

The European Elections Studies: Objectives and Accomplishments

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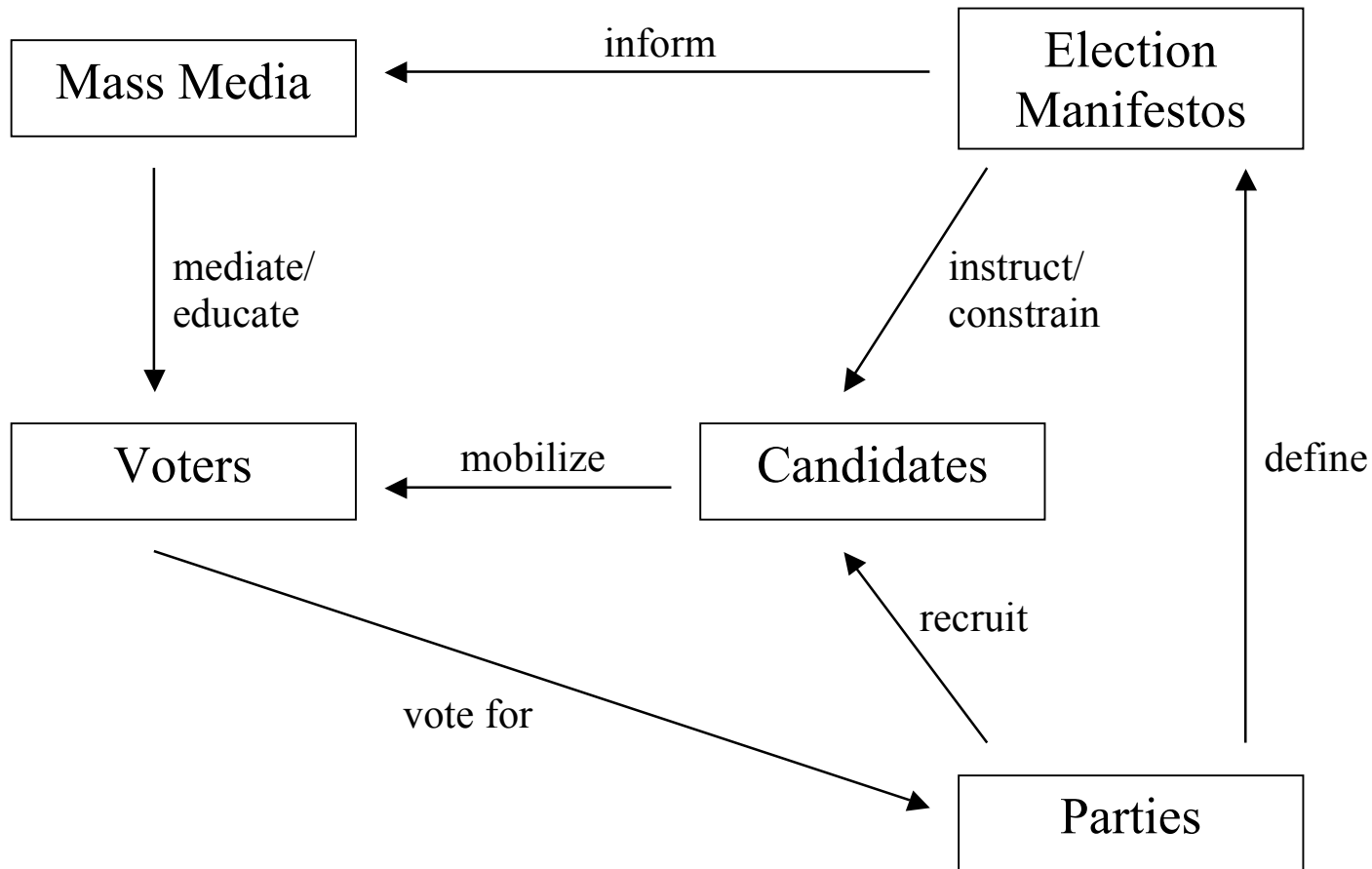
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European Parliament Elections as a Venue for Comparative Electoral Research

- Opportunity for comparative study of electoral mobilization and choice
 - Low profile elections minimize effects of idiosyncratic factors
 - Ostensibly similar policies at issue across diverse political contexts
 - Wide variety of contextual characteristics allowing theoretical innovations (see next slide)
 - Occasional concurrent national elections provide validity checks
- Opportunity to obtain funding for comparative electoral research
 - British, German and Dutch funding in 1979
 - Use of Eurobarometer as locomotive for studies in 1989 and 1994
 - Infrastructure funding from the EU's DG Research in 2009
 - (But major funding problems in 1999 and 2004)

Linkages studied by the EES*



* Diagram employed by Bernhard Wessels at the '09 Candidate Study kick-off meeting, used here with thanks.

European Election Studies 1979-2009

Date	N of countries	Voters study (waves)	Follow-up voters study (Fall EB)	Media study	Candidate study	Manifestoes study	Contextual data study
1979	9	√	√	√	(√)	√	(√)
1984	10		√			√	(√)
1989	12	√ (3)	√			√	(√)
1994	12	√ (1)	√*		√	√	(√)
1999	15	√ (1)	(√)	√		√	(√)
2004	23	√ (1)	(√)	√		√	(√)
2009	27	√ (1)	(√)	√	√	√	√

* Fall EB for 1994 was substantially augmented to constitute what was virtually a 2nd post-election wave.

Major Innovations

Propensity to vote questions

- Permit focus on "a party" instead of, as heretofore, on "party X"
- Eliminate problems of comparability between different party systems
- Lower the level of analysis to the voterXparty level, permitting simultaneous analysis of all of a voter's party evaluations, along with independent variables relating to political parties
- Hugely increasing the range and complexity of researchable questions (while increasing the complexity of the analysis process)

Stacked datasets

- Differentiate between respondent and unit of analysis unusual in political science
- Require special procedures to transform independent variables appropriately (a subject for this afternoon's session)
- Raise methodological issues regarding clustering of cases

Findings (an idiosyncratic list)

Things about European Parliament elections...

- They are second-order elections (where executive power is not at stake)
- People behave differently at second-order than at first-order elections
- These differences (e.g. low turnout) do not constitute judgments on the electoral arena (e.g. Europe) but indicators of how much is seen to be at stake. The most amazing thing about EP elections is that anyone at all votes when so little seems to be at stake.

Things about voting behavior in general...

- There are degrees of second-order-ness. All elections (and voters themselves) vary in terms of how much is seen to be at stake.
- What seems to be at stake from a voter's perspective need not be the same as what seems to be at stake for candidates, parties, or media pundits.
- Some voters have a 'habit of voting' and turn out even when nothing is at stake
- Some of the most important influences on party choice are things about parties

Select bibliography of works using EES data

Books about particular European Parliament elections...

Jay G. Blumler, *Communicating to Voters: Television in the First European Parliamentary Elections* (London: Sage) 1983 [EES 1979]

Mark Franklin, Cees van der Eijk, et al., *Choosing Europe? The European Electorate and National Politics in the Face of Union* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press) 1996 [EES 1989-94]

Hermann Schmitt and Jacques Thomasson (eds) *Political Representation and Legitimacy in the European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 1999 [EES 1994]

Wouter van der Brug and Cees van der Eijk (eds.) *European Elections and Domestic Politics* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press) 2007 [EES 1989-99]

Jacques Thomassen (ed.) *The Legitimacy of the European Union After Eastern Enlargement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 2009 [EES 2004]

Books about electoral behavior in general...

Mark Franklin, et al., *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies Since 1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press) 2004 [No EES data]

Wouter van der Brug, Cees van der Eijk and Mark Franklin *The Economy and the Vote: Electoral Responses to Economic Conditions in 15 Countries* (New York: Cambridge University Press) 2007 [data from EES 1989-99]

Cees van der Eijk and Mark Franklin, *Elections and Voters* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan) 2009 [data from EES 1989-2004]