

## Measurement and Theory of Democratic Attitudes

## Recap: Support

- ▶ Basic premise
  - ▶ Necessary for any regime
  - ▶ More so for democracies
- ▶ (Overly) complex concept
  - ▶ Mode
  - ▶ Objects
  - ▶ Sources
- ▶ Resurfaced and simplified during 1990s

## Lane: Political Ideology

- ▶ One of the founding fathers of political sociology/psychology
- ▶ Singlehandedly renewed interest in 'ideology'
  - ▶ Systems of political ideas
  - ▶ Explanations and recipes
  - ▶ More general than policy preferences
  - ▶ Intimately linked to values
  - ▶ Not necessarily grand and consistent
- ▶ Familiar with mass survey methodology
- ▶ But interested in in-depth interviews → 'Political Ideology' (1962)

## Where and when?

- ▶ Arguably, the most famous in-depth study of political reasoning
- ▶ Based on 15 very long interviews
- ▶ In 'Eastport': (declining) industrial town, East Coast
- ▶ All respondents rent in government-subsidised housing development ('Hilltop')
  - ▶ Stable family income, upper/lower threshold
  - ▶ Racially/ethnically mixed
  - ▶ 'Some community spirit'
  - ▶ vs Stern Terrace
- ▶ 1957/58

## Why?

1. 'Discover the latent political ideology of the American urban common man'
2. Explain its sources (more generally)
  - ▶ In culture
  - ▶ In experience
3. Ideology ↔ democratic institutions

## How?

- ▶ Respondents randomly selected from electoral register
  - ▶ White, married, working- /lower middle class fathers
  - ▶ Women and black/coloured people excluded
  - ▶ Relatively homogeneous sample
  - ▶ But wide variety of backgrounds + political views, abilities
- ▶ Cash incentive
- ▶ Interviews based on script
- ▶ Standard items/scales included
- ▶ Lengthy night-time conversations
- ▶ '15 political authors' → 3750 pages of verbatim transcript
- ▶ Interpretation/explanation based on contemporary psychology
- ▶ Lane trained as a psychotherapist

# What?

- ▶ Topics
  - ▶ (1950s) policies: unions, subversion(!), atomic bombing ...
  - ▶ War and poverty: cause and effect
  - ▶ Parties, political process, elections, leaders
  - ▶ Group memberships, political roles, participation, political knowledge
  - ▶ Freedom, equality, democracy, role of government
  - ▶ Upbringing, family, career, work, sex, friends
- ▶ Aim
  - ▶ Understand 'these men as men'
  - ▶ 'Third Ear' and latent meaning
  - ▶ Discursive (rambling) interviews

## Summary

- ▶ Not representative in a conventional sense
- ▶ But aimed at being objective
  - ▶ random sample
  - ▶ transcripts
- ▶ Focus on interpretation/classification of the 'data'
- ▶ Almost unique in its depth
- ▶ Touches upon many themes still important today



## Class questions

1. Does this approach make sense to you? Why (not)?
2. Try to practice Lane's approach
  - ▶ In teams of three
    - ▶ Interviewer
    - ▶ Interviewee
    - ▶ Scribe/observer
  - ▶ You may use Lane's five dimensions of democratic attitudes, try other things from the text, or use your own ideas
  - ▶ Does it work as a method for you?
  - ▶ What are your substantive findings?