

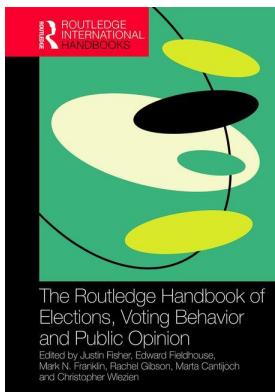
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ATTITUDES, VALUES AND BELIEF SYSTEMS

Oddbjørn Knutsen

Introduction

The topic of this chapter comprises three concepts that are central within public opinion research, namely attitudes, values and belief systems. The chapter starts with examining how these concepts are defined within social science in general, and then within political science more specifically. The section on belief systems focuses on a major debate within public opinion research – that concerning people’s democratic competence.

Attitudes

The attitude concept

Much of the theoretical framework and conceptualization of attitudes has been developed within social psychology.¹ In general, an attitude is an expression of favor or disfavor toward a person, place, thing or event (the attitude object). Eagly and Chaiken (1993: Chapter 1) define, for example, an attitude as “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor.” *Psychological tendency* refers to a state that is internal to the individual. *Evaluating* refers to all classes of evaluative response, whether overt or covert, cognitive, effective or behavioral. This psychological tendency can be regarded as a type of bias that *predisposes* the individual toward evaluative responses that are positive or negative. An attitude develops on the basis of *evaluative responding*: An individual does not have an attitude until he or she responds to an entity on an affective, cognitive or behavioral basis.

Attitude is one of many hypothetical constructs that are not directly observable, but can be inferred from observable responses. Attitudes are one of numerous implicit states or dispositions that psychologists have constructed to explain why people react in certain ways in the presence of certain stimuli.

Multi-component models of attitudes are the most influential. A classic tripartite view is that an attitude contains cognitive, affective and behavioral components:

- The *cognitive component* contains thoughts or ideas that people have about the attitude object. These thoughts are sometimes conceptualized as beliefs which are understood to be associations or linkages that people establish between the attitude object and various attributes.

- The *affective component* consists of feelings, moods, emotions and sympathetic nervous system activity that people experience in relation to the attitude object.
- The *behavioral component* is a predisposition to action under appropriate conditions. It is also referred to as the *conation element* or an individual's *action tendencies* towards the object. It is also argued that attitudes can be derived from past behavior.

The assumption that attitudes have three different components and that attitudes are formed through cognitive, affective and behavioral processes has been advanced in numerous discussions of attitudes. This approach raises a question about the consistency or empirical validity of these components.

Another theoretical view is that the three components described above are distinct entities, which may or may not be related, depending on the particular situation. This viewpoint has been strongly advocated by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). In their theory, the term "attitude" is reserved for the affective component. The cognitive dimension is labeled as beliefs, and is defined as a person's subjective probability that an object has a particular characteristic. This is often referred to as the one-dimensional view of attitudes.

Milton Rokeach (1968: Chapter 5) has a somewhat different conceptualization of attitudes. His definition is perhaps more relevant for social and political attitudes. He defines an attitude as "a relatively enduring organization" of beliefs around an object or situation predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner. A belief is defined as any simple proposition, conscious or unconscious, inferred from what a person says or does, capable of being preceded by the phrase "I believe that..." In this conceptualization:

- 1 *An attitude is relatively enduring.* Some predispositions are momentary and, as such, are not called attitudes. The concept of attitude is typically reserved for more enduring, persistent organizations of predispositions.
- 2 *An attitude is an organization of beliefs.* Rokeach differentiated between three types of beliefs: (a) descriptive beliefs which describe the object of the beliefs as true or false, correct or incorrect, (b) evaluative beliefs which evaluate the object as good or bad, and (c) prescriptive beliefs which advocate a certain course of action or a certain state of existence as being desirable or undesirable.
- 3 All beliefs are *predispositions to action*. An attitude is thus a set of interrelated predispositions to action organized around an object or situation. Each belief within an attitude organization is conceived as having the three components that are emphasized in other approaches (cognitive, affective and behavioral).
- 4 They are *organized around an object or a situation*. Attitude objects are considered as static objects of regard, concrete or abstract, such as a person, group, an institution or issue. A situation is a dynamic event of activity around which a person organizes a set of related beliefs about how to behave.
- 5 They involve a *set of interrelated predispositions to respond*, meaning that attitudes are not single predispositions but sets of interrelated predispositions.
- 6 *A preferential response* implies that the response can be either affective or evaluative or both. It is not assumed that there is a one-to-one relationship between affect and evaluation.

Political attitudes

Political attitudes are defined more broadly in political science than in social psychology. Based on Rokeach's (1968) definition of attitudes, we can define a political attitude in the following

way: Political attitudes are relatively enduring organizations of beliefs around political objects or situations which predispose individuals to respond in some preferential manner.

The most immediate political objects are political actors, institutions and political issues. Therefore, various levels of political trust and support are central political attitudes, from orientations to politicians and political parties, to political institutions and evaluation of regime performance (Norris 2011: Chapter 2).²

Political issues are probably the most studied political attitudes. In some ways, the literature does not always differentiate clearly between issues (attitudes) and values regarding the dimensions, antecedents and behavioral consequences. Much of what is written about political values is thus relevant for studies of political issues. The dimensions of political issues and values are therefore addressed together under the “Values” section below.

There are, however, considerable measurement equivalence problems (Ariely and Davidov 2012) when examining political attitudes over time and cross-nationally. These problems are caused by the fact that attitudes address objects and situations: these may change over time even though there is no real change in basic orientation. In politics, “situations” can reflect unfolding political events, the current state of a given policy area, the political debate about where to move from the present state, the specific behavior of politicians that draws attention, and so on.

Values

The value concept

The concept of values is used in many of the social sciences. Values are considered to be a basic aspect of individuals’ belief systems and central in the culture of a given social group and in a given country. Several definitions of “values” have been influential. For the anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn (1951), a value is a conception of that which is desirable and which influences the selection of available modes, means and ends of action. Central to this definition is the notion “a conception of the desirable.” A desire is a wish or a preference, while the term “desirable” goes beyond a wish or a want by including considerations of moral content.

For Milton Rokeach (1973: Chapter 1), a “value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is preferable to opposite or converse modes of conduct or end-states of existence.” Rokeach’s definition includes elements that can be used as a point of departure for discussing several dimensions of the value concept. Rokeach indicated that there are two types of values: terminal (end-state of existence) and instrumental (mode of conduct) values. Rokeach also differentiated between personal and social values. People have values they want to emphasize in their own lives (self-centered) but also values they would emphasize in their social environment (societal-centered). This differentiation can be expanded to different domains where we can talk about family values, work values, bureaucratic values, political values, and others.

For Rokeach, a value is a basic and relatively stable element in a person’s belief system. A value is a *prescriptive belief* wherein some means or end of action are judged to be desirable or undesirable. Values are sometimes contrasted with attitudes. A value is considered to be a basic (prescriptive) belief that often influences a specific attitude together with other beliefs.

Building on Rokeach and others, Shalom Schwartz (2007) identifies formal characteristics that are the defining features of basic human values.

Values are beliefs:

- a about desirable end-states or behaviors (modes of conduct),
- b which transcend specific situations or actions,

- c that guide selection or evaluation of behavior and events,
- d are ordered by relative importance to form a value system,
- e where the relative importance of values guides attitudes and behavior.

Other researchers such as Jan van Deth and Elinor Scarbrough (1995) consider the relationship between values and attitudes as reciprocal, which, at the individual level, provides opportunities for the modification and adaption of values. These scholars use the notion “*value orientation*” for constellations of attitudes that can be patterned in some empirical way and are theoretically interpreted in a meaningful way. This implies that value orientations can be studied by data that comprise indicators that can be attitudes.

Culture can be considered as the rich complex of meanings, beliefs, symbols, norms and values prevalent among people in a society. Cultural differences can be studied along many dimensions. Given that values are central elements in individuals’ belief systems, the values that are emphasized in a society may be a very central feature of culture. The same applies to political values in relation to political culture.

Political values

A point of departure for conceptualizing the notion of political values is the distinction made by Rokeach (1973: 7–8) between personal and social (terminal) values. Values may be self-centered or society-centered, intra-personal or inter-personal in focus. Some values may relate to the individual’s own life, while others relate to society or even the political sphere. These latter values can then be considered as political values.

Terminal political values can be considered as end-states that individuals would like to see characterizing society as a whole and see implemented through the political system. Instrumental political values are modes of conduct that are considered legitimate (or illegitimate) in influencing political decisions – for example, various types of political participation (Knutsen 2011). Inspired by Rokeach and Schwartz and others, Goren, Federico and Kittelson (2009: 805) define “core political values” as abstract normative beliefs about desirable end-states or modes of conduct that operate in the political realm. These political values are quite stable and guide preferences on short-term political controversies and issues of the day. Similarly, McCann (1997: 565) defines a citizen’s core political values as consisting of overarching normative principles about government, citizenship and (American) society. These principles and assumptions facilitate positions taking on more concrete domains by serving as general focal points in the otherwise confusing environment. Kinder (1998: 808) used the notions of “principles” and “values” interchangeably, indicating that the former is used more frequently within political science while “values” are used more frequently within social psychology. His definition of political principles and values is that they transcend particular objects and specific situations; they are relatively abstract and durable claims about virtue and the good society. Furthermore, these principles and values are motivating and lead to particular positions being taken on political issues and help people to evaluate and make judgments.

Political value and attitude dimensions

The number of political issues and value dimensions depends on how many items are included in dimensional analyses such as factor analyses. As a rule, there should be at least three indicators for tapping a theoretically meaningful dimension. When this rule is followed, the issue or value structure is multidimensional. Some of the dimensions that have been focused upon in the literature are reviewed below.

Christian values focus on the importance of Christian morals and principles in society and politics, and on traditional moral guidelines in school and society in general. Secularization is often understood as a process whereby mundane reality is less interpreted from a supernatural perspective, and secular values are based on more modern norms of morality where the individual wants to determine for him- or herself without the guidelines of the church (Halman and Moor 1994; Norris and Inglehart 2004).

The most important political value orientations that emerged in the Industrial Revolution were economic left-right values. These value orientations are economic in nature, and refer in particular to the role of government in creating more economic equality in society versus the need for economic incentives and efficiency. These values include workers' control and state regulation of the economy versus private enterprise, private property and the market economy (Knutsen 1995).

The moral value dimension and economic left-right values are often referred to as "Old Politics" because they capture the essence of the traditional lines of conflict in industrial society. In contrast, "New Politics" refers to value conflicts emerging from post-industrial society. The most well-known new political value dimension is that of the materialist/post-materialist value orientations. These value orientations were originally formulated by Inglehart (1977, 1990), who argued that new post-materialist values are deeply rooted and stand in opposition to more traditional materialist values. Materialist values emphasize economic and physical security such as economic stability and growth, law and order, and strong defense. Post-materialist values emphasize self-expression, subjective well-being and the quality of life.

New Politics values can, however, be conceptualized along three different dimensions: The value conflict between *environmental versus economic growth values* is firmly rooted in the public mind, and in many West European countries conflicts over environmental values seem to be the most manifest expression of the "New Politics" conflict (Dalton 2009).

In a series of articles, Scott Flanagan emphasized that a *libertarian/authoritarian* dimension is the central New Politics dimension (Inglehart and Flanagan 1987; Flanagan and Lee 2003). The libertarian/authoritarian value orientations are also central components in Herbert Kitschelt's (1994, 1995) works.

The third set of New Politics orientation is related to immigration and immigrants. This has become a major policy area in Europe with different views among the mass publics. Comparative research has shown that these orientations are closely related to and reflect basic values and beliefs about different conceptions of national identity, ethnicity and multiculturalism (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007: 429–434).

A final dimension is the relationship between national and supranational orientations. This dimension is particularly related to attitudes toward European integration. It also includes various orientations toward economic and political globalization versus emphasis on national sovereignty and identity (Marks and Steenbergen 2004).

Inglehart's broader value dimensions

Inglehart has broadened his study of value dimensions by emphasizing that his materialist/post-materialist dimension is only one component of a much larger value syndrome, and by including an additional dimension (Inglehart and Welzel 2005). In an alternative approach to conceptualizing and analyzing value orientations in a long-term perspective, a two-dimensional value structure is emphasized: one dimension based on traditional versus secular-rational values; the other based on survival versus self-expression/well-being values. These two dimensions are associated with the structural changes occurring in the transition from pre-industrial to industrial society, and from industrial to post-industrial society, respectively.

Political value change

Inglehart incorporates most explicitly the issue of cultural change in his work. He identifies a “silent revolution” in which a gradual value change takes place along the materialist/post-materialist dimension. As older and more materialist generations die, they are continuously replaced by younger, less materialist generations. Inglehart’s theory is based on two hypotheses: The *scarcity hypothesis* implies that short-term effects may induce all cohorts to emphasize post-materialist values when economic conditions are good and materialist values when economic conditions decline. The cohort differences are explained by differences in economic and physical security during the formative years of the various cohorts. This *socialization hypothesis* predicts a watershed between the post-war and the pre-war cohorts in value priorities because they have such different experiences in their formative years regarding economic security (economic scarcity versus economic prosperity) and physical security (war versus absence of war).³

Empirical research has shown a fairly consistent decline in religiosity in rich, advanced industrial countries. The most important aspects of secularization at the individual level are the decline in both religious beliefs and church religiosity. In other parts of the world, religiosity has been much more stable. Overall, the world is becoming more religious even though the advanced industrial countries in the West have become considerably more secular (Norris and Inglehart 2004).

Belief systems

Definitions of belief systems

Beliefs, attitudes and values do not exist in isolation but are connected with many other beliefs in an organized system. According to Rokeach (1968:123), a belief system “represents the total universe of a person’s beliefs about the physical world, the social world, and the self. It is conceived to be organized along several dimensions.” Converse (1964) defined a belief system in a more narrow sense:

as a configuration of ideas and attitudes in which the elements are bound together by some form of constraint or functional interdependence. In the static case, given initial knowledge, “constraint” meant the success in predicting that if an individual holds a specified attitude – that he holds certain further ideas and attitudes.

(Converse 1964: 207)

The belief system debate

A main controversy in the debate about ideology and belief systems commenced with the findings in *The American Voter* (Campbell et al. 1960), and in particular Converse’s article “The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics” (1964). Converse’s theses are still by many considered to be the strongest argument in the field. At the heart of the debate is the question of whether citizens are qualified to understand and have a coherent and stable set of political attitudes and beliefs.

Converse studied three aspects of belief systems:

- constraints (correlations) among political attitudes and values,
- stability of political attitudes at the individual level,
- levels of political/ideological conceptualization.

Although Converse (1964: 207) originally avoided ideology for “belief system,” the notion of ideology is frequently used for more sophisticated belief systems; in fact the higher level of conceptualization is designated “ideological” (see also the section on “ideology and belief systems” below).

First, Converse’s approaches and empirical findings are presented, then some other works that challenge or support Converse’s views. Each topic (constraint, stability and conceptualization) is examined separately. Within the review of constraint a brief review of constraint between issue dimensions and party choice is also presented.

Converse’s approach

Constraint

Converse (1964: 227–231) compared the correlations between economic left–right issues and foreign policy issues in the mass publics and the political elite (congressional candidates) and found much higher correlations among the elite. He also focused upon other aspects of constraint in a more broad-based context:

- The correlation between political issues and party choice was also much higher among the elites (Converse 1964: 229).
- The impact of social structural variables like social class and religious denomination on party choice is much larger among those with a higher level of political conceptualization (see below) than among those with a low level of conceptualization (Converse 1964: 231–235).
- The mass public had, however, a high degree of constraint with regard to different attitudes toward a group they liked or disliked. Such attitude objects have a higher centrality in the belief systems of the mass than of the elites. In such cases it is not the general principle that is included in the question that is important, but the positive or negative attitude toward the given social group. Various mass attitudes toward concrete objects (social groups) might then be expected to be highly constrained and also stable over time among the mass public.

Attitude stability: the black and white model

Converse studied stability in political issue attitudes over time using panel data from 1956, 1958 and 1960 (Converse 1964: 238–245). He anticipated a low degree of stability in particular for more abstract and remote attitude items while attitudes toward bounded and visible groups like Negroes and Catholics would be more stable. This is exactly what he found. There is one group of individuals who have a well crystallized and stable attitude pattern, and a larger group where the response sequence over time is statistically random. He explains the pattern by what he calls a *black and white model* comprising polar opposites regarding belief system stability. The model does not specify the proportion of the population falling into either category. These expectations are to a large degree confirmed by his empirical analyses, although he allows for a “third force” which he leaves open to the possibility of real attitude change over time. This third force is, however, small compared to the two other groups.

Based on the findings regarding the lack of stability in political attitudes, Converse formulated the notion of *non-attitudes*. Large portions of the population (and voters) do not have real attitudes on specific issues.

Levels of political conceptualization

These aspects of the mass public's political belief systems were measured by open-ended questions resulting in lengthy materials which measured the respondents' evaluation of the political scene in the respondents' own words. The original measure of levels of conceptualization in Campbell et al. (1960) and Converse (1964) was based on eight open-ended questions relating to American political parties and presidential candidates. The respondents were classified into theoretically meaningful categories which tapped a hierarchy of political or ideological differentiation. There were two dimensions of levels of conceptualization. *An active use of ideological dimensions of judgment* was based on questions about what the respondents liked and disliked of the two presidential candidates and the two major American political parties. Here, a differentiation was made between those who focused on ideological arguments, group interests, important issues of the time, and those who were not able to mention any issue content.

In order to measure *recognition of ideological dimensions of judgment*, the respondents were first asked which of the American parties (Democrats or Republicans) is most conservative and liberal and then why they think so. Five different levels of recognition were identified.

Converse's main view

According to Converse, "ideological thinking" is a central aspect of political sophistication. This is, for example, expressed in this way:

At the same time, moving from top to bottom of this information dimension, the character of the objects central in a belief system undergoes systematic change. These objects shift from the remote, generic, and abstract to the increasingly simple, concrete, or "close to home." Where potential political objects are concerned, this progression tends to be from abstract, "ideological" principles to the more obviously recognizable social groupings or charismatic leaders, and finally to such objects of immediate experience as family, job, and immediate associates.

(Converse 1964: 213)

The results of Converse's surveys and analysis cast doubt on many of these assumptions by revealing the apparent lack of understanding of ideology or even differentiation between the two political parties on the liberal-conservative continuum. Most people fall, for example, into the lower levels of conceptualization, giving rise to concerns as to whether voters are competent to make the decisions they are called upon to make in a democratic polity (see Bølstad in this volume).

The controversy⁴

Constraint

Later analyses, based on a variety of techniques designed to cleanse the data of measurement error, have challenged Converse's conclusions. Studies using such methods report very high levels of "true" attitude stability and substantial (as much as 50 percent) random error in the raw data. Similarly, upwardly adjusted attitudinal consistency coefficients have led to much more favorable comparisons between the mass public and Converse's elite sample of congressional candidates (see, for example, Achen 1975; Judd and Milburn 1980).

Another aspect of constraint concerns the dimensionality of the political attitudes. The issue of multidimensional attitude structure raises the question of how the pattern differs between individuals with higher and lower level of political sophistication. Is the attitude structure more unidimensional among those with a higher level of sophistication or are the various dimensions more strongly expressed among this group? This issue is examined, but not solved, in various contributions to the literature on the topic (see Marcus, Tabb and Sullivan 1974; Peffley and Hurwitz 1985). The critical argument regarding Converse's approach is that his inability to find evidence of ideological constraint may be due to his use of correlation coefficients – a statistic which can measure response consistency only on a single liberal–conservative dimension.

Goren (2013: Chapter 3) differentiates between issue attitudes and attitudes toward policy principles. Policy principles reference more abstract ideas than issue preferences. Core principles stand above the issue attitude and are quite similar to political values as defined in the previous section. Goren analyzes constraint among several policy preferences that measure central policy principles, and finds that politically unsophisticated, moderately sophisticated and highly sophisticated individuals hold real attitudes toward central policy principles. He finds that the highly sophisticated do not systematically rely more on these principles to constrain their policy preferences than do the unsophisticated (Goren 2004; 2013: Chapter 5).

Converse (1974, 1980) has challenged the validity of “corrected” correlations, arguing that measurement error is a product of both the questions used in a survey and the competence of the respondents. Several efforts to verify or reject this proposition have been made, but this issue remains controversial (see also Erikson, this volume).

Stability over time, non-attitudes

Achen (1975) identified two possible sources of weak correlation coefficients among citizens' political survey responses: (1) the instability of a voter's political attitudes, and (2) the low reliability of opinion survey questions (measurement errors). A statistical model designed to separate these two sources of response instability was developed and applied to Converse's data. The survey questions suffered from fairly weak reliabilities. When the correlations among attitudes were corrected for this unreliability, the result was a sharply increased estimate of the stability and coherence of voters' political thinking (see also Judd and Mulburn 1980).

Hill and Kriesi (2001) examined a Swiss panel that had been asked several questions about environmental pollution four different times during a two-year period (1993–95). The authors used a probability model in order to differentiate between those who had stable attitudes (called opinion holders) across the various waves, those who were vacillating changers and those who were durable changers. Their conclusion was that the portion that held stable opinions was larger than in Converse's data, but there were also large proportions of vacillating changers with unstable opinions. The group of durable changers was small.

Inglehart (1985) analyzed items designed by Rokeach and Inglehart to tap basic value priorities. These items showed modest individual-level stability, together with remarkably high aggregate stability structured in ways that could not occur if random responses were the prevailing pattern. Materialist/postmaterialist values showed, for example, large differences between birth cohorts. These aggregated results are skewed to result from random answering and cannot be attributed to methods effects. While random response to given items does play an important role, it is much less widespread than Converse's black and white model implies, and does not generally reflect an absence of relevant preferences.

The use of various statistical programs to control for measurement errors in the belief system debate has been challenged. Measurement error varies according to political knowledge and

education, as Feldman (1989) has shown, and a significant part of measurement error might be caused by the survey instruments, which are interpreted differently among people with different levels of political knowledge (Norpoth and Lodge 1985). When these aspects of measurement error are controlled for by the statistical programs, important aspects of differences between belief systems in the mass public are hidden.

Issues, political principles and party choice

Converse found a much stronger correlation between political issues and party choice among the elite than among the mass public. In the following, some different findings regarding this aspect of the debate will be reviewed.

The sophistication–interaction hypothesis implies that the correlation and effect of attitudes and values on party choice will vary significantly between people at different sophistication levels. Goren (2013: Chapter 8) argues that the nature of policy principles is such that reliance on these speaks well for the political competence of all voters, independent of political sophistication. His analyses of the determinants of the presidential vote based on US election studies shows that policy principles have large effects on the presidential vote, but very few interaction effects with political sophistication are significant. However, several studies of issue voting (specific or more broad) have shown considerable and significant differences in the impact of political issues on voting. MacDonald, Rabinowitz and Listhaug (1995) compare the impact of several issues on evaluation of parties in Norway and the United States and of presidential candidates in the United States based on election studies in the two countries. When controlling for demographical variables in both models, the explanatory power varies considerably between the sophistication levels for nearly all parties and presidential candidates. Other comparative research has also shown that issue and value-based voting varies strongly with levels of political sophistication (Lachat 2008).

Level of conceptualization

The original study of ideological conceptualization was based on the 1956 election study. Longitudinal studies have shown that ideological thinking became considerably more prevalent during the 1964 election and has remained largely stable since then (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008: 293). The most pronounced critic of the level of conceptualization approach has been Smith (1980, 1981), who questioned the fundamental reliability and validity of the levels of conceptualization, on methodological and conceptual grounds. He documented that changes in the levels which occurred across two and four-year periods were so large that the measure possessed an unacceptably low level of reliability. He also questioned whether the open-ended questions measured that which was intended and therefore claimed that their validity was low. This view has been countered by several scholars. Hagner and Pierce (1982) analyzed the criterion validity of the open-ended response variables, and showed that the conceptualization levels differentiate fairly stably across time between various social background variables (e.g., education), psychological involvement and political participation, political knowledge, political efficacy, etc. Cassel (1984) also examined the validity and reliability of the levels. She concluded – as had Hagner and Pierce – that the validity was good and that the levels of conceptualization indexes used in previous studies measured ideological sophistication and not merely campaign rhetoric.

Comparative works on belief systems

There are a few comparative works on the issues of constraint and political attitude stability. In an influential comparative work based on surveys of Sweden and the United States, Granberg and Holmberg (1988) concluded that there was more constraint among attitudes, more stability of attitudes over time and more evidence of issue voting in Sweden (see also Niemi and Westholm 1984). The level of conceptualization research was followed up by comparative data and analyses in the Political Action project in the works of Klingemann (1979). Klingemann relied to a large degree on Converse's framework. Five countries were included in the study: Austria, Britain, Germany, the Netherlands and the United States. With regard to the active use of an ideological mode of thoughts, between 34 and 36 percent in the Netherlands and Germany were classified as ideologues, and 20–21 percent in Austria, Britain and the United States. Klingemann also examined ideological recognition and understanding and found – as did Converse – that the proportions classified as ideologues were considerably larger than those with an active use of ideology. Ideological recognition and understanding was most frequently found in Germany (56 percent), the Netherlands (48 percent), Austria (39 percent), the United States and Britain (both 33–34 percent).

Ideology and belief systems

The “end of ideology” debate that commenced following the publication of Daniel Bell's work *The End of Ideology* (Bell 1960) penetrated mainstream political science in several ways. It drew attention to the need for defining the term, and was central in the rejection of the “isms” that was part of a drive toward a rational and empirical discipline (Knight 2006: 622). Below three different ways of approaching ideology after the end of ideology debate are briefly reviewed.

Sartori (1969) coupled an ideological belief system or an ideological mentality to a “closed” cognitive structure that he defined as a state of dogmatic impermeability concerning both evidence and arguments. The opposite was a pragmatic mentality that was identified as an “open” cognitive structure⁵ where cognitive openness was defined as a state of mental permeability. He also associated ideology with a rationalistic process, coding and contrasting this with empirical process coding. Ideologies were central for elites in obtaining political mobilization and for maximizing the possibility of mass manipulation.

By contrast, for Converse, ideology – or the ability of individuals to think ideologically – was defined in such a way that ideology became entangled with political sophistication. Although Converse (1964: 207) originally avoided ideology for “belief system,” the notion of ideology is frequently used for more sophisticated belief systems; in fact the higher level of conceptualization is designated “ideological.” It is evident from Converse's work that he considered ideology and political sophistication as more or less synonymous, and that an ideological belief system was characterized by (a) a high level of constraint, (b) stable political attitudes, and (c) an “ideological” level of recognition and active use of ideological concepts.

Another common way of using the ideology concept in studies of mass belief systems is to consider the various political values and attitude dimensions which were outlined in the section on values above, as *ideological dimensions*, and the poles as representing various ideologies without including level of sophistication in the definition.

Conclusion

The conceptualization of attitudes and values, and the differences between these concepts, are central within public opinion research. As has been shown, it is frequently difficult in practice to maintain this differentiation. Many items which were intended to tap political values use the notions “more” or “less,” and thereby resemble attitude items by taking the existing situation as a point of departure, although they are formulated as general policy orientations. The political value and attitude structure is multidimensional, not one or two-dimensional, when a larger number of items are examined.

Most of the contributions in the debate concerning citizens’ democratic competence were published before 2000 as the above review confirms. There are also important contributions from after 2000. The review has indicated some unresolved issues in the debate and also emphasized that advanced statistical methods have proven to be somewhat problematic – at least for some scholars – in solving the basic issues in the debate.

Notes

- 1 This review of the general attitude concept is based on Ajzen (2005), Eagly and Chaiken (1993), Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), Oskamp and Schultz (2005) and Rokeach (1968).
- 2 The more general regime support levels, approval or core regime principles and values, and national identities, are closer to political values than to attitudes.
- 3 An alternative hypothesis would be that new values become inculcated rather as a consequence of new political choices than as a cause. See van der Brug and Franklin (in this volume) and Evans and Northmore-Ball (in this volume).
- 4 A thorough review of works on these topics by Campbell et al. (1960) and Converse (1964) and the American debate can be found in Lewis-Beck et al. (2008: Chapters 8–10). See also Critical Review’s 2006 (vol. 18) special issue on “Democratic Competence” based on the debate of Converse’s view. Other works where Converse elaborates his views are found in Converse (1970, 2000, 2006).
- 5 Sartori based his differentiation between open and closed mind on Rokeach’s (1960) well-known work.

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