

Plurality Systems

Weekend 3 : Session 3

Basic Principles

- Contestants are individual candidates
- Candidates run in individual, geographically identifiable districts
- The most popular candidate wins – the one with more votes than any other

Key Elements: District Magnitude

- No necessary number
- 1 is the most common and easy to work
- Number of votes an elector may cast is NOT necessarily the same as the number of candidates to be elected
- DM does not need to be the same in every district

Key Elements: Ballot Structure

- Voters typically have list of names of candidates
- Simple marks (**X**) beside names
- With DM greater than 1
 - *bloc* vote
 - *cumulative* vote
 - *limited* vote
 - *single non-transferable* vote
- Approval voting

Key Elements: Formula

- Votes counted for candidates, in districts
- Winners are candidates with greatest number – no predetermined QUOTA
- Votes cast for other than leading candidate do not contribute to electing a representative

How Does Plurality Work

- Simple voting
- Simple counting
- Winner's total can be less than $\frac{1}{2}$ with more than two candidates
- Losing candidates' votes may total more than winner's

- SEO - SA

Single-Member Plurality (FPTP)

- Large parties get bonus
- Small parties get 'penalized'
- Small regional parties may do better
- Artificial majorities common
- Support of local representatives highly variable

The '*bloc*' Vote

- Like SMP
- Increasing DM will *reduce* proportionality
- Voters may divide support between candidates of different parties
- In practice voters vote party tickets

The '*cumulative*' Vote

- Allows voters to indicate degree and intensity of preference
- 'Semi-proportional' in allowing minorities to cumulate their votes and get some representation

The '*limited*' Vote

- Candidates of large parties share (split) party vote
- Stimulates competition between candidates of same party
- Small parties can gain some representation if they focus support on one candidate
- Share of votes needed to elect decreases as DM increases

The '*Single Non-Transferable*' Vote

- Tends to work like a proportional system with regard to vote – seat share balance
- Tends to work like a SMP system with regard to producing majority governments
- Stimulates competition between running mates of big parties

Ballot Design

- Is alphabetical voting a problem?
- What signals do different ballot designs send?

In our 5 member electoral district

→ if casting 5 votes

→ if casting 3 votes

→ if more than 1 vote could go to 1 candidate

3 Different Plurality Ballot Formats

Angela	
Brad	
Claude	
Dan	
Edith	
Frankie	
Gladys	
Harley	
Ian	
Julie	
Katie	
Lianne	
Manjit	
Nick	
Paul	
Ron	

Angela	<i>Red</i>	
Brad	<i>Blue</i>	
Claude	<i>Gold</i>	
Dan	<i>Blue</i>	
Edith	<i>Blue</i>	
Frankie	<i>Gold</i>	
Gladys	<i>Gold</i>	
Harley	<i>Red</i>	
Ian	<i>Blue</i>	
Julie	<i>Red</i>	
Katie	<i>Independent</i>	
Lianne	<i>Blue</i>	
Manjit	<i>Gold</i>	
Nick	<i>Red</i>	
Paul	<i>Red</i>	
Ron	<i>Gold</i>	

<i>Red Candidates</i>	
Angela	
Harley	
Julie	
Nick	
Paul	
<i>Blue Candidates</i>	
Brad	
Dan	
Edith	
Ian	
Lianne	
<i>Gold Candidates</i>	
Claude	
Frankie	
Gladys	
Manjit	
Ron	
<i>Independents</i>	
Katie	

Evaluation – for governing

- Stable (long-lasting?) Governments
Good
- Electoral Accountability
Good
- Parliamentary Check on Government / Role of Members
Poor / All members same status
- 'Fair' Representation
Poor
- Democratic Political Parties
few non-ideological

Evaluation – for voters

- Voter Choice

Poor

- Identifiable Representation

Good

- Encouragement to participate

Moderate

- Equality of the Vote

Poor

Strengths

- Produces majority governments
- Good local representation
- Limits minor parties
- Governments and Members easily accountable
- Easy to use and understand
- We know how it works & at all levels of our political system

Weaknesses

- Allows Government to dominate parliament
- No clear vote – seat relationship
- Minority interests shut out
- Provides only simple either-or choice
- Votes don't count equally; many don't contribute to electing anyone
- Voter turnout slightly lower

Plurality System for BC ?

- Think about the patterns of the last 50 years
- Keeping the electoral systems will contribute to keeping the same kind of politics