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Voting research has tended to miss the importance of cognitive factors on the causal forces leading to behavior. When processes of perception or cognition have been treated at all, interest has centered mainly on evidence of perceptual distortion, (Campbell et al, 1960, p. 43)

and not focused on information processing.

To that end, the purpose of this paper is to briefly outline individual information processing principles which should apply to forming images of candidates and to resulting political behavior. Such micro-level processes can be examined by laboratory studies, fleshed out by individual interviews, and generalized by survey research; possible investigation strategies will be noted, where relevant. This paper will proceed through stages of information processing: potential inputs, selection, evaluation, combining and retrieval, and responding. An underlying assumption here will be that political perceptions have much in common with both object and person perception.

Inputs

What is the range of available information about political candidates? Content Evidence on this point, provided by content analyses of media campaign coverage, has been summarized by Kinder (Note 8), so it will not be reviewed here. The point will be instead to argue that such research might focus instead on a psychologically plausible typology of the generic types of person information. The taxonomy focuses such types that can be theoretically extended to other domains. For example, objects, politicians, and nonpolitical persons all have complex appearances, appropriate activities, specified relationships to the perceiver, expected contexts, and inferred internal properties. How much do these types of information serve as mental hooks or symbols for our knowledge of the respective stimuli? Without going too far afield of actual political behavior, the theoretical common ground shared by political, social, and object perception work seems fruitful terrain. Elsewhere, some links between object and social perceptions are examined in view of theoretically overlapping types of information (Fiske and Cox, Note 1). For compari-

son, this section on inputs extends a taxonomy of person and object attributes to the realm of political cues.

It is important to note a peculiar characteristic of most political information. Most political cues are routed to perceivers via the news media. The inputs to political cognition, then, are indirect (cf. Warr and Knapper, 1968) and pre-processed by the human beings who present the news. This pre-masticated material is the potential fuel for political thought and it ranges considerably from directly observable to completely inferential. As will be discussed next, this preprocessed material goes from concrete attributes, through specific behaviors, to inferred behavior

At the most concrete level, the appearance of things, candidates, and other people provides fairly objective information about size, weight, age (or state of repair!) and the like, as well as more subjective attributes, such as attractiveness (e.g. Berscheid and Walster, 1974). Both objective and subjective cues figure importantly in person perception (see Fiske, Note 2, for a review), and at least anecdotal evidence exists for their importance to candidate images. Relative height is reputedly an electoral advantage; age (e.g. Kearns, 1977) and ethnicity are often discussed in the media as potential determining factors, and physical attractiveness is the bane of kingmakers. Although existing evidence is scant, physical appearance could be investigated experimentally by manipulating it directly within a hypothetical set of candidate cues. Appearance also could be examined in archival photographs of election outcomes. And the role of appearance could enter into survey research, by simple recognition tasks (Name - the - candidate - from - the - photo) or by free-response descriptions (What do you remember of what the candidate looks like?) In any case, concrete physical appearance cues are bound to matter and have been largely ignored in the political arena.

Moving to a somewhat less concrete level, specific behaviors and patterns of behavior figure vitally in perceptions of politicians and other people. Behavior obviously may be interpreted by the perceiver, but behaviors are subjective to varying degrees. At the most concrete level, photographs of a particular gesture

become symbols for the politician and material for cartoonists. Think of Nixon's doubled-handed V for victory, Lindsay's shirt sleeves and jacket over the shoulder, Ford's stumbles, Humphrey's handshake, and Carter's grin. Relatively less concrete one-time behaviors of politicians include their actual verbal statements at press conferences, speeches, endorsements, legislative votes and interviews. Nonpolitical actions become political too, and contribute to candidate images, for example, Johnson shows off his scar, and Ted Kennedy at Chappaquidick. Single instances of behavior become important because of the patterns inferred from them (cf. Schank and Abelson, 1977; Abelson, 1976 on scripts). Salient isolated behaviors can make or break political careers, just as easily as make or destroy friendships. Yet single behaviors, as explicit experimental stimuli, remain uninvestigated (with some exceptions, of course, Brewer, 1968; Newtonson, 1976; Fiske, Note 3). Similarly, surveys could inquire of ^Srespondents, "when you think of candidate X, what single action stands out in your mind?" Both techniques can point up the potential impact of single, diagnostic behaviors and theme-generating actions. ^PA more inferential type of information regards a politician's relationship network, the affiliations that dominate political and personal life. Representatives of some interest groups can damn a candidate (e.g. merely associating with Korean Ambassador Park rapidly became ill-advised). Associations with particular branches of the major parties carries a variety of implications as in labels such as "Southern Democrat" or "the Daley camp." Superficially nonpolitical relationship networks matter, too; think of Nixon and Rebozo, or Wilbur Mills and Fannie Foxe. Such relationships are vital to candidate images because of what they imply. The impact of relationship networks could be investigated; at this point the questions are open.

From the most concrete levels of photographed appearance and gestures, through single concrete actions, to inferred patterns of behavior and relationship networks, these types of information are the stuff of ordinary news reports. These are the relatively objective items within the reporter's domain. Biases in the selection,

juxtaposition, and emphasis of relatively concrete items imply things, and it is the implications which worry image-makers. While any one of these concrete attributes might seem trivial, hardly worth considering on its own, the implications are clearly vital. If the implications are important, then the evidence used to reach the inferences is also vital.

What is the nature of the implication drawn from concrete cues? In person perception, the implied or inferred internal properties are traits. Traits similarly infer into political perception, but the specific dimensions probably differ. For example, dimensions important in ordinary person perception are sociability and task orientation (e.g. Rosenberg and Sedlak, 1972). In politics, party label matters most (Kinder, Note 8), and task dimensions may also matter (e.g. competence: Popkin, Gorman, Philips & Smith, 1976; ^{or} trustworthiness: Miller & Miller, 1977). [^] This trait-like information is rarely presented directly by the news media, except for political analysis columns. With that exception, perceivers must infer politicians' traits from the more concrete types of evidence. Social psychologists have focused extensively on how perceivers move from behaviors to traits (e.g. Jones, and Davis, 1965; Jones, Kanouse, Kelley, Nisbett, Valins, and Weiner, 1972) or from traits to other traits (e.g. Schneider, 1973). But the process of inferring the dispositions of politicians has been neglected. Except for attitude change work on determinants of perceived source credibility (e.g. Eagly, Chaiken, Wood & 1978) it remains an open question how attributes of candidates are inferred. Parallels from person perception and attribution suggest that behavioral consistency would be a big factor (e.g. Jones and Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1967) and the pronouncements of media or local opinion leaders probably carries much weight (cf. Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). In any case, how inferences are made about candidates is a wide open field.

Selection of Inputs

Given the overwhelming variety of inputs to candidate images, how do potential votes select cues? What are the attentional processes involved in perceiving politicians? Work in person and object perception suggests several principles:

gallience, informativeness, schematic relevance, and affective consistency.

Principles of salience in attribution are reviewed at length elsewhere (Taylor and Fiske, in press), and may be summarized here: attributes that are novel, dynamic, contrasting, and rare all attract disproportionate attention. In the political arena, the parallel is those attributes of a candidate which contrast markedly with the rest of the candidates attributes or with the relevant attributes of other candidates in the field. Such contrast and consequent attentional focus is double-edged; it polarizes initial evaluations in both positive and negative directions (Taylor and Fiske, 1978). Salience also results in greater recall and in holding people more personally responsible for their actions. So the consequences of highly salient behavior are extremely hard to shake,

Principles of attention to maximally informative cues also are contributed by work in person perception (Fiske, Note 3). Perceivers typically focus on cues which differentiate people. Extreme, negative and consensual attributes attract particular attention because they are applied to fewer people than are more modal ones. That negative information attracts attention is a basic principle of scandal-mongering and that extreme statements attract attention is clear to Wallace. Consensually agreed on attributes attract attention for a variety of reasons which include being unambiguous, applying to fewer people, and carrying a large evaluative component. For example, one does not lightly label someone: "She is warm" or "Nixon is a cold person." Such consensually informative attributes attract attention. Within the context of a set of attributes, early and inconsistent attributes draw attention. Early attributes represent the biggest increment of information, that is, from zero. Shaking a first impression of fence-sitting was long Carter's problem in the 1976 campaign. Moderately inconsistent attributes, by virtue of applying to few people, are maximally helpful to forming impressions. Inconsistencies in politicians' statements are routinely seized on by the news as particularly revealing. Finally, any one attribute within a small set receives more

attention than any single attribute in a larger set. (Elaborations on and references for all these points are in Fiske, Note 3.) To study attentional processes in candidate perceptions would require experimental control over information inputs. Otherwise, selection or attention cannot be distinguished from input exposure, relative emphasis within an impression, or forgetting.

Preliminary work in schematic processing also suggests principles of input selection. Perceivers hold informal theories about the structure of the environment, social, political, or inanimate. These theories determine what constitutes relevant data (See Taylor & Crocker, Note 4, for a more thorough theoretical discussion). Evidence for theory-driven selection of inputs comes from work in story-understanding (Bower, 1977); perceivers appear to selectively process details consistent with particular schemas (Fiske and Piaget, Note 6). Similar notions have guided the programming of computers for natural language processing (Schank and Abelson, 1977). In the political sphere, preliminary evidence for schema-selected input comes from an experiment in which perceivers were trained in one of two alternative political schemas and subsequently listened to a country's description which contained both kinds of information (Fiske and Kinder, Note 5). Early analyses suggest that perceivers selectively attended to schema-relevant areas. In perceiving candidates, voters with differing ideologies or political schemas probably notice whatever fits with their structuring of the situation. If a person structures the political world in terms of competing interest groups, liberal-conservative distinctions may seem irrelevant and be largely ignored. To further investigate this, laboratory and analog experiments (similar to the one described above) are one approach. Identifying people with diverse long-term political schemas would also allow both lab and field tests of theory driven attention (Fiske & Kinder, Note 8).

Affective consistency is another guide to the selection of inputs. Some rather mixed evidence from consistency theory (e.g., Abelson et al, 1968) suggests that people notice inputs which confirm their existing attitudes and evaluations (See, e.g.

Sears and Whitney, 1972). The consistency effect differs from the schematic effect in that schemas structure inputs and determine data relevance while consistency biases selectively ignore inputs which are evaluative contradictions. Although attentional Consistency is difficult to separate from selective exposure (Sears and Freedman, 1967), possible determinants of affective consistency lie in party loyalty, interpersonal networks, policy positions, and the like.

To summarize, salience, informativeness, schema-relevance and affective consistency all provide attentional principles to guide the selection of inputs.

Evaluation of Inputs

Once selected, candidate attributes must be evaluated. Each input must be scaled for its meaning on relevant dimensions. For simplicity, evaluation will be emphasized here, and ideological, competence, and issue dimensions will be treated as inferential attributes, themselves sources of evaluative information. To assign a scale value to a particular cue, the perceiver must consult both internal and external standards. Rather than delving at length into the massive literatures on attitude scaling (e.g. Summers, 1970; Fishbein, 1967) and political measurement (e.g. Lodge et al, 1976), the reader is referred to Sears and Whitney (1972), who discuss the evaluation of new information on the basis of prior positions. Kinder (note 8) reviews the evaluation of attributes as affected by party identification, prior evaluation of the political figure, and perhaps by chronic political predispositions. The evaluation of inputs remains an open area for further work.

Combining of Inputs

Several combinatorial principles have been proposed in work on person perception and a political behavior. Some of these are algebraic models and some not. Of the algebraic approaches, both averaging and summation have been proposed, with equal and

unequal weighting of component cues. Anderson (e.g. 1974) has conducted extensive research on the averaging of traits, performance measures, foods, books and capsule biographics into composite judgments. Although equal weighting often applies, differential weighting may occur in more realistic tasks (Fiske, Note 3). Fishbein (e.g. Fishbein and Ajzen, 1976) has supported ^{an} unequal-weighted summation model of person perception and attitudes. In political behavior, Kelley and Mirer (1974), tested an equally weighted model which integrated likes and dislikes into an overall candidate evaluation. Rather than enter into the various controversies, it is useful to note that algebraic models potentially provide relatively concrete testable predictions.

Predictions offered by nonalgebraic models may be harder to specify. In person perception, a Gestalt model has long held that impression components influence each other (e.g. Asch, 1946; Zanna and Hamilton, 1977). Context determines meaning, and evaluative meanings change depending on cue juxtapositions. This model is testable, then, by determining whether meanings change with context. Clearly they do, as anyone trying to program computer text-processing can attest (e.g. Stone, Dunphy and Ogilvie, 1966; Schank and Abelson, 1977). But the question remains as to the usefulness of this approach in predicting and understanding perceptions. To the extent that the Gestalt model makes nonspecific predictions, it may be of limited practical and theoretical utility.

Another nonalgebraic model of person perception relies on theory-driven inference rules. In this view, schemas structure and organize inputs into conclusions within appropriate theoretical domains. A schematic model allows precise prediction only upon specification of the relevant personal theories. Preliminary approaches to specification are represented in political science by Axelrod (1973), in international affairs (Jervis, as ^{discussed by Kinder & Weiss, Note 10} in common social settings by Schank and Abelson (1976), in self-perception by Markus (1977), and in social cognition by Taylor and Crocker (Note 4).

The utility of the various algebraic and nonalgebraic approaches remains to

be assessed. By sheer bulk, the evidence points to Anderson's unequal-weight averaging model. The averaging model also has heuristic advantages, in that it allows assessment of independent predictions about relative weighting. Relative weight in person perception may describe an attributes' relevance to the judgment (Anderson, 1974). Evidence also suggests that relative weight mirrors selective attention; principles of informativeness determine both selection and weighting of uses. From this it follows that negative, extreme, early, consensual and moderately inconsistent cues should carry particular weight as well as attention (argued above and in Fiske, Note 3). The relative importance of key attributes, such as policy issues and political party, easily be considered as a problem of relative weighting. Despite the potential complexity of identifying all the model's parameters from given data, the weighted averaging model provides a tractable approach to combining rules in political judgment processes.

Retrieval

Because cognitive processes cannot be observed directly, retrieval processes are difficult to separate from selection and combination processes. Essentially, the equation has too many unknowns and an infinity of solutions. Despite this, various lines of cognitive research have uncovered potentially extensible principles of remembering: primarily, that memory is organized. The organization of person cues in memory has been studied inferentially. That is, various organizing structures have been posited, but all tend to make similar predictions, so they are virtually impossible to separate (J.R. Anderson, 19) and presumably of limited interest here. The overlapping predictions of various models are useful, in any case. The essential shared point is that structured memory is more efficient than unstructured memory. This effect emerges in several ways.

First, people spontaneously organize information into clusters of adjacent related cues. This finding is well-established in free recall work with lists of words as stimuli (e.g. Bousfield, 1953; Bousfield and Bousfield, 1966; Sternberg and

Tulving, 1977). Preliminary person memory work also indicates clustering by social categories (Fiske and Piaget, Note 6) and by types of information (Fiske and Cox, Note 1). One method for assessing the subjective organization of a candidate's attributes or of groups of candidates would be to examine respondent-generated lists for clustering. If a free-response description of a candidate shows grouping of items, such as related issue positions, or inter-connected personal information, then that reveals subjective organization. This could also be examined experimentally, by presenting lists of hypothetical candidate information and examining the recalled output for clustering (Fiske & Kinder, Note 9).

In addition to spontaneous clustering of output, category labels facilitate amount of recall. Supplying free-recall subjects with category labels enables increased retrieval of relevant items (e.g. Tulving and Pearlstone, 1964). In person memory, subjects categorize information by salient social labels and remember by such group-labels (Taylor, Fiske, Etcoff and Ruderman, in press). Similarly, subjects' structuring of social events creates preferential recall for structure-relevant material (Snyder and Uranowitz, in press). And person attributes organized by prototypical categories are better recalled than attributes not so organized (Cantor and Mischel, 1977). These results collectively demonstrate that organization facilitates recall.

Such an advantage in efficiency of recall should extend to other variables besides sheer volume. Reaction time for responding should decrease (Markus, 1977), and errors should decrease. Items that fit into a structure should be output before unstructured items; they should be more available to recall (e.g. Tversky and Kahneman, 1974). More subjective variables such as confidence in answers also should be affected by the level of organization.

All these findings may be related to political science debates over the role of ideology in levels of voter information (e.g. Converse, 1975). Voters who have an organizing structure for the overwhelming amounts of available political information, for example voters with an ideological understanding, should reasonably be able to re-

member more efficiently. This parallels Down's explanation in terms of information costs. Organized information costs less to recall. Efficiency of recall is particularly relevant in a sphere such as politics where the potential information levels are so high and where the typical voter's investment in the information is relatively low.

Before leaving retrieval processes, a final comment is in order. This section has focused on organized recall of individual attributes. Some evidence suggests separate memory systems for individual attributes that comprise an evaluative judgment and for the judgment itself (e.g. Anderson and Hubert, 19 ; Dreben, Fiske, and Hastie, Note 7). It appears that social perceivers integrate information and store the individual cues separately from the overall response. If this holds true for political figures, the recalled components of an image and the general evaluative judgment may not correspond. Although originally based on the same data, recall of each may be completely independent.

Products of Political Information Processing

The major dependent measures in political science research on candidates have been vote intention, thermometer ratings, and open-ended questions about likes and dislikes for each candidate (e.g. SRC, pre and post election surveys, 1976). Although the vote is in many ways the major predictive goal, it is an awkward dependent measure. Dichotomous, only indirectly measured, and with a high non-response rate, the vote provides minimal information. Thermometer ratings are more analogous to the scaled likability ratings common in person perception. As such, they provide summary evaluative information with more precision than does the vote. But they tell practically nothing about candidate images. Open-ended questions based on specific likes and dislikes for each candidate provide another level of detail, but do not encourage or allow complex, sophisticated descriptions. Less structured questions would better reveal the structure of candidate images.

Finally, this comment has continued a long-standing political science

tradition of voter-specific models for perceptions of candidates. But if person perception principles are involved, the formation of candidate images should generalize across perceivers as diverse as ordinary citizens, news commentators, and the political elite.

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