

Political Communication
POLS 418
MWF 10:00-10:50

Drew Seib

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Goals

- ▶ Research Methods
- ▶ Background
- ▶ Direct Effects
- ▶ Indirect Effects

Before we get started...

- ▶ What's in the news?
- ▶ AZ shootings
- ▶ Academically Adrift

Independent vs Dependent Variables

- ▶ Independent Variable
 - ▶ Causal or explanatory variable
 - ▶ “The phenomenon thought to influence, affect, or cause some other phenomenon” (Johnson and Reynolds 2008).
- ▶ Dependent Variable
 - ▶ “The phenomenon thought to be influenced, affected, or cause by some other phenomenon” (Johnson and Reynolds 2008).
- ▶ Independent Variable → Dependent Variable

Examples

- ▶ Exposure to political advertisements causes people to change their vote choice.
- ▶ People's attitudes towards gun policy are affected by recent news stories of the Tucson, AZ shootings.
- ▶ People's feelings toward the president are only minimally influenced by media exposure.
- ▶ Our social network (the people we talk to about important matters) influences our political attitudes.

Intervening Variables

- ▶ “A variable coming between an independent variable and a dependent variable in an explanatory scheme” (Johnson and Reynolds 2008).
- ▶ Independent Variable → Intervening Variable → Dependent Variable.
- ▶ Example: The amount of news coverage that an issues receive increases the issues salience within the public, which in turn cause the government to address the issue.

- ▶ In Lippmann and Merz's content analysis of the *New York Times* coverage of the 1917 Russian Revolution, they found an anti-Bolshevik bias. The authors express their concern about the ability of the average member of society to be able to form an intelligent opinion.
 - ▶ Can you think of any examples of bias in coverage of a topic today?
 - ▶ How could bias in news coverage affect the ability of people to form intelligent opinions?

We left off here talking about whether bias in the media and diverse opinions are a good thing and how they might affect people's ability to form intelligent opinions.

Lasswell

- ▶ What was Lasswell known for? Question Model of Communication
 - ▶ “Who says what to whom via which channels with what effects”
 - ▶ What is so important about this five question model?

Lazzerfeld

Errie County Study

- ▶ What was the Erie County Study and why was it so important to political communication?
- ▶ Is there a way that we could improve his study?
- ▶ Do you agree with Lazzerfeld's *minimal effects* conclusion?
- ▶ Media → People (attitudes and behaviors towards government)
- ▶ If the media only has minimal effects, then why do we care about people such as Glen Beck?

The Unanswered Question

Why are there no direct effects?

The Role of the Wars

- ▶ Why were the wars so important to the development of political communication?
- ▶ Could political communication have grown as a field of study with out the wars?
- ▶ Is war propaganda still popular today. Why or why not?
- ▶ Political communication is thriving today, yet we only sporadicly have wars to talk about. What is it that drives the study of political communication today?

An Intervening Variable

- ▶ Under the indirect effects model: Media Agenda → Public Agenda → Policy Agenda
- ▶ How do political scientists and communication scholars differ in what they study?
- ▶ If we only study how the Media Agenda → Public Agenda or how Public Agenda → Policy Agenda do we have a full picture? What do we have to gain? Or put another way, what are we missing?

Diffusion

- ▶ What do we mean by diffusion of events?
- ▶ How does the type of event matter for diffusion?
- ▶ How do demographics matter for diffusion?
- ▶ Going back to Lippmann's concern over an informed citizenry, does diffusion give us any more hope?

New Communication Technologies

- ▶ What is the Public Electronic Network?
 - ▶ “PEN was designed to encourage exchange, especially about political issues, among residents of Santa Monica...”
- ▶ What is the PEN Action Group?
- ▶ What was PENNFEMME?
- ▶ What are some similarities between the PEN Action Group and PENFEMME?
- ▶ Are there networks similar to PEN today?
- ▶ Is there hope that the internet might help to create an informed citizenry?
- ▶ Why is the internet so useful in facilitating political communication?