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INDICE

	Pág.
<i>D.M.Clark-A.Ehlers</i> Una exposición del enfoque cognitivo para la comprensión y el tratamiento de los trastornos de ansiedad	7
<i>Andrés Rodríguez</i> Viejos y nuevos paradigmas en Psicología del Trabajo y de las Organizaciones	29
<i>I.Caro-E.Ibáñez</i> La Escala Hospitalaria de Ansiedad y Depresión. Su utili- dad práctica en Psicología de la Salud	43
<i>Steven Greer</i> Terapia Psicológica Adyuvante para mujeres con cáncer de mama	71
<i>Sagrario Yarnoz</i> La Teoría del Apego en la evaluación de las relaciones afectivas. Un enfoque sociocognitivo	85
Notas sobre Libros Terapia Cognitiva * Avances en el Tratamiento Psicológico de los Trastornos de Ansiedad * Aspectos Cognitivos de la Esquizofrenia	103
Normas de Colaboración	119

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POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

Volume 14, Number 2

June 1992

Impersonal Influence: Effects of Representations of Public Opinion on Political Attitudes

89

Diana C. Mutz

The Determinants of Turnout in Presidential Elections: An Integrative Model Accounting for Information

123

David Moon

The Sources of Tactical Voting in British Parliamentary Elections, 1983-1987

141

David J. Lanoue and Shaun Bowler

Proportional Representation Under Three Voting Procedures: An Israeli Study

159

Dan S. Felsenthal

Abstracts

Political Behavior, Vol.14, N° 2, 1992

IMPERSONAL INFLUENCE: Effects of Representations of Public Opinion on Political Attitudes

Diana C.Mutz

Many phenomena of interest to political scientists involve what may be termed "impersonal influence"; that is, influence that derives from individuals' perceptions of others' attitudes, beliefs, or experiences. "Others" in this case refers not to the close friends and acquaintances that concerned the authors of classics such as *The People's Choice* and *Personal Influence*, but rather to the anonymous "others" outside an individual's realm of personal contacts. Modern mass media facilitate the influence of anonymous others by devoting considerable time and attention to portraying trends in mass opinion. This study explores the rationale for theories of impersonal influence, synthesizing existing research findings falling under this general theoretical framework, and investigating its psychological underpinnings using experiments embedded in representative surveys.

THE DETERMINANTS OF TURNOUT IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS: An Integrative Model Accounting for Information

David Moon

This paper presents a model of turnout that extends the Riker and Ordeshock (1968) model to account for the purchase of new information for assessing outcome-contingent benefits and the seeks to integrate the various institutional, sociological, psychological and economic factors that have been advanced to account for turnout in American presidential elections. personal and institutional data from the 1972 and 1976 ICPSR NES Panel Study and Vote Validation Survey are used to test the model. The results suggest that a variety of factors are important in influencing the turnout decision, including the perceived difference between the candidates (in 1976), sense of social duty, sense of attachment to relevant groups, political efficacy, resource constraints, residence, and the cost of registering (in 1976), Closeness of the election also seemed to have a significant impact in 1976.

THE SOURCES OF TACTICAL VOTING IN BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, 1983-1987

David J. Lanoue and Shaun Bowler

Using data from the UK General Election Surveys of 1983 and 1987, we present a critical test of different approaches to tactical voting. Specifically, we are concerned with how the competitive situation in each constituency affects voters' likelihood of voting tactically, as well as the role of voters' attitudes and personal characteristics. We find that voters are less sensitive to the actual marginality of a district than to whether or not their party has a chance of winning the seat. In addition, we find that party identification, and particularly intense loyalty, dampen the tendency to vote tactically, regardless of the type of district. We also consider differences in tactical voting between constituencies where Labour dominates vs. districts where the Conservatives are strongest. Finally, we discuss the broader implications of these findings for the study of voting behavior.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION UNDER THREE VOTING PROCEDURES: An Israeli Study

Dan S. Felsenthal

This paper attempts to evaluate, by means of a public opinion survey, the likely effects on the Israeli political system of replacing the extant electoral procedure of proportional SV (where every voter can vote just for one party) with either proportional AV (where voters can vote in favor of as many parties as they like), or proportional CAD (where voters can vote in favor, as well as against, as many parties as they wish). It also shows how the results of proportional AV and CAD enables one to measure the extent of affinity or rivalry existing between individual parties or party blocs. The main results are: (1) These three alternative proportional representation schemes would have considerably different effects in terms of the number and type of parties gaining representation, as well as in terms of governmental coalitions. (2) The extent of affinity (or rivalry) existing between blocs of parties is usually not symmetrical—one bloc can approve (or disapprove) of another bloc significantly more than vice versa. (3) Voters tend to vote sincerely (rather than strategically) under the proportional SV procedure. Theoretical issues and practical implications of these procedures are discussed.