**Introduction**

The The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior is a theory of behavioral prediction; it refers to the concept that beliefs guide behavior. Foremost, the sole determinant of behavior is the intention to act or not to act. This theory states that this intention to act (or not act) is shaped by three factors: attitudes towards the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived control in performing the behavior. If these three factors create a strong behavioral intention (as opposed to a weak one), the behavior at hand can then be predicted to happen. Questions on this survey are presented in groups that would give feedback regarding a particular component of the TPB model seen in Figure 2: Attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control were all analyzed to represent an individual’s three main beliefs.

**TPB Components**

1. Attitude towards the behavior
   - positive/negative outcomes
2. Subjective norms
   - one’s perception of the social pressure to perform or not perform the action
3. Perceived Behavioral control
   - the ease or difficulty one has in achieving the desired behavior

Research Question:

The current study was made to test the ability of the TPB to predict behavior by applying it to student voting intentions and (thus) voting behavior in the 2020 Presidential Election. Our current research question is: Will the TPB successfully predict whether students who had strong intentions to vote actually did in fact vote?

**Methods**

**Participants**

Data were collected from students at Sacred Heart University (N = 20). Students eligible to participate in the study were either enrolled in an introductory level psychology course or a part of the undergraduate population. The study was conducted as an online study using SurveyMonkey (a survey and data collecting website).

**Procedure** (see Figure 1)

1) Demographics
   - Gender
   - Nationality
   - Age
   - Academic year and parent’s education level
   - Social status
   - Political party identification
   - Past voting behavior

2) Full survey
   - Perceived norms on voting (reference groups: peers and parents/guardians)
   - Perceived behavioral control of voting
   - Intentions to vote
   - Social status
   - Political party identification
   - Past voting behavior

3) Sample Questions
   - Attitude
     - My voting in the 2020 presidential election will result in my voice having been heard
   - Subjective Norms
     - My parents/guardians (peers) think that I should vote in the upcoming 2020 presidential election
     - When it comes to voting, I want to do what my parents/guardians (peers) think I should do.
     - Most people who are important to me approve of voting in the 2020 presidential election
   - Behavioral Control
     - I expect that I will actually have the ability to vote on election day, Tuesday November 3, 2020.

**Results**

To create the Attitude composite score (α = .776), we averaged responses to the seven attitude questions.

To create the Subjective Norms Parents (α = .579) and Subjective Norms Peers (α = .428) composite scores, we averaged response from the seven subjective norms questions, respectively for each referent group

To create the Subjective Norms Total composite score (α = .712), we averaged the responses to the parents and peers subjective norms questions plus one additional subjective norm question.

There was no composite score created for our behavioral control questions because there were only two behavioral control questions in total.

We originally intended to examine both referent groups (parents/guardians and peers) separately thinking this distinction would have an influence on an individual.

However, after calculating Cronbach’s (a) for the parents/guardians referent group (Cronbach’s α = .579) and peers referent group (Cronbach’s α = .428), we saw their internal reliability was not strong. As a result, we decided to look at these two groups as a whole because the Cronbach’s α for both groups combined was much stronger (Cronbach’s α = .712).

**References**

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Lenoci and Flaherty: The Theory of Planned Behavior Applied to Voting in the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election

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