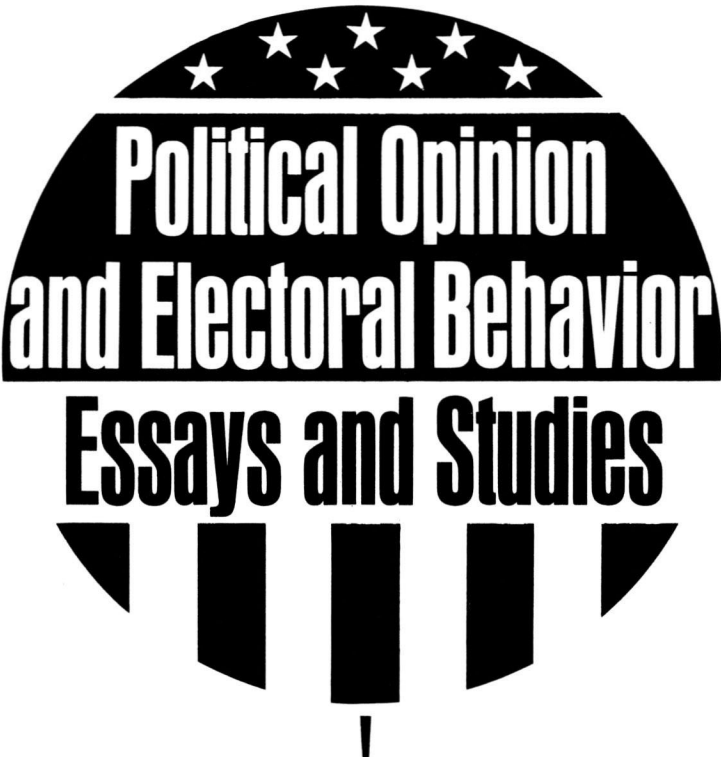
A stylized graphic of the American flag. The top half is a blue semi-circle containing seven white stars. The bottom half is a red semi-circle containing the text 'Political Opinion and Electoral Behavior' in white, and 'Essays and Studies' in blue. Below the red semi-circle are five vertical red bars of varying heights, resembling the stripes of the flag.

**Political Opinion
and Electoral Behavior**
Essays and Studies

Dreyer and Rosenbaum

A stylized graphic of the American flag, featuring a semi-circular top with stars and a bottom with vertical stripes, framing the title text.

Political Opinion and Electoral Behavior

Essays and Studies

edited by

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Political Opinion and Electoral Behavior: Essays and Studies

Preface

We suspect that most authors entertain the secret but immodest hope that their book will be stimulating, pertinent, and unique. We admit that this has been our hope too. The reader will draw his own conclusions as to whether we have succeeded.

The merit of this book rests on the quality of the articles it contains and the coherence and order that exist among them. We did not wish the reader to feel like an unexpected guest at a journalistic potluck. We have attempted to present our selections within an integrating conceptual framework. This is certainly not a sample of all important literature in the field but does represent, in our opinion, a range of interesting and competent studies illustrating trends and directions in current research.

We regret the omission of many article footnotes and the necessity of having edited some articles for the sake of economy. We hope the authors will feel we have done them no injustice.

For errors of omission and commission we blame ourselves. For their constructive suggestions we thank our editors: Arthur Bauman, Richard Kuhn, and Robert Gormley. We are particularly indebted to our reviewers, William Buchanan, Bernard Hennessy, Edgar Litt, Marbury B. Ogle, James Prothro, James Robinson, James Rosenau, and David Sears, for the many innovations they suggested. To our wives, who provided encouragement, sympathy, the editorial pencil, coffee, proofreading, and patience, we offer additional thanks. Finally, our grati-

tude to our children who, with wisdom beyond their tender years, did not deface, rearrange, hide, or digest our manuscripts while they lay within tempting reach.

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1. The Study of Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior

The respondent was a disillusioned man. He had “embraced the values of democracy most fervently” and then had discovered that his experience contradicted them. To a public opinion analyst in Ithaca, New York, he described his political education: “You gotta realize, life doesn’t go the way you learn it in high school, or college, or the Constitution—it isn’t that way.” The incongruity between the theory and practice of American politics had turned him cynical: “The United States,” he concluded, “is great on paper.”¹

Our New York voter had discovered two political worlds in America—the normative and the existential. His disillusionment resulted from knowledge that what he believed about American politics and what he felt it ought to be contradicted what he discovered to be true. Since this is a book about that aspect of American political life called “public opinion,” we begin by acknowledging the correctness of our voter’s observation. What we wish to do throughout this book is describe how American public opinion actually is formulated and expressed. Only then will we be in a position to judge the magnitude of the disparity between theory and fact as they relate to American public opinion. To use our voter’s distinction, we are concerned about the process of opinion formation and expression as they occur, not as they should occur.

This is, we hope, an integrated collection of articles

¹ Morris Rosenberg, “Some Determinants of Political Apathy,” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 18, No. 4 (Winter 1954–55), 360.

about public opinion and political behavior. We have attempted to select material that explains as well as describes the political opinions and behavior of the American public. Although ultimately the authors of these articles speak for themselves, we admit a deliberate bias in our selection of material and our approach to it. In this chapter we wish to discuss the subject matter of this collection, and explain how we propose to approach it.

Opinion and Behavior

In this reader we shall focus upon three related aspects of political opinion and behavior in the United States: how and why Americans formulate and express their political attitudes, and how these attitudes are related to various kinds of political behavior, especially voting behavior. We shall examine the process of the formation of political opinion, the nature of its expression, and its impact on public policy.

We have selected this perspective on public opinion because we are concerned primarily with analysis and explanation rather than with simple description. We wish to know what determines the political attitudes of people and what sorts of political behavior these attitudes produce. Without an analytical perspective, most of the "facts" that we discover about American public opinion would be stereotyped and superficial; they would be interesting but, for understanding why and how American public opinion operates as it does, not very helpful. To understand the difference between an analytical and a simply descriptive approach to the study of public opinion, let us examine the following true story from both perspectives.

Subject A and Question Seven: A Case Study

During 1959 all entering freshmen of the seven campuses of the University of California were asked to take an English examination, called "Subject A,"² the purpose of which was to determine whether students would be assigned to a regular or a remedial English course in their first year of college. On the May 1959 examination, question seven read:

What are the dangers to democracy of a national police organization, like the F.B.I., which operates secretly and is unresponsive to public criticism?

Although no student taking the exam objected to the question, open and vociferous objection soon developed. In February 1960, the Berkeley

² See David Horowitz, *Student* (New York: Ballantine Books, Inc., 1962), pp. 41-46.

District Chairman of the American Legion's Americanism Committee telegraphed Governor Brown that question seven was "a deliberate and vicious communist propaganda scheme" intended to indoctrinate entering freshmen with "the party line." The District Chairman demanded an immediate investigation of the matter. At the Governor's request the professor in charge of Subject A explained that, like other questions of the exam, question seven had been selected because its "shock value" would provoke students to write a "better essay in defense of their belief."

Soon others were implicated in the dispute. Late in February the Regents of the University of California, after careful study of the matter, issued a public apology to the American Legion and the F.B.I. and ordered question seven removed from the test. On February 29, J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the F.B.I., wrote a letter to the *Daily Californian* expressing his shock at the "erroneous and misleading" question. Hoover's letter triggered strong rebuttal from several Berkeley students. On March 4, the student editor of the *Daily Californian* wrote a column in which he accused the Regents of "goofing" in their apology, castigated the F.B.I. as a "sacred cow," and branded the American Legion "reactionary." Several days later another student wrote the paper and compared the F.B.I. with the Gestapo. With this exchange of epithets and apologies the contention subsided.

Description versus Explanation

Several facts in this story are important for anyone interested in public opinion. First, there was a sharp, and apparently irreconcilable, divergence of opinion between, on the one hand, the Governor, an American Legion member, and the University Regents, and, on the other, a group of college professors and students over (a) the value and function of the F.B.I. and (b) the propriety of publicly debating the subject. Second, participants on both sides of the dispute quickly translated their opinions into overt actions: the American Legion official telegraphed the Governor, the Governor requested an investigation, the Regents apologized, the professor responsible for the exam demurred, and several students publicly censured educational officials and the F.B.I. itself.

If we wish only to describe opinion and its relation to behavior, we can say little else. But if we wish to explain the relationship between opinion and behavior, we need to know much more. For example, we would probably want to know why this subject was controversial at this particular time and place. We would also want to know what motivated the participants to react the way they did. In addition, we would want to account for the particular alignment of participants in the debate. Naturally, the questions we can ask are numerous, and to answer them

we need to probe backward into the forces creating political opinions among the different groups. The kind of question we ask is important, and in this book we are concerned not only with descriptive questions (Who holds what kinds of opinions and engages in what kinds of behavior?) but also with analytical questions about why people think and behave the way they do—about, in other words, the complex interaction of opinion and political behavior.

The Behavioral Orientation

In this reader, most articles need careful explanation, not only because the reader should know what the investigators are doing, but also because “behavioralism” is a term of fairly recent vintage. There are a great many varieties of behaviorists, and seldom is there unanimity about precisely what makes a behaviorist “behavioral.” By making our explanation of behavioralism broad, we hope at least to capture some of the essence of the term.

An Approach

Behavioralism in political science, as in all the social sciences, is essentially an approach or a methodological orientation for studying social problems and obtaining information about human behavior. It is not a dogmatic prescription about how people ought to behave, nor a rigid enumeration of immutable “laws” of human behavior.

Nevertheless, since we, every day, consciously or unconsciously repeat certain decisions that influence our behavior—in other words, since many of our actions are patterned and habitual—it is possible, through careful observation, measurement, and analysis, to make verifiable statements about the way most people are likely to act most of the time. This is the basic assumption of behavioralism. A behavioral approach to determining why a group of people consider themselves Republicans or Democrats might reveal a common pattern whereby the family, or perhaps more specifically the father, was a major influence in the choice of party identification, but it would be the method rather than the conclusion which was “behavioral.”

A Method

The behaviorist seeks to follow a clear and, hopefully, scientific plan in his research. He tries (1) to formulate some question or hypothesis about human behavior which can be tested, (2) to create a technique for investigation which will provide him with the necessary data that relates to his problem, and (3) to develop some criteria or standards

by which to measure the reliability of his conclusions. Although the questions, methods, and standards for evidence will differ among disciplines and researchers, this three-part pattern is likely to be the same whether the investigator is studying the mating habits of anthropoid apes, the effect of insulin on the human body, or the state of cultural development in the Fiji Islands.

In formulating his question for investigation, the behavioralist wants his hypothesis to be empirically relevant—which is an indirect way of insisting that this hypothesis should be clear enough to tell him where to go for information and what to look for. In creating research techniques the behavioralist emphasizes “empirical information”—that is, information obtained either by experiment or by systematic observation. Often such information is quantitative: it appears in the form of statistical data, frequency counts, or categories of facts and figures ordered in a manner relevant to the problem. But quantitative information is not the only kind the researcher gathers; he may evaluate what he observes or get answers to pertinent questions about what his informants think or do. But whether or not the information is quantitative, the researcher is conscientiously trying to make use of data that are reliable, accurate, and verifiable.

Behavioralism is also concerned with the relationships between fact and theory. Instead of merely stockpiling facts, the investigator wishes to know what light his information may shed upon existing theories about his subject. For example, if an investigator finishes an exhaustive set of voter interviews with the conclusion that third-generation Irish-Americans tend to be much more Republican than their parents or grandparents, he may then use his data to expand or modify an existing theory about the relationship between party identification, ethnic background, and the cultural assimilation of minorities into American life. In other words, the behavioralist is concerned with theory at both ends of a research problem: he wants, first, to utilize theory to derive a testable proposition from which he can gather data, and second, to determine the implications that his data has for the existing theory. As one behavioral scientist put it, “Research untutored by theory may prove trivial, and theory unsupported by data, futile.”³

Behavioralists aim, at least ultimately, at explaining human behavior. They are concerned with motivation, causation, purposes, values, and influences. Behavioral research seeks to identify uniformity and regularity in human behavior and to state the conditions which influence or produce these behavioral patterns.

Many behavioralists are concerned with preserving “value neutrality”

³ David Easton, “The Current Meaning of Behavioralism in Political Science,” in James C. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Limits of Behavioralism in Political Science* (Philadelphia: The American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1962), p. 8.

in their research; that is, they try to exclude their prejudices and value judgments from their research. A researcher, for example, may agree that the Communist Party is subversive and unholy, and that those who become Communists are psychologically ill. But if he wishes to obtain reliable information about communist recruitment he will withhold his judgment about Communist Party members until he has done research about them—and he will try to create a research design that does not beg the conclusion which he as an individual has already drawn.

Finally, behavioralists have often been interdisciplinary in their approach to research. They sometimes utilize, for their own purposes, data and concepts from disciplines other than their own. Political scientists, for instance, may borrow concepts from Freudian psychology, or sociology, or social psychology, to explain why some men become professional politicians and others do not.⁴

What we have so far said about behavioralism and behavioralists is, of course, an abstraction. Few social scientists would comfortably fit all aspects of our brief description. Still, most of the authors in this book share at least some of the attributes described above. From what we have already said, then, it should be clear that the reader is about to begin a forbidding journey through unfamiliar territory in search of occult information about obscure subjects. Hopefully, with a general understanding of the orientation of most behavioral scientists, he will find himself on familiar ground.

A Structure for Explanation

In compiling this book of readings we have adopted an explicit theoretical framework concerning how political opinions are formed and how they relate to behavior. This is essential if our material is to be meaningful. We have adopted this framework for several reasons: first, to determine what information is relevant to our subject and hence what materials should be included in the book; second, to arrange and organize our chapters with its aid. Finally, and perhaps most important, our theoretical perspective provides us with a generalized picture of the phenomena we will study.

The framework, or theoretical orientation, we have adopted was originally developed by the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center for its analysis of the 1952 and 1956 presidential elections. We believe this model, which the Center labels "the funnel of causality," is the most

⁴ See, for example, Harold Lasswell, *Psychopathology and Politics* (New York: The Viking Press, 1960), and Alex Gottfried, "The Use of Socio-Psychological Categories in a Study of Political Personality," *Western Political Quarterly*, 8 (June 1955), 234-247.

comprehensive and orderly theoretical scheme yet developed to describe how a variety of influences mold and modify political opinion and behavior.⁵ Since we are using this model to impose conceptual and logical order on the selection and organization of our material, it is important for the reader to have a clear picture of it.

The Funnel of Causality: A Working Model

In their orientation to the study of political behavior, the Survey Research Center (SRC) group emphasizes the vote as the basic unit of political power. Their larger focus of interest, however, is the total content and quality of the public's reaction to politics. In concentrating on electoral participation and partisan choice, they are trying to account for variations in two classes of events. First, they wish to explain why some people vote and others do not. Second, they wish to explain what leads voters to choose one candidate over another. But the framework which defines these questions is also suitable for describing most other influences on political opinion or behavior. These influences the SRC organizes conceptually into a "funnel of causality."

The SRC believes that an individual's political attitudes and behavior result from the convergence of a number of determinants (or independent variables) which can be classified as historical, institutional, sociological, and psychological. Moreover, these independent variables have different degrees of theoretical relevance for voting and other partisan choices. As indicated by Figure 1, various psychological or attitudinal variables such as those toward the political parties, the candidates, and the issues are found to have the greatest relevance for explaining contemporary voting choices. In turn, these variables are found to be related to more "distant," or background, influences such as historical events (e.g., depressions or wars), demographic, i.e., individual and social characteristics (e.g., age, education, occupation), "institutional" factors such as election laws and the norms of the local political system, or combinations of these and other influences.

Time and Causality

While it is relatively easy to identify the variables that affect political opinions and behavior at a given point in time, a more elaborate theory is necessary to explain how they relate to each other through time. In this respect, the SRC group regards political opinions and behavior to be a function of (1) the interaction of a variety of influences at any

⁵ For a more detailed presentation of the framework, see Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes, *The American Voter* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1960), pp. 18-37.