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2. Electoral Supply and Voter Engagement[1]

Miki Caul Kittilson
School of Politics and Global Studies
Arizona State University
Miki.Kittilson@asu.edu

Christopher J. Anderson
Department of Government
Cornell University
christopher.anderson@cornell.edu

Abstract

Electoral institutions shape the potential costs and benefits of participation. We argue that their effect on voter turnout is indirect by shaping the differentiation and stability of choices available to voters. Specifically, electoral institutions can produce political conditions that pull citizens into the democratic process by making voting meaningful, but that also push away those predisposed to abstain. Our analyses of data from 31 contemporary democracies around the world collected by the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems* project suggest that a differentiated electoral supply powerfully influences voter engagement, and that these effects are contingent on a citizen's sense of external efficacy. Citizens who feel that voting and who is in power makes a difference are more likely to vote if they live in countries where parties present more differentiated policy profiles. By contrast, those who are less efficacious are substantially less likely to vote if the party system is highly differentiated.

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Inclusive and vibrant voter participation is integral to the quality of representation in the democratic process. A large body of literature establishes that at the level of individual citizens, factors such as resources, social networks, and attitudes about elections and the political system are strong predictors of whether voters will cast their ballot on Election Day. Because it often focuses on individual countries and elections, this research places the onus for participation on citizens themselves – how they come to afford the cost of voting – but less emphasis on how the political context can facilitate or hamper participation. Various studies at the macro- (or cross-national) level focus on how political context, and electoral institutions specifically, come to impose costs on citizens when deciding whether to vote. However, such studies are typically unable to elucidate the individual-level underpinnings of the vote or place the effects that individual-level factors have in the broader electoral and institutional context.

Drawing on the cross-national Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) data set, this chapter combines macro- and micro-level explanations of voter turnout by examining the confluence of individual-level characteristics such as resources and political attitudes alongside choices offered by the party system context in shaping voter participation across a set of democracies. We utilize statistical techniques appropriate for two-level data to combine individual and contextual levels of analyses into a single comprehensive model of voter participation. We argue and our findings suggest that a differentiated electoral supply systematically shapes voter engagement, but that these effects of the macro-political context are contingent: a differentiated electoral supply conditions the effects of political beliefs (external efficacy) on voter participation. Importantly, the effects of the contours party system are not direct, and they do not impact citizens in an even-handed manner. Instead, citizens who already feel efficacious about their vote are more likely to vote if they live in countries where parties

present more differentiated policy profiles. Conversely, citizen who do not feel efficacious about their participation in the first place are substantially less likely to vote when political parties are located further apart ideologically.

We proceed as follows: we begin by reviewing the literature on voter turnout and describe the ways in which individual- and country-level differences may combine to shape patterns of participation. We then examine one particular aspect of the micro-macro-connection in voter turnout by examining how the supply of electoral choices and attitudes toward the political system affect voter turnout.

Existing Explanations for Voter Participation

Because we cannot hope to do justice to the voluminous literature on voter participation here (for a review, see Blais 2006), we focus our discussion on the micro- (individual-level) and macro- (cross-national) foundations of voter engagement. Traditionally, research on voter turnout has proceeded along these two parallel tracks that rarely intersect. On one track, researchers established what it is about individuals that makes some more likely to vote than others; on the other track, researchers established why turnout is higher in some countries than others. Both approaches have commonly focused on the cost of voting and the ways in which individuals and institutions afford and lower them (Perea 2002).

Micro-Foundations of Turnout

Part of the parallel nature of the literature on voter turnout has to do with research design. Studies of individual voter behavior have traditionally been conducted within the context of one nation and one election where (national) electoral institutions and political context apply to

everyone and are thus held constant. Such micro-level studies of voter participation are commonly motivated by questions of political equality, under the presumption that unequal turnout equals unequal representation. The most prominent explanations for what creates unequal participation at the level of individuals center on the unequal distribution of resources and orientations toward the political system, including elections (Powell 1986).[1]

Among these factors, the role of resources as an explanation for voter turnout has long been dominant, in part because differences in resources – especially material ones – are an easy shorthand for economic inequality in society and therefore the ways in which patterns of participation may favor one economic stratum over another. For example, Verba and Nie's (1972) seminal study of participation in the U.S. highlights the importance of education, income, and occupation for the propensity to participate in politics. While the empirical relationship between social status and voting participation holds strong, the causal mechanisms behind this relationship have proved more elusive. Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) offer a convincing explanation: individuals' resources (time, money, and civic skills) help them to bear the costs of participation. Education is a key indicator of political skills and access to information, as well as a proxy for cognitive ability critical for processing political information (Dalton 2008). Verba, Schlozman and Brady find that formal education is, all things equal, related to political knowledge, interest, and sophistication, suggesting that "information costs might be lower for those of higher socio-economic status" (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995: 287). A recent comparison of 22 European countries suggests that education is the most consistent cross-national influence on voter participation, and by extension a common source of inequality (Gallego 2007).[2]

Causally speaking, resources and other characteristics of individuals are expected to

influence the decision to vote by shaping the calculus of the voting decision.[3] That is, resources do not "act", but they shape what people think; and attitudes, in turn, are the most proximate predictor of political action. Thus, aside from affecting the immediate and narrow cost-benefit calculus of the vote, researchers have long noted the importance of political orientations, broadly conceived, for shaping turnout. In particular, a sense of civic duty and other attitudes about the political system are powerful determinants of the vote and have helped to explain the so-called paradox of voting (Riker and Ordeshook 1968; Blais 2000).

Below, we focus on feelings of efficacy, which electoral researchers recognize as playing an important role for shaping the decision to vote. Political efficacy refers to "the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process … the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change" (Campbell et al. 1954: 187). Existing research distinguishes between internal and external efficacy and defines the former as an individual's sense that he or she can personally affect the political process and the latter as beliefs about the responsiveness of the political system to the electorate (Lane 1959; Balch 1974; Miller and Listhaug 1990; Anderson et al. 2005: 42). While the connection between internal efficacy and participation perhaps skirts tautology, external efficacy is useful for our purposes because it measures citizens' sense that their participation matters to the political process – that elections lead to responsiveness to citizen demands, for example – and thus helps to overcome real or imagined hurdles to political engagement at the ballot box. Thus, citizens who have faith in elections and the political system are significantly more likely to vote than individuals with more cynical beliefs (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Leighley 1995).

Macro-Foundations of Turnout

By concentrating on resources, a great deal of the micro-level research has focused on how individuals come to afford the costs of voting (of time, knowledge, and so on). This mirrors the theoretical emphasis in cross-national aggregate studies of voter turnout. Thus, rather than focusing on the benefits of voting, which may derive from the perceived policy positions of candidates or parties, or from the intrinsic rewards of participating in the democratic process, past research explains cross-national variation in voter turnout primarily with the help of electoral institutions and how these shape the costs of casting a ballot. Speaking very generally, where the rules reduce the amount of time and effort required to cast a ballot, more citizens are likely to show up at the polls (Powell 1980, 1986; Jackman 1987; Jackman and Miller 1995). Several studies along these lines found that such features as automatic registration or weekend and holiday voting can lift some of the burdens of voting, while compulsory voting diminishes resource-based differences in the ability to afford the cost of voting.

Aside from facilitating the mechanics of casting a ballot, electoral systems are expected to shape aggregate patterns of turnout by shaping the structure of options voters have at the ballot box. Specifically, proportional representation (PR) electoral systems are assumed to increase turnout (Powell 1986; Jackman 1987; Banducci and Karp 2009). Yet, mapping out the theoretical foundations for this relationship has proved challenging (Blais 2006). To begin, we know that proportionality shapes the contours of the party system by encouraging a greater number of parties. While the connection between proportionality and a more numerous party system is well established, past research offers rival hypotheses on exactly how the number of parties may translate into a decision to vote.

On one hand, with a greater variety of choices on the ballot, it may be more likely that

individual voters find a party that fits their policy preferences (Blais 2000, 2006). Moreover, because of the higher likelihood that one's vote affects a party's share of seats in parliament, proportionality may translate into a greater sense of efficacy that casting a ballot matters, which, in turn, may have a positive impact on turnout (Brockington 2004). A number of aggregate analyses, including Powell's (1986) class study, have corroborated this intuition, and a recent analysis of multi-level data from the CSES finds that greater proportionality indeed encourages turnout (Nevitte et al. 2009; see also Franklin 2002; 2004; Norris 2002; Gray and Caul 2000; Jackman 1987).[4]

On the other hand, Jackman (1987) argues that a greater number of parties increase the odds of a coalition government (see also Kedar 2005). As a result, voters in fragmented party systems may perceive their vote as one step removed from government formation and in fact turn the vote into a lottery over alternative outcomes. And this, in turn, may alienate voters, rendering them less likely to cast a ballot. The bulk of the cross-national evidence supports the latter expectation, finding that a greater number of parties depresses voter turnout (Jackman 1987; Blais and Dobrzynska 1998; Gray and Caul 2000). Yet, in a recent analysis of CSES data, a greater number of parties – typically associated with PR systems – do not appear related to higher levels of voter participation (Nevitte et al. 2009).

Clearly, these expectations and findings are at odds, and some of them may be due to differences in methodology or the appropriateness of particular estimation techniques. Yet, understanding the mechanisms behind the relationship between proportionality, party systems, and turnout is essential to improving our understanding of how turnout varies across countries (Blais 2006). Recently, Karp and Banducci (2007, 2008) have unpacked the relationship between proportionality and political involvement through a series of cross-national, multilevel analyses

of turnout in old and new democracies. By utilizing individual level survey data nested within contextual variables describing the number of parties in a country, they provide insight into how the number of parties can simultaneously hamper and facilitate turnout. Specifically, they find that voters have stronger party attachments in proportional systems, and these attachments heighten political efficacy and voter participation. At the same time, they find evidence that coalition governments reduce political efficacy and therefore diminish incentives to turn out.

In addition to the number of parties, both Aarts and Wessels (2005) and Brockington (2009) highlight the role of the ideological spread of parties across the party system. While the former do not uncover clear links between the party system and participation, the latter finds a connection. Specifically, Brockington (2009) reports that a wider spread of parties along the ideological continuum is associated with a higher probability of turning out, thus suggesting that the relationship between macro-political context and the vote is direct (also Dalton 2008).

Below, we follow the general approaches taken by both Karp and Banducci and Brockington to consider how the nature of the macro-level electoral supply affects the choices individual voters make on Election Day. Taken together, these studies suggest that the number of parties and the ideological differences between them are important contextual influences, and that orientations at the individual level play an important role as well. At the same time, several questions remain: first, do ideological polarization and the number of parties on offer have separable effects on turnout; second, do they affect turnout directly or indirectly; third, do the contours of the party system impact those who hold positive and negative attitudes toward the political process differently; and fourth, can we confirm existing results once we model turnout simultaneously at two levels of analysis?

Connecting Electoral Supply, Efficacy, and Turnout

Past research establishes clearly that faith in the political system – external efficacy – is one of the strongest and most proximate predictors of voter participation. We extend this insight by arguing that efficacy also is key to understanding the link between macro-political context and the decision to cast a ballot on Election Day. We focus on electoral supply as the macro-political factor at play, and examine the following three dimensions of the political supply side: how many choices are presented to the electorate, and how distinct are these choices, and how predictable are those choices. Simply put, our argument is that the electoral supply can make the election process worth investing in for potential voters, or it may make the vote even less attractive than they found it in the first place.

The mechanism by which political context exerts it influence is through the meaning of ballot choices. Where elections and parties present distinct choices and probability of meaningful change, the act of voting becomes more important. Further, we introduce the idea that the electoral supply may both shape citizens' efficacy toward elections and interact with efficacy in important ways. In addition to the effects that the number and ideological spread of parties plays in shaping turnout, we argue that it is important to also consider the predictability of choices because stable choices lead to more discernable choices. The more stable the party system, the easier it is for citizens to make sense of their choice set. After all, the benefits of voting for one's preferred party, in part, stem from the assumption that parties offer clear distinctions to voters, and more specifically differentiated and therefore identifiable benefits to groups of voters, and that parties are around to provide them once in office.

How then, can we connect electoral supply, individual differences, and turnout? We build on cross-national work on turnout by arguing for the importance of combining micro- and

macro-levels of analysis (Powell 1986; see also Franklin 2004). But in a departure from this work, we do not aim to pit individual and contextual variables against each other in a race to predict turnout. Instead, we hypothesize that the relationship between external efficacy and electoral supply on the one hand, and voter participation on the other, can take two different forms, as outlined in Figure 2.1 (see Anderson 2007, 2009 and introduction to this volume). The figure presents two different theoretical models of indirect and contingent effects of macro-political context (here, electoral supply) on individual behavior (the decision to vote). The indirect effects work as a chain of causal factors, moving from the broader forces toward the more proximate influences on the decision to vote. In the first step, the electoral supply influences citizens' external efficacy toward electoral democracy. For example, with more choices (a greater number of parties) and greater differentiation among those choices (ideological spread), there may be a greater likelihood that there is a party that matches up with the preferences of any given voter. Great stability among these choices means that they are more easily identified by citizens. In such a causal chain, differentiation and stability in electoral supply is expected to encourage citizens to feel that their vote makes a difference, and that the policy consequences will differ, depending on which party or candidate wins the election. In this way, discernible and predictable choices among parties encourage positive orientations toward the system and process of electoral representation. In turn, these orientations are among the most proximate and important determinants of political participation.

The second theoretical model depicted in Figure 2.1 maps a contingent relationship between electoral supply, external efficacy, and turnout. A contingent effect implies that the effect of the electoral supply is moderated by voters' political efficacy – that is, by whether they have faith in the political and electoral system. More choices may boost participation especially

or only among those who feel efficacious about the election process. Similarly, a more differentiated electoral supply may especially heighten voter participation among those with high levels of efficacy. Because efficacious citizens already have a vested interest in the election outcome, clear choices raise the stakes for one team winning over another, increasing the potential regret if one abstains from voting. In contrast, even committed citizens may abstain in countries where the choices are less stark. The consequences of a rival candidate or party assuming leadership are obfuscated, dampening citizens' motivation to vote.

For those who do not feel efficacious, having more choices may be overwhelming and thus may dampen their propensity to vote. This would imply that a more numerous, stable, or differentiated electoral supply should diminish turnout among inefficacious voters. Alternatively, the nature of the electoral supply may simply be beside the point. Citizens who lack faith in the system may simply not be sensitive to variation in the macro-political context because they have given up on the game before the contest has even begun.

Finally, efficacy may moderate the relationship between the stability of the electoral supply and voter participation. In the context of an entrenched, static choice set, the propensity to abstain from voting may be exacerbated for those who do not feel efficacious. By contrast, dynamism in the party system may introduce an incentive for politically inefficacious citizens to take a chance on voting for a new party.

--Figure 2.1 about here--

Data and Analysis

We utilize data from Module 2 of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems project to examine these hypotheses. Specifically, for our purposes, we use data from 31 countries.[5] The

pooled micro-level survey data are complemented by national-level contextual variables. In statistical terms, this means that individual respondents are nested within the different countries in our data set.

Our analysis requires three critical variables: turnout, efficacy, and electoral supply (see chapter appendix on question wording). Turnout is a standard question asking respondents to report whether they voted in the most recent election. To tap a respondent's feelings of external political efficacy, we rely on questions asking respondents whether it makes a difference who is in power and whether one's vote makes a difference (cf. Brockington 2009). These measures are correlated, but they are not synonymous; while one is directed at the perceptions of the consequences of one's vote, the other gauges perceptions of the consequences of elections (their bivariate correlation is .41, indicating that they explain roughly 20% of each other's variation). Aarts and Thomassen (2007: 9) refer to the item measuring whether people believe that who one votes for makes a difference as a "perception of accountability."

To measure the party system context, we utilize three separate measures of the electoral supply (see book appendix for variable documentation). First, the effective number of parties measures the number of choices available to potential voters. Second, the degree of polarization in the party system taps into the distinctiveness of choices. Third, the age of the party system represents the stability of choices for the electorate.

Political Efficacy and Voter Participation Across Democracies

Table 2.1 presents the CSES countries in our study, and the aggregate level of voter turnout for each country. Clearly, countries with compulsory voting laws such as Australia register higher rates of turnout than others. But beyond cross-national variation in levels of aggregate turnout,

the forces that motivate citizens to cast their ballots vary substantially across countries as well. The final two columns of Table 2.1 display gaps in voter turnout among those who do and do not feel efficacious for the set of countries in this study. Those who believe that their vote or that who is in power makes a difference turn out in higher percentages. For example, in Switzerland the gap between those who strongly believe that their vote makes a difference and those who do not registers 46 percentage points. The UK, Finland and New Zealand boast similar gaps of 36, 36, and 32 percentage points.

--Table 2.1 about here--

Decomposing the Variance in Turnout

Our indirect and contingent effects models imply that both a citizen's characteristics and the political context will shape voter participation. To gauge how much variance in voter participation is due to individual level and contextual effects, we estimated a multilevel regression model that decomposes the variance in reported turnout. Table 2.2 presents the variance components for voter participation. The results reveal that over 80 percent of the variance (83.3%) is explained by individual level factors, while macro-level variables account for less than 20 percent of the variance (16.7%). Both are statistically significant, suggesting that we need both to understand voter participation fully. While individual level factors hold most of the explanatory power, political context plays a role as well. This is of substantive importance because it helps put macro-level effects in relief: these preliminary results suggest that macro-level variables play a relatively smaller role in shaping turnout, and this means that any one potential macro-level factor – of a wide variety that have been suggested in the literature – has only a relatively small chance at "coming out on top" in a statistical sense, relative to others and

relative to individual-level differences in voter characteristics, when it comes to understanding why people vote.

- - -Table 2.2 about here- - -

The Effects of Electoral Supply on Orientations and Voter Participation

The relationships between political orientations and turnout may be influenced by a host of other factors identified by prior research, and certainly multivariate analyses are essential to improving our understanding of how these factors work together. One challenge in mixing aggregate and survey data comes in violating standard assumptions of OLS models – namely that errors terms are independent. Respondents within nations are likely to have much in common with fellow citizens relative to those living elsewhere. Because the CSES allows one to merge data from both the individual and national levels, standard regression methods would create a number of statistical problems, perhaps most importantly that they would likely underestimate the standard errors of the national-level variables (see Steenbergen and Jones 2002). To control for clustering error terms, researchers have adopted multilevel estimation models from education and sociological research (Bryk and Raudenbusch 1992; Kedar and Shively 2005) to study a wide range of political science topics. We utilize the xtlogit and xtmixed functions in STATA to estimate multi-level models, which allows for random intercepts across the panels (countries).

The indirect effects hypothesis displayed in Figure 2.1a posits that the contours of the party system shape individuals' orientations toward the system and processes of electoral democracy. Table 2.3 presents the results of the multilevel models estimating the direct effects of country-level contextual variables and the micro-level respondent characteristics on voter participation. This baseline model tests the first basic hypothesis, namely that the number,

differentiation, and stability of party choices directly influence an individual's propensity to vote, regardless of attitudes about electoral democracy. As the results show, party system characteristics do not appear to directly influence voter participation. In fact, none of the coefficients are close to statistical significance; even the variable measuring compulsory voting – while positive – fails to achieve conventional levels of significance possibly because the limited number of compulsory systems.

As hypothesized, at the individual level, those who feel their vote makes a difference, and those who feel that who is in power makes a difference are likely voters. In addition, as anticipated by prior research, several control variables are statistically significant. Age, education level, income, being a union member and feeling attached to a political party, and having been contacted by a party or candidate before the election are all strong predictors of voting.

- - -Table 2.3 about here- - -

While there is no evidence to suggest that the effects of the party system are direct, they still may be indirect or contingent. In Table 2.4 we therefore step back in the causal chain to explain variation in the measures of efficacy, which the previous model showed to be critically important to explaining turnout. Specifically, we examine the influence of the electoral supply by regressing feelings of efficacy on the number of parties, the degree of party polarization (differentiation), and the age of the party system (stability).

Overall, the effects of the electoral supply on political orientations are weak, suggesting that the effects of macro-political context on turnout are neither direct nor indirect. In model 1, which focuses on the question of whether a respondent believes voting makes a difference, the results show clearly that the indicators of electoral supply have minimal impact, as none of the

macro-level variables have a significant influence on external efficacy. This stands in slight contrast to the results we obtain for model 2, which focuses on people's beliefs that who is in power makes a difference. We find that the differentiation among parties is a statistically significant indicator of faith in the political system. Thus, there is some limited evidence that citizens' beliefs that who is in power makes a difference are greater if they live in a country where the electoral supply is more differentiated.

Although our focus is primarily on the macro-level electoral supply variables, the established individual level influences are statistically significant across the models: education, income, ideological orientation, party attachment, union membership, and having been contacted are important influences on political efficacy. This is important in the context of this study because it indicates that education, income, and social attachments have an indirect effect on turnout by boosting supportive attitudes, which, in turn, enhance turnout.

- - -Table 2.4 about here- - -

While the results so far suggest that the impact of macro-political context is not direct, that there is not much of an indirect effect, the question remains whether the effects of the electoral supply are contingent. More specifically, is the effect of the electoral supply on turnout conditioned by people's feelings of efficacy? We investigate this possibility in Table 2.5 by adding several interaction variables to the baseline model of voter participation. The first model includes an interaction term between whether a respondent believes their vote makes a difference and each of the three electoral supply variables. In a parallel fashion, the second model includes three interactions between the electoral supply measures and whether a respondent believes who is in power makes a difference.

- - - Table 2.5 about here- - -

For the first model, both the interactions between differentiation in electoral supply and the perception that voting makes a difference as well as the interaction between party system stability and the sense that voting makes a difference are statistically significant, and the coefficients are in the expected direction. A very similar pattern consistent with the first result emerges for the second model: the interactions between the individual-level perception that who is in power makes a difference and macro-level electoral supply in the form of differentiation and stability are both statistically significant and in the expected direction.

If the effects of electoral supply on turnout are indeed contingent, how much do these effects matter? To answer this question, we next look at the joint effects of polarization and efficacy on voter participation. Figure 2.2 graphically illustrates the effect of the differentiation among parties (polarization) on voter participation among citizens who feel their vote makes a difference and those who do not. The top line shows that, for those who believe their vote makes a difference, greater polarization among parties slightly increases the likelihood of voting. In stark contrast, the bottom line in the graph indicates that those who do not feel efficacious are also sensitive to a polarized electoral supply, but in the opposite direction: increased polarization substantially decreases their likelihood of casting a ballot. Thus, a differentiated political supply turns efficacious voters out, and keeps voters who lack faith in the system home.

- - - Figure 2.2 about here- - -

Figure 2.3 presents the substantive results for party system stability on voter participation among citizens with different levels of faith that their vote makes a difference. While the interaction term was statistically significant, the substantive results reveal little differentiation. In contrast to polarization, the effects for party system stability differ little across these two sets of respondents. Certainly those who do not believe their vote makes a difference are less likely to

cast a ballot. However, for both those who have and those who lack faith in the ballot the influence of party system stability on turnout is positive.

- - - Figure 2.3 about here- - -

The relationships for our second measure of external efficacy mirror those of the first. Figure 2.4 displays the effects of party system differentiation on voter participation among those who believe that who is in power makes a difference and those who do not. As in the case of our other measure of external efficacy, we observe a positive slope for the former and a negative slope for the latter. In short, living in country with a more differentiated electoral supply makes those who feel efficacious more likely to cast their ballot on Election Day. In contrast, greater differentiation among parties substantially depresses the likelihood that citizens who do not feel efficacious about who is in power will vote.

- - - Figure 2.4 about here- - -

Finally, the relationship between party system stability and voter participation is depicted in Figure 2.5. The positive slope of the line for those who believe who is in power makes a difference parallels the positive slope of the line for those who do not. As before, although the inefficacious are less likely to vote, the effects of party system stability are similar for the inefficacious and efficacious citizens alike.

- - - Figure 2.5 about here- - -

Conclusions

Over 30 years ago, Verba, Nie, and Kim set out to "explain differences across nations in the degree to which the participant population is representative of the population as a whole" (Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978: 19). Focusing on a limited number of countries, they argued that "the way

in which institutional constraints on participation modify individual propensities to be politically active takes us a long way in explaining differences across nations in the representativeness of the participant population" (Verba, Nie, and Kim, ibid.).

While we depart from Verba et al. in our focus on the supply of electoral choices rather than examining the effects of countries' formal institutional characteristics, we (and our results) could not agree more. The structure of political conflict, as reflected in a country's party system, can provide a fundamental pull to participate in elections. This structure varies across countries and has consequences. In particular, we find that the electoral supply plays a contingent role in influencing voter participation. Where the party system connects citizens to a differentiated set of choices, the efficacious are more likely to vote, while the inefficacious are less likely to vote. Significantly, the simple number of parties competing in the election has little impact on turnout. Thus, the content of the electoral supply simultaneously strengthens and weakens the relationship between political orientations and the propensity to vote; while a more distinct set of choices propels efficacious citizens to the ballot box, it diminishes the odds that the less efficacious make the effort to turn out.

While these contingent effects are strong, the direct effects of the contours of the party system on voter participation are less so. And the electoral supply exerts little impact on respondents' feelings of efficacy, though we document that a more polarized choice set enhances people's sense that who is in power matters. This is broadly consistent with the findings by Anderson in his chapter (this volume) on system support attitudes. In this sense, the effects of the electoral supply are not truly compositional: the party system does not appear to strongly encourage feelings of efficacy in the first place. Rather, individual level attributes play the most important role in shaping a citizen's sense of efficacy in the democratic process. Our findings

support those of many previous studies: those with higher socio-economic status and more social connections are more likely to feel efficacious.

In short, the context of elections does more than guide potential voters on who to vote for – it also shapes the likelihood that they will even cast a ballot in the first place. In this way, the structure of the party system can pull voters into the democratic process, or deflate whatever limited civic ambitions they had in the first place. We speculate that the strongly negative effect of polarization on turnout among citizens with low levels of external efficacy may reflect a deep cynicism among such voters to whom a polarized party system communicates conflict and division among self-interested political actors.

Regardless of the precise source of this effect, our results indicate that, among the indicators of the electoral supply, and in addition to the more commonly studied number of choices available to voters, the differentiation among parties appears integral and most central to determining turnout. Among those who already feel isolated from parties and inefficacious, a wider gap among parties can further dampen their propensity to vote. As Sidney Verba reminds us, representativeness in citizen participation is "at the heart of political equality" (Verba 2003: 663). Recalling the image of diverging lines on a graph, a growing chasm between those who feel efficacious and engaged on the one hand, and those who feel ambivalent and disengaged on the other, may be troubling for the quality of the democratic process. Further, the lower levels of education, income, and social connectedness among voters who lack faith in politics portend important social and economic divisions in the political process. But as our results suggest, the nature of the electoral supply can narrow or widen that divide.

Endn**otes**

[1] We bracket the question of mobilization through social networks and by political parties and candidates (cf. Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). For a discussion of mobilization and campaign activities, see the chapter by Banducci and Karp in this volume.

[2] Age is another important individual level difference that has long been considered a consistent predictor of voting participation, as young people are less likely to vote than their older counterparts. This finding holds in the U.S. (Miller and Shanks 1996) and across established democracies (Blais 2000; Franklin 2002; Norris 2002; Wattenberg 2006). Age is expected to work in two ways: first, it elevates levels of political knowledge acquired through a lifetime of experience with politics. This knowledge is a key resource for navigating the electoral landscape and can be called upon to understand the contours of an election campaign, thus reducing the amount of resources involved in the process of casting a ballot. In addition, age is a proxy for social connectedness and a sense of identification with one's community. Young people tend to be more mobile, increasing the amount of time and energy needed to make sense of the local issues and candidates, and to find the polling place on Election Day. Thus, age (as well as marriage, children, owning a home, etc.) is associated with more stable and extensive social ties and community roots and identification.

[3] They also affect the calculus of other political actors to target particular groups of individuals for mobilization. As research suggests, individuals with desirable characteristics are more likely to be contacted during an election campaign. These include, in particular, those who are more likely to come out and vote (e.g., individuals with resources and attachments to parties), making the investment in mobilization on the part of parties and candidates more worthwhile (Karp, Banducci, and Bowler 2008, and the chapter by Banducci and Karp in this volume).

[4] A number of other macro-level factors have been examined. Among these, highly competitive elections, as measured by the margin of victory and how close the largest party is to achieving a majority, has consistently and prominently been found to increase voter turnout as well.

[5] Some nations were excluded because the necessary predictors were not available. See Table 2.1 for a list of the nations included.

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Appendix. Description of Variables

Variable Name	CSESII variable number	Coding
Gender	B2002 Gender	1=male, 2=female
Age	B2001 Age	Continuous variable
Education	B2003 Eductation	1=lower, 2=middle, 3=upper
Left/Right Ideological Orientation	B3045 In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?	Left/Right self placement, 0=left, 10=right
Union Member	B2005 Union membership of respondent.	1=union member, 0=not member
Close to Party	B3028 Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular political party? [Some nations used different wording]	Are you close to a political party?, 0=no, 1=yes
Voting Participation	B3004 Whether or not respondent cast a ballot (regardless of whether the ballot was valid).	Did respondent cast ballot? 0=no, 1=yes
Vote Makes a Difference	B3014 “Some people say that no matter who people vote for, it won't make any difference to what happens. Others say that who people vote for can make a difference to what happens. Using the scale on this card, (where ONE means that voting won't make a difference towhat happens and FIVE means that voting can make a difference) where would you place yourself?”	Who people vote for makes a difference; 0=disagree, 1=agree.
Who In Power Makes Difference	B3013 “Some people say it makes a difference who is in power. Others say that it doesn't make a difference who is in power. Using the scale on this card, (where ONE means that it makes a difference who is in power and FIVE means that it doesn't make a difference who is in power), where would you place yourself?”	Who is in power can make a difference; 0=disagree, 1=agree.

Table 2.1 Gaps in Voter Participation, By Country

Country	Election Year	Aggregate Turnout	Vote Makes a Difference	Who in Power Makes Difference
Albania	2005	49.2	8	10
Australia	2004	94.3	1	9
Brazil	2002	68.7	3	4
Bulgaria	2001	66.6	8	27
Canada	2004	60.9	17	11
Czech Republic	2002	57.9	30	61
Denmark	2001	87.1	4	4
Finland	2003	66.7	36	22
France	2002	60.3	18	15
Germany	2002	79.1	12	8
Hungary	2002	73.5	49	35
Iceland	2003	87.7	9	9
Ireland	2002	62.6	8	8
Israel	2003	67.8	26	10
Italy	2006	83.6	22	19
S. Korea	2004	60.0	15	20
Mexico	2003	41.7	9	9
New Zealand	2002	77.0	32	17
Norway	2001	75.5	4	15
Philippines	2004	45.3	15	-3
Poland	2001	46.2	40	21
Portugal	2005	64.3	4	4
Romania	2004	58.5	19	12
Slovenia	2004	60.6	20	3
Spain	2004	75.7	32	27
Sweden	2002	80.1	25	12
Switzerland	2003	45.2	46	25
Taiwan	2004	54.0	7	6
UK	2005	61.5	36	30
USA	2004	68.7	17	27

Source: Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, Module II; Voter turnout for parliamentary elections collected from IDEA represents the proportion of total number of votes cast/registered voters.

Note: Entries represent the difference in voter turnout percentages among those who do and do not feel their vote or who is in power makes a difference, by country.

Table 2.2 Variance Decomposition in Electoral Participation

Parameter	**Estimate**
Fixed Effects	
Constant	.863*** (.012)
Variance Components	
Country-level	.067*** (.009)
Individual-level	.334** (.001)
-2 log likelihood	-8988.89

Note: Entries are maximum likelihood estimates; standard errors in parentheses.
*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

Table 2.3 Direct Effects of Electoral Supply on Voter Turnout

	Turnout
Individual-Level	
Vote makes	.199**
difference	(.016)
Who in power	.109**
Makes difference	(.016)
Gender	.030
	(.038)
Age	.393**
	(.020)
Education	.184**
	(.028)
Income	.115**
	(.016)
Left/Right	.006
Ideological	(.008)
Orientation	
Union	.273**
Member	(.053)
Close to Party	.747**
(attachment)	(.041)
Contacted	.427**
	(.053)
Country-Level	
Number of parties	-.040
(enep)	(.074)
Differentiation	-.006
(Party	(.122)
Polarization)	
Stability	-.000
(Age of Party	(.004)
System)	
Freedom House	-.193
	(.250)
Compulsory	.424
Voting	(.335)
Legislative	-.437
Election	(1.14)
Constant	-.601
	(1.74)

Note: Coefficients from multilevel random intercept models, followed by standard errors in parentheses. *p<.05, **p<.01. Respondent n=26,033, country n=31.

Table 2.4 Indirect Effects of Electoral Supply on External Efficacy

	Model 1 Voting Makes a Difference	**Model 2** Who Is In Power Makes a Difference
Individual-Level		
Gender	.039**	.025
	(.014)	(.015)
Age	.001	-.001
	(.008)	(.008)
Education	.060**	.073**
	(.010)	(.010)
Income	.016*	.020**
	(.006)	(.006)
Left/Right Ideological	.016**	.011**
Orientation	(.003)	(.003)
Union	.085**	.019
Member	(.020)	(.020)
Close to Party	.320**	.374**
(attachment)	(.015)	(.016)
Contacted	.109**	.099**
	(.018)	(.019)
Country-Level		
Number of parties	.033	.040
	(.028)	(.029)
Differentiation	.038	.094*
(Party System Polarization)	(.047)	(.048)
Stability	.000	-.001
(Age of Party System)	(.002)	(.002)
Freedom House	.105	.114
	(.096)	(.100)
Compulsory Voting	-.120	-.111
	(.128)	(.132)
Legislative Election	1.03	-.100
	(.443)	(.458)
Constant	1.93*	2.72**
	(.672)	(.695)

Note: Coefficients from multilevel random intercept models, followed by standard errors in parentheses. *p<.05, **p<.01. Respondent n=26,425; Country n=31.

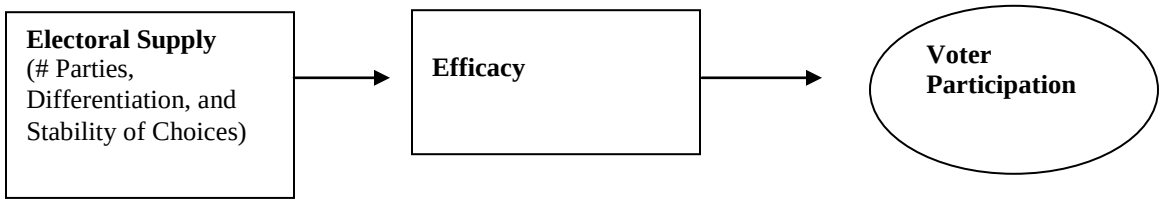
Table 2.5. Contingent Effects of Supply and Efficacy on Participation

	Model 1	Model 2
Individual-Level		
Vote Makes a Difference	-.079	--
	(.060)	
Who In Power Makes a Difference	--	-.089
		(.060)
Gender	.027	.033
	(.039)	(.038)
Age	.394**	.389**
	(.020)	(.020)
Education	.193**	.191**
	(.028)	(.028)
Income	.116	.115**
	(.016)	(.015)
Left/Right Ideological Orientation	.008	.008
	(.008)	(.007)
Union Member	.275**	.285**
	(.053)	(.053)
Close to Party (attachment)	.772**	.774**
	(.041)	(.042)
Contacted	.432**	.441**
	(.053)	(.053)
Country-Level		
Number of parties (Effective # electoral)	-.011	-.047
	(.081)	(.081)
Differentiation (Party Polarization)	-.313*	-.223
	(.129)	(.130)
Stability (Age of Party System)	-.006	-.003
	(.004)	(.004)
Freedom House	-.175	-.166
	(.249)	(.253)
Compulsory Voting	.409	.389
	(.334)	(.339)
Legislative Election	-.410	-.194
	(1.14)	(1.15)
Micro-Macro Interactions		
Number of Parties * Vote Makes a Difference	-.004	--
	(.009)	
Differentiation * Vote Makes a Difference	.087**	--
	(.012)	
Stability * Vote Makes a Difference	.001**	--
	(.000)	
Number of Parties * Who in Power Makes Difference	--	.006
		(.009)
Differentiation * Who in Power Makes Difference	--	.063**
		(.012)
Stability * Who in Power Makes Difference	--	.001*
		(.000)
Constant	.635	.427
	(1.74)	(1.76)

Note: Coefficients from multilevel random intercept logit models, followed by standard errors in parentheses. *p<.05, **p<.01. Respondent n=26,200; Country n=31.

Figure 2.1 Models of Electoral Supply, Individual Orientations and Mobilization and Voter Participation

(a) Indirect Effects:



(b) Contingent Effects:

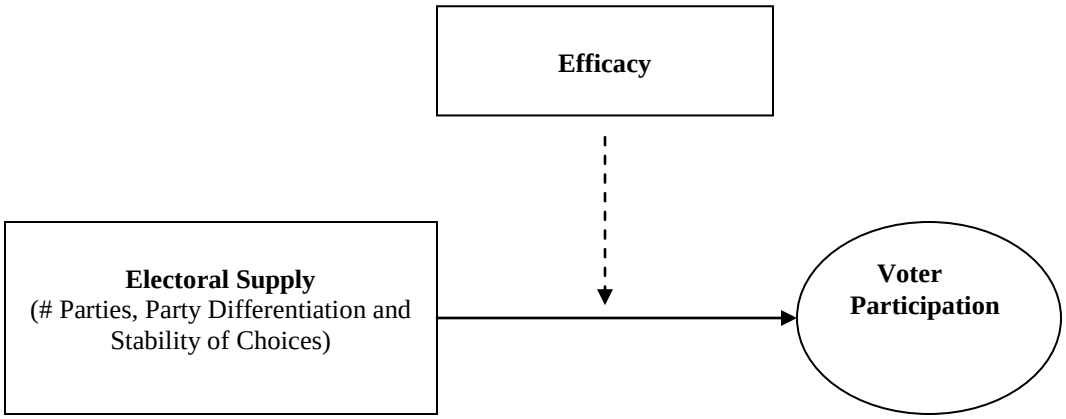


Figure 2.2 Effects of Differentiation and Faith in Voting on Voter Participation

Figure 2.3 Effects of Party System Stability and Faith in Voting on Voter Participation

Figure 2.4 Effect of Differentiation and Belief Who Is in Power Makes a Difference for Voter Participation

Figure 2.5 Effect of Party System Stability and Belief Who Is in Power Makes a Difference for Voter Participation