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Making Your Vote Worth More:

The Impact of Electoral Rules on Voters' Behaviors in Ireland, the Netherlands, and the U.S.

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Introduction

While elections do not inherently make a nation democratic, they are a necessary condition for democracy. Free, competitive elections allow citizens to voice their preferences and hold legislators accountable to the will of the people. Electoral scholars Arend Lijphart (2012), Pippa Norris (2004), and G. Bingham Powell (2000) distinguish among two predominant types of electoral systems, each with its own unique effects: (1) majoritarian systems where the candidate with the most votes wins the legislative seat and (2) proportional systems where legislative seats are allotted based on the percentage of votes a party receives. Both majoritarian and proportional systems achieve the democratic function of "government of the people, by the people, for the people" but in significantly different ways (Lijphart, 2012, p. 1). Majoritarian systems tend to create decisive elections in which a simple popular majority tasks one party with the responsibility of governance (except in cases of divided government and the Electoral College overriding the popular vote); on the other hand, proportional systems produce multiparty coalitions that reflect the preferences of as many people as possible (Lijphart, 2012, p. 2). How a government formulates its electoral rules matters for how both citizens and political parties behave and interact with each other.

According to rational voting theory, electoral rules create costs and incentives to which citizens and political actors respond. Assuming that institutions matter, and citizens and parties respond rationally to institutional costs and incentives, we can predict behaviors and political outcomes in majoritarian and proportional systems. This paper examines how majoritarian and proportional electoral arrangements allocate costs and incentives to voters by evaluating their divergent effects on citizens' efficacy, knowledge, and sophistication levels and how, in turn, they impact turnout in Ireland, the Netherlands, and the U.S. Given Americans' relatively low

civic participation levels, in addition to increasing polarization and the erosion of democratic norms in recent years, we must look to other Western liberal democracies that have maintained comparatively strong civic norms. If there are fewer costs and greater incentives for political participation in proportional systems such as Ireland and the Netherlands, then it could be possible to strengthen American civic norms and democracy through electoral reform.

Ireland, the Netherlands, and the U.S. are appropriate case studies for investigating the effect of electoral rules on efficacy, knowledge, sophistication, and turnout levels because they use three different types of electoral arrangements. Schematically, they can be viewed as occupying distinct points along the proportional-majoritarian electoral spectrum (See Figure 1.1). The Netherlands and the U.S. serve as proportional and majoritarian prototypes. The U.S. is characterized by single-member simple plurality elections and a strong two-party system, which diminish electoral proportionality and penalize smaller parties, thereby lowering efficacy, knowledge, sophistication, and turnout levels. However, the Netherlands, characterized by proportional representation party-list elections as well as a nationwide district and an extremely low voter threshold, maximizes electoral proportionality and aids smaller parties, increasing efficacy, knowledge, sophistication, and turnout levels. Ireland uses a proportional representation single transferable vote system which adds variety to the analysis and provides an additional test of whether proportional systems boost efficacy, knowledge, sophistication, and turnout levels. Since Irish citizens must decide how they rank their preferences, they engage in slightly more strategic decision-making than Dutch citizens and significantly more than American citizens. Moreover, because Irish citizens' singular vote is transferred down the ballot, Ireland has fewer wasted votes than in the Netherlands and significantly fewer compared to the U.S. Ireland and the Netherlands are both proportional systems, but the former is more proportional than the latter

because of the single transferable vote. The U.S., as a prototypical majoritarian system, belongs on the opposite side of the electoral spectrum. Situating these nations' electoral systems along a spectrum clarifies their divergent effects.

Figure 1.1
Heuristic Model
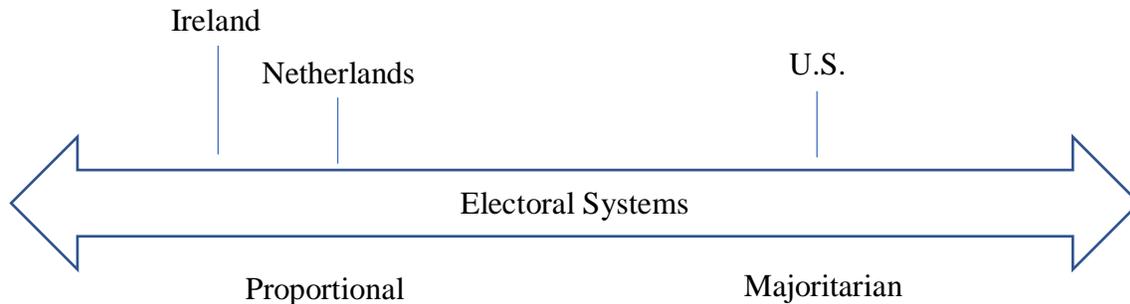
This research uses data from The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) in order to determine how different electoral arrangements impact political efficacy, knowledge, and sophistication and how, in turn, they shape voters' decision to cast a ballot in Ireland, the Netherlands, and the U.S. At the most basic level, electoral systems create costs, which are largely informational, and incentives, which are primarily participatory, for citizens engaging in the democratic process. Proportional representation lowers the cost of becoming politically informed and increases the incentives for actual political participation, creating a more dynamic relationship between citizens and the political system. Proportional representation minimizes political information costs by fostering greater party-system stability and ideological consistency. As a result, citizens under proportional systems become familiar with the parties and their leaders and policies over time. Since a singular vote is less likely to be wasted and more likely to be translated into a legislative seat under proportional representation, citizens are incentivized to become politically informed in order to discern their interests and vote

accordingly. The incentives are even greater in a transferable vote system because it wastes virtually no votes, allowing citizens to rank their preferences and transferring them accordingly. Overall, Irish and Dutch citizens experience relatively few costs in becoming informed and, consequently, greater incentives for casting a vote.

On the other hand, majoritarian systems increase the cost of becoming politically informed and disincentivize political participation. Majoritarian systems increase information costs to the extent that, as the two predominant parties alter their ideological positions each election cycle and campaigns are more personalistic, citizens find it costlier to ascertain candidates' and parties' true policy stances. Moreover, a singular vote is more likely to be wasted and less likely to translate into a legislative seat under majoritarian electoral laws. Even in a bipolar system where parties are clearly distinguishable, citizens are disincentivized to incur informational costs because campaigns remain personalistic and parties disguise their true positions on certain salient issues, and they are more likely to abstain because their vote is less consequential. Thus, American citizens experience heightened political information costs and, subsequently, fewer incentives to vote.

It is vital for the maintenance of democracy that citizens feel their vote matters and actively engage in the political process. Given that Americans are largely uninformed about politics and vote significantly less compared to citizens in other advanced democracies, research examining the impact of electoral systems on efficacy, knowledge, sophistication, and turnout is more salient than ever. Additionally, who votes matters because it creates representational bias. Is American democracy truly representative if only 50% of the electorate casts a ballot and the vast majority of these citizens are white, affluent, and educated?

If electoral rules significantly impact how citizens feel about the political process, their knowledge of it, their participation in it, and their representation by it, then scholars should more critically analyze the costs and incentives majoritarian and proportional electoral arrangements impose on voters. Exploring the Irish and Dutch electoral systems and how they reduce informational costs and incentivize political participation could provide valuable insight into how the U.S. can alter Americans' disenchantment with the democratic process through electoral reform. Compared to majoritarian systems, proportional ones tend to produce more equal representation, less polarization, greater efficacy, heightened political knowledge, and higher turnout because, among many other reasons, singular votes are more likely to be translated into legislative seats and a multitude of elected parties requires cooperation, negotiation, and moderation. At a time when the U.S. is experiencing unprecedented levels of political apathy, inequality, and polarization, the nation could greatly benefit from the advantages associated with proportional electoral systems.

Democracy and Elections

This section outlines the three major concepts undergirding my analysis: a rational theory of voting as well as majoritarian and proportional models of democracy. One theoretical perspective that can be used to understand the behavior of citizens and political parties is a rational theory. While other factors such as emotional appeals, immediate environmental stimuli, and implicit biases certainly influence citizens' and parties' behaviors, a rational framework is useful in identifying the factors that determine the extent to which citizens respond to costs and incentives imposed upon them by different electoral arrangements. Majoritarian and proportional models vary by country, but they generally share the same key features: how votes are translated into seats, party systems, and government formation. The U.S. constitutes the majoritarian model, and Ireland and the Netherlands, albeit different, comprise the proportional model.

A Rational Framework for Democracy

In *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Anthony Downs (1957) provides an account of rational voting theory, applying economic principles to the realm of politics. Prevailing economic theory maintains that individuals and groups act rationally to the extent they act efficiently to maximize utility. Put simply, all behaviors are rationally motivated to maximize output for any given input, so that benefits exceed costs. Consumers aim to maximize utility and firms seek to maximize profits; similarly, voters aim to select a government that will best further their personal interests, and political parties seek votes for re-election (Downs, 1957, p. 5 & 20). So long as voters and political parties believe they are advancing their own selfish ends, they are behaving rationally.

Rational voters compare the expected utility income (i.e. the benefits they expect to receive from government) to assess which party will provide them with more benefits (Downs,

1957, p. 37). With a preliminary understanding of expected benefits, rational voters calculate the current party differential – the difference between the utility income they actually received in a given period and the one they would receive if the opposition had won (Downs, 1957, p. 40). Rational voters then adjust the expected party differential by considering current events and the performance of the incumbent party (Downs, 1957, p. 41). If present utility income is low, rational voters are likely to vote against the incumbent government in favor of change; however, if utility income is high, they are likely to keep the incumbent in power (Downs, 1957, p. 42).

Nevertheless, a clear party differential does not guarantee that citizens will vote because there are implicit costs in registering to vote and becoming politically informed, which make it easier for certain citizens (i.e. the affluent, highly educated, and socially connected) to register and acquire information. Steven Rosenstone and John Hansen (2003) contend that citizens participate in politics "when they get valuable benefits that are worth the costs of taking part" (p. 10). Affluent, educated, and socially connected citizens take part in politics whereas the poor, uneducated, and isolated abstain because the former possess the requisite resources of time, money, and knowledge that the latter do not. Therefore, some citizens can more easily incur informational and participatory costs than others.

The affluent and highly educated are more likely to become informed and participate because they own greater sums of money to contribute to campaigns, can take the necessary time off work to canvass, write letters, and attend meetings, and possess sufficient knowledge to effectively communicate their ideas and mobilize fellow citizens (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995, p. 274-275; Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003, p. 12). The poor, however, find it more difficult to become informed and participate because they possess insufficient resources. For those simply trying to make ends meet, taking time off work, donating to campaigns, and acquiring political

information are luxuries they cannot afford. As money has replaced time as the most valuable political currency, the advantage already enjoyed by the educated and affluent is exacerbated, increasing the political influence of those with greater resources (Brady, Verba, Schlozman, 1995, p. 274).

However, party systems can subsidize informational costs. Assuming normally distributed preferences, Downs' (1957) median voter theory predicts that in majoritarian systems candidates from the two predominant political parties will gravitate toward the middle of the ideological spectrum to attract the median voter. In proportional representation systems, candidates and parties have less of an incentive to moderate their views and instead remain ideologically distinct because they need fewer votes to gain legislative representation. Thus, citizens experience reduced information costs under proportional systems.

Candidates and political parties further subsidize participation costs by strategically mobilizing social groups (Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003, p. 10). Social networks not only minimize the costs of gathering information, but also, they allow for more efficient political action (Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003, p. 24). Candidates and political parties seek to minimize the cost of mobilizing citizens to win election, so they strategically garner support through social networks. To mobilize the most effective number of citizens with the least amount of resources, candidates and parties target people who they already know, are well-situated in social networks, and will likely participate (Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003, p. 31). Consequently, candidates and parties target the wealthy, educated, and partisan rather than the poor, uneducated, and indifferent, exacerbating political inequality (Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003, p. 32).

In explaining who participates in Dutch elections, Marcel van Egmond, Nan de Graaf, and Ceis van der Eijk (1998) believe individual behaviors alone cannot explain sharp

fluctuations in turnout between elections. Similar to Rosenstone and Hansen (2003), van

Egmond et al. (1998) find that individual behavioral attributes are shaped by each election's

context. Individual behavioral factors (e.g. educational attainment and party affiliation) make

individuals more or less inclined to vote, and contextual factors (e.g. the perceived importance

and competitiveness of elections) then motivate citizens to actually vote (van Egmond et al.,

1998, p. 286 & 288). The Netherlands' higher levels of socioeconomic equality, educational

attainment, and political knowledge enable a larger portion of its citizens to understand the

complexities of politics and feel efficacious (Howe, 2006, p. 156-157). These attributes and the

likelihood that even the smallest parties are likely to gain representation explain why the

Netherlands has averaged approximately 80% voter turnout since 1971 (Howe, 2006, p. 138).

Two Models of Democracy

Distinguishing between majoritarian and proportional models of democracy provides a

useful framework for analyzing the divergent effects of electoral rules. Each democratic

framework articulates its own ideals, which inevitably shape nations' electoral rules to achieve

those goals. While the majoritarian model strives to represent a simple majority of the people,

the proportional model strives to represent as many people as possible. Therefore, majoritarian

electoral systems create decisive elections that concentrate power within a single party (except

where the separation of powers and divided government exist), and proportional electoral

systems often produce coalition governments representing an array of societal factions.

1. The Majoritarian Model

The majoritarian model envisions elections as a means by which citizens *control*

policymakers (Powell, 2000, p. 5). Proponents of the majoritarian model believe clarity and

accountability are only possible when political power is concentrated, and elections are decisive;

otherwise, citizens cannot control those in power (Powell, 2000, p. 5). This democratic model employs a majoritarian electoral system. Single-member simple plurality is the most common majoritarian electoral arrangement in which the candidate with the largest number of votes wins and all other votes are unrepresented, or 'wasted' (Lijphart, 2012, p. 130). Such first-past-the-post, winner-take-all elections typically produce a two-party system and create disproportionate results or what Douglas W. Rae terms "manufactured majorities" (Lijphart, 2012, p. 14). When a single party wins both executive and legislative elections, power is concentrated in one party that rules in the interest of a bare majority and a large, excluded minority (Lijphart, 2012, p. 10).

Pippa Norris (2004) refers to the majoritarian model as an adversarial one in which two parties compete against each other for the spoils of government. For Norris (2004), the defining attributes of adversarial democracies include strong voter-member relations and decisive elections (p. 69). Because adversarial democracies with majoritarian elections produce a two-party system, there is a clear winner who controls government and a clear loser who does not. Such decisive majoritarian elections, however, tend to waste more votes and skew results in favor of the winning party. Since legislators are elected through a single-member simple plurality candidate-ballot system, they must respond to constituency concerns to remain in office, improving democratic accountability (Norris, 2004, p. 71). Nevertheless, majoritarian democracies are susceptible to a polarized zero-sum game between the party in power and the party excluded from power, creating an "elective dictatorship" where the majority party rules unchecked until the following election (Norris, 2004, p. 73).

2. The Proportional Model

Whereas the majoritarian model prioritizes government effectiveness, the proportional model strives for socially inclusive representation. The proportional model views elections as a

chance for citizens to *influence* rather than control the policymaking process (Powell, 2000, p. 6). This model disperses political power by allocating legislative seats proportionally to candidates from all societal factions, so they can bargain with one another to achieve desired policy outcomes (Powell, 2000, p. 6). Moreover, elections are not decisive because parties must form a governing coalition after citizens cast their votes, although some proportional systems announce the proposed coalitions prior to the national vote. The proportional model considers the dispersion of power among different groups essential to fairly translating citizens' preferences into legislative representation and policy outcomes.

The proportional model achieves social inclusion through a proportional representation electoral system. While the Netherlands utilizes a proportional representation open party list system, where Dutch citizens vote for a party and can select its leader, Ireland uses a single transferable vote system, where Irish citizens rank their preferences and their single vote is transferred accordingly. Both forms of proportional representation encourage strategic voting and turnout because citizens choose among a multitude of parties, and votes are rarely wasted. Ireland's single transferable vote system arguably fosters greater strategic decision-making because citizens rank their preferences. It also wastes fewer votes because they inevitably go toward a winning party and citizens must weigh their preferences against the likelihood that their candidate will win. By allocating seats in proportion to the percentage of votes a party receives, it is difficult for a single party to gain an outright majority, so parties must compromise, negotiate, and form governing coalitions. Proportional representation therefore gives rise to a multitude of parties, which better represent the particular interests of most citizens (Lijphart, 2012, p. 35-36).

Not surprisingly, proportional elections encourage cooperative governance, reduce barriers for small parties, and ensure parliamentary diversity, maximizing electoral participation (Norris, 2004, p. 69). Because seats are allocated based on the share of votes a party receives, proportional elections produce a multiparty system in which three or more parties vie for power. With more competitive political parties, citizens are more likely to feel their votes are not wasted, thereby increasing efficacy and turnout. Depending on the minimum threshold and district magnitude, it is likely that even fringe parties with a small, dispersed base can gain at least one legislative seat in parliament (Norris, 2004, p. 75). Without a single-party majority, parties must form ruling coalitions, facilitating political compromise and ideological moderation. However, given the multiplicity of political parties, democracies with proportional elections are susceptible to weak, unstable coalitions, making it difficult for parties to implement policies and for citizens to assign direct responsibility (Norris, 2004, p. 76).

The Divergent Effects of Electoral Systems

This chapter expands on the previous one by analyzing the specific, divergent effects of majoritarian and proportional electoral systems on party systems, electoral proportionality, voters' efficacy, knowledge, sophistication, and turnout levels, and party ideology. Majoritarian elections tend to create a two-party system with less electoral proportionality, lower efficacy, knowledge, sophistication, and turnout levels, and greater ideological polarization. Conversely, proportional elections tend to create a multiparty system with greater electoral proportionality, higher efficacy, knowledge, sophistication, and turnout levels, and less ideological polarization.

Party Systems

According to Duverger's (1964) law, majoritarian electoral arrangements tend to create two-party systems, whereas proportional representation tends to produce multiparty systems. In single-member simple plurality elections, citizens vote for a single candidate in their district, where only one legislative seat is available. Since only the winner gets the single district seat, minority parties are penalized and disadvantaged. As a result, third parties find it difficult to gain large, concentrated support and eventually wither away in favor of the two predominant political parties. In the U.S., districts are heavily dominated by either Republicans or Democrats, so third parties are often unable to effectively compete. Following primaries, general elections are typically a face-off between a Republican and Democratic candidate, resulting in a Republican-Democratic split legislature.

Under proportional representation, seats are allocated in accordance to the share of votes a party receives. Although minimum thresholds and district magnitude serve as barriers for small parties, proportional representation fosters a multiparty system, since just a small percentage of the national vote guarantees legislative representation (Rae, 1971, p. 98). The lower the threshold

and higher the district magnitude, the greater the number of competitive parties (Rae, 1971, p. 115). In the Netherlands, with a 0.67% minimum threshold and the entire nation serving as one district, Dutch parties nominate a list of candidates, voters cast their ballot for a particular party, and seats are allotted proportionally to party lists in proportion to the number of votes a party receives (Lijphart, 2012, p. 134-135). Unsurprisingly, Dutch elections typically result in at least ten parties gaining legislative representation. Similarly, Ireland's single transferable vote system, while slightly more complex, results in multiple parties winning seats.

Representation and Electoral Proportionality

Majoritarian and proportional elections also succeed to varying degrees in representing the true preferences of citizens. Norris (2004) remarkably finds that while the "average winner's bonus" – the difference between vote share and seat share for the leading party – averages 12.5% in majoritarian systems, there is only a 5.7% difference in proportional systems (p. 93). Thus, in order to obtain a manufactured majority, the leading party would only need to garner 37.5% of the national vote to gain a majority in the average majoritarian democracy but would need 46.3% of the national vote in the average proportional democracy (Norris, 2004, p. 93). Majoritarian elections exaggerate the vote share of the winning party and penalize minority parties, but proportional elections represent an array of diverse societal groups (Rae, 1971, p. 88).

Lijphart's (2012) findings reinforce the notion that proportional elections produce less disproportionate results. Because of the Netherlands' low minimum threshold and large district magnitude, it averages just 1.21% electoral disproportionality, the lowest of all thirty-six democracies analyzed by Lijphart (2012, p. 150). In contrast, single-member simple plurality elections in the U.S. create a two-party system in which the victorious party is overrepresented, and the losing party underrepresented. Yet the U.S. averages just 4.43% electoral

disproportionality in legislative elections because primaries prevent smaller party candidates from competing in general elections (Lijphart, 2012, p. 148 & 152). U.S. presidential elections, however, result in 46.03% electoral disproportionality because the size of the body being elected is just one, increasing the margin for error (Lijphart, 2012, p. 147-148).

Majoritarian elections tend to increase electoral disproportionality, advantage larger parties, reduce the number of effective parties, and create manufactured majorities (Rae, 1971, p. 27). Proportional elections, in contrast, produce greater proportionality since the share of seats should be equal to the share of votes a party wins (Rae, 1971, p. 28). Nevertheless, Douglas W. Rae (1971) contends that "legislatures are not clear mirrors of society; worse yet, they are always inclined to magnify the size of the 'conformist' majority," concluding that there exists a persistent electoral bias in favor of strong parties (p. 136). In both majoritarian and proportional electoral systems, strong parties with more than 20% of the national vote receive more than their proportionate share of legislative seats, and weak parties with less than 20% of the vote receive less than their proportionate share (Rae, 1971, p. 135). Strong parties are institutionally advantaged, and small parties are institutionally penalized irrespective of electoral formula.

Political Efficacy and Voter Turnout

The extent to which citizens feel their voice matters in the political arena can be understood internally and externally. Whereas internal political efficacy encompasses citizens' ability to understand the complexities of the political system, external efficacy entails whether citizens believe politicians are responsive to the average person (Rasmussen & Nørgaard, 2018, p. 25). Rasmussen and Nørgaard (2018) find that education determines both internal and external political efficacy to the extent that it equips citizens with greater intellectual resources, so they

can understand the intricacies of politics and public policy (p. 25). Citizens with a firm understanding of the political process are more likely to feel that government responds to them.

Political efficacy and voter turnout should be higher under electoral systems that reduce the cost of voting, maximize party competition, and maintain electoral proportionality (Norris, 2004, p. 257). Therefore, political efficacy and voter turnout should increase under proportional electoral arrangements where barriers to small parties are reduced and, consequently, citizens feel their votes are not wasted and go toward a losing candidate.

Often in majoritarian elections, citizens feel that their vote will not matter, particularly in opposition-concentrated districts. For example, a Republican in a heavily-concentrated Democratic district or a Democrat in a heavily-concentrated Republican district may feel their vote will not be decisive and therefore abstain. Wasted votes are less prevalent in proportional systems since it is relatively easy to gain legislative representation. If only 1% of the popular vote is necessary for representation, citizens will feel that their vote matters and cast a ballot on election day. The wasted vote theorem hypothesizes that voter turnout should be higher under proportional representation, especially in nations with low minimum thresholds and high district magnitudes, because it increases electoral prospects for those who would otherwise go unrepresented in majoritarian systems (Norris, 2004, p. 162). This is especially true under the single transferable vote system, where there are virtually no wasted votes, since votes are transferred down the ballot to a winning candidate.

Strategic voting also influences citizens' efficacy and turnout levels. Although one would expect citizens to vote for the candidate or party with the higher expected party differential, this is not always the case because they must consider others' probable behaviors (Downs, 1957, p. 48). With strategic voting, citizens might not vote their sincere preference in order to prevent the

least preferred outcome. One might expect citizens to vote their sincere preference in proportional elections where smaller parties face fewer barriers in gaining representation, but specific voting procedures and the post-electoral coalition formation process create incentives for citizens to not vote their sincere preference (Abramson et al., 2010, p. 81). Third-party supporters may feel incentivized to vote for one of the major parties in order to be included in the governing coalition and select the prime minister (Abramson et al., 2010, p. 82-83). Strategic voting becomes more common under a single transferable vote system where citizens rank various candidates. To the extent that voters under proportional electoral arrangements consider potential coalitions, the bargaining power of major parties, and who is likely to lead the government, voting becomes more strategic. Under majoritarian systems, citizens may not feel they can vote their true preferences; regardless, their vote choice involves less strategy – they vote for one of the two viable parties. Thus, strategic voting should heighten citizens' sophistication levels and thereby their engagement in the political process.

Political Knowledge and Voter Sophistication

Whether a voter decides to partake in elections depends on the cost of gathering and interpreting relevant political information. The rational voter will acquire political data until the marginal return from the information equals the marginal cost of obtaining it (Downs, 1957, p. 215). So, how do voters go about becoming politically informed? A continuous stream of free information establishes a "floor for all types of rational calculations" from which voters may begin to narrow their information selection process (Downs, 1957, p. 223). While governing party activities, campaign ads on TV, and conversations with friends are generally free, there exist implicit costs in the time it takes to gather, analyze, and evaluate this information. With a minimal level of knowledge from a continuous stream of free information, voters intentionally

choose what other information they gather (Downs, 1957, p. 214). But because there are endless amounts of information, voters determine their information investment based on how much they value making the correct decision, which necessarily depends on whether citizens believe a party can win election (Downs, 1957, p. 215-216).

Since the ability to use this acquired political information depends on one's available resources, the cost of information is different for different people. Thus, it is rational for people to have different levels of political knowledge (Downs, 1957, p. 235-236). Individuals with lower incomes are less likely to have the leisure time and educational background to procure and examine political information in as critically a manner as individuals with more leisure time and higher levels of educational attainment (i.e. higher-income citizens). With lower knowledge and sophistication levels, low-income citizens are less likely to vote and, consequently, their interests are less likely to be represented in government. High-income citizens possess the leisure time, educational background, and informal connections to acquire greater political knowledge and, hence, vote in a more sophisticated manner.

Nevertheless, Downs finds that no one has a high incentive to acquire significant levels of political information. If voters express a clear party differential, they are less likely to acquire new political data and will simply vote for their preferred party. If voters are apathetic, they have a greater incentive to acquire information to discern their preferences, but they also require a large expected return value to no longer be indifferent (Downs, 1957, p. 243). Moreover, one's vote value – the probability that a single vote will be decisive – further affects voters' decision to acquire political information (Downs, 1957, p. 244-245). In elections where the vast majority of citizens participate, especially in areas heavily dominated by one party, citizens may feel their

single vote will not be decisive and, therefore, the cost of becoming informed outweighs the benefit of voting correctly for the party that will further their interests.

According to Kimmo Grönlund and Henry Milner (2006), low levels of political knowledge are problematic because information is the most powerful predictor of participation (p. 386). For them, knowledge of the political system and parties is a necessary condition for voting meaningfully. However, because knowledge and sophistication levels vary by educational attainment, citizens experience different costs in acquiring and analyzing political information (Grönlund & Milner, 2006, p. 386-387). Milner (2014) finds that proportional representation increases turnout by lowering the cost of becoming politically informed, especially for those for whom it is most costly – the less educated with fewer resources (p. 1). Moreover, Fisher et al. (2008) discover that voter turnout is higher under proportional than majoritarian systems largely because those with lower levels of political knowledge vote at higher rates in proportional systems (p. 95). Why is it that those with lower levels of political knowledge are less likely to vote under majoritarian electoral arrangements?

Milner (2014) argues that proportional representation reduces political information costs, especially for those with fewer financial, educational, and social resources, and increases turnout by creating greater "ideological consistency and distinctiveness" (p. 6). When voting, citizens take into account past experiences and, because proportional representation creates a more "stable political map," voters become familiar with parties, leaders, and policies over time, reducing the threshold for political knowledge and increasing turnout (Milner, 2014, p. 8). Majoritarian systems are less stable because parties and candidates cloud their policies in ambiguity, pandering to current public opinion in order to win election. With less party stability and ideological consistency, majoritarian systems diminish citizens' ability to rely on past

experiences when voting, raising the threshold for political knowledge (Milner, 2014, p. 8). In bipolar situations, citizens face fewer informational costs, since the parties are clearly distinguishable, but, as Downs (1957) points out, citizens under majoritarian electoral arrangements may simply vote along party lines with little to no information. But because their votes hold less value, they have little incentive to become informed in the first place (p. 243-245).

Paul Howe (2006) confirms the weak link between political knowledge and electoral participation in high civic literacy societies with greater socioeconomic equality. Although the Netherlands has experienced a comparable decline in political knowledge to the U.S. the last half century, it has maintained around 80% voter turnout. So, why does knowledge exert a relatively small influence on electoral participation in the Netherlands? In other words, why do those in the Netherlands who do not identify with a party, do not attend church, and lack sufficient political knowledge still vote? Howe (2006) asserts that the absence of a strong relationship between knowledge and electoral participation in the Netherlands is best explained by the nation's higher absolute levels of political knowledge (p. 154). Because socioeconomic equality and civic literacy rates are higher in the Netherlands, it has fewer people at the bottom end of the knowledge scale and, therefore, higher levels of absolute knowledge (Howe, 2006, p. 157). Where income and educational inequality are higher, absolute political knowledge decreases, making knowledge a more significant predictor of turnout (Howe, 2006, p. 157).

Party Ideology and the Median Voter Theory

According to Anthony Downs' (1957) median voter theory, in majoritarian electoral systems the two predominant political parties will gravitate toward the middle of the ideological spectrum to win the median voter (p. 118). Assuming that the median voter theory holds in a

non-polarized democratic society, the two major political parties will converge in the middle, assuming normally distributed preferences (Downs, 1957, p. 125). Each party develops policies similar to its opponent in hopes that voters will realize their true preference lies near them, and this overlapping obfuscates parties' policies in an attempt to increase their appeal to the median voter (Downs, 1957, p. 135-136). Parties in majoritarian systems adopt "bridging" strategies that create a broad coalition across ideological groups by emphasizing uncontroversial, bipartisan issues agreed upon by the public (Norris, 2004, p. 10). Policy ambiguity, however, has the adverse effect of making it costlier to obtain information. Downs (1957) astutely notes, "Rational behavior by political parties tends to discourage rational behavior by voters" (p. 136). As long as parties cloud policies in ambiguity to maximize votes, voters themselves cannot discern their interests and, therefore, are less likely to cast a ballot.

Downs notes, however, that majoritarian systems do not necessarily create ideological moderation and convergence. In nations where citizen preferences are sharply divided, political parties will remain at their opposite poles and appeal to their bases. Where a once centralized distribution of voters divides into two ideological extremes, Downs (1957) believes conflict is inevitable (p. 120). In conflict-ridden societies, democratic norms begin to erode, as the two political parties implement drastically different policies to stymie and frustrate their opponent. The result: an antagonistic, polarized political culture founded on abhorrence rather than trust of the party in power. This aptly characterizes the current state of American democracy, which is experiencing unprecedented levels of political polarization. Democrats and Republicans not only dislike but also distrust one another to rule in the nation's best interest. Mutual goodwill and commitment to democratic institutions – the hallmarks of American democracy – are beginning

to erode, as Republicans and Democrats actively seek to subvert each other for selfish political gain, often at the expense of fundamental rights engrained in the constitution.

Under proportional electoral arrangements, candidates have a strong incentive to remain ideologically pure and distinct because political support is derived from their ideological base (Norris, 2004, p. 256). The mobilization of citizens with particular viewpoints and party loyalties is achieved through "bonding" strategies that emphasize the party's programmatic policy platform (Norris, 2004, p. 10). With ideologically distinct political parties and fewer electoral barriers, citizens find it less costly to obtain information and more worthwhile to cast a ballot.

Research Design and Methods

How do majoritarian and proportional electoral arrangements influence citizens' efficacy, knowledge, and sophistication levels and how, in turn, do they affect voter turnout in Ireland, the Netherlands, and the U.S.? I argue that proportional electoral laws increase efficacy, knowledge, sophistication, and turnout levels in both Ireland and the Netherlands because, in creating ideologically stable and distinct parties, leaders, and policies, they reduce the cost of becoming politically informed and, by minimizing electoral barriers, they incentivize political engagement. Nonetheless, efficacy, knowledge, sophistication, and turnout levels should be slightly higher in Ireland because its single transferable vote system wastes virtually no votes. On the other hand, U.S. majoritarian electoral laws decrease efficacy, knowledge, sophistication, and turnout because as parties remake themselves in each election it becomes costlier for Americans to obtain factual information and discern candidates' and parties' ideological positions. Even if political polarization reduces information costs, Americans still have fewer incentives to engage in politics because majoritarian electoral laws penalize smaller parties and waste more votes. Since majoritarian electoral laws increase informational costs and decrease participatory incentives compared to proportional representation, typical predictors of efficacy, knowledge, sophistication, and turnout should matter more in the U.S. than in Ireland and the Netherlands.

By concentrating legislative power in one political party, majoritarian elections create manufactured majorities whereby smaller parties are penalized and a large minority is left unrepresented. However, proportional elections, by dispersing power among multiple parties, create more proportional results and enable smaller parties to gain legislative representation. Where legislative results are more proportional and electoral barriers to smaller parties are reduced, citizens are more likely to feel efficacious (i.e. their vote can make a difference in the

election) and cast a ballot on election day. Where legislative results are skewed and electoral barriers to smaller parties more prevalent, citizens are more likely to feel their votes are wasted and abstain. Irish and Dutch citizens should feel efficacious and vote in larger numbers because proportional representation diminishes electoral disproportionality and minimizes electoral barriers, but efficacy and turnout should be slightly higher in Ireland because of the single transferable vote. American citizens should feel less efficacious and experience lower turnout because majoritarian elections increase electoral disproportionality and penalize smaller parties.

Majoritarian and proportional electoral arrangements also offer divergent costs for obtaining political information. Citizens under proportional systems find it less costly to become politically informed and discern parties' ideological positions because, since multiple parties can gain representation, there is an incentive for parties to remain ideologically distinct and consistent. Proportional representation fosters greater party system stability and ideological consistency, so voters become familiar with politics over time, reducing the cost of obtaining political information, especially for those with fewer resources (Milner, 2014, p. 8). Moreover, there is a greater incentive to learn about the parties and candidates because a single vote is more likely to be translated into a legislative seat and less likely to be wasted. Majoritarian systems, incentivizing parties and candidates to cloud their policies in ambiguity and remake themselves every election, make it costlier for citizens to obtain accurate political information and discern parties' ideological positions. With less stable, consistent policies, voters find it more difficult to rely on past experiences when voting, raising the political knowledge threshold (Milner, 2014, p. 8). Even if political polarization minimizes information costs, voters still face few incentives to become informed because their votes are more likely to be wasted. Thus, Irish and Dutch citizens should possess higher knowledge and sophistication levels and vote in larger numbers.

Country Cases

I analyze how majoritarian and proportional electoral arrangements affect efficacy, knowledge, sophistication, and turnout levels in the 2007 Ireland, 2010 Netherlands, and 2008 U.S. elections. In order to clarify how electoral arrangements impose costs and incentives on citizens, it is important to understand the unique political context in which they participate. Ireland and the Netherlands, while different, constitute the proportional model, and the U.S. comprises the majoritarian model. Ireland, the Netherlands, and the U.S. were selected because their demographic similarities increase the likelihood that electoral systems help explain voters' behaviors. The Netherlands and the U.S. serve as proportional and majoritarian prototypes, and Ireland, with a single transferable vote system, adds variety to the analysis and reinforces the divergent effects of electoral systems.

1. Ireland Elections and Government

For presidential, legislative, European, and local elections, Ireland employs a proportional representation single transferable vote (PR-STV) system, where voters rank candidates in multi-seat constituencies, and their singular vote is transferred accordingly. Put simply, Irish citizens rank candidates in order of preference, and this vote is transferred down the list if higher-ranked candidates have passed the quota or been eliminated. After ballots are sorted according to voters' first preference, the quota is calculated as the minimum number of votes required to fill available seats. In the first count, candidates whose first preference total equals or surpasses the quota are elected. Second and further counts then distribute surplus votes for elected candidates and first preference votes for candidates who did not meet the quota. This process of distributing surpluses and eliminating the least supported candidates continues until all seats are filled, resulting in virtually no wasted votes (Proportional Representation, 2016).

Such a complex electoral system requires a high degree of voter rationality and strategic decision-making, since citizens are not only presented with a variety of choices but also must consider the order in which they rank them. In this regard, PR-STV requires slightly higher levels of strategic decision-making than PR-open list in the Netherlands and substantially higher levels than single-member simple plurality in the U.S. PR-STV reduces political information costs by fostering ideologically distinct parties and incentivizes electoral participation by wasting few votes, if any. Citizens are incentivized to discern their interests and vote accordingly because they can choose among various party platforms, and their votes are unlikely to be wasted.

A parliamentary republic, Ireland vests executive authority in the government (the cabinet), who is accountable to the legislature (the parliament). The legislature of Ireland – the Oireachtas – is the primary government body and consists of three institutions: the president and a bicameral parliament (the Dáil and the Seanad). The President of Ireland is elected every seven years for no more than two terms and, as head of state, plays a largely ceremonial role. The lower house of parliament – the Dáil – comprises 166 members elected every five years in forty constituencies. The upper house – the Seanad – includes 60 members who are not directly elected but rather nominated by various methods (The Irish Government, 2015).

The prime minister is nominated by a majority in the Dáil and then appointed by the president after a general election. The prime minister heads the cabinet – the Government of Ireland – which is invested with full executive power but dependent on majority support in the Dáil to make and pass legislation. As the head of government, the prime minister is the leader of the government and has the right to dismiss ministers and dissolve parliament. With no term limits, prime ministers can remain in power indefinitely so long as they retain majority support in

the Dáil. If majority support is lost, the prime minister can either resign or convince the president to dissolve the Dáil and hold new elections (The Irish Government, 2015).

In the 2007 Ireland election, six parties gained legislative representation, and Fianna Fáil remained the largest party in the Dáil with 77 seats. Needing 84 votes for a governing majority, Fianna Fáil formed a coalition with the Green Party and Progressive Democrats, who held six and two seats, respectively. Fine Gael, Sinn Féin, and the Labour Party remained in opposition. Mary McAleese, already reelected in 2004, remained president, and Prime Minister Bertie Ahern – party leader of Fianna Fáil – was reappointed as prime minister. Largely a two-party system, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, both liberal-conservative parties, have dominated Irish elections in recent years, with minimal competition from Sinn Féin and Labour.

Irish citizens are eligible to vote at eighteen and, similar to the U.S., must register and update their voting information with the local Register of Electors by a certain date prior to elections (Right to Vote in Ireland). Nevertheless, voter registration in Ireland is a more straightforward and less onerous process than in the U.S., making it less costly for citizens to ensure they can vote on election day.

2. Netherlands Elections and Government

The Netherlands utilizes a proportional representation open party list system in which parties nominate a list of candidates, voters cast their ballot for a particular party list rather than individual candidates, and legislative seats are allocated to party lists in proportion to the number of votes a party receives (Lijphart, 2012, p. 134-135). In the Netherlands, parties must earn at least 0.67% of the national vote in order to gain representation in the Dutch House of Representatives, and the entire nation serves as a single district, maximizing proportionality and representation (Lijphart, 2012, p. 139-140). Like Ireland and the U.S., the Netherlands has a

bicameral legislature: The House of Representatives (*Tweede Kamer*) and the Senate (*Eerste Kamer*). The 150 Members of the House of Representatives are elected directly every four years via proportional representation party-lists, while the 75 Senators are elected indirectly by provincial counselors through proportional representation (Ramkema, 2008, p. 31). The maximum parliamentary term is five years, but elections are typically held every four years and can occur at any time should the House of Representatives be dissolved due to severe conflict within the cabinet and a vote of no confidence.

Political parties and candidates are incentivized to remain ideologically distinct and consistent since the Netherlands' proportional system minimizes electoral barriers. Dutch citizens find it less costly to become politically informed, as they become familiar with parties and their leaders and policies over time. Moreover, proportional representation incentivizes political engagement because, where a singular vote is more likely to result in a legislative seat, citizens will be inclined to discern which party best represents their interests and vote accordingly. Despite producing more competitive parties, the Netherlands' proportional representation party-list system requires slightly less voter rationality than the Irish PR-STV system since Dutch citizens are not tasked with ranking their preferences.

In stark contrast to the U.S., the executive and legislative branches are fused in the Netherlands, which means that the prime minister is elected indirectly through parliament (Ramkema, 2008, p. 50). The prime minister is typically the top candidate on the list of the party who wins the most seats in the House of Representatives. In addition to an indirectly elected prime minister, the Dutch executive branch includes an unelected monarch whose power is merely symbolic and ceremonial. A parliamentary representative democracy and constitutional monarchy, the Netherlands invests executive and legislative powers in the prime minister and the

cabinet in the House of Representatives, while the monarch serves as the figurehead of the nation with nominal powers regulated by the constitution (Ramkema, p. 9).

Proportional representation party list elections have created a robust multiparty system in the Netherlands. In nations with proportional representation, three or more parties vie for power and no single party usually wins an outright majority, requiring elected parties to enter into negotiations with each other to form a governing coalition (Ramkema, 2008, p. 39-40). In the 2010 Dutch election, ten parties gained parliamentary representation, and the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) became the largest party with 31 seats. Prime Minister Mark Rutte and the VVD formed a governing coalition with the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), creating the first coalition government not led by a Christian democratic or socialist party in 92 years. In recent years, the traditional center-right CDA and socialist Labor Party (PvdA) as well as the new conservative-liberal VVD have faced competition from the populist Party for Freedom (PVV), which has become the primary opposition party advocating for stricter immigration policies and withdrawal from the EU (Ramkema, 2008, p. 16).

Upon turning eighteen, all Dutch citizens are automatically registered to vote through the municipal government in which they live. Citizens receive a voting pass from their municipal government, and, on election day, they go to the local precinct with their voting pass to select their party of choice and give preference to a particular candidate to serve as the party's leader if they do not support the party's top candidate (Ramkema, 2008, p. 25-26).

3. U.S. Elections and Government

The U.S. uses single-member simple plurality (SMSP) elections in which the candidate with the largest share of votes, whether a majority or not, wins. The nation is divided into single-member constituencies, voters in each constituency cast a single ballot for one candidate, and the

candidate with the largest share of the vote wins the seat. SMSP electoral laws increase the cost of becoming politically informed because, according to the median voter theory, the two predominant parties alter their policies based on electoral incentives each elections cycle, making it costlier for Americans to ascertain candidates' and parties' policy preferences. But in an increasingly polarized society such as the U.S., some scholars would argue that it has become easier to distinguish parties' ideological positions. However, even if it has become less costly for citizens to become politically informed in a polarized society, SMSP electoral laws still disincentivize political engagement because votes are wasted more frequently than under proportional representation, and a singular vote matters less for electoral outcomes. SMSP electoral laws also require less strategy because the choice is simpler. Presented with two viable political parties, citizens can either vote for the Democrats or Republicans or abstain.

Congress is composed of two houses: there are 435 congressional districts in the U.S. House of Representatives (district numbers vary per state depending on its population) and 100 seats in the U.S. Senate (two senators per state). Members of the House of Representatives serve two-year terms and are considered for reelection every even year, and senators serve six-year terms with elections staggered on even years, so roughly one-third of senators are up for reelection every two years. Representatives are selected via districts and senators statewide via plurality general elections.

While representatives and senators are directly elected to Congress, the President of the U.S. is indirectly elected through the Electoral College every four years. In order to win election, the president must receive a majority of the electoral votes. Each state possesses electoral votes equivalent to the number of representatives and senators serving the state in Congress. In total, the Electoral College consists of 538 electors, and a majority of 270 electoral votes are required

to elect the President. With the exception of Maine and Nebraska, all states utilize a winner-take-all system and award the entirety of their electoral votes to the presidential candidate winning the popular majority. The president wins the state's electoral votes by winning a plurality of its popular vote. Because of the Electoral College, votes for presidential candidates are often skewed and disproportionate. It could be the case that, even though one presidential candidate wins the popular vote, the other candidate still wins the presidential nomination by obtaining a narrow 51% majority in most states, thereby accumulating a majority of electoral votes. Despite Hillary Clinton winning 48.2% of the popular vote and Trump just 46.1% in the 2016 presidential election, Trump ascended to the presidency courtesy of a 304-227 electoral victory.

With SMSP elections, the U.S. has developed a predominantly two-party system in which the Democratic and Republican parties compete for the spoils of government, but occasionally the Libertarian and Green parties as well as Independents are elected to office. A moderate left party, the Democratic Party generally advocates for the expansion of government social programs, civil rights, and regulation of corporations and the market to ensure fairer economic outcomes. A conservative party, the Republican Party typically supports smaller federal government, the expansion of states' rights, and unregulated free market capitalism. The 2008 U.S. elections were a noteworthy victory for the Democratic Party. President Obama defeated John McCain, and Democrats increased their House and Senate majorities, gaining complete control over all three branches.

U.S. citizens are eligible to vote when they turn eighteen, but they are not automatically registered. Instead, it is the responsibility of individuals to ensure they are registered and update their voting information. Varying by state, voter registration can be a convoluted process, and citizens are often unsure where or if they are registered to vote. Even when registered, voter

suppression laws often deter and prevent less privileged citizens from voting. States remove voting precincts in heavily minority-populated communities, require additional forms of identification, and institute laws whereby citizens must register and change their party affiliation a month prior to election day.

Data

The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) is a collaborative research project among election study teams from around the world. The CSES primarily focuses on citizens' behavior and attitudes during national elections, with an emphasis on voting and turnout. Every five years, the CSES produces a module consisting of a nationally-representative post-election survey and additional variables about the context of each country and the electoral system within which respondents participate. The questionnaires and study design are developed by an international committee of leading scholars in electoral politics, political science, and survey research. The project is then carried out by prominent social scientists within each nation before the studies are combined into a single, free, public dataset for comparative analysis. This research project draws from the 2007 Ireland, 2010 Netherlands, and 2008 U.S. elections in Module 3 to ascertain electoral systems' divergent effects on citizens' efficacy, knowledge, and sophistication levels which, together, influence turnout.

Operationalization of Variables

In order to test my research question using the CSES, key terms must be defined and operationalized. Political efficacy, the belief that one can both understand and influence the political process, may be understood internally and externally. Efficacious citizens are more likely to feel they understand politics and can make a difference, whereas apathetic citizens are less likely to feel they understand politics and that their vote matters. The question of whether

who people vote for makes a difference (C3005) best encompasses citizens' belief that politicians are generally responsive to the average person (i.e. external efficacy). Citizens who feel their vote will not make a difference are generally apathetic, and citizens who feel their vote can make a big difference are generally efficacious.

Political knowledge is constructed as an index variable from a battery of three political information items (C3036_1-3), testing citizens' general knowledge about their nation's political system – candidates, policy positions, and institutions. Political knowledge should matter more for turnout in majoritarian systems such as the U.S., where pandering by political parties and candidates produces party instability and ideological inconsistency, thereby making it costlier for citizens to obtain correct political information. While still increasing turnout, political knowledge will matter less in proportional systems such as Ireland and the Netherlands because party systems and ideologies remain comparatively steady.

While political knowledge concerns the extent of citizens' understanding of factual information, sophistication reflects citizens' ability to think abstractly about politics, requiring higher-level thinking. Voter sophistication is measured as the difference between voters' (C3011_A-B) and experts' (C5017_A-B) ideological placement of the paired predominant political parties. Greater congruency between voters' and experts' placement reflects higher levels of sophistication since voters can more accurately place political parties along an ideological spectrum relative to experts. Voters should be less sophisticated in nations with majoritarian electoral arrangements such as the U.S. because it is more difficult to place political parties along an ideological spectrum when parties are incentivized to obfuscate their policies.

Turnout is measured as whether or not a respondent cast a ballot in the 2007 Ireland lower house election, the 2010 Netherlands lower house election, and the 2008 U.S. presidential election (C3021_1).

To compare samples from the 2007 Ireland, 2010 Netherlands, and 2008 U.S. elections, a series of control variables known to be important for political participation are considered: age (C2001), gender (C2002), education (C2003), marital status (C2004), union membership (C2005), employment status (C2010), household income (C2020), religious service attendance (C2023), campaign interest (C3018), satisfaction with democracy (C3019), and strength of partisan attachment (C3020_2).

Ireland, the Netherlands, and the U.S. are similar along many dimensions. All three nations are advanced Western liberal democracies with relatively high levels of educational attainment and economic wealth. Irish, Dutch, and American respondents are almost identical in age, gender, and labor force composition. Most of them follow their elections at least fairly closely, exhibit strong partisan attachment, are satisfied with the state of their democracies, and feel their vote makes a difference. With Irish, Dutch, and American voters sharing similar backgrounds, the results will help discern how majoritarian and proportional electoral arrangements shape efficacy, knowledge, and sophistication levels and how, in turn, they influence turnout.

Because proportional representation lowers the cost of obtaining political information and heightens incentives to cast a ballot, it reduces the explanatory weight of variables typically known to predict efficacy, knowledge, sophistication, and turnout levels. Thus, education and political knowledge should be more important in the U.S., where majoritarian elections raise the cost of becoming politically informed and create fewer incentives for participation. Conversely,

education and political knowledge should matter less in Ireland and the Netherlands because proportional elections lower the threshold of political knowledge, especially for those with fewer educational resources. Proportional representation lowers the cost of gathering information and increases incentivizes for participation, thereby reducing the importance of education, political knowledge, and other typical determinants of political participation in Ireland and the Netherlands.

The following conceptual models (Figures 4.1 – 4.4) sketch the relationship between political efficacy, political knowledge, voter sophistication, and turnout. Individuals' economic, social, and educational resources matter for political participation: those with greater resources are more likely to participate, while those with fewer resources find it costlier to do so. Education, income, and social networks subsidize the cost of becoming politically informed and participating because the highly educated can understand the complexities of politics, the affluent can more easily contribute to campaigns, and the socially connected find themselves in situations where politics is discussed and learned informally (e.g. at work, in church, and during organization meetings). On the other hand, the uneducated, poor, and socially isolated find it costlier to understand the complexities of politics, contribute to campaigns, and participate. For those simply trying to make ends meet, taking time off work, donating to campaigns, and acquiring political information are luxuries they cannot afford. As money has replaced time as the most valuable political currency, the power of the educated and affluent is strengthened, increasing the political influence of those with greater resources. This resource effect is more pronounced in majoritarian electoral systems because they raise the information costs and decrease participatory incentives. Proportional representation reduces costs and heightens

incentives by fostering ideological distinctness and consistency and wasting fewer votes, so that over time voters become familiar with party platforms and feel their vote can make a difference.

Political knowledge is a significant determinant of political participation. Political understanding encompasses voters' ability to understand basic factual knowledge about their political system and discern the ideology of the parties representing their interests. Without an understanding of the basics of the political system and party ideologies, voters are less likely to feel their vote matters and turnout to vote. Lastly, Downs (1957) explains the importance of voters' personal involvement and interest in politics. Those who follow politics and elections closely, exhibit strong partisan attachment, and feel satisfied with their democracy will be more inclined to participate because they are more likely to have discovered who can better represent their interests and, subsequently, feel they have more to gain by participating. Political efficacy, in turn, becomes a determinant of voter turnout, since those who feel their vote can make a difference will feel more inclined to cast a ballot on election day. Electoral arrangements serve an intermediary role in either exacerbating or diminishing the effects of the determinants of political participation. By lowering the costs of gathering information and increasing incentives for participation, proportional representation reduces the significance and effect of typical factors predicting political participation in majoritarian systems such as the U.S.

Figure 4.1

Political Efficacy

**Electoral Arrangement
(Ireland, Netherlands, and U.S.)**

Resource Endowments
Age
Gender
Education
Marital Status
Union Membership
Household Income
Religious Service Attendance

Personal Interest
Campaign Involvement
Partisan Attachment
Satisfaction with Democracy

Figure 4.2

Political Knowledge

**Electoral Arrangement
(Ireland, Netherlands, and U.S.)**

Resource Endowments
Age
Gender
Education
Marital Status
Union Membership
Household Income
Religious Service Attendance

Personal Interest
Campaign Involvement
Partisan Attachment
Satisfaction with Democracy

Figure 4.3

**Voter Sophistication
(Party A and Party B)**

↑

**Electoral Arrangement
(Ireland, Netherlands, and U.S.)**

Resource Endowments
Age
Gender
Education
Marital Status
Union Membership
Household Income
Religious Service Attendance

Personal Interest
Campaign Involvement
Partisan Attachment
Satisfaction with Democracy

Figure 4.4

Voter Turnout

↑

**Electoral Arrangement
(Ireland, Netherlands, and U.S.)**

**Political
Efficacy**

Resource Endowments
Age
Gender
Education
Marital Status
Union Membership
Employment Status
Household Income
Religious Service Attendance

**Political
Knowledge**

Personal Interest
Campaign Involvement
Partisan Attachment
Satisfaction with Democracy

Descriptive Results

Ireland, the Netherlands, and the U.S. are similar in many ways. All are advanced,

industrialized, liberal Western democracies and members of the OECD, with high levels of

educational attainment and economic prosperity. The samples from the CSES are roughly

representative and similar for the three countries in this study, making them appropriate for

comparison in ascertaining the divergent effects of majoritarian and proportional systems on

citizens' efficacy, knowledge, sophistication, and turnout levels.

Demographic Characteristics

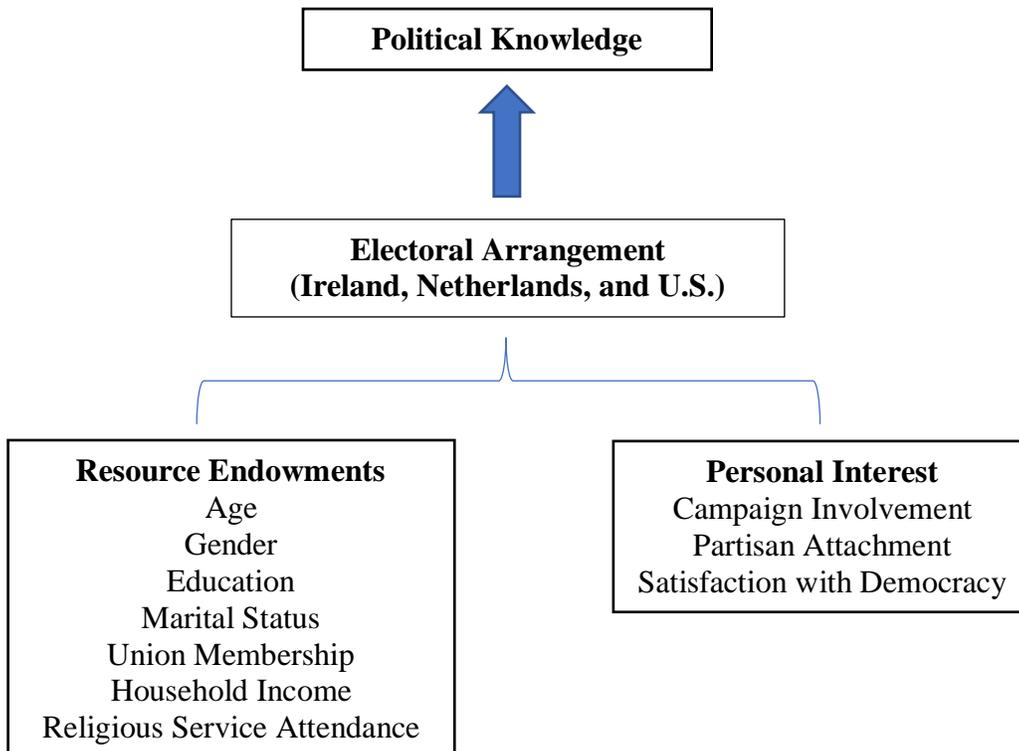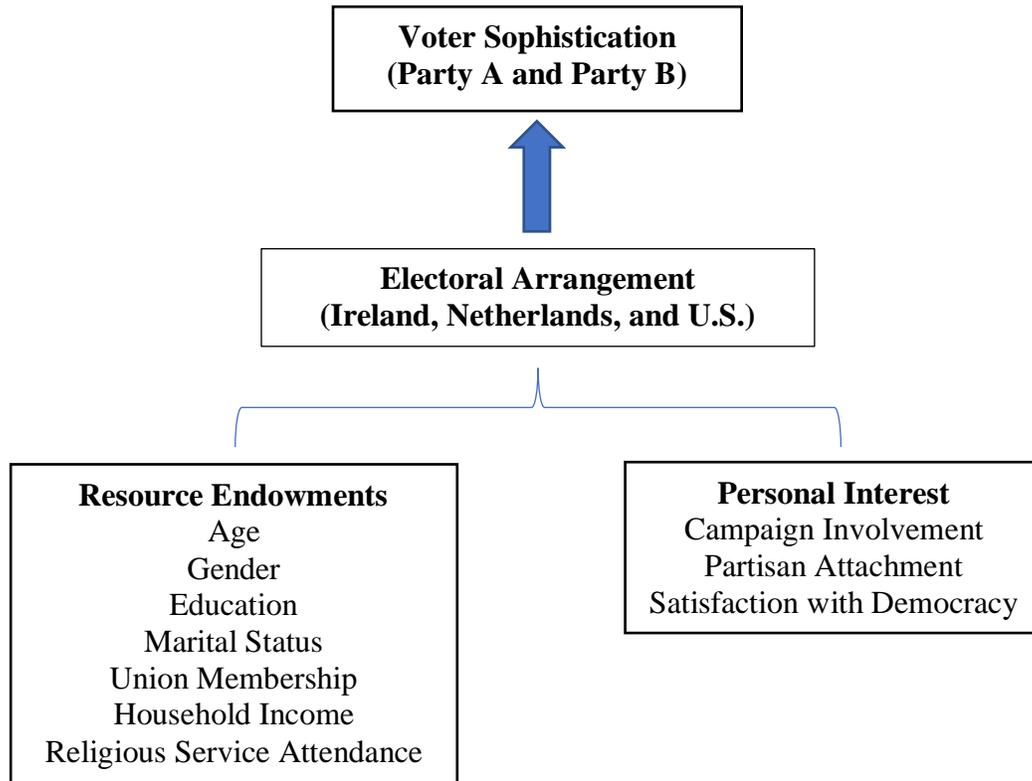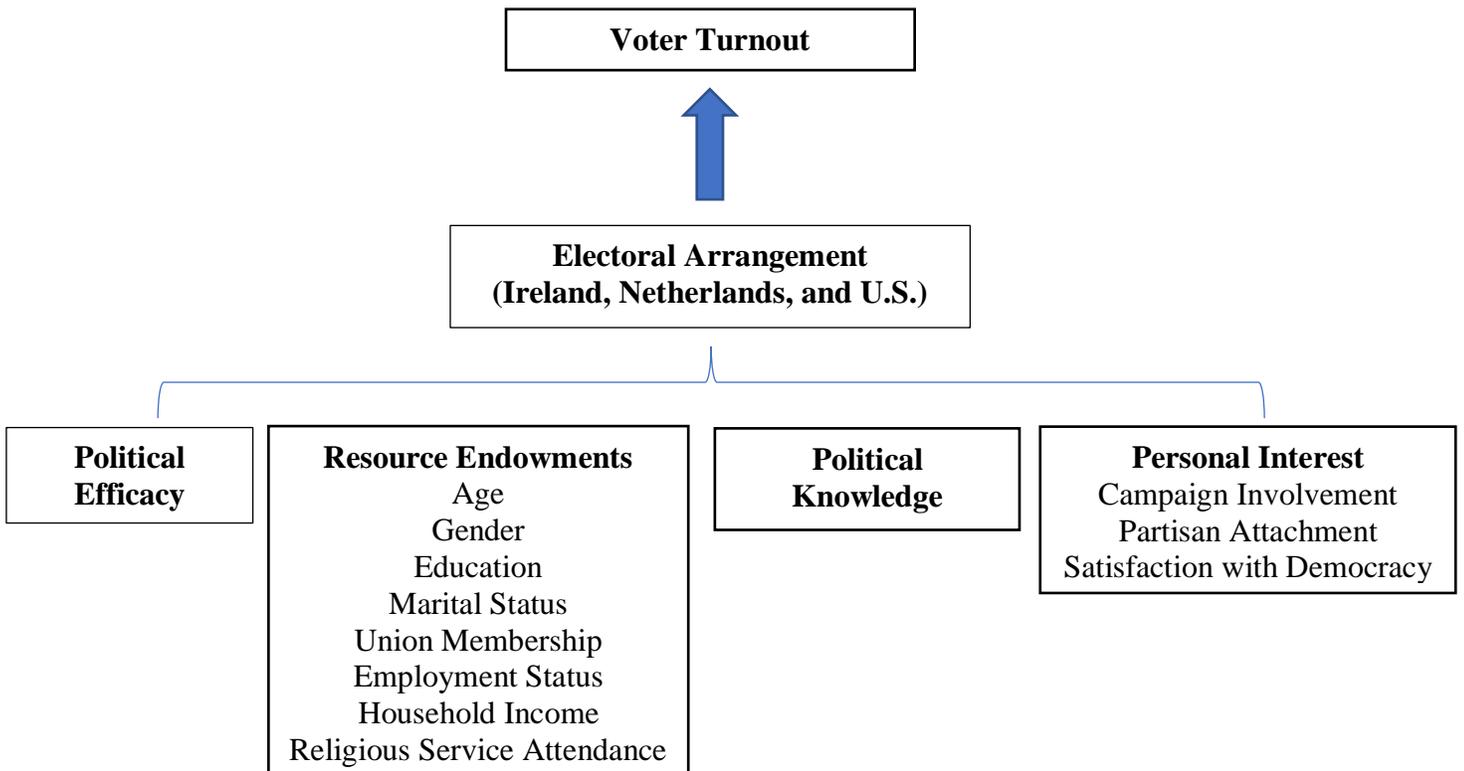The distribution of respondents amongst the four age cohorts is almost the same in

Ireland, the U.S., and the Netherlands. Approximately 12-18% are between 17 and 29-years-old,

27% are between 30 and 44-years-old, 28-31% are between 45 and 59-years-old, and 24-30% are

between 60 and 95-years-old. Irish, Dutch, and American respondents are also roughly split

between males and females.

On average, the Dutch are more highly educated than Americans and the Irish. Only

20.4% of Dutch respondents failed to complete secondary school or less, 49.0% completed

secondary or trade school, and all 30.7% who went to college completed it. In Ireland, 49.6%

failed to complete secondary school or less, 50.5% completed secondary or trade school, and no

one attended college. In the U.S., 47.0% failed to complete secondary school or less, 31.4%

completed secondary or trade school, and only 21.7% went to college. The average Dutch

respondent attends trade school, but the average Irish and American respondent only receives

some secondary education.

The vast majority of Irish (62.7%) and Dutch respondents (70.1%) are married compared

to 43.8% of American respondents. Very few Irish, Dutch, and American respondents are

members of unions, but it is slightly more common in Ireland and the Netherlands because of the presence of labor parties. The composition of the Irish, Dutch, and American labor forces is nearly identical: approximately 50% of respondents are employed full-time and work at least 32 hours/week, roughly 18% are retired, and less than 11% are unemployed. Irish, Dutch, and American respondents are evenly and proportionately distributed among household income quintiles. Although equality is slightly higher in Ireland and the Netherlands than in the U.S., the average respondent in all three cases belongs to the third household income quintile.

Unsurprisingly, Irish and American respondents attended church more frequently than Dutch respondents, signifying higher levels of religiosity in Ireland and the U.S. 42.0% of Dutch respondents never attend religious services compared to just 2.8% of Irish and 0.9% of American respondents. Moreover, 59.0% of Irish respondents and 37.1% of American respondents attend religious services at least once per week while only 20.1% of Dutch respondents do the same.

Irish and American respondents followed their elections much more closely than Dutch citizens followed theirs. 69.0% of Irish respondents and 79.6% of American respondents followed their elections at least fairly closely compared to just 35.8% of Dutch respondents. Despite the average Irish and American respondent following elections more closely, turnout was higher in Ireland (67.0%) and the Netherlands (75.4%) than in the U.S. (58.2%).

American respondents display stronger levels of partisan attachment than Irish and Dutch citizens when asked how close they feel to their party of choice. 40.2% of American respondents feel very close to their party compared to just 19.5% of Irish and 14.9% of Dutch respondents. When considering those who feel somewhat close, Irish, Dutch, and Americans show nearly identical levels of partisan attachment.

In regard to satisfaction with democracy, 81.0% of Irish, 77.3% of Dutch, and 82.3% of American respondents reported being at least fairly satisfied. Only 4.2% of Irish, 3.5% of Dutch, and 4.9% of American respondents were not at all satisfied.

Despite disparities in educational attainment, campaign involvement, and religious service attendance, Irish, Dutch, and American respondents are similar in regard to age, gender, marital status, union membership, employment status, household income, partisan attachment, and satisfaction with democracy. Ireland, the Netherlands, and the U.S. are well-established Western liberal democracies with relatively high levels of economic wealth and educational attainment, and their citizens are similar along most demographic dimensions.

		Ireland	Netherlands	U.S.
	Table 5.1			
	Summary of demographic characteristics among Irish, Dutch, and American			
	respondents (expressed as percentages)			
Age	17-29	11.5	16.0	18.6
	30-44	27.3	27.4	27.1
	45-59	31.3	28.8	30.7
	60-95	29.9	27.8	23.6
Gender	Male	49.6	51.1	43.0
	Female	50.5	49.0	57.0
Education	None	1.6	--	0.1
	Primary Incomplete	--	--	4.1
	Primary Complete	24.9	5.3	10.1
	Secondary Incomplete	23.1	15.1	32.7
	Secondary Complete	30.2	8.0	19.6
	Trade/Vocational School	20.3	41.0	11.8
	Undergraduate Incomplete	--	--	15.2
	Undergraduate Complete	--	30.7	6.5
Marital Status	Married	62.7	70.1	43.8
	Widowed	6.6	4.6	9.3
	Divorced/Separated	6.6	5.9	20.4
	Single, never married	24.1	19.5	26.5
Union Membership	Member	37.5	20.8	7.5
	Non-member	62.5	79.2	92.5
Employment Status	Employed (32+ hours)	46.3	56.6	50.4
	Employed (15-32 hours)	13.6	3.0	8.1
	Employed (<15 hours)	--	--	1.3
	Helping Family Member	0.5	--	--
	Unemployed	3.0	11.4	5.6
	Student	1.0	6.6	2.9
	Retired	17.9	19.0	17.0
	Housewife	13.6	--	6.3
	Permanently Disabled	4.3	3.4	8.3
Household Income	Lowest Income Quintile	10.7	22.5	21.3
	Second Income Quintile	21.3	20.0	22.7
	Third Income Quintile	23.7	20.6	15.8
	Fourth Income Quintile	22.2	20.9	24.2
	Highest Income Quintile	22.1	16.0	16.0
Religious Service Attendance	Never	2.8	42.0	0.9
	Once a year	9.3	--	--
	Two to eleven times a year	14.5	19.7	20.7
	Once a month	5.2	9.5	25.5
	Two or more times a month	9.3	8.7	15.8
	At least once a week	59.0	20.2	37.1
Campaign Involvement	Very closely	25.2	3.7	35.3
	Fairly closely	43.8	32.1	44.3
	Not Very closely	23.5	55.1	13.1
	Not closely at all	7.5	9.1	7.3
Partisan Attachment	Very close	19.5	14.9	40.2
	Somewhat close	59.1	59.8	29.6
	Not very close	21.4	25.3	30.2
Satisfaction with Democracy	Very satisfied	12.1	7.0	26.8
	Fairly satisfied	68.9	70.2	55.4
	Not very satisfied	14.9	19.3	12.8
	Not at all satisfied	4.2	3.5	4.9

Political Efficacy, Knowledge, Voter Sophistication, and Turnout

1. Political Efficacy

On average, Irish and American respondents felt more efficacious than Dutch

respondents, although all respondents exhibit high levels of efficacy. 51.5% of Irish and 54.5%

of American respondents believed who people vote for can make a big difference compared to

just 24.9% of Dutch respondents. When including those who feel slightly less strongly, 72.3% of

Irish, 68.0% of Dutch, and 80.1% of American respondents feel who people vote for can make a

difference (See Table 5.2). Figure 5.1 shows that a significant majority of Irish, Dutch, and

American respondents feel their vote can make a difference.

Figure 5.1 (CSES Module 3)
Political Efficacy in Ireland (2007), the Netherlands (2010), and the U.S. (2008)

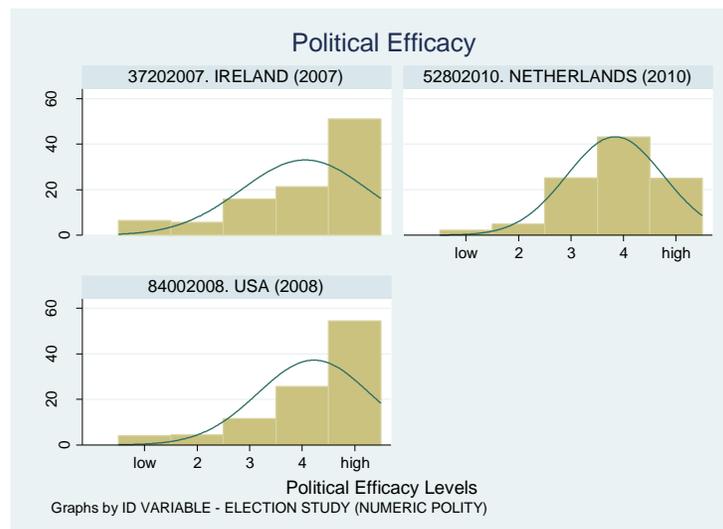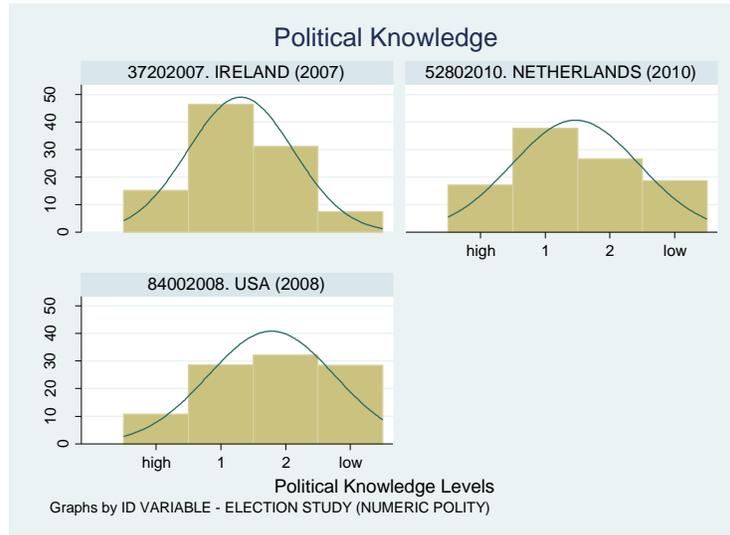| Table 5.2 Summary of Political Efficacy Levels among Irish, Dutch, and American Respondents (expressed as percentages)			
	Ireland	Netherlands	U.S.
Won't make a difference	6.3	2.1	4.1
2	5.5	4.9	4.3
3	15.8	25.1	11.5
4	21.2	43.1	25.7
Can make a big difference	51.1	24.9	54.5

2. Political Knowledge

In contrast to efficacy, Irish and Dutch respondents possess significantly higher levels of political knowledge than American respondents. As Table 5.3 illustrates, 15.2% of Irish respondents and 17.1% of Dutch respondents answered all three survey questions correctly compared to just 10.8% of Americans. A majority of Irish and Dutch respondents – 61.5% and 54.7% – exhibit high levels of political knowledge, with at least two correct responses. American respondents display significantly lower levels of political knowledge with only 39.4% able to answer at least two questions correctly. Moreover, just 7.4% of Irish and 18.6% of Dutch respondents answered all three questions incorrectly, but 28.4% of American respondents could not answer a single question correctly. The difference in political knowledge levels between Irish, Dutch, and American respondents are more profound when one considers the difficulty of the questions. American respondents were simply asked to identify the respective positions held by three prominent political figures (Dick Cheney, Nancy Pelosi, and John Roberts), but Dutch respondents, when presented with a photograph, had to identify political figures as well as their party and function. Irish respondents were asked similarly difficult questions about budgeting, government departments, and party platforms. Considering that Irish respondents had to know detailed facts about their political system and Dutch respondents had to know three pieces of information for each question, their higher levels of political knowledge are even more impressive. Figure 5.2 illustrates that the majority of Irish and Dutch respondents possess high levels of political knowledge, and a significant portion of American respondents possesses little to no political knowledge.

Figure 5.2 (CSES Module 3)
Political Knowledge in Ireland (2007), the Netherlands (2010), and the U.S. (2008)

Table 5.3			
Summary of Political Knowledge Levels among Irish, Dutch, and American Respondents (expressed as percentages)			
	Ireland	Netherlands	U.S.
High	15.2	17.1	10.8
1	46.4	37.7	28.6
2	31.1	26.6	32.2
Low	7.4	18.6	28.4

3. Voter Sophistication

    Irish and Dutch respondents also possess higher levels of sophistication, as demonstrated

by smaller deviations between Irish and Dutch respondents' and experts' placements of the two

major parties along the ideological spectrum. Sophistication is measured as voters' ability to

accurately place political parties along a political spectrum relative to experts. Zero, when there

are no deviations between voters' and experts' placements, signals high levels of voter

sophistication. Small deviations from zero reflect close correspondence between respondents'

and experts' placements of parties. Positive or negative deviations mean respondents placed the

party either to the left or the right of the position established by experts. In Figure 5.3 Panel A,

the peak around 0 in Ireland and the Netherlands signifies that Irish and Dutch respondents

accurately placed Fianna Fáil and the VVD along the ideological spectrum relative to experts'

placement; on the other hand, American respondents exhibit lower levels of sophistication,

finding it more difficult to accurately place the Democratic Party. Panel B reinforces the notion

that Irish and Dutch respondents display higher levels of sophistication for Fine Gael and PvdA,

with there being fewer deviations between Irish and Dutch respondents' and experts' placements.

Table 5.4 indicates that the magnitude of American respondents' placement errors are three to

nine times larger than that of Irish and Dutch respondents.

Figure 5.3 (CSES Module 3)
Voter Sophistication in Ireland (2007), the Netherlands (2010), and the U.S. (2008)

Panel A
(Fianna Fáil, VVD, Democratic Party)

Panel B
(Fine Gael, PvdA, and Republican Party)
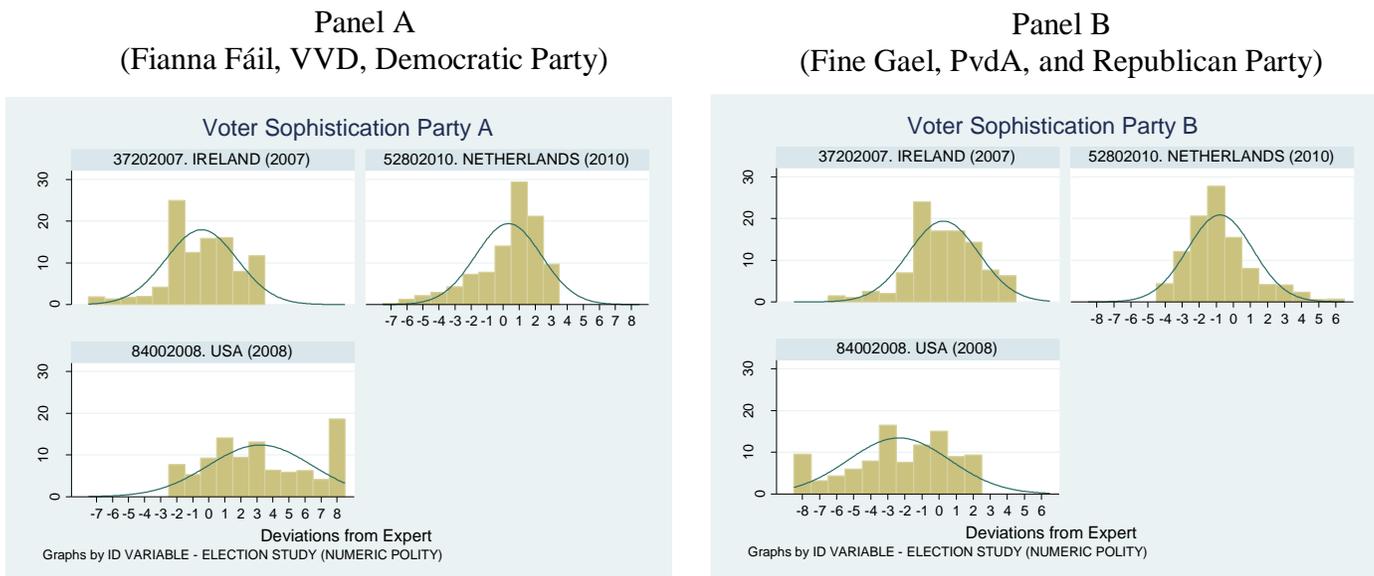
Table 5.4 Average Voter Sophistication Levels among Irish, Dutch, and American Respondents for Parties A and B (expressed as means)			
	Ireland	Netherlands	U.S.
Party A	-.45	.34	3.21
Party B	.26	-.78	-2.35

4. Turnout

Table 5.5. shows that respondents were much more likely to cast a ballot in Ireland and

the Netherlands than in the U.S. 87.9% of Irish respondents cast a ballot for the 2007 Ireland

lower house election and 91.3% of Dutch respondents cast a ballot for the 2010 Netherlands

lower house election, and 75.8% of American respondents cast a ballot for the 2008 U.S.

presidential election. Notably, 23.7% of American respondents did not have the choice to cast a

ballot because they were not registered. All Dutch citizens are automatically registered to vote.

Like the U.S., Ireland has an application registration system, but less than 1% of Irish

respondents were unregistered, and they were only 3% less likely to cast a ballot than Dutch

respondents.

| Table 5.5 Respondents' decision to cast a ballot (expressed as percentages)			
	Ireland	Netherlands	U.S.
Yes	87.9	91.3	75.8
No	11.4	8.7	0.5
Not registered	0.63	--	23.7

How Education and Political Knowledge Affect Turnout

What is the impact of education and political knowledge on turnout? Although Irish,

Dutch, and American respondents are well-educated, educational attainment matters less for Irish

and Dutch respondents' decision to cast a ballot. Figure 5.4 shows the steepest drop amongst

American respondents. As educational attainment decreases, fewer American respondents

decided to cast a ballot relative to Irish and Dutch respondents. American respondents' decision

to cast a ballot in the 2008 U.S. presidential election dropped 60.1% between respondents with

an undergraduate degree and those with no education and 23.1% between respondents with an

undergraduate degree and those having completed secondary school.

While the decision to cast a ballot remained fairly constant among Irish and Dutch

respondents, regardless of educational attainment, the decision fluctuated drastically among

American respondents according to their educational level. 96.8% of Dutch respondents

attending at least some college cast a ballot, and 84.1% of those with just a primary education

still cast a ballot. Similarly, 87.0% of Irish respondents attending trade school cast a ballot, and

87.1% of those with just a primary education still cast a ballot. However, 91.6% of American

respondents with at least some college education cast a ballot, but only 52.7% with a primary

education did the same – a difference of roughly 40%. Irish turnout dropped 24.5% between

respondents with the highest and lowest levels of educational attainment. Dutch turnout only

dropped 12.6% between respondents with a college degree and those only having completed

primary school.

Figure 5.4

Respondents' decision to cast a ballot by level of education attainment
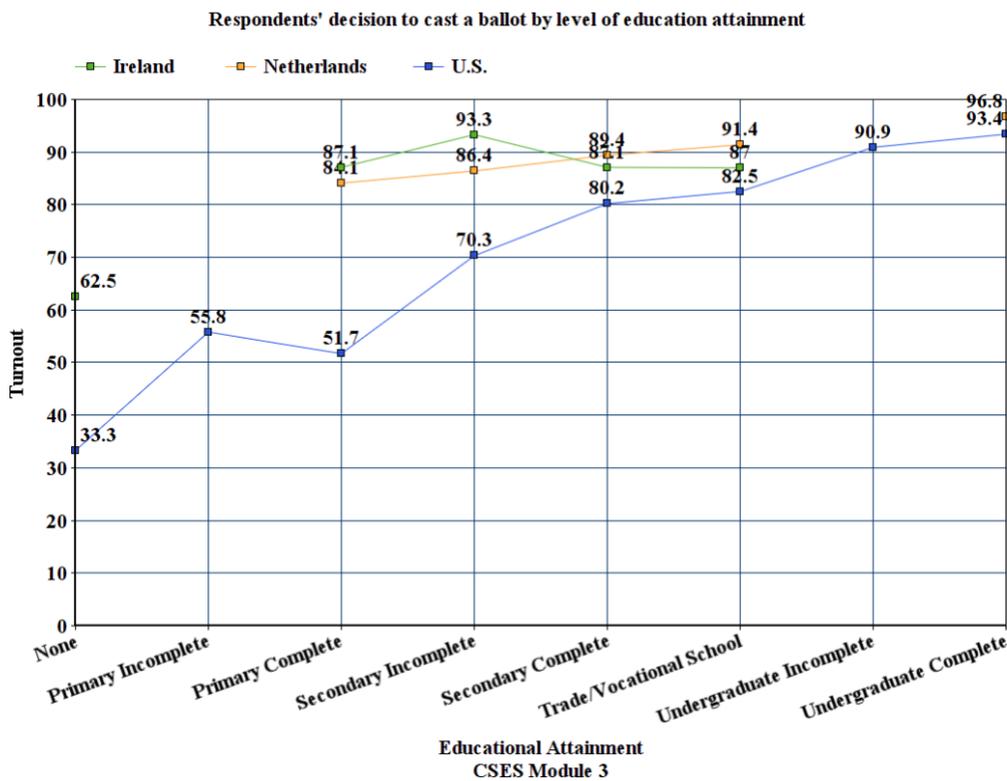
Not only does the average Irish and Dutch respondent possess higher levels of political

knowledge, but also, political knowledge matters less for whether Irish and Dutch respondents

cast a ballot. Figure 5.5 shows a substantially steeper drop in turnout amongst American

respondents with lower levels of political knowledge. As political knowledge decreases, fewer

American respondents cast a ballot relative to Irish and Dutch respondents. Turnout in Ireland

only dropped 9.1% between respondents with the highest and lowest levels of political

knowledge. Similarly, turnout in the Netherlands only dropped 7.6%. However, turnout in the

U.S. dropped 35.4%. Whereas turnout remained fairly constant among Irish and Dutch

respondents, regardless of political knowledge levels, turnout among American respondents

fluctuated considerably. 86.8% of Irish and 96.6% of Dutch respondents answering all political

information items correctly cast a ballot, and 77.8% and 89.0% answering all items incorrectly

still cast a ballot in each nation. Meanwhile, although 93.3% of American respondents answering

all political information items correctly cast a ballot, only 57.9% answering all items incorrectly

cast a ballot. This supports Fisher's (2008) and Milner's (2014) findings that political knowledge

has a more significant impact on turnout in nations with majoritarian electoral systems, where

the political knowledge threshold is higher.

Figure 5.5
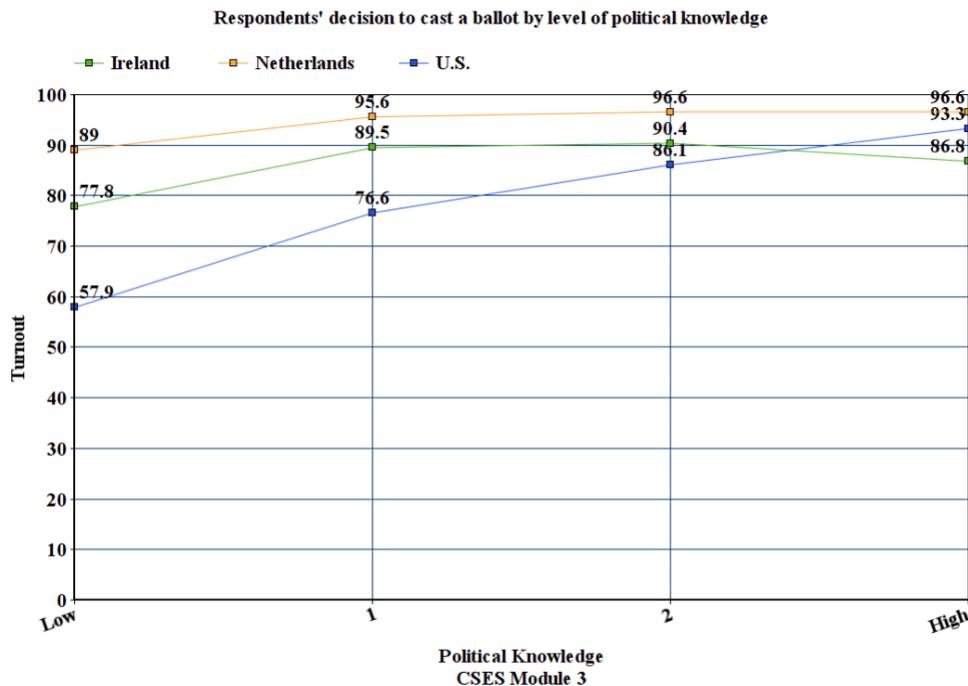
Do Electoral Systems Matter?

Do electoral systems influence efficacy, knowledge, sophistication, and turnout levels? It is expected that typical predictors of political participation – demographic characteristics and political interest – will exert a significant positive effect on Americans' efficacy, knowledge, sophistication, and turnout levels because U.S. electoral rules increases informational costs and decreases participatory incentives. Meanwhile, such factors will be less important in Ireland and the Netherlands. Irish and Dutch citizens' political behavior will vary independently of demographic characteristics and political interest because proportional electoral rules decrease informational costs and increase participatory incentives. Regression analysis largely confirms these expectations. Although the efficacy model fails, the knowledge, sophistication, and turnout models strongly support the notion that proportional electoral arrangements reduce the influence of typical predictors of political participation by minimizing informational costs and increasing participatory incentives.

Political Efficacy

Externally, political efficacy encompasses the extent to which citizens believe political institutions are responsive to the average person. One way of measuring responsiveness is to consider the extent to which citizens feel their vote makes a difference. Recall the descriptive results show that all three nations display relatively high levels of political efficacy. So, what determines political efficacy? I estimate the effects of demographic characteristics (age, gender, education, marital status, union membership, household income, and religious service attendance) and political interest (campaign involvement, satisfaction with democracy, and partisan attachment) on political efficacy.

If electoral arrangements influence political behavior, then I anticipate that resource endowments and personal political interest variables will matter more in the U.S. than in Ireland and the Netherlands because majoritarian systems increase costs and diminish incentives for political participation. Americans, especially those with fewer resource endowments and less personal interest in politics, will feel less efficacious because their singular vote is largely inconsequential. These variables should matter less for explaining efficacy levels in Ireland and the Netherlands because proportional systems minimize costs and increase incentives for political participation by generating fairer results and wasting fewer, if any, votes.

My expectation for political efficacy largely fails, as there are no consistent, significant patterns across the three countries. Resource endowments and personal political interest explain relatively little variation in political efficacy, but political interest, particularly campaign involvement and partisan attachment, matters more in all countries but especially the U.S. The relationship between resource endowments and political efficacy are statistically insignificant and inconsistent across nations, suggesting that such characteristics have little bearing on whether Irish, Dutch, and American citizens feel efficacious. When analyzing data from the American National Election Studies, efficacy is more closely related to measures of trust, but the CSES had no variables that captured this concept.

	Ireland	Netherlands	U.S.
Table 6.1 Predicting Political Efficacy: Results of OLS Regression Analysis CSES Module 3			
Age	0.06	-0.15**	-0.02
	(0.09)	(0.05)	(0.03)
Gender	0.08	-0.03	0.15**
	(0.13)	(0.11)	(0.06)
Education	0.03	-0.00	-0.00
	(0.07)	(0.04)	(0.02)
Marital Status	0.30*	-0.06	-0.07
	(0.15)	(0.12)	(0.06)
Union Membership	0.05	0.09	-0.06
	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.10)
Household Income	-0.02	-0.05	-0.06*
	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.02)
Religious Service Attendance	-0.00	0.01	0.01
	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Campaign Involvement	0.23*	0.14*	0.24***
	(0.90)	(0.08)	(0.04)
Satisfaction with Democracy	0.15*	0.11*	0.05
	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.03)
Partisan Attachment	0.26*	0.12	0.17***
	(0.11)	(0.09)	(0.03)
Constant	4.58***	5.45***	5.36***
	(0.76)	(0.62)	(0.32)
R-squared	0.09	0.07	0.10
N	320	308	1,089
***$p < 0.001$ **$p < 0.01$ *$p < 0.05$			

Of the resource endowment variables, education (-0.00) and income (-0.06*) fail to predict efficacy in the U.S. Education and income were expected to have larger, more significant effects, particularly in the U.S., because those with higher levels of educational attainment and income better understand the political process and can contribute money, both of which increase citizens' belief that their vote can make a difference.

On the other hand, campaign involvement is the most important factors in the U.S. (0.24***). How closely one follows the campaign matters most in the U.S. because single-member simple plurality, candidate ballot elections facilitate stronger attachments between voters and individual candidates. If citizens cast ballots for candidates rather than parties, then

campaigns become more personalistic, as candidates mobilize voters through personal appeals. And since citizens vote for individual candidates, who adopt their own unique agendas, the extent to which someone follows the campaign matters more for whether that person feels their vote can make a difference. In other words, the personalized nature of American campaigns means that citizens' efficacy levels are strongly dependent upon them following campaigns. Without closely following campaigns, citizens will not be up-to-date on candidates' policy stances and are therefore less likely to feel their vote can make a difference.

In contrast, campaigns in the Netherlands are more about parties because citizens vote for party platforms rather than individual candidates. Party-list proportional representation encourages stronger party discipline since candidates' success depends on the success of the party. Voting for parties and not candidates, the extent to which Dutch citizens follow the campaign matters less for political efficacy (0.14*). In Ireland, the effect of campaign involvement on political efficacy is as strong as in the U.S. but less significant (0.23*). Its single transferable vote system employs a candidate-ballot system like the U.S., meaning that citizens vote for individual candidates, although Irish voters may preferentially rank them.

Partisan attachment exerts a positive, statistically significant effect on political efficacy in Ireland (0.26*) and the U.S. (0.17***). As Irish and American citizens feel closer to their party, political efficacy increases. That strength of partisan attachment matters for levels of political efficacy is unsurprising, given that political parties serve as a cognitive heuristic in lowering political information costs. Partisanship matters most in the U.S. because only two major parties compete for elections. Americans choose between Democrats and Republicans, so those who do not identify with either party are less likely to feel their vote can make a difference. Partisan attachment is insignificant in the Netherlands (0.12) because, presented with a larger array of

viable political parties, Dutch citizens are able to identify with a party they feel particularly close to and aligns with their preferences. Compared to the U.S., the relationship is stronger but less significant in Ireland because citizens are presented with more party options than in the U.S. but less than in the Netherlands. Like the U.S., Ireland is predominantly a two-party system dominated by Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, but smaller third parties stand a greater chance of gaining legislative representation due to its PR-STV system, which wastes virtually no votes. Consequently, Irish citizens are more likely to believe their vote can make a difference.

Political Knowledge

Electoral systems also matter for political knowledge levels, with majoritarian systems increasing the cost of obtaining accurate political information. The descriptive results reveal that Irish and Dutch respondents possess higher levels of political knowledge than American respondents. What explains these differences? Political knowledge is estimated by the same model used for political efficacy. Similarly, I expect that resource endowments and political interest variables will be more influential on political knowledge in the U.S., where the political knowledge threshold is higher.

The results largely support these expectations. The effect of education in the U.S. is strong and statistically significant but insignificant in Ireland and the Netherlands. Second, campaign involvement is important in the U.S. but not in Ireland and the Netherlands. Third, the model better explains variations in political knowledge in the U.S. than in Ireland and the Netherlands. The model explains 6% of variation in political knowledge in Ireland, 20% in the Netherlands, and 28% in the U.S. The greater predictive value of the model for the U.S. supports the hypothesis that resource endowments and political interest are more influential for political knowledge levels in the U.S. Greater party, leadership, and policy stability in proportional

systems means that experience matters more than resources and political interest in Ireland and the Netherlands. Proportional systems lower the political knowledge threshold, reducing the information costs incurred by voters. Majoritarian systems such as the U.S., where party leaders and platforms are changed every election, raise the political knowledge threshold, increasing the information costs voters must incur to obtain accurate political information.

Table 6.2 Predicting Political Knowledge: Results of OLS Regression Analysis CSES Module 3			
	Ireland	Netherlands	U.S.
Age	0.12	0.28***	0.19***
	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.03)
Gender	-0.14	-0.28*	-0.13*
	(0.10)	(0.14)	(0.05)
Education	0.02	0.10	0.21***
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.02)
Marital Status	0.09	0.09	-0.05
	(0.11)	(0.16)	(0.06)
Union Membership	0.10	-0.19	0.20*
	(0.10)	(0.16)	(0.09)
Household Income	0.12*	0.12*	0.08***
	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.02)
Religious Service Attendance	0.01	0.00	-0.04
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Campaign Involvement	0.10	0.09	0.27***
	(0.06)	(0.10)	(0.03)
Satisfaction with Democracy	-0.05	0.07	-0.00
	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.02)
Partisan Attachment	-0.02	0.20	-0.02
	(0.08)	(0.11)	(0.03)
Constant	2.11***	1.79*	3.01***
	(0.55)	(0.78)	(0.30)
R-squared	0.06	0.20	0.28
N	294	176	1,082
***$p < 0.001$ **$p < 0.01$ *$p < 0.05$			

Educational attainment has a powerful effect on political knowledge in the U.S. (0.21***). As Americans become more educated, they possess higher levels of political knowledge. That education is insignificant for knowledge levels in Ireland and the Netherlands provides further evidence of a higher knowledge threshold in the U.S. The robust relationship between education and political knowledge in the U.S. suggests that less educated citizens

experience greater burdens from the electoral system. Education is insignificant in Ireland (0.02) and the Netherlands (0.10) because proportional electoral laws lower the knowledge threshold. Hence, experience matters more than resources in proportional systems.

How closely respondents followed the campaign exerts a strong and significant effect on political knowledge in the U.S. (0.27***) but not in Ireland (0.10) and the Netherlands (0.09). As Americans follow the campaign more closely, they become more knowledgeable about politics. This relationship shows strong support for the personalized nature of American campaigns and the idea that parties, leaders, and policies are more dynamic under majoritarian systems. In Ireland and the Netherlands, how closely one followed the campaign is less influential because parties and their leaders and platforms remain relatively constant in the long-run and campaigns are party-focused. In the U.S., where parties, leaders, and policies change each election cycle and individual candidates' campaigns are the focal point of elections, it becomes important for Americans to follow campaigns closely in order to know who holds which political office and what their policy stances are.

Voter Sophistication

Additionally, electoral systems impose costs and incentives for voter sophistication. Measured as the difference between voters' and experts' placement of the two predominant political parties, voter sophistication conveys the extent to which citizens possess abstract knowledge about politics in their country. Descriptive results show that Irish and Dutch respondents possess higher levels of sophistication than their American counterparts. Does a country's electoral system explain differences in voter sophistication levels? Voter sophistication is estimated by the same model used for political efficacy and knowledge. I expect that resource endowments and political interest will matter more for voters' sophistication levels in the U.S.

The results support this hypothesis: resource endowments and political interest are more important for voter sophistication levels in the U.S. than in Ireland and the Netherlands. The model explains 22% and 15% of variation in voter sophistication for Democrats and Republicans, respectively. However, the model only explains 5% for Fianna Fáil voters and 6% for Fine Gael voters in Ireland and 2% for VVD voters and 10% for PvdA voters in the Netherlands. The results suggest that majoritarian systems increase the sophistication threshold and thereby the strength and significance of resource and interest variables.

Table 6.3 Predicting Voter Sophistication for Party A: Results of OLS Regression Analysis CSES Module 3			
	Ireland Fianna Fáil	Netherlands VVD	U.S. Democratic Party
Age	0.32**	0.08	0.02
	(0.12)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Gender	-0.15	-0.08	-0.40*
	(0.19)	(0.16)	(0.17)
Education	0.10	0.10	0.51***
	(0.09)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Marital Status	-0.20	0.18	-0.29
	(0.21)	(0.18)	(0.19)
Union Membership	0.00	0.10	0.05
	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.30)
Household Income	-0.04	0.01	0.42***
	(0.09)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Religious Service Attendance	-0.17**	-0.03	-0.06
	(0.07)	(0.04)	(0.07)
Campaign Involvement	0.11	-0.02	0.04
	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.11)
Satisfaction with Democracy	-0.00	0.02	-0.21**
	(0.10)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Partisan Attachment	-0.16	0.04	-0.45***
	(0.15)	(0.13)	(0.10)
Constant	1.93	2.75**	7.64***
	(1.05)	(0.90)	(0.96)
R-squared	0.06	0.02	0.22
N	253	287	977
***$p < 0.001$ **$p < 0.01$ *$p < 0.05$			

	Ireland Fine Gael	Netherlands PvdA	U.S. Republican Party
	Table 6.4 **Predicting Voter Sophistication for Party B: Results of OLS Regression Analysis** **CSES Module 3**		
Age	0.10 (0.12)	0.09 (0.07)	0.13 (0.08)
Gender	0.22 (0.18)	-0.28 (0.14)	-0.10 (0.15)
Education	0.13 (0.09)	0.13* (0.05)	0.38*** (0.05)
Marital Status	-0.34 (0.20)	0.08 (0.16)	-0.37* (0.17)
Union Membership	-0.13 (0.19)	0.13 (0.17)	0.14 (0.28)
Household Income	0.00 (0.08)	0.11* (0.06)	0.28*** (0.07)
Religious Service Attendance	-0.03 (0.07)	0.06 (0.04)	0.03 (0.06)
Campaign Involvement	-0.18 (0.12)	-0.14 (0.10)	0.05 (0.10)
Satisfaction with Democracy	0.15 (0.10)	0.11 (0.07)	-0.11 (0.08)
Partisan Attachment	-0.05 (0.15)	0.10 (0.12)	-0.40*** (0.10)
Constant	2.24* (1.04)	3.12*** (0.82)	6.70*** (0.90)
R-squared	0.05	0.10	0.15
N	243	291	982
***$p < 0.001$ **$p < 0.01$ *$p < 0.05$			

Education, household income, and partisan attachment exert the strongest effects on voter

sophistication levels in the U.S, but the relationships are stronger than in the political knowledge

model. I believe this is because respondents are required to think abstractly about politics, which

is a more rigorous demand that requires greater resources and interests. Educational attainment

correlates strongly and significantly with sophistication levels among Democrat (0.51***) and

Republican (0.38***) voters in the U.S. As Americans become better educated, they demonstrate

higher sophistication levels, meaning they can more accurately place their respective political

parties along an ideological spectrum relative to experts. Citizens with higher levels of educational attainment are more likely to gain the intellectual capacity and skills to think conceptually and abstractly compared to their less educated counterparts. Highly educated citizens can better articulate what it means to be liberal, moderate, or conservative and discern the 'true' ideological position of political parties despite parties' intentional ambiguity. Even in a bipolar environment, SMSP still disincentivizes sophistication. If single votes are less consequential, then citizens have fewer incentives to learn which party best represents their interests. Nevertheless, higher educational attainment helps overcome informational costs and participatory disincentives by facilitating political interest and engagement.

Education, however, is insignificant for both Fianna Fáil (0.10) and Fine Gael (0.13) voters in Ireland. Since political parties can afford to be ideologically pure and distinct under proportional electoral laws, Irish citizens experience little difficulty in identifying the ideological position of either of the two major parties, regardless of education attainment. The results remain largely the same in the Netherlands: education is insignificant for VVD voters (0.10) but barely significant for PvdA voters (0.13*). Where proportional electoral laws incentivize ideological purity and consistency, the threshold for sophistication is lowered, so that educational attainment matters less for how accurately voters place a given political party along the ideological spectrum relative to experts.

Household income also affects sophistication levels among both Democrat (0.42***) and Republican (0.28***) voters in a strong, significant way. As household income increases, citizens can more accurately place the Democratic and Republican parties along the ideological spectrum. Income matters for sophistication levels to the extent that wealth provides greater access to education and makes people more self-interested, so they become more interested in

learning which party will best serve their personal interests. Directly, affluent citizens can more easily contribute to campaigns and thereby influence policy. The affluent, directly engaging with parties and their candidates and policies through monetary support, are better able to discern parties' ideological positions. The relationship between household income and voter sophistication is strong and significant in the U.S. because majoritarian electoral laws make it costlier for citizens to locate parties' positions, thereby increasing the significance of resources such as income. Parties in majoritarian systems are intentionally ambiguous on salient policy issues; furthermore, American politics is personalistic and candidate-centric, so parties' positions become less relevant. Even as polarization minimizes information costs, SMSP still disincentivizes learning about political parties. Income helps overcome these disincentives by increasing political interest and engagement which, in turn, increase sophistication levels.

Income is insignificant for sophistication levels among Fianna Fáil (-0.04) and Fine Gael (0.00) voters in Ireland. With greater ideological distinctness and consistency, voters incur fewer costs in locating parties' positions, meaning that income is less indicative of voter sophistication levels under proportional systems. Moreover, because candidates' success depends on the success of the party in proportional systems, parties – not candidates – are the focal point of campaigns and elections. In the Netherlands, household income is insignificant for VVD voters (0.01) and marginally significant for PvdA voters (0.11*). Nevertheless, the effect pales in comparison to that of the U.S., supporting the proposition that resource endowments matter more under majoritarian systems, where the cost of becoming politically sophisticated is higher.

Lastly, partisan attachment correlates strongly and significantly with sophistication levels for both Democrat (-0.45***) and Republican (-0.40***) voters in the U.S. However, partisan attachment is insignificant among respondents for both parties in Ireland and the Netherlands. As

Americans feel closer to a particular party, they display lower sophistication levels. Partisans, those feeling close to either the Republican or Democratic party, display lower levels of sophistication likely due to the distortion of information by political parties, which is exacerbated by political polarization. Under majoritarian electoral laws, parties are incentivized to distort their policies, and polarization entrenches this distortion. Parties mislead their supporters by portraying the other party as the enemy, causing citizens and politicians alike to distrust and despise one another. In a polarized climate, Democrats and Republicans find it difficult to see past their differences and overestimate the extent to which parties are either liberal or conservative. Median voters, or non-partisans, can more accurately discern the ideological position of the parties through a more objective view where party attachments do not fog their lenses. Partisan attachment is insignificant in both Ireland and the Netherlands: how close Irish and Dutch citizens feel to their party has a negligible impact on how accurately they can pinpoint the ideological positions of their dominant parties. Even if Irish and Dutch citizens feel close to a particular party, they can better discern the predominant parties' ideological positions because party boundaries are clearly demarcated.

Turnout

To what extent do electoral systems impose costs and incentives for participation at the ballot box? The model considers the same set of variables in addition to political efficacy and knowledge. It is expected that resources, interest, efficacy, and knowledge will matter more for whether Americans decide to cast a ballot than their Irish and Dutch counterparts. Overall, the turnout model indicates that typical predictors of political participation, such as resource endowments, political interest, efficacy, and knowledge, are indeed insignificant under proportional systems but strongly significant in the U.S. The model explains 20% of the variation

in turnout in the U.S. but only 8% in Ireland and 4% in the Netherlands. That resource

endowments, political interest, efficacy, and knowledge strongly predict respondents' decision to

cast a ballot in the U.S. lends support to the hypothesis that typical predictors of political

participation become more significant under majoritarian electoral arrangements because they

increase the cost of political participation.

Table 6.5 Predicting Respondents' Decision to Cast a Ballot: Results of OLS Regression Analysis CSES Module 3			
	Ireland	Netherlands	U.S.
Political Efficacy	0.02	-0.04	0.30***
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.08)
Age	0.17	-0.04	0.25**
	(0.09)	(0.06)	(0.08)
Gender	-0.11	0.05	0.34*
	(0.13)	(0.09)	(0.15)
Education	0.11	0.00	0.22***
	(0.06)	(0.03)	(0.06)
Marital Status	-0.03	-0.03	-0.10
	(0.15)	(0.10)	(0.17)
Union Membership	-0.03	-0.10	-0.03
	(0.13)	(0.10)	(0.27)
Employment Status	-0.04	0.02	-0.03
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)
Household Income	-0.08	0.03	0.09
	(0.07)	(0.03)	(0.07)
Religious Service Attendance	0.06	0.02	0.18**
	(0.05)	(0.02)	(0.06)
Campaign Involvement	0.17	0.05	0.66***
	(0.09)	(0.06)	(0.10)
Satisfaction with Democracy	0.09	0.04	0.07
	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.07)
Partisan Attachment	0.01	0.04	0.40***
	(0.11)	(0.07)	(0.09)
Political Knowledge	-0.09	-0.00	0.24**
	(0.08)	(0.05)	(0.09)
Constant	1.60	0.59	4.19***
	(0.82)	(0.56)	(1.01)
R-squared	0.08	0.04	0.20
N	285	176	1,055
***$p < 0.001$ **$p < 0.01$ *$p < 0.05$			

Political efficacy, the extent to which citizens believe their vote can make a different in

the election, correlates strongly and significantly with turnout in the U.S. (0.30***). More

efficacious Americans are more likely to cast a ballot. Since majoritarian electoral laws penalize smaller parties, Americans may feel they cannot vote their true preference. Many Americans are apathetic to the political process because they do not identify with either of the two major parties, or Democrats in heavily Republican districts or Republicans in heavily Democratic districts simply feel their votes do not matter. The result: Americans' decision to cast a ballot largely depends on the extent to which they feel their vote can make a difference and, with single member simple plurality elections, many Americans feel it will not and so they abstain. The opposite is true in Ireland (0.02) and the Netherlands (-0.04), where proportional representation minimizes electoral barriers. Irish and Dutch respondents' cast a ballot independently of efficacy levels because citizens are more likely to feel they can vote their true preference.

Of the resource variables, education exerts the strongest and most significant effect on turnout in the U.S. (0.22***). As Americans attain higher educational levels, they are more likely to cast a ballot. Education matters more for turnout amongst American respondents because U.S. electoral laws incentivize political parties to muddy their policy positions, making it more difficult for voters to understand which party will better represent their interests. If Americans cannot determine their interests, then they are more likely to abstain. Secondarily, application registration increases participatory burdens. Before citizens can incur the actual cost of voting, they must navigate the complicated registration process, which varies by state. Less educated citizens, who are more likely to work lower-paying jobs, be non-white, and poor, sometimes lack proper identification to register and, even if they do register with their local supervisor of election, they cannot afford to take time off work to vote on election day. Since it is more burdensome to ascertain one's interests from inconsistent, ambiguous policy platforms, let alone register to vote, education matters for whether Americans cast a ballot. Education is

insignificant in Ireland (0.11) and the Netherlands (0.00) because proportional electoral laws make it easier for citizens to discern their interests and vote accordingly, regardless of educational attainment.

Religious service attendance is a second resource variable that significantly impacts turnout in the U.S. (0.18**) unlike in Ireland (0.06) and the Netherlands (0.02). Americans who attend church more frequently are more likely to cast a ballot. The church has become a key pillar of American politics since the Reagan era, and it reduces the cost of political participation through social networking. The church, in primarily identifying with the Republican party on abortion and the public role of religion, simplifies voters' decisions. Americans who attend church and befriend church-goers adopt similar political stances, reducing each other's informational costs. Without the church, many Americans may not discern their interests, develop partisan attachments, and vote. Religious service attendance, however, does not matter for respondents' decision to cast a vote in Ireland and the Netherlands. While the Netherlands is primarily a secular country with relatively few church-goers, Ireland holds a large Catholic population, yet religious service attendance has no bearing on turnout. Religious service attendance is insignificant in Ireland and the Netherlands because proportional systems reduce participation costs.

Political interest, specifically campaign involvement (0.66***) and partisan attachment (0.40***), correlate most strongly and significantly with turnout in the U.S. The more closely Americans follow the campaign and more closely they feel to a party, the more likely they are to cast a ballot. Americans find it costlier to determine candidates' and parties' policies and who will better represent their interests, especially if they do not follow the campaign closely or feel particularly close to a party, because politics is personalistic and candidate-centered. Following

the campaign closely and feeling close to a party reduces political participation costs insofar as Americans are more likely to remain up-to-date. Campaign involvement and partisan attachment are insignificant in Ireland (0.17 and 0.01) and the Netherlands (0.05 and 0.04) because campaigns and elections are focused on parties rather than candidates.

Political knowledge (0.24**) also matters for turnout in the U.S. Americans with lower knowledge levels are less likely to cast a ballot. Because politics is more dynamic under majoritarian electoral laws, citizens find it costlier to remain informed and, without sufficient knowledge levels, they are less likely to cast a ballot. Those who do not understand who or what they are voting for are more likely to feel apathetic and abstain. Proportional systems lower the political knowledge threshold, and hence the cost of obtaining information and voting. Political knowledge matters less under proportional systems such as Ireland (-0.09) and the Netherlands (-0.00) because parties, leaders, and policies remain relatively stable. Able to rely on their experiential knowledge, Irish and Dutch citizens' knowledge levels have no impact on their decision to cast a ballot. Not a single variable in the turnout model significantly predicts respondents' decision to cast a ballot in Ireland or the Netherlands, upholding Howe's (2006) finding that knowledge and other typical predictors of political participation are insignificant in nations where income and educational equality are higher. In the U.S., where income and educational equality is lower, knowledge and other typical predictors of political participation become significant.

Conclusion

How do majoritarian and proportional electoral arrangements shape citizens' efficacy, knowledge, and sophistication levels and how, in turn, do they influence turnout in Ireland, the Netherlands, and the U.S.? Overall, the results indicate that electoral rules are indeed important for political behavior. Proportional and majoritarian electoral arrangements appear to impose significant divergent informational costs and participatory incentives on citizens, thereby influencing their efficacy, knowledge, sophistication, and turnout levels. Although the political efficacy model fails, the knowledge, sophistication, and turnout models largely support the hypothesis that typical predictors of political participation are more influential when costs are higher and incentives lower. Hence, resource endowments, political interest, knowledge, and efficacy matter more for political participation in majoritarian systems such as the U.S. than in proportional systems such as Ireland and the Netherlands.

To reiterate, majoritarian electoral systems increase informational costs in two ways. Dominated by two political parties, majoritarian systems foster ideological instability and ambiguity, as candidates and parties distort their platforms and remake themselves every election cycle. Moreover, candidate ballots under SMSP electoral laws facilitate stronger voter-candidate attachments, making campaigns and elections more personalistic. Together, these two factors increase informational costs to the extent that citizens must keep up with constantly changing parties, leaders, and policies in order to be knowledgeable and sophisticated. Proportional electoral arrangements reduce informational costs by fostering ideologically distinct, consistent parties. Since citizens vote for parties, candidates' success depends on the success of the party, reinforcing party discipline and reducing informational costs.

Electoral systems also seem to offer participatory incentives. Even if polarization reduces informational costs in nations with majoritarian elections, citizens still have few incentives to participate. Under majoritarian systems such as the U.S., singular votes are less consequential and more likely to be wasted, since candidates win with a mere plurality and those from smaller parties stand virtually no chance of winning election. Under proportional systems, and particularly under Ireland's single transferable vote system, singular votes are more consequential and less likely to be wasted since there are fewer electoral barriers, especially for smaller parties. Consequently, participatory incentives are higher under proportional representation, as citizens feel they have more to gain by voting on election day.

Because informational costs are greater and participatory incentives fewer in majoritarian systems such as the U.S., typical predictors of political participation significantly affect citizens' knowledge, sophistication, and turnout levels. Conversely, in proportional systems where costs are lower and incentives higher such as Ireland and the Netherlands, resource endowments, political interest, knowledge, and efficacy become insignificant when explaining citizens' political behaviors. Irish and Dutch respondents know who holds which political office, can accurately place a political party along the ideological spectrum, and cast a ballot regardless of educational attainment, campaign involvement, knowledge, and efficacy.

It is evident that not only do majoritarian and proportional electoral arrangements impose divergent costs and incentives on citizens, but also, they significantly affect citizens' knowledge, sophistication, and turnout levels. What are the implications of these results for electoral politics, particularly in the U.S.? Given that U.S. turnout is drastically lower than in other advanced Western liberal democracies, it is imperative U.S. policymakers consider how they can stimulate democratic engagement through electoral reform. After all, democracy does not sustain itself.

Democracy depends on an informed citizenry actively engaging with responsive democratic institutions through elections, peaceful protests, town hall meetings, lobbying, or contact with government officials. In the U.S., civic engagement has steadily declined over the last fifty years and, coupled with increasing polarization and the recent erosion of democratic norms, it is critical to explore how the electoral laws policymakers construct and enact impose costs and incentives on citizens. U.S. SMSP electoral rules negatively impact citizens' political behaviors, diminishing their knowledge of the political process and their participation in it.

The U.S. is currently experiencing unprecedented levels of political apathy and polarization. In order to address Americans' disenchantment with the democratic process, the nation could greatly benefit from the advantages associated with proportional electoral arrangements. Proportional electoral arrangements typically produce more equal representation, less polarization, and higher efficacy, knowledge, sophistication, and turnout levels. In allocating legislative seats proportionally and minimizing electoral barriers, proportional systems give rise to a multitude of political parties, increasing proportionality, alleviating polarization, and boosting efficacy and turnout. Where multiple parties exist, citizens feel they can vote their true preference, all societal factions are more fairly represented, and parties themselves must cooperate and negotiate with one another in order to govern. Many Americans today feel alienated by the two-party system, large societal groups are left unrepresented, and Democrats and Republicans stymie each other's every move. Systemic political change must tackle the root of the problem – the way U.S. electoral laws are constructed to impose costs and incentives only certain citizens, primarily the socially, economically, and intellectually advantaged, can incur. By implementing proportional electoral laws, we can begin to transform the way citizens and government engage with one another, creating a truly democratic union.

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      rish_government/.

On my honor, I have not given, nor received, nor witnessed any unauthorized assistance on this work.

Technical Appendix

CSES Variable Descriptions

1. Political Efficacy (C3005)

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 big difference to what happens. Using the scale on this card, (where ONE means that voting won't make any difference to what happens and FIVE means that voting can make a big difference), where would you place yourself?

1. Who people vote for won't make a difference
2.
3.
4.
5. Who people vote for can make a big difference

2. Political Knowledge (C3036_1-3)

Q25-Q27. Political information items.

1. Correct
5. Incorrect

Ireland (2007)

Question text (C3036_1): Who was the Minister for Finance at the time when the last Dail was dissolved? [Correct answer: Brian Cowen]

Question text (C3036_2): Which Government Department received the most money in last year's budget? [Correct answer: Social Welfare]

Question text (C3036_3): Which was the first party to announce that it would cut the standard rate of tax in the 2007 campaign? [Correct answer: Labour]

Netherlands (2010)

The Dutch respondents were shown photographs of politicians and asked for their name, the party, and the function. In C3036, those respondents who provided correct answers to all three sub-questions were coded as providing the correct answers. Note that the political knowledge questions were part of the first wave, i.e. pre-election, survey.

Question Text (C3036_1): "I will now show you photographs of politicians. Could you tell me for each person the name; the party; and the function?" [Correct answer: Photo 1; Alexander Pechtold; D66; party leader]

Question Text (C3036_2): "I will now show you photographs of politicians. Could you tell me for each person the name; the party; and the function?" [Correct answer: Photo 2; Camiel Eurlings; CDA; minister]

Question Text (C3036_3): "I will now show you photographs of politicians. Could you tell me for each person the name; the party; and the function?" [Correct answer: Photo 3; Gerdi Verbeet; PvdA; MP, Speaker]

United States (2008)

The US questionnaire asked respondents about the current political position of different persons. The initial question text was: What job or political office does [...] now hold?

Question Text (C3036_1): Dick Cheney [Correct Answer: Vice president of the United States]

Question Text (C3036_2): Nancy Pelosi [Correct Answer: Speaker of the House of Representatives]
Question Text (C3036_3): John Roberts [Correct Answer: U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice]

*Note: The three political information items were combined into an indicator variable to measure overall levels of political sophistication. The indicator variable was recoded on a 0-3 scale. 0 signifies that a respondent answered none of the three questions incorrectly, 1 signifies that a respondent answered one question incorrectly, 2 signifies that a respondent answered two questions incorrectly, and 3 signifies that a respondent answered all three questions incorrectly.

3. Voter Sophistication (C3011_A-B – C5017_A-B)

Q11a-b. In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place [PARTY A] on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means the left and 10 means the right? Using the same scale, where would you place [PARTY B]?

0. Left
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10. Right

Q6a. A-B. Parties' positions on the left-right scale (in the expert judgment of the CSES Collaborator):

0. Left
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10. Right

*Note: Voter sophistication is measured by the difference between voters' and experts' ideological placement of the two major parties. For a particular party, Voter Sophistication = Voter's Placement – Expert's Placement.

4. Turnout (C3021_1)

The wording of this item, which is to record voting in the national election, follows national standards. This item ascertains whether or not the respondent cast a ballot, regardless of whether or not it was valid.

1. Respondent cast a ballot
5. Respondent did not cast a ballot

According to the US electoral system, the data included 499 registered citizens which were not registered as a voter. These cases were defined as "no answer" (code 8) in C3021_1.

*Note: Ballot refers to one cast in the 2007 Republic of Ireland lower house election, 2008 U.S. presidential election, and the 2010 Netherlands lower house election.

5. Demographic Variables

Age (C2001)

Age of respondent (in years)

010-150. Age, in years

*Note: Respondents were divided into four distinct age cohorts: (1) 17-29, (2) 30-44, (3) 45-59, and (4) 60-95.

Gender (C2002)

Gender of Respondent

1. Male
2. Female

Education (C2003)

Education of Respondent

1. None
2. Incomplete Primary
3. Primary Completed
4. Incomplete Secondary
5. Secondary Completed
6. Post-Secondary Trade/Vocational School
7. University Undergraduate Degree Incomplete
8. University Undergraduate Degree Completed

Marital Status (C2004)

Respondent's marital or civil union status

1. Married or living together as married
2. Widowed
3. Divorced or separated (married but separated/not living with legal spouse)
4. Single, never married

*Note: Recode into two responses for regression analysis: married (1) and unmarried (2-4).

Union Membership (C2005)

Union membership of respondent

1. R is member of a union
2. R is not a member of a union

Employment Status (C2010)

In labor force:

1. Employed - full-time (32+ hours weekly)
2. Employed - part-time (15-32 hours weekly)
3. Employed - less than 15 hours
4. Helping family member
5. Unemployed

Not in the labor force:

6. Student, in school, in vocational training
7. Retired
8. Housewife, home duties
9. Permanently disabled

Household Income (C2020)

Household income quintile appropriate to the respondent

1. Lowest household income quintile
2. Second household income quintile
3. Third household income quintile
4. Fourth household income quintile
5. Highest household income quintile

Ireland (2007)

Household income per week

1. Less than 240 Euros
2. 241 - 450 Euros
3. 451 - 700 Euros
4. 701 - 1,000 Euros
5. More than 1,000 Euros

Netherlands (2010)

Spendable household income

1. Less than 24,889 Euro
2. 24,889 - 34,120 Euro
3. 34,121 - 44,127 Euro
4. 44,128 - 60,354 Euro
5. More than 60,354 Euro

United States (2008)

Household income per year

1. Less than $16,999 per year
2. $17,000 to $34,999 per year
3. $35,000 to $49,999 per year
4. $50,000 to $89,999 per year
5. More than $90,000 per year

Religious Service Attendance (C2023)

Attendance at religious services

1. Never
2. Once a year
3. Two to eleven times a year
4. Once a month
5. Two or more times a month
6. Once a week/more than once a week

Campaign Involvement (C3018)

How closely did you follow the election campaign? Very closely, fairly closely, not very closely, or not closely at all?

1. Very closely
2. Fairly closely
3. Not very closely
4. Not closely at all

Satisfaction with Democracy (C3019)

On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in [COUNTRY]?

1. Very satisfied
2. Fairly satisfied
4. Not very satisfied
5. Not at all satisfied

Partisan Attachment (C3020_4)

Do you feel very close to this party, somewhat close, or not very close?

1. Very close
2. Somewhat close
3. Not very close