A 1999-2009 Trend in Expected Electoral Participation in Seven European Post-communist Countries

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Lessons Learned for Understanding Civic Citizenship Education
Roma, December 2-4, 2013
Background

• During communism regimes controlled social life
  – No autonomous activities
  – Activities not organized by the state were repressed
  – Rigorous supervision to ensure state monopoly
  – Forced participation in different organizations (Young Pioneers, Comsomol, the Communist party, etc.)
  – No opportunities to vote for competing parties
Background

• At the end of 20\textsuperscript{th} and the beginning of 21\textsuperscript{st} century citizens from former communist countries exhibited low civic participation due to (Howard, 2002; Letki, 2004)
  – Destroyed social capital
  – Mistrust in institutions and people
  – Persistence of friendship networks
  – Post-communist disappointment and disillusionment (apathy)

• Without citizens’ participation system will lack legitimacy, needs of citizens will not be heard by politicians and society (Howard & Gilbert, 2008; Howard, 2002)
Background

• Low political interest, however, is not a constant and we should question whether and how the communist legacy still influences non-participation (Smith, 2009)

• Two mechanisms of change (Howard, 2002)
  – Generational change ("earliest lessons are best remembered" – Sztompka, 1996)
  – Policies promoting civic participation and political interest

• Pace of change – 20 years would be sufficient to recover the destroyed social capital (Paldam and Svensden, 2001)
Research Questions

• What are the differences in levels of expected student electoral participation between the European post-communist countries at the end of the first and second decades after the fall of communism?

• What are the changes in the effects of the different variables literature associates with the low electoral participation in the European post-communist countries between 1999 and 2009?
Data

- Civic Education Study (CivED) 1999
- International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2009 (ICCS) 2009
- Seven countries participated in both studies and have comparable data:
  - Bulgaria
  - Czech Republic
  - Estonia
  - Latvia
  - Lithuania
  - Poland
  - Slovak Republic
Method

- Levels of expected future electoral participation
- Test the effect of predictors theory claims to determine low participation in these countries

\[ Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{YEAR} + \beta_{2/3} \text{INTRUST(\times YEAR)} + \beta_{4/5} \text{PTRUST(\times YEAR)} + \beta_{6(7)} \text{ATTIT(\times YEAR)} + \beta_{8(9)} \text{ICONCIT(\times YEAR)} + \beta_{10(11)} \text{ISOCIT(\times YEAR)} + \beta_{12} \text{KNOW} + \beta_{13} \text{BOOKS} \]

- Intercept
- CivED 1999/ICCS 2009
- Trust in institutions*
- Trust in people
- Attitudes towards own country*
- Importance of conventional citizenship*
- Importance of social movement citizenship*
- Student civic knowledge**
- Number of books at home (aggregated at school level)*

* - Scales recreated using PCA anchoring the factor scores to the ICCS ones
** - KNOWLMLE from 15 civic knowledge items from CivED
## Results – Levels of expected electoral participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expected future electoral participation</th>
<th>Change</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% (SE)</td>
<td>% (SE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>58.44 (1.94)</td>
<td>69.09 (0.98)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>64.92 (1.70)</td>
<td>49.60 (1.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>68.31 (1.14)</td>
<td>72.78 (1.27)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>71.41 (1.31)</td>
<td>77.23 (1.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>79.83 (1.10)</td>
<td>87.56 (0.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>87.96 (1.19)</td>
<td>77.19 (1.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovak Republic</td>
<td>93.17 (0.64)</td>
<td>74.67 (1.19)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

▲ - 2009 significantly higher than 1999 (p<.05, two-tailed)

▼ - 2009 significantly lower than 1999 (p<.05, two-tailed)
## Results – model fit

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trust in institutions X Year</td>
<td>▲</td>
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<td>▲</td>
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<td>▼</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trust in people X Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attitudes towards own country X Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Importance of conv. citizenship X Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Importance of soc. mov. related citizenship X Year</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

▲ - Positive, significant change between 1999 and 2009 ($p<.05$, two-tailed)
▼ - Negative, significant change between 1999 and 2009 ($p<.05$, two-tailed)
Discussion

• Levels of expected electoral participation differ significantly between 1999 and 2009

• However, different trends within the former East Bloc countries were found
  – Eastern European students exhibit significantly higher levels in 2009 for almost all most variables
  – Central European students show a significant decrease from 1999 to 2009 for almost all variables

• Similar results were obtained by the multiple linear regression model
  – In general, the effects of the variables decreased or did not change in Eastern European countries, but significantly increased in Central European countries
  – These results suggest that citizens of Central European post-communist countries feel more dissatisfied, leading to lower intentions for active electoral participation
Discussion

- Various explanations for the differences can be provided
  - Cultural and historical – religion, cultural heritage, history and political development prior to communism (Cerych, 1997; Kotásek, 1996)
  - Different ways of introducing communism (Coffé & van der Lippe, 2009; Mishler & Rose, 2002)
    - Different extent of its adoption and Soviet supervision
    - Different degree of citizens’ freedom and private initiative
  - Different way the democracy was introduced after 1989 (abrupt vs. gradual change) (Mishler & Rose, 2002; Sztompka, 1996; Coffé & van der Lippe)
  - Different degree of Western influence over the socioeconomic development of former communist countries after 1989 (Schwartz & Bardi, 1997)
- Central European countries tend to have a better model fit than their Eastern counterparts
Discussion

• Post-communist countries already appear not as a consolidated group with common features

• “Post-communist” seems to lose its relevance due to the increasing divergence during the democratic transition (Howard, 2002)
Questions?

Thank you for your attention!