

Public Opinion and Political Participation

Student's Name

Institutional Affiliation

Week 2 Discussion: Public Opinion and Political Participation

Option 01: Influence of Public Opinion on Health Care Policy

Public opinion plays a crucial role in shaping healthcare policy, as demonstrated by a recent Gallup poll that reveals increasing public concern over healthcare costs. (Gallup, 2024). This poll indicates that many Americans prioritize reducing healthcare expenses over other policy issues, which can pressure policymakers to focus on cost-reduction strategies in healthcare legislation.

The influence of public opinion on healthcare policy is underscored by the concept of "agenda-setting," where the issues that receive the most public attention become priorities for policymakers (McCOMBS & SHAW, 1972). The Gallup poll is a prime example of this, as the heightened public concern will likely elevate healthcare cost reduction on the legislative agenda. By connecting this recent poll to the agenda-setting theory, it becomes evident how public sentiment can direct policy focus and legislative action.

Furthermore, the "public opinion-policy feedback loop" theory suggests that policies can shape public opinion, influencing future policies. (Soroka & Wlezien, 2010). This theory helps explain the dynamic interaction between public perception and policy development. For instance, if new healthcare policies successfully reduce costs, public opinion may shift more favorably towards the effectiveness of current government actions, potentially influencing the direction of future healthcare policies.

In analyzing how the poll reflects public opinion's impact on healthcare decisions, policymakers must consider these opinions in their legislative efforts, as ignoring them could result in political backlash or reduced public trust. Therefore, incorporating public sentiment into

policymaking not only aligns with democratic principles but also enhances the legitimacy and acceptance of healthcare policies.

In conclusion, the relationship between public opinion and healthcare policy is dynamic, with each influencing the other. Recent polls like the one conducted by Gallup provide a snapshot of public priorities, which policymakers cannot afford to ignore if they wish to maintain public trust and effectiveness in addressing key healthcare issues.

Option 02: Comparison of Presidential Campaign Tactics

The 2008 and 2016 U.S. presidential elections offer a fascinating study of the evolution of campaign tactics, particularly through the lens of advertising. Analyzing one Democratic and one Republican advertisement from each election reveals divergences and continuities in strategy that reflect broader trends in political communication.

In 2008, the Democratic campaign famously utilized social media and digital platforms, a nascent tactic but brilliantly executed tactic that contributed significantly to Obama's success (Kreiss, 2016). The advertisements from this period emphasized hope and change, targeting a diverse, younger audience energized by these progressive themes. In contrast, the Republican advertisements 2008 tended to focus on traditional values and experience, aiming at a more conservative base wary of rapid changes.

Fast forward to 2016, and the political advertising landscape has shifted considerably. Trump's campaign leveraged a more aggressive use of social media, utilizing platforms to bypass traditional media filters and engage directly with voters (Enli, 2015). His ads often used provocative language to stir strong emotional responses, reflecting a shift towards more polarizing, populist messaging. On the other hand, Clinton's advertisements continued the Democratic trend of focusing on inclusivity and progressive values but with increased emphasis on experience and stability, likely in response to Trump's unconventional approach.

The contrasting approaches between these two election years highlight a significant evolution in campaign tactics. The shift from a primary focus on traditional broadcast advertising in 2008 to the sophisticated use of digital and social media platforms in 2016 illustrates the rapid adaptation of campaign strategies to new technologies. Moreover, the strategic use of rhetoric

evolved from inspirational to confrontational, mirroring changes in the political and social climate of the United States (Kephart III, 2024).

These observations underscore the importance of adapting campaign strategies to technological advancements and shifting voter demographics and sentiment. The ability to resonate with the electorate, leveraging the appropriate media and messages, remains central to political campaign success.

References

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