

The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES)  
Module 4 Theoretical Statement

Approved by a Plenary Session of CSES Collaborators  
Mexico City, Mexico and the CSES Module 4 Planning Committee  
On Sunday, June 12, 2011

## **Table of Contents**

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page</u>
Process	3
Primary Theme: Distributional Politics and Social Protection	5
Secondary Theme: Mobilization	13
Political Knowledge Questions	18
References	21

## Process

Identifying the substantive focus and developing the questionnaire for CSES Module 4 has been a collaborative, iterative process that has occurred over the course of a period of three years and has benefitted from the input of dozens of scholars. We would like to provide our sincere thanks to all of the persons who have provided content and ideas for this specific module, and also to the hundreds of scholars and their funding organizations that have contributed to the success of the CSES project more generally.

The process for developing CSES Module 4 began on June 12, 2008, when the Chair of the CSES Module 3 Planning Committee, Ian McAllister, distributed a public call for nominations for members of a CSES Module 4 Planning Committee. The same announcement requested that the CSES user community and public at large also provide suggestions and proposals for possible themes for CSES Module 4.

A Nominating Committee consisting of Hans-Dieter Klingemann (Social Science Research Center, Berlin), Jacques Thomassen (University of Twente, Netherlands), and Ian McAllister (The Australian National University) was convened to collect and consider nominations for members of the CSES Module 4 Planning Committee. On August 19, 2008, the Nominating Committee forwarded the following names for the CSES Module 4 Planning Committee:

- André Blais\*, Université de Montréal, Canada (chair)
- David Howell\*, University of Michigan, USA (ex-officio)
- Bernt Aardal\*, University of Oslo, Norway
- Kees Aarts\*, University of Twente, Netherlands
- John Aldrich\*, Duke University, USA
- Ulises Beltrán\*, Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económica (CIDE), Mexico
- Goran Čular, University of Zagreb, Croatia
- Rachel Gibson, Manchester University, UK
- Elisabeth Gidengil, McGill University, Canada
- Sara Hobolt, Oxford University, UK
- Ken'ichi Ikeda\*, University of Tokyo, Japan
- Pedro Magalhaes, Lisbon University, Portugal
- Radoslaw Markowski\*, Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland
- David Sanders, Essex University, UK
- Nicolas Sauger, Sciences Po, France
- Michal Shamir\*, Tel Aviv University, Israel
- Jack Vowles\*, University of Exeter, UK
- Bernhard Weßels\*, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB), Germany

\* Continuing members

Over the same time period, a CSES Module 4 Task Force collected proposals from the CSES user community as to possible themes and questions for CSES Module 4. The Task Force was coordinated by Jack Vowles (Exeter University, UK), with support from André Blais (University

of Montreal, Canada), Kees Aarts (University of Twente, Netherlands) and Gabor Toka (Central European University, Budapest).

At a CSES Plenary Session on September 6-7, 2009 in Toronto, Canada, the members of the CSES Module 4 Planning Committee were confirmed by the collaborators in attendance. In response to suggestions made by collaborators in attendance, the following scholars were added to the CSES Module 4 Planning Committee:

- Rachel Meneguello, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Brazil
- Chi Huang, National Chengchi University, Taiwan

At the same Plenary Session in Toronto, Task Force Coordinator Jack Vowles presented a review of the past CSES modules and the use of individual questions and variables from those modules in scholarly publications. He presented seven proposals received in regards to themes and content for CSES Module 4. The proposals were discussed and feedback received from the collaborators in attendance.

A final call for CSES Module 4 proposals was distributed to the public on November 11, 2009.

The full set of proposals, including newly received proposals, were presented, discussed, and debated at a meeting of the CSES Module 4 Planning Committee in Budapest, Hungary on March 12-13, 2010. By the end of that meeting, a tentative set of themes for the CSES Module 4 questionnaire were decided upon. The themes selected were those that were most favorably received and reviewed by CSES collaborators and the CSES Module 4 Planning Committee, and that were feasible within the design and constraints of the CSES project.

The CSES Module 4 Task Force dissolved into three subcommittees: on the ‘main theme’ of distributional politics and social protection led by Jack Vowles, on a mobilization section (led by Rachel Gibson) and on the knowledge questions (led by Ulises Beltrán). Where appropriate, authors of the selected proposals were consulted for further revision, to incorporate feedback received into their proposals. The proposals were turned into draft question sets that were then presented and debated at a meeting on October 25-26, 2010 of the CSES Module 4 Planning Committee in Tel Aviv, Israel.

The CSES Module 4 Planning Committee presented the resulting draft questionnaire to the CSES collaborator base for their feedback and consideration for implementation at a CSES Plenary Session in Mexico City, where it was approved.

## **Primary Theme: Distributional Politics and Social Protection**

This proposed 'primary theme' for Module 4 will make it possible to probe the interactions between voters' socio-economic locations, policy preferences, institutions, and voting choices, and their consequences for public policy.

Based on research drawing on Module 1 of the CSES, Hans-Dieter Klingemann concluded that 'the electoral system matters, but not much' (2009, 26). Drawing on Module 2, Dalton and Anderson report a series of findings indicating that party system variables, particularly ideological polarisation, matter more than institutions (2011, 252). In contrast, research findings in comparative political economy make dramatic claims about the effects of electoral systems on the size of government, the party composition of governments, the extent of social provision, and the distribution of income (in particular, Persson and Tabellini 2003). Meanwhile a 'thermostatic' model of democratic responsiveness is also based on the hypothesis that public preferences on matters such as social expenditure are significantly mediated through institutions. Here the relevant institutional variables are centralization/decentralization, and parliamentary/presidential (Soroka and Wleziem 2010, 49-57). These two sets of findings challenge those of the CSES so far, and are central to its first objective: to inquire into '*how social, political, economic, institutional contexts shape belief and behaviors, affecting the nature and quality of democratic choice*'.

The main theme of Module 4 will provide a means to to increase knowledge about the sources of voter preferences for patterns of public policy, and how those are mediated through institutions and voting behaviour. The main focus will be on policies that affect income and wealth distribution, both directly, and through mechanisms of social protection, although other policy areas will also be included. The years of 2011-2016 are likely to be a particularly fertile period to inquire into these questions. Reviews of the world economy over the last two or three years paint a picture of most democratic developed economies entering a period of constrained growth, deficit reduction, and expenditure constraint and austerity, while many democratic developing economies continue to grow (for example, Economist, 2010a). In some cases, developing democracies have been able to significantly enhance social protection and reduce inequality through both growth and government expenditure: for example, Brazil (Economist 2010b, 32). Welfare states are not just a European phenomenon (Kim 2004, Kim 2009, Rudra 2002, 2007, 2008, Yoon 2009a, 2009b). Yet processes generating income and wealth inequality continue to operate, partly in response to globalization, affecting both developed and developing economies (Dreher, Gaston, and Martens 2008, 149-157; OECD 2011).

This approach brings distributional politics and proximity models of electoral choice into the picture, potentially challenging models of valence politics that have gained increasing attention in recent literature in electoral studies (Clarke et al 2004; 2009). A focus on distribution and equality/inequality draws obvious attention to the variable of income. In Module 4, we extend this inquiry to wealth and reengage with the question of economic voting, represented by questions in Module 1 that were dropped from Modules 2 and 3.

The next task is to outline in more depth the more precise logic of the theories behind the themes summarized above.

## Comparative Political Economy

It has been understood for some time that electoral institutions appear to impact on the partisan composition of governments (Vowles 2004) and consequently on social and economic policy (for example, Castles 1985). More recently, these claims have been developed on deeper theoretical foundations and with more systematic evidence (Boix 2002; Persson and Tabellini 2003). Bringing the theory down to the individual-level, insurance and redistributive incentives are said to ‘interplay’ to support the welfare state, and these preferences are crucially mediated through institutions (Iversen 2005 91-98, 116-118; Iversen and Soskice 2001, 2006). The macro- and micro- nature of the CSES design provides the means to estimate the relative effects of these country and individual-level differences on voting choices and policy preferences: direct, indirect, and contingent (Dalton and Anderson 2011, 243-245)

The political economy literature has long suggested that social protection is related to the risks of economic vulnerability of nation-states (Cameron 1978; Rodrik 1998). Iversen and Soskice apply this logic to individuals. If skills are generic, as throughout much of the service sector, workers are more mobile and can adapt to changes in the labor market. Where skills are specific, workers are more exposed to risk and more in need of state intervention to assist them when out of work, often to the extent of providing resources for retraining. In a situation of recession, however, the threat of longer-term job loss is likely to penetrate into the services sector and particularly among public employees where substantial cuts in government expenditure are anticipated.

Iversen and Soskice assume that voters on the median income particularly exposed to risk tend to favor some redistribution of income away from the rich. But without electorally viable center parties to represent those preferences, risk-averse, middle-income voters will vote for less redistribution than they would like by choosing parties of the right. Otherwise, they risk too much redistribution from a party of the left that might also reduce middle-income after-tax incomes. When parties of the center are viable in PR systems, middle-income voters have a ‘modest redistribution’ option more consistent with their preferences. Because center-left or social democratic parties often have the option of entering a coalition with those center parties, the center-left tends to be in government more under PR than in majoritarian systems, and can therefore legislate for redistribution that can benefit both middle-income voters and the poor.

This logic can be seen to operate at two levels familiar to scholars of electoral systems: mechanical, in terms of the translation of votes into seats and into governments, and individual, in terms of voter preferences for or against protection and redistribution. These individual-level preferences, rooted in perceptions of vulnerability and security or insecurity, are claimed to shape attitudes to social protection and the welfare state, mediated mechanically, as explained above, by the electoral system.

These inferences speak to the second CSES general objective: *to understand the nature of political and social cleavages and alignments*. Old cleavages have weakened in the advanced democracies. It remains uncertain whether this means a process of cleavage transformation or simply cleavage decline. Because it is open to exploring new cleavage foundations, this approach offers the potential of offering a new perspective of the development of cleavages in the developing and/or non-European democracies. Distributional issues matter everywhere, albeit at

differing levels, even if not couched in the terms of ‘left’ and ‘right.’ Take, for example, the situation in Thailand, with a party system split between the urban poor and the rural middle and upper classes (Glassman 2010).

Another case can illustrate some of these arguments. Britain’s labor market leans toward the ‘generic’ service sector (76.2 percent of GDP), although productive employment remains more significant than often assumed, at 23% (Office for National Statistics, 2010, 254). Moreover, large areas of the country that suffered the effects of deindustrialisation in the 1980s remain heavily dependent on government expenditure. In 2010, the Labour party promised the most redistributive path out of recession, and the Conservative party the least redistributive. Britain’s center party, the Liberal Democrats, indicated moderately redistributive policy preferences that most closely reflected the interests of those on or close to the median income.

Under PR, at the recent 2010 election the Liberal Democrats would have been far more likely to go into coalition with the Labour Party, as both parties together would have outmatched the Conservative Party in terms of seats, and their policies were generally deemed more proximate. Under the first-past-the-post system, the Liberal Democrats failed to win enough seats to construct a secure majority with Labour. A coalition with the Conservatives proved the only viable option for a stable government able to assure economic confidence. As a result, Britain’s path through the next few years will dramatically reduce social protection: an alternative path, shaped by PR, would have led to more modest cuts.

So far, the logic applied in this case is simply mechanical. The Liberal Democrats were a large enough party before the 2010 election to be deemed viable in the sense of gaining some parliamentary representation. But individual-level choices may still have been apparent. Middle-income voters in constituencies where a Liberal Democrat could not have feasibly been elected may have chosen to vote Conservative, despite a sense of insecurity, because they feared an unconstrained Labour majority government that might disadvantage them by more greatly favoring those on low incomes. It is this specific linkage between individual-level examples of strategic voting to perceptions of insecurity and preferences for social protection that previous research testing this theory has not uncovered so far (Iversen 2005, 91-106).

Research following these themes will not require much new macro-level data to be collected, given that economic data is included in the CSES datasets. However, data on the universal versus targeted nature of social expenditure could also be collected to test hypotheses that these differences between programs could have significant effects on public preferences for welfare. There is a recent critique of some of Iversen’s earlier work on the hypothesized positive implications of deindustrialization for the funding of the welfare state. This argues that deindustrialization has changed the nature of the workplace, making many jobs far less secure, thus potentially increasing demand for universalistic versus contribution-based social programs, not necessarily support for increased expenditure overall (Carnes and Mares 2010). While the CSES itself will not be producing macro-data to operationalize analysis based on these matters, supplementary data is likely to be produced after consultation with experts on the classification of welfare systems.

Exploring the general theme of job security will require instruments that generate somewhat more detailed information about jobs and economic sector, in order to divide respondents more precisely into those with generic and specific skill sets: ISCO occupation codes to three digits, in particular, although two digit data will be accepted. Collaborators should note that failure to collect occupational and industry data may mean that their countries will fall out of analysis on key questions associated with the main theme. Other instruments are needed to estimate perceptions of job or income security, and preferences for various classes of government expenditure. Three of these, for health, education, and unemployment, overlap with questions that can be deployed to test another model of the relationships between public preferences and policy outcomes, mediated through institutions: the ‘thermostatic’ model.

### The Thermostatic Model

The ‘thermostatic’ model finds a relationship between policy preferences and expenditure: as expenditure goes up, public preferences shift towards reduction, and when it goes down, preferences shift in the other direction. This relationship has been established over time in three countries, the United States, Britain, and Canada (Soroka 2003; Soroka and Lim 2003; Soroka and Wlezien 2004, 2005, 2008, 2010; Soroka, Wlezien and MacLean 2006; Wlezien 1995, 1996, 2004; Wlezien and Soroka 2003, 2007).

Testing the theory in the CSES allows extension of this research on thermostatic public responsiveness to spending from a focus on changes in opinion over time in a handful of countries to levels of opinion at a particular point in time across many countries.

The objective is to examine how decentralization of government responsibility influences the public's reaction to policy at different levels of government. The conjecture is that vertical division of powers, or decentralization, makes it more difficult for the public to gauge and react to government policy change (Arceneaux 2005). Put differently, the government policy signal may be confused, or rather, there may be different signals from multiple sources, at least in policy domains for which different governments have different responsibility. Previous analysis of the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom suggests that this might be true, though confidence in the finding and the ability to generalize is limited given the small number of cases. Series of the necessary public opinion data are not available in any other countries.

Although the thermostatic model typically characterizes responsiveness over time, an identical expectation applies across space. Consider, for example, the fifty states in the United States. The preferred level of policy in a particular area, say, welfare, differs across the states, as does the level of policy. If the thermostatic model holds, the public's relative preference would reflect the difference between the two across states  $j$ :

$$R_j = P^* - P_j$$

...where  $R$  represents the public's preference for “more” or “less” policy,  $P^*$  designates the public's preferred level of policy and  $P$  is policy. In theory, then, the preference for more policy in each state will depend on whether the public's preferred level is greater than policy itself in the different states. One empirical application to abortion opinion and policy in the different



states of the United States supports these inferences (Goggin and Wlezien 1993). The question is whether the thermostat model applies across countries and policy domains and, most importantly, the extent to which the public's response to policy (P) is a function of the decentralization (D) of different domains.

In order to assess the effects of decentralization on public responsiveness it is essential to have a measure of relative preferences in a broad range of countries where decentralization differs. Of course, comparable measures of spending are needed, though these are available for numerous countries, both at the national and sub-national levels (see Rodden 2004). The CSES provides a unique opportunity to acquire such measures across a wide range of countries with different federal arrangements and levels of (de)centralization. The proposed instruments ask respondents whether they perceive government expenditure as too much, too little, or about right, on five policy areas: health, education, unemployment, defense, and the amount of tax. These questions have also been important in a range of other studies on the connection between opinion and policy (e.g., Eichenberg and Stoll 2003; Erikson et al. 2002; Jennings 2009; Jennings and John 2009; Page and Shapiro 1992; Stimson et al. 1995).

These questions therefore have broad appeal. Surveys, and particularly election surveys, tend to include relatively few policy questions. Some of those questions are about particular policies, which are then incomparable across countries or over time. These spending and tax questions provide valuable information on respondents' policy preferences, at a relatively general level. They can be and have been used for a wide range of analyses, including work on electoral behavior that seeks to make links between policy and voting preferences.

Research focussed on the effects of veto players (Tsebelis 2002) and the clarity of responsibility (Powell 2000, 52) could also play into these questions. Other research shows that federal systems have been slower to develop social protection, largely as the result of a greater number of veto points. But if the mechanism here is 'stickiness,' federalism may also be associated with a greater difficulty in reducing social protection once it is established. 'Clarity of responsibility,' as defined by macro-variables, will also be an important control. Where party systems are highly fragmented, considerable research already gives good grounds expecting a more blurred relationship between preferences and policies, as citizens may have less expectation that their vote choices will translate into a government that might implement them. Electoral system differences provide another obvious direction in which to extend this research. Wlezien and Soroka also argue that presidential systems should be more policy-responsive than parliamentary systems, another important hypothesis that is worth testing with the large number of cases available in the CSES. Measures of federalism in the CSES can also be applied. This is useful for work on compounded representation in federal systems (Hamann 1999; Kedar 2006.)

### Wealth, Economic Voting, Valence and Positional

The political economy approaches discussed above assume that economic conditions and economic and social policy decisions in response to them have different impacts on citizens. Taking this logic a step further, Michael Lewis-Beck, Martial Foucault and Richard Nadeau argue for a move toward the estimation of 'positional economic voting' (Foucault, Nadeau, and Lewis-Beck, 2010; Lewis-Beck and Nadeau, 2010). As the strongest empirically-identified

effects of economic voting are sociotropic, most assume that economic voting is a valuation of government economic performance rather than a reflection of voter's own circumstances, and, furthermore, its extent is a measure of democratic accountability (Duch and Stevenson 2008). The economy is assumed to be a valence issue, everyone sharing in the goal of prosperity. Positional economic issues have rarely been tested as such, although many questions are regularly asked in election surveys that address them: attitudes to progressive taxation, for example.

While the economic voting literature has a consensus that individual or household circumstances have at best minor influence on vote choice, some evidence of positional economic voting can be gleaned from use of the traditional sociotropic instrument. For example, there is CSES-based evidence that the extent to which country-level perceptions of the economy affect vote choice can vary by 'positions' defined by occupational groupings and sectors (Hellwig 2001). The list of expenditure questions already proposed could be brought to bear to some extent to test positional economic voting. But a question measuring the extent to which voters believe the government should seek to address the economic needs of the disadvantaged has been added to CSES Module 4 to address the matter fully.

A focus on distribution and equality/inequality draws obvious attention to the variable of income. An influential model in the political economy literature clearly indicates the reasons why one would expect lower income earners to vote for more redistribution (Meltzer and Richards 1981). But evidence that income affects distributional preferences and voting choice is mixed and often lacking. Findings from Module 1 of the CSES indicates that income does affect turnout, but more in less wealthy countries and less in the more wealthy (Nevitte, Blais, Gidengil, and Nadeau 2009). There is already evidence that turnout can also affect patterns of policy. If low turnout is more concentrated among those on low incomes in situations of higher economic inequality (Solt 2008, 2010), this raises the income level of the median voter, making governments of all stripes less attentive to the poor, a claim for which there is some empirical support (Boix 2002; Husted and Kenney 1997; Mueller and Stratmann 2003). Systematic analysis of the extent to which income structures votes for the right and the left has not yet been carried out using the CSES. Evidence from several countries indicates that the relationship is often weak, and sometimes not apparent. Income data is often difficult to collect, and may suffer from significant numbers of missing values, a problem that can be addressed using imputation. Despite these concerns, analysis of Modules 1-3 of the CSES indicates that household income is collected by most collaborators with little apparent difficulty.

There are various reasons why the relationship between income and political preferences could fail to conform to the simple Melzer-Richard model. Voters on low incomes may be more attentive to other concerns, particularly in countries in which religion shapes the cleavage structure (Alesina and Giuliano 2009; De La O and Rodden, 2008). Income does not closely correlate with wealth, particularly where those with wealth are able to minimize their taxable incomes through legal loopholes. Income correlates highly with age, as younger people generally have lower incomes. Following from this, it provides only a snapshot of current income, which may not reflect respondents' incomes over the longer or even medium term. A theory of 'aspirational' voting suggests that people may vote in terms of their anticipated income in the future, rather than the income they currently have (Manning 2005). The theoretical foundations

of this hypothesis lie in the ‘prospect of upward mobility’: the poor will not support high levels of redistribution because of the hope that they may improve their incomes over the longer term (Benabou and Ok 2001) or, more simply that ‘individual preferences for redistribution depend on future income prospects’ (Alesina and Ferrara 2005). In practice, this tendency extends beyond the ‘poor,’ at least up to and including the median voter.

While not abandoning the collection of income data, additional approaches are therefore required: estimation of ‘aspirations,’ and a focus on wealth. There are good reasons to believe that wealthy people will tend to vote for the right, particularly if that wealth has been generated by high levels of risk. The right promises a better return on investments. But measures of wealth or ‘patrimony’ are virtually absent from major national election studies. France stands out as an exception: items estimating wealth ownership have been included in the French national election survey since 1978. The results from the French case are compelling. They show that the patrimonial effect well exceeds other economic effects tested, and does so under strong statistical controls (Nadeau, Foucault and Lewis-Beck 2010a, 2010b). Evidence based on United States data at the time of the 2008 presidential election (Lewis-Beck and Nadeau 2010) suggest that these findings may apply to other institutional and national contexts.

Estimation of wealth adds value to a political economy approach by identifying a further source of preferences for expenditure-based policy decisions. Including measures of wealth ownership and perceptions of job security in the new CSES module will stir interest from scholars working in a variety of fields including voting behavior, economic voting, political psychology, class voting and public opinion. Including simple measures of individuals’ wealth ownership would provide useful information about individuals’ location in the economic structure that could contribute to impact on their vote and their policy preferences. Crucially, the instruments to estimate wealth do so by requesting information about the type of assets rather than their value, limiting the risk of respondent resistance to such questions.

### Summary

This primary theme for Module 4 reflects two out of the three major goals of the CSES: to inquire into *how social, political, economic, institutional contexts shape belief and behaviors, affecting the nature and quality of democratic choice* and *to understand the nature of political and social cleavages and alignments*. The third goal, *to shed light on how citizens, living under diverse political arrangements, evaluate democratic institutions and processes* will remain ‘active’ as this is addressed by three questions in the ongoing ‘core’ of the module: satisfaction with democracy, efficacy, and government capacity to ‘make a difference.’

The theme of income and wealth distribution and social protection takes the opportunity to investigate how conditions in the aftermath of a global recession may shape public perceptions and political behavior, during a period in which positional differences are widening between social groups in many countries. Perhaps they are being redefined in the process, thus altering the nature of cleavage politics. This theme provides the opportunity to expand the range of socio-demographic questions into wealth and assets, and opens up inquiry into the political psychology of insecurity and how those may be linked to behavior and public policy. To cap it off, this theme provides the means to investigate far more systematically than before how electoral

systems, systems of government, and levels of centralization or decentralization may mediate and even shape the relationships between public perceptions, political behavior, voting choice, and public policy.

#### Sources of questions

##### *Expenditure Questions (Q1a-Q1f)*

These have been widely used in a variety of surveys over the years – for discussion see Soroka and Wlezien 2010, 64-68.

##### *Aspirations or ‘Prospect of Upward Mobility’. (Q2)*

This is an adaptation of a General Social Survey Question used in Alesina and Ferrara (2005, 905).

##### *Government on Redistribution – for positional economic voting (Q4)*

##### *Job Security (Q21, Q22).*

Adapted from a single question used in the 1997 ISSP (Iversen 2005, 95).

##### *Wealth or Patrimonial Battery (Q23a-d)*

As recommended and tested in Nadeau, Foucault and Lewis-Beck (2010a, 2010b).

## **Secondary Theme: Mobilization**

Interest in mobilization has been stimulated by party-based research into the rising use of more high-tech 'professionalized' techniques. In Module 4 of the CSES, we propose to widen this focus into questions of mobilization and test common assumptions in the literature about how marketing techniques and newer electronic methods are actually alienating or de-mobilizing voters. The idea is to specify the range of possible options that parties can use to mobilize voters directly and indirectly and compare their effects. We will explore the interesting and as yet not researched question, of how far Internet methods actually fit within a 'professionalized' campaign approach. Do they actually represent the return to more grass-roots and social network type of mobilization and thus cluster with the face-to-face methods rather than direct mail and telemarketing? If so, to what extent are they as effective in stimulating turnout and other forms of campaign/electoral activism?

While academic study of the extent and effects of voter contact by parties is not new (Eldersveld 1956; Patterson and Caldeira 1983), analysis of these mobilizing efforts has increased significantly over the past two decades. The major conclusion has been that direct attempts by political actors to contact voters and ask for their support is one of the most effective methods of increasing voter turnout (Bergen et al. 2004; Magalhães 2010; Panagopoulos and Francia, 2009; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Wielhouwer and Lockerbie 1994), and particularly for reaching those with low levels of existing political engagement (Beck et al. 2002). It is also very clear that these effects vary by mode. Face-to-face contact is by far the most effective means for a party to increase its support (Magalhães 2007), while methods relying on more automated, remote methods such as telephonic 'robocalls' have little effect in converting or mobilizing votes (Gerber and Green 2000, 2008).

While much of the work has focused on the United States, comparative work on the topic has been increasing. This has shown firstly that there is considerable variance in the amount of official party contact reported, with Spain and Sweden reporting very low instances of contact while Ireland and the United States have very high levels. Overall the average is around one in five voters reporting some kind of official contact by parties during the previous election campaign (Karp and Banducci 2007). Second, the incidence of contacting appears to be systematically linked to the wider institutional setting, particularly the level of democratic consolidation within a country and whether it has a candidate-centered form of politics or depends on strong parties. (Beck and Gunther 2010; Karp and Banducci 2007; Karp et. al. 2007).

The arrival of social media and Web 2.0 technologies – blogs, twitter, social networking sites, and online video – has raised fresh questions about the effectiveness of campaign contacting. The relative cheapness and viral nature of the Internet means that the potential 'reach' and frequency of online contact increases significantly beyond what is possible via face-to-face methods and even by phone or direct mail. It also increases the role of informal contacts from friends and family in a two-step manner, whereby official and unofficial messages of support are easily passed around and across online networks. These changes both to the intensity and to the quality and 'source' of the campaign contact hold substantial implications for the effectiveness of mobilization efforts by politicians and for the propensity of citizens to become politically engaged.

The proposed battery of questions constitutes an expansion and better specification of a pre-existing item in CSES questionnaires to allow us to examine these questions. The question posed in Module 2 was:

*During the last campaign did a candidate or anyone from a political party contact you to persuade you to vote for them?*

The data resulting from this question have already been used in at least two studies (Karp and Banducci 2007; Fisher, Lessard-Phillips, Hobolt, and Curtice 2008). The data produced by this study on contacts and types of contacts will be used:

- To measure and explain attributes of electoral campaigning and mobilization strategies in different countries and elections;
- As independent variables in explanations of turnout;
- As dependent variables in models where electoral systems and district size and competitiveness can be used, among others, as independent variables.

In particular, the questions will be expanded to focus on different modes of contact and also different sources of those contacts. In addition to measuring formal contact by the parties, we will also measure informal passing on of messages by informal networks of friends and family. We will further distinguish as to whether these messages are taking place via offline means (face-to-face, direct mail, phone) or online (email, social networks). Examining these different types of campaigning and the resources employed in political mobilization, while highly relevant to academic study, is also particularly useful from the point of view of electoral practitioners (i.e. IDEA, Ace Project).

One of the issues about online mobilization by parties or other political actors is that it is much more likely to be mediated or ‘two-step’ than traditional forms. While it is a specific contact, it is likely to be coming from friends/family in the form of a forwarded joke/email/link/tweet rather than from the parties themselves.

There is a wealth of hypotheses to test relating to the impact of socioeconomic development, technology use, and political system structure (party system size, ideological polarity, electoral system, federalism, candidate versus party centered) on the use of different campaign techniques. To date, the impact of such variables on the use of different types of political contact with voters has not yet been systematically explored. In terms of media variables, the World Bank has extensive data on penetration of television and newspapers and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) maintains worldwide figures on Internet/broadband usage. The Freedom House annual report ‘Freedom of the Press’ rates all nations on the level of freedom and editorial independence enjoyed by the press.

The ‘reach’ of the study of party mobilization into non-Western democracies has so far been limited. The CSES is an excellent vehicle with which to expand the cases to be investigated. A review of survey findings and related publications so far makes it clear that there is some interesting variance in contact across systems and that it is affected by institutional/macro-level

factors. Furthermore, contacting affects turnout, and the type of contact matters (both online and offline and the different sub-modes such as face-to-face and direct mail, and email versus SMS/text messaging). There are two sets of questions to explore, in what could be seen as a two-variable system of (sequential) equations. First, why do rates of contact differ so much across nations (i.e. where contact is the dependent variable)? And second, under what circumstances is contact most likely to prompt political engagement (i.e., treating contact as the independent variable)?

As noted above, there is earlier CSES comparative data on rates of offline contact that can and has been used to address the first question. There is, however, little comparative data and investigation on the second question, particularly that allows for identification of different modes of offline and online contact engaged in, and also the source of that contact, i.e. dividing party contact that is direct (i.e. from official channels) vs. indirect (i.e. messages passed on from friends and family). Most of the data on the latter has focused on the online mode. No studies so far have asked about off-line indirect contact made through friends/family (i.e. that passed on party messages received by phone, face to face conversations about contact with a candidate or handing over flyers). This is seen as a potentially interesting gap to fill in that would it allow for an assessment of how far the ‘personalizing’ of these messages increases their impact, given that several studies have found that personal mobilization messages can significantly increase voter turnout. It would also be useful to compare how far online and offline modes are linked to direct or indirect forms of contact. The ‘viral’ element of the former would suggest it more likely would be linked to promote this indirect and more personalized contact.

Drawing together these points there are important research questions below that CSES contact data will allow us to test.

1. What determines contact? How far does the mode and frequency and source (direct/indirect) vary across countries depending on the democratic institutional design – such as the number of years as a democracy, type of electoral system, federal versus unitary, district magnitude (and perhaps whether single-member versus other or districted versus not districted), the effective number of parties, freedom of information laws, and extent of contacting by other non-party actors? Do parties act as intervening variables between institutions and contact, moderating the frequency and types of contact made? Do left/right-wing parties or major/minor parties differ systematically in their preference for certain types of contact?
2. What is the most significant type of contact? Face-to-face contacting by parties is the most effective type of direct contact in stimulating voter turnout but the effects of both offline and online indirect contact particularly when performed by friends and family, have a significant extra effect on the likelihood of voting.
3. Are some forms of contact (such as indirect) likely to affect behaviors other than voting such as party membership, party identification, ability to locate parties on L-R scale, discussion, donation, and contacting of politicians? Many other interesting questions in this area may not be easily assessed in the CSES module, but the module might be able to be combined with other aspects of particular surveys to make some preliminary progress on this.

4. Causation - Are people contacted because they are likely voters, or are they likely voters because they are contacted? Of course, this would be best addressed with panel data. However, it may be possible through structural equation modeling or use of instrumental variables to make an effective bid at addressing this question. In addition with contacting at different stages of maturation across the countries within CSES this may add some leverage to taking an over-time perspective on the question. With countries where contacting is rarer and emergent do we observe stronger effects on vote than in those countries where it has become more routinized?
5. Over time change – While we are too late for a true base-line, we are early enough to get some important observations in countries where contacting is currently low, and ascertain to what extent a convergence toward the ‘Americanized’ model is taking place. A repeat of the questions at a future time would allow for this to be examined more closely and individual nation observations could be used to address this issue on a case-by-case basis.

### Sources of questions

Since 1956, the American National Election Study (<http://www.electionstudies.org/>) has included questions about whether respondents were contacted by parties. In the 2008 ANES time series study, these were the questions employed:

*As you know, the political parties try to talk to as many people as they can to get them to vote for their candidate. Did anyone from one of the POLITICAL PARTIES call you up or come around and talk to you about the campaign this year? 1. Yes, 5. No*

*IF SOMEONE FROM POLITICAL PARTY CONTACT R ABOUT CAMPAIGN: Which party was that? 1. Democrats, 5. Republicans, 6. Both, 7. Other {SPECIFY}*

Additional questions have been asked in several years about whether respondents received mail, phone or personal contacts.

The Comparative National Elections Project (<http://www.cnep.ics.ul.pt/>) includes a battery of questions on party contacts: whether the respondent was contacted by parties; types of contacts (phone, mail, in person); and the party or parties that made the contact.

The Flash Eurobarometer No. 162 from the European Elections 2004 included a question on political parties/candidate contact.

*Q7. Political parties and candidates campaigned for votes in the European Parliament elections we have just had. For each of the following, please tell me if you have been in this situation or not (yes, no, don't know)*

- a. Political parties or candidates or their representatives called to your home*
- b. You have been contacted by political parties or candidates or their representatives by phone*
- c. You received leaflets concerning the European Elections in your mailbox*
- d. You have been approached in the street by political parties or candidates or their representatives*



- e. You have seen advertisements for parties or candidates*
- f. You have read about the electoral campaign in the newspapers*
- g. You have seen or heard things concerning the electoral campaign on television or on the radio*
- h. You have discussed the European Parliament Elections with your family, friends or acquaintances*
- i. You took part in public gatherings or meetings concerning the European Parliament Elections*
- j. You have searched for information on the European Elections on the internet*
- k. You have been aware of a nonparty campaign or advertisement encouraging people to vote in the European Parliament elections*

## **Political Knowledge Questions**

How much citizens know about politics has become an important variable for the understanding of political behavior. It is considered a good proxy for other variables such as political sophistication, political expertise or awareness, exposure to media, interest in public affairs, and others (Fiske et al. 1983; Zaller 1990, 1991; and others). Many significant relationships between political information and other variables of interest such as participation (Verba et al. 1997) or the reception of information (Zaller 1991) have been found.

Successive CSES Planning Committees have acknowledged the importance of this variable for the project. From the beginning there has been a debate about its measurement. Some members have argued for a set of questions that can be broadly comparable, while acknowledging that other differences between countries will mean that exact comparison will be impossible. Others have argued that the questions should be left to collaborators to choose the most relevant items in their country on the basis of a similar amount of mean-centered variance. The collaborator choice model prevailed in the first three Modules. Three questions on political knowledge have been included in the questionnaire of all CSES Modules. For Module 2, the instructions to local investigators were:

*These items are designed to indicate the respondents' general political knowledge. They should be coded as shown below. The set of questions should include one that is easy (i.e. 2/3 will answer correctly), one that is slightly more difficult (i.e. 1/2 will answer correctly), and one that is difficult (i.e. 1/3 will answer correctly).*

The strategy has had mixed results, and generated too much low quality data. In some countries all questions had similar proportions of correct answers, that is similar difficulty, and in some cases as in Poland (2001) no variance: 98%, 96%, and 98% of correct answers. In the end, in only seven studies in Module 2 the distribution of correct answers obtained resembled the distribution suggested in the instructions given to the local investigators. Very high within-country correlations between items are sometimes found. The highest are found in Italy (2006, Module 2) where the correlation between the easy and medium item is 0.71; Taiwan (1996, Module 1), 0.57 between easy and medium, 0.53 between easy and difficult, and 0.56 between medium and difficult, and Spain (2000, Module 1), 0.53 between medium and difficult. But in other countries, correlations are much lower.

In a careful analysis, Martin Elff concluded that there are 'serious doubts about the equivalence of knowledge questions employed in the election studies that contribute to the CSES. The number of correct responses to the knowledge question batteries varies considerably across samples, even if controlled for education, probably the most powerful predictor of political knowledge. ... The IRT-based analyses presented in this paper also indicate that some of the item batteries do not scale very well, that is, several of the items in these batteries have disappointing and even poor performance as discriminators of different levels of political knowledge' (Elff 2009).

Elff argues that in order to achieve equivalent measures of political knowledge with a limited set of items, CSES participants need to coordinate with regards to the general topical area of the questions. The Module 4 Planning Committee, after much debate, has adopted this approach for Module 4, and has defined four questions that it asks collaborators to include.

Elff went on to argue that political knowledge questions should be in open format and should avoid formats that require numbers or statements involving numbers as an answer. He recommended using open-ended questions because ‘political knowledge items in “multiple choice” format... may be more vulnerable to guessing than knowledge items that ask a question in “open” format’. He argues that numbers should be avoided because ‘there are good reasons to attribute the lack of discriminance of knowledge questions asking for numerical values on their lack of validity. They tap another cognitive competence in addition to political awareness’. Elff concluded that ‘the knowledge questions used in the American National Election Studies (ANES) are probably a good standard’.

The CSES Planning committee however decided against using open-ended questions. If ANES is the standard, it has changed, and for good reasons. Gibson and Caldeira (2008) found that whereas the ANES data indicated that relatively few Americans knew what job William Rehnquist held, their surveys indicated substantially higher rates of public knowledge about this fact. Krosnick, Lupia and others (2008) reviewed the coding of the open ended questions in the ANES and found a long list of errors and inconsistencies in the coding, sufficient to explain the discrepancies with Gibson and Caldeira’s findings.

In the 2008-2009 ANES Panel Study open-ended questions were abandoned. The ANES 2008-2009 Panel Study had seven ‘general knowledge questions’ on various topics, and four specifics for each of the two main candidates (state, religion, previous work). Five items call for numbers (how many times an individual can be elected President, for how many years is a United States Senator elected, how many United States Senators are there from each state, for how many years a member of the United States House of Representatives is elected, and the best guess of the average price of a gallon of regular unleaded gasoline). The rest of the questions are formulated in a close ended, multiple choice format.

Political knowledge items in ‘multiple choice’ format may be more vulnerable to guessing than knowledge items that ask a question in ‘open’ format, but items in open-ended format asked in many years of the ANES were subject to a multitude of coding errors and inconsistencies. These errors using open-ended questions would multiply in a project like CSES where full coordination is difficult to attain.

The four items chosen for the CSES are as follows: First, from a list of four names of Ministers in the government prior to the election, respondents are asked to identify the Finance Minister (or equivalent title). This is intended as a ‘policy accountability’ estimate, identifying the individual most identified with economic management. The next question asked the latest official unemployment rate that is available for the country as of the beginning of the data collection period for the survey. This is intended as an actual ‘economic knowledge’ estimate. The third question asks which party or group of parties (again from four alternatives) came in second in the recent legislative election. This again indirectly measures another ‘accountability’ dimension:

whether or not respondents can correctly identify the loser and thus, by implication, the winner as well. The final question measures the international dimension: choice of the name of the current Secretary-General of the United Nations from a list containing three other previous holders of the position. A further estimate of political knowledge will be estimated by a comparison of respondent's left-right (or other dimension) assessments of party positions against expert judgments, weighted by the respective parties' vote shares.

Pre-testing these measures in several countries indicated acceptable variances. It is accepted that data generated by these questions will vary between countries. In one sense, this might be expected to reflect differences in establishing accountability across institutions, opening up potential for research into this question. It is an empirical question whether or not the questions will scale within countries, and opinion within the Planning Committee was divided about whether or not this matters. Analysts will have the option of standardizing the data within each country if they wish to use mean-centered estimates of relative knowledge within countries: indeed, given the variation in the data generated by the collaborator-choice questions in Modules 1-3, there is a case for doing so already with existing Module 1-3 CSES knowledge data.

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