Affluence, Austerity and Electoral Change in Britain

Affluence, Austerity and Electoral Change in Britain investigates the political economy of public support for British political parties since Tony Blair led New Labour to power in 1997. Using valence politics models of electoral choice and marshalling an unprecedented wealth of survey data collected in the British Election Study’s monthly Continuous Monitoring Surveys, the authors trace forces affecting support for New Labour during its 13 years in office. They then study how the recessionary economy has influenced the dynamics of party support since the Conservative–Liberal Democrat Coalition came to power in May 2010 and factors that shaped voting in Britain’s May 2011 national referendum on changing the electoral system. Placing Britain in comparative perspective with cross-national survey data gathered in the midst of the worst recession since the 1930s, the authors investigate how the economic crisis has affected support for incumbent governments and democratic politics in over 20 European countries.

Paul Whiteley is Professor of Government at the University of Essex.

Harold D. Clarke is Ashbel Smith Professor in the School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences at the University of Texas at Dallas, and Adjunct Professor in the Department of Government at the University of Essex.

David Sanders is Professor of Government at the University of Essex.

Marianne C. Stewart is Professor in the School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences at the University of Texas at Dallas.
Affluence, Austerity and Electoral Change in Britain

PAUL WHITELEY
Department of Government, University of Essex

HAROLD D. CLARKE
School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences, University of Texas at Dallas, Department of Government, University of Essex

DAVID SANDERS
Department of Government, University of Essex

MARIANNE C. STEWART
School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences, University of Texas at Dallas
Most, probably, of our decisions to do something positive... can only be taken as the result of animal spirits – a spontaneous urge to action rather than inaction, and not as the outcome of a weighted average of quantitative benefits multiplied by quantitative probabilities.

John Maynard Keynes, The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money, 1936

The curious task of economics is to demonstrate to men how little they really know about what they imagine they can design.

Friedrich Hayek, The Fatal Conceit, 1988

The first point of recapitalisation was to save banks that would otherwise have collapsed. And we not only saved the world...

Gordon Brown, 10 December 2008

We can’t go on with the same irresponsible economic policies that gave us the biggest boom, the biggest bust... and now threaten our recovery with higher debts, higher instability, higher taxes, higher interest rates and higher unemployment.

David Cameron, 2 January 2010

This can’t go on. The world badly needs a change of course.... We need a new deal based on the understanding that collective austerity risks catastrophe.

Ed Balls, 27 October 2011

I have no illusions that there is a big task to turn round Labour’s economic credibility and show – even as George Osborne’s plans deliver unemployment rising, growth stagnating and long-term reform stalling – that Labour can be trusted again.

Ed Balls, 16 January 2012

Growth has been weaker than originally expected.... But the arguments for deficit reduction have become stronger, not weaker, over the last year.

George Osborne, 27 January 2013
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Acknowledgments

Writing *Affluence, Austerity and Electoral Change in Britain* has been an enjoyable challenge. A large number of individuals and organizations assisted us in our efforts and we wish to take this opportunity to thank them. First and foremost is the Economics and Social Research Council. The ESRC provided major funding for the 2001, 2005 and 2010 British Election Studies (BES) that generated data for the vast majority of the analyses that we discuss in the pages that follow. ESRC funding enabled us to conduct the Rolling Campaign Panel Surveys (RCPS) and monthly Continuous Monitoring Surveys (CMS) as well as the traditional BES pre-campaign and post-election in-person surveys. The RCPS and CMS surveys permit us to track the short- and long-term dynamics of political attitudes and behaviour in the British electorate over a now lengthy period characterized by protracted prosperity followed by the most serious economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The recession and the Coalition Government’s imposition of stringent austerity policies to restore Britain’s economic good health constitute an important, if very painful, real-world political economy experiment. Leveraging the data-generating power of the CMS, we investigate the dynamics of party support in a major mature democracy in a time of acute economic distress.

The CMS project builds on national monthly surveys initiated in April 2004 with a research grant provided by the National Science Foundation (US). We are pleased to acknowledge the generous assistance and sage advice of former NSF Political Science Program Director, Frank Scioli, in getting the CMS project underway. We also thank current NSF Political Science Program Director, Brian Humes, for assisting the Political Support in America and Political Support in Canada surveys that have been carried out in conjunction with the BES.

Since 2001, the fieldwork for the BES in-person surveys have been conducted by three highly capable survey houses, NOP in 2001,
Acknowledgments

NATCEN in 2005 and BMRB in 2010. Here, we wish to thank Nick Howat and his colleagues at BMRB for their first-rate work on the 2010 in-person surveys. We really appreciate their help. The RCPS and CMS national internet surveys were carried out by YouGov under the supervision of Project Director, Joe Twyman. Joe and the YouGov team have done a superb job in providing us and the election study community with an unparalleled array of high-quality survey data covering what has become an important period in British political-economic history. We owe Joe and others at YouGov a deep debt of gratitude. In addition, we are pleased to thank Pippa Norris, Ron Johnston, Charles Pattie and their colleagues for generously providing aggregate data on campaign spending, election results, and sociodemographics that we have merged with BES survey data.

The BES project has received substantial assistance from others as well. Over the past decade, the University of Texas at Dallas has provided research assistance that has greatly facilitated the assembly and processing of the BES data. In particular, we wish to thank UTD Provost, Hobson Wildenthal, for his continuing interest and support. We also thank Karl Ho and Russell Hoffman for their expertise in constructing the website used for disseminating BES survey data, graphics and research reports to user communities in the UK and around the world. We are very pleased to take this opportunity to recognize their generous assistance. In addition, we thank our energetic research assistant, Eddie Feng, for his quick and careful coding of masses of BES open-ended ‘most important issue’ responses and Cheryl Berry, UTD Administrative Assistant, for her invariably accurate and timely processing of the paperwork needed for Clarke and Stewart to travel to the UK and purchase the computers and software needed to analyze a large and valuable array of survey data.

In addition to those who have helped us with the BES project per se, there are many people we wish to recognize for helping us to develop our ideas about the science of electoral choice, the conduct of survey research and the analysis of survey data. The list is too long for complete enumeration – over the years we have accumulated many intellectual debts! However, we especially wish to thank Alan Acock, Jan Box-Steppensmeier, Ian Budge, Russ Dalton, Ray Duch, Justin Fisher, Jim Gibson, Jeff Gill, Jim Granato, Simon Jackman, Bill Jacoby, Rob Johns, Richard Johnston, Ron Johnston, Mike Lewis-Beck, Skip Lupia, Allan McCutcheon, Bill Mishler, Helmut Norpoth,
Acknowledgments

Charles Pattie, Jason Reifler, Doug Rivers, Brian Schaffner, Norman Schofield, Peter Schmidt, Tom Scotto, Paul Sniderman, Randy Stevenson, Lynn Vavreck, Herb Weisberg, Guy Whitten and Chris Wlezien. Special thanks go to Allan Kornberg, Larry LeDuc and Jon Pammett for many conversations where they communicated their insights about valence politics and implications for understanding public support for authorities, regime and community in democratic polities. Larry also deserves special recognition for developing and sharing his ideas on the politics of national referendums and the psychology of political choice in these important events.

Research is one thing, writing is another, and publication still another. We are privileged to publish Affluence, Austerity and Electoral Change in Britain with Cambridge University Press. We appreciate the continuing interest our editor, John Haslam, has shown in the project and his patience as we completed the manuscript. Clarke first broached the idea for the book to John at a Tower Center luncheon at Southern Methodist University a few years ago. We were gratified when he responded enthusiastically. Like all good editors, he then encouraged his authors to see the project through to completion. Thanks, John!

Last, certainly not least, we wish to thank Gill and Sue for their unflagging patience and very cheerful support over the several years we have been working on this project. Yes, studying voting and elections is fun, but we recognize that other things are too!

Paul Whiteley
Harold D. Clarke
David Sanders
Marianne C. Stewart