans are to consider it nationally important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This section describes this hypothesis, in two principal forms, outlines other related theoretical claims about the origins of citizens’ national priorities, and reviews the available evidence evaluating each one.

News Media Agenda-Setting

Hypothesis One version of the notion of the media agenda-setting hypothesis begins with the presumption that political affairs are far off on the periphery of most people’s thinking throughout the course of their daily lives. So when a survey researcher asks people what the most

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important problem facing the country is, they must work hard to generate even a single answer to this question and cite whatever comes to mind first.

According to this version of media agenda-setting, what happens to come to mind for people is at least partly and perhaps principally a function of the behavior of the news media. The more attention the media have paid to a particular problem recently, the more people have presumably thought about it. Because recent thought about a topic makes knowledge about it especially accessible in memory (Higgins & King, 1981), people seem especially likely to retrieve problems on which media attention has focused. Thus, media attention is thought to render a problem particularly accessible, leading people to cite it as the nation's most important (Iyengar, 1991, 1993; Price & Tewksbury, 1995). According to this line of thinking, agenda setting occurs because people answer the MIP question based upon relatively superficial thinking.

A second version of the media agenda-setting hypothesis does not posit it to be the result of such a passive process, mediated by the mere activation of knowledge bits in memory. This version proposes that the news media tell people what to think about (Cohen, 1963). The key word here is "telling;" the idea is that the media, by its decisions about which issues to focus upon, communicate implicit but nonetheless very clear messages about what the members of the press feel are the most significant issues facing the nation and therefore deserving of people's cognitive focus (see also McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Thus, to the extent that the staffs of the news media are perceived to be credible and authoritative observers of the national and international scenes, their views about problem importance may be adopted by their readers and viewers as well. According to this vision of the process, agenda-setting results from inferences people make about which problems they should consider important.

In either of these two versions, the agenda-setting hypothesis suggests a relatively simple relation between the volume of news media coverage of an issue and the proportion of Americans citing it as the nation's most important. The more such coverage, the more such citing should occur. At one level, this assertion might seem hopelessly naïve, because it ignores the content of news media coverage altogether. That is, the same positive relation between volume of coverage and frequency of citing is predicted, regardless of whether the news stories say that an issue is a serious problem or that it is becoming less serious.

However, this prediction is not as implausible as it may first appear, because news media stories almost never announce that a particular problem has been completely solved. Certainly, news stories sometimes report that inflation or unemployment rates have dropped, but it is very rare

indeed to hear the pronouncement that issues like crime or drug abuse or pollution or honesty in government or even rising prices or joblessness are no longer problems at all for the nation. Therefore, it seems quite reasonable that even a "good news" story about an issue might enhance the accessibility of that issue in people's memories while not simultaneously convincing people that the issue is not a problem and is therefore an inappropriate answer to the MIP question. Likewise, a "good news" story may suggest an improvement in social conditions, but may simultaneously suggest that the purveyors of news think the problem is serious enough to merit attention.

Evidence Evidence in support of the media agenda-setting hypothesis has come from a wide range of different sorts of studies. For example, the initial demonstration was a simple cross-sectional study of North Carolina undecided voters during the 1968 U.S. presidential election campaign (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). A ranking of issues from those addressed the most often to those addressed the least often corresponded almost perfectly to the frequency with which issues were cited as the ones about which respondents were "most concerned" and believed that "government should concentrate on doing something about." Various other studies have confirmed this sort of cross-sectional relation between amount of media coverage and frequency of citing problems as the nation's most important (see also Bowers, 1973; Palmgreen & Clarke, 1977; Wanta & Hu, 1994).

Other cross-sectional studies have gained empirical leverage by focusing on differences in opinions between individuals who are exposed to different media sources that themselves differ in content (e.g., Erbring, Goldenberg, & Miller, 1980). For example, McLeod (1965) studied readers of two different newspapers, one of which emphasized the control of nuclear weapons during the 1964 presidential election campaign, while the other emphasized federal spending policies. Readers of the former reported nuclear weapons to be the more important issue, whereas readers of the latter described federal spending policies as the more important issue (see also Miller & Wanta, 1996; Wanta, 1997).

Laboratory experiments have also been conducted to test this hypothesis. In many such studies, exposure to particular news stories was experimentally manipulated (e.g., Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Iyengar, Peters, & Kinder, 1982). Consistent with the agenda-setting notion, people exposed to news coverage of a given issue subsequently rate the issue to be more important (see also Wanta, 1988). Field experiments involving exposure to actual news broadcasts in people's own homes have yielded similar findings (e.g., Cook et al., 1983; Leff, Protess, & Brooks, 1986). However, experiments to date have only documented very short-term effects on public concern (lasting up to a week),

leaving open the question of whether agenda-setting has the power to yield meaningful political consequences in the course of ordinary daily life over the longer term.

In this light, the most important body of evidence regarding agenda-setting involves analysis of time series data on changes in media coverage and public concerns over time. Many such studies have yielded evidence that increases in media coverage of problems preceded increases in selections of a problem as the most important issue (e.g., Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Iyengar & Simon, 1993; MacKuen & Coombs, 1981; Watt, Mazza, & Snyder, 1993).

The Real-World Cues Hypothesis

To date, researchers have explored only one strong challenge to this last set of evidence: the real-world cues hypothesis. According to this perspective, the time-series evidence apparently consistent with agenda-setting is attributable to the fact that the news media and ordinary Americans respond similarly to changes in the objective seriousness of problems. When a problem truly becomes more serious, the media may be the first to recognize this and to convey this information to the public. A bit more slowly, the public may come to learn of this change in real circumstances, and the more news media attention is devoted to it, the more quickly the public learns. So the surge in public concern about a problem following increased media coverage of it may be due not merely to enhanced accessibility of the problem in people's memories or to acceptance of the implicit message that news media personnel believe a problem is important. Rather, it may be due to people coming to recognize what the media have already seen: that the problem has in fact become more significant. Consistent with this argument, the frequency with which people cite a problem as the nation's most important is a function of real-world cues about the seriousness of the problem (e.g., Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Hill, 1998; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Schuman, Ludwig, & Krosnick, 1986).

The Issue-Attention Cycle

The issue-attention cycle offers another conceptualization of the origins of MIP question responses (Downs, 1972). According to this vision, the processes at work are quite a bit more thoughtful and responsible than those described by the agenda-setting hypothesis. A foundation of this view is the assumption that contemporary society is complex and multifaceted; millions of Americans are attempting to manage a wide range of different problems challenging the country from many different directions. At any given moment, most people may be occupied by a series of problems that are consensually recognized as serious. But in the background, unnoticed by most people, other problems are emerging as significant.

Public consciousness may progress through a series of stages (Downs, 1972). Stage 1 is what Downs called the "preproblem" stage, during which an objectively serious problem exists, but without the awareness of the vast majority of the public. Movement to Stage 2 occurs when a dramatic event suddenly calls people's attention to the highly undesirable situation, to which they had been oblivious (see also Cobb & Elder, 1972; Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988; Kingdon, 1995). The sharp surge in public concern that occurs at this time is partly the result of this new awareness, but also the result of optimistic and enthusiastic rhetoric from political leaders, asserting that the problem is important and can be solved with minimal disruption to the social order, as long as enough resources are devoted to ameliorative efforts.

Stage 3 begins when people begin to realize that the initially optimistic rhetoric regarding the problem's tractability was most likely unrealistic. People come to see that the actual financial costs of solving the problem will be substantial, and that many people will experience major lifestyle inconveniences in the course of implementing effective solutions. Stage 4 begins when the realizations of Stage 3 provoke some people to become discouraged about the prospects of solving the problem, others to feel threatened by the proposed solutions (and therefore to defensively downplay the problem's significance), and still others to become bored with the public discussion that has no promise of a happy outcome (see also Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988). At this time, some other issue moves into Stage 2, taking center stage in public debate, and people running the news media recognize that the public is becoming bored. The media therefore shift their focus elsewhere, pushing the target issue into Stage 5, the postproblem stage, during which people are no longer explicitly concerned about it.

This account of shifts in public concern certainly implicates the news media, because they are the conduits through which public discussions take place and information is shared throughout a society. So the media are essential for the process to unfold. But the impact of the media's actions is thought to be due to the content of the messages they deliver about the state of social reality, not to the media's ability to alter the mere accessibility of knowledge or to communicate the views of their staffs about what issues are significant. Thus, this account is fundamentally quite different from the agenda-setting notion.

Presidential Approval

Presidents have more success in achieving their legislative agendas when they enjoy high levels of approval from the American public (Bond, Fleisher, & Wood, 2003;

Canes-Wrone & de Marchi, 2002; Ostrom & Simon, 1985; Rivers & Rose, 1985). Furthermore, high levels of presidential approval significantly enhance the chances that the president's political party will gain seats in midterm Congressional elections, affecting the reelection prospects most of representatives who supported the president the most (Abramowitz, 1984, 1985; Abramowitz & Segal, 1992; Gronke, Koch, & Wilson, 2003). And popular approval of the president is an important determinant of whether the president's political party retains the White House in the next election (e.g., Sigelman, 1979). Not surprisingly, then, presidents routinely take steps to try to increase their approval ratings (see Brody, 1991; Brody & Sigelman, 1983). And job approval ratings of the president seem likely to be an important determinant of the degree of confidence that citizens have in their government. Thus, the forces that drive presidential approval up and down are terrifically consequential, and a great deal of research has explored these forces.

Honeymoon Period

For most presidents, a honeymoon period of high ratings occurs at the beginning of their terms; approval declines thereafter (Brace & Hinckley, 1991; Norpoth, 1996; Stimson, 1976). One possible explanation for this pattern is that every major policy decision angers or disappoints some citizens, and the more time passes, the more such decisions are made, and the more dissatisfied citizens accumulate (Mueller, 1970, 1973). An alternative account proposes that people who are generally uninterested in politics pay attention during campaigns when presidents promise to solve problems, and these people then become disappointed as time passes and these goals are not achieved quickly (Stimson, 1976). Citizens who are more attentive to politics may attend instead to campaign promises about specific policies to be implemented, and when presidents fail to pass those policies, they may suffer disapproval.

In fact, the decline is mostly among people who identify with the major party that is not the president's (Presser & Converse, 1976–77). These are just the people who are likely to be most dissatisfied with the policies pursued by the president, suggesting that the disappointment is due not to failure to implement promised policies but instead is due to efforts to pursue undesirable policies.

When a new president is elected, public optimism about what that person will accomplish is high (see Sigelman & Knight, 1983, 1985). But as time passes after the election, the public gradually lowers its beliefs about what the president can accomplish during the term, and these expectations about likely accomplishments are important determinants of approval levels (see also Ostrom & Simon, 1985).

Impact of Events and Beliefs

Many investigations have identified specific beliefs that shape overall approval and the process by which this shaping occurs. Most generally, a president's approval is driven by approval of the president's handling of specific issues (Druckman & Holmes, 2004; Iyengar, Peters, Kinder, & Krosnick, 1984; Malhotra & Krosnick, 2007; Newman, 2003). That is, presidents are seen as doing a better job overall if they are perceived to be doing a better job at handling the economy, international relations, and an array of other challenges facing the country.

An especially large amount of research has drilled down beneath this seemingly simple surface to identify what aspects of the economy are especially consequential in citizens' thinking about the president.

Macroeconomic Indicators To do so, some researchers have predicted changes over time in aggregate approval levels using various different indicators of the health of the national economy, such as the national unemployment and inflation rates. And in general, these indicators have usually been found to predict approval as expected, though not always. For example, some studies have shown that as inflation rises, presidential approval declines (e.g., Burden & Mughan, 2003; Gronke & Brehm, 2002; Nicholson, Segura, & Woods, 2002; c.f., Clarke, Rapkin, & Stewart, 1994; MacKuen, Erikson, & Stimson, 1992), and some studies have found that as unemployment rises, presidential approval falls (e.g., Burden & Mughan, 2003; Gronke & Brehm, 2002; Kriner, 2006; c.f., Geys & Vermeir, 2008; Nicholson, Segura, & Woods, 2002).

Studies of other macroeconomic indicators have also generally yielded expected findings, though not always. Presidential approval appears to increase when GDP increases (Nicholson, Segura, & Woods, 2002), when the tax burden of Americans declines (Clarke, Rapkin, & Stewart, 1994; Geys & Vermeir, 2008), when the federal deficit declines (Geys & Vermeir, 2008), and when people's incomes increase (Clarke, Rapkin, & Stewart, 1994; Kriner, 2006; Monroe & Laughlin, 1983). Whereas one study found that presidential approval rises when success of U.S. trade with other nations increases (Burden & Mughan, 2003), another study found no such relation (Monroe, 1979). And presidential approval appeared to be unrelated to interest rates (Monroe, 1978, 1979) or to improvements in the stock market (Monroe, 1978; Monroe & Laughlin, 1983).

So it appears that conclusions about the relations of macroeconomic indicators hinge on exactly which survey data are used, which time period is studied, and what control variables are included in an analysis. Although it seems

that presidents enjoy benefits when the nation's economy improves and suffer when the economy declines, more work is needed to illuminate the conditions under which these effects appear.

Perceptions of the Economy Two contrasting hypotheses attempt to account for the relations of approval with macroeconomic indicators. The "pocketbook" hypothesis was long taken for granted by observers: The better the economy is doing, the more individual citizens are enjoying good or improving economic circumstances. And these people translate their personal pleasure into approval for the president. The "sociotropic" hypothesis suggests instead that people are not focused only on their own fortunes and misfortunes. Instead, people are thought to evaluate the nation's economy and to credit the president for its improvements and blame the president for its declines. Of course, both of these hypotheses could be true—some people might make pocketbook-based judgments whereas others make sociotropic judgments. Or the same individuals might take both sorts of considerations into account when evaluating the president.

Two contrasting hypotheses have also been offered about temporal orientation. The retrospective hypothesis proposes that people look at recent changes in the economy in the past. When their own or the nation's conditions are improving, citizens are thought to reward the president. The prospective hypothesis suggests that people look into the future and make predictions about the likely trajectory of their own or the nation's financial conditions. When things are looking up, presidents are thought to be rewarded.

Studies have sometimes looked at the relation of presidential approval to objective indicators of people's own personal economic conditions and have generally found no such relations. For example, Lau and Sears (1981) found no lower approval ratings among people who were unemployed or underemployed or experienced recent declines in personal income.

Most studies in this area have compared the impact of subjective retrospective and prospective judgments of personal and national economic conditions. And these studies have yielded nearly unanimous support for the retrospective and prospective sociotropic hypotheses (Clarke & Stewart, 1994; Clarke, Rapkin, & Stewart, 1994; Clarke, Stewart, Ault, & Elliott, 2004; Druckman & Holmes, 2004; Greene, 2001). Studies that focused on perceptions of improvements and declines in "business conditions" have also yielded mostly supportive evidence (MacKuen, Erikson, & Stimson, 1992; Norpoth, 1996).

Fewer studies have gauged the impact of judgments of personal economic conditions on approval ratings, but the

majority of them have also yielded confirmatory evidence. People who say that their personal financial situations have improved (Clarke, Stewart, Ault, & Elliott, 2004; Druckman & Holmes, 2004; Nicholson, Segura, & Woods, 2002) or will improve in the future (Clarke, Stewart, Ault, & Elliott, 2004; Nicholson, Segura, & Woods, 2002) are more likely to approve of the president's performance.

Some scholars have argued that these latter findings involving judgments of personal economic conditions are artifactual (Lau, Sears, & Jessor, 1990; Sears & Lau, 1983). When survey questions measuring perceptions of personal economic experiences are asked immediately before or immediately after questions assessing presidential approval, these measures are strongly associated with one another, whereas when the questions are asked during different interviews, they are no longer associated with one another.

However, the apparent impact of personal economic experiences may be underestimated in analyses like these (Kinder & Mebane, 1983). People's perceptions of the nation's economic circumstances are partly shaped by their own personal economic circumstances. That is, people sometimes generalize from their own lives to the nation as a whole. People who are suffering economically are especially inclined to believe that the nation is doing badly economically. And people who are enjoying economic successes are especially likely to think that the country is doing well economically. So, personal grievances can impact incumbent evaluations indirectly by shaping perceptions of the nation as a whole.

If personal economic conditions are not in fact determinants of presidential approval, one possible explanation may involve attributions (Brody & Sniderman, 1977; Sniderman & Brody, 1977). Personal economic suffering may only impact presidential approval among citizens who believe that government should be doing more to help solve their economic problems. Although most Americans hold their government responsible for solving national problems, citizens rarely hold government responsible for solving their own personal problems (Kinder & Mebane, 1983). This is because people rarely hold government responsible for causing their own personal traumas.

Consistent with this reasoning, people who blame government for national economic problems place more weight on their perceptions of those problems when evaluating the president (Kinder & Mebane, 1983). Similarly, the impact of perceptions of the economy on presidential approval is most pronounced among people who hold the president responsible for economic events (Rudolph, 2003).

International Conflict Presidential approval is also influenced by international events and perceptions of them.

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When the United States becomes engaged in an international conflict, presidential approval typically increases. This can be in the form of an attack on the United States or its interests by another nation, or it can be in the form of aggressive action by the United States toward another nation, presumably signaling that the nation is perceived to pose a threat. For example, approval spiked at the time of the start of the first and second Gulf wars, the Iraq invasion of Kuwait, the U.S. bombing of Libya in 1986, the U.S. invasion of Granada, the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and the U.S. invasion of Panama (Geys & Vermeir, 2008; Gronke & Brehm, 2002; Nadeau, Niemi, Fan, & Amato, 1999; Ostrom & Job, 1986; Peffley, Langley, & Goidel, 1995).

These are examples of what Mueller (1970, 1973) called “rally round the flag” events, and many studies have documented short-lived increases in approval following rally events (e.g., Brody & Shapiro, 1989a; Lian & Oneal, 1993; Mueller, 1970, 1973; Oneal, Lian, & Joyner, 1996). Some people think this is due to the temporary disappearance of criticism of the president by other political elites (Brody & Shapiro, 1989b) and the coming together of diverse partisans in support of the president’s response (Oneal et al., 1996).

Nonmilitary events that signal conflicts between the United States and another nation can also instigate surges in public approval of the president, such as the Tiananmen Square incident in China, the taking of the Iranian hostages, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (e.g., Clarke, Stewart, Ault, & Elliott, 2004; Nadeau, Niemi, Fan, & Amato 1999). When a nonmilitary international conflict between nations occurs, presidents increase their approval most by responding vigorously *without* using military force (James & Rioux, 1998). Use of military force actually decreases approval initially, in contrast to the more sizable increase in approval that can follow a vigorous nonmilitary response by the president.

Following an international attack on the United States, public approval increases most after the president makes a nationwide speech about the attack, thus presumably taking responsibility for action and articulating a plan (Peffley, Langley, & Goidel, 1995). Consistent with this logic, the post-September 11 increase in presidential approval was more pronounced among people who saw President Bush’s speech reassuring the nation than among people who did not (Schubert, Stewart, & Curran, 2002).

The outcomes of short-term international conflicts have interesting and perhaps surprising effects on presidential approval. When an international conflict leads to a compromise between the United States and its opponent(s), presidential approval increases as a result of the compromise. But if the conflict leads to a stalemate, to the defeat

of the United States, or, most surprisingly, a victory for the United States, presidential approval does not change as a result (James & Rioux, 1998).

When international military conflicts last a long time, presidential approval declines gradually and predictably. This may occur because Americans are willing to support a war with enthusiasm if no U.S. casualties are incurred, but people become increasingly unhappy with the president as the number of fatalities accumulates (Mueller, 1973). Consistent with this logic, many investigators have found that the more American troops die in combat during a president’s term, the lower the president’s approval ratings fall (Hibbs, 1982; Kriner, 2006; Mueller, 1973).

Even the increased threat of international conflict can translate into increased presidential approval. Presidential approval increases after government-issued warnings about the possibility of an impending terrorist attack (Willer, 2004).

Policy Successes Not surprisingly, presidential approval increases after visible successes of government efforts. For example, President George W. Bush’s approval increased after Saddam Hussein was finally captured, following a prolonged hunt for him (Willer, 2004). Likewise, the signing of the Camp David Peace Accords increased President Carter’s approval rating (Nadeau, Niemi, Fan, & Amato, 1999).

Scandals Also not surprisingly, presidential approval drops follow the public revelation of scandalous behavior by the president or members of the administration. This occurred following the revelation of the Iran–Contra scandal involving President Reagan (Clarke, Stewart, Ault, & Elliott, 2004; Geys & Vermeir, 2008) and Watergate (Geys & Vermeir, 2008; Gronke & Brehm, 2002; Newman, 2002).

Personal Trauma Presidential approval increases following personal traumas experienced by the president, such as the assassination attempt on President Reagan (Clarke, Stewart, Ault, & Elliott, 2004; Nadeau, Niemi, Fan, & Amato, 1999).

Presidential Travel Abroad Although some people have speculated that simply taking a trip abroad is sufficient to increase a president’s approval rating, this appears not to be the case (Simon & Ostrom, 1989).

Presidential Speeches Presidential approval has sometimes surged following presidential speeches addressing the nation (Kriner, 2006; Ragsdale, 1984). However, a presidential speech alone does not increase or decrease

approval (Simon & Ostrom, 1989). A presidential speech occurring during the time of an approval-enhancing event increases approval more than the event alone would, and a presidential speech occurring during the time of an approval-diminishing event decreases approval more than would have occurred without the speech.

Political Party Conventions A president's approval rating increases when the president's political party holds its national convention prior to an upcoming election (Clarke, Rapkin, & Stewart, 1994), perhaps because such conventions involve many visible endorsements of the president.

Tone of News Coverage When news coverage of the president turns negative, approval ratings tend to decline as a result. And when news coverage praises presidential successes, approval ratings increase as a result (Brody, 1991; West, 1991).

Perceptions of the President's Personality Not surprisingly, presidential approval is generally higher among citizens who believe the president is more competent (Gilens, 1988; Greene, 2001; Newman, 2003), has more integrity (Druckman & Holmes, 2004; Greene, 2001; Newman, 2003), and is a stronger leader (Druckman & Holmes, 2004; West, 1991). Interestingly, approval seems not to be driven by the extent to which the president is perceived to be empathetic to the needs and experiences of the nation's citizens (Druckman & Holmes, 2004).

Emotions Evoked by the President When presidents evoke more positive emotions and fewer negative emotions from citizens, they tend to enjoy higher approval ratings (Gilens, 1988).

Divided Government When things go badly in the country, the president runs the risk of being blamed (Nicholson, Segura, & Woods, 2002). But when the Congress is not controlled by the president's political party, responsibility for national conditions can be partly blamed on Congressional representatives. Therefore, in times of divided government, presidents tend to enjoy higher approval ratings (Nicholson, Segura, & Woods, 2002; Baum, 2002; Burden & Mughan, 2003).

Sharing the President's Party Identification and Ideology Citizens who share the president's party affiliation tend to approve at higher rates than citizens who do not share that affiliation (e.g., Greene, 2001; Newman, 2003; Nicholson, Segura, & Woods, 2002; Rudolph, 2003). Likewise, citizens who share the president's liberal or conservative ideology tend to approve at higher rates than citizens who do

not share that ideology (Rudolph, 2003; Newman, 2003; Nicholson, Segura, & Woods, 2002).

Agreement on Policy Issues Presidential approval is enhanced among people who shared more of the president's positions on key policy issues, such as military spending, government assistance programs for the poor, women's rights, and the environment (Gilens, 1988; Thomas, Sigelman, & Baas, 1984).

Citizen Personality Approval of Republican presidents is most likely by citizens who are high in consciousness and stability and low in openness to new experiences but is unrelated to extraversion, and agreeableness (Gerber, Green, & Latimer, 2008).

News Media Priming

A large amount of literature has posed that the criteria used to make presidential approval judgments shift over time as the result of changes in the volume of news media attention to issues. According to the original formulation of the "news media priming" hypothesis, people base their overall presidential evaluations most heavily on the issues that are most accessible in long-term memory. That is, when asked to evaluate the present, people use whatever issues happen to come to mind, which are those made most accessible by recent, frequent activation. A large number of news stories about an issue were thought to increase the accessibility of related knowledge in people's memories, thereby enhancing the issue's impact on approval ratings (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Iyengar, Peters, Kinder, & Krosnick, 1984; Price & Tewksbury, 1997).

Two forms of evidence support this hypothesis: (1) laboratory experiments contrasting people who saw or read no news stories or programs about an issue with people who saw or read many such stories (e.g. Holbrook & Hill, 2005; Iyengar, Peters, Kinder, & Krosnick, 1984; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Miller & Krosnick, 2000; Valentino, Traugott, & Hutchings, 2002); and (2) surveys comparing the correlations among attitudes of Americans when an issue got little or no media attention with those correlations during a later period when the issue received a huge amount of national news coverage (e.g., Kiousis, 2003; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990; Stoker, 1993; van der Brug, Semetko, & Valkenburg, 2007). Thus, the independent variable (amount of media coverage) was varied between essentially zero and a large amount across samples of people. Both of these methods are valid approaches to assessing whether consumption of a large amount of news media coverage of a domain causes citizens to use that domain in judging the president to a greater extent than people who consumed no coverage.

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A close examination of the language in those papers and wider discussions of their findings in print reveals an interesting leap made by analysts: that as news media attention to an issue increases, so does the weight that people attach to the domain when evaluating the president. That is, this language posits a *dosage-response hypothesis*. It is not merely that the presence of news media coverage causes priming, but the *amount* of priming is presumed to increase monotonically with the *amount* of coverage (Krosnick & Brannon, 1993; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990; Stoker, 1993).

Direct tests of the dosage hypothesis are rare. Some studies have not supported it (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Malhotra & Krosnick, 2007). However, other studies have provided more supportive evidence (Althaus & Kim, 2006; McAvoy, 2006; Togeby, 2007). Thus, it appears that volume of media coverage does not regulate issue impact on presidential approval in a simple way. Clearly, substantial coverage of an issue focuses public attention on that issue, but smaller shifts in the volume of coverage may not be especially consequential. And perhaps the effect of coverage does not happen quickly—rather, perhaps coverage needs to focus on an issue for an extended period of time for it to have enhanced impact. Further work on the dosage hypothesis is merited.

Another challenge to the original version of the priming hypothesis involves its purported cognitive mechanism: accessibility. News stories about an issue were thought to increase the accessibility of relevant information in long-term memory, which in turn was thought to enhance the issue's impact on presidential approval judgments. But laboratory experimental evidence showed that although news stories on an issue do increase the accessibility of relevant knowledge, this increase in accessibility is not responsible for the issue's increased impact on presidential evaluations. That is, the people who manifest the strongest increases in accessibility are not the people who manifested the strongest priming effects (Althaus & Kim, 2006; Miller & Krosnick, 2000).

Other evidence suggests that quite a different mechanism is at work (Miller & Krosnick, 2000). Priming occurs exclusively among people who trust the news media to provide accurate and balanced information on appropriate issues. This suggests that people who manifest news media priming choose to be influenced by the news media. That is, these citizens believe that the media focus their attention on issues that are especially nationally important and deserve special weight when evaluating political actors. So these citizens accept that recommendation from this trusted source and construct their presidential approval ratings accordingly. Interestingly, priming is especially pronounced among people who are highly knowledgeable about politics, perhaps suggesting that keeping a

running tally of news media attention to particular issues is especially likely among political experts and less likely among people who know little about politics, perhaps pay less attention to political news stories, and do not keep conscious track of what issues have received extensive coverage.

Impact of Presidential Rhetoric

The news media are not the only source of priming effects. Presidents themselves can change the criteria that the public uses to evaluate them. By focusing their public statements on particular issues, presidents can lead citizens to place extra weight on those issues when constructing overall performance evaluations (Druckman & Holmes, 2004).

Personal Importance Attached to Policy Issues

As was discussed earlier, the amount of personal importance that citizens attach to their attitudes toward policies is an especially significant factor facilitating responsible electoral behavior. The more importance people attach to an issue, the more informed they become about it, the more thoughtful they are about it, the more the issue shapes their vote choices, and the more likely they are to express relevant policy preferences to government officials. As reassuring as all this sounds in terms of the functioning of democracy, that assessment cannot be made without an understanding of who attaches importance to which policy issues and why.

Two primary and quite different hypotheses address this issue. The first has its roots clearly in the writings of Gabriel Almond (1950), who proposed that political engagement is concentrated among a relatively small proportion of a democratic electorate. He referred to these individuals as “the attentive public,” who might make up 15% of a polity. These are people who are highly educated about political and civic affairs, attend closely to all aspects of politics, stay up to the minute on national and international developments, are widely informed about and engaged in a wide array of policy issues, know a great deal about political actors and current debates, and therefore manifest all the hallmarks of issue public membership for the full array of issues facing a nation at any one time. In contrast, the vast majority of citizens were thought to be uninformed, disengaged, and uninvolved. Thus, according to this vision, a small fraction of the population speaks on behalf of many, many others (see also Price & Zaller, 1993).

The contrasting hypothesis envisions issue public memberships as widely dispersed across a nation. Rather than concentrating the effort and responsibility among a small group of citizens, this hypothesis proposes that effort and responsibility are shared broadly—different

people choose to engage in different issues. Thus, the work entailed in directing government activities is widely distributed across the population. And the assignment of issues to individuals is thought to be driven by three psychological forces.

First, an issue may become important to individuals who perceive the attitude object to be linked to their material self-interests (e.g., Apsler & Sears, 1968; Petty, Cacioppo, & Haugtvedt, 1991). Self-interest-based importance develops when people perceive an issue to be linked to their tangible rights, privileges, or lifestyle. Perceived self-interest is likely to be high among people who feel their own personal well-being may be directly affected by an issue in some immediate and concrete manner (Modigliani & Gamson, 1979; Popkin, Gorman, Phillips, & Smith, 1976). Thus, for example, a gun owner in a high-crime neighborhood who learns that local gun control laws are being considered will be more likely to consider his attitude toward gun control to be personally important than someone who does not own a gun and lives in a low-crime neighborhood.

An issue may also become personally important to someone as a result of social identification with reference groups or reference individuals. Strong identification with a social group may lead an issue to become important to a person if the group's rights or privileges are perceived to be at stake (Key, 1961; Modigliani & Gamson, 1979). Thus, a Black Wall Street executive who identifies closely with Blacks as a group may care deeply about social welfare programs for the urban poor, even though she is unlikely to be affected directly by such programs. Strong identification with a group that consensually considers an issue to be important can serve as an impetus for importance, independent of whether rewards for the group are in question (Sherif & Hovland, 1961). For example, people who strongly identify with Catholics are likely to care deeply about abortion, because the Catholic Church has publicly declared that issue's importance and has taken a strong stand on it. Similarly, importance may develop as a result of identification with reference individuals whose interests are perceived to be at stake or who are perceived to care deeply about a particular issue.

Finally, an issue may become personally important to people if they come to view it as relevant to their basic social and personal values. Values are abstract beliefs (not specific to any attitude object) about proper modes of behavior, about how the world ought to be, or about the worthiness of various long-term goals (Rokeach, 1968). Values may also tell people which policy issues to consider personally important. Therefore, the closer the perceived linkage between an issue and an individual's values, and the more important the values, the more important the issue

is likely to be to him or her (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; Katz, 1960; Rosenberg, 1956).

A good deal of evidence is consistent with this latter account. For example, when people are asked to explain why they do or do not attach personal importance to a particular policy issue, most of the explanations cite either self-interest, social identification, or value relevance, with self-interest dominating (Boninger, Krosnick, & Berent, 1995). Likewise, statistical analyses of survey data show that issue importance ratings are best predicted by self-interest ratings and that ratings of social identification and value relevance explain additional variance as well (Boninger, Krosnick, & Berent, 1995; Holbrook, Berent, Krosnick, Visser, & Boninger, 2005). In an experiment, inducing participants to imagine themselves getting into a car accident led them to see their self-interest as more at stake in the issue of traffic safety laws, which in turn induced these people to attach personal importance to the issue. Likewise, when other experimental participants were told that an impending policy change would affect them personally, this led them to perceive greater self-interest at stake in the issue, which in turn induced more personal importance being attached to it (Bizer & Krosnick, 2001).

Taken together, these studies suggest that self-interest is consistently a primary determinant of the degree of personal importance people attach to their attitudes. Values were also fairly consistent causes of personal importance, but much weaker ones. Social identification's effects appeared sometimes and not others, apparently depending on the prominence of major social cleavages over the issue involved.

These findings suggest that issue public membership is likely to be idiosyncratic, such that each individual attaches personal importance to just a few issues that touch him or her directly somehow. And indeed, other evidence supports this conclusion by showing that issue public membership is not concentrated among a small portion of the population. Knowing the amount of personal importance that a person attaches to one policy issue affords very little ability to predict the amount of importance that person attaches to another issue (Krosnick, 1986). The amount of personal importance an individual attaches to any one issue is also essentially uncorrelated with indicators of general political engagement, such as the degree to which people say they are interested in politics and the amount of formal education people have (Krosnick, 1986). Furthermore, the impact of personal importance in regulating issue impact on vote choices remains robust even when controlling for the role of general political involvement in regulating this impact (Anand & Krosnick, 2003). All this sustains the portrait of issue public membership as being distributed broadly across the American populace, which reinforces

the claim that sharing responsibility in this fashion allows people to be thoughtful and responsible in their limited issue domains.

CAUSES OF POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE

We began this chapter by contemplating the demands that democracy places on its citizens for the system to function effectively. Chief among these requirements is the possession of relevant information, which enables citizens to formulate preferences and effectively advocate for their desired outcomes. But how do citizens acquire the information that they need to meet these demands? To understand this question, it is useful to consider the general processes by which people become knowledgeable about topics.

For the most part, people gain knowledge about an object through two processes: (1) through direct experience with the object (Fazio & Zanna, 1981; Wood, Rhodes, & Biek, 1995); and (2) through exposure and attention to information about the object from other people, received during informal conversations (Robinson & Levy, 1986), formal schooling (Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996), or through the mass media (McGuire, 1986; Roberts & Maccoby, 1985). Knowledge about social and political issues is especially likely to be acquired through the latter route: through exposure and attention to information provided by other people, especially by the news media (Clarke & Fredin, 1978; Clarke & Kline, 1974; Perse, 1990).

But exposure to information is just the first of several steps that must unfold for knowledge acquisition to occur. Having been exposed to a new piece of information, an individual must then devote perceptual attention to the information, bringing it into short-term or working memory (Baddeley & Hitch, 1974). The world is altogether too complex for people to attend to all of the stimuli that bombard their senses at any given moment, so people selectively attend to some things and filter out the vast majority of others. Some of the information that is brought into short-term or working memory undergoes elaboration, during which an individual actively thinks about the new information and relates it to information already stored in memory. Through this, process-associative links are built, connecting new information to previously acquired information (Craik & Lockhart, 1972). The more extensively an individual processes new information, the stronger the neural trace and the more likely it is that the new information will be available for later retrieval (e.g., Craik, 1977; Tyler, Hertel, MacCallum, & Ellis, 1979). Thus, the process of acquiring knowledge about the political world is costly, imposing tremendous cognitive demands (Downs, 1957).

These demands are especially high for people who have little political knowledge to begin with. Prior knowledge on a particular topic improves people's ability to comprehend new information, enabling them to efficiently extract the central elements of a message and draw appropriate inferences (Eckhardt, Wood, & Jacobvitz, 1991; Recht & Leslie, 1988). Prior knowledge also enhances people's ability to store new information on that topic and retrieve the information later (e.g., Cooke, Atlas, Lane, & Berger, 1993; Fiske, Lau, & Smith, 1990; McGraw & Pinney, 1990; Recht & Leslie, 1988; Schneider, Gruber, Gold, & Opwis, 1993). So the less political information a person has stored in memory, the more difficult it is for him or her to acquire new information.

In addition to the substantial cognitive burdens it imposes, the acquisition of political knowledge also involves other costs. In particular, it reduces the resources available for acquiring information about other topics. The more people are exposed to information about political issues and objects, and the more resources they devote to attending to and elaborating this information, the less likely it is that other available information will be stored in long-term memory and available for later retrieval (e.g., Kahneman, 1973). Thus, becoming more knowledgeable about political matters often comes at the cost of gaining knowledge about other topics.

Determinants of Political Knowledge

Under what circumstances are people willing to bear the cognitive burdens and opportunity costs of becoming politically knowledgeable? And how do people select among the myriad political issues and objects that vie for their attention?

Incidental Media Exposure People sometimes learn about the political world through incidental exposure to news media coverage of politics (Krugman & Hartley, 1970; Zukin & Snyder, 1984). For example, people with no particular interest in politics may nonetheless become politically knowledgeable because they routinely watch the evening news, either out of habit or because another household member regularly tunes in. This type of passive learning may be especially likely for televised news broadcasts, which often contain vivid graphics and visual images that require fewer cognitive resources to decode and retain in memory (Graber, 1990).

Nonselective Media Exposure People also intentionally expose themselves to information about the political world. Many people tune into general television or radio news programs that cover a range of political topics, for example, and doing so leads to increases in political

knowledge (e.g., Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Roberts & Maccoby, 1985). The flowing nature of television and radio news programs does not easily afford news media consumers opportunities to selectively expose themselves to some stories and not others. Therefore, choosing to watch or hear such programs typically brings with it non-selective exposure to information on many topics.

The decision to tune in to television or radio news broadcasts is of course influenced by interest in politics: Those who find politics intrinsically interesting are much more likely to intentionally expose themselves to news programming than those who are disinterested in politics (e.g., Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Luskin, 1990). News media consumption is also influenced by more general surveillance motives: Those who are more intrinsically motivated to monitor their environment pay more attention and give more thought to news broadcasts than those who are lower in this motivation (e.g., Eveland, Shah, & Kwak, 2003).

Issue-Specific Selective Attention People are selective not only in terms of the overall amount of attention they pay to the news media, but also regarding the amount of attention they pay to media coverage of specific issues. Indeed, people sometimes actively seek out information about some issue but make no special effort to gain information about other issues, rendering them deeply knowledgeable about the former and less informed about the latter.

How do people decide which issues to attend to? One answer is suggested by the positive correlation between the volume of knowledge a person has stored in memory about an object and the personal importance people attach to their attitudes toward the object. People consider themselves more knowledgeable about an object when their attitudes toward it are important to them (e.g., Bassili, 1996; Krosnick, Boninger, Chuang, Berent, & Carnot, 1993; Prislun, 1996; Visser, 1998), and they are in fact able to retrieve more information about the attitude object from memory (Berent & Krosnick, 1995; Krosnick, Boninger, Chuang, Berent, & Carnot, 1993; Wood, 1982). The knowledge accompanying more important attitudes is also more likely to be accurate (Krosnick, 1990). These associations suggest that attitude importance may provide the impetus for knowledge acquisition, motivating people to gather and retain information about some attitude objects at the expense of learning about others.

This occurs because attitude importance guides people's choices when they are deciding to which information they will attend (Holbrook, Berent, Krosnick, Visser, & Boninger, 2005). They selectively attend to information relevant to their more important attitudes, particularly when available information is abundant and time or cognitive resources are limited. After people are exposed to

information, they process it more deeply if it is relevant to important attitudes, because such processing is likely to serve strategic purposes later. As a result, this new information is more likely to be stored in long-term memory and available for later retrieval.

SUMMARY

Clearly, a great deal of research has explored the forces that drive political thinking and action. And our review covers only a subset of this literature—much more fascinating work has explored many other aspects of the cognition and behavior of ordinary citizens, of political leaders, and of nations. And much of this work illuminates fundamentals of human perception, judgment, decision making, choice, social influence, and action.

As is presumably apparent, this literature is quite a bit more flattering to citizens than many past accounts have suggested. Most of the determinants of political outcomes seem quite reasonable normatively. To be sure, evidence that votes are influenced by the order of candidate names on the ballot, for example, is at least a bit troubling. But relative to the magnitude of other influences on vote choices, name order effects are quite small, which itself is reassuring. And the conditions under which these effects occur point the finger of blame more to the tremendous demands placed on voters to express preferences in many races without easy access to information with which to make substantive judgments, rather than to laziness or incompetence of voters themselves. The literature on the causes of vote choices, presidential approval, turnout, and other such phenomena point, for the most part, to factors that seem reasonable rather than dooming contemporary democracies to destruction.

Consider, for example, the work on presidential approval: These judgments appear to be based on many sensible considerations. Rewarding the president for domestic and international successes seems quite reasonable, as does punishing the president for national failures. Of course, a more refined view of events might lead an observer to say that some such rewarding and punishing is not deserved, either because the president was neither responsible for causing nor creating a problem, nor are there obvious government-based mechanisms for solving it. But issues of causal responsibility and solvability are no doubt debatable, so it seems difficult to justify a claim that tying the president's approval ratings to the health of the nation is obviously a mistake or clearly unfair. In this light, evidence that citizens' linkages of national conditions to presidential approval sometimes hinges on causal attributions is also flattering for the polity.

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Evidence that the country initially rallies around its president in times of international crisis also seems normatively desirable, as does the evidence that public support for presidents ultimately hinges on what they say and what they do, not the mere existence of crisis. And the evidence that presidential approval responds to news of personal traumas that the president endures, speeches the president makes, political party conventions, the tone of news coverage, the existence of divided government, agreement with the president on policy issues all suggest that the public is paying attention to the flow of news between elections and using that news to update their evaluations. Finally, the fact that news media priming seems to occur only among people who trust the media and choose to follow its suggestions about how to evaluate the president also seems more normatively admirable than the counterclaim that priming happens automatically and outside of the awareness of the citizens who manifest it, due to shifts in mere accessibility.

We look forward to future research in political psychology, continuing to illuminate and clarify the processes and variables discussed previously, and taking a balanced approach to considering the normative implications of the discoveries that are uncovered. Such work will no doubt help to advance psychology's understanding of the human mind and of social interaction but may also equip governments to interpret the actions of their citizens more accurately and to conduct their activities in ways that maximize the longevity and prosperity of societies.

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