



On the substantive theme and questions of CSES Module 2

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Theoretical focus: Representation



Theoretical focus: Accountability



Theoretical focus: Representation and accountability

Via three key theoretical questions:

- 1) To what extent are elections a mechanism to hold government *accountable*, as opposed to a means to ensure that citizens' views are properly *represented* in the democratic process?
- 2) New set of items on citizen engagement and cognition across democratic polities.
- 3) The module further elaborated the question how voters' choices are affected by the institutional context within which those choices are made.

Module 2: Continuity and change

Continuity

Demographic variables

Added: Membership in associations; Spouse SES

District-level variables

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?

Political participation

Examples:

(Have you) taken part in a protest, march or demonstration?

(Have you) worked together with people who shared the same concern?

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?

(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

Democracy/Regime evaluation

Please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: "*Democracy may have problems but it's better than any other form of government.*"

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?

How widespread do you think corruption such as bribe taking is amongst politicians in [country]: very widespread, quite widespread, not very widespread, it hardly happens at all?

Removed topics and questions

Assessment of the fairness of electoral process

Evaluation of political parties

Political parties care what people think

Political parties are necessary

Evaluation of economic performance

Do people express political opinion

Continuity and change in macro variables

New topics

European Parliament political group

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.

Function of elections: Majoritarian view

Selection of government

Concentration of power - elected majority

Under control of majority of electorate

Requirement 1: clarity of responsibility

Who responsible for government policy

Alternative government identifiable

Requirement 2: voters' sanction effective

Condition: majoritarian system

Clear choice between two (groups of) parties

Winning party takes over government responsibility

Function of elections: The consensus (proportional) view

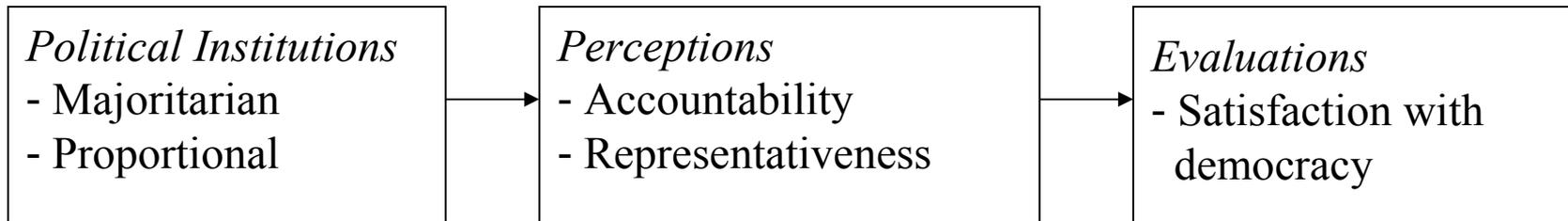
Elect parliament as representative as possible of the people

Multi-party system » coalition governments

No coercive relation between outcome election and government formation

Government responsibility blurred

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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