**Theories of Voting Behaviour Revision Tasks**

**Task 1**

Read the following text about the sociological model of voting behaviour. Identify the K (knowledge), Keg (knowledge-examples) and Analysis (A) points. What could you add to this text to show additional k/Keg/A points that relate to the relevance of the sociological model of voting behaviour?

*The Sociological Model is based on the idea that voters would favour a party based on their social groupings, for example this could be their Social Class, with middle class people more likely to vote for the Conservatives and the working classes more likely to vote Labour. There was evidence of a link between a person’s social class as measured by their occupation and their party preference. A, B and C1 voters (professional and managerial occupations) traditionally supported the Conservatives and voters in occupational classes C2, D and E (manual occupations) were much more likely to support Labour.* *For example, in the period from the Second World War up to the 1970’s this appeared to be the case. In the 1950’s and 1960’s, most voters could be categorised as middle class Conservatives or working class Labour supporters with high levels of absolute class voting. In these years, Labour and the Conservatives between them often accounted for over 95% of total votes cast. The significance of class led Pulzer to state that social class was the basis of party politics, everything else was just “embellishment and detail”.*

*It is clear to see that the Sociological Model no longer holds the relevance that it did in previous years. The support for the two main parties has declined from over 95% in the 1950’s to around 65% in 2010. There has been an increase in support for smaller parties who attract voters across all classes. During this period the number of A, B and C1 voters supporting the Conservatives has fallen below 50% and in 1997 Labour actually achieved a higher level of support in the C1 category than the Conservatives did. The number of C2, D and E voters supporting Labour has also declined.*

**Task 2**

Read the following text about the rational choice model of voting behaviour. Identify the K (knowledge), Keg (knowledge-examples) and Analysis (A) points. What could you add to this text to show additional K/Keg/A points that relate to the relevance of the rational choice model of voting behaviour?

*The rational choice model of voting is about voting according to self-interest. This model views voters as consumers who will make a political choice based on which party will benefit them the most. This theory of voting behaviour focuses more on short-term factors. The rational choice model tends to be more prevalent in countries where the electorate are more educated and have access to a wide range of media outlets. Some psephologists argue that those who adhere to the rational choice model are more knowledgeable of the issues and less likely to be influenced by family or other social networks. This model is based on the idea that people will vote for who is most likely to make them better off. The state of the economy is one of the most important factors when looking at the rational choice model. The economy is a short-term factor as it changes from election to election. If the economy is doing well, it would be rational to vote for the party who is in charge when the economy is doing well. Politicians have used this to their advantage. Both Gordon Brown and Tony Blair were accused of making a pre-election boom. If people have more money in their pockets and businesses are confident in the government keeping employment steady then people are more likely to vote for the incumbent to keep the economy going well.*

*The rational choice model means that voters have preferences as to what policies they want. These may be the policies that appeal to them personally or policies they believe in strongly. The American political scientist, Anthony Downs, in the 1950s described voters as making the same sorts of decisions as consumers do when they decide which product to buy. Voters have preferences as to what policies they want. These may be the policies that appeal to them personally or policies they believe in strongly such as the importance of free health care. This interpretation of voting behaviour is in direct contrast to the sociological interpretation by his contemporary Peter Pulzer. Pulzer’s interpretation of voting behaviour is based solely on social class. Whilst he acknowledged that other factors existed he did not put any value on these other factors. This is summed up by his famous quote ‘Class is the basis of British party politics; all else is embellishment and detail.’*

*Compared to the other theories, the rational choice theory of voting behaviour is important in explaining voting behaviour in recent elections. In elections pre-1970’s the sociological model was dominant but it has declined in importance specifically due to class dealignment and the electorates’ increase in political literacy. Party identification is also less relevant as there has been a decline in the long-term attachment voters have to a political party. This means that the rational choice model is now the most relevant. This could be due to an increase in political knowledge with the availability of the internet. This has been compounded by class dealignment which has weakened the link between social class and voting behaviour. Voters are much more volatile than previously and are much less likely to be attached to a political party. This means there is an increase in the number of floating voters. These voters, as they are less likely to be attached to a party, may be much more likely to be influenced by short-term factors such as the effectiveness of a party’s campaign, the significance of key policies or the perception of a party’s leader. For example, in the 2017 general election there were significant changes in support for the main parties during the campaign and this was attributed to the effectiveness of Labour’s campaign, the poor reaction to Conservative manifesto policies such as social care and improving perceptions of Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership.*

**Task 3**

Identify the main arguments in support and against the relevance of the party-identification model from the text below. What could you add to this text to show additional K/Keg/A points that relate to the relevance of the party identification model l of voting behaviour?

*The Party-Identification Model is based on the psychological attachment that people have to political parties. Electors are seen as people who ‘identify’ with a party or regard the Party as part of their identity. This model disregards the influence of the media, etc as it perceives the main influence on voting behaviour to be that of traditional family voting patterns and traditions. This model stresses the importance of early political socialisation.*

*It may be the case that people could display a bias towards the party that they or their family have long identified with. They may vote for this party irrespective of whether they believe the party is doing a good job.*

*In the 2001, 2005, 2010 and 2015 elections most of social classes D and E voted for Labour. This suggests that people traditionally vote along class lines and therefore this model of voting appears to be relevant.*

*Psephologists found that in the 1950s-1970s people did vote along class lines. Butler and Stokes undertook research in the 1970s which revealed that approximately 90% of those surveyed stated that they did identify with a particular political party. This shows that during this time party identification was correlated strongly with actual voting behaviour. In the local elections of 1963, 85% of Conservative identifiers and 95% of Labour identifiers voted in accordance with their stated party identification. However, from the 1980s class dealingment resulted in a change in this voting behaviour and this entrenched voting pattern became less relevant. Therefore, this model may have been more relevant historically than it is today.*