# Measuring Party Identification in Multi-Party Systems: a PTV-based Alternative

(a project under development)

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Conference on *Revisiting Party Identification*
**LUISS** Guido Carli *University*
Rome, 6-7 October 2011

# ANES measure in European context

- Instability at individual level (direction)
  - NL 1971-77 (3 observations): 43% stable
  - NL 1981 (3 observations, 4 months) 51% stable
  - GB 2005-10 (8 observations) 50% stable
  - But: the set of parties between which respondents change are ideologically similar

# Non-exclusiveness

- Repeating European style 'party id' questions (separate direction and strength) after having asked them in their 'standard' form yields large proportions expressing 'id' for one or several other parties as well. (NL 1981 (~40%); similar in some small scale surveys elsewhere).
  - NB: not only for weak partisans or leaners

- Incompatible with 'tribal' meaning of Party ID.

# Ideological ID

- The multiple parties named as objects of ID generally share political stances, in L-R or other (e.g., religious) terms
- Hence the notion that people identify with a ideological stance, which expresses itself as 'ID' for all parties that express this stance sufficiently
- Ideological ID is not incompatible with 'tribal' sense of ID
- Fulfils Miller's notion of functional equivalent of ID in the Michigan sense (which would be more difficult if there is no discernable similarity between the parties involved > 'multiple' ID is a *contradictio in terminis* from 'tribal' perspective

# From Ideological ID to PTV

- Search for a simpler, cheaper way of assessing the attractiveness of multiple parties led to development of PTV questions:
    - Ask for each party how likely it is that R will 'ever' vote for it (on a scale, e.g., 1-10)
    - 'ever' as projective device
    - No limitations to # of 'positive' responses
    - Question focuses explicitly and exclusively on electoral preference (i.e., not 'feeling', 'likes' etc.)
    - See Van der Eijk et al, *Electoral Studies* 2006

# Common PTV findings

- In all EU countries large proportions express high PTVs for multiple parties (but not unlimitedly so, often for 2 or 3 only)
- From panels: PTV scores are reasonably stable over time
- PTV scores are generally unfoldable in 1 dimension
- etc

# PTV findings (continued)

- maxPTV is strongly predictive of electoral participation
- Highest PTV is strongly predictive of party actually chosen if respondent does not abstain (>>85%)
- Analysing PTVs jointly (in stacked form) reveals common factors of electoral attractiveness
  - Ideology (LR distance)
  - Other elements of policy (issues)
  - Party size
- Pooling stacked data across countries allows the analysis of relevant contextual factors

# PTV findings (continued 2)

- When looking at *patterns of multiple PTVs* we see distinct age differences:
  - Older: smaller %s ties at highest score
  - Older: smaller #s of parties with high scores
  - Thus also: older: larger preferential distinction between most preferred party and other ones
- This is compatible with notion of developing predispositions as a consequence of 'learning' from repeated behaviour

# But: PTVs are not ('tribal') IDs

- At least they are not so necessarily, rather PTVs are electoral utilities in the Downsian sense of the word
- Yet: strong association with PID: PTV scores are generally very high for parties that respondents claim to ID with, with a monotone relationship between strength of ID and magnitude of PTV
- But: in many instances of very high PTV scores we do not see respondents claiming to identify
- But: derived PTV measures may conceivably be used to measure aspects of party ID

# Stable predispositions

- One frequent connotation of Party ID involves stable predispositions

- to keep the concept lean I focus on that aspect, which I'll refer to as *predispositional party ID* (that is predispositional to electoral choice)

- If this can be measured validly, it remains an empirical question whether predispositional Party ID involves also perceptual screens, tribal aspects, etc.

# Predispositional Party ID

- Focuses on choice of party in the form of a 'standing decision'
- Irrelevant how this standing decision has come about (parental transmission, habituation from repeated behaviour, cognitive updating of party evaluations)

# Operationalisation

- 'gap' in PTV scores between the two parties with the highest scores

- This measure implies that Predispositional Party ID is not a characteristic that is present or absent, but that it has a (continuous) magnitude from (very) weak to (very) strong
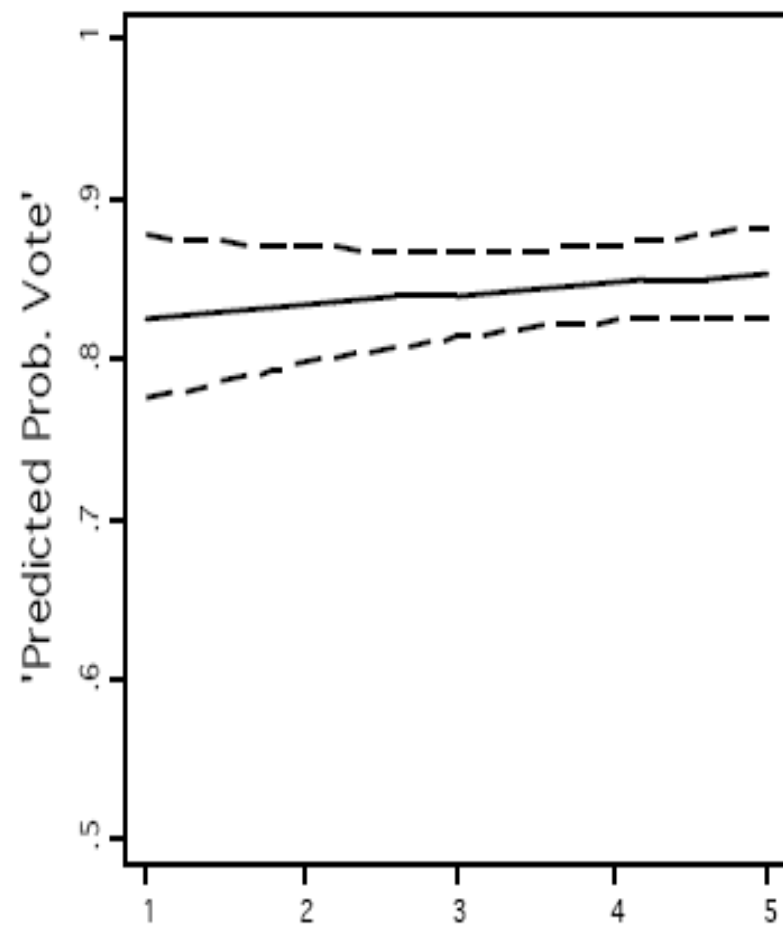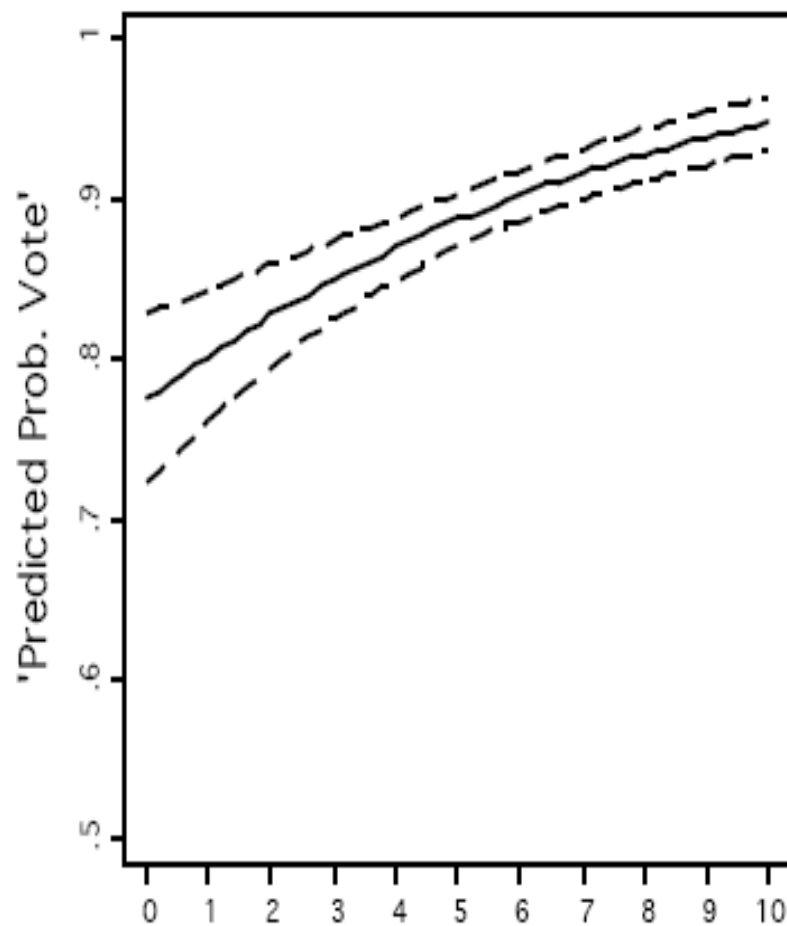
# Validating

- How to validate this proposed measure?
- Comparatively, i.e. versus other possible measures of Party ID
  - The traditional European version(s) of Party ID
  - Actual stability of vote choice
- In terms of predictive power for other indicators of predispositions ('When decided', 'whether hesitated', etc.), and for electoral participation:
- In terms of corrolaries of standing decisions:
  - Ideological and policy considerations driving vote choice should be less important the stronger the standing decision

# Preliminary summary of findings

- In GB and NL Predisp-ID is a very strong determinant of 'when' and 'hesitate' responses, much stronger than repeated choice, 'classic' ID measures, or Party Likes/Dislikes
- Idem for electoral participation
- L-R effect on choice weaker with stronger PredispID
- Marginal effect of Predisp-ID on predicted probability to vote for the party in question is *much* stronger than similar effect of classic Part ID (see next slide) after controlling for demographics and LR distance to parties (see next slide)

# Marginal Effects

# Further checks to be conducted

- Does measure gain from combining 'gap' with 'maxPTV'?

- Checks consequences of missing PTV scores

- Extensions of validating analyses to more contexts (other NESs, European Election Study Data).