

Sensorveiledning POL1001

V2018

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Studentene skal besvare totalt fire oppgaver, to i atferd og to i politisk teori. Hver besvarelse teller ¼ del av den samlede karakteren. I atferd består den første oppgaven av å definere 4 begreper, mens den andre oppgaven består i å svare på en av to essayoppgaver. I teori kan studentene velge to av fire essayoppgaver. Noen vil nok ønske å besvare teorioppgaven på engelsk og atferd på norsk pga språk brukt på forelesning og pensum. Det er helt greit.

Om en student bare svarer på to av de fire oppgaver fører ikke dette til automatisk stryk. Dette bør være en helhetsvurdering. Dersom de besvarte delene er særdeles gode – bør studenten få stå karakter – men selvsagt trekkes betraktelig for den manglende besvarelsen. Om de besvarte oppgavene er svake er det naturlig å vurdere kandidaten til stryk.

Kandidater som svarer på flere enn fire oppgaver skal ikke belønnes. I slike tilfeller blir det opp til sensor å vurdere hvilke tre besvarelser som skal legges til grunn. Ved stor variasjon bør man velge de fire beste besvarelsene. Studenter som skriver svært mye mer enn en halv side pr begrep under atferds første oppgave, skal ikke belønnes for dette. Det viktigste her er at studenten evner å være presis.

A. Political Behavior:

1. What is a cleavage:

Students should mention the following points: A cleavage is a deeply rooted, *structural political conflict* in society *opposing two groups* of the population. A cleavage emerges because the population of a country is divided by antagonistic interests into two “camps” as regards a fundamental issue. Cleavages are not just there but emerged at particular historical moments as a result of conflicts that broke out around historic events or societal transformations. Cleavages are relevant for present day politics because they still structure the voting choice to some extent. But a cleavage is not only defined by the opposition of two groups (a), but also by the fact that (b) their conflict is visible in the party system because parties claim to represent each group’s interest in the parliament; and (c) the fact that individuals identify with “their” group.

Students should mention at least 1 example of cleavages and say when and why it emerged: A good example is the socio-economic cleavage that developed in the 19th century. It opposes owners and workers, a new class that formed during the industrial revolution. They have fundamentally opposed economic interests regarding private property and the privileges that come with it. Social democratic and conservative parties in many modern democracies represent this divide. A new cleavage is the one opposing opponents and defenders of globalisation and (free) international migration that is emerging due to

accelerated economic globalisation and global exchange. It is represented by populist parties vs. liberal parties at the level of the party system and growing identification of the opposed groups with group-specific values at the psychological level.

2. Define media exposure vs. media reception:

Exposure means that a recipient is only physically proximate to a media message, for example, being in a room where the radio is turned on and audible is defined as exposure. The degree of exposure is, in other words, the mere frequency of contact with certain media. But exposure does not necessarily equal reception of the message, because being exposed does not mean that the recipient actually pays attention to it. Reception certainly depends on exposure but involves that the recipient actually processes the messages or pays attention to it. Other terms used to define reception are that the recipients actually take in or cognize the media message. Students should also mention that no persuasion can happen without reception of the message. That's why it is so important in media effects research to measure reception rather than mere exposure to media messages. In the chain of persuasion, reception is closer to accepting a message than exposure. If one studies the effects of media messages, one should use measures tailored to the reception of messages as the independent variable.

3. What is understood by priming?

Priming refers to "changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations" (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987, p. 63). Priming occurs when news content suggests to news audiences that they ought to use specific issues as benchmarks for evaluating the performance of leaders and governments. By making some issues more salient in people's mind (agenda setting), mass media can also shape the considerations that people take into account when making judgments about political candidates or issues (priming). Miller and Krosnick (1996) argue that priming effects occur because individuals are busy and can devote only limited time to politics. So, they develop their opinions about leading politicians based on the topics about which the media talks a lot. In Miller/Krosnick words, many people make political judgments, for instance about presidents, in a satisficing way which means that instead of using all the relevant information about their performance, they consider primarily information that is conveniently available through the mass media to make the judgment. In Miller and Krosnick's words: "the issues the media choose to cover most end up being primed, meaning they become the predominant basis for the public's evaluations about the president."

4. What is understood by framing?

Framing occurs and operates at different levels. First, it describes the active behaviour of communicators (journalists, politicians, political activists) when designing their political messages. This is frame building. In that sense, framing describes how communicators construct a political message. This includes which aspects of the underlying reality are emphasized, which labels are used, what is defined as the problem, who is assigned responsibility for it, which values are central in the narrative, and what treatment is

recommended. Not all of these elements need to be present in a frame. On a more general level, the term “framing” refers to generic modes of presentation of political reality. Furthermore, framing refers to a media effect (the framing effect) on recipients of frames that they encounter in a mediated message. In this version, framing is based on the assumption that how political reality is presented in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences. As a microconstruct, framing describes how individuals use information and presentation features regarding issues as they form impressions. The primary difference on the psychological level between agenda setting and priming, on the one hand, and framing, on the other hand, is the difference between *whether* we think about an issue and *how* individuals think about it. The latter is the framing effect.

A. Discuss the concept of “party identification”. Explain what it means, when and by whom it was invented, and how it compares with the sociological model and the RC model. Discuss also the critique of the concept and whether it is useful today.

Meaning and origin of PI

First, PI should be defined and briefly situated in the context of the development of scholarship about voting behaviour. The concept party identification (PI) was invented by a group of researchers at the University of Michigan, at Ann Arbor, USA in the late 1950s and 1960s. That’s why it is also called the Michigan model (or social psychological model). It is a response to the social-structural model by Lazarsfeld and the cleavage model by Lipset and Rokkan which both see the social (group-) identity of an individual as crucial for the vote. The great novelty of the Michigan model was the proposition that a voter’s affective orientation toward a party is the crucial independent variable that explains his/her voting choice. The affective orientation is described as a stable bond between voters and a party that makes them vote for the candidates of that party most of the time. The PI is described as similar to a psychological party membership. It is important that parties as groups (and not individuals) are imbued with positive associations by voters because they are the main objects on their political horizon. PI acts as an organizing mechanism for voters’ cognitions and behaviour. PI can also be described as party loyalty and as such it is a stabilizing factor for the political system.

Relationship with other models of voting

Second, students should say how a PI develops, and in what relation it stands with the variables of the social-structural and the RC models of voting behaviour. In this regard, it is important to mention that PI develops early in the lifecycle and that the early phase of political socialisation in the family plays a strong role. But not all voters develop a PI, and the PI can also vary in strength. In fact, the share of voters with a (strong) PI is declining over the decades since the 1960s, especially the share of voters with a strong PI declined. Even though a PI is a stable trait of a voter, it may change as a consequence of major political events.

The role played by early socialisation establishes a connection between the Michigan model and the variables of the social-structural model. From the perspective of social structure, the PI is located closer to the voting choice than voters identification with a social group and

their place in the social structure. This is visualized by the metaphor of the “funnel of causality” which integrates the social-structural variables that are located farther away from the voting choice and the PI which is located closer to the voting choice. The funnel of causality also shows how the PI can be reconciled with the rational choice model: First, the PI influences the vote directly, but it also influences how voters evaluate the performance of candidates and how they choose their own position with respect to salient issues. In RC, voters expectations concerning candidates’ policy with respect to major issues explain their vote; however, the Michigan model claims that these evaluations are themselves influenced by a stable PI. Second, the Michigan model speaks to the RC model because developing a PI saves voters time and energy in the process of evaluating candidates and issues. The PI can serve voters as an information shortcut when there is uncertainty about the future behaviour of candidates or parties. Therefore, it is rational for busy voters to “use” an existing PI.

Critique, discussion

Students should describe some of the critique that has been voiced against the PI, especially in the context of European party systems. For example, since voters in many European countries vote for parties in parliamentary elections (not candidates), it is questionable whether the PI is really distinct from the habitual voting behavior. The correlation between both questions in surveys is very high suggesting that there is no real difference. If that critique is true, the PI is only the habitual voting behaviour but does not explain anything itself as an “independent variable”. There is also the problem that less and less voters have a strong PI. Therefore, the predictive power of the PI must be seen with scepticism. If we cannot predict the outcome of elections with the PI, what is it worth? The relevance of the Michigan model can be discussed with examples from Norwegian elections and the data provided in Holmbergs article. Students might also discuss the influence of macro-trends like cognitive mobilization, education, social mobility, and the emergence of new parties for the relevance of the PI as a factor in the explanation of voters’ behavior.

B For a long time, early scholars of the media believed that there exist only minimal effects of the media because research failed to demonstrate changes in opinions and behavior. Discuss why media can be, nevertheless, influential for public opinion and political behavior. What kind of effects have these sceptical scholars overlooked?

Reasons for not finding stronger media effects in many studies

After an initial phase characterized by the belief in very strong media effects followed a phase from the 1960s until the end of the 1970s during which the minimal effects paradigm was widely accepted. It claimed that there were only weak effects of the media on individuals. The reason was that research unsuccessfully tried to find direct media effects on individuals’ political attitudes and behaviour. In other words, researchers failed to show that media had the power to sway people’s attitudes like the concept of the “hypodermic needle” suggested. If effects were found at all, the media were only reinforce existing attitudes, rather than changing them. However, one reason for the cautious beliefs in media

effects was insufficient conceptualization and measurement of constructs. For instance, the independent variable was not properly conceptualized: No distinction was made between exposure and reception of media content. In this regard, the metaphor by Zaller, which compares media effects with the effects of a medicine, can be offered to explain the problems of early media effects research. When only exposure to media content is measured, which is often the case when self-reports are used, it is more difficult to find effects. Hence, media *reception* is the correct independent variable that should be measured. However, self-reported behaviour is not an accurate proxy for it. Students might give ways to tackle this problem with using political knowledge and education as a proxy.

Which effects have been overlooked and why?

Another reason for the return to the concept of influential media was that scholars realized they had asked the wrong question. Instead of looking for attitude change (*media tell people what to think*), scholars started to consider other cognitive effects of the media that did not directly affect attitudes/behavior but indirectly (*media tell people what to think about*). The formula “mass media might not be successful in telling people what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling people what to think about” became the new paradigm of media effects research. This new paradigm includes new types of effects like agenda-setting, priming, and framing. These are effects on the salience of topics in the memory of the recipient due to media reception. By focusing the attention on a relatively small number of topics, media suggest the recipients that these are the most important topics in politics during a period. Media users have thus these topics top of the head when they think about political matters and form political opinions. A consequence of the agenda-setting effect (the media agenda influences the salience of topics in recipients’ minds), individuals use the topics that predominate on the media agenda when they evaluate political candidates or parties in elections. This is called the priming effect. It is not a direct, persuasive effect, but a cognitive effect that acts on the individual by altering what they think about. Priming is based on memory-based models of information processing. These models assume that people form attitudes based on the considerations that are most salient (i.e., most accessible) when they make decisions. In practice, priming means that judgments about political objects are directly correlated with the ease in which instances or associations related to the objects can be brought to mind. Another cognitive effect is framing. It describes the fact that the media construct political reality and that this construction can resonate with existing schemas in the recipients’ minds and, consequently, alter their understandings of an issue.

Another type of cognitive media effect that students can mention is learning, for example in campaigns. So, despite the fact that media content does not persuade individuals right away, individuals learn pieces of information that they later use to form impressions and opinions. It is also important that scholars recognized that media effects are different for different groups of people, for example, strong partisans often show weaker effects than people with a stronger need for information do. So, today we are in the phase of preference-based effects models. Nowadays, media effects research also needs to take into consideration *how* people receive political news. A new channel, which is of growing importance, is the internet and social media platforms in particular. For example, there are new effects on online

political participation to consider. In the course, we concentrated on these participation effects and not on effects on the polarization of political attitudes. Research has shown that it makes a difference for peoples' degree of online and offline political participation whether or not they use social media platforms to consume news. Such findings point to a beneficial, pro-civic effect of social media, and suggest that social media lower the cost for political participation.

Political Theory

Q1, Plato vs. Marx. There are five topics explicitly mentioned here which should be discussed (private property, the class system, censorship, control of religion, and respect for the gods) and one topic so central to Plato (the moral law) that it can scarcely be omitted from discussion. On the face of it, it might look like Plato and Marx have something in common when it comes to religion, but this is not the case at all. In fact, Plato vs. Marx is a study in opposites. The starting point for Plato is his conviction that only a small elite-in-the-know ('philosophers') can understand morality or rulership. These philosophers are not only uniquely qualified by inherent talent to rule but must be entrusted with political authority if a system is to operate properly and stably. Plato believes that the ruling class should not own any property aside from the most basic things such as their clothes, cups, and quills; this is because he does not want the rulers to be guided by personal interest. But Plato has no problem with the members of the Warrior class and the ordinary people owning land and other private property. Marx did not object to people owning land -- in spite of what some Marxists and anti-Marxists have claimed -- but wanted to limit the possibility for private accumulation of wealth. Plato's class system is strictly meritocratic, with people being entrusted with responsibilities suited to their abilities. Plato also fiercely objected to what he called the caleidostope man who flits from one line of work to another. Marx and Engels, of course, in a famous passage in *THE GERMAN IDEOLOGY*, thought that someone should be allowed to herd sheep in the morning go fishing in the afternoon and "criticize" after dinner; in other words, they championed precisely the "caleidoscope man" Plato mocked. Yet Marx famously wrote that in politics, as in sea-faring, one needed to have a captain. But Marx rejected the class system he encountered and did not believe that there were people with inborn abilities which entitled them to rule. Plato's ideal was a system which would not change and to protect it he felt he needed a strict system of censorship, extending among other things to art, music, and religion, so that people would venerate the gods. Marx believed that religion, in his day, was supporting the class system and exploitation and that, over time religion should wither away. I have already indicated that the 'philosophers' (and Plato did not mean people like Thrasymachus) had a unique understanding of the moral law, which Plato argued was fixed for all time. Marx, by contrast, believed that the morality of each system is designed or adapted to support the politico-economic system in place; this means that, for Marx, there are bourgeois morality and proletarian morality, but there could not be any such thing as absolute morality fixed and unchanging.

Q2, Hobbes vs. Mill. There are three topics in discussion here: representative government vs. absolute monarchy, the limits of freedom of religion, and the moral law. Mill championed representative government because he thought that it had the best chances of assuring good government by informed and responsible officials, but warned about various dangers for representative government, highlighting the danger of people electing either incompetent officials or irresponsible (self-serving) officials. For Mill, the differences of opinion associated with representative government were, at least potentially, a source of strength for the system. By contrast, Hobbes, who lived through the English Civil War, had seen for himself how differences of opinion concerning taxation, religion, and the sovereign's authority in defining morality had led to

the war (especially taxation and religion). For this reason, Hobbes was convinced that, in the interests of keeping the peace, it was necessary to have a single, undivided sovereign authority (whether King or Lord Protector) who would assert his authority over the Church(es), dictate the correct interpretation of Scripture, and define the content of the moral law. This means, of course, that there was no place for freedom of religion in Hobbes' universe. By contrast, Mill, in *ON LIBERTY*, pleaded for the widest possible freedom of thought, expression, and scholarly investigation. Finally, while Hobbes' defense of the sovereign as the final authority in morality qualifies Hobbes as a moral conventionalist, Mill's appeal to let people judge for themselves the consequences of their actions, qualifies him as a moral consequentialist.

Q3, Plato vs. Mill. The topics explicitly under discussion here are liberty (freedom) and morality, and given the reference to Mill's *THE SUBJECTION OF WOMEN*, also the status of women. Starting with the last of these points, Plato and Mill agreed that both men and women should be judged by their merits -- which is to say by what use they make of their talents, their contributions to society, the good that they do, and, for Plato, their sticking to the work of their class and trade. I have already mentioned, in the A to Q2, that Mill was a consequentialist. Plato, by contrast, was a universalist, believing that some actions are inherently good or inherently bad and that, while consequences are obviously fundamentally important, it is wrong-headed to make a consideration of consequences the starting point for assessing the morality of a given action. Finally, where liberty is concerned, Mill believed that human progress depended on intellectuals' enjoying full freedom for their work and, in order to achieve this, extended that principle to the entire society, famously writing that, if all of humankind except for one person would hold one opinion (for example, that the world is flat), then that vast majority would have no more right to impose its view(s) on the one person thinking differently, than that person would have to impose his or her view(s) on everyone else. This is just about as far from Plato's thinking as one can get. First of all, Plato did not recognize the right of anyone to work outside his or her competence; indeed, Plato does not develop any theory of rights at all. Second, Plato was not interested in progress and therefore had no use for people developing new ideas. Moreover, new ideas in religion and morality were, for Plato, not merely suspect but actually dangerous. And third, the "one person" who would want to go his or her own way would have no place in Plato's society. Remember too that Plato thought that amoral or immoral atheists should be executed, while moral atheists should be reeducated to believe in the gods and that, if after reeducation they still did not believe in the gods, then they should, according to Plato, be executed.