



On the substantive theme and questions of CSES Modules 1 & 2

Electoral institutions, representation and accountability

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General Theoretical Focus

„We want to make theoretical and substantive advances in our understanding of how **variation in the institutional arrangements** that govern the conduct of elections **affect the nature and quality of electoral choice** in democratic Polities.

Through comparative analysis, where citizens are observed in different settings, the impact of institutions can be established.”

(“Guiding Principles, Final Report of the 1995-96 Planning Committee”)“

Module Topics



- Module 1 (1996-2001) - 39 election studies, 33 countries

- Performance of the System

- Module 2 (2001-2006) - 41 election studies, 38 countries

- Representation and Accountability

Narrowing the focus: The main themes of the CSES Module 1



- 1) The impact of electoral institutions on citizens' political cognition and behavior
- 2) The nature of political and social cleavages and alignments;
- 3) The evaluation of democratic institutions and processes

1) The impact of electoral institutions on citizens' political cognition and behavior



The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws;

“Do high district thresholds not only discourage parties from contesting seats, but do they also discourage voters from casting their ballots for small parties that hover perilously close to the threshold?”

3) The evaluation of democratic institutions and processes



- Perception of the performance of political parties and representatives as institutions that link citizens to government

Does citizen satisfaction with the performance of political parties increase with the number and ideological diversity of the political choices that citizens are offered?

System-level or “Macro-level” topics



Data on political parties and party systems

Information about main parties (A-F)

Year founded

Ideological family

International organization

Left-right position

Election results: Votes and seats

System-level or “Macro-level” topics



Data pertinent to the election at which the module was administered

- Turnout

- The most salient factors/issues

Data on regime type

- Powers of the head of state

- Powers of the head of government

- Dissolution of the legislature

System-level or “Macro-level” topics



Data on electoral institutions

Election method – Head of State/Government

Electoral structure of the legislature

Voting procedures

- Compulsory voting

- Electoral formula

- Thresholds

Types of electoral alliances

District-level data



Electoral returns,

Turnout,

The number of candidates, lists, seats.

CSES public opinion survey – the main areas



Voter turnout and vote choice (current and previous election)

Candidate and party evaluations

- PID & sympathy scores

Current and retrospective economic evaluations,

Evaluation of the electoral system itself,

Standardized socio-demographic measures

(including **political information** items!)

Public opinion questionnaire – example questions



Evaluation of the representatives' responsiveness

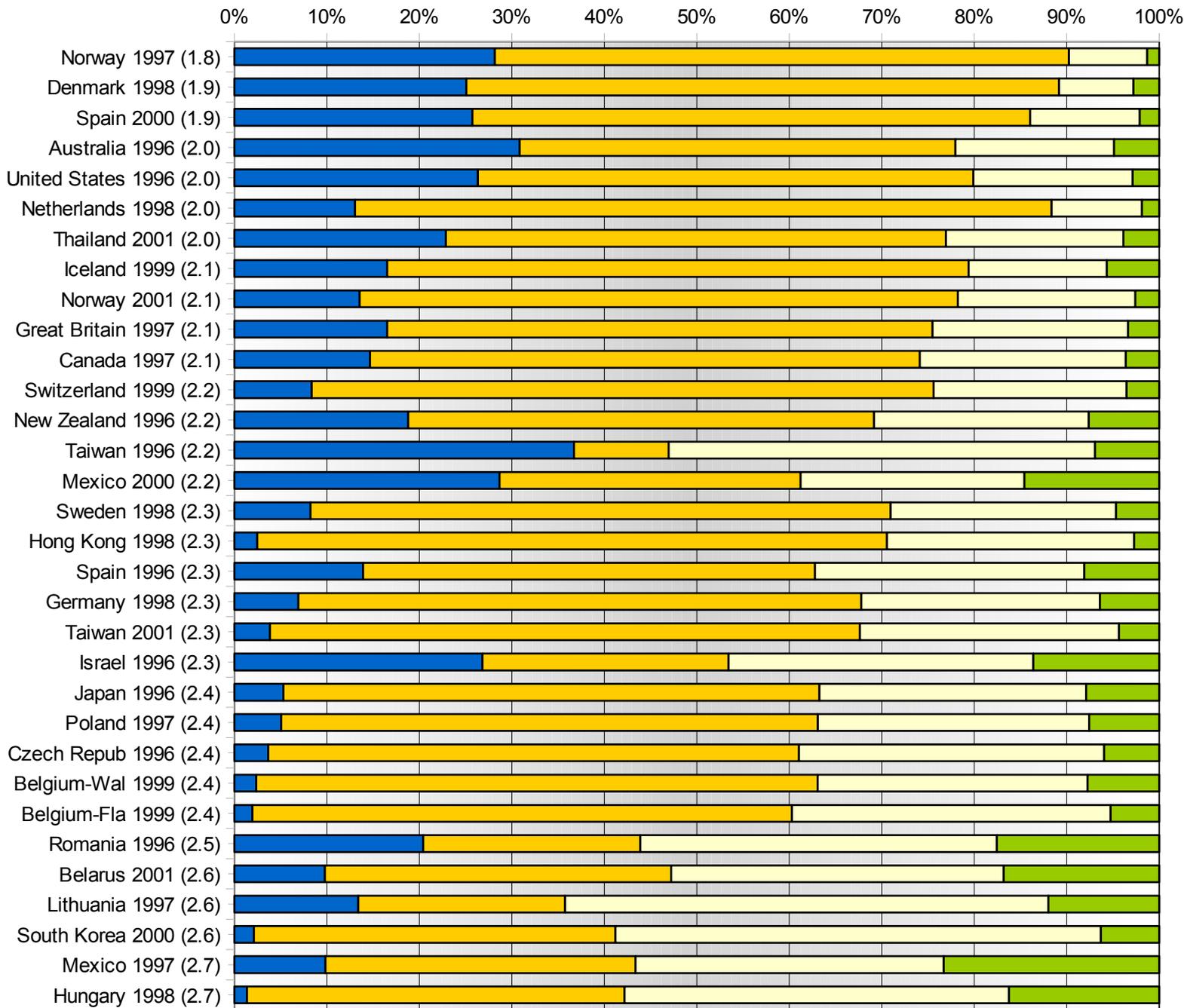
Q11. Some people say that members of [Congress / Parliament] know what ordinary people think. Others say that members of [Congress / Parliament] don't know much about what ordinary people think. Using the scale on the card (...), where would you place yourself?

Public opinion questionnaire – example questions



Q1. On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in [country]?

Respondents' satisfaction with democracy...



Module 2 (2001-2006)

Theoretical focus: Representation



Module 2 (2001-2006)

Theoretical focus: Accountability



Module 2 (2001-2006)

Directions of change:

- Contrasting majoritarian and consensus models of democracy, or *accountability vs. representation*
- Introducing new items on citizen engagement and cognition across democratic polities.
- Introducing new measures of democracy/regime evaluation

Module 2: Continuity and change

Continuity

Various survey questions

Demographic variables

Added: Membership in associations; Spouse SES

District-level variables

Change: (Topic 1) Perceived representation

How well voters' views are represented in elections

Thinking about how elections in [country] work in practice, how well do elections ensure that the views of voters are represented by Majority Parties: very well, quite well, not very well, or not well at all?

Is there a party [leader] that represents r's views

Would you say that any of the parties in [country] represents your views reasonably well?

Party [leader] that represents r's views best

Change in public opinion variables

Topic 2 “on citizen engagement and cognition across democratic polities”

Political participation

Examples:

Here is a list of things some people do during elections. Which if any did you do during the most recent election?

- ...talked to other people to persuade them to vote for a particular party or candidate?
- ...showed your support for a particular party or candidate by, for example, attending a meeting, putting up a poster, or in some other way?

Accountability



Most important issue

What do you think has been the most important issue facing [country] over the last [...] years?

Evaluation of government performance

With reference to the most important issue

In general

Performance of party r voted for in previous election

How well did the party you voted for then perform over the past [...] years? Has it done a very good job? a good job? a bad job? a very bad job?

Regime evaluation



How much respect is there for individual freedom and human rights nowadays in (country)? Do you feel there is a lot of respect for individual freedom, some respect, not much respect, or no respect at all?

Continuity and change in macro variables



New topics

Significant parties not represented in parliament
before [after] the election

Consensus on the left-right placements

Number of portfolios before [after] - by party

Size of the cabinet before [after]

Items on Federalism

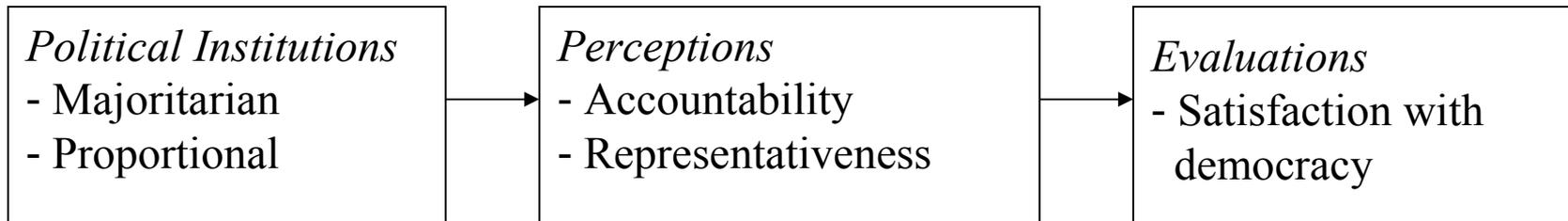
Substantive illustration*

'The key theoretical question to be addressed by the second module is the contrast between the view that elections are a mechanism to hold government *accountable* and the view that they are a mean to ensure that citizens' views and interests are properly *represented* in the democratic process. *It is intended to explore how far this contrast and its embodiment in institutional structures influences vote choice and satisfaction with democracy.'*

*Source material: *Satisfaction with democracy: do institutions matter?*, by Kees Aarts & Jacques Thomassen

Prepared for delivery at the 2006 Annual Meeting of the APSA, Philadelphia, August 31 - September 3, 2006.

Research Design





Accountability

Q10 *'Some people say that no matter who people vote for, it won't make a difference to what happens. Others say that who people vote for can make a difference to what happens.*

Using the scale on this card, (where ONE means that voting won't make a difference to what happens and FIVE means that voting can make a difference) where would you place yourself?'



Perceived representation

Q15 *‘Thinking about how elections in {country} work in practice, how well do elections ensure that the views of voters are represented by MPs: very well, quite well, not very well, or not well at all?’*

Analytical scheme: Micro-level relationships

		Perception of political accountability	
		low	high
Perception of representativeness	low	low satisfaction	intermediate
	high	intermediate	high satisfaction

Results: Hungary

		Perception of accountability	
		low	high
Perception of representativeness	low	28% (very) satisfied	36%
	high	50%	63%

“For the pool of all elections in the data set, the question whether people feel represented by their members of parliament is much more important for their satisfaction with democracy than whether they think it makes a difference whom they vote for.”

The effect of macro-level characteristics



Hypotheses:

Majoritarian > Accountability

Proportional > Representation

Results:

“compared with their counterparts in majoritarian systems, citizens in proportional systems are more positive about both the representation and the accountability functions of democracy, which is clearly at odds with the theories outlined earlier ...”



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