

L2929 Week 04: The Sociological Approach

Essential Readings Questions to Consider

Classes: Thursdays, 11:00 – 13:00, LT313

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Office Hours: Thursdays, 16:00 – 17:00, MC431

Essential Reading Key Questions:

1. What are the different implications for political opinions of modernisation theory and political generation theory, as outlined by Grasso et al.?
 - a) What are the measures of economic and social opinions that Grasso et al. use? Do you think that these measures capture what they intend? Are there other measures that you would like to see included?
 - b) Do you think there could be any differences, including in experiences of government during their formative years, between the people born at the beginning and end of the generations that Grasso et al. identify?
 - c) How important do you think the political generation effects identified by Grasso et al. are in comparison to other drivers of political opinions?
 - d) What do the results presented by Grasso et al. imply about the importance of electoral outcomes?
2. In terms of policy positions, do you think it is more likely that (some) working class voters became *indifferent* between the major parties, or *alienated* by them, when Labour moved towards the centre?
 - a) According to Heath, how do voters use the class backgrounds of politicians as heuristics; what are voters inferring from those signals?
 - b) How convincing do you find the measures used by Heath? Do you think any measures are missing from his empirical analysis?
 - c) Do Heath's results suggest that action needs to be taken by political parties in terms of the candidates who they field in elections?
 - d) What are the implications of Heath's results for the policy positions that parties take?
3. McNeil and Haberstroh show that both class origin and class destination matter for political opinions (on Brexit). To what extent does this fit with your pre-existing view of what drives (class) identity and its resulting political opinions?
 - a) Generally speaking, they observe stronger effects of education than of occupation. Why do you think this might be?
 - b) What are the implications of McNeil and Haberstroh's findings, if any, for Heath's findings? And for the findings outlined by Grasso et al.?
 - c) McNeil and Haberstroh use their results to argue against the findings of Gidron and Hall relating to the effects of declining self-perceived status. Are the two papers measuring the same thing and, if not, can their results be reconciled?
4. Now that we have examined rational choice, psychological, and sociological accounts of political behaviour, do you think that they are equally applicable to the political behaviour of elites and masses? Why (not)?

Essential Readings Further Questions:

5. What is the difference between descriptive and substantive representation?
 - a) Which, if either, do you think is more important?
6. What is the causal order of the relationship between components of the rational choice, psychological, and sociological approaches to accounting for political behaviour?

Essential Readings for Next Week:

- Rosie Campbell and Philip Cowley (2014), 'What Voters Want: Reactions to Candidate Characteristics in a Survey Experiment', *Political Studies*, Vol. 62, No. 4, pp. 745-765.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.12048>.
- John Gerring (2004), 'What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good for?', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 98, No. 2, pp. 341-354.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055404001182>.
- David W. Nickerson (2008), 'Is Voting Contagious? Evidence from Two Field Experiments', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 102, No. 1, pp. 49-57.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S00030554080039>.
- Kathryn Roulston, Kathleen deMarris and Jamie B. Lewis (2003), 'Learning to Interview in the Social Sciences', *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 9, No. 4, pp. 643-668.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800403252736>.

Note: the essential readings are all available via the L2929 page on Myplace.