What are Opinions? Integrating Theory and Methods for Automatically Analyzing Opinionated Communication (OPINION)



**WORKING GROUP1 MEETING**

**September 27th, 2023, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan, Poland**

**GLOSSARY**

**WG1.SG Linguistics (coordinator: Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk)**

**Proposed OPINION Glossary terms**

**Version of 20 September, 2023**

abuse, accessibility, affect, Addressee, Adjective, Adverb, Agent, ambiguity, ambivalence, anaphora, ambiguity, anonymous/anonymity, answer, appraisal, argument, assertion, attitude, augmentative, axiology, belief, bias, blaming, blog, bridging, change, Channel, cataphora, category/categorial (boundary),  certitude, coalition, code, code-switching, coherence, cohesion, cognition, cognitive environment, cognitive model, cognitive dissonance, collective, collocation, commissive, communicative competence, communication, concept,  conceptual meaning, cognition, collective, concept, communication, connotation, conspiracy theory, Constructivist Theory, construction, context, contrast, control, conviction, corpus, Cooperative Principle, co-text, counter-discourse, credibility/credible, criticism, culture/subculture, data/datasets, decision, definitions, deixis, dialog(ue), dialectical variation, digital, diminutive, direct, disagreement, discrimination, disinformation, discourse,  discursive strategy, disposition, effectives, ellipsis, doubt, embeddings, emotion, entailment, explicature, expressive act, ethics, evaluation, evidence, exaggeration, experience, explicit, expressive language, face, face threatening act, face saving act, Facebook,  fact, fake news, false, feeling, felicity conditions, figurative language, framing, genre, gossip, grammar, harm/harmful, hate speech, hostility,  hedge, hegemony, homophobia, hyperbole,  hedging, hostility, hypothesis, identification/identify, identity, implicature, implicit, idea, ideology, illocutionary act, impolite/impoliteness, increment, indirect, indirect speech act, information/informative, influence, Instagram, integrative, intention, interference, Interjection, interrogative, intertextuality, intuition, *irrealis,* irony, joke/jocular, judgement, knowledge, language (markers), lexico-grammar, lexis /lexicon, lexicography/lexicographic, lie, linguistic meaning, linguistic packaging,  locutionary act, logical premises, manipulation, mistake, mode, meaning, mental representation, message, metalinguistic, metaphor, metonymy, modality, modification, monologue, morphology, multimodality, negative, necessary (properties), Noun, object, offense/offensive (language), offensive language types, opinion, opinion markers, opinion types (Biased, Communal, Individual, Informed, Indirect, Personal, Public, Expert/Professional, Objective, Subjective), Opinion Event, opinionated text/discourse, ontology, opposition, overstatement, output, packaging options, parody, performative, perlocutionary act, personality, personification, persuasion (persuasive appeals), philosophy, phonetics, power, political correctness, politics, pluralism, point of view, polarization, politeness, politeness/polite, political science, politics, polysemy, positive, pragmatics, praising,  precondition, prejudice, presupposition, procedural meaning, prejudice, probability, proof, proposition, prosody, prototype, psychology, qualitative, qualifier, quantitative, question,  *realis*, Receiver, reason, reference, register, Relevance, repetition, repressive discourse, rhetoric, right, sarcasm, satisfaction, schema, self-interest, semantics, semantic field, semiotics, sentence, similarity, simile, sincerity condition, social constructivism, social fact, social media, society, sociology, Source, speech act, speech event, stance, statement, subjective language, subjectivity, sufficient (properties), suspicion, synecdoche, syntax, tautology, taxonomy, topic, trust, truth, typology, understatement, utterance, vagueness, value, Verb/verbal, verdictive, volitive/involitive (non-volitive), vulgarism, world knowledge, wrong, X(formerly Twitter)

**WG1.SG 1.1.C: A Critical Discourse Analysis, media studies, linguistics, and political science perspectives (coordinator: Anna Bączkowska)**

**Proposed OPINION Glossary terms**

ambiguity -

appraisal -

attitude -

certainly -

collectivization -

comprehensibility -

criminalization -

Critical Discourse Analysis -

differentiation -

economization -

emotivity -

expectedness -

evaluation -

evidentiality -

explicit -

functionalisation -

genericisation -

hate speech -

hedging -

ideologization -

implicit -

impoliteness -

incivility -

individualisation -

irony -

insults -

judgement -

multimodality -

nomination -

objectivisation -

passivisation -

politicization -

predication -

relationalization -

reliability -

slurs -

somatization -

stand -

swearing -

vagueness -

vulgarism -

**WG1. SSG 1B: OPINIONS POLITICAL COMMUNICATION RESEARCH, EXCEPT PUBLIC OPINION (coordinator: Gabriella Szabo)**

**Proposed OPINION Glossary terms**

***Opinion***

**Dictionaries:**

* Cambridge Dictionary (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/opinion):

a thought or belief about something or someone; the thoughts or beliefs that a group of people have; a judgment about someone or something:a judgment made by an expert; the ideas that a person or a group of people have about something or someone, which are based mainly on their feelings and beliefs, or a single idea of this type.

* Merriam Webster Dictionary (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/opinion):

a view, judgment, or appraisal formed in the mind about a particular matter; belief stronger than impression and less strong than positive knowledge; a generally held view (*public opinion*); a formal expression of judgment or advice by an expert; the formal expression (as by a judge, court, or referee) of the legal reasons and principles upon which a legal decision is based.

* <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/opinion>

a belief or judgment that rests on grounds insufficient to produce complete certainty; a personal view, attitude, or appraisal; the formal expression of a professional judgment; Law. the formal statement by a judge or court of the reasoning and the principles of law used in reaching a decision of a case; a judgment or estimate of a person or thing with respect to character, merit, etc.: to forfeit someone's good opinion.

* MacMillan Dictionary (https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/opinion):

the attitude that you have towards something, especially your thoughts about how good it is; the attitudes and thoughts of a group of people*(public opinion);*

**Academic definitions**

* Opinion is a view, judgment, or appraisal formed in the mind about a particular matter (Pozzi et al., 2017).
* Opinion is a thought or belief about something or someone (Katewoodford, 2015).
* Opinions are subjective statements that reflect people’s sentiments or perceptions about the entities and events (Liu, 2007).
* Opinion is different from fact. “The meaning of opinion changes if the meaning of fact changes” (Myers, 2004, p. 4).
* Although the concept of opinion is used frequently interchangeably with the concept of attitude, they are different in three respects. First, opinions can be considered as observable, specific responses (verbal or otherwise) to an issue or question while attitudes are covert, psychological predispositions or tendencies. Secondly, while attitude refers to affect, opinion is characterized more by cognition and a conscious decision to support or oppose the specific target. Attitudes relate more to emotional orientations and opinions more to thoughtful and conscious deliberation. Thirdly, attitudes are more general, durable orientations towards a class of targets, opinions are more situational, pertaining to a specific issue in a specific context. „In this way, attitudes are thought of as being continually held and opinions denote the focused and specific application of those underlying attitudes to a delimited target” (Anderson & Turgeon 2023, p. 22-23).
* Make distinctions between opinionated and non-opinionated language in public discourse. Non-opinionated statements convey information relating solely to the source's attitude toward a particular idea or belief (e.g., "I believe that Red China should be admitted to the United Nations"). By contrast, *opinionated statements convey two kinds of information; they indicate the source's attitude toward an idea or belief and his attitude toward those who agree or disagree with the source* [e.g., "Only a stupid fool would oppose admission of Red China to the United Nations" (opinionated rejection statement), or "Any intelligent person knows that we should admit Red China to the United Nations" (opinionated acceptance statement)]. Messages containing opinionated statements explicitly indicate the source's disapproval or approval of the recipient is contingent upon the latter's conformity to message recommendations (Miller & Baseheart, 1969).
* Public opinion in political communication refers to the collective attitudes, beliefs, and evaluations that individuals hold on political issues, policies, candidates, and institutions (Campbell et al., 2019; Verba et al., 2017; Huddy et al., 2018). It encompasses the opinions and preferences of the public regarding matters of political significance (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2019)
* The opinionated pieces in news media are falling somewhere in between advocacy and tabloid journalism in that it shares the former’s commitment to *advancing a particular political agenda* and the latter’s commitment to commercial imperatives (Entman 2004).
* Broadly, there are two types of news articles: 1) *opinion articles written to present the opinion of the editor or board and aimed to persuade the readers with respect to a particular point of view (opinion = subjectivity), and* 2) news stories, which aim to report factual news or events. Given that the intent of opinion articles is persuasion, we hypothesize that one of the *key difference between news stories and opinion articles rests in the discourse structure* and, in particular, the argumentative and persuasive aspects of the article (Alhindi, T. et al., 2020).

**Related terms**

* *Argument*: an opinion supported by facts and principles.
* *Belief:* a conviction based on cultural or personal faith, morality, or values.
* *Prejudice*: a biased assumption or prejudgment about members of a specific group.
* *Attitude*: a set of emotions, beliefs, and behaviors toward a particular object, person, thing, or event.
* *Judgment*: a decision or opinion about someone or something that you form after thinking carefully; the ability to form valuable opinions and make good decisions; a decision that you make, or an opinion that you have, after considering all the facts in a situation; the process of forming an opinion or evaluation by discerning and comparing; an opinion or estimate so formed; a formal utterance of an authoritative opinion;a proposition stating something believed or asserted.
* *Thought:* an idea or opinion produced by thinking, or occurring suddenly in the mind.
* *View:* an opinion, belief, or idea, or a way of thinking about something.
* *Bias*: a particular tendency, trend, inclination, feeling, or opinion, especially one that is preconceived or unreasoned.
* Opinion is often associated with political *preferences* (political leaning) (for an overview see Zaller, 2019). Moreover, political opinions are often interchangeably used with political attitudes (Krosnick & Petty, 1995; Page & Shapiro, 2019) or are measured as agreement or disagreement with statements (Converse, 2018; Delli Carpini, & Keeter, 2018).
* *Emotion*: emotion is a person's internal state of being and involuntary physiological response to an object or a situation, based on or tied to physical state and sensory data. However, opinions can be based on people's emotional reactions. Cognition and emotion are two complementary aspects of the psyche, and that it is difficult to separate their influence in the performance of the meaning-making activities of everyday life. In social life complex emotions (such as moral emotions) are very much interconnected to opinions in a way that they are involved in forming and communicating (moral) judgments and decisions, and in motivating responses to one's own and others' action.
* *Sentiment*: a manifested general feeling/attitude/opinion about something. In sentiment analysis it refers to the positive, negative or neutral tonality of the sentence.
* *Partisanship* (*bias*) in media: case makers who work from unveiled ideological assumptions,” as distinct from the “detached” media, with its aspirations of objectivity, fairness, and balance (Jamieson et al., 2007).
* *Journalistic interventionism* reflects the extent to which journalists *pursue a particular mission and promote certain values*. Journalists with a high interventionist attitude do not report neutrally and objectively but *are engaged in the subjects they are reporting about*. An interventionist reporting style aims at influencing public opinion. Moreover, journalism cultures that follow an interventionist approach may act on behalf of the socially disadvantaged or as mouthpiece of a political party and other groups whose interests are at stake. (Hanitzsch, 2007; Mellado, 2020).

*Deliberation*

Habermas (2006): According to the deliberative paradigm, a democratic process, which is supposed to generate legitimacy through a procedure of opinion and will formation that grants (a) publicity and transparency for the deliberative process, (b) inclusion and equal opportunity for participation, and (c) a justified presumption for reasonable outcomes (mainly in view of the impact of arguments on rational changes in preference). The deliberative model expects the political public sphere to ensure the formation of a plurality of considered public opinions.

*Rational choice*

Rational choice theory posits that individuals make political decisions based on a rational assessment of costs and benefits. It assumes that individuals weigh the potential outcomes and choose the option that maximizes their self-interest. In the context of public opinion, this theory suggests that individuals form their opinions by evaluating political issues and policies based on their perceived benefits and consequences (Taber & Lodge, 2006).

*Constructivist approach*

Currently scholars share the view that public opinion is a social construct (Bourdieu, 1979; Burstein, 2003; Herbst, 1993; Lewis, 2001, McGregor, 2019, 2020). According to Strong (2017) many traditional studies conceptualize ‘public opinion’ as the opinion of the public, and assume it exists ‘out there’, awaiting observation. The constructionist approach towards public opinion and opinion formation, as represented by W. Gamson, is based on a number of theoretical and methodological shifts. First, a shift in focus from attitudes and voting behavior (determined by social background) to political cognition. The interpretive processes are central as well as concepts derived from cognitive psychology - schemata, constructs, cognitive maps, frames, script, and modes of political thinking. Secondly, constructivism resigns from reliance mainly on the sample surveys with pre-coded response categories to open-ended questions. Other methodological traditions for studying public opinion are increasingly being employed, particularly long intensive interviews and focus groups. Thirdly, media are no longer conceived as an environmental stimulus, but a cultural system worthy of a dynamic analysis in its own right. Public opinion analysis, in this approach, requires an examination of political culture and the language and symbols of public discourse. The relationship between the media and public opinion formation are based on the interplay between two interactive systems. On the one hand, there is a system of media discourse that frames events and presents information in some contextual meaning. On the other hand, there are interacting individuals who actively use media and construct their own personal meanings about public events and issues (Garrison 1988, Gamson & Modigliani 1989). According to W. Gamson public discourse draws on a catalogue of discursive resources (metaphors, catch-phrases, argumentation strategies etc.) which are organized in packages. The study of opinion formation should include the mechanisms of articulation of these elements constituting packages. In general, perceiving public opinion as a social fact allows to study the conditions of its emergence, the feedback loops linking media and publics but also policy-makers and their usage of social opinions to legitimize their views (Soo et al., 2023; Strong 2017; Szwed 2011; Walgrave et al., 2022).

*Political behaviour*

Kim et al. (1999): As we have already seen, Bryce’s model suggests that the variables of deliberative democracy result in some forms of participatory activity. Katz also maintains that opinions lead to actions: “Opinions [are] really formed through the day-to-day exchange of comments and observations which goes on among people. . . . By the very process of talking to one another, the vague dispositions which people have are crystallized, step by step, into specific attitudes, acts, or votes” (1992, p. 80).

Public opinion can drive mobilization and activism. When people feel strongly about an issue, they may engage in protests, rallies, or other forms of collective action to express their opinions and push for change (Gerber et al., 2020). These activities can have a significant impact on political communication by drawing attention to specific issues and applying pressure on policymakers (McCright & Dunlap, 2019; Tarrow, 2018; Verba et al., 2019).

Cognitive dissonance theory suggests that individuals strive for consistency between their beliefs and behaviors. When confronted with conflicting information or opinions, individuals experience psychological discomfort or dissonance (Festinger, 1957; Jackman, 2001; Cooper 2007). To reduce this dissonance, they may adjust their opinions or seek out information that aligns with their existing beliefs.

*Manipulation/Persuasion*

Public opinion plays a crucial role in shaping political processes and decision-making (Bartels, 2019; Erikson et al., 2019). It refers to the impact that the opinions of the public have on political actors, policymakers, and the formulation of public policies (Druckman & Lupia, 2020; Page & Shapiro, 2019). Political communication often aims to shape and mobilize public opinion to influence political outcomes (Soroka & Wlezien, 2019).

The elaboration likelihood model explains the process by which individuals process persuasive messages. It suggests that people engage in either a central or peripheral route of processing, depending on their motivation and ability to think deeply about an issue (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Cacioppo et al., 1996; Albarracín et al., 2005). This model helps understand how individuals form and change their opinions in response to persuasive communication.

*Communication/Media infrastructure*

Kim et al. (1999): Lasker (1949) points out, “Our opinions can remain unformed and mutually contradictory for a long time unless a discussion or some other stimulus forces us to reconsider them.” Many contemporary scholars such as Zaller (1992, 1996), Zaller and Feldman (1992), Price (1992), Page and Shapiro (1992), and Mutz and colleagues (1996) share this view. We would argue, therefore, that those who talk politics frequently are likely to have more consistent, clearer, and more considered opinions.

Huckfeldt et al. (1995): Political communication beyond the boundaries of cohesive social groups has the potential to create a public opinion that is more than the sum of its parts: a public opinion that is more than a straightforward aggregation of its component units, regardless whether the units are individual citizens or small cohesive social cells. Such a consequence arises because patterns of political diffusion depend on channels of social communication.

Kim et al. (1999): Katz (1992) summarizes Tarde’s argument: (a) The newspaper fuels conversation, (b) conversation shapes opinion, and (c) opinion triggers action. Tarde, for example, wrote that “conversation at all times, and the press, which at present is the principal source of conversation, are the major factors in opinion” (1899/1989, p. 75).

Metag (2016): Communication processes are crucial for opinion formation (Zaller, 1992) since mass media and interpersonal communication provide essential information for opinion formation (De Vreese, 2007). Local mass media remain influential in forming citizens’ political opinions. Other relevant individual characteristics for opinion formation include political predispositions, political involvement and personal relevance (Zaller, 1992).

*Polarization*

Public opinion polarization is conceived as a process of alignment along multiple lines of potential disagreement and measured as a growing constraint in individuals' preferences. The findings suggest that opinion changes correspond more to a resorting of party labels among voters than to greater constraint on issue attitudes: since parties are more polarized, they are now better at sorting individuals along ideological lines. Levels of constraint vary across population subgroups: strong partisans and wealthier and politically sophisticated voters have grown more coherent in their beliefs (Baldassarri & Gelman 2008).

*Ideology*

Ideological opinions categorize individuals' political beliefs based on a set of coherent and consistent principles (Jost et al., 2009). Common ideological categories include liberalism, conservatism, socialism, libertarianism, and nationalism. These classifications are often based on attitudes towards the role of government, economic policies, social issues, and other ideological dimensions (Feldman & Johnston, 2014).

*Framing*

Issue-based opinions focus on specific policy areas or topics (Bartels, 2005; Petrocik et al., 2003; Kuklinski et al., 2000). These opinions reflect individuals' preferences, evaluations, and positions on particular issues such as healthcare, immigration, climate change, gun control, and education (for an overview see Lupia & McCubbins, 2020).

*Media partisanship/politicization*

Politicization may be said to occur whenever political values, motives and orientations affect editorial and/or journalistic practice. Although the idea of completely non-political media has probably always been more a normative theoretical construct than an empirical reality, the impact of political rationality and a political logic of action on the media is still a highly contested issue that touches the core of the current media-politics relationship in several ways (Esmark, 2014).

*Media bias*

We deal with it in a situation where one’s rations, views, political parties, ideologies, value systems, religions, nations, professions are favored, presented in a good light, while others are criticized, discriminated, presented in a negative way (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2011, p. 70). Therefore, the bias may concern not only politics, but also religion, attitudes, nationalities or advertised products (Guo & Lai, 2014).

Ewa Nowak-Teter emphasizes the differences between slant, which means the inclination, distortion and one-sidedness of the relationship in which some elements are emphasized, and ignores others, from bias, defined as consistent and long-lasting one-sidedness of the message. The researcher points out, however, that in the Polish literature on the subject, the persistence of a particular power or political reason has often been described as political bias (Nowak-Teter, 2017, p. 105).

Types of media bias: unintentional and intentional (intended); Dennis McQuail proposes a more complex typology of political bias, making the criteria of its division intentionality, as in the previous typology, but also adding a second criterion, that is, openness. On this basis, he distinguishes propaganda, ideological, unmistakable and involuntary bias (McQuail, 1992, p. 191); explicit and implicit bias (Anderson et al., 2016).

Measures of media bias: (a) by estimating ideological scores for several major media outlets. To compute this, we count the times that a particular media outlet cites various think tanks and policy groups, and then compare this with the times that members of Congress cite the same groups (Groseclose & Milyo, 2005); (b) three categories: measures based on comparing media outlets with other actors, measures based on the intensity of media coverage, and measures based on tone. In the second part of the chapter we discuss the main factors that are found to be correlated with media bias, dividing these into demand-side and supply-side factors.

*Media discourse*

Media discourse refers to interactions that take place through a broadcast platform, whether spoken or written, in which the discourse is oriented to a non-present reader, listener or viewer. Though the discourse is oriented towards these recipients, they very often cannot make instantaneous responses to the producer(s) of the discourse, though increasingly this is changing with the advent of new media technology, as we shall explore. Crucially, the written or spoken discourse itself is oriented to the readership or listening/viewing audience, respectively. In other words, media discourse is a public, manufactured, on-record, form of interaction. It is not ad hoc or spontaneous (in the same way as casual speaking or writing is); it is neither private nor off the record. Obvious as these basic characteristics may sound, they are crucial to the investigation, description and understanding of media discourse. Because media discourse is manufactured, we need to consider how this has been done – both in a literal sense of what goes into its making and at an ideological level (O’Keeffe, 2013, p. 441).

*Trust*

Public opinion also affects the trust and legitimacy of political institutions. When public opinion is favorable, it enhances the perceived legitimacy of governments and their policies. Conversely, widespread negative opinions can erode trust and skepticism towards authorities (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002).

*OPINION HOLDER*

The holder of a particular opinion is a person or an organization that holds the opinion. In the case of product reviews, forum postings and blogs, opinion holders are usually the authors of the posts. Opinion holders are important in news articles because they often explicitly state the person or organization that holds a particular opinion. For example, the opinion holder in the sentence “John expressed his disagreement on the treaty” is “John”.

*OBJECT*

In general, opinions can be expressed on anything, e.g., a product, a service, a topic, an individual, an organization, or an event. The general term object is used to denote the entity that has been commented on. An object has a set of components (or parts) and a set of attributes. Each component may also have its sub-components and its set of attributes, and so on. Thus, the object can be hierarchically decomposed based on the part-of relationship. Definition (object): An object O is an entity which can be a product, topic, person, event, or organization. It is associated with a pair, O: (T, A), where T is a hierarchy or taxonomy of components (or parts) and sub-components of O, and A is a set of attributes of O. Each component has its own set of sub-components and attributes. In this hierarchy or tree, the root is the object itself.

*OPINION PASSAGE*

The opinion passage on a feature of the object evaluated in a positive or negative way. This means that it is possible that a sequence of sentences (at least one) together expresses an opinion on an object or a feature of the object. It is also possible that a single sentence expresses opinions on more than one feature, e.g., “The picture quality of this camera is good, but the battery life is short”.

*MEDIA* as (1) sources of opinions (opinion holders, senders); (2) channel of opinion dissemination; (3) receivers (comments provided by the audience members) - and senders again - since the comments may be visible to others (e.g. in the online media); (4) gatekeepers: blocking or banning some opinions.

*SEMANTIC ORIENTATION*

Opinion can be expressed with a finite set of words or phrases.

*INFORMED OPINION by Druckman (2014)*

*Information* is important because it aids citizens in the process of connecting their interests and values with available political alternatives. And, indeed, the more and less informed express distinct preferences. There are four problems with the informed opinion criterion: (1) most citizens lack knowledge and thus many fail to meet this criterion outright; (2) even if the mass public did possess knowledge about politics, it is not clear why this would matter; (3) high levels of information are not even necessary for the formation of quality preferences in the first place. That is, some argue that citizens find alternative ways to arrive at opinions they would hold if they had more information. They do so by using a variety of shortcuts/cues/advice; (4) despite years of research devoted to “measuring” knowledge, there is nowhere near a consensus, much less one resting on philosophical underpinnings, on how it should be measured => informed opinion is neither realistic nor independent of strategic elite communication, raising serious questions about its suitability as a requirement of democratic functioning and responsiveness.

*SOCIAL CONTEXT by Metag (2016)*

Studies concerned with elections and direct democratic votes have shown that interpersonal communication can influence people’s political opinions and decisions => political opinions depend on *interpersonal discussions*.

**WG1 SSG PUBLIC OPINION & ECONOMIC (coordinated by Christian Baden) – summaries of 2 online meetings**

**(1)**

*Opinions*, when seen in the context of public opinions, may be conceptualized as attributes of the individual or collective actor, or as a property of a public discourse, but they generally matter only to the extent that they are public in what they refer to, and possibly, in how they are expressed.

Imagine as a circle: *Holder - Object - Stance - Expression - Perception - (Holder...)*

Opinions require holders, but these holders may not need to be natural people:

Depending on the theoretical perspective, *holders* may be individuals, organizations, or entire publics; holding an opinion may be conceptualized as a psychological state, as a response behavior (which may reflect a psychological state, but likely imperfectly), but also as an attribution, in the sense that others perceive an actor or public to hold certain opinions.

Opinions require *objects*, but in public opinion, only opinions toward objects that are of public relevance matter. However, this public relevance can be constructed (i.e., people discursively agree that an object is political, they "make an issue"; its relevance emerges from a process); it can be conceptualized as culturally or institutionally pre-established; or it can be imposed by the researcher (as, for instance, in survey questions, independently of whether it is in fact recognized by the holder as important. Objects can be well-defined or vague, to the point of being symbolic: For instance, people can have opinions toward symbols that don't refer to any actual object (e.g., collectively perceived threats); and they can be defined exogenously (e.g., by the researcher; by an actor who created an object that people can have an opinion about), or endogeneously as part of the same discourse that may also constitute their public relevance (with the effect that objects can change in content as discourse moves on, different holders may perceive or define the object differently). Theories differ dramatically in how they conceptualize this.

Opinions require *a stance* that a holder can hold toward said object. This uncontroversially includes evaluative stances, but possibly also a few more, depending on the theoretical vantage points. For affective stances (liking), epistemic stances (believing), and identification (e.g., recognizing an object as "of us" or "of others"), there are some legitimate differences in how opinions are delineated (e.g., whether it can be an opinion that the earth is flat). Depending on the theoretical perspective, the stance primarily arises from inner states (attitudes, beliefs, etc.) or arises from a discursive process, which can be understood as a multi-level process wherein one layer is concerned with the making of issues and formation of agreement on the meaning of an object of public relevance; and the other one is concerned with negotiating the stances that are expressed, and may be recognized as (il)legitimate, valid, acceptable/accepted, hegemonic/deviant, or otherwise sanctionable.

Opinions may require some form of *expression* or at least *expressability*. Expression can take place in myriads of ways, self-directed or prompted, discretionary or not, authentic or strategic, and there are many other variations. The key theoretical controversy here is how the mode of opinion expression alters the status of the opinion: In one view, the opinion remains conceptually unchanged even if it remains unexpressed, and its expression is merely a potential implication; in another view, where, by whom, how, and to whom an opinion is expressed is key: Opinions presented in or by highly visible actors (media, celebrities) have more power and impact than others, well-warranted opinions are more persuasive, and so on. Especially the role of media as a venue where opinions are expressed is conceptualized differently: Media can be exogenous to opinions in the sense that they are influenced by and influence holders of opinions, but remain in the role of a separate arena; or they can be endogenous to opinion processes as one (rather powerful) holder or site where other holders exchange their opinions, and thus at the center of interest. Similar things are true for opinion leaders and influencers.

Opinions can be *perceived*, both in the sense that individuals perceive communication acts or behaviors to express opinions, but also in the sense that people develop perceptions of what opinions are held by others, groups, collective actors, or "the public" (public opinion climates). Both the perception and expression of opinions are key to the social interactive process of public opinion as a negotiation and discursive dynamic, but relatively exogenous from public opinion as a statistical aggregate.

In the study of opinions, theories don't disagree that much on what *factors* might matter, but rather on how different aspects are primary or secondary to the process. For instance, both social-psychological and discursive theories of opinion agree that interactions with alter networks and wider communication environments matter, and that within these, it is not only important what is said but also by whom. However, in a survey-based paradigm, the social configuration of the interaction tends to take precedence (who is exchanging with/following whom; networks of sources/alters), and content appears only in the second step; in discursive theories, interactions tend to be aggregated first to the level of contents (arguments, common stances, frames), and the identities of contributing actors comes in only in the second round.

**(2)**

Aspects that are important, "modular add-ons" to a shared definition, from our point of view (public opinion, marketing, ...) that a common definition will support, such as:

 - public opinions need to be conceptualizable as *aggregate* (either statistically or as dynamic process)

 - public opinions have some degree of *impact*

 - public opinions have *normative qualities*, they can be better or worse

 - public opinions exist *relative to some kind of public*, and the media that create/connect these matter (and have fragmented)

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COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is a funding agency for research and innovation networks. Our Actions help connect research initiatives across Europe and enable scientists to grow their ideas by sharing them with their peers. This boosts their research, career and innovation.