Expressive vs. Instrumental Motivation of

Turnout, Partisanship and Political Learning[1]

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An exciting recent development in theories of voting is the increasing formalization of the difference between electoral outcomes under instrumental and expressive models of voting. Although the relevant literature concentrates on the problem of turnout, the choice between these models has to be confronted with respect to every aspect of voting behaviour, including party choice (Brennan and Buchanan 1984) and the information-processing activities that shape choices (cf. Downs' 1957; Popkin 1991).

In instrumental models of electoral politics, commonly associated with Downs' legacy, voters are interested in the political consequences of election outcomes, especially in government policies and performance. In the expressive model, the benefit of voting for the individual citizen derives solely from the intrinsic rewards of casting a vote. The two models lead to different predictions about turnout and thus imply different equilibria in terms of the optimal location for vote-maximizing parties in the policy space (cf. Brennan and Hamlin 1998).[2] Moreover, intriguing—even troubling—questions arise about the kind of political representation that can emerge through the electoral arena if vote choice itself were to be affected by expressive motives (Brennan and Buchanan 1984; Brennan and Lomasky 1994).

More or less widespread agreement seems to have emerged in the scholarly literature about three points. First, probably no advocate of the importance of instrumental rationality

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[2] Under instrumental probabilistic voting, turnout is predicted to increase modestly by the party differential, thus leading to a higher turnout among the more extreme voters. Under expressive probabilistic voting, alienation must be the chief determinant of non-voting, thus leading to a higher turnout among voters who are ideologically close to a large number of

for voting behaviour would debate that non-zero turnout is explained partly or entirely by expressive factors like a sense of civic duty or of belonging to a political community (e.g. Riker and Ordeshook 1968). Second, it remains a widely held view that even if electoral participation follows a purely expressive logic, the making of a choice between parties nonetheless follows the instrumental model (cf. e.g. Enelow and Hinich 1984; for challenges to this position see Brennan and Buchanan 1984; Fischer 1996; Kan and Yang 2001; Schuessler 2000). Even advocates of expressive models of vote choice like Brennan and Hamlin (1998) and Schuessler (2000) assume that instrumental political rationality plays some role in these choices, in contrast to the purely expressive motivation of turnout.

Third, apparently many scholars see it as an alarming possibility that expressive rationality may dominate vote choices. Unlike instrumental rationality, expressive rationality does not necessarily connect voting behaviour to the politically relevant collective consequences of individual vote choices. Hence, expressive voting raises the spectre of mindless voters supporting causes that they came to like for some essentially non-political reason, and in spite of disagreement with their political substance, as in Brennan and Lomasky's (1994) analyses of popular support for wars. The same intuition about the dangers of expressive behaviour brings Brennan and Hamlin (1999) to conclude that the more impact expressive motives have on vote choice, the stronger the justification for representative democracy over direct democracy.

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parties. Under realistic assumptions about the location of parties, these voters should be

This chapter concurs with and builds on the first point, but provides empirical evidence that contradicts the second and qualifies the third. I start the analysis with discussing the concepts of expressive and instrumental voting behaviour. The conceptual analysis generates expectations about how the relative weight of these motivations varies across different institutional settings and three forms of electorally relevant political involvement: turnout, the development of a party preference, and political information processing. The empirical analysis uses data from over 30 postelection surveys conducted on five continents as part of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems project, and follows the lead of Guttman, Hilger and Schachmurove (1994) with respect to the operationalization of the difference between expressive and instrumental behaviour. The conclusions discuss how the results suggest practically and theoretically relevant insights regarding the role of expressive behaviour in the electoral arena and its functionality for democratic representation.

1. Instrumental and Expressive Voting

Theories of both "instrumental" and "expressive" voting assume that voting behaviour is, procedurally speaking, rational. That is, voters act in a goal-oriented fashion, and their preferences inform their political choices. They weight benefits against costs. They consistently and transitively rank the political objects in their choice set, always selecting the one that ranks highest in their ordering of the alternatives (Downs 1957: 6). Their responses

predominantly centrist in terms of ideology.

to stimuli are not some kind of unconditional, automatic reaction, but are mediated by reasoning and intuition about the link between those stimuli and their relationship to the voters' preferences. Though political cognition may be influenced by unconscious reactions that the voters cannot control (see e.g. Baldwin and Masters 1996; Forgas and Moylan 1987), these involuntary responses do not fully determine voting behaviour.

The hallmark of expressive actions is that the reward of bearing the costs of a particular action is intrinsic to the activity itself. For instance, participation in an election may be gratifying for the thrill of it, or the opportunity that it offers for self-expression, or the feeling of fulfilling a civic duty. For an instrumentally rational action, in contrast, gratification is not immediate as in the case of consumption, but delayed like returns to investments. These delayed benefits are uncertain public goods—policies or symbolic rewards—that, in retrospect, may appear to have been brought about by the election outcome.

Hence we run into the paradox of voting. No matter how much value the individual citizen attaches to the political consequences of an election going one way rather than another, the weight of a single vote in determining the outcome is infinitesimally small in a large electorate. Thus, the collective benefits of the outcome occur to individual citizens essentially independently of whether they themselves voted. As long as voting is costly, that is, i.e. it takes time, effort, and involves risks like being run over by a car on the way to the polling station, instrumentally rational voters will not turn out unless they are coerced to.

Limits of space prohibit here a review of the enormous intellectual efforts invested in

eliminating the paradox in the last few decades. Suffice to say that the proposed solutions either fail in large electorates, lack logical consistency, or invoke what are essentially intrinsic individual rewards of turnout—side payments, social signalling, alienation and so forth—to explain why some vote and others do not (see Mueller 1989: 348-69). Some evidence exist that the closeness of elections and the perceived political stakes involved show the expected correlations with turnout both at the individual and at the aggregate level (see, for instance, Blais 2000; Franklin 2004). Yet, it would be a mistake to read this as evidence of instrumental voting: the same correlations can obtain if the intrinsic rewards of voting were changing in response to the stakes and the closeness of the election. This can happen if citizens' sense of duty and entertainment *ceteris paribus* increases in close and consequential elections, or if strategic politicians make bigger efforts to reduce the costs—and increase the intrinsic rewards—of voting in those situations (Aldrich 1993; Cox 1999).

Indeed, direct and indirect empirical evidence abound that expressive factors like a sense of civic duty bring about turnout (Campbell *et al.* 1960; Blais 2000; Franklin 2005). Disturbing implications emerge, however, if intrinsic rewards motivate not just turnout but vote choice too, since the intrinsic benefits of voting for a party may be totally disconnected from whether the party's victory is expected to bring about the collective outcomes desired by the same voters. Knowingly or not, expressive actors may end up voting for a rather different party than the one they would if their choices followed an instrumentally rational logic with collective political outcomes in their mind (Brennan and Lomasky 1994;

Schuessler 2000). This can happen either if the development of a party preference itself directly follows an expressive logic, or if the information basis of individual vote choice has been acquired due to expressive motivation, and therefore its composition does not reflect the concerns of an instrumental voter strictly focused on collective political outcomes.

2. The Motivation of Information Processing and Choice

The key question is thus whether the development of party preference and the processing of political information are also subject to a similar paradox as turnout, and thus driven by expressive motives alike. For formulating expectations about this question, it is useful to synthesize the conventional algebraic formulae for instrumental and expressive models of voting in a single equation.

$$U = P * B - C + D \tag{1}$$

In Equation (1), U is the individual citizen's utility of electorally relevant political involvement like turnout or information processing. Rational actors only do things that seem to have a positive utility U. The P term stands for the probability that the vote cast by this individual can break or create a tie in the election outcome, and as such is inevitably close to zero in a large electorate (cf. e.g. Brennan and Lomasky 1994). The benefit of voting, B, is the voter's utility difference between the conceivable outcomes of the election. C is the total

cost of action, including the time and the effort that it takes. Turnout is expressively motivated because in a large electorate P times B is so small that the utility of turnout can only be positive if D, the intrinsic rewards of the action, is higher than C.[3]

One could argue, however, that the size of C and D become rather different when the political involvement in question is the psychological process by which party preference is developed, or acquiring the knowledge necessary for making the best possible individual choice. It is indeed a widely held view among followers of both Downs (1957) and Key (1966) that even if turning out to vote is an expressive act, the choice among the parties is determined by instrumental political considerations. The implicit reasoning behind this view seems to be that choice is basically costless, and its intrinsic rewards are zero—that is, this is how it must be if vote choice is instrumental, since the P times B part of the equation remains exactly the same negligible quantity for choosing between the parties as it was in the case of turnout.

Yet anyone who has ever hesitated between several equally (un)appealing choice options will know that the psychological burden of choosing can be sizeable. Only expressive motivation can explain if someone spends long days with thinking about such an otherwise inconsequential matter as which party—if any—to vote for. Indeed, given how small the P times B term is, even fairly small efforts to reach a choice should be explained by such

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[3] I understand the D term broadly, including not just the utility of gratifying one's sense of civic duty, but also the entertainment value of the action in question, its value to

motives. The intrinsic rewards of choosing, in their turn, are likely to be substantial even in the absence of a strong sense of citizen duty to choose. Having a partisan preference is a possible avenue for self-expression, group membership, and self-affirmation in front of other people. It gives a subjective meaning to our voting rights and the political world as a whole, suppresses uncomfortable doubts about whether we can possibly control our political environment, and permits us to follow politics as if it were a thrilling spectator sport. It is perfectly conceivable that these intrinsic rewards of partisan choice are, for most people, much larger than the negligible P times B term. If so, then expressive motives surely dominate vote choices.

Contradictory expectations obtain regarding political information processing too. Making electoral choices that faithfully express the true underlying preferences of the individual tend to require considerable political knowledge. Information shortcuts and cues may abound, but their effective use seems to require a great deal of knowledge to begin with (Lau and Redlawsk 2001). Even the relatively modest bites that most of us actually take from this constantly changing body of knowledge require much time, attention, and cognitive effort to process. Thus, these costs easily exceed the negligible value of P times B, undermining the potential of instrumental motives to shape voters' stock of political

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send signals about the actor, and any other benefits that are not conditional on the outcome of the election.

knowledge.[4] This does not mean that all citizens remain rationally ignorant. The excitement

of partisan voters about being part of their team's effort appear to make quite a few people

follow news stories regularly, attentively, and quite closely. Indulgence in infotainment and

involuntary exposure to news also create ample space for expressively motivated political

learning (Fiorina 1990). The downside of this possibility is that expressively motivated

information processing may make citizens well equipped with a large stock of entertaining

information, but still unaware of those things that they would need to know in order to vote in

line with their instrumental political preferences.

Yet, in the case of information processing, a whole range of truly instrumental

considerations influence the utility of the action that have no parallel in the case of turnout

and developing a party preference, and do not easily fit into Equation (1) above. The reason is

that citizens are not only makers, but, above all, recipients of political outcomes. In order to

adjust their economic, protest (and so forth) behaviour to politically induced changes in their

environment, they need to monitor political events all the time. For instance, they may need

to fill tax forms and hence learn about rates and exemptions, discover legislation that opens

new opportunities for their disabled children, be forced to visit abortion clinics abroad due to

recent legislation back home, or see their real estate change market value because commuter

train fares changed as a result of privatization. Rational citizens will therefore invest some

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[4] Strictly speaking, the *P* times *B* term borrowed from the turnout equation shows the
benefit of voting (for one's ideal choice) rather than not voting. In a similar equation for

effort into a continuous processing of information conducive to successful adaptation to government policies. The more uncertainty they sense about the direction of public policy and other real world events, the bigger their investments into political information processing will be. Thus, the same party differential B that appears in the P times B term in Equation (1) can appear among the factors motivating political information-processing. By coincidence, the rational investments of public policy recipients into political learning may well make them pick up much the same information that instrumentally rational voters focused on collective political outcomes would attend to in order to arrive at their best electoral choice.

The key expectations that we can formulate based on the above discussion relate to the relative importance of B and D in motivating electoral activities. Turnout, as it was suggested above, has clearly expressive roots, and should be positively influenced by D, whatever residual impact B may register. Political knowledge, in contrast, may well be detached from expressive motivations and be influenced by B—though not by P—instead. However, this expectation is not so firm than the one concerning turnout. The expectations are even less clear about the development of a party preference since the empirical values of C and D may or may not be so high that this process would be driven expressive motives instead of instrumental ones. For choice, C and D are both psychological in nature, and are thus likely to vary across individuals. Therefore, mixed expressive-instrumental models can conceivably be appropriate. All in all, here we have yet another question that needs empirical

information processing, B may double if the information gain moves one's vote from the

exploration.

Of course, the above reasoning about the likely importance of *B* depends on assumptions about *P*, the value of which may greatly vary across political contexts. This brings in another family of hypotheses. Pappi (1996), for one, argued that expressive voting, when it occurs at all, is largely a product of multiparty systems, which reduce the voters' capacity for truly rational behaviour. The idea behind the proposition is that a multiparty system encourages sincere voting among citizens for the party that best matches their feelings, values, and so forth, as the consequences of the vote for government formation and government policies are hard to predict in these settings and thus get unduly discarded by the voters. By the same token, two-party systems focus citizens' attention on the policy consequences of their vote, and thus instil an instrumental logic to party choice.

Although Pappi did not discuss this possibility, the same proposition can apply to turnout and political information processing too. The argument can be further generalized to say that the more consensual and less majoritarian the political system is in Lijphart's (1999) terms, the more expressive voting becomes the rule rather than the exception, because the consequences of citizens' votes for government formation and policies become less predictable in consensus than in Westminster-type democracies. Several testable hypotheses obtain along those lines, but I will concentrate here only on the three that seem to be closest to Pappi's reasoning. The first is that the number of parties is a determinant of how

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worst to the best possible choice. Yet, the bottom line s that *P* times *B* will still be negligible.

expressive citizens' behaviour is. The second follows the second-order elections model (Reif and Schmitt 1980): voting is less instrumental and more expressive in elections in which national executive office is not at stakes. The third hypothesis focuses on electoral systems and the incentives they create for strategic behaviour. The proposition here is that the bigger the mismatch between vote and seat distributions is, the more motivated citizens are to think carefully about wasted votes rather than just supporting whatever party seems most sympathetic to them for some expressive reasons. The three propositions seem to capture neatly how the party system, constitutional design and the electoral system might impact the incidence of expressive voting.

Of course, all these three hypotheses were plain wrong if, as I suggested, the empirical values of C and especially D are sufficiently high compared to the tiny value of P times B. In that case, turnout and the development of party preferences would remain expressively motivated in any electoral context, and irrespective of institutions. Likewise, the motivation of information processing would be invariably instrumental if the cost of knowledge nearly always exceeded its D value but lagged behind the B value of behavioral adjustment to policy outcomes in everyday life.

3. An Empirical Test of Expressive vs. Instrumental Behaviour

Empirically distinguishing between instrumental and expressive motivation is proverbially difficult (Fischer 1996: 172). For example, the impact of subjectively perceived

closeness of an electoral contest on turnout is often treated as evidence of instrumental rationality (see Blais 2000: 72-7), but it is plausible that expressive voters are also thrilled by, and thus become more likely to vote in close races. Many see strategic voting as another *par excellence* instrumental behaviour, but expressive voters may also vote strategically to avoid the uncomfortable feeling that they did not make the best possible use of their vote. Another common belief is that apparent altruistic behaviour is more likely to stem from expressive than instrumental motivation (Tullock 1971; Fischer 1996). Yet, there is no hard evidence that actors derive less pleasure from egoistic and more from altruistic behaviour when they act expressively rather than instrumentally. It may thus seem that with a little imagination any seemingly mindless—and hence, as some would haste to presume, expressive—behaviour can be explained in instrumental terms too, and any apparently outcome-oriented act could be seen as if it aimed merely at intrinsic rewards.

The one operational distinction that seems to escape this fate was offered by Guttman, Hilger, and Schachmurove (1994). They argue that if voting were an instrumental investment in uncertain collective outcomes, then participation must be influenced solely by its costs, the closeness of the election, and the voters' utility differential between alternative election outcomes. If, however, voting is expressive—that is, an act of consumption –, then it should also matter how attractive, in an absolute sense, the alternatives were. If the relatively most preferred outcome is still appalling in absolute terms, then even a very big utility differential can fail to justify effort. Conversely, as long as the choice options are sufficiently attractive,

people will still turn out to vote even if their utility differential between the worst and best outcome approaches zero.

There are two remaining problems with this distinction. First, the intrinsic rewards of voting may be sensitive to the utility differential between the alternative outcomes. Thus, purely expressive motivation may be consistent with positive effect of the perceived utility differential between parties on electorally relevant acts like turnout, the development of a party preference and political information processing. Second, the absolute value of the most preferred outcome may not capture more than just a fraction of the cross-individual variation in the intrinsic rewards of voting. For instance, it probably has little to do with a sense of citizen duty. Yet a partial empirical test of expressive versus instrumental motivation remains possible. If the absolute value of a party for the voter has an effect on voting behaviour, voting has to be, at least in part, an expressive act, driven by intrinsic rewards.[5] Furthermore,

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[5] Downs speculated that in a world characterized by uncertainty regarding party positions, abstention can be rational for some extremist voters who would like to force their most preferred party to move closer to their own position in the future (A. Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy.* New York, John Wiley, 1957, 119). Hence alienation can drive turnout not only among expressive, but instrumentally rational actors too. However, Downs did not offer any support for his implausible proposition that the clear and immediate loss that the abstaining extremist voters accept this way could be counterbalanced by a highly uncertain future gain. This gain would presumably be a move towards a more extreme position by the median legislator as a result of party repositioning aimed at preventing abstention among extremist voters. It seems that for Downs to be correct on this point, extremist voters would have to attach much greater utility either to a future gain than to an equally large present gain, or to a unit change in the position of their favourite party than to an equally big change in the position of the median legislator. Both preference schedules are possible, but only if voters are motivated by the intrinsic rewards of the vote, rather than its policy impact.

in the case of turnout we know *a priori* that the motivation cannot be instrumental at all, but has to be fully expressive. Thus, the estimates regarding turnout provide a benchmark that will help assessing the relative weight of expressive and instrumental motives in the case of the two cognitive processes in the analysis.

The extension of the Guttman-Hilger-Schachmurove test is straightforward for these processes. The development of a party preference is more likely driven by expressive than instrumental motives if the utility differential has less impact on it than the absolute utility of the most preferred outcome. Similarly, if the processing of political information is driven by the instrumental rationality of public policy recipients, then it will be related to their utility differential between the parties; but if knowledge is driven by the consumption value of learning, then it is more likely to be related to the absolute evaluation of the most liked alternative. This is so because rationally ignorant voters should process political information only for its entertainment value or as a by-product of other activities than trying to make a well-informed vote choice. The more one likes at least one party, the more partisan excitement can be generated by the political world, and hence the higher the consumption value of information processing will be. Conversely, citizens' interest in monitoring political outcomes in order to adjust to them in their everyday life in a timely and effective manner may prompt instrumentally rational political learning and at the same time is likely to reflect, among other things, perceptions about possible variation in likely political outcomes—and thus the utility difference between the least and most liked party.

Therefore, in the tests below, the highest score attached to any one of the parties by a citizen on a feeling thermometer (variable *CONSUME*) will stand for that component of the consumption value of electoral activities for the individual in question that can be clearly distinguished from the utility differential. The difference between the thermometer evaluations of the most and least liked party (variable *INVEST*), in its turn, will show the investment value of electorally relevant activities. Both indicator may vary across national political contexts—for instance, be higher in multiparty than two-party systems where fewer voters find a party really close to them and greatly different from the only alternative. However, this has no impact on the analysis below because their impact is estimated separately for each individual election, and only then will the estimated impact be correlated with features of institutional design.

4. Data, Models, Variables

The tests below were carried out with data from Module 1 of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, administered to national samples between 1996 and 2001. Demographic weights, if available, are used to correct for unequal rates of non-response across population groups. Thailand was dropped from the analysis because more than one dependent variable was completely missing for that country. Chile, Lithuania and Russia 2000 were dropped because their data referred to presidential-only elections, for which the respondents' evaluations of the main contenders on feeling thermometers were not available.

A few more elections covered by CSES 1 are excluded from one part of the analysis or another due to missing data regarding political knowledge or partisanship.

The research question at hand may seem to call for a conventional multi-level analysis. Yet, the two-stage analytical strategy proposed by Long Jusko and Shively (2005) seems preferable instead. The first reason is that the number of respondents per elections is sufficiently high to support separate individual level analyses of each election. The second reason is that the number of elections covered is relatively small, and form a non-random sample of the theoretical universe of elections from which they are taken. Hence, it would not be appropriate to use a conventional multi-level analysis.

In the first stage of the analysis, a total of 96 regression equations were estimated with three different dependent variables for individual legislative elections covered by CSES Module 1 surveys. The *TURNOUT* variable shows whether the respondent voted in the last election. Voters' political information level (*INFO*) is measured on an additive scale summing up correct responses from each respondent to three country-specific knowledge questions. Whether citizens paid whatever psychological costs it took to make up their mind between the contending parties is shown by the *CHOICE* variable, which is based on a dichotomous (yes or no) party identification variable in the CSES data set.

The independent variables in the first stage of the analysis are all measured at the individual level. A set of socio-demographic variables enter the analysis as proxies for differences in the costs of voting across individuals within the same country. Variables

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INVEST and *CONSUME,* in their turn, were derived from feeling thermometers showing the respondents' rating of the major parties in their country. *CONSUME* shows the highest rating given by each respondent to any one of the evaluated parties. *INVEST* shows the difference between the highest and lowest rating given by each respondent to any one of the parties.[6] Some respondents only evaluated one party or none at all. Since the instrumental model cannot be assessed in their case, they are excluded from the statistical analyses reported in this chapter.[7] The Appendix gives further details about the variables in the analysis.

Following the research design suggested by Long Jusko and Shively (2005), the second stage of the analysis assesses the relationships between relevant macro-variables and the regression coefficients estimated in the first stage regarding the impact of *CONSUME* and *INVEST* on the three dependent variables. The macro-variables in this analysis refer to three aspects of institutional design (see above) that may influence whether expressive or instrumental rationality dictates political involvement in a particular context.

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[6] Calculated separately for each respondent, the range and the standard deviation of the ratings had a Pearson-correlation over .9 with each other in all national samples. Thus, they could not enter the regression analyses simultaneously. Of the two measures, the range was selected for the greater ease of interpretation that it allows.

[7] One could even argue that those respondents who have no comparative assessments of the parties use the absolute value of the only party they evaluate as a handy information shortcut helping to judge the investment (i.e. political) value of the vote. Thus, the predictions of the Downsian theory and that of its alternative may be indistinguishable in this part of the electorate.

5. Results

Table 1 shows summary statistics about the relevant regression coefficients in the 96 equations estimated in the first stage. The findings regarding the impact of the socio-demographic variables are neither shown in the tables nor discussed in the text since they are irrelevant for the purposes of the present analysis. Expressive motivation must be present if *CONSUME* registers significant positive effects on any of the three dependent variables, but would not be contradicted if *INVEST* has some effects too. If, however, instrumental political rationality motivates political involvement, then the party differential of the respondents— that is, the *INVEST* variable—must have a significant positive effect on the dependent variables, and *CONSUME* must have no effect whatsoever.

Table 1 near here

A brief look at Table 1 suffices to see that for turnout and choice the expressive account receives stronger support than the instrumental explanation. *CONSUME* shows a statistically significant and positive effects on turnout in 22 of the 35 elections in the analysis, and *INVEST* has a similar effect only 15 times. Note again that the significant effects of *INVEST* do not contradict a fully expressive account, while any significant effect of

CONSUME is clearly anomalous for the instrumental model.[8]

Given the paradox of voting it is, of course, only to be expected that the expressive account of turnout would receive support from the data. The truly interesting finding is that the development of a party preference as indicated by *CHOICE* seems even more clearly expressively driven than turnout itself. *CONSUME* records a significant positive effect on *CHOICE* in 32 out of 34 electoral contexts, while *INVEST* has a similar effect on *CHOICE* only 17 times.[9] Hence, party preferences appear to develop on an even more clearly expressive ground than turnout.

The results in Table 1 show no support for an expressive account of political information processing. Where *CONSUME* shows a significant effect on knowledge level, the effect is more often negative than positive, which contradicts the expectations drawn from the expressive model. It is hardly conceivable that these negative effects occur because the consumption value of information is lower for those citizens who have the highest sympathy

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[8] One might want to argue that CONSUME can record significant effects among instrumental voters if they use the absolute value of the best alternative as a cue regarding the utility difference between the best and worst alternative. But all the respondents included in the analysis could evaluate on the same thermometer scales at least two, and usually all the relevant parties running in the election. Thus, it is not clear why they would rely on a cue when the real thing itself is also available for leading their judgement.

[9] It could be objected that the causal connection behind the recurrent significant relationship between CHOICE and CONSUME runs in the opposite direction: people with a clear preference among the parties have give inflated estimates of their liking of the most favoured party as a mere rationalization of their standing preference. However, if such a rationalization effect is present in the data, then it should also inflate the correlation between INVEST and CHOICE too, and thus cannot explain why CONSUME appears to be more readily related to CHOICE than INVEST.

for their most favoured party. Rather, the explanation should be that the investment value of new political information is lower for these people because they are anyway less likely to change their mind.

In contrast, *INVEST* records a significant positive effect on *INFO* in 22 out of the 27 CSES 1 samples for which all the necessary data are available. This suggests that citizens become more attentive to political information when they think that the stakes in the electoral process, i.e. the utility differences between the parties, are higher. In other words, although the high opportunity costs of learning can hardly justify investments into improving the information basis of one's electoral choices, something else nevertheless appears to create a link between instrumental motivation to learn and the act of learning. The theoretical discussion above suggested that this linking factor is the interest of citizens in learning as recipients—rather than as makers—of political outcomes.[10] The result seems to be that political learning among citizens is actually rooted in instrumental motivation, and thus may be undertaken the same way as citizens would learn about politics if their electoral choices had a far bigger impact on actual outcomes than they really do.

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[10] One might want to speculate that the causal arrow between INFO and INVEST goes the other way round: the more one knows about politics, the bigger differences are perceived between the utilities of the competing parties. Unfortunately, no panel data are available for the CSES surveys that would allow one to test this proposition for all the countries covered by the study. However, the 1998 Hungarian election survey that provided postelection data for CSES Module 1 also had a pre-election wave featuring both feeling thermometers and political knowledge questions, thus allowing a dynamic analysis of causal linkages between INFO, INVEST and CONSUME. The findings indicated that INVEST is

The final hypotheses to be tested suggest that expressive choices among parties occur not because of the general characteristics of the electoral arena that create the paradox of voting, but because of particular institutional settings, like a multiparty system. Table 2 checks whether this is the case by correlating three macro-variables that seem relevant here with the parameter estimates summarized in Table 1 and discussed above.[11] The theory would be supported if evidence for expressive motivation were more likely to come from elections with little significance for the composition of the executive, where the electoral system is 'feeble' in that it faithfully reproduces the distribution of popular votes in the composition of the legislature, and where the party system is fragmented.

Table 2 near here

With 18 correlation coefficients displayed in the table, we would expect that one may reach statistical significance at the .05 level even by chance alone. None does if we use two-tailed significance tests, and the one that would be significant at the five percent level if we used one-tailed tests has the wrong sign, suggesting that the more dependent the composition of the executive is on the election, the stronger the impact of expressive motivation on turnout may be. Hence, the pairwise correlations are so discouraging for the presented

significantly more likely to have a significant positive effect on INFO than the other way round (data not shown).

extension of Pappi's theory that there is little point in presenting multivariate analyses of the problem. Indeed, exploratory regression analyses did not identify any significant effects of the three macro characteristics on the regression coefficients obtained at the individual-level within countries (data not shown). Thus, the analysis does not lend support to the idea that institutional design could alter the relative weight of expressive vs. instrumental motives in voting behaviour.

6. Conclusion

Explaining political involvement by its intrinsic rewards has several attractive features. Unlike models based on instrumental rationality, it is not *prima facie* incapable of explaining the observed range of electoral turnout in the world's democracies. It can account for why exactly the most sophisticated citizens are the most likely to behave seemingly irrationally and vote: their longer schooling years and exposure to other forms of informal civic education instil an above average sense of civic duty (Mueller 1989: 365), and their higher information level helps them better appreciate the relatively subtle entertainment of voting.

Expressive voting can explain not only why people vote, but also makes a convincing case for turnout being sensitive to the costs of voting and its possible political benefits. The intrinsic rewards of electorally relevant political involvement provide sufficient motivation of

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[11] Note that due to missing macro data some elections had to be omitted from this

information processing, decision-making and turnout only if the expected costs of the latter are lower than the reward.

What the present analysis added to these theoretical arguments is above all a novel empirical demonstration that if turnout is expressively motivated, then the development of a preference among parties is even more so. Somewhat surprisingly, the same cannot be said about the potentially most demanding activities that citizens need to perform to become voters. The processing of political information seems less likely to be rooted in expressive, and probably more likely to be rooted in genuine instrumentally rational motives than either turnout or developing a party preference. I argued that this is possible for two reasons. First, monitoring political developments is so costly that its consumption value may be insufficient to motivate the act. Second, citizens are not just makers, but also recipients of collective political outcomes. Since they need to adjust their everyday activities to these outcomes, they may well attend to them exactly as instrumental voters would if simple calculus had not revealed to them that rational ignorance was their best choice.

Last but not least, the analysis suggests that expressive voting is probably an inevitable feature of mass democracy, rather than linked to certain institutional contexts. There is thus little point in trying to reduce its role through institutional engineering. What may be more promising is to exploit the fact that political information processing follows such motives that can embed the knowledge basis of even the most expressive electoral

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analysis (see the Appendix for details).

choices in those real-life circumstances that matter most to citizens in their everyday life. Although we cannot tell whether expressive voters are more or less altruistic, more or less engaged in strategic games, more or less materialistic and so forth than instrumental voters are, it is quite conceivable that they are not making the same choices, and this should reduce the quality of political representation. However, electoral democracy seems to be dependent for citizen input on expressive motivation, and at least the information basis of expressive choices can probably approximate the information basis that those instrumental voters would rely on whose choices we will never see, but who will nevertheless remain the inevitable reference point for normative assessments of democratic representation.

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APPENDIX

1. Data source

The micro-data analysed in this chapter come from the August 2003 release of the Integrated Micro-Data Set of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems. After each election covered by the study, national probability samples of the adult population were interviewed. The data sets and study documentation can be downloaded from the website of the project at http:/www.umich.edu/~nes/cses/. The collaborators in the project are not responsible for my interpretations and errors.

2. Number of cases and weighting procedures in the analyses

Only legislative elections are covered. Those respondents who gave sympathy ratings for only one party or no party at all are excluded from the analysis. In all analyses reported here the data were weighted with the demographic weight variables distributed together with the Integrated Micro-Data Set. The values of the weight variables were adjusted so that the weighted and unweighted number of cases are identical in each national sample. A total of 35 surveys are used in the analysis, including two studies from Belgium (separate surveys for Walloonia and Flanders in 1999), Hong Kong (the 1998 and 2000 elections); Mexico (1997 and 2000), and Spain (1997 and 2000) each.

3. The dependent variables in the regression analyses

INFO: The collaborators in the CSES project were asked to include three neutral, factual, and

unequally demanding country-specific political knowledge questions in the

questionnaire module. The INFO variable is a simple count of the number of correct

responses given by each respondent. Note that the INFO variable is entirely missing

for the following elections: Belarus 2001; Denmark 1998; Iceland 1999; South Korea

2000; Peru 2000 and 2001; Russia 1999; and Slovenia 1996.

CHOICE: party identification, based on A3004 of the CSES data set. The respective question

to the respondents read: 'Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular

political party?' Yes responses were coded 1 and nays 0. Note that the CHOICE

variable is entirely missing for the French-speaking part of Belgium in the 1999

federal elections.

TURNOUT: electoral participation, based on A2028 of the CSES data set. The variable was

coded 1 if the respondent claimed to have voted in the last election and 0 if he or she

reported abstention from the polls.

4. The party utility variables

CONSUME: the "consumption value of the vote", i.e. the highest rating given by the

respondent to any one of the major parties on eleven-point like/dislike scales

(A3020_A to A3020_I in the integrated CSES data set), which asked respondents to

evaluate each of the major parties (up to six) in the given country. See question 7 of the CSES Module 1 questionnaire.

INVEST: the party differential of the respondent or "investment value of the vote", i.e. the difference between the highest and the lowest rating given by the respondent to any one of the parties on the like/dislike scales.

5. Socio-demographic control variables employed in all stage 1 models

AGE: age of respondent in years (missing values substituted with sample mean).

AGE SQUARED: the squared value of AGE.

FEMALE: coded 1 for women and 0 for men.

INCOME: personal income, divided into quintiles by country (missing values substituted with the median).

HEDUC: coded 1 for university education or more and 0 otherwise.

LEDUC: coded 1 for primary education or less and 0 otherwise.

6. Macro variables

STAKES: a scale rating the legislative elections included in the analysis in terms of their possible de facto impact on the composition of the executive. All legislative elections in pure parliamentary systems - including Poland and Romania, which are often considered semi-presidential, but the government is only responsible to parliament -

were rated 5; legislative elections in Hong Kong, Korea, Mexico, Peru were rated 1 because the executive is not at all responsible to the legislature; those in Russia, Ukraine and the United States were rated 2 because appointments to the executive were to be confirmed in at least one house of the legislature. The 1996 legislative election in Taiwan was rated 3 because of the dual answerability of the executive to legislature and the directly elected president.

ELECTORAL SYSTEM: the degree of deviation between the percentage distribution of votes and seats, as measured by the Loosemore-Hanby index calculated for the given legislative election. These data were kindly provided by Hans-Dieter Klingemann and Bernhard Wessels of the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin in 2002. Data for Iceland and Portugal were added by the author.

PARTY SYSTEM: the effective number of electoral parties. These data were kindly provided by Hans-Dieter Klingemann and Bernhard Wessels of the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin in 2002. Data for Iceland and Portugal were added by the author.

Note that some elections were excluded from the analysis reported in Table 2 because of missing information about one or more macro variables. These were the following elections: Belarus 2001; Hong Kong 2000; Mexico 2000; and Peru 2001.

Table 1: Summary statistics about the impact of CONSUME and INVEST on three indicators of political involvement in national samples

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Number of surveys	Average value of regression coefficients	Standard deviation of regression coefficients	Number of positive effects significant at p≤.05	Number of negative effects significant at p ≤.05
INFO	CONSUME	27	-0.019	0.038	2	7
INFO	INVEST	27	0.050	0.036	22	0
CHOICE	CONSUME	34	0.334	0.126	32	0
CHOICE	INVEST	34	0.113	0.069	17	0
TURNOUT	CONSUME	35	0.196	0.165	22	0
TURNOUT	INVEST	35	0.081	0.091	15	0

Note: Table entries summarize the key results of within-country logistic regression analyses of the determinants of TURNOUT and CHOICE and OLS-regression analyses of the determinants of INFO. All dependent variables were regressed on variables CONSUME, INVEST and the socio-demographic proxies for the cost of voting described in the Appendix.

Table 2: Correlation of the first-stage regression coefficient estimates with macro characteristics of the electoral context

First stage regression estimates	Second stage statistics	Macro characteristics of electoral context		
		STAKES	ELECTORAL SYSTEM	PARTY SYSTEM
Effect of CONSUME on INFO	Pearson Correlation	-0.067	-0.326	-0.052
	Sig. (2-tailed) with N=25	0.751	0.112	0.807
Effect of INVEST on INFO	Pearson Correlation	0.186	0.244	0.045
	Sig. (2-tailed) with N=25	0.372	0.241	0.830
Effect of CONSUME on CHOICE	Pearson Correlation	0.245	-0.094	0.132
	Sig. (2-tailed) with N=30	0.193	0.622	0.488
Effect of INVEST on CHOICE	Pearson Correlation	0.009	0.118	-0.047
	Sig. (2-tailed) with N=30	0.963	0.534	0.804
Effect of CONSUME on TURNOUT	Pearson Correlation	0.305	-0.035	-0.073
	Sig. (2-tailed) with N=31	0.095	0.850	0.697
Effect of INVEST on TURNOUT	Pearson Correlation	0.009	0.067	-0.149
	Sig. (2-tailed) with N=31	0.963	0.721	0.425