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The Impact of Party Affect on Voter Sincerity in Open and Closed Electoral Systems

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Electoral institutions are well-known for their formative effects on party systems and for their potential to manipulate vote choice¹. Maurice Duverger (1963) first captured this complex in describing how the mechanical and psychological effects can and sometimes do conspire to produce two party competition in single-seat plurality systems. Single-seat districts reduce proportionality in the translation of votes to seats, and this in turn limits the viability of smaller parties. Small party supporters recognize this reduced viability, and cast a vote not for their party of preference, but for the next best party that can still win. This further diminishes the viability of the smaller parties and they may eventually quit contesting elections. The two work in tandem to reduce the number of parties¹ in the system (Blais and Carty 1991).

More fundamentally, Duverger's psychological effect exemplifies a very basic assumption of voter rationale – that voters decide how to mark their ballots not just based on their preferences for parties, candidates, and what their stances are on important political issues, but also on the likelihood that the choices they have before them are legitimate contenders *in that particular electoral environment*. However, because most research into the impact of electoral design on vote choice investigates the ballot and not the voter, the larger question of how electoral systems shape cognition remains understudied. This paper undertakes this task by examining the correlation between voters' preferences – as expressed in their affect toward the parties of their system – and their actual vote across 18 established democracies employing various electoral configurations.

I expect that electoral rules will not only direct the frequency of voter loyalty to one's preferences, but also the degree to which sincerity can be explained by micro-level indicators like party affect. This should be especially evident in small party supporters, who, all else equal, ought to be impacted by Duverger's Law repeatedly and under a variety of different circumstances. The results of the analysis provide clear and convincing evidence that electoral rules have cognitive consequences for voter rationale, deepening some of the conclusions that Klingemann and Wessels (2002) posited through a similar study of sincere voting.

In more permissive electoral systems, small party supporters are more free to cast ballots for their top preferences, and perceptions that the top candidates or parties are very different does little to sway their loyalty. Conversely, voter sincerity among small party supporters in restrictive electoral systems requires high levels of party affect to offset the harshness of the electoral environment, and perceptions there that the top competitors are quite different works aggressively to shift their vote choice away from small parties to

¹ Dr. Drummond has been a Fellow of the Center for the Study of Democracy. He has just completed his dissertation and has been awarded a PH.D. in Political Science. This paper is drawn from his thesis. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2006 Midwest Political Science Association meetings.

more viable ones. This evidence adds further fuel to the argument that electoral rules not only shape party systems but also how people make choices within them.

I begin with a brief discussion of the strategic voting literature and why voter loyalty matters before moving to the conditions under which we should expect loyalty. I then conclude this discussion with some hypotheses for how electoral rules interact with the correlates of sincere voting before moving to test them in the advanced democracies of the CSES.

Why Loyalty Matters

Phillip Converse (1969) argued that long-term partisan attachment may require repeated practice of voting for one's party. Familiarity may breed contempt between friends, but in politics, it normally breeds psychological attachment and predictable support. Given the importance of political parties to democracy through their many roles in the electorate, as organizations, and in government (Key, 1964), loyalty and the attachment it breeds may be a good thing. Of course, parties and their supporters do not operate in a vacuum – electoral design has formative effects on party systems which ultimately can impact how people vote.

This is hardly news. Maurice Duverger (1963) claims that voters do take such things into account when deciding how to vote. Because people pay attention not just to their own preferences, but presumably to whether their preferred party or candidate has a chance at winning, the electoral environment can influence their vote. It is the less “permissive” electoral arrangements, to use Lijphart's formulation (1984: 159), that pose the greatest challenge to voter preferences, since one's preferred party must be able to win a plurality of the vote to gain the seat.

When voters abandon their top preference because it seems unable to win, and instead cast a vote for a “lesser evil”, we often say they voted strategically. This complex choice to cast strategic ballots in part represents the mechanism by which the plurality single-seat district systems tend to produce two-party competition, with a second part being the withdrawal of less viable parties from further competition over time (Duverger, 1963; Blais and Carty, 1991).

There can be no doubt that Duverger's claims provoked serious study into the empirical strength of sincere voting in mostly Canada and the UK (Shively, 1970; Spafford, 1972; Cain, 1978; Galbraith and Rae, 1989; Johnston and Pattie, 1991; Lanoue and Bowler, 1992; Heath et al., 1991; Evans and Heath, 1993; Niemi et al., 1993; Heath and Evans, 1994; Blais and Nadeau, 1996; Reed, 1999; Alvarez and Nagler, 2000). In many cases, the estimated impact of strategic voting was low – about 6 to 7% of the electorate; however Blais and Carty (1991) argue that some of the effect of strategic voting is actually already realized by the time of the elections since many smaller parties have already been weeded out. Still, because of its relative rarity, and the seeming defiance of Duverger's Law by countries like Canada who should have 2 parties but instead have 3, the very worth of Duverger's Law has been questioned, and the impact of tactical voting on the composition of legislatures, tested for significance (Kim and Fording, 2001).

Despite these critiques, most electoral scholars feel fully committed to the notion that electoral institutions do matter. They also seem to share a common assumption when

it comes to strategic voting: That electoral rules pressure voters who are intent on trading off their top preferences at the ballot box so long as they do not waste their vote and that the extent to which they do so will depend on the extent to which the mechanical effect – the translation of votes to seats – is strong or feeble (Sartori, 1976). This has led to a severe bias within the literature where only the very restrictive electoral systems using single-seat districts and plurality rule seem to be suitable sites for strategic voting. Indeed, by far the vast majority of studies on the phenomenon until very recently have concentrated on the UK, Canada, and the United States.

More recent research challenges this assumption and sought to expand both the empirical study of strategic voting, and the theoretical causes underlying it, to include other types of electoral arrangements and different kinds of pressures. Tsebelis (1986) argues that seat quotas may in fact drive some tactical behavior, as parties which are unlikely to win an additional seat in multiseat districts given their relative vote percentage may lose some voters who seek to maximize the chances that a second preference gets one. Gary Cox (1997) also notes anecdotally that large parties may ask their supporters to keep potential coalition partners in mind where legal thresholds promise to exclude them from the parliament, leading to a type of strategic voting “down” the ballot. These results have been backed up to a degree by Thomas Gschwend’s (2004) examination of split-ticket voting in Germany. In other words, strategic voting may be a means of maximizing the potential for *specific coalitions* in the multiparty systems.

This raises some doubt as to whether there is a universal logic to strategic voting, born out of the restrictive electoral pressures of plurality systems, which simply fails to exist in the multiparty systems. By challenging the standard assumptions of the strategic voting literature, such studies open the door to more fundamental questions concerning the role electoral design plays in shaping the way voters reason at the polls. If this is true, it may make more sense to examine the way electoral rules impact voters’ decisions to remain loyal to their preferences, and not why they defect. Furthermore, identifying the circumstances under which we expect sincere voting may be more fruitful in isolating how institutions impact the way voters make their decisions since sincerity promises to be far more prevalent than strategic voting in every system.

Despite the potential upside to such studies, very little attention has been paid to sincere voting as a means of gauging the impact of electoral rules on voter rationale. Hans-Dieter Klingemann and Bernhard Wessels (2002) took up this line of research in examining models of sincere voting across 31 new and old democracies, finding that in more permissive electoral systems where the emphasis can be fairly said to center on the party, modeling preferences on parties and party systems produces stronger predictions of voter sincerity. Furthermore, in these open systems, voters’ liking of their preferred party seems to be a better predictor of voting sincerely for it than in closed ones which employ more restrictive electoral arrangements.

Presumably, part of the reason behind the added explanatory value of party affect in the open systems comes from the lower threat of casting a wasted vote for small party supporters. Klingemann and Wessels (2002) however, do not provide insights into the differential consequences that electoral design may have for how small party supporters address these and other pressures. There is good reason to begin our investigation with small parties and their voters. Like canaries in a coal mine, they feel the pressures of the

electoral system sooner – their political demise a hallmark of how the harsh environment of closed systems regulate competition. If there are consequences for voter rationale owing to electoral design, essentially making it easier for a voter in open systems to “vote in line with his preferences,” (Klingemann and Wessels, 2002) then we ought to see them manifest to the greatest degree among the small party supporters.

Before I turn to this task, there are a couple of assumptions I should state up front. First, I assume that parties and voters can be placed along a single ideological dimension. Voter preferences have long been modeled in this way – that is, as a function of how closely parties’ or candidates’ issue positions match individuals’. Anthony Downs adds an additional assumption in *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957), arguing that voters will prefer candidates or parties whose positions most closely match their own. Thus, if we know with certainty the positions of people and parties, we should also know how they will vote if they are rational. Second, I assume that if given a choice between two otherwise equally desirable parties, voters will choose the one with the better chance of winning. Finally, I assume that we can model preferences based on how much voters like the parties in their system and through these preferences and respondents’ actual voting records, gauge sincerity.

Sincerity to What?

What does it mean to be a sincere voter? I take sincerity to be when a voter casts a ballot for his top preference. In some cases, this may mean that a person votes *against* his stated party identification. How is this possible? Party identification and attachment are usually measured by the standard questions in political surveys asking respondents whether they feel close to a particular party and if so, which party and how closely do they identify with it. If the hallmark of sincere voting is whether one votes with one’s party identification, then we may be missing some insincere voting if that party identification has been built by abandoning a smaller party for a larger one. In such cases, at least some of the strategic voting will seem sincere because we are not tracking preferences, but compromises.

Instead, we should focus on one’s preferences given no external electoral pressures. There are a number of ways to do this. We could measure sincerity as a function of whether one casts a vote for the party that most closely resembles the point in ideology space that our voter occupies. This Downsian model of voting is sometimes referred to as correct voting, and it implies that voters who fail to do this are in fact incorrect in their choices.² Alternatively, we could infer rank orderings of suitable parties for our voters by evaluating their position in ideological space and how that compares to voters’ positions on important political issues. This is the preferred method of Alvarez and Nagler (2000), but is unfortunately not possible given the constraints of the CSES data.³ Moreover, such measures may be tapping into voters’ inability to accurately place the important issues in ideological space and likely also demands that voters be ideologically constrained.

A far better measure would simply take the preferences voters have across the parties in their systems and assess which party each respondent prefers. Klingemann (1995) and Klingemann and Wessels (2002) argue that voters consider the alternatives before them when deciding how to vote and so voters’ orientations to each of the parties

may be a way of gauging preferences. The CSES does this, asking respondents to report how much they like each of the top 6 or more parties on a scale of 1 to 10. I assume that reporting that one likes a party a great deal means that one would consider voting for the party.⁴

I am aware that Alvarez and Nagler (2000) are in direct opposition to this particular means of measuring voter preferences. For instance, they state the assumption that feeling thermometer questions like the ones in the CSES can gauge preferences is “dubious at best,” and that to date “no strong justification for this assumption has appeared in the literature” (Alvarez and Nagler, 2000: 64). Still, they concede this is the most common way of producing rank-orderings of parties and candidates. Despite their concerns over whether feelings constitute preferences, there are a number of advantages to such a measure.

For one, there is a lot less room for biases to creep in, as there is no need to gauge whether voters are placing parties correctly or accurately in space, and no need to account for their own ideological self-placement. There is no assumption of sophistication on the part of voters by such a measure either, as one need not be ideologically constrained to mark one’s feelings about a party. Furthermore, as there is no reasonable argument why voters in one country might be less apt to state their true feelings toward one party or another than they are in other countries – given, of course, that we are talking about democracies here – there is little reason to think that any bias that does exist will move inconsistently across countries.

Thus, I retain these feeling measures – what I will call party affect from here forward – as my means of operationalizing preferences.⁵ Sincere voters, then, are voters who cast ballots for their most preferred party. In the event that a respondent lists two or more parties as equally preferred to all others (i.e., there are two parties with equally high affect scores), the party which received the most votes in the election is taken as the truer preference. This is admittedly somewhat arbitrary, but not maliciously so.

If preferences take into account electoral viability at all, then this is a reasonable way to resolve the tie.⁶ Because I intend to examine the impact of party size on sincerity by grouping voters by their preferred party, breaking ties in this way is necessary since it forces a single voter into only one group when being counted. If I were to allow ties to remain, each tie would be counted in at least two parties’ groupings as sincere or insincere, depending on how they behaved. This provides me more maneuverability with the data, but also creates a bias since it means that larger parties will have even more members to gauge sincerity for and that smaller parties will have fewer. While I do not correct for this bias, I address it now.

The number of ties is empirically not insignificant – about 5 to 10% of those grouped in the largest parties were tied with a smaller party on affect scores in each country. If there is one worry about what this bias will mean, it is that the assumption that larger parties have more sincere voters will be a self-fulfilling prophecy. As we will see with the results however, the largest two parties, while having more sincere voters than the smallest ones, do not show 90% sincerity levels and higher. This would suggest that much of the bias moves in the opposite direction for many countries, and that the largest parties are actually showing more conservative sincerity rates than they otherwise would.

Second, the smallest parties are thus “robbed” of some of their sincere voters in this measure, but this does not count against them twice since these voters appear only in

the larger party groupings as sincere voters there. Finally, since what is being measured in the case of the party size test is essentially the gap in sincerity between large and small party supporters, shifting these voters back to the small party groupings would result in a net gain in sincerity for the larger parties as well (because they would lose insincere voters overall). The gap, in other words, would likely remain, as sincerity would more uniformly shift upwards for all parties.

Thus, the measure may be biased by producing a more conservative count of sincere voters (I think 80% sincerity does seem low for large party supporters) but the bias is a uniform one that should not affect the larger findings. Armed with a definition and operationalization of sincere voting, I proceed to a discussion of when voters ought to be loyal and cast sincere votes, and how these conditions are impacted by electoral design.

When Should Voters be Loyal?

If sincere voting means casting a vote for one's preferred party, then when should we expect that voters will be loyal to their preferences? A good place to start would be to ask when they will be disloyal. Duverger's Law holds that knowledge of how the electoral system translates votes into seats can cause some voters to abandon their preferred party at the polls and instead cast a strategic ballot for a different party. Duverger notes:

“In cases where there are three parties operating under the simple-majority single-ballot system the electors soon realize that their votes are wasted if they continue to give them to a third party: whence their natural tendency to transfer their vote to the less evil of its two adversaries in order to prevent the success of the greater evil” (Duverger, 1963; 226).

In other words, voters who would otherwise cast sincere ballots for their preferred party find themselves in a predicament if their party is not likely to be competitive in the election. This results in some of these supporters casting votes for a more viable party, presumably whichever one they prefer next. This phenomenon, called the psychological effect, has been variously proven in a number of contexts (see Spafford, 1972; Cain, 1978; Galbraith and Rae, 1989; Johnston and Pattie, 1991; Abramson et al., 1992; Lanoue and Bowler, 1992; Heath et al., 1991; Evans and Heath, 1993; Niemi et al., 1993; Heath and Evans, 1994; Blais and Nadeau, 1996; Alvarez and Nagler, 2000).

The mechanism at work is the expectation that voters have of how the race will turn out, but it is important to note that there really are two separate factors at work here. The first has nothing much to do, at least not directly, with the electoral system, but instead seems to be a factor of the size of the party that a voter supports (usually measured by their vote share). Smaller parties are by definition disadvantaged when it comes to winning elections because they are less popular than larger parties. While it is true that very proportional electoral systems, as we will soon see, are fair enough to often allow smaller parties representation, they are nevertheless minor parties who at best will serve as junior coalition members.

The second factor at work is the mechanism which Duverger was speaking of – the mechanical effect. This mechanism is a distortion in the translation of votes into seats

and is often measured as the degree of departure from perfect proportionality. In practice because of a myriad of influential electoral institutions which we will discuss shortly, the mechanical effect is likely to adversely affect small parties unless they are regionally concentrated (i.e., a small party can be the largest in a particular district). Because smaller parties are more likely to feel the brunt of the mechanical effect, often winning fewer than their fair share of seats and sometimes even being locked out of parliament altogether, the extent to which the translation of votes to seats deviates from perfect proportionality will also determine how difficult it is to remain loyal to one's preferred party if it is small.

Because the mechanical effect is stronger in more restrictive electoral systems the pressure to vote strategically seems to be higher there than in the proportional systems. This approach was first discussed by Leys (1959) and Sartori (1968), holding that strategic voting should occur in lesser amounts in PR systems. As Cox (1997) notes, there has been little empirical evidence supporting the claim, although there is some recent evidence that sincere voting is more common in PR systems than in plurality (Klingemann and Wessels, 2002; Gschwend, 2004).

In the strict Duvergerian logic (and Leys-Sartori logic for that matter) this makes a great deal of sense. The only motivation for voters to cast strategic ballots in the above scenario is when they want to conserve their vote, a major assumption which goes to the heart of what preferences mean. Because more "permissive" electoral systems (to borrow Arend Lijphart's (1984) formulation) tend to have fairer seat allocation processes and larger districts to conduct them in, wasted votes should be less of a worry there even for the smallest of supporters (legal thresholds of course notwithstanding). Thus, if the only motivation for strategic voting were only vote conservation, then strategic voting should be very low in PR systems. Empirically, this does not seem to be entirely true, however.

Gschwend (2004) finds evidence from Germany, backed up anecdotal evidence by Cox (1997), that strategic voting can occur out of a strategy of *coalition insurance* or *portfolio maximization*. Voters who cast strategic ballots because of this motivation seek to protect the viability of an as-yet unformed coalition between a large and a particular small party. In these systems, small parties may be challenged not only by competition from other small parties to form a minimal winning coalition (Riker, 1982), but they may also be limited by legal thresholds which promise to exclude them from the legislature and any potential coalition unless they garner the required votes. Often this hurdle is 3 to 5% of the vote. No party that small could ever be a lone government, but the same sized party could garner enough seats in permissive systems to help form a coalition. Thus, large party supporters may logically cast a strategic vote down the ballot for a small party coalition partner if they are endangered by the electoral hurdle. Cox (1997) refers to this as *threshold insurance*.

Tsebelis (1986) also makes an argument for a different kind of strategic voting in multiseat districts. His argument centers on how seats are distributed and the package of votes needed to gain a seat (called a quota). When parties are likely to win enough votes to say, gain two or three seats in a multiseat district, but are likely far away from winning an additional one, it would be a waste to cast a vote for that party when one could instead help a second preferred party win their first seat.

Thus, strategic voting may be more nuanced than the classic example the psychological effect portrays. Both vote conservation and coalition prospecting are

logical motivations for strategic voting, and because people's preferences extend beyond single parties to potential coalitions as in the Germany anecdote, parties both small and large may have supporters who cast votes for parties not representing their top preference on the ballot. Returning to the original question of when we might expect voters to be sincere and cast votes for their most preferred party, the examples from strategic voting thus point to several immediate answers.

Party Size

The lesson from the strategic scenarios above is that voters have a disincentive to remain loyal when either their vote is in danger of being wasted (vote conservation) or when loyalty to one's party may actually cross-cut one's longer-term preferences (coalition insurance), although these should be much more infrequent. Thus, as party size increases, so should sincerity in general. Indeed, Blais and Nadeau (1996) find in their study of the 1988 Canadian elections, when voters thought their first choice was least likely to win, they often chose to vote for their second, more viable preference.

Party Affect and Expected Utility

Although these conditions do not directly follow from strategic voting, we should also expect that sincerity will be higher among all party supporters who show a strong liking for their parties. This behavioral relationship represents the importance of preferences to vote choice and also allows us to draw some conclusions about the cognitive mechanism which drives sincere voting – namely, that strength of preference matters. But is that the only factor voters take into account when deciding to vote sincerely or not?

The rational choice approach to explaining vote choice describes a vote calculus which accounts for the difference in expected utility of one alternative over another. For instance, when two parties are competing, and both seem equally preferable to a voter, it is perfectly rational not to vote for either, and especially not if one does not believe that one's vote will be decisive either way. Although Riker and Ordeshook (1968), and later Blais (2000) argue that people may overestimate their role in determining elections, and thus limit the importance of expected utility to a degree in determining voter rationale, the benefit of one candidate over another remains a useful rubric for thinking about sincere voting.

Specifically, for small party supporters who are deciding between sincerity and strategy, knowing whether they feel there is much difference between the top alternatives could be beneficial in explaining the choices they ultimately make. In particular, it would seem that as voters perceive big differences between the top two parties, their incentive to defect will likely increase, just as great perceived differentials between candidates may induce voting in the first place (Black, 1978; Blais, 2000). Klingemann and Wessels (2002) also model sincere voting in part on the perceived differential between the top parties as well, although it is unclear, since they do not disaggregate by party size, whether they expect high party differential to lead to sincere or insincere voting. Because this factor should depend on the party's size, I state the hypotheses from the perspective of small party supporters.

These three conditions – that sincere voting is less frequent among small party

supporters, who have weaker positive feelings toward their party, and who perceive there to be a large difference between the top choices on the ballots – provide a baseline useful to tracking sincere voting at the individual and party levels. Of course, all of these conditions make little practical sense without the electoral context. This is, after all, the primary mechanism behind the manipulation of the sincere voter to abandon his party. Again, returning to strategic voting provides additional conditions that should impact these baseline correlates of sincerity.

Restrictive Electoral Systems

As Klingemann and Wessels argue, “Voters relate their political preferences to the supply-side of politics”, which is to say, the parties, the candidates, and their stances on the issues (2002:2). This of course is what, in their words, “electoral systems try to facilitate or constrain.” The electoral system does indeed constrain the party system in low district magnitude countries, resulting in fewer viable parties, and thereby, representing fewer issue stances. This of course does not mean that other parties cease to exist.

On the contrary, nonviable parties often do run campaigns, even though they are unsuccessful. This is why when we model vote choice we must include a second layer of complexity, one which accounts for party viability and how it impacts the vote. Otherwise, strategic voting seems on its face to be irrational. And just as electoral rules shape party systems by constraining the number of viable parties, they also shape the environment in which strategic voting thrives. They do so through a set of institutions that dictates the number of possible winners, how disproportionate their rewards will be, and how strong a party must be to gain a voice in parliament.

District Magnitude

District magnitude plays a very important role in shaping party competition. The size of the district determines how many candidates can win seats. In plurality systems, which nearly always use single seat districts, that number is 1. In proportional systems, the districts are always larger than 1 seat because a district magnitude equal to 1 negates any effort done by the electoral formula to impose proportionality on the seat allocation process. In other words, there is no way to proportionally divide and allocate a single seat among multiple parties and candidates. Because of this, more restrictive electoral systems like majority/plurality have been thought of as the prime sites for strategic voting. Evidence of this appears in the sites selected by most who study the phenomenon empirically in the closed systems of the United States, Great Britain, and Canada (Shively, 1970; Spafford, 1972; Cain, 1978; Galbraith and Rae, 1989; Johnston and Pattie, 1991; Lanoue and Bowler, 1992; Heath et al., 1991; Evans and Heath, 1993; Niemi et al., 1993; Heath and Evans, 1994).

By contrast, electoral systems that promote more party competition, like PR, should have less strategic voting not only because of proportional seat allocation, but also because higher district magnitude means more winners in both number and kind (Nadeau and Blais, 1993). Furthermore, in these systems there are multiple ways to win: by securing the most seats if the object is power, by securing any seats if it is representation,

and by forming a coalition if the object is governance. Thus, party supporters whose party has little chance of winning the most seats still have the opportunity to vote sincerely without wasting their votes. This is certainly not the case in more closed systems where district effective magnitude approaches 1.

Legal and Effective Thresholds

Thresholds also play a part in promoting sincere voting, especially among smaller parties. Legal thresholds are an extension of the exclusion threshold which is theoretical in nature and not codified in any way, but is every bit as constraining on small parties. Exclusion thresholds represent the percentage of the vote a party needs to be sure it cannot be excluded from winning at least one seat. Exclusion threshold depends entirely on district magnitude, and although it is not binding in the way legal thresholds are, it represents a barrier to entry that can be assessed across systems. In single seat districts, the exclusion threshold is 50% of the vote. If a party wins 50% or more of the votes, it cannot be excluded. This does not mean that a party with 33% will not win the seat however. Instead, exclusion thresholds and their theoretical counterpart, the inclusion threshold, are more guideline than law.

In contrast, legal thresholds usually exist in proportional systems to guard against parliamentary (hyper)fractionalization, when the district magnitude is so high and the exclusion threshold so low that too many parties may gain seats in the legislature making any coalition very shaky from the start. There are numerous examples, the most notable probably being the Italian governments before plurality rule was established in the mid-1990s, where parliament was so fractionalized that a new government was formed almost on a biannual basis.

Thresholds operate as minimum requirements in percent votes needed to gain seats in the legislature. In Germany, this requirement is set at 5%. Elsewhere, the requirements are lower, as it is in Israel where the legal barrier to entry is only 1.5% or in the Netherlands where it is .67%. Legal thresholds then provide a check on very small parties and the parliamentary fractionalization which can occur in large magnitude PR systems. As such, we should expect that where there is a legal threshold, the parties which receive vote totals close to it should have relatively high levels of sincere voting as their supporters do their best to push them over the hurdle.

Although I have listed these factors separately here, they are hardly independent operators. Instead, they tend to group together, with more restrictive electoral systems having lower district magnitude, less proportional seat allocation, and higher exclusion thresholds. By contrast, more permissive systems tend to have higher district magnitude, more proportional allocation, and lower exclusion thresholds. I refer to the former set of party system characteristics as closed systems, and the latter as open.

Thus, because closed systems are less fair to smaller parties, and tend to produce more losers in each election, they should also see lower overall rates of sincere voting than do open systems. And because there are greater risks of wasting one's vote in closed systems, the baseline correlates of sincerity are either mitigated or exacerbated by these more restrictive electoral characteristics. I discuss how in the next section, where I list first the three baseline hypotheses, followed by the likely impact of system closedness on these correlates of sincerity.

The Correlates of Sincerity

Vote choice is clearly complicated, and whether that choice is to cast a sincere ballot or not, it seems to depend in part on how one's preferred candidate or party will likely fare given the electoral environment. I have made the claim that these electoral considerations modify the most basic determinants of sincere voting by manipulating their strength. They do so because of either a strong or feeble mechanical effect, to use the Sartori (1986) classifications.

There are 2 levels to this study: Level 1 includes both individual direct effects on sincere voting (party affect and perceived differences between the top parties) and party effects (party strength). These effects constitute the baseline correlates of sincerity. Level 2 represents electoral system level effects (system closedness) on the strength of the individual and party relationships I explore in level 1. I begin with the baseline hypotheses before presenting the level 2 hypotheses.

Baseline Hypotheses

Hypothesis H1: *The more positive one's affect is to a party, the greater the likelihood one will be sincere.*

Hypothesis H2: *The larger the party, the more likely its supporters will be sincere.*

Hypothesis H3: *The greater the disparity between respondents' feelings toward the top two parties, the more likely they will cast votes for one of those two parties whether they are small or large party supporters.*

These three hypotheses represent some of the prevailing wisdom regarding voter sincerity. H1 suggests that party affect matters in promoting sincere voting. This hypothesis is proffered by Klingemann and Wessels (2002) and is consistent with the literature on partisanship and vote choice, which suggests that party attachment is built up over time by voting sincerely (Converse, 1969). The effect ought to hold regardless of the electoral system in which the parties are competing, regardless of whether the parties are big parties or small ones.

H2 pertains to the effects of party competition on the logic of strategic voting. In general, we expect to see larger parties (measured in terms of their vote share) to have more sincere voters as a percentage of their base. This represents the most fundamental assumption of the strategic voting literature, the wasted vote imperative, which is thought to lead people to conserve their vote and instead cast it for a party that has a better chance to win. The pressure to do so should be stronger among weaker parties since they by definition have a worse shot at winning, but the intervening variable of electoral design will have to be accounted for.

H3 holds that when voters perceive differences between the top alternatives, they are more likely to cast a vote for one of them. Klingemann and Wessels (2002) also utilize this in their model of voter sincerity, and it has its roots in the rational choice literature and expected utilities (see Riker and Ordeshook, 1968). The hypothesis holds

across all parties, since supporters of the top two parties are also likely to perceive great differences between their preferences and the preferences of the opposition. It also makes good sense for small party supporters since winning and losing elections is about who gets the power to authoritatively allocate values (Easton, 1953). With stakes that high, supporting a small party when a strategic vote might have helped approximate one's preferences and procure some of those "values" is costly indeed. Thus, the largest party supporters will be more sincere when they perceive a great difference between the top two alternatives, and the smallest supporters will likely be insincere. This in particular will be a direct test for strategic voting in different electoral environments.

Of course, these effects do not occur in a vacuum. To the contrary, party competition for votes, and vote choices themselves, are made within an electoral environment which includes information about just how risky voting for a "loser" might be. Indeed, some electoral systems make voting for losing parties less risky than others and at the same time, may make it advantageous for larger party supporters to defect to small party coalition prospects (Gschwend, 2004). For instance, open systems provide more paths to victory than do closed systems, as small parties can still win seats in the legislature and perhaps carve out a spot as a coalition partner, and this all can influence the degree to which these above three hypotheses hold true.

Open and Closed: Sincerity in Context

Hypothesis HH1: The more open the system, the less important party affect is for promoting sincere voting among small party supporters.

This hypothesis holds that because open systems have electoral rules which promote more proportional seat allocation and have larger districts which allow for more parties to gain entry into the legislature, the risk of casting a wasted vote is lower than in closed systems where small parties are effectively shut out. Lower risk should mean a lower attachment threshold for ensuring sincere voting, even among smaller parties.

Hypothesis HH2: The more open the system, the weaker the effect of party strength on promoting sincere voting.

Again, thinking back to our initial hypotheses, I expect a strong link between party strength and sincere voting among small (indeed all kinds of) parties since larger parties will more easily exceed the threshold of exclusion. However, because the threshold of exclusion varies by electoral system, the extent to which party size matters will be determined by how open the system is, with sincerity rates varying a great deal by party size in the closed systems. The strength of the association between party strength and sincere voting ought to be stronger in closed systems.

Hypothesis HH3: The more open the system, the weaker the effect of perceived differences between the top two alternatives on small party sincerity.

This final hypothesis suggests that the pressure small party supporters will feel to cast a decisive vote for one of the top two alternatives will wane as openness increases. This is because in such systems, the fact that coalition governments are usually a necessity will limit the stakes of any election. Furthermore, because small parties can still win by both gaining representation and even forming coalition governments means that one need not cast a vote for the top two alternatives out of considerations of vote conservation alone. The opposite should in fact be very true in the closed systems where the stakes are high and coalitions are rare. Here, small party supporters should cast insincere ballots as a direct function of how much difference they see between the top alternatives.

Thus, I expect that small party supporters will be more sincere in open systems, which is to say there will be less strategic voting there. Likewise, sincere voting will be highest among the top party supporters in the closed systems where there is no reason to seek out coalition partners. Finally, where the top parties seem very different, small parties will feel less pressure to defect when the stakes are lower, and so more will defect in the closed systems than in the open.

Testing the Baseline Hypotheses

I use the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) data to test these hypotheses. The CSES Modules 1 and 2 contain questions of individual vote choice and preferences for the various parties in each voter's district along with data on district magnitude, party size, and election results. Because of its versatility, the CSES is perfectly suited for these "nested" analyses. Table 1 below provides an overview of the countries I examine in this study, levels of sincere voting for the largest and smallest party supporters, as well as their effective district magnitude – the primary independent variable I use to gauge system openness.

Very generally, we already see some evidence that party size matters, as the largest party tends to have the greatest level of sincere voting – especially when compared to the smallest. The last column of the table provides the measure for effective district magnitude for each country. District magnitude, as I have discussed, is one of the strongest determinants of proportionality, with high magnitude being a necessary but not sufficient case for proportional seat allocation. Proportionality really requires both a large number of seats to be distributed and a proportional allocation formula.

Effective district magnitude factors in both of these rules, and then modifies the final value based on the legal threshold for PR systems. As shorthand however, when I refer to open and closed systems, I will be thinking of closed systems as those with magnitudes of four and lower and open systems as those with greater than four. With data on 18 advanced democracies, I now move to a test of the baseline hypotheses. I begin with the first hypothesis – that as party affect increases, so does sincerity.

Table 1. Sincere Voting in the CSES Countries

Country (Year)	% Sincere Largest Party (N)	% Sincere Second Party (N)	% Sincere Smallest Party (N)	Effective District Magnitude
AUS (1996)	88.9% (703)	89.7% (546)	37.0% ^c (54)	1
BEL (2003)	72.5% (294)	67.2% (317)	83.1% ^d (201)	8.3
CAN (1997)	80.5% (495)	90.0% (283)	81.5% ^c (119)	1
DEN (1998)	80.4% (623)	72.2% (614)	82.7% ^c (98)	25
FIN (2003)	70.1% (224)	71.9% (235)	62.8% ^d (51)	13
FRA (2002)	60.2% (171)	79.4% (34)	27.0% ^c (33)	1
GER (1998)	81.1% (646)	82.3% (365)	76.6% ^d (138)	10
GRB (1997)	83.8% (1094)	86.6% (558)	72.6% ^b (91)	1
ICE (2003)	81.1% (423)	88.7% (346)	81.9% ^c (72)	7
IRE (2002)	75.5% (948)	80.1% (277)	44.4% ^d (99)	4
ISR (1996)	63.3% (316)	64.6% (280)	48.4% ^c (95)	33.3
NET (1998)	57.4% (655)	74.1% (316)	41.3% ^c (223)	74.5
NZL (1996)	68.8% (1282)	69.0% (1082)	22.1% ^d (122)	10
NOR (1997)	84.3% (651)	77.1% (192)	65.2% ^d (138)	8.7
POR (2002)	86.6% (275)	89.3% (244)	51.7% ^c (29)	10.5
SPA (1996)	79.4% (238)	79.4% (340)	35.3% ^c (17)	6.7
SWE (1998)	85.8% (337)	81.5% (221)	84.2% ^d (38)	12
USA ⁷ (1996)	89.7% (487)	86.6% (381)	55.3% ^a (43)	1
Median Sincere (% vote)	80.5% (36.2%)	75.8% (24.9%)	59.1% (5.2%)	8.5 (Belgium/Norway)

Sincere voters cast ballots for party that respondent reported greatest liking for, excluding those who reported less than 6 out of 10 on the scale. Ties go to the largest party. Smallest party is the: a) 3rd party, b) 4th party, c) 5th party, d) 6th party. CSES module 1 ends with 6th party.

Hypothesis H1: Party Affect and Sincere Voting

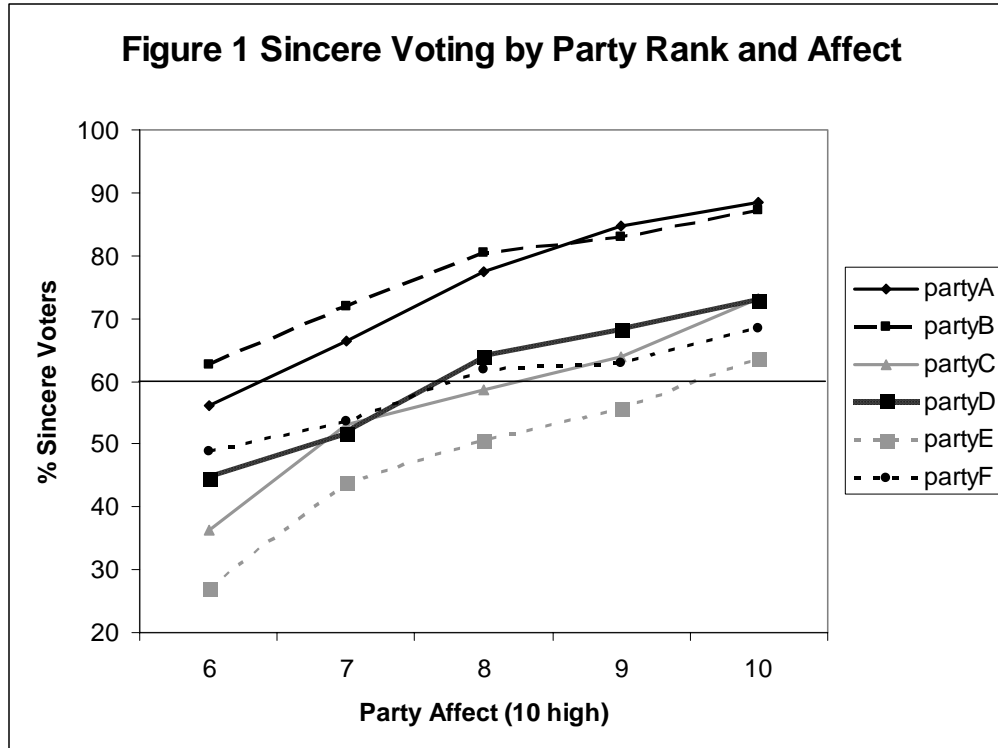
I assume that voters who express great affinity for a party they do not vote for may likely be deciding to deny their preference out of a concern of wasting their vote. Given this assumption, it is reasonable to expect that in a permissive electoral system, as party affect rises so will the likelihood of sincere voting. To test this hypothesis, I employ a variable from the CSES which asks respondents to report how much they like, on a scale from 0 low to 10 high, each of the parties they are shown (6 total in the first module, 9 in the second). The parties are shown in order of how they performed in the most recent election, which in most cases was just weeks prior to the interview.

Because overall sincerity rates will likely depend a great deal on party size, I separate out this effect by segregating the respondents into groups who preferred each of the parties.⁸ Party A represents all those in a country whose liking for it exceeded or equaled their liking for any other party, party B would represent those for whom this party was preferred to all others or tied with parties C, D, E, or F, *but not A*, and so on. Ties are thus broken by assigning a respondent's preference to the larger party, with ties between A and B going to A, B and C going to B, and so on. In general, unless otherwise reported, party A is the largest in votes through the smallest, party F.

This gives us party groups for each country that can be easily compared within and across electoral systems and serves as the best first attempt to assess how party affect impacts sincerity regardless of intervening effects like party size, closeness of the race, or openness of the system. Here I have reported only the findings for those who reported liking their party at a score of 6 or higher.⁹ Respondents are coded as having voted sincerely if their vote matches their party preference. Below, Figure 1 presents these findings.

As we quickly see, sincerity rates do increase with affect. As we move left to right, we have increasing rates of sincerity for each party (A through F) which roughly corresponds to vote shares across countries (on average party A tends to garner 35% of the vote, and parties C through F about 12% and lower). In general, the number of countries with parties in each trend line is equal, except as we move to parties E and F where more closed systems produce fewer parties and so have no one to contribute to the measure.¹⁰ This is especially the case for party F, where only 8 of the 18 countries I analyze, and only 2 of the closed systems (IRE and FRA) have representatives in the measure. The figure clearly shows that regardless of size, as affect increases, so does sincerity.

Table 2 below summarizes the results of logistic regressions done in each country for the top two parties' supporters (this helps control for size), testing whether affect is a strong indicator of sincerity at the individual level. The results indicate that it is indeed a very strong indicator in nearly every country.



Source: *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems Modules 1 and 2*. Data represent the combined rates of sincere voting for all parties across all systems by party rank. Party A is the highest vote-getter each time, and party F, the lowest.

Table 2. Affect Increases Likelihood of Sincere Voting

Country	Party A † (S.E.)	Party B (S.E.)	Country	Party A (S.E.)	Party B (S.E.)
AUS	.453*** (.108)	.072 (.095)	IRE	.364*** (.059)	.308** (.112)
BEL	.530*** (.131)	.446*** (.116)	ISR	.240* (.095)	.252* (.100)
CAN	.498*** (.104)	.148 (.152)	NET	.745*** (.084)	.380*** (.128)
DEN	.853*** (.094)	.628*** (.078)	NZL	.508*** (.057)	.196*** (.054)
FIN	.504*** (.132)	.511*** (.143)	NOR	.741*** (.104)	-.057 (.151)
FRA	.627*** (.142)	.388 (.326)	POR	.224 (.129)	.332* (.154)
GER	.296*** (.083)	.257* (.109)	SPA	.241* (.113)	.251* (.090)
GBR	.435*** (.063)	.347*** (.100)	SWE	.486*** (.133)	.478** (.173)
ICE	.679*** (.133)	.717*** (.173)	USA	.467*** (.063)	.384** (.142)

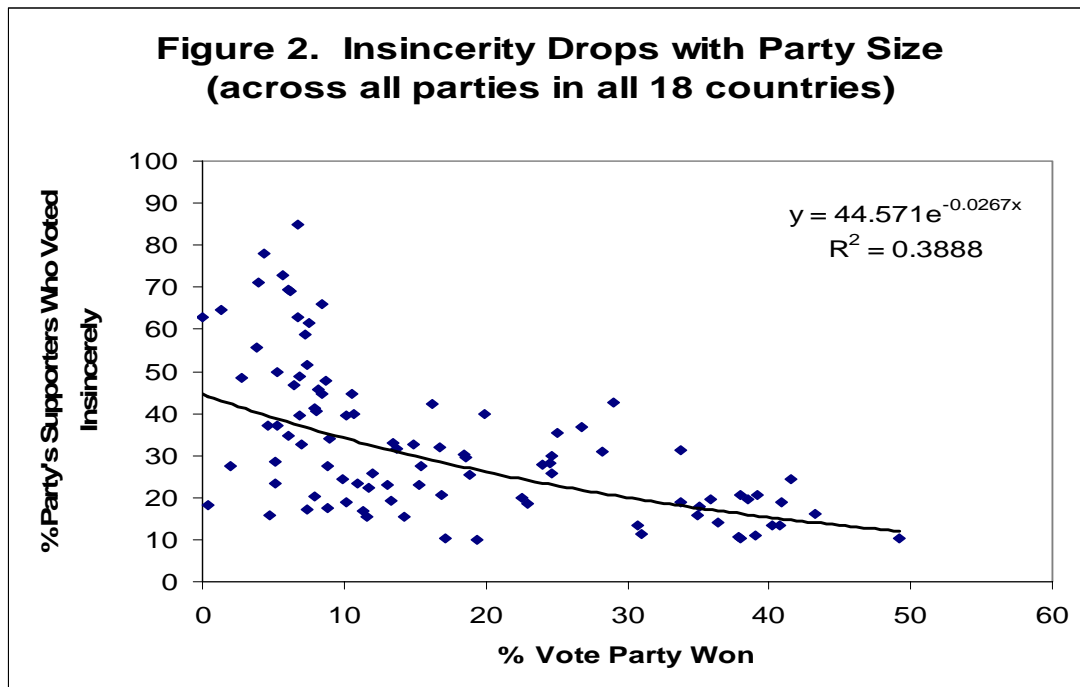
Source: *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems Modules 1 and 2*. Party values are the individual level logistic regression betas for party A and party B supporters in each country. As such, they represent the increased log-likelihood of voting sincerely given a unit increase in affect (taking only those who scored 6 or higher out of 10 for affect).

In addition to confirming the first hypothesis that affect matters, there is preliminary evidence that party size impacts the overall levels of sincerity. Returning to Figure 1, we see that the relative distance between lines tends to persist even as affect rises. Furthermore, sincerity rates seem to climb generally in order of their previous election results. This suggests that party strength likely matters to sincere voting as the differences in intercept values means that larger parties begin with a higher percentage of sincere voters, and the relatively uniform gap suggests that even the highest affect does little to offset the impact of small party size on sincerity. I now investigate this hypothesis at further length.

Hypothesis H2: Party Strength and Sincere Voting

Hypothesis H2 predicts that party strength will be positively linked to sincerity. Working from the assumption of the strategic voting literature which argues that voters cast strategic ballots out of a desire to conserve their vote, we should expect that small party supporters are more likely to cast insincere ballots since their parties have little hope of winning.¹¹

Figure 2 (see below) illustrates the relationship between party strength, measured here as the percentage of votes the party won in the most recent election, and the rate of insincere voting among all those who preferred that party and reported a score of 6 or higher on the 11 point liking scale. These data represent sincerity rates at the party level, and are plotted regardless of the electoral system in which they compete. Despite this lack of nuance, the trend shows that party strength matters in promoting sincere voting, with on average about a 25 point difference between smaller parties (less than 10% of the vote) and larger parties (greater than 25%) when measuring sincerity rates.



Source: *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems Modules 1 and 2* and the Election Results Archive at the Center on Democratic Performance, SUNY Binghamton (N = 95).

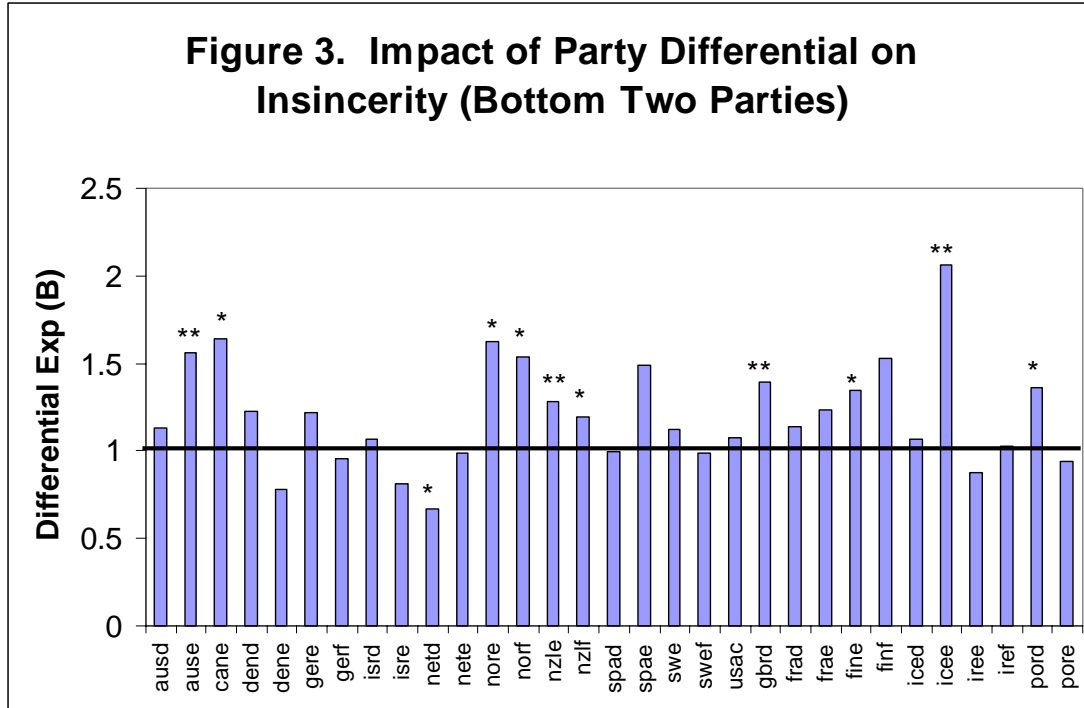
The greatest variation in the relationship occurs among the smallest parties, where anywhere between 15 to 90% of small party supporters cast insincere ballots. By the time we move to the larger parties, this variation vanishes, as indeed it should almost by definition. Part of the story is still missing, however, and it is the part that helps explain the wide variation among small party supporters in sincerity levels. Preferring a nearly hopeless party in restrictive electoral systems is hardly the same as doing so in the more permissive and open ones. As we will see shortly, this helps explain quite a bit of the variation at this end of the graph. Before moving to the impact of electoral institutions on these baseline relationships, we have one last hypothesis to test: that close elections breed insincerity among small party supporters.

Hypothesis H3: Party Differential and Sincere Voting

The third hypothesis has to do with how perceptions of the top parties impacts sincerity, holding specifically that when small party supporters like one of the top two parties a great deal more than the other, the pressure to vote insincerely will increase. To test this hypothesis, I take all the respondents who preferred one of the bottom two ranked parties (with a range of vote shares between 0 and 10%), and regress the absolute difference between their likings for the top two ranked parties against a simple dichotomous variable cataloging whether they cast a vote for one of these top two parties. If this hypothesis is correct, the resulting slopes for each small party will be positive and statistically significant when also controlling for their liking of their preferred party. Figure 3 below presents the evidence.

In all, 31 parties from 17 countries are presented in the figure (Belgium had no parties ranked in the bottom two that did not receive less than 10%). Of those 31 small parties, 22 evidenced the expected direction of the slope. I have drawn in a line at $Y=1$ to make comparison between these cases simple. The values above represent exponentiated betas from logistic regressions. If the value is above 1.0, it means that for each unit increases in differential, there is a corresponding positive increases in the log likelihood that the respondent will cast a vote for one of the top two parties instead of being sincere. While the evidence is not as strong as I had expected, the vast majority of cases where the relationship was statistically significant, were positive as well, and vice versa. The evidence seems clear enough that sincerity is threatened by the perception that the top two alternatives are different.

To summarize, I have found good support for all three hypotheses to this point. Small party supporters are less sincere than larger ones, feeling strong positive affect toward your preferred party helps promote sincerity, and finally, perceiving little difference between the top two parties seems to also help small party supporters remain loyal to their preferences. How does the electoral system impact these baseline relationships?



Source: *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems Modules 1 and 2* (N = 31). Party labels correspond to country abbreviation and party rank for bottom two parties in each country (e.g., Australian parties D and E are represented by 'ausd' and 'ause' respectively).

Testing the Level 2 Hypotheses

I stated earlier that electoral rules determine party competition, and because of this they are the source of the pressures to vote strategically, with most notably plurality single-seat systems leading the pack. Indeed, while scholars like Leys (1954), Sartori (1968), Cox (1984); Tsebelis (1986); Riker (1986), Cox (1997), Klingemann and Wessels (2002), and Gschwend (2004) have argued that strategic voting can occur in multimember districts and proportional systems as well, most concede that vote conservation is less a concern where the system is stacked in favor of fair representation. Instead, it may be because of an interest in preserving coalition opportunities that some large party supporters would consider voting down the ballot for a small potential partner (Tsebelis, 1986; Cox, 1997).

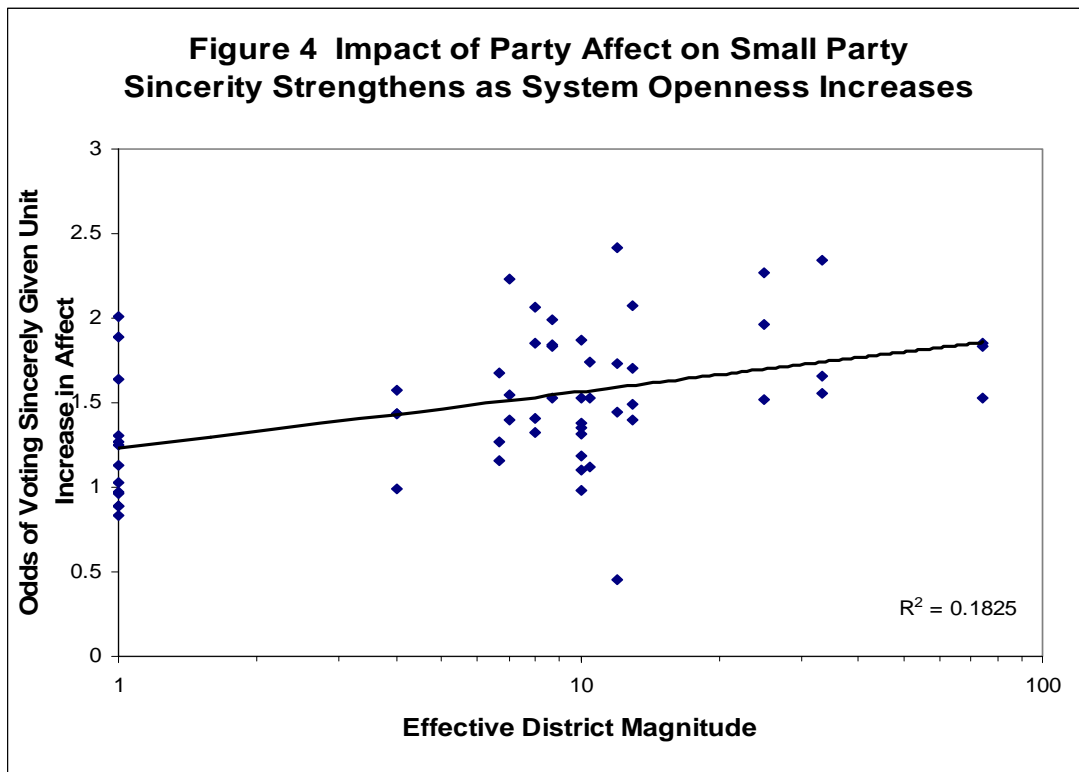
So electoral rules may be determinative not just of the magnitude of strategic voting, but also of the type, with open systems having less strategic up voting and more strategic down voting than closed systems. What this means, is that electoral systems can have consequences for vote choice by impacting the risk/reward structure of party competition, and with it, impact how rational voters choose to weigh the various baseline correlates of sincerity we just saw. I test whether this is true below, beginning with hypothesis HH1.

System Openness, Affect, and Sincere Voting

Hypothesis HH1 holds that party affect will have a greater impact on sincerity rates among small party supporters in open systems than it will in closed systems. From the first hypothesis (H1) we know that sincerity rates climb as party affect strengthens. Does the electoral system affect this relationship?

Since open systems provide additional paths to victory, even small party supporters can be winners, either by gaining a fair number of seats in parliament, or better still, by forming a coalition government with one or more of the larger parties. Thus, the risk involved with voting sincerely in open systems is far reduced when compared to that in closed systems where victory requires at least a plurality of the vote. Because closed systems are riskier to small party supporters than are open systems, sincerity rates among these voters should generally decline as systems become more closed to competition, and likewise, party affect should be a far weaker indicator of sincere voting here among the smaller parties' base as well.

To test this hypothesis, I first run logistic regressions which predict party sincerity rates based on respondents' reported affect levels for their preferred party. I then take the resulting exponentiated coefficients for each party and plot these versus effective district magnitude (closed systems tend toward 1). If hypothesis HH1 is correct, we should see larger coefficients as we move from more closed to more open systems – that is, the gap between low and high affect sincere voters should grow with system openness. Figure 4 below, reports the results from 59 parties in 18 advanced democracies.



Source: *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems Modules 1 and 2* (N = 59) Values represent exponentiated betas (EXP(B)) from logistic regressions predicting the log likelihood of sincere voting given actual party affect levels of small party supporters in each country and by party.

The results support hypothesis HH1 that sincerity rates vary not just as a function of party affect, but that the degree to which it impacts sincere voting seems to vary by system openness. As we move left to right, and from closed systems to open ones, we see that sincerity rates for individual parties vary more between low and high affect – the odds of voting sincerely increase with affect, and the extent to which this is true depends on how open the system is. This is likely due to the fact that in more open systems, sincerity levels have more mobility among small parties because there is far less risk of wasting one’s vote when seat allocation is proportional.

But how do we know that the real impact of system openness acts independently from the baseline effects of closeness of the race and party strength? To ascertain this, I regress the original logistic regression coefficients representing the relationship between affect and sincerity for small party supporters against three independent variables: average small party strength, closeness of the race, and system openness. This should tell us whether the results above are really driven by system openness, or if they vary instead as a function of a complex of variables like party size and how close the race is. The results are reported below in Table 3.

Table 3. Separate Effect of System Openness on Sincerity Rates among Small Party Supporters

Effect on the Strength of the Relationship between Attachment and Sincerity	B	S.E.	Sig
intercept	16.350	9.300	.097
party strength (average at level 2)	-.069	1.185	.955
closeness of race	.123	.380	.751
system openness	15.812	4.590	.004**

Results of standard OLS regression at country level. Party strength variable measured as percent votes party most recently won. Closeness of race represents the absolute difference between the top two parties in percent vote. System openness measured by log of the effective district magnitude of the system. Dependent variable, relationship between affect and sincerity, measured by subtracting the predicted sincerity levels of small party supporters who reported a score of 10 (high) versus those who reported a score of 6 (low). Probabilities of sincere voting can then be calculated using the intercept values and slopes of logistic

regressions using the following equation: $\pi = \frac{e^{\alpha + \beta_1 X_1}}{1 + e^{\alpha + \beta_1 X_1}}$, where X represents R’s liking for his party.

As the table above indicates, the effect of system openness on the strength of the association between party attachment and sincerity rates is positive and significant, even when controlling for any confounding effect of tight races or variations in small party size on the dependent variable. This tells us that as systems become more open, they increase the strength with which party affect promotes sincere voting among small party supporters, and as systems become more closed, the overall effect is a diminution of the role affect plays in promoting sincerity.

I argue this is again because open systems provide more opportunities for small party supporters to cast meaningful sincere ballots. Because of this, the effect of party affect meets its potential where the mitigating effects of closed system dynamics,

including fewer parties and more disproportional seat allocation, are not present to limit the efficacy of the small party vote. Finally, because there does not seem to be a bias in open systems toward significantly greater amounts of strongly attached supporters,¹² we can say that this relationship is not merely an artifact of variations in partisanship.

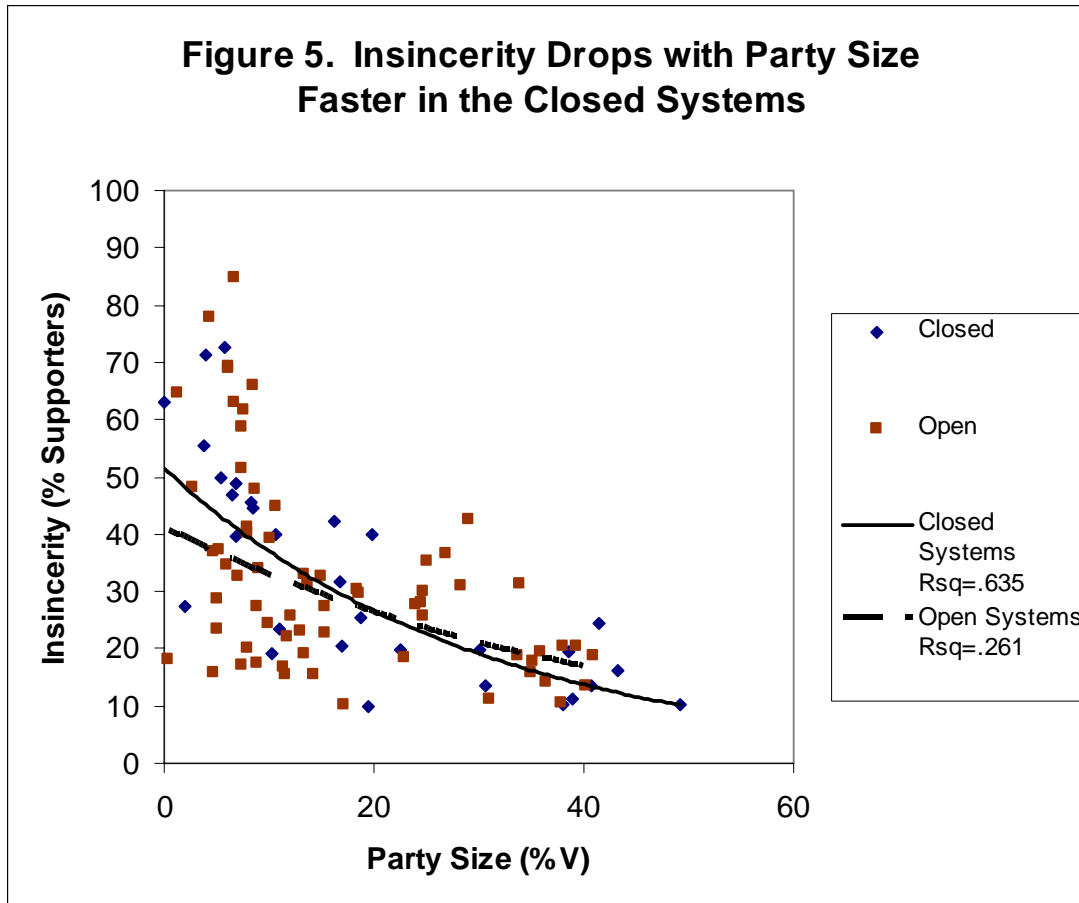
If electoral rules impact the strength of the association between party affect and sincerity levels, do they also impact the relationship between party strength and sincere voting? In the next section I test the second system level hypothesis.

Party Strength and Sincerity in Open Systems

I showed earlier that party strength seems to be positively correlated with sincere voting because the threat of wasting one's vote approaches zero as party size increases. However, I also surmised that the extent to which the threat of casting a wasted vote among small party supporters would vary by the opportunities for small parties to find additional ways to win. In closed systems, this is essentially a fool's errand. Small parties can only win here if there are many parties of equal or lesser strength, something we should expect not to happen in low district magnitude systems if there is anything at all to Duverger's Law or to Cox's (1997) M+1 theory,¹³ or if they are regionally concentrated. In open systems, however, the opportunities to win all lie in winning seats. Sometimes these seats will afford the small party the opportunity to govern in a coalition, and usually the seats will provide representation only. As a consequence, small party supporters here are in little danger of casting a completely wasted vote.

Hypothesis HH2 predicts that the association between party strength and sincere voting will vary as a function of system openness, arguing that these many paths to victory reduce the risk of wasting one's vote and increase the potential for coalition building. To test this hypothesis, I plot the insincerity rates (100% - % sincerity) of each party by its electoral strength, splitting the data points into two categories – open and closed systems. Figure 5 illustrates the differences between open and closed systems in terms how powerful an indicator party strength is for sincerity. If hypothesis HH2 is correct, we should expect to find that sincerity levels among smaller parties are higher, and the slope gauging the impact of party strength on sincere voting rates flatter, in open systems.

As we look at the graph, we can see clearly that insincerity drops to near zero as party size increases toward 50% of the vote. This is what we found when testing hypothesis H1. Now that I have disaggregated the open and closed systems, we see that the rate at which insincerity drops with party size is hardly uniform. In the closed systems, insincerity levels are generally higher than those found in open systems until around 20% of the vote. After that, parties in closed systems continue to become more sincere (less insincere) than their counterparts in open systems, although the relationship is slight.¹⁴



Source: *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems Modules 1 and 2* (N = 95).

This both provides some small confirmation of hypothesis HH2 that party strength will be less powerful an indicator in open systems, but also provides some general support for those who argue that larger parties in open systems may have a reason to vote insincerely out of an interest in insuring potential coalition partners exceed the legal threshold. By way of comparison, OLS regressions of the impact of party size on insincerity rates in open and closed systems confirms that in closed systems, the slope is indeed steeper as insincerity rises rapidly with small party size (-.823*** to -.740***). Still, the difference between the two OLS regression betas is statistically insignificant.

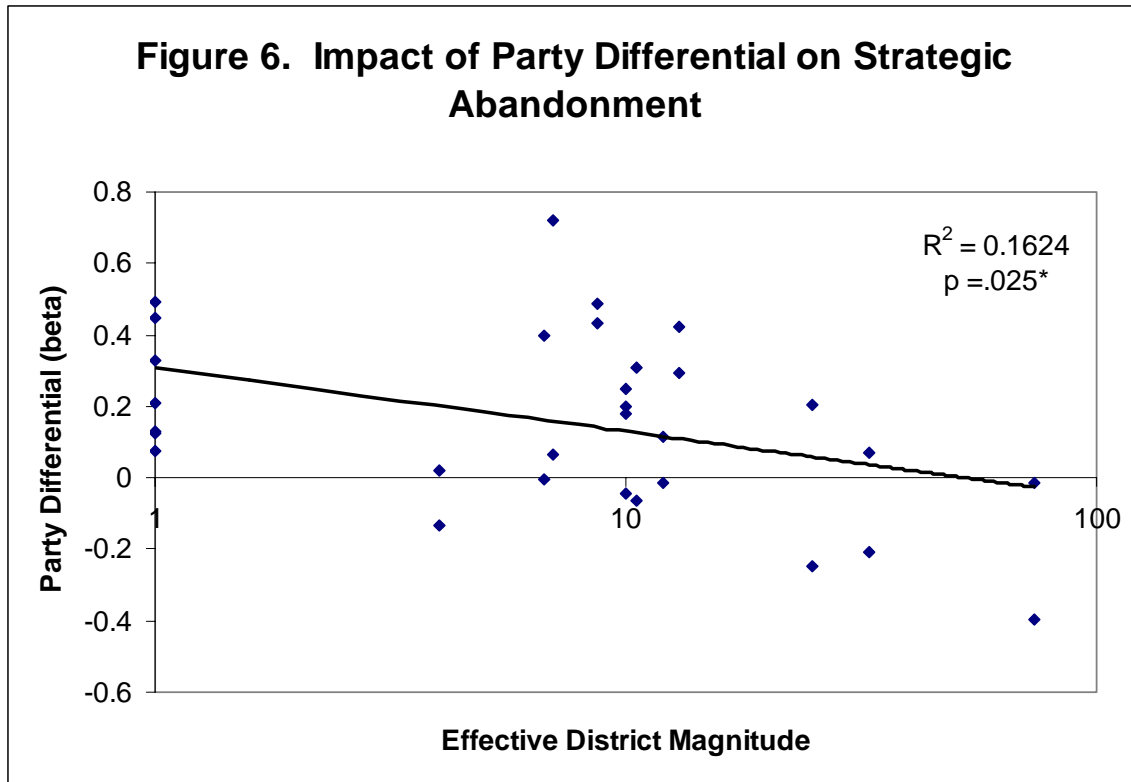
System Openness, Party Differential, and the Pressure to Defect

The final hypothesis of this study holds that the differential liking respondents have for the top two parties – an effect I have established as statistically significant in its impact on pressuring small party supporters to abandon their party for one of the top two alternatives – will be less potent in the open systems than in the closed. The reason for this is simple: extra space in open systems, the cost of casting a sincere vote when the top two parties are very different, and likely also have very different perspectives on politics, is much smaller than it is in closed systems where the stakes are higher. To put it differently, there is more danger in pursuing short-term preferences in closed systems than in open.

To test whether there is any truth to this hypothesis, I take the logistic regression

coefficients produced when I tested hypothesis H3 and the impact of party differential for small party supporters on voting for the top two parties (controlling for party affect toward their own), and graph this against system openness (effective district magnitude). The results are illustrated in Figure 6 below.

The result is clear. As openness increases, the pressure to vote for one of the top two parties that comes from seeing how different they are, diminishes to zero, and in fact, in the Netherlands, it becomes negative and significant. This means that in the Netherlands, for some small party supporters, the more difference one sees between the top two parties, the more likely one will remain sincere to even the smallest party.



Source: *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems Modules 1 and 2* (N = 31).

This makes sense in light of the Netherlands’ continuing experiment with more consensual politics. The larger implication of this is that electoral dynamics truly impact voter calculus. A standard OLS regression of the above points by openness confirms that the relationship is statistically significant, lending even more weight to these implications.

Conclusions

I began this paper asking a fundamental question – “How do voters decide to cast sincere ballots, and how does the electoral system figure into that decision?” Now that we have come to the conclusion, are we any closer to an answer? I believe so. At the individual level, vote choice is a function of many different and disparate factors, some of which play their roles out inside the heads of voters, and some of which act as forces on voters from afar. While determining voters’ rationales is at best, a risky proposition, there still are some conclusions we can draw about

voters' propensity to cast sincere ballots.

First, feeling great affinity for a party helps promote sincere voting, and the more a voter prefers a party, the more likely he is to cast a ballot for it. Regardless of the electoral dynamics, both in terms of the institutions which frame the election and in terms of the election itself, voters who report a strong affect or liking for their preferred party are much more likely to cast sincere votes than are those who report less affinity for their preference.

Second, context does matter. The strength of the voter's preferred party goes a long way toward predicting sincere or insincere voting. This is mostly common sense, given that strong parties tend to get that way because they can promote voters to be sincere, but even small differences between parties in size can make a difference in the likelihood that its supporters will remain faithful. This is probably due in part to a general urge among voters to conserve their votes. Why vote for a small party with no chance of winning when one can vote for a larger, albeit less satisfactory party that may win?

Third, and in keeping with vote conservation as a primary motivation, small party voters will tend to vote sincerely if they perceive little difference between the top alternatives. In other words, if there is little difference between how much respondents like one party or the other, there is little reason to think that either party would do a better job or have a greater utility for the voter. In such cases, sincerity makes perfect sense even if the race is very close.

Fourth, institutions matter. Whether a system is open or closed to party competition is a very important distinction which has serious consequences for the rationale of voters as they decide whether to cast sincere ballots. Closed systems provide little in the way of consolation to small party supporters, and unless they are long-sighted, the reward of being sincere is marginal at best. In open systems, the consolation comes in the form of seats. Small party supporters are not necessarily locked out of government simply because they are in the minority. Rather, the open system provides multiple paths to victory for all parties, with outright winning of the election, consolation prizes in the form of seats, and perhaps the most dynamic option, the ability to form coalition governments. Open systems thus produce more sincere voting among small party supporters than do closed systems.

Finally, and most importantly to this study as much of what I have found echoes scholars who have written before me (Leys, 1954; Sartori, 1968; McKelvey and Ordeshook, 1972; Black, 1978; Tsebelis, 1986; Riker, 1986; Cox, 1997; and Klingemann and Wessels, 2002), system openness seems to have consequences for voters' decision-making processes, as factors which go far in explaining voters' propensity to cast sincere ballots in closed systems – like party strength and party differential – are less successful in explaining the actions of voters in open systems. Open system voters are less likely to abandon their party solely on the basis of party strength, and when they perceive large differences between the top parties, this seems to do as much to fuel sincerity as it does to promote strategy. By contrast, the variable at the individual level that I thought would have the most influence on sincerity in open systems in fact did – party affect is crucial for sincere voting in open systems, especially for small parties.

In a near definitive answer to my motivating question, voters cast sincere ballots when they can do so safely. But it really is much more than just this. The evidence seems to support that voters' decision-making processes differ by electoral context, and so part of the answer to when we should expect voters to remain loyal to their preferences is *when their preferences are heeded*. The natural extension of research like this is to ask whether voters in closed systems feel their preferences matter – or to approach it from an institutions perspective – to ask whether electoral institutions match popular will when it comes to electoral choice inside and outside the

ballot box.

Endnotes

¹ For a counter-argument to the strength of strategic voting in reducing multipartism, see Lijphart, 1990.

² Lau and Redlawsk (1997) conducted an experiment on correct voting which went much further in depth than any left-right operationalization could. Their findings were that most people did vote correctly despite having far from perfect information about candidates. The above operationalization is thus not meant to be the only way, or even the best way, to gauge correct voting. It is simply meant to suggest that similar means of capturing preferences might be gauging something other than sincerity.

³ The CSES contains data on self-placement along the left-right scale, and on placement of parties and candidates as well. But there are no questions asking respondents to place particular issues. If one resorts to a more basic measure in which voters' self placements are compared with the mean placement of parties by all other voters on the same left-right scale, we once again are confronted by a number of biases inherent to such measures both within systems and between them (e.g., some systems have more parties to be placed than others, the major parties in some systems may be more ideologically fluid in some systems than they are in others.)

⁴ The same assumption however, may not hold entirely for candidates, and so I do not use the battery of questions tapping attitudes toward candidates. Indeed, I know many hardened Democrats who report they like John McCain better than Hillary Clinton, but that does not mean they prefer the Republican candidate to the Democrat.

⁵ Party Affect [most liked party is preferred party] is operationalized by the following CSES question:

Q. I'd like to know what you think about each of our political parties. After I read the name of a political party, please rate it on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means you strongly dislike that party and 10 means that you strongly like that party. If I come to a party you haven't heard of or you feel you do not know enough about, just say so. The first party is PARTY A.

⁶ If electoral viability is a factor in voter preferences, then why not just return to the partisan identification measure? This is a fair question, but it would assume that the party stated by the respondent is also the most preferred party. If it is not, then more is gained by this measure than lost.

⁷ All data taken from CSES modules 1 and 2 and represent the results of legislative elections, except for the USA, where presidential results are used to determine sincerity.

⁸ If I do not control for party size here and instead report only one overall measure for the entire sample, there will be two sizable problems. First, without weighting the data by party size, respondents from very small parties who represent a fraction of the population will count just as much as those from the largest parties. Because smaller parties will likely have lower sincerity levels, this promises to skew the results of countries with a disproportionate number of small party supporters who were interviewed. Second, even after weighting, this would still disadvantage the proportional electoral systems since they tend to be more permissive and allow additional parties to compete, even if those parties are quite small.

⁹ This seems to be a good cutoff since it represents those who show liking for the party just above the indifference score of 5 out of 10. Why use any cutoff? If we do not use a cutoff, we risk the chances that our sample includes those who reported preferring a party, but whose actual orientation toward the political system is likely negative. Those who prefer party A for example, but only like it with a score 3 out of 10, are likely to report thinking that parties are less important and the system is inherently flawed. Furthermore, since what we are attempting to test here is psychological attachment, it is difficult to argue that these party supporters are attached at all.

¹⁰ Because of this, measures of parties E and F are likely inflated unduly by the effects of the electoral system in reducing risk, something I will investigate in later hypotheses. Party F is also likely inflated in these systems because it is often so close to the legal threshold that sincere voting goes up. This is likely why it leapfrogs party E

in most cases. Since we would expect closed systems to produce even lower sincerity rates among party E and party F supporters, the results here are even more significant.

¹¹ Unless a voter is motivated by something other than a desire to gain a voice in the next government, (certainly this is not an argumentative point since many small party supporters could feasibly waste their vote in the short term as they work to build up the party's credibility), then vote conservation should be a driving force behind small party supporters defecting en masse for more viable choices.

¹² A simple check of the mean attachment scores of small party supporters across countries and systems shows that plurality systems have small party supporters reporting a mean value of 8.26 out of 10 on the attachment variable (among all those who scored at least a 6) while the same measure is 8.34 for PR systems. Mixed systems represent an anomaly as their mean scores come in at 8.72. However, given that they fall in the middle of the graph and that their values for sincerity are vary widely, if anything, their inclusion despite high average attachment scores works against a generalized trend, and so we do not exclude them here as doing so would likely only strengthen the result.

¹³ Cox's M+1 theory is far too complicated go into much detail here, but the primary argument it makes is that district magnitude + 1 represents an upper bound on the number of quality candidates or parties which can run in any given district. It represents an extension in some ways of Duverger's Law, and is in keeping with a line of research which has sought to explain the effects of district magnitude on the number of parties. Cox does state however that the rule should be considered an upper bound only, not a restriction.

¹⁴ Indeed, a regression analysis of the impact of system openness on the relationship between party strength and sincere voting does show a negative slope, meaning that as system openness increases, the effect of party vote size on sincere voting over all kinds of supporters is diminished. The effect however is statistically insignificant.

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