The CSES: Achievements and Future Options

Jack Vowles
University of Exeter

TASK FORCE: Jack Vowles, Andre Blais, Kees Aarts, Gabor Toka, Radoslaw Markowski

Acknowledgements: Ian McAllister, Nancy Burns, Dave Howell and CSES Secretariat
Three Goals

- How social, political, economic, institutional contexts shape belief and behaviors, affecting the nature and quality of democratic choice
- To understand the nature of political and social cleavages and alignments
- How do citizens evaluate democratic institutions and practices?
Module 1

System Performance

- Constitutional and institutional effects on democratic performance
- The social underpinnings of party systems
- Attitudes to parties, political institutions, and the democratic process
- 33 countries
Module 2

Accountability and representation

- Do elections make governments accountable, are citizens’ views represented?
- Political participation and turnout
- Institutions and contexts in new democracies
- 38 countries
Module 3

Political choices: contestation and inclusiveness

- Policy questions about electoral system design
- Established democracies
  - How satisfaction varies with choices
  - How and why new parties are formed
- New democracies
  - Electoral system design and political stability
Module 3

Survey instruments on -

- Retrospective evaluation of candidates and parties
- Prospective evaluations via ideology, party image, and policy differences
- Voter perceptions of policy choices

Consequences of limited choices?

- Turnout, new parties, disorder, threats to democracy?
Publications

The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems

Edited by Hans-Dieter Klingemann

2001-2009

Number Publications
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electoral System</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old/New Democracies</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalitions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Evaluations</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party System</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Background</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divided Government</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential/Parliamentary</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Globalization</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballot structure</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Win/Lose</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnout</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Congruence</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inequality</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Dependent Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choice Parameters</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with democracy</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnout</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement/Efficacy</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleavages</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology/Issue Voting</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party ID</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Voting</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System Support</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass/Elite Policy Congruence</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Protest</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7 Options (N questions)

- Micro-politics of social protest (11)
- Interpretation of Elections (3 – 9)
- Political Economy of Electoral Systems (5)
- Behavioral Foundations of Social Politics (24)
- Voter mobilization and the professionalization of campaigns (11)
- Elections and the formation of governments (5 - ..
- Improving the measurement of political knowledge (3-7, although 3 would replace existing questions)
# Social Protest

## Key Research Questions
- Are protesters excluded?
- Individuals’ distances from median voter
- Perceptions of political efficacy
- Is protest complementary or substitutive?
- What are the implications for governance of the above?

## Survey Instruments
- Reinsertion of module 2 question (four protest events)
- Specific recent country protests?
- Government-organized or independent?
- Attendance alone or in group?
- Grievances and demands
- Type of event and level of violence
- Reaction of police
- Respondent a victim of human rights violation?
Election Interpretation

**Key Research Questions**
- Content interpretation (what election about)
- Decisiveness/mandate
- Definition of winner

**Importance**
- Normative force in public opinion
- Representation process
- Legitimacy between elections
- Policy post-election

**Survey Instruments**
- The elections were about (1-5):
  - Leadership
  - Candidate quality
  - National security
  - The economy
  - Social differences
- Which of those most of all?
- Did the election generate a mandate?
- Who won?
Political Economy of Electoral Systems

- **Key Research Questions**
  - Why are elections biased left under PR and right under SMP?
  - Why are the least equal countries the least redistributive?

- **Hypotheses**
  - Social protection preferences function of income and skills
  - ‘Time inconsistency problem’ leads to under-provision
  - Middle-income voters vote centre/PR, right/SMP
  - Centre allies with left under PR

- **Survey Instruments**
  - If looking, how hard/easy to find a job?
  - Preferences for more or less government spending on
    - Unemployment
    - Health
    - Pensions
    - Industries in trouble
Behavioral Foundations of Social Politics

- **Key Research Question**
  - Why do some governments spend more on social policies than others?

- **Two competing explanations**
  - Poor seek redistribution
  - Voters seek social insurance, including rich
    - Therefore countries with well-off risk-averse people exposed to labor market uncertainty will spend more

- **Questionable behavioral assumptions**
  - Voters can distinguish between redistributive and insurance elements of policy
  - Other identities don’t matter

- **Questions**
  - Batteries testing the above
  - And do voters discount promises of future commitment?
  - An extensive list (24)
Voter Mobilization and Campaign Professionalization

**Research Questions**
- What drives new methods of campaigning?
- What are the effects?

**Causal Hypotheses**
- Professional campaigns more likely where
  - Political advertising allowed
  - Fewer limits on campaign expenditure
  - Countries are richer
  - SMP/Majoritarian systems
  - Elections more frequent
  - The party system strong

**Consequential Hypotheses**
- Professional campaigns foster
  - Voter dissatisfaction
  - Lower party identifications

**Questions**
- 11 types of messages/contacts: yes or no, and how many -
  - Face to face, leaflet, TV, Radio, newspaper, direct mail, telephone, email, social network site, mobile phone/SMS
Elections and the Formation of Governments

**Research Questions**

- Where voters choose not only among parties but among potential coalitions, do they have preferences about about the governments to be formed?
- Do those preferences influence vote choice?

**Questions**

- Three coalition options: recall of pre-election preferences compared to post-election
- How likely were those options?
- On election day, how likely would preferred party have won a seat and/or get into government?
- Reasons for defection from vote for most preferred party: strategic or otherwise?
Improving Political Knowledge Questions

- **Research Questions**
  - Is political knowledge higher or lower in some countries than others, and if so why?
  - How important is political knowledge in affecting:
    - Turnout
    - Vote choice
    - And other matters

- **Problem:** Current CSES knowledge questions do not facilitate cross-country comparison

- **Instruments**
  - **Core**
    - Party in power before the election (or got the most votes?)
    - Eligibility criteria to vote (i.e., citizenship)
    - One of five countries with veto power on UN Security Council
  - **Supplementary**
    - True-False: the largest right-wing party is a left-wing party
    - What level of government is responsible for land use?
    - Knowledge of recent international meeting
    - Knowledge of most important election issue(s)
Some Debating Points

- **What remains from before?**
  - What goes in, something must come out

- **The balance between dependent and independent variables?**

- **One big idea or several smaller ones?**
  - If several smaller ideas, can they be linked?

- **Continuity in themes and instruments?**

- **Consistency with CSES aims/objectives?**
Constraints

- Module to take 10-15 minutes
- Current module: minimum 35 questions, less demographics
  - More questions, the more parties in the system
  - Core questions?
    - Vote, previous vote, party identification, left-right
    - Performance, positional?
    - System perceptions
- Space for new questions?