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Voting Behaviour

Read and précis notes will be checked before this lecture is delivered.

What, if anything, can influence voting behaviour?

- There are two ways of analysing the way people vote.
- Partisan models, and
- Rational Choice models

Other models may also be accepted but you must bring these ideas into the exam.

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Other divisions

- One method used by psephologists in assessing voting behaviour is looking at **Long term and Short term** factors
- Partisanship- long term factors
- Rational choice- short term factors.

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Partisanship - do people stay the same?

- I am a Harlequins fan - will I stay that way or will I change?
- What about support for a political party - if I support and vote Conservative will I stay Conservative?
- Could I influence my wife, daughter and family?

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Partisanship

- Could I my beliefs about politics be influenced by those around me through what is called a socialisation process?
- The two main parties have an core vote of loyal supporters who vote for them habitually (could the Liberals have developed the same 22%)

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Class

- What is AB? C1? C2? DE? (class as per the British Market Research society)



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Class influence ...

- It has long been thought that Labour were the party of the working class and the Conservatives the upper class with many middle class wanting to be upper class so steering towards the Tories.
- Between 1945 and 1970 election results showed this trend. With some exceptions. [Why might this happen?](#)

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Class and partisan dealignment ...

- 'Dealignment' = weakening of traditional relationships. (long-term factor)
- Since 1970 there has been a class/partisan dealignment and that class is not as significant. We do need to look at their arguments - but the [General Election results for 2005](#) suggest that there is still evidence of class alignment (albeit that there is also significant evidence of apathy)?

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Class dealignment

In 1979 85% voted for two main parties, by 2010 this was down to 65%

Some possible explanations ...

- (1) the distinction between classes have been eroded. WHY-can you think of at least three reasons?
- (2) In the 1980's Ivor Crewe argued that the *old working class* had declined and a new working class had emerged (pro Thatcher).

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Class dealignment

- (3) *Sectoral cleavages* had emerged - those in the private sector thought one way and those in the public another (housing, work, transport etc).
- (4) Another explanation was that *changes in the labour market* - with more women workers, part-time workers - had raised questions over the value of class identity.

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Class and voting since 1980

- In the late 1970's the Conservatives started to capture *working class Tory voters* and three consecutive victories forced the Labour Party to change its strategy and direct itself towards winning middle-class votes.
- Kinnock started the process. Smith followed and Blair was the image. Gordon wasn't.

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1997 and 2001 elections

- The elections of 1997 and 2001 provided further evidence of class dealignment. Labour were taking the votes of the middle-class and class based voting was less noticeable (but still evident).

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2005 General Election

- The data for 2005 seems to suggest that class voting is still dominant.
- Indeed, Labour won 48% of DE (25% Cons) and 40% of C2 (33% Cons). By comparison they won only 32% of C1 (Cons 36%) and 28% of AB (Cons 37%).

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2005 General Election

- What the data does not establish - but it can be inferred - is that partisan disillusionment is leading to the apathy with 39% of voters staying at home. Despite an election too closer to call in 2010 34% still stayed away.

There is no doubt that Labour is suffering from Partisan disillusionment - the Tories are also suffering from it.

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Gender and age

- Two other partisan models are age and gender.
- For much of the post war period women were more likely to vote Conservative than men. Why do you think this is?

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Gender and age

- Break into Political Groups look at the General Election results for 2005 and analyse them. Then report back your findings.
- Is there an age gap?
- Is there a gender gap?
- Is there an ethnicity gap?

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Break into Political Groups

- Break into Political Groups and research the General Election results for 1997, 2001, 2005 and 2010 and analyse them. Then report your findings to the class.
- Group One: Working Class.
- Group Two: Middle Class.
- Group Three: Electoral Turnout

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Rational Choice

- If I am choosing a university do I go where my parents want or should I choose what is right for me?
- Why shouldn't it be the same with voting?



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Factors to consider

- There are several factors that may effect my vote
- Government ability
- Government economic management
- Policies
- Leadership

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- Rational Choice models can be seen as a replacement for traditional partisan models. It is suggested, therefore that these factors are becoming more important (even with a rise in apathy).

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Examples

You need to be able to compare partisan models with rational choice models. In order to do that you need to have some examples when rational models played an important role in election results.

- **Government ability**- The supposed sleaze within the Conservative party was part of the reason they lost the 1997 General election.

Who was Neil Hamilton and why is he an example?

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Examples

- **Government economic management**- The Labour government was voted out of power in 1979 due to their poor economic record. *What slogan did the Tories use?*
- **Policies**- In 2001 General Election the public favoured Labour's focus on health and education, rather than the Conservative's immigration and 'keep the pound'.

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Discussion Point

- Turn to the person next to you. Which rational choice model do you consider the most important at election time and why?

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2010

- Dangerous to start making predictions about the reasons for the election because EVERYONE LOST!
- However, it did appear as if the public wanted a change of govt. Did they want coalition?

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Exam Focus

- **With the person next to you plan answers to the Extended questions on page 91 of Heywood.**
- **Present them to class**

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