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Getting Out the Vote: Party Mobilization in a Comparative Perspective

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A long tradition within political science examines the impact of party canvassing on voter participation. Very little of this work, however, is comparative in scope. This essay examines how system-level characteristics shape the nature and impact of party canvassing and how voters respond to those efforts. Parties are found to target the same types of potential voters everywhere – those who are likely to participate. However, one important difference is that overall levels of party contact are far greater in candidate-based systems than in proportional representation (PR) systems. Party mobilization, therefore, cannot explain the higher rates of turnout observed in PR systems.

A long tradition within political science has identified the importance of party mobilization efforts to voter turnout. Such work, which has often employed an experimental approach, has tended to focus on the impact of campaign work, on voter willingness to turn out and on the importance of various means of contact – mail, telephone or doorstep – upon voters.[1] Typically these studies have been made within the context of a single country, usually that of Britain or the United States.[2] In this article we move beyond a single system to compare mobilization across seven different countries with different electoral systems in order to ask questions about the level and kind of mobilization efforts that take place. The broader theoretical relevance of this work lies in its extension of the literature on electoral systems. Within this literature, considerable bodies of work discuss comparative features of party life such as policy positioning or candidate nomination.[3] Here we extend a discussion of cross-system effects to consider how these system-level characteristics shape efforts to 'get out the vote' and, also, voter responses to those efforts.

TURNOUT AND PARTY MOBILIZATION EFFORTS ACROSS DIFFERENT SYSTEMS

As Leighley noted, the major theme of research on voter turnout has concerned the link between individual attitudinal and demographic traits and turnout.[4] The impact of party

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[1] Alan S. Gerber and Donald P. Green, 'The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment', *American Political Science Review*, 94 (2000), 653–63; Harold F. Gosnell, *Getting-Out-the-Vote: An Experiment in the Stimulation of Voting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927).

[2] John M. Bochel and David D. Denver, 'Canvassing, Turnout and Party Support: An Experiment', *British Journal of Political Science*, 1 (1971), 257–69; Gerber and Green, 'The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout'.

[3] For a review, see David M. Farrell, *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction* (London: Palgrave, 2001).

[4] Jan Leighley, 'Attitudes, Opportunities and Incentives: A Field Essay on Political Participation', *Political Research Quarterly*, 48 (1995), 181–209.

mobilization efforts were, she argued, an unfairly neglected aspect of turnout studies.[5] Since then, and partly in response to this argument, more efforts have been made to consider the impact of mobilization; most notably in Gerber and Green's experimental work that revisits and extends the earlier work of Bochel and Denver in 1971 and of Gosnell in 1927.[6] All of these studies show that party mobilization efforts can increase the willingness of voters to turn out and vote: but does this mean that parties everywhere engage in the same level of activity to turn out voters? Further, does this mean that voters in different systems are equally responsive to campaign contact? In other words, how general are some of the findings from the British and American literature?

In this article, we examine how successful parties are at mobilizing voters under different electoral systems. Successful mobilization efforts can be measured by the amount of contacting and the effectiveness of this contact in turning out voters. We suggest a straightforward cost/benefit approach to examining the former question: parties will expend greater effort on mobilizing voters when the expected benefits of turning out voters are greatest, relative to the costs; i.e. when extra votes are likely to turn into extra seats for the party.[7] At the same time, system-level factors such as electoral rules will shift that balance between costs and benefits. Candidate-based systems, for example, may provide incentives for candidates to mobilize voters even in cases where the expected return is not readily apparent. Whether voters are responsive to these efforts may also depend on the nature of the electoral system.

We know from earlier studies that in single-member district (SMD) systems, parties are likely to invest heavily in mobilization activity in competitive (marginal) seats.[8] Districted systems in general can produce extremely safe districts in which there is little point in opposition parties campaigning.[9] Unless the safe incumbent party sees some value in campaigning for a seat it is very sure of winning, then it is unlikely to make much effort in those seats. In the United States, for example, the vast majority of House seats are widely viewed as being non-competitive. By contrast, recent presidential elections have been extremely competitive, with more states proving to be pivotal to the outcome. Therefore, voters who would otherwise be ignored by candidates contesting congressional elections

[5] Leighley, 'Attitudes, Opportunities and Incentives', pp. 182, 189; Robert Jackson, 'A Reassessment of Voter Mobilization', *Political Research Quarterly*, 49 (1996), 331–49.

[6] See also Samuel J. Eldersveld, 'Experimental Propaganda Techniques and Voting Behavior', *American Political Science Review*, 50 (1956), 154–65; Roy E. Miller, David A. Bositis and Denise L. Baer, 'Stimulating Voter Turnout in a Primary: Field Experiment with Precinct Committeemen', *International Political Science Review*, 2 (1981), 445–60; Gerber and Green, 'The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout'.

[7] Gary Cox, 'Electoral Rules and the Calculus of Mobilization', *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 3 (1999), 387–419.

[8] See, for example, Charles Pattie, Ronald Johnston and Edward Fieldhouse, 'Winning the Local Vote: The Effectiveness of Constituency Campaign Spending in Great Britain, 1983–1992', *American Political Science Review*, 89 (1995), 969–83; in addition, see Johnston's earlier work on New Zealand: Ron Johnston, 'Resource Allocation and Political Campaigns: Notes Towards a Methodology', *Policy and Politics*, 5 (1976), 181–99; Ron Johnston, 'The Electoral Geography of an Election Campaign: Scotland in October 1974', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 93 (1977), 98–108; Ron Johnston, 'Campaign Expenditure and the Efficacy of Advertising at the 1974 General Elections in England', *Political Studies*, 27 (1979), 114–19; Ron Johnston and P. J. Taylor, *Geography of Elections* (Harmondsworth, Midx.: Penguin Books, 1979).

[9] G. Bingham Powell Jr, 'Voting Turnout in Thirty Democracies: Partisan, Legal, and Socio-Economic Influences', in Richard Rose, ed., *Electoral Participation: A Comparative Analysis* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1980), p. 12.

might be mobilized by parties focusing their efforts on the presidential race. The emphasis on competitiveness leads one to expect that the degree of party mobilization in any districted system will depend on the relative distribution of safe and marginal seats.

The presence of many safe seats in single-member district systems is often cited as a factor contributing to low voter turnout. Nevertheless, while it is assumed that parties ignore the 'safe' seats, there are still reasons to expect mobilization efforts in these districts, particularly among candidates who seek to cultivate the 'personal vote'. While often overstated, developing personal relationships with constituents is an important part of the role of the representative and there is evidence that it enhances electoral prospects.[10] Therefore, even when there is less competition, candidates still have an incentive to contact voters. The importance of 'home style' is buttressed by evidence that constituents are more likely to know their representatives and have some contact with them in electoral systems with lower district magnitudes.[11] Additionally, having geographically defined districts with a single-member elected simplifies the process of identifying which voters to contact and which candidates are responsible for the contacting. In comparison, in PR systems, party lists are often used to elect candidates. Candidates in these list-based systems are less likely to have an incentive to campaign on a personal level especially in districts with a large district magnitude.[12]

Evidence from countries other than Britain and the United States on party canvassing and turnout is less well developed but the existing literature does suggest that party contact is an important strategy in districted systems used elsewhere. In the 2002 general election in Ireland, for example, over half of the voters report that a candidate made a personal house visit and over half also report being contacted by a party worker.[13] Similarly high levels of party contact were observed in Ireland in the 1999 European Parliament elections.[14] In Canada, local canvassing is viewed as an important feature of election campaigns which can increase vote share particularly for candidates running for opposition parties.[15] In contrast, parties in Sweden and Norway rarely engage in door to door canvassing. Instead,

[10] Bruce Cain, John Ferejohn and Morris Fiorina, *The Personal Vote: Constituency Service and Electoral Independence* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987); Valerie Heitshusen, Garry Young and David M. Wood, 'Electoral Context and MP Constituency Focus in Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom', *American Journal of Political Science*, 49 (2005), 32–45.

[11] John Curtice and Phil Shively, 'Who Represents Us Best? One Member or Many?' (Centre for Research into Elections and Social Trends, University of Oxford, Working Paper No. 79, 2000); Shaun Bowler and David M. Farrell, 'Legislator Shirking and Voter Monitoring: Impacts of European Parliament Electoral Systems upon Legislator–Voter Relationship', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 31 (1993), 45–69.

[12] John M. Carey and Matthew S. Shugart, 'Incentive to Cultivate a Personal Vote: A Rank Ordering of Electoral Systems', *Electoral Studies*, 14 (1995), 417–39. Throughout this article we use SMD to refer to electoral systems that rely only on single-member district systems with plurality or majoritarian rules to elect members of the legislature. We use PR to refer to countries that employ proportional representation. New Zealand refers to its proportional system as MMP because of the combination of single-member districts and a proportional party list. Ultimately, MMP is proportional and we refer to the electoral system as MMP when specifically discussing the case of New Zealand and PR when discussing it in terms of a general class of electoral systems.

[13] Michael Marsh, 'None of that Post-Modern Stuff Around Here: Grassroots Campaigning in the 2002 Irish General Election', *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion, and Parties*, 14 (2004), 245–67.

[14] Jeffrey A. Karp, Shaun Bowler and Susan A. Banducci, 'Electoral Systems, Party Mobilization and Turnout: Evidence from the European Parliamentary Elections 1999', in Colin Rallings, Roger Scully, Jonathan Tonge and Paul Webb, eds, *British Elections and Parties Review, Vol. 13* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), pp. 210–28.

[15] Kenneth R. Carty and D. Munroe Eagles, 'Do Local Campaigns Matter? Campaign Spending, the Local Canvass and Party Support in Canada', *Electoral Studies*, 18 (1999), 69–87.

personal contacts made by party activists take place at factories, offices and other places of work.[16]

In addition to greater efficiency and building a personal vote, efforts to get out the vote are likely to pay the greatest dividends in elections that typically have low voter turnout. Plurality systems are known to have lower voter turnout than PR systems.[17] Where turnout is low, party mobilization may have a greater potential to impact the outcome of an election. For several reasons, then, we should expect to see high levels of voter mobilization in districted systems because the districted structure means both that individual candidates have incentives to campaign and, further, that in competitive districts the reward for campaign effort is especially clear.

Although districts may provide strong incentives to mobilize, a plausible rival hypothesis is that PR systems may in fact encourage greater mobilization efforts. A long-held virtue of PR systems is that because every vote counts in PR, parties have an incentive to mobilize everywhere, resulting in more competitive elections.[18] A more proportional translation of votes to seats suggests that party mobilization efforts may also be greater under PR systems because additional seats are more easily assured through extra votes. Furthermore, because PR systems are typically multi-party systems, there are more relevant actors in those electoral arenas trying to reach out to voters than in SMD systems.

All of this literature speaks to systemic variations in party contacting strategies. It does not, however, directly address the question of whether such efforts will be successful and under which institutional arrangements we would expect greater success. Successful mobilization efforts rely both on contacting voters and in converting potential voters to actual voters.

A considerable body of work shows that party contact is influential in mobilizing voters to turn out and vote. Field experiments in the United States, beginning with Gosnell, have repeatedly demonstrated that citizens are more likely to vote when they are contacted. Experimental studies that compare the type of contact made indicate that face-to-face canvassing is more effective than contacts made by telephone or mail.[19] Election surveys also suggest that doorstep canvassing is more effective than telephone canvassing.[20] There is also evidence that canvassing tends to increase turnout among occasional voters but not

[16] Peter Esaiasson, 'Scandinavia', in David Butler and Austin Ranney, eds, *Electioneering: A Comparative Study of Continuity and Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1992), pp. 202–16.

[17] G. Bingham Powell, 'American Voter Turnout in Comparative Perspective', *American Political Science Review*, 80 (1986), 17–43.

[18] Harold F. Gosnell, *Why Europe Votes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930); Herbert Tingsten, *Political Behavior: Studies in Election Statistics* (London: P. S. King and Son, 1937).

[19] See also Eldersveld, 'Experimental Propaganda Techniques and Voting Behavior'; Bochel and Denver, 'Canvassing, Turnout and Party Support: An Experiment'; Miller and Bositis and Baer, 'Stimulating Voter Turnout in a Primary'; Gerber and Green, 'The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout'. Imai provides an empirical test that calls into question Gerber and Green's findings about the effectiveness of telephone calls. He finds that telephone calls increase turnout by about 5 percentage points. See Kosuke Imai, 'Do Get-Out-the-Vote Calls Reduce Turnout? The Importance of Statistical Methods for Field Experiments', *American Political Science Review*, 99 (2005), 283–300.

[20] C. J. Pattie and Ronald J. Johnston, 'Hanging on the Telephone? Doorstep and Telephone Canvassing at the British General Election of 1997', *British Journal of Political Science*, 33 (2003), 303–22.

chronic non-voters and that contacts closer to the election tend to be more effective.[21] Evidence based on a field experiment during local elections in Britain suggests that party canvassing can appreciably increase voter participation, but others emphasize the relative unimportance of party canvassing when compared to television appeals.[22] Technological advances have led to a steady decline in door to door canvassing.[23] Nevertheless, parties are more likely to mobilize voters through doorstep canvassing than by telephone and these efforts can have a significant influence on increasing an individual's likelihood of voting and party choice.[24]

While contact may well have an impact on turnout, some suggest that other systemic features will influence the effectiveness of contact. In other words, under certain rules voters will be more responsive to that contact. This argument shifts attention away from questions of party and candidate strategy to the reaction of voters to the psychological effects of competitive elections and the meaningfulness of votes. First, the increased number of parties under PR rules may lead to more effective contacting as the electorate sorts into rival blocs. The greater number of parties in PR systems leads to greater dispersion across the ideological spectrum and increases the likelihood that they will be ideologically focused with stronger links to social groups and may, as a consequence, have an easier time mobilizing voters.[25]

Secondly, it has been suggested that PR systems enhance political efficacy because votes are not wasted.[26] Greater stores of efficacy may make it easier for parties in PR systems to persuade potential supporters to vote. Additionally, party supporters under PR may be persuaded to turn out to maximize the party's representation in parliament. Even if the party cannot win a majority, every extra vote has the potential to translate into seats giving a party useful bargaining power over coalition arrangements. By contrast, in districted systems, parties that are not in a competitive position may find it difficult to persuade potential supporters to go to the polls since their votes may be perceived as making little difference to the outcome. We might expect, therefore, that party contacting will be more effective in converting potential voters to actual voters where a vote is more likely to make a difference to the distribution of seats. In systemic terms, then, we might expect mobilization efforts under PR and in marginal seats to have a higher payoff. Therefore, contacted voters under PR may actually turn out and vote much more readily than under SMD systems.

[21] David Niven, 'The Limits of Mobilization: Turnout Evidence from State House Primaries', *Political Behavior*, 23 (2001), 335–50; David Niven, 'The Mobilization Calendar – The Time-Dependent Effects of Personal Contact on Turnout', *American Politics Research*, 30 (2002), 307–22.

[22] Bochel and Denver, 'Canvassing, Turnout and Party Support'; John M. Bochel and David D. Denver, 'The Impact of the Campaign on the Results of Local Government', *British Journal of Political Science*, 2 (1972), 239–43; Ian McAllister, 'Campaign Activities and Electoral Outcomes in Britain 1979 and 1983', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 49 (1985), 489–503.

[23] David Denver, Gordon Hands, Justin Fisher and Ian MacAlllister, 'Constituency Campaigning in Britain 1992–2001', *Party Politics*, 9 (2003), 541–59.

[24] Paul F. Whiteley and Patrick Seyd, 'Local Party Campaigning and Electoral Mobilization in Britain', *Journal of Politics*, 56 (1994), 242–52; Paul F. Whiteley and Patrick Seyd, 'Party Election Campaigning in Britain', *Party Politics*, 9 (2003), 637–52.

[25] Cox, 'Electoral Rules and the Calculus of Mobilization', p. 398; Powell, 'Voting Turnout in Thirty Democracies'.

[26] See for example Susan A. Banducci, Todd Donovan, and Jeffrey A. Karp, 'Proportional Representation and Attitudes about Politics: Results from New Zealand', *Electoral Studies*, 18 (1999), 533–55; Douglas Amy, *Real Choices/New Voices: The Case for PR Elections in the United States* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1993).

EXPECTATIONS ABOUT PARTY STRATEGY

Even in the advent of professional campaigns, resources are not limitless and so parties are likely to emphasize contact with a particular subset of voters.[27] Parties, therefore, have an incentive to reduce the costs of mobilization efforts by targeting probable voters and targeting voters that are less costly to reach. Several voter characteristics may make them easier to contact or identify as probable voters: voters in previous elections, those who live in cities, members of formal interest groups, such as unions, are characteristics of probable voters or easily contactable potential voters. Previous voters are likely to vote again so contacting efforts are going to be more cost effective.[28] Home-owners, rather than tenants, will have more stable residential patterns that allow them to be more readily contacted. City areas, moreover, offer a population density that makes door to door canvassing more cost effective than in rural areas where the population is more dispersed. Parties in PR list-based systems that engage in door to door canvassing are likely to place greater value on population density than under districted systems simply because their votes come nationwide and voter rich areas are therefore more likely to be targeted.[29] By and large, then, we expect to see very few differences in targeting across demographic groups. However, we do expect the balance between efforts at mobilization and conversion – whether we expect voter contact to turn out loyal voters or try to change the minds of waiverers – to differ. Here the American system of registration as a partisan is likely to be a distinctive system by allowing parties to target their own loyalists much more readily than elsewhere. By contrast, Australia's compulsory voting means that the question of mobilization is largely moot for that system. Campaign efforts there, then, will be much more likely to be flavoured by attempts at conversion rather than mobilization.

Based on these expectations, we have the following hypotheses:

HYPOTHESIS 1 Overall levels of party mobilization will be higher under SMD than under PR rules. In particular, marginal seats will yield greater mobilization efforts.

HYPOTHESIS 2 Party contacting will be more effective in PR list-based systems than in SMD systems. Within SMD systems, contacting will be more effective in marginal districts than in safe districts.

HYPOTHESIS 3 In order to enhance the effectiveness of contacting, parties will concentrate on reaching voters who are more readily identifiable as repeat voters and identifiers by simple demographic traits. Previous voters will receive more attention than other voters, as will home owners (i.e. long-term residents of an area) and these patterns will hold regardless of system because parties will adopt a mobilization strategy by targeting strong identifiers. The exception is in compulsory systems where parties are more likely to adopt a conversion strategy and contact 'independents'.

[27] David M. Farrell, 'Campaign Strategies and Tactics', in Lawrence LeDuc, Richard G. Niemi and Pippa Norris, eds, *Comparing Democracies: Elections and Voting in Global Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 160–83.

[28] Where available parties are able to target individuals through registration lists. They can also identify voters either by relying on voting records that are available for public inspection or, when allowed, through observation at polling places.

[29] Parties may also target likely voters by focusing on geographic areas known to have high turnout.

DATA AND METHODS

To test these hypotheses, we rely on individual level data measuring citizen contact with political parties and activists in the context of a national election campaign. We have identified eight national election studies from a diverse set of countries (and electoral systems) that include a measure of party contact.[30] These include Australia, Britain, Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden and the United States. Of these Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States use single-member district plurality systems to elect legislators, while Sweden and the Netherlands use PR with a national party list. Australia is also the only country in our sample with compulsory voting and therefore provides a distinct contrast to the United States in terms of sorting out party contacts aimed at conversion versus mobilization. New Zealand had a plurality system until 1996 when it switched to a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system.[31] Our selection of elections thus permits comparisons across countries as well as within. In the latter case, the availability of election studies in New Zealand under both SMD and MMP permits a more direct test of the impact of electoral institutions because it controls for country-specific factors that might also influence the relationship between party mobilization and the electoral system.

To measure party contact, we use a question from election surveys asking respondents if they had personally been contacted by a party during the campaign.[32] In some countries, respondents were asked how they had been contacted – a personal visit, by telephone, and by mail. In other countries, the question asked only about telephone or personal visits. While the format of the questions allow us to separate contact via the mail from more personal forms of contact, we are unable to make distinctions between personal visits and telephone calls in all of the cases. Therefore, we count only a personal visit or a telephone call as a form of party contact (see Appendix for details on question wording).

Based on our earlier discussion, four sets of variables that should predict whether an individual is contacted by a party are examined. First, we examine variables that parties may use when they set out to do canvassing or mobilization efforts. These variables include partisanship, campaign activity, previous voting history and union membership within the household.[33] Secondly, we include social and demographic variables that are indicators of the likelihood of voting. Thirdly, we include a set of variables that are indicators of the ease of contact such as home ownership and city or rural dwelling. Finally, where single-member districts exist, we use a measure of marginality that is based on the distance

[30] We have included two election studies from New Zealand, one under SMD rules and another under PR rules. A future source of data to examine these questions is the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES).

[31] See Jack Vowles, 'The Politics of Electoral Reform in New Zealand', *International Political Science Review*, 16 (1995), 95–115, for a discussion on the reasons for reform.

[32] Respondents' report of party contact is a direct measure of party mobilization efforts at getting out the vote by making personal visits and phone calls. As parties increase mobilization efforts this will be directly correlated with the number of citizens reporting such contact. Of course, as with any survey measurement that requires a recall effort there is likely to be error. Reported vote suffers from the same problem. However, our models control for the various factors that might lead to over-reporting party contact and should minimize the influence of this possible source of measurement error.

[33] Voting records in the United States, Britain, Sweden and New Zealand are available for public inspection. In Canada voter lists containing names and addresses are available to registered political parties for electoral purposes. Parties are also represented at the polling station and can, therefore, record who votes. In the Netherlands, residents are required to register at the local municipality. However, these records are not generally made available. For more information on the Netherlands, see Robert J. J. Voogt and Willem E. Saris, 'To Participate or Not to Participate: The Link Between Survey Participation, Electoral Participation, and Political Interest', *Political Analysis*, 11 (2003), 164–79.

between the first and second place vote getter.[34] All of the variables are standardized to a scale of 0 to 1 to allow for comparisons across countries.

There are several other issues in the specification of voting models, in general, and in voting models using party contact, specifically, that need to be addressed. We propose a hierarchical process where individuals are first contacted and then contact influences voting. In addition, while we suggest that party contacting may enhance the likelihood of voting, it is also possible that likely voters are more likely to be contacted by parties. One method for dealing with these issues is to estimate a two-stage model. Such a strategy requires an instrumental variable that must be a good predictor of the first-stage dependent variable but not be correlated with the second-stage dependent variable. Unfortunately, no such measure exists in our dataset.[35] As an alternative, we estimate two separate models: one for contact and one for whether an individual voted. We follow Rosenstone and Hansen's approach by controlling for all appropriate factors that may also influence contact in the turnout model.[36] In the final step of our analysis, we pool the data to allow us to model cross-system differences in party contacting and the impact of this contact on voting.

RESULTS

Figure 1 shows the percentage of respondents who report being directly contacted by a political party during the campaign in the seven countries under study. The results provide strong evidence that party contact varies with the electoral system. Citizens in SMD systems are, in general much more likely to be contacted by party workers than in any of the three PR systems in the sample. Overall, about a third report being contacted directly, either in person or by telephone in the United States and in Britain, while almost 25 per cent do so in New Zealand in 1993 and 20 per cent report being contacted in Canada. In contrast, less than 10 per cent report being contacted in Sweden or the Netherlands. In Australia, few people report being directly contacted.[37] At least part of this 'non-campaign' may be attributable to compulsory voting. Turnout levels in Australia, thanks in part to compulsory voting, are among the highest in the industrial world, averaging 95 per cent (of registered voters). Parties, therefore, have little need to get out the vote.[38]

Figure 2 shows that parties are consistently more likely to target voters in marginal districts than in safe districts.[39] This result is entirely expected and consistent with theories

[34] In the United States, we measure marginality by the distance between the two presidential candidates at the state level.

[35] Gerber and Green, 'The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout', use a variable indicating whether a subject was selected for the treatment group. Unfortunately, we are using observational data so we do not have such a measure at hand.

[36] Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen, *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America* (New York: Macmillan, 1993).

[37] However, nearly nine out of ten respondents report receiving something in the mail from a political party, indicating that parties are nevertheless making an effort to reach voters. In New Zealand under MMP, a similar proportion of citizens report receiving information in the form of a letter or pamphlet. Nearly two-thirds of Americans also report receiving information by mail. In the Netherlands, 17 per cent report receiving something by mail while in Canada 12 per cent recall receiving mail.

[38] See also Ian Ward, 'Localizing the National: The Rediscovery and Reshaping of Local Campaigning in Australia', *Party Politics*, 9 (2003), 583–600, at p. 593.

[39] Marginal seats are classified as those where the margin between first and second place is less than 5 percentage points.

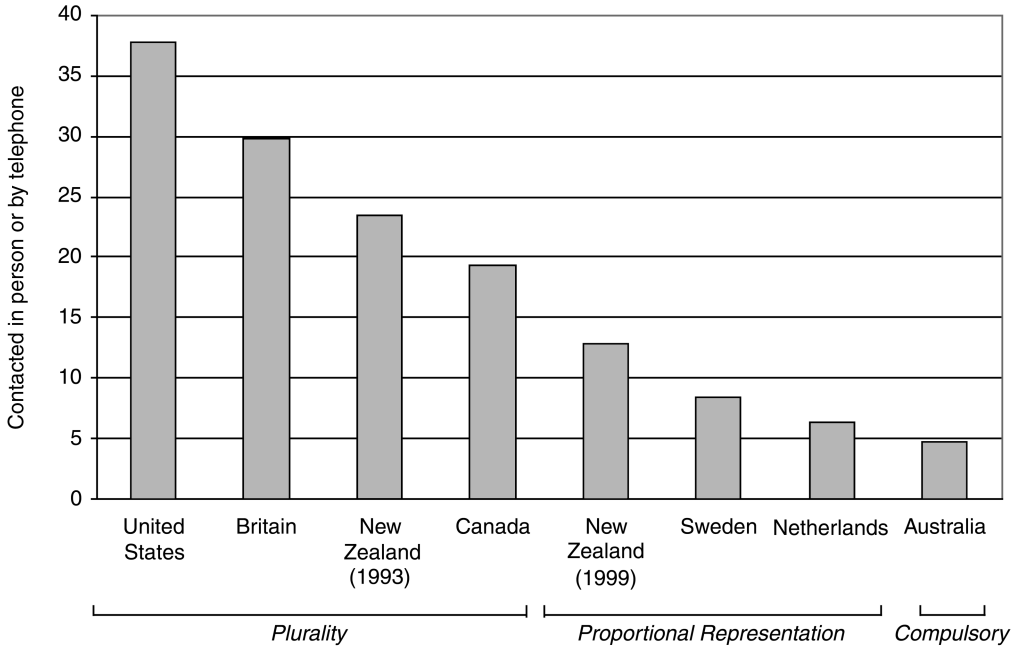

Fig. 1. Party mobilization across electoral systems

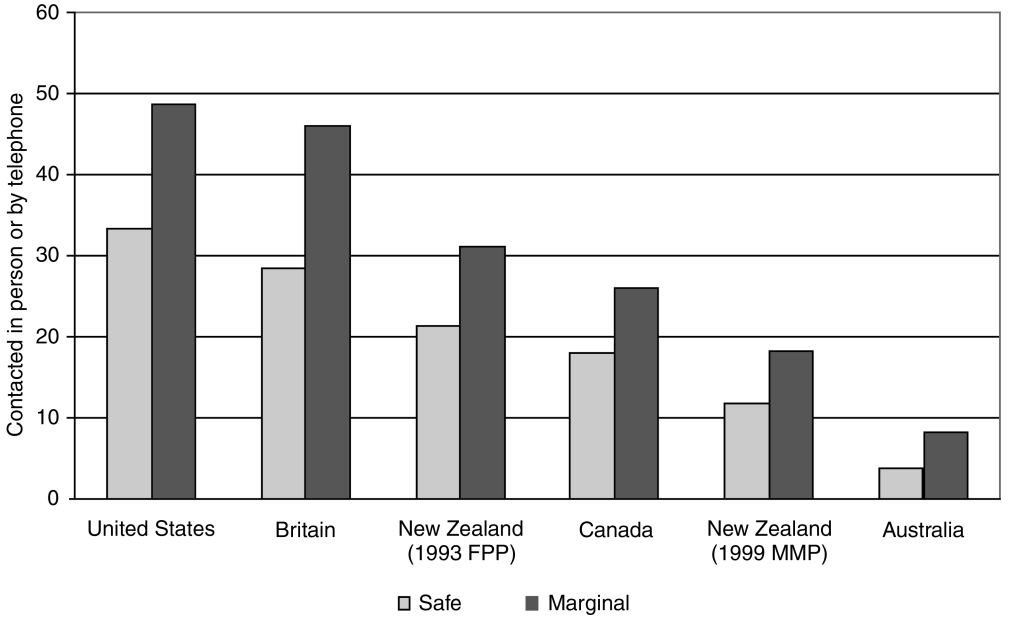

Fig. 2. Reported party contact by safe and marginal seats

TABLE 1 *Party Contact Model: Logit Coefficients*

	Proportional Representation Systems									Plurality and Majoritarian Systems		
	Netherlands			Sweden			New Zealand			Britain		
Variables	Coef.	S.E.	Max.†	Coef.	S.E.	Max.	Coef.	S.E.	Max.	Coef.	S.E.	Max.
Education	0.60	(0.39)	0.04	0.77	(0.52)	0.03	0.08	(0.30)	0.01	−0.02	(0.16)	0.00
Age	−0.07	(0.07)	−0.03	−0.15	(0.10)	−0.04	0.15***	(0.05)	0.14	0.04	(0.03)	0.06
Female	0.09	(0.18)	0.01	0.49*	(0.25)	0.02	0.16	(0.11)	0.02	0.04	(0.09)	0.01
Union	0.39**	(0.20)	0.03	0.30	(0.30)	0.01	0.14	(0.12)	0.01	0.16	(0.26)	0.03
Activity	2.22***	(0.41)	0.27	1.68***	(0.43)	0.11	0.97***	(0.26)	0.11	0.54**	(0.25)	0.12
Previous voter	−0.29	(0.26)	−0.02	0.12	(0.41)	0.01	0.59*	(0.34)	0.05	0.33**	(0.14)	0.06
Party strength	0.27	(0.32)	0.02	1.10***	(0.29)	0.06	0.41**	(0.18)	0.04	0.44**	(0.22)	0.06
Right	0.13	(0.26)	0.01	−0.04	(0.36)	0.00	0.25	(0.22)	0.03	0.14	(0.15)	0.03
Left	0.20	(0.23)	0.01	0.04	(0.39)	0.00	0.13	(0.18)	0.01	0.10	(0.13)	0.02
City	−0.22	(0.19)	−0.01	−0.53*	(0.28)	−0.03	0.27**	(0.12)	0.03			
Home owner				0.05	(0.29)	0.00	−0.10	(0.15)	−0.01	0.15	(0.14)	0.03
Marginality							−0.01**	(0.00)	−0.05	−0.04***	(0.00)	−0.41
Constant	−2.94***	(0.44)		−4.01***	(0.69)		−3.92***	(0.48)		−0.87***	(0.26)	
n	1,785			1,097			2,842			2,495		
Pseudo R^2	0.05			0.10			0.03			0.06		
PRE	0.00			0.00			0.00			0.00		

TABLE 1 *(Continued)*

	Plurality and Majoritarian Systems											
	Canada			United States			Australia			New Zealand		
Variables	Coef.	S.E.	Max.	Coef.	S.E.	Max.	Coef.	S.E.	Max.	Coef.	S.E.	Max.
Education	1.16***	(0.24)	0.15	0.99***	(0.27)	0.19	0.39	(0.42)	0.01	− 0.04	(0.03)	− 0.04
Age	0.13***	(0.03)	0.17	0.20***	(0.04)	0.35	0.20**	(0.09)	0.07	0.10***	(0.04)	0.15
Female	0.19**	(0.09)	0.03	0.19	(0.12)	0.04	0.41*	(0.24)	0.02	0.14	(0.11)	0.02
Union	0.03	(0.10)	0.00	0.26***	(0.17)	0.06	0.02	(0.27)	0.00	0.11	(0.12)	0.02
Activity	0.11	(0.23)	0.02	2.61***	(0.35)	0.56	2.20***	(0.75)	0.19	0.97***	(0.26)	0.18
Previous voter	0.47***	(0.13)	0.06	0.70	(0.16)	0.15	− 0.52	(0.48)	− 0.03	− 0.12	(0.17)	− 0.02
Party strength	0.02	(0.12)	0.00	0.19	(0.18)	0.04	− 0.28	(0.37)	− 0.01	0.55***	(0.17)	0.10
Right	0.08	(0.13)	0.01	− 0.01	(0.21)	0.00	0.36	(0.32)	0.02	− 0.28	(0.22)	− 0.05
Left	− 0.02	(0.15)	0.00	0.38	(0.27)	0.09	− 0.63	(0.75)	− 0.02	− 0.47**	(0.23)	− 0.07
City				0.16	(0.17)	0.04	− 0.51**	(0.25)	− 0.02	0.61***	(0.13)	0.10
Home owner				0.67***	(0.14)	0.15	− 0.23	(0.28)	− 0.01	0.08	(0.16)	0.01
Marginality	− 0.02***	(0.00)	− 0.17	− 0.02***	(0.01)	− 0.32	− 0.03**	(0.01)	− 0.05	− 0.06***	(0.01)	− 0.37
Constant	− 2.90***	(0.25)		− 3.53***	(0.32)		− 3.20***	(0.67)		− 1.73***	(0.28)	
n	3,600			1,500			1,585			1,920		
Pseudo R^2	0.03			0.14			0.06			0.08		
PRE	0.00			0.22			0.00			0.00		

***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.10$.

†'Max.' refers to the maximum change in probability holding all other variables constant at the mean.

about party motivations. What is unexpected is the proportion of citizens who are canvassed in the 'safe' seats. In the United States, about a third report being contacted in states that were not 'in play' during the 2000 presidential election and, in Britain, a slightly lower percentage report being contacted in 'safe' seats. While the proportion being contacted in 'safe' seats in New Zealand (under SMD) and Canada is somewhat lower, it still exceeds the proportion being contacted in marginal seats in New Zealand (under PR) and Australia. Moreover, the level of party contact in the 'safe' seats in any country with SMD exceeds that of any of the PR countries (see Figure 1). Thus, the assumption that party mobilization is lower in SMD systems because parties ignore citizens in 'safe' seats is clearly not supported.

Table 1 reports the results of a multivariate analysis that examines what types of citizens political parties contact during a campaign. Since the dependent variable is dichotomous, logistic regression is used to estimate the models. To ease the interpretation of the coefficients we also report first differences, which represent the maximum change in probability in the value of the independent variable, holding all other variables constant at their means.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the results that are reported in Table 1. First, parties in all countries, except Canada, tend to contact those voters who are most politically active. As discussed earlier, parties that adopt a mobilization strategy may target politically active people because they are easier to motivate to get to the voting booth and they are more likely to convince their friends to vote. Also, parties may just find it easier to locate politically active people from lists of campaign contributors or party members. It is striking that the effect of political activity on the probability of being contacted is consistent and strong across all countries. Previous voters were also more likely to be targeted in Britain and Canada. Therefore, while active citizens are no more likely to be contacted in Canada, past voters are more likely to be contacted in Canada.

While we also expected parties to focus their efforts in areas of high population density, particularly in PR systems, there is little evidence for this. The exception is in New Zealand, where those living in the city are more likely to be contacted. Contrary to our expectations, parties were somewhat less likely to concentrate their efforts in urban areas under MMP.

Secondly, we expected that members of groups, such as unions, that have close ties to parties would also be targeted by parties. This appears to be the case only in the Netherlands and the United States. We also tested the effect of these traditional ties by examining whether voters on the left or the right were more likely to be contacted. With the exception of New Zealand in 1993, there were no significant differences between those on the middle of the ideological spectrum (the reference category) and those on the left or the right. In New Zealand in 1993, those on the left were less likely to be contacted than moderates.

Strength of party identification is a factor in Sweden, Britain, the United States and New Zealand (both years). This seems to suggest that parties in these countries are more likely to adopt a mobilization strategy by focusing their efforts on the most committed voters. In contrast, there is no evidence that parties strictly adopt a conversion strategy by targeting those with the weakest preferences. We expected parties to pursue a conversion strategy in Australia because of compulsory voting. While the coefficient is negative for strength of party identification, indicating those with stronger identification are less likely to be contacted than those with weak preferences, it is not statistically significant.

Thirdly, even when controlling for other factors, marginality is a consistent predictor of party mobilization in all countries where single-member districts exist. In the United States and Britain, citizens living in the safest seats are at least a third less likely to be

contacted than those in the most competitive seats. There is a similar effect in New Zealand under SMD, while in Canada the difference is 17 percentage points. In New Zealand, under MMP, parties are still more likely to contact voters in the most marginal seats but the differences are not nearly as great as under SMD. Under plurality rules, voters in the safest seats were 37 percentage points less likely to be contacted than those in the most marginal while the difference in only 5 points under proportional rules. Despite compulsory voting, contacting is still greater in marginal districts in Australia as well.

Despite the significant relationship of some of the independent variables to party contact, the model fit in all but one case is poor. The PRE measure, which indicates whether the model improves our ability to predict party contact over simply predicting party contact from the univariate distribution, is 0 in all cases except for the United States. Therefore, party contacting appears to be more targeted in the United States than in the other countries. The PRE value for the model estimated in the United States indicates that knowing the values of independent variables improves our ability to predict whether or not a citizen is contacted by 22 percentage points. Given the greater degree of professionalization of campaigns in the United States and a greater tendency to rely on consultant and specialized campaign agencies, it is not surprising that there is a greater degree of voter targeting in the United States than in the other countries examined.[40] In other countries, certain types of citizens are more likely to be contacted but the process is much more random.

Whether the contacting is targeted or not, the successfulness of the contact in mobilizing voters is a separate question. There are two ways of assessing effectiveness of party contact: the total number of voters contacted and the effect of this contact on actually voting. If parties are successful in contacting many voters but they only contact those who are likely to vote, then their efforts may not prove terribly effective in enlarging the pool of voters. In Table 1, we reported the percentage of voters contacted in each country. In Table 2, we examine the effect of this contact on turnout. In the discussion of the results we will focus primarily on the effects of party contact on voting.

We should note that the models testing the relationship between party contact and turnout are a fairly rigorous test as past vote, campaign activity and partisan strength are all included in the model. Therefore, the effects we observe are fairly robust. Those respondents personally contacted by a party during the campaign were significantly more likely to vote in four cases: the Netherlands, New Zealand (under PR), the United States and Britain.

Our hypothesis that party contact would be more effective in PR than under SMD is supported in the case of New Zealand. Party contacting increases the probability of voting under PR in New Zealand by 0.04 percentage points, while the increase in the probability of voting under SMD rules in New Zealand is not significant and has a negative sign. Overall, party contact has a significant effect on turnout in two of the three PR countries and in two of the five SMD countries. While party contact is significant in a higher proportion of PR countries, the strongest effects of party contacting are to be found in two plurality countries: Britain and the United States. In Britain, respondents who are contacted are 0.06 percentage points more likely to vote than those not contacted. Similarly in the United States, contacted respondents are 0.11 points more likely to vote than those who are not contacted.

While we also expected party contact to be more effective in marginal districts, the empirical evidence suggests that marginality has a largely indirect effect on turnout; the

[40] Farrell, 'Campaign Strategies and Tactics'.

TABLE 2 *Voter Participation Model: Logit Coefficients*

	Proportional Representation Systems									Plurality and Majoritarian Systems		
	Netherlands			Sweden			New Zealand			Britain		
Variables	Coef.	S.E.	Max.†	Coef.	S.E.	Max.	Coef.	S.E.	Max.	Coef.	S.E.	Max.
Party contact	0.83*	(0.46)	0.02	1.35	(1.04)	0.04	2.21***	(0.73)	0.04	0.40***	(0.13)	0.06
Education	0.94**	(0.41)	0.03	0.99**	(0.48)	0.05	1.41***	(0.47)	0.04	0.62***	(0.20)	0.07
Age	−0.13**	(0.06)	−0.04	−0.15	(0.09)	−0.05	0.16*	(0.09)	0.04	0.26***	(0.04)	0.29
Female	−0.02	(0.19)	0.00	0.00	(0.24)	0.00	0.20	(0.17)	0.01	0.14	(0.11)	0.02
Union	0.33	(0.25)	0.01	−0.05	(0.26)	0.00	0.06	(0.17)	0.00	0.56*	(0.29)	0.07
Activity	1.15	(0.75)	0.03	1.34***	(0.48)	0.06	1.18**	(0.48)	0.03	0.52	(0.32)	0.07
Previous voter	2.26***	(0.22)	0.19	1.59***	(0.33)	0.13	1.75***	(0.23)	0.12	1.51***	(0.12)	0.30
Party strength	2.76***	(0.51)	0.10	1.50***	(0.37)	0.07	1.77***	(0.28)	0.05	1.53***	(0.26)	0.15
City	−0.14	(0.19)	−0.01	0.06	(0.24)	0.00	0.22	(0.18)	0.01			
Home owner				0.54	(0.24)	0.03	0.11	(0.24)	0.00	−0.24	(0.16)	−0.04
Marginality							−0.01*	(0.01)	−0.02	0.00	(0.00)	−0.02
Constant	0.13	(0.34)		0.17	(0.59)		−1.44**	(0.56)		−2.55***	(0.30)	
n	1,785			1,097			2,842			2,495		
Pseudo R^2	0.26			0.15			0.18			0.16		
PRE	0.12			0.00			0.01			0.11		

TABLE 2 *(Continued)*

	Plurality and Majoritarian Systems											
	Canada			United States			Australia			New Zealand		
Variables	Coef.	S.E.	Max.	Coef.	S.E.	Max.	Coef.	S.E.	Max.	Coef.	S.E.	Max.
Party contact	0.16	(0.10)	0.03	0.98***	(0.20)	0.11	0.03	(1.06)	0.00	−0.04	(0.25)	0.00
Education	1.12***	(0.22)	0.21	2.34***	(0.39)	0.26	0.44	(0.87)	0.00	0.12	(0.05)	0.03
Age	0.15***	(0.03)	0.22	−0.06	(0.05)	−0.05	0.02	(0.17)	0.00	0.17**	(0.07)	0.05
Female	−0.23***	(0.08)	−0.05	−0.20	(0.16)	−0.02	−0.70	(0.49)	−0.01	0.24	(0.19)	0.01
Union	0.10	(0.09)	0.02	−0.22	(0.24)	−0.03	1.63	(1.06)	0.01	−0.12	(0.22)	−0.01
Activity	5.76***	(0.47)	0.44	1.71***	(0.59)	0.13	−0.19	(1.35)	0.00	1.67***	(0.51)	0.06
Previous voter	1.03***	(0.10)	0.23	2.17***	(0.18)	0.35	1.68**	(0.79)	0.03	1.41***	(0.22)	0.10
Party strength	0.43***	(0.10)	0.09	0.85***	(0.23)	0.11	0.41	(0.75)	0.00	1.20***	(0.30)	0.05
City	0.00	(0.00)	−0.02	0.01	(0.20)	0.00	−0.33	(0.45)	0.00	0.75***	(0.20)	0.04
Home owner	−1.99***	(0.21)		0.75***	(0.17)	0.10	0.66	(0.59)	0.00	0.24	(0.24)	0.01
Marginality				0.00	(0.01)	0.02	0.01	(0.02)	0.00	−0.01	(0.01)	−0.02
Constant				−2.44***	(0.38)		2.52**	(1.01)		−0.88**	(0.42)	
n	3,600			1,499			1,585			1,888		
Pseudo R^2	0.17			0.34			0.09			0.16		
PRE	0.18			0.32			0.00			0.00		

***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.10$.
†'Max.' refers to the maximum change in probability holding all other variables constant at the mean.

effect of marginality on turnout is not significant when we control for party contacting. Voters, therefore, are not responding to the expected benefits that their votes will make to the outcome of the elections, rather, they appear to be responding to party efforts at mobilizing. Voters are more likely to be contacted in marginal districts and those who are contacted are more likely to vote. This result supports the claim that competitiveness fosters higher turnout by affecting the voter mobilization strategies of parties. In districted systems, parties target resources to competitive seats where a single vote is more likely to make a difference and this additional effort at contacting voters pays off in terms of higher turnout.

We can estimate the effect of party canvassing on overall turnout by taking into account the estimates of the effect of contact shown in Table 2 along with the proportion of citizens who report being contacted and who report voting. Thus, the simulated increase in turnout (I) is a function of the proportion of citizens who were not contacted and did not vote (N) times the probability of being contacted (P):

$$I = (100 - N) \times P.$$

The simulated decrease in voting (D) can be derived by the proportion of citizens contacted (C) times the probability of being contacted minus one:

$$D = (C \times P) - 1.$$

The simulated results based on these estimates are presented in Table 3. These estimates reveal that turnout in the United States is more likely to be influenced by mobilization efforts than anywhere else. If everyone were mobilized, we estimate that turnout would increase by about 9 percentage points, whereas, turnout would have fallen by about 4 points if no one was contacted. Of course, the highly competitive nature of the 2000 presidential campaign (which is the basis for this estimate) may make this particular election somewhat of an outlier. Nevertheless, analysis of previous elections indicates that party mobilization is on the rise in the United States suggesting that the level of mobilization observed in 2000 is not unusual.[41] Britain also has effective mobilization efforts. The maximum expected increase in turnout if everyone in Britain were mobilized is about 5 percentage points and turnout is expected to decline by close to 2 points if no one is contacted. In Canada, turnout would increase by 2 points if everyone had been contacted and decline by less than 1 point if no one were contacted. In New Zealand (under FPP) and Australia, mobilization efforts have little or no effect on turnout. Of the countries with PR, New Zealand has the most to gain from mobilization efforts. If everyone were mobilized in New Zealand, based on estimates under PR in 1999, turnout would increase by close to 4 points. It appears that mobilization efforts in Sweden would also be successful at increasing turnout. Though the coefficient for party contact is sizeable in Sweden, this effect is not significant.

So far we have considered how mobilization efforts vary from one country to another, without explicitly taking into account the electoral system and other contextual factors. To consider these factors, we have pooled the data across the election studies and estimated

[41] Kenneth M. Goldstein and Travis N. Ridout, 'The Politics of Participation: Mobilization and Turnout over Time', *Political Behavior*, 24 (2002), 3–29; Susan A. Banducci and Jeffrey A. Karp, 'Mobilizing American Voters: A Reassessment' (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, 2001).

TABLE 3 *Estimated Change in Turnout from Mobilization Efforts*

	If *no one* were contacted	If *everyone* were contacted
United States	− 4.2	8.7
Britain	− 1.8	4.7
New Zealand (FPP)	0.0	0.0
Canada	− 0.6	2.1
New Zealand (MMP)	− 0.5	3.7
Sweden	− 0.3	3.7
Netherlands	− 0.2	2.2
Australia	0.0	0.0

Note: Estimates derived from Table 2. This table shows changes in percentage points in each case.

the same models of party contact and voting.[42] The small number of countries in the sample presents a degrees of freedom problem for testing hypotheses based on system level variables. We acknowledge this issue by restricting the model specification to just a few key variables.[43] We also report robust standard errors that adjust for clustering at the country level.

Along with the electoral system, we include a measure of the number of effective parties to control for the effects of multi-partyism.[44] There is conflicting evidence on how the number of parties influences turnout.[45] Those hypothesizing that a greater number of parties increases turnout suggest it is through party mobilization efforts: the greater number of parties increases competition for votes and greater mobilization efforts while a negative effect is thought to be due to alienation and subsequent abstention due to lack of voter control over government formation. Greater numbers of parties suggest stronger links to other social groups such as trade unions, religious organizations or other civic associations.[46] Where these ties are stronger, parties may tend to rely more on these social organizations and less on the party organization for mobilizing voters. Therefore, we expect that the number of effective parliamentary parties will be negatively correlated with party contacting and, given the disagreement in prior studies, we have no hypothesized direction for the effect of parties on turnout.

[42] We have pooled eight different election studies from the seven countries used in our analysis. While the pooling of datasets may present issues in terms of the comparability of time and survey methodology, it has been employed in previous studies (see, for example, Eva Anduiza Perea, 'Individual Characteristics, Institutional Incentives and Electoral Abstention in Western Europe', *European Journal of Political Research*, 41 (2002), 643–74) and is the method employed by the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems. We have paid careful attention to the comparability of questions across surveys.

[43] We also estimated a reduced model regressing the four contextual variables on contact aggregated by country ($n = 8$). The results for these variables were similar to those reported in the individual level model.

[44] We use the effective number of legislative parties. As we expect that with an increased number of parties, there will be more party contacting, we also tried an alternative measure of multi-partyism using the number of parties represented in parliament. Each performed similarly in the pooled model, so we have opted to use the more familiar measure of the effective number of parties.

[45] André Blais and Agnieszka Dobrzynska, 'Turnout in Electoral Democracies', *European Journal of Political Research*, 33 (1998), 239–61.

[46] Cox, 'Electoral Rules and the Calculus of Mobilization'; Powell, 'American Voter Turnout in Comparative Perspective'.

TABLE 4 *Party Contacting: Pooled Model*

Variable	Coef.	Robust S.E.	Max.
Education	− 0.10***	(0.02)	− 0.07
Age	0.01***	(0.00)	0.10
Female	0.13***	(0.03)	0.02
Union	0.07	(0.05)	0.01
Activity	0.93***	(0.29)	0.15
Previous voter	0.38**	(0.18)	0.05
Party strength	0.40***	(0.14)	0.05
National marginality	− 0.01	(0.02)	− 0.04
District marginality × SMD	− 0.03***	(0.01)	− 0.18
SMD	1.36***	(0.23)	0.15
Compulsory voting	− 2.01***	(0.12)	− 0.15
Effective number of parties	− 0.26***	(0.12)	− 0.09
Constant	− 2.27	(0.60)	
n	16,824		
Pseudo R^2	0.09		
PRE	0.03		

Note: The table shows logit coefficients. Robust standard errors that adjust for clustering on country are in parentheses. 'Max.' refers to the maximum change in probability holding all other variables constant at the mean.
***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$.

In the pooled models, we also use an indicator of district marginality. Because there is no indicator of marginality in PR systems comparable to SMD systems and New Zealand's MMP, we set marginality to 0 for PR systems and also include a measure of national level competitiveness for all countries. Effectively, the district level marginality is an interaction between an SMD system dummy variable and marginality.

The results in Table 4 confirm that respondents are more likely to report being contacted in SMD systems. In a perfectly competitive election, the probability of being contacted is 15 percentage points greater than in a PR system. However, citizens are less likely to be contacted in safer seats. Moving from the most competitive to the least competitive reduces the probability of being contacted by 18 percentage points. National competitiveness, by contrast, has no impact on the probability of being contacted.

The number of effective parties is negatively associated with contact; this is the case whether we control for the type of electoral system or not. Thus, two-party systems are likely to produce greater party mobilization than multi-party systems. In another model, we also included turnout in the previous election to test whether parties were likely to invest more heavily in mobilization efforts when the return is likely to be greater. The results supported this hypothesis though an analysis based on a larger number of countries is needed to test this hypothesis adequately. Overall, these results are consistent with the analysis presented earlier and support our expectations about how electoral systems and other contextual factors will influence contact.

In term of effectiveness, the results in Table 5 suggest that overall party contact is expected to have a small but significant influence on voter participation. Those who are contacted in person or by phone by a party are 3 percentage points more likely to vote than those who were not contacted. While the effect is not substantial, we have used a fairly rigorous test for the effects of contact by including both past voting behaviour and political

TABLE 5 *Voter Participation: Pooled Model*

Variable	Coef.	Robust S.E.	Max.
Party contact	0.48***	(0.16)	0.04
Education	0.43***	(0.10)	0.11
Age	0.01**	(0.01)	0.08
Female	− 0.05	(0.08)	0.00
Union	0.06	(0.06)	0.00
Activity	2.83**	(1.13)	0.14
Previous voter	1.47***	(0.21)	0.18
Party strength	0.87***	(0.20)	0.07
Compulsory voting	3.31***	(0.20)	0.12
SMD system	− 1.41***	(0.21)	− 0.10
Constant	− 0.32	(0.24)	
n	16,957		
Pseudo R^2	0.24		
PRE	0.12		

Note: The table shows logit coefficients. Robust standard errors that adjust for clustering on country are in parentheses. 'Max.' refers to the maximum change in probability holding all other variables constant at the mean. ***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$.

activity in the model. From the party contact models, we also know that active citizens and past voters are more likely to be contacted.

DISCUSSION

One of the findings of this study is of particular importance to our theoretical understanding of PR electoral systems. It is well known that voter turnout is higher in countries with PR systems than in SMD systems. Depending on the countries and elections analysed, proportional systems are estimated to have a turnout advantage of between 7 and 9 percentage points.[47] One explanation for this higher level of turnout is that party competition under PR produces an increased level of party campaigning and – hence – turnout. In this article we have shown that party campaign activity is not the mechanism that produces higher levels of turnout. Campaign activity is far higher under candidate-based systems than under PR list-based systems. Even when controlling for party mobilization, the estimated difference in the likelihood of voting between SMD systems and PR is 10 percentage points.

Additional evidence for this conclusion is found in New Zealand where the transition to PR appears to have led to a shift in party strategies. Rather than focusing their contacting efforts entirely on marginal seats, as they had done in the past, parties focused their efforts somewhat more broadly in the first election held under the new system in an attempt to

[47] Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999); André Blais and R. Kenneth Carty, 'Does Proportional Representation Foster Voter Turnout?' *European Journal of Political Research*, 18 (1990), 167–81; Robert W. Jackman, 'Political Institutions and Voter Turnout in the Industrial Democracies', *American Political Science Review*, 81 (1987), 405–23.

capture the nationwide 'list' vote.[48] The shift in strategy was accompanied by a decline in overall party mobilization in the first three elections under MMP.[49] Vowles attributes the decline in party mobilization as a factor that contributed to a decline in overall turnout.[50]

Our findings from the country-specific models revealed no clear patterns in the effectiveness of contacting across electoral systems. Furthermore, within SMD systems voters in marginal districts who were contacted are not more likely to vote than those contacted in safe districts. Together these results suggest that the effect of the competitiveness of elections on turnout may largely be indirect through the campaign efforts of parties. In other words, while votes are more likely to translate to seats in marginal SMD districts and under PR, voters are not instrumentally motivated and do not respond to the perceived effectiveness of their vote but respond instead to the contact efforts of parties. This finding is consistent with past research which has found that competition is associated with greater campaign effort which in turn stimulates turnout. Cox and Munger, for example, find that in competitive elections voters do not vote at higher rates because they believe their participation matters but rather because parties make greater efforts at mobilizing.[51] Furthermore, Denver and Hands note that: 'Higher turnout in marginal seats is rarely the product of a "rational" appreciation of the situation by voters, but results from parties creating greater awareness amongst voters or simply cajoling them into going to the polls.'[52]

While we see no systematic differences in the effectiveness of contacting across electoral systems, there are nonetheless notable differences across countries. In some countries, perhaps where campaigns are more professionalized and where targeted direct mail efforts and telephone banks are more prevalent, parties are better able to target and mobilize likely voters. This is certainly the case in the United States where we are able to predict with the greatest accuracy the probability of being contacted. Party contacting is also the most effective suggesting that parties in the United States are particularly good at identifying likely voters and converting them to actual voters through personal contact.

CONCLUSION

In this article we have extended a discussion of electoral systems to the conduct of party mobilization efforts. Our findings lead us to conclude that candidate-based systems may have advantages that stimulate greater mobilization even though overall turnout may be lower than in most PR systems. In particular, in 'winner takes all systems', parties may have a stronger incentive to contact their supporters given that the failure to do so may

[48] David Denemark, 'Electoral Change, Inertia, and Campaigns in New Zealand: The First Modern Campaign in 1987 and the First MMP Campaign in 1996', *Party Politics*, 9 (2003), 601–18; David Denemark, 'Campaign Activities and Marginality: The Transition to MMP Campaigns', in Jack Vowles, Peter Aimer, Susan Banducci and Jeffrey Karp, eds, *Voter's Victory? New Zealand's First Election Under Proportional Representation* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1998), pp. 81–100.

[49] Jeffrey Karp and Susan Banducci, 'Political Parties and Mobilisation', in Jack Vowles, Peter Aimer, Susan Banducci, Jeffrey Karp and Raymond Miller, eds, *Voter's Veto: The 2002 Election in New Zealand and the Consolidation of Minority Government* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2004), pp. 104–16.

[50] Jack Vowles, 'Offsetting the PR Effect? Party Mobilization and Turnout Decline in New Zealand, 1996–1999', *Party Politics*, 8 (2002), 587–605.

[51] Gary Cox and Michael C. Munger, 'Closeness, Expenditures, and Turnout in the 1982 US House Elections', *American Political Science Review*, 83 (1989), 217–31.

[52] David Denver and Gordon Hands, 'Marginality and Turnout in British General Elections', *British Journal of Political Science*, 4 (1974), 17–35.

be the difference between winning and losing rather than just a diminished vote. Moreover, candidates are more likely to be in touch with their supporters when they have an incentive to cultivate a personal vote. This pattern presents a puzzle for our understanding of turnout since, plainly, the higher levels of turnout under PR cannot be associated with higher levels of party mobilization efforts under PR. We must, then, look elsewhere for an explanation of turnout under PR.

Despite the differences across systems, there appears to be a set of individual voter attributes that trigger party contact across all of these systems. In particular, once people have participated in an election the act of voting is reinforced by party contact. If, as a recent paper noted, voting is an habitual act, one of the things that helps keep it habitual is party contact. People who vote once are likely to show up as 'targets' for party campaign activity in future years.[53] Those who participate even more fully – perhaps by donating time or money to a party – are even more likely to be contacted. For some voters, then, participation sets up a virtuous circle in which party campaigns encourage future participation.

Advocates of PR have long argued that voters are more likely to be mobilized in proportional systems because parties have an incentive to mobilize everywhere rather than concentrating their efforts on only marginal seats, as in the case in SMD systems. Moreover, it is generally accepted that, where there are more parties competing for votes, there is likely to be more competition, which should lead to greater mobilization. The empirical evidence, however, indicates that this is not necessarily the case. PR systems appear to have lower levels of campaign activity than candidate-based systems. The exception to this general finding is Australia where compulsory voting appears to mean that parties have to make less of an effort to mobilize voters.

APPENDIX: MEASURES OF PARTY CONTACT

Note that contact is measured by whether respondents reported being visited or telephoned by a political party.

American National Election Study (2000)

VAR 001219. As you know, the political parties try to talk to as many people as they can to get them to vote for their candidate. Did anyone from one of the political parties call you up or come around and talk to you about the campaign this year?

Australian Election Study (1998)

Did anyone from the following political parties call you by telephone, personally visit you, send a personalized letter, or give or send you a party pamphlet during the election campaign? (Circle as many as apply.)
A11 series

British Election Study (2001)

60 (a) Did a canvasser from any party call at your home to talk with you during the election campaign?
61 (a) Did anyone from a political party telephone you during the election campaign to ask you how you might vote?
62 (a) Did any political party contact you on election day itself to see whether you had voted/intended to vote?

[53] Eric Plutzer, 'Becoming a Habitual Voter: Inertia, Resources, and Growth in Young Adulthood', *American Political Science Review*, 96 (2002), 41–56.

Canadian Election Study (2000)

B9. Where you contacted by a political party during the campaign?
B9A. Was that in person, by phone, by mail, or by email?

Dutch Election Study (1998)

During the election period, have you been contacted by a politician of a political party on the street, through mail or in another way?
V1120-V1161

New Zealand Election Study (1993, 1999)

A4 (1993). A5 (1999). Did anyone from the following political parties contact you during the election campaign? *If so, please tick in the appropriate boxes for each party. If not, leave blank.*
Telephoned at home
Personally visited
Sent letter (1999 Study only)

Swedish Election Study (1994)

Before this year's election, were you personally visited in the home or telephoned by any party?
Question 41C