

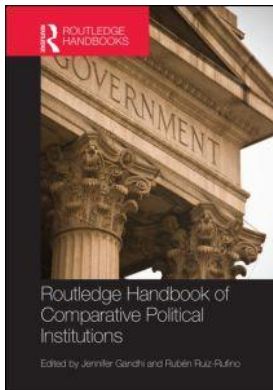
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### **Voting behavior and political institutions**

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## **Part III**

# The effects of comparative institutions

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# VOTING BEHAVIOR AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

*Ian McAllister*<sup>1</sup>

A common refrain in social science is that “institutions matter.” Institutions matter for, among other things, increasing a nation’s wealth, reducing corruption, and effective governance. And not least, political institutions matter for a citizen’s voting behavior. The political institutions within which a voter exercises his or her vote will structure the choices that are available to him or her. In turn, these choices act to shape the eventual voting decision. The interaction between these system-level characteristics and the voter’s own characteristics determines the voting decision. Voting is therefore not simply a personal choice, but one that is shaped by the context within which the choice is made (for reviews, see Anderson, 2007; Dalton and Anderson, 2011; Klingemann, 2009).

The institutional features of a political system have long been known to be a key influence on voter behavior. Voters have been observed to behave differently depending on whether the executive authority rests with a president or with a parliament; whether the electoral system is majoritarian or proportional; and whether the party system consists of two parties or more than two parties—to mention just three types of institutional variation (Duverger, 1954; Norris, 2004; Shugart and Carey, 1992). But understanding how and in what ways these institutional differences shape voting behavior has only become a prominent subfield of voting studies in the past two decades, as appropriate data sources and methods have become available.

The insight that systematic data collection is necessary to evaluate the impact of institutions is often attributed to the work of Stein Rokkan (1970) almost half a century ago. However, it was not until the 1990s that there was a move to measure systematically the impact of institutions on voting behavior. The first steps in this process were the establishment of a coordinated cross-national effort in data collection (especially through the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems [CSES] project—see Klingemann [2009]). Established in 1995, the CSES enables the systematic analysis of electoral behavior under globally varying institutional conditions. The project coordinates the operation of more than 50 national election studies across the world, thereby ensuring that information about citizens’ behavior and attitudes gathered in each country is comparable and can be matched with information about institutional arrangements. Combined with advances in methodology (and specifically multi-level modeling [see Kedar and Shively, 2005]), analysts have been able, for the first time, to measure the precise impact of institutions on voter behavior.

Since the range of political institutions is vast, and their potential impact on voting behavior substantial, some broad categorization is required. Accordingly, the chapter is divided into five sections. The first section examines the impact of electoral institutions on voting behavior, with a specific focus on electoral participation. The second section deals with election rules, such as thresholds and the degree of proportionality in the electoral system, and how they can shape behavior. The third section moves the focus of attention to system performance, which is defined by economic voting, but the logic applies equally well to other issues that concern voters. Partisanship and how it varies by the institutional arrangements of the country is the topic of the fourth section, while the fifth section examines the opportunities particular institutional arrangements open up for strategic and split ticket voting. The conclusion draws some broad conclusions about the total impact of institutions on voting behavior.

### Electoral participation

The institutional factors that shape electoral participation are generally well known, although the relative magnitude of their effects on individual behavior and how they should be categorized are often a matter of dispute. This section examines the impact of voter and party registration rules—the classic “gate-keeping” function of the electoral system—on electoral choice, as well as other rules that serve to shape the act of voting. In different ways, each of the rules has an independent impact on citizens’ electoral choices.

*Electoral laws.* The laws that determine who is eligible to enroll to vote are the first institutional factor shaping electoral participation. There is some U.S. evidence, starting with Wolfinger and Rosenstone’s (1980) pioneering study, which shows that easier registration rules increase the numbers who enroll to vote; this, in turn, boosts turnout. However, U.S. registration rules tend to be different from those found in other countries, particularly in Europe. First, in the U.S. registration is an individual opt-in responsibility rather than an automatic process (Knee and Green, 2011: 314). Second, registration laws that have evolved in some U.S. states have been designed with the explicit purpose of dissuading blacks to register to vote. In any event, later studies, also examining the U.S., have suggested that the effects attributable to easier registration rules are relatively small (Knee and Green, 2011; Mitchell and Wlezien, 1995). The more limited international research that has been conducted has confirmed the importance of voter registration rules (Blais, 2000; Norris, 2004).

In addition to voter registration, the formal registration of political parties can indirectly influence electoral participation, by determining which parties are able to gain access to the ballot list. Party registration serves to regulate political funding and to control the party names (and sometimes the party emblems) that appear on ballot papers in order to avoid duplication or confusion for voters. In newly democratic countries party registration rules are often used to stifle opposition, or to ensure that one party does not gain a dominant position (Karvonen, 2007). Russia, for example, required a registered political party to have at least 10,000 members from 2001 to 2006, when it was increased to 50,000. Following mass protests in the wake of the December 2011 Duma election this requirement was reduced to 500 members. Studies in regions as diverse as Latin America (Bimir, 2004) and the Asia-Pacific (Reilly, 2006) confirm the importance of party registration rules.

*The electoral system.* A second institutional factor that can affect electoral participation is the electoral system itself. One consideration is whether voting is voluntary or compulsory, with studies showing that turnout is higher in countries that have compulsory rather than voluntary voting. In the first systematic analysis of the effects of compulsion on turnout, Jackman (1987; see also Blais and Dobrzynska, 1998; Franklin, 2004) estimated the increase in turnout due to

compulsion to be around 13 percentage points. However, the positive effect of compulsion tends to be limited to the established democracies that have compulsory voting—Australia and Belgium—while the effect is considerably less in other compulsory voting countries, particularly in Latin America (where it is called “mandatory voting”). The discrepancy appears to be caused by the strict enforcement of compulsory voting in Australia and Belgium, and the political culture that underpins compulsion; most other countries that operate compulsory voting have significantly weaker enforcement (Norris, 2002; Blais, 2007; Birch, 2009).

Another aspect of the electoral system is district magnitude, or the number of representatives that are elected from each electoral district. Larger districts with more candidates encourage greater competition between parties and candidates and therefore generate more mobilizing activity compared to smaller districts (Karp *et al.*, 2007). By contrast, smaller districts are often categorized as “safe” for one party and rarely change hands at any election; there is little incentive for non-incumbent parties to concentrate scarce resources on these seats and therefore turnout is lower. In many democracies, “safe” seats regularly make up the large majority of districts and as a result, the parties concentrate their activities on the minority of marginal districts that they have a chance of winning. However, part of this effect may be due to the electoral system itself, since proportional representation systems generally have larger districts than majoritarian or first-past-the-post systems.

One dimension of the electoral system that has received much attention in recent years is the integrity or fairness of the system. If voters have confidence in the system and in the processes that underpin it, they will be more likely to turn out to vote (Birch, 2010). In transitional democracies particularly, a belief that the electoral system is open to manipulation can undermine support for democracy and leave open the possibility of a return to “more orderly” and predictable authoritarian rule. Manipulation can take place directly, through electoral management bodies, or indirectly through biased electoral rules (Lindberg, 2009; Levitsky and Way, 2010). Studies show that public perceptions of electoral unfairness have a significant negative impact on views of democracy generally across a range of postcommunist societies (McAllister and White, 2015)

*Type of legislature.* The legislature is the third institutional factor that affects turnout. Jackman (1987) has identified countries with a single legislature as having higher turnout compared to bicameral countries. This proposition, according to Blais (2007), is based on the concentration of political authority, so “the more powerful the body that is being elected, the higher the turnout.” It should therefore also apply to unitary systems, with turnout being higher than in federal systems. Blais and Dobrzynska (1998) provide a more sophisticated measure of the principle, taking into account, among other things, direct and indirect elections and the presence or absence of subnational elections. They conclude that the salience of an institution for voters is indeed a significant influence on turnout.

*The act of voting.* The general rules that surround the act of voting and whether they make voting easy or difficult are a fourth factor that is known to affect turnout. The day on which polling takes place influences turnout (Franklin, 2004), with a national rest day (such as a Sunday, which is used in many European countries) producing higher rates of turnout compared to a regular work day (such as a Tuesday, as in the U.S., or a Thursday, as in the UK). There is also some evidence that the easy availability of postal or absentee ballots increases turnout, since voters will have flexibility in how they choose to cast their ballot. However, the effects of these various measures appear not to be large and as a consequence, the estimates are especially sensitive to the countries that are included in the analysis (Norris, 2004).

*Minimum voting age.* The age at which citizens are permitted to vote is a fifth factor influencing turnout. Since turnout is higher among older citizens, it follows that, other things being

equal, lowering the voting age will reduce turnout. In their study of 324 national elections across 91 countries, Blais and Dobrzynska (1998: 246) found that “everything else being equal, turnout is reduced by almost two points when the voting age is lowered one year.” Lowering the voting age from 21 to 18 years in the 1970s therefore reduced turnout by about 5 percentage points. Both Franklin (2004) and McAllister (2014), analyzing a smaller group of countries, estimate the decline in turnout due to the lowering of the voting age to 18 to be about 3 percentage points. Since the vast majority of democracies allow voting at 18 (among the established democracies, only Austria currently allows national voting at 16) the current voting age has few consequences for turnout. However, if the age was reduced further, to 16 as some parties and organizations advocate, turnout could be expected to decline.

Compulsory voting is known to reduce inequalities in voting—such as younger or lower socioeconomic status voters turning out less frequently than older voters or those in higher status groups (Gallego, 2010). A reduction in the observed patterns of inequalities in voting has also been demonstrated to have effects on redistributive public policies favoring the under-privileged (Hill, 2002). If certain groups are less likely to turn out to vote, governments have less incentive to address their concerns in framing policies (Griffin and Newman, 2005). Thus reducing inequalities in voting—in age, education or income, for example—can have measurable effects on government policies and an impact on whom they are directed.

This overview of the impact of institutional arrangements on electoral participation indicates that all have some tangible impact, but in general the effects vary between countries and are usually small. As Holmberg (2009: 167) puts it, “the electoral system matters, but not much.” Consequently, which countries are included in the study has a considerable impact on the estimates that are arrived at. Within the literature on electoral participation, the major factor that has been identified as impacting on turnout is whether the electoral system is proportional or majoritarian; this is examined in the next section, in the context of election rules.

### Election rules

Election rules refer to a complex set of explicit regulations and principles that determine how votes are counted. This process ultimately determines who is elected. One of the earliest categorizations of election rules and their consequences was Duverger’s law (1954), which predicted that majoritarian electoral systems would produce two party systems while proportional election systems would produce multiparty systems. In each case, this outcome would have distinct implications for individual voting behavior. However, election rules also extend beyond the counting of votes to cover, for example, election thresholds.

*Proportional versus majoritarian electoral systems.* The proportionality of the electoral system is often identified as a major institutional feature that shapes voting behavior. There is some evidence that greater proportionality leads to higher turnout (Franklin, 1996; Radcliff and Davis, 2000), but as Blais (2007: 113–114) points out, the bulk of these studies are based on the established democracies and when new or emerging democracies are incorporated into the analysis, the results are less robust (Blais and Dobrzynska, 1998). Which countries are included in any study therefore seems to have a crucial effect on the results, in addition to the complicating factor, noted in the previous section, that PR systems tend to have larger districts compared to majoritarian ones. This means that electoral competition will generally be more intense in PR systems, but that higher district magnitude will not lead to higher levels of turnout.

Proportional representation systems are also divided into three groups, according to the form of the ballot. First, systems that use open ballot lists, where voters can choose between individual

candidates are the most candidate-centered systems. Second, systems that use semi-open ballot lists give voters the choice between voting for a pre-ordered party list, or for an individual candidate. Third, systems that use closed-list ballots force voters to choose between parties, not candidates and are therefore party- rather than candidate-centered. In general, systems that are more candidate-centered encourage candidates to cultivate personal votes and to provide effective constituency service (Shugart, 2001; Shugart *et al.*, 2005). By contrast, when candidate fortunes largely rest with the party, party service and party loyalty become paramount considerations for candidates. There is evidence to show that candidate-centered systems generate higher levels of voter satisfaction, net of other things (Farrell and McAllister, 2006; see also Anderson and Guillory, 1997).

The findings on the proportionality of the electoral system are on firmer ground with respect to how the electoral system shapes the public's views of the political system as a whole. Studies have shown that the more proportional the electoral system, the greater the number of competing political parties. This, in turn, generates a stronger sense among voters that their views are being adequately represented (Anderson, 2011; Karp and Banducci, 2008). By contrast, in two party systems many voters feel that their views are unduly constrained by the limited choice available. By producing a wider range of parties, then, PR systems provide more choice for voters and generate stronger satisfaction with the system as a whole (Anderson and Guillory, 1997; Norris, 2004). These popular feelings towards the political system can have significant effects on voting behavior, through stronger partisanship, more information about the available policy choices, and a higher level of mobilization by the parties.

*Election thresholds.* One specific consideration in election rules is whether or not a threshold is applied. Many countries have rules about an electoral threshold, so that a party is unable to secure representation until a minimum threshold is met. The purpose is to reduce the number of parties in the legislature and to improve governance, coalition formation, and accountability. For example, of the 34 countries that are members of the OECD, 19 have an election threshold; most of these 19 countries operate some form of proportional representation. The popularity of election thresholds rests in their simplicity and effectiveness; they are straightforward to implement and easy for voters to understand. During their transition to democracy, many of the postcommunist countries introduced thresholds, often with the intention of facilitating the return of noncommunist parties to power, and barring representation from small, extremist parties (Moraski and Loewenberg, 1999).

Thresholds can affect voter behavior in two ways. First, they have been shown to increase disproportionality in election outcomes and to contribute to the number of wasted votes (Anchar, 1997; Powell and Vanberg, 2000). Voters may therefore be discouraged from voting for a small party that looks unlikely to meet the required threshold and instead opt for a larger and more established party. Second, thresholds can act as a disincentive to new parties contesting elections and arguably limit the choices that are open to voters in an election. The ultimate effect may be to reduce representation. Thresholds may therefore act in a subtle way to nudge voter behavior towards support for major parties, and away from minor parties.

Election rules and their effect on the counting of votes has an obvious impact on voting behavior, by favoring the major parties. A majoritarian system will favor the major parties by giving them a disproportionate share of the seats in a legislature. While a PR system will result in a more equitable distribution of seats, the use of election thresholds in most of the countries that operate PR also biases the system towards the major parties, although perhaps not as strongly. The net effect in both cases is that some voters will perceive their vote as being wasted unless their choice is for a major party.



## System performance

The performance of the political system—the ability to generate material benefits for citizens (such as physical security and economic prosperity) as well as non-material ones (such as confidence in institutions and political efficacy)—serves to shape public views of the system and ultimately determine individual voting behavior. Across the amorphous field of system performance and its political consequences, perhaps no subfield is matched by the breadth and depth of the research on economic voting. This focus forms the main part of this section, but the logic can apply equally well to any issue of concern to voters.

*Economic voting.* Institutions provide an important backdrop to economic voting by way of their impact on public policy. Electoral systems have been long found to have important implications for policy, with proportional systems leading to more redistribution and higher levels of public spending than plurality systems (Austen-Smith, 2000; Milesi-Ferretti *et al.*, 2002; Morelli, 2004). Others have observed the strong similarity between varieties of capitalism and the type of electoral system in the country (see, for example, Gourevitch and Shinn, 2005). However, the origins of these patterns have been a matter of debate. Rokkan (1970) and more recently Boix (1999) have argued that the adoption of PR systems was a conscious policy of the political right, while more recent work has cast doubt on this explanation and argued that the motivation lay in the right's support for consensus regulatory frameworks (Cusack *et al.*, 2007).

A consistent finding in the research is that voters will reward a government for good economic performance and punish a government for poor economic performance. But more than any other area, voters must see a direct line of accountability to government, and institutions help to shape whether that line of accountability is clear or opaque—what has been termed “clarity of accountability” (Powell and Whitten, 1993). In general, economic voting is stronger in countries where the clarity of accountability is transparent—such as two party systems where the major parties alternate in government—and weaker in countries with multiparty systems where coalition arrangements are the norm. This distinction tends to divide Westminster countries based on majoritarian electoral systems from their European counterparts which are based on proportional representation.

*Accountability.* In recent years the clarity of accountability argument has been subjected to considerable scrutiny, and it has been argued that changing economic and political conditions have been undermining the ability of voters to attribute reward or blame for government performance. The various arguments that clarity of accountability has been gradually eroded can be disaggregated into three, partially overlapping, components: path dependency; the growth of the welfare state; and economic globalization.

Path dependency—with each government being required to maintain a certain set of policies irrespective of their own policy priorities—implies that voters see little difference between governments. For example, interest groups, the bureaucracy, and the courts all play a role in the policy process, while past policies often institutionalize programs regardless of the party that occupies government. Thus, a range of factors may conspire to make it difficult or even impossible for a government to change policy direction. A wide range of studies have confirmed this conclusion. For example, Imbeau *et al.* (2001: 1; see also Schmidt, 1996) talk of “the average correlation between the party composition of the government and policy outputs is not significantly different from zero,” while Huber and Stephens (2001: 221) found “a sharp narrowing of political differences” on welfare state policies in established democracies during the 1980s.

A second, related, factor undermining clarity of accountability is the growth of the welfare state in the advanced democracies. One explanation for the weakening impact of economic performance on the vote is the development of sophisticated social welfare programs that

mitigate the political effects of poor economic performance. Thus, when unemployment rises, the provision of unemployment benefits helps to cushion the negative consequences for the incumbent government. Pacek and Radcliff (1995), for example, find that voters are less sensitive to the impact of a poorly performing economy in states with extensive social protection than in countries where the unemployed are expected to fend for themselves.

A third factor eroding clarity of accountability is globalization, and the view that the international economic environment is undermining the ability of governments to make independent economic policy. Hellwig and Samuels (2007) show that the impact of economic voting is less in countries that have more exposure to the globalized economy, so that a voter often finds it difficult to make retrospective judgments about his or her government's effectiveness. These effects are especially noticeable in medium or small-sized economies, where economic performance is seen to be determined by decisions in Beijing, Brussels, or Washington, rather than in the country's national capital (Hellwig, 2001). Economic voting in Australia, for example, is noticeably lower than in comparable economies, due in large part to the view that global economic forces wield more influence over economic conditions than the incumbent government (McAllister, 2011).

While most light has been shed on how economic voting is structured by political institutions, the same logic applies to other issues that voters might be concerned about, be it the environment, health, or education (Anderson, 2007; Kedar, 2009). In each case institutions will mediate citizens' views of the issue in question, and help to shape whether or not voters feel that the incumbent government can be rewarded or punished for their performance. For example, a national government cannot resolve the global warming problem, but it can be seen to be assisting or hindering a solution through national policies. Extending the logic further, institutions also help to mediate more general evaluations of system performance, such as confidence and trust in political institutions. To the extent that a clear line of accountability can be drawn between the performance of the institution and the government, the government stands to be rewarded or punished for its performance.

### Partisanship

Few explanations for voting behavior have attained the status of party identification. First advanced in 1960 in *The American Voter* study, party identification rapidly became the dominant explanation for voting behavior in the U.S. and inspired a wave of research across the other established democracies. It gained a new lease of life with the collapse of communism, and scholars have examined the formation of partisanship in the new democracies of central and eastern Europe. These studies have generally found that partisanship is formed in these new democracies in much the same way as the established democracies, assuming the existence of similar institutional structures that foster open party competition and help candidates to forge a link with voters (Brader and Tucker, 2001, 2008; Dalton and Weldon, 2007; Whitefield, 2002).

While the roots of partisanship are attributed to group membership and to parental socialization, in recent years studies have moved to examine the contribution of institutional arrangements and political context to the formation, strength, and direction of party identification. As a result, we know a considerable amount not only about the individual-level characteristics that shape partisanship, but also about the system-level characteristics as well. In general, partisanship is more likely to form in countries that sustain "institutions that encourage retrospective clarity of responsibility" (Huber *et al.*, 2005: 366). This is more likely to occur in systems that have fewer legislative parties and stronger party discipline, so the choices that voters have to make are

more sharply defined. Voters will therefore adopt distinct policy preferences based on what the parties offer, and that in turn will encourage debate, competition, and the accumulation of information about the policy choices that are on offer (Bowler *et al.*, 1994).

The importance of the types of institutional context noted previously in shaping both the direction and strength of partisanship has also been shown to vary according to the cognitive skills of citizens. Huber *et al.* (2005) show that the impact of institutional context on partisanship has the strongest impact on individuals who have the fewest cognitive resources, measured by educational attainment. For these low-resource individuals, partisanship is a valuable heuristic for making political choices when other information is limited, so partisanship plays a greater role in low information environments or among those with limited political knowledge (Dalton *et al.*, 2011). This has particular implications in new or emerging democracies, especially where literacy may be low and/or the party system has yet to consolidate.

The type of electoral system has particular consequences for partisanship. In general, more proportional systems appear to lead to stronger partisanship and provide a stronger guide to voting. Tverdova (2011) shows that when the effect of candidates on voting is measured against the effect of partisanship, partisanship becomes a more important element in more proportional systems. This is at least partly a consequence of the larger number of parties in PR systems, so voters feel themselves more adequately represented. By contrast, in a two party system voters may feel that one party provides an inadequate representation of their views. Voters may therefore feel less inclined to identify with one or other party and if they do, to have weaker identification.

Other aspects of the electoral and party system also help to shape partisanship. The frequency of elections and whether the system is based on voluntary or compulsory voting are factors. Australia's internationally high levels of partisanship are often attributed to compulsory voting combined with a three-year national election cycle. The net effect is that the vast majority of Australian voters attend the polls regularly thus putting parties at the forefront of their minds (McAllister, 2011). The party system matters not just through the number of parties but in the expectations voters have of the post-election coalition arrangements that are usually made during the election campaign, and in the salience of policies (Curini and Hino, 2014). In multi-party systems where coalition governments are the norm, voters may alter how far they use their partisanship as a guide to voting depending on what coalition arrangements are likely to emerge after the election.

Partisanship is perhaps the most pervasive mass political view; even in countries where party identification has been in decline, a large majority of the electorate still identify with a political party. The fact that the direction and strength of partisanship is partly predicated on the design of political institutions confirms the importance of macro influences on individual voting behavior. It also suggests that where partisanship is in decline, institutional changes may be one mechanism for halting that decline.

### Strategic and split ticket voting

Strategic voting (sometimes called “sophisticated” voting in the U.S. or “tactical” voting in Britain) occurs when a voter casts a ballot for a party other than the one he or she prefers. This event can occur when the voter believes that voting for a party other than his or her preferred party will help to bring about a particular outcome, such as blocking the election of a particular party. Strategic voting therefore combines two elements: a voter casting a ballot for a party or candidate that was not their most preferred; and a reasonable expectation about the outcome of the election (Blais *et al.*, 2001: 344; see also Cox, 1997). A strategic voter is usually distinguished from a sincere

voter, who votes for her preferred party regardless of the consequences, and a momentum voter, who votes for a party because she believes it is likely to win (Blais and Gschwend, 2011: 176).

While the normative reasons for strategic voting have long been understood and analyzed (see, for example, Cox, 1997), the empirical evidence for it has been elusive. The rise of third parties in Britain during the 1970s and 1980s provided much of the impetus for measuring strategic voting. Early attempts to measure strategic voting used respondents' self-reports (for example, Heath *et al.*, 1991) or inferences from aggregate election returns (for example, Johnston and Pattie, 1991). More recent approaches have included modeling the proximity of voters to the parties on a range of issues, and determining if voters deviate from voting for the party closest to them (Alvarez and Nagler, 2000; Blais *et al.*, 2005). In practice, these various methods tend to estimate the number of strategic voters in any one election at around 4 to 6 percent of all votes cast (Blais *et al.*, 2005).

The electoral system is usually identified as the major institutional factor that determines the level of strategic voting in any given system. In general, most studies see plurality systems as most susceptible to strategic voting, since voters have good local knowledge concerning the competing parties and candidates as well as accurate assessments of the likely election outcome. Accordingly, there has been considerable research on strategic voting in the Westminster democracies, notably the U.S. and Britain (see Alvarez *et al.*, 2006). More recently, European countries based on proportional electoral systems have been the subject of in-depth analysis, in addition to several comparative studies (see Blais and Gschwend, 2011; Gschwend, 2004). These studies aimed at proportional systems have concluded that strategic voting does exist, particularly when voters are concerned about what coalition government might be formed after an election (Kedar, 2009).

Isolating the common factors that may shape strategic voting in the various studies that have been conducted is problematic because of differences in country coverage, methodology, and the plethora of contextual differences that exist. However, several conclusions seem clear. First, the evidence does suggest that strategic voting is substantially conditioned by the electoral system, with majoritarian systems showing higher rates of strategic voting when compared to proportional systems. Second, the proportion of voters who vote strategically tends to be small, typically much less than 10 percent of the electorate, largely because the opportunity to vote strategically occurs only in a minority of districts. Third, there is good evidence that strategic voting has increased in recent years.

In addition to the option of voting strategically or sincerely, voters in some systems have the opportunity to vote for different legislatures in the same national election. A voter may therefore choose to vote for one party in one legislature and for another party in a different legislature. This phenomenon is known as split ticket voting and it has become a common feature in many electoral systems, particularly the U.S. (McAllister and Darcy, 1992). This is called "vertical" split ticketing, as the act occurs between different levels of government (Burden and Helmke, 2009). The alternative is "horizontal" split ticket voting, which occurs in parallel electoral systems, where voters can simultaneously cast a ballot in a constituency contest and a national party list (McAllister and White, 2000). The common feature between the two types of split ticket voting is that voters will be motivated by different things in the choices they make, and these motivations are a consequence of election rules.

The rise in the incidence of split ticket voting in many countries is usually attributed to declining popular trust in parties. Fiorina (1992) argues that this widespread suspicion of parties is reflected in a preference for divided government, so no single party has the capacity to govern unhindered and therefore potentially to dominate the electorate. Other research has endorsed the view that voters' motivations are tactical and positive rather than dysfunctional and negative.

Bowler and Denmark (1993) use aggregate data to argue that the electoral systems of the Australian upper and lower houses create very different structural opportunities for voters to cast their ballots tactically, and are unrelated to dealignment. In a comparison of Australia and the U.S., Bean and Wattenberg (1998) show that Australian split ticket voters are largely motivated by a desire to see power shared between parties, while this plays no role in shaping split ticket voting in the U.S. Studies in other countries have identified local factors as important, as in Brazil (Ames et al., 2009); the intervention of parties, as in Denmark (Elklit and Kjaer, 2009); and attempts to minimize policy risk, as in Mexico (Burden and Helmke, 2009).

The importance of these forms of voting is largely dependent on the institutional opportunities that exist to permit them to operate. Moreover, even when such opportunities exist, a minority of voters—and often a very small minority—choose to exercise them. They can, however, have a significant impact on government performance. For example, a government that fails to gain control of an upper house through split ticket voting among its supporters risks having its legislative program curtailed. Similarly, strategic voting can change the outcome of many constituency election contests, an outcome that is often unrelated to voting trends in national politics.

## Conclusion

Institutions are important influences on citizens' voting behavior. This is hardly surprising; the "new institutionalism" of the 1980s and 1990s was premised on the assumption that institutions shape public norms, values, and beliefs which in turn serve to mould policy outcomes (see, for example, North, 1990). Each of the five topics covered here has presented evidence that confirms that political institutions do matter for voting behavior. The question remains, however, to what extent institutions matter in shaping political behavior compared to non-institutional factors, such as the voters' own characteristics. This raises two issues, one normative and one empirical.

Normatively, distinguishing between the impact of institutions and non-institutional factors on political behavior raises problems of endogeneity. If institutions are a product of the conditions under which they have emerged, then they cease to be independent agents. In other words, "conditions shape institutions and institutions only transmit the causal effects of these conditions" (Przeworski, 2004: 527). If this is the case, then it becomes almost impossible to evaluate the impact of institutions since they are the result of what we are trying to measure. Fortunately, it appears that this endogeneity problem has been over-stated; we know, for example, that particular institutions have specific effects on individual behavior. However, we can see the effects of endogeneity when an institution is implanted into one country and works as predicted, while the same institution implanted in another country results in total failure (Przeworski, 2004).

Empirically, much depends on which institutions and countries are included in the analysis. The CSES project mentioned earlier has done much to clarify this situation. We know, for example, that institutions have relatively little impact on patterns of voter abstention, but that the type and complexity of a party system will impact ideological voting and views of issues, among other things (Klingemann, 2009: 26). So what institutions are included for examination has important implications. The countries included in any sample will also have a major impact on the results, as already noted, since each differs in terms of institutional mix and, not least, in the age of their democracy. Moreover, as institutions change and evolve over the course of time, there may be a lag in the political effects of an institutional change.

Do institutions matter for voting behavior? According to Klingemann (2009: 26), the “results prove that they (mostly) do.” But as in any analysis, evaluations of their importance must be sensitive to the nuances. The study of institutional effects on voting behavior has made major progress in the past two decades. These advances have been predicated on advances in data collection and in methodology. The challenge of the next two decades will be to consolidate the findings of this research.

### Note

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