The Choice Argument for Proportional Representation

Adam Lovett

Abstract: What electoral system should a democracy choose? I argue for proportional representation (PR). My main empirical premise is Duverger's law: under PR there are more viable candidates in district-level elections than there are under single-member plurality (SMP) systems. My main normative premise is that democracy is valuable because it enables ordinary citizens to rule themselves. To enjoy the value of self-rule, citizens must be able to make an autonomous vote choice. Yet how autonomous any choice is depends on the diversity of one's adequate options. The fewer adequate options one can choose between, the less autonomous is one's choice. So PR augments self-rule by increasing the diversity of acceptable options citizens have at election time.

Word Count: 9,980 (excl. title, abstract, keywords, bibliography)

Many countries worldwide use a single-member plurality (SMP) electoral system. In such systems, the electorate is split up into several geographically-defined districts, and each district elects a single member of the legislature. The candidate who wins election in any district is the one who wins the plurality—not necessarily a majority—of the votes in their district. This system is used in elections to the British House of Commons, the U.S. House of Representatives, and the Indian Lok Sabha. The most widely used alternative to SMP is proportional representation (PR). Systems of proportional representation ensure that the fraction of seats each party wins in the legislature matches the fraction of voters each party won at election day. This system is used in elections to the Dutch Second Chamber, the Israeli Knesset and the German Bundestag. Which of these electoral systems is better? More generally, what electoral system should democracies adopt?

A large literature tries to answer these questions. Preponderantly, those writing in this literature defend proportional representation. Unfortunately, existing arguments for proportional representation are largely inconclusive. People have suggested the PR is preferable because it increases policy congruence (Powell 2000), reduces polarization (Drutman 2020), improves deliberation (Macleod 2017), boosts turnout (Amy 2002, ch.7) or improves descriptive representation (Lijphart 1991). Generally, the evidence for these causal claims is less than completely compelling. It's unclear whether proportional representation really

does have any of these effects. And, in the cases where it is most plausible that PR has an impact, there are more straightforward ways to get the desired effect other than by adopting PR. If we want to, say, boost turnout or improve descriptive representation, we can adopt compulsory voting and quotas for women and minorities in the legislature. So—as I'll discuss at more length in section 2—the existing literature does not furnish a very strong argument in favor of PR. In this paper, I aim to furnish a much stronger argument.

We should start with what we know for sure about the effects of electoral system choice. We know how they affect the party system. As Maurice Duverger said, "the simple-majority ballot [SMP] favours the two-party system" (1954, 217) and "proportional representation favour[s] multi-partism" (1954, 239). Single-member plurality systems tend to see fewer viable candidates—that is, candidates with any chance of winning election—at the district level than do systems of proportional representation. That matters, I believe, because the value of democratic institutions consists in part in autonomy: in democracies, we rule ourselves. But, to rule ourselves, we have to make autonomous vote choices. The less diverse are the acceptable options we're choosing between in the ballot booth, the less autonomous is our vote choice. So to achieve democratic autonomy, voters need a wide range of acceptable options. Under PR, voters usually have many more acceptable options at election time than they do under SMP. So we should adopt

PR because it better facilitates the value of self-rule. Call this the Choice Argument for proportional representation.

This idea, that we should adopt PR because it augments voter choice, is not a novel one. In some form it goes back to the nineteenth century (Hare 1873, iv). But it has never been spelt out in detail. My goal in this paper is to spell it in detail. Here's the plan. In the next section we'll look at the existing literature. We'll then explore the underlying account of democratic values before looking at how the nature of an option-set affects the autonomy of a choice. After this, I'll state the choice argument in detail. I'll then address some objections to it and, finally I'll compare PR to two-round electoral systems. Overall, I believe this leaves us with a powerful argument in favor of proportional representation.

Background

Let's start by looking at some of the existing arguments for proportional representation. One argument in favor of PR concerns congruence. In the 1990s, several empirical studies suggested that PR produced policy outcomes closer to the median voter (e.g. Huber and Powell 1994; Powell 2000). The idea was that this made PR superior to SMP because it increases the match between what citizens want and policy outcomes. But since then the empirical evidence for the claimed connection between congruence and PR has fallen apart. In a 2006 study,

André Blais and Marc André Bodet conclude that "PR does not bring about a better representation of citizens' overall ideological orientations" (Blais and Bodet 2006, 1259) and in a 2010 study Matt Golder and Jacek Stramski "find no significant difference between the level of congruence in proportional and majoritarian democracies" (Golder and Stramski 2010, 104). The issue was that the earlier studies focused on developed democracies in the 1980s and 1990s, while the later studies looked at more countries and more time periods. The later findings have held up. As Benjamin Ferland concludes in a recent article, "levels of policy congruence seem to be similar across electoral systems" (Ferland 2021, 360). Congruence considerations don't speak strongly in favor of PR.

A second argument concerns polarization. Lee Drutman (2020) thinks that the extreme levels of polarization in the U.S. today would be effectively addressed by changing the election system. The idea is that PR would induce a multiparty system, and in multiparty systems we should expect less polarization. Regrettably, the empirical evidence Drutman marshals for this claim is rather thin. He doesn't explore whether polarization is actually rarer in countries with PR. He does no comparative analysis. Yet, on the face of it, many countries with PR have experienced severe polarization in recent years—consider Israel or Poland—while many countries with SMP—consider Canada—have avoided such polarization.[1]

[1] For many case studies of national polarization see (McCoy and Somer 2019). All their cases except for the U.S. happened in non-SMP systems.

Overall, there does seem to be some correlation between PR and lower levels of affective polarization (Gidron, Adams, and Horne 2020). But the correlation is weak and there's no evidence it's causal. High confidence that PR substantially reduces polarization seems unwarranted.

A third argument concerns legislative deliberation. John Macleod (2017), for example, suggests that PR leads to better deliberation in the legislature. The idea is that PR leads more voices being represented in the legislature and gives governing parties a stronger incentive to listen to minority voices: they might want to form a coalition with them in the future. Unfortunately, again, empirical evidence is scant. Macleod (2017) cites no such evidence. And there are ways in which the adversarial system created by SMP can improve legislative deliberation. SMP usually ensures that there is always a reasonably well-resourced legislative actor, the opposition, with a strong incentive for identifying and publicizing missteps by the government. Under PR, government policies can simply escape motivated scrutiny under the shroud of consensus. So it seems hard to be sure that one system produces better legislative deliberation than the other.

A fourth argument concerns turnout. Several people support proportional representation on the basis that it increases voter turnout (Amy 2002, ch.7; Drutman 2020, 302–6). Unfortunately, the evidence for this claim is also inconclusive. Certainly, one sees higher turnout in developed countries that use

PR than those that use SMP. But when one extends one's analyses to include democracies in Latin America and Eastern Europe, the association dramatically weakens (Blais and Aarts 2006; Smith 2017). More importantly, there are much more straightforward ways to increase turnout than changing electoral system. One can have elections on public holidays. One can increase the number of polling booths or provide free transportation to them. And, most potently, one can institute compulsory voting. The Australian experience, for example, suggests that fining people for not voting leads to turnout of around 95%. There are better ways to increase turnout than adopting PR.

Let us turn to a final argument. Many people have suggested that women and minorities receive more representation in the legislature under PR systems than under SMP systems (Lijphart 1991; Amy 2002, ch.5-6; Drutman 2020, 313–16). There are, however, dissenters. Some claim that, European countries with PR have better descriptive representation than those without it, but this difference disappears in the Americas (Stockemer 2008). Congruently, others claim that the effects of PR on descriptive representation only occur in some contexts (Moser and Scheiner 2012). More importantly, though, there are better ways to improve descriptive representation than adopting PR. One can institute quotas, or reserved seats. India, for example, reserves certain districts for candidates from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The result is that people of Scheduled Castes make up 15.5% of the Lok Sabha and are 16.5% of the general population. Those of

Scheduled Tribes make up 8.7% of the chamber and the same percentage of the population. One can achieve almost perfect descriptive representation without transforming the electoral system.

We've just seen several arguments in favor of the claim that PR has good consequences: either in promoting congruence, reducing polarization, improve deliberation, increasing turnout or aiding descriptive representation. I want to highlight two general themes from this survey.[2] First, each of these arguments rely on a disputable causal claim. The effects of PR on at least congruence, polarization, deliberation and turnout are unclear. It would be good to rest the case for PR on more solid empirical evidence. Second, we can often achieve these goals via more straightforward means than manipulating the electoral system. We can increase turnout by compulsory voting. We can get descriptive representation with quotas. The choice argument is especially distinctive in light of these two points. It relies on the most well-established effect of electoral systems—their effect on the number of viable parties. And it's not clear how to increase the number of viable parties other than by manipulating the electoral system. So the choice argument is a crucial addition to the case for proportional representation.

---

[2]This is not an exhaustive survey. For other arguments for PR, see (Wodak 2019; Christiano 1996, 218–42).

What is the status of the choice argument in the existing literature? We can trace that idea that PR improves voter choice at least back to Robert Hare, who suggested that SMP lead to "restricted powers of selection" (Hare 1873, vi). But Hare never spelt out what exactly was objectionable about such a restriction. Ensuing literature continues this lack of detail. Many people suggest that expanding voter choice tells in favor of PR, but they say very little about why (Carey 2017, 85; Wodak 2019, 368; Cunow et al. 2021). The idea is almost invariably underspecified. Writers do sometimes suggest that the issue is that two-party systems mean many voters "are left with no choice they can enthusiastically endorse" (Amy 2002, 93). But that seems like an implausible way to specify the idea. A voter can enthusiastically endorse the party that they vote for while thoroughly detesting government policy. The party they vote for might, after all, lose the election and have no influence on policy. Yet, ultimately, we care about voters' relationship to government policy, not to a losing candidate they happen to vote for. So the idea that we should adopt PR because it expands voter choice has a long history, but it has never been spelt out convincingly.

The aim of this paper is to spell it out convincingly. But, first, we need to make clear what makes democracy valuable.

The Value of Self-Rule

In many countries, key political offices are filled by election and citizens sometimes vote directly on policy. Why are such democratic institutions valuable? Some people think that the answer to this question is purely instrumental. Democratic institutions are valuable because, and only because, they have good causal consequences—perhaps they avert famine, reduce the risk of war, or increase economic growth. Were such institutions to lack such good consequences, they would have no value whatsoever. This idea should, I think, be resisted. It clashes with our considered moral judgments. To see this, imagine you could replace the democratic institutions of your state with government by a benevolent, competent, dictator. You're sure that the dictator will reliably enact better policies than enacted by your democracy. Should you install the dictator in power? I think not. You have weighty moral reasons not to unilaterally eradicate democracy, even if the dictator would ultimately improve everyone's well-being. If so, democratic institutions are more than merely instrumentally valuable.[3]

So what makes democratic institutions intrinsically valuable? Some think: equality. The idea is that democracy is intrinsically valuable, or valuable in itself, solely because it is distinctively egalitarian (Christiano 2008; Kolodny 2014b; Viehoff

[3] For more on this point, see e.g. Kolodny (2023, 295–97) or Lovett (2024, 5–6).

2019). Nowadays, such equality is most commonly conceptualized in relational terms. The idea is that certain relationships are objectionably inegalitarian. Think here of the relationship of master to slave or lord to peasant. These are relationships of subordination or domination. They're objectionable in the sense that we have rights against being subjected to them. Moreover, such relationships seem partly constituted by asymmetries of power. To be subordinated to someone is, in part, to be subjected to their asymmetric power. Democratic institutions are intrinsically valuable, the thought goes, because they equalize an important kind of power: political power. In democracies, after all, everyone gets one vote. And so democratic institutions help preclude objectionably inegalitarian relationships. That, some think, captures the entirety of democracy's intrinsic value.

This view also does not seem satisfactory. The problem is that one can equalize political power by giving nobody any power at all. To see a science fiction version of such a case, imagine that we identified an algorithm that we were sure would spit out instrumentally ideal legislation at every point in time. It identifies the laws the enactment of which would have the best consequences at every point. Should we replace our democratically-elected legislators with such an algorithm? I think that there is a weighty objection to such a replacement. This is not, by hypothesis, an instrumental objection. But it also cannot be an egalitarian objection. Were the algorithm to make all political decisions, none of us would have asymmetric political power over anyone else—since none of us would have any political power

at all. So, if something really is wrong with rule by the algorithm, then the intrinsic value of democratic institutions cannot consist solely in equality.

This legislative algorithm is, of course, fantastical. But our judgement about it is just a version of the more familiar worry about being ruled by a very detailed constitution. Imagine that a centuries-old constitution decides all the important questions of public policy. Something of democratic value is lost in this system. That loss cannot be explained in purely egalitarian terms. Citizens are not, in this system, in a relationship of subordination with the founding fathers—we're not in any kind of social relationship with people who died centuries ago. So equality must not exhaust the intrinsic value of democratic institutions.[4]

What else does the value of democratic institutions consist in? A natural answer is: autonomy. Democracy involves not just a society of equals, but also a society in which citizens rule themselves (Altman and Wellman 2009; Stilz 2019; Wilson 2021; Lovett and Zuehl 2022; Chapman 2022). This is the value picked out when people talk about the import of popular sovereignty, self-determination, or collective self-government. The thought is that it's valuable for there to be a certain kind of causal connection between the preferences of ordinary citizens and government policy. Democracy facilitates such a connection. This thought dates

---

[4] For more on these points, see Lovett and Zuehl (2022). For a complementary discussion of a similar case—replacing actual elections with an algorithm that predicts how people would vote—see Chapman (2022, 215–19).

back to at least Rousseau's *Du Contrat Social*. In Rousseau's hands, the idea was that self-rule disables the objection to state coercion. The picture was that, when the state forces its citizens to obey the laws, then it threatens their freedom. This threat can only be disabled by democracy. By ensuring that the laws are a manifestation of people's will, we can ensure that state coercion just forces people to obey their own will. And, Rousseau thought, being forced to obey one's own will is not freedom-destroying. From this we can draw the idea that democracy uniquely defuses the tension between state coercion and individual freedom.[5]

This is a negative argument in favor of self-rule. It says that self-rule helps us avoid a bad: unfreedom. I myself prefer a more positive ways to conceptualize the value of self-rule. In other work, I've argued that democracy helps citizens achieve a valuable kind of autonomous authorship over their social and political affairs (Lovett and Zuehl 2022; Lovett 2024, 42–61).[6] The thought is that it's valuable to be the autonomous author of one's personal affairs. It is valuable for you to be the one who decides who you marry or where you live or what career to pursue. This gives your authorship over your life, and that seems good in itself. Analogously, it's valuable for citizens to be autonomous authors of the important features of their society: of the nature of the economic system, the extent of

[5] Rousseau, of course, thought that in large states we should have monarchy (Rousseau 1968, Bk.III, Ch.3-8). So he is a source of this pro-democracy argument but wouldn't endorse it exactly. For more recent sources of this kind of negative argument, see (Pettit 2012; Stilz 2019, 107).
[6] For a similar view, see Chapman (2020; 2022, ch.6)

inequality, the degree of prosperity. This gives citizens authorship not just over their own lives, but of the parts of their lives they share with their fellow citizens. And that is intrinsically valuable.

However we conceptualize the value of self-rule, there's a question of how individualistic it is. On more individualistic conception, self-rule is achieved simply by establishing a causal connection between individual intentions and government policy. On the less individualistic conceptions, that causal connection must go via a joint intention. My preference for some policy must make a causal contribution to policy via some joint intentions to bring about that policy.[7] I am neutral between these views in this paper. The choice argument can be mounted on either view—and it can be mounted on both negative and positive conceptions of the value of self-rule. What matters to the argument is that democratic institutions are valuable partly because establishing a causal connection between citizen preferences and government policy augments citizens' autonomy.

How do democratic institutions establish such a causal connection? Let's focus on electoral institutions. Elections mean that who you vote for makes a causal contribution to who gets elected. When you vote for a winning candidate, your vote contributes to their victory. Who wins an election, in turn, often makes a

---

[7] For views which emphasize such joint intentions, see (Stilz 2019; Lovett and Zuehl 2022; Chapman 2022).

causal contribution to government policy. In parliamentary systems, it does so mainly when the candidate you vote for contributes to the formation of government. The government then determines policy. In legislative elections in presidential systems, it does so when the candidate you vote for is in the legislative majority on specific issues. Such majorities affect policy. In either system, democratic institutions facilitate a causal connection between citizen preferences and government policy.[8] And so they facilitate the value of self-rule.

Crucially, the connection between citizen preferences and government policy has to be causal. It isn't enough that policy simply matches what citizens want or would want were they fully informed.[9] After all, the output of a legislative algorithm might match citizens (fully informed) preferences. More specifically, this causal connection is one of *causal contribution*. One can make can make a causal contribution to a policy without making a difference to whether that policy was enacted. Think here of a soldier landing in Normandy in June 1944. Their fighting contributed to the allied victory in WWII. But it didn't make a difference to whether the allies won—the allies would still have won without any individual soldier. Not all causation involves making a difference.[10] Democratic institutions

---

[8] Sometimes, it might also be more directly valuable to have influence on who occupies office—for example, when it has symbolic significance. So one can be self-ruling with respect to outcomes other than policy.

[9] For more on this point, see Kolodny (2014a, 206–8).

[10] For more on contributory causation, see Goldman (1999).

don't generally enable each citizen to make a difference to what policies get enacted. But they enable citizens to make a causal contribution to those policies.

I want to address a worry about this view. In large democracies individual voters make a small causal contribution to government policy. When millions of people vote for some candidate, one's own vote for them makes a tiny contribution to their election—and so to their policies being enacted. The worry is that such a small contribution to policy translates into little authorship of policy, and such miniscule authorship is not very valuable. To address this worry, note that although each person's individual contribution to policy gets smaller in larger democracies, those policies get more important. The policies of larger democracies affect millions of people. The key further point is that it is more valuable to be author of more important outcomes. Better to author, say, victory in WWII than victory in a street brawl. So, even if one only makes a small contribution to policy in a large democracy, that contribution can be very valuable. The attenuation of one's causal influence in large democracies is offset by the greater import of what one influences.[11]

Let me clarify two final points about self-rule. First, on the view I've just outlined, people who vote for election candidates who lose enjoy less of the value of self-

---

[11] I spell this out in more detail in Lovett (2024, 50–52).

rule that do those who vote for winners.[12] This is because people who vote for losers make less of a causal contribution to policy than people who vote for winners. This implication seems to me plausible. It helps explain why those who always lose elections—persistent minorities—are at a democratic disadvantage compared to those who always win. The former enjoy less self-rule than the latter. And it doesn't mean that election losers enjoy none of the value of self-rule. Their preferences often affect the broad contours of policy, and they often impact specific policies through means like protests and petitions. Losers simply enjoy a little less of the value of self-rule than winners.[13]

Finally, I don't believe that self-rule is the only democratic value. Both instrumental and egalitarian considerations play a key part in explaining the appeal of democratic institutions. Perhaps other things, such as the expressive and communicative functions of elections, also contribute to the value of democratic institutions.[14] I am a pluralistic about what makes democracy valuable. The important point is not that self-rule is the only democratic value, but that it is an important democratic value. Democratic institutions are valuable, in part, to the extent that they facilitate the autonomy of their citizens. This claim is the background normative setting of the choice argument.

---

[12] This is contrary to the view in, say (Stilz 2019, ch.4; Chapman 2022).

[13] For more on this point, see Lovett and Zuehl (2022, 487–90). This matters solely to our discussion of two-round systems in section 9.

[14] For discussions of the expressive significance of voting, see (Christiano 2008; Chapman 2022).

Autonomy and Option-Sets

On any way of understanding the value of self-rule, it is important that voter's vote choice is autonomous. Imagine, for example, that voters are forced to vote for a certain candidate. If they don't, that candidate will inflict violence on them. Think of Liberia's presidential election in 1997. Charles Taylor won with 75% of the vote, largely because he threatened to plunge Liberia back into civil war if he lost.[15] Such coercion makes citizens' vote choices non-autonomous. The laws Taylor enacted were not really manifestations of people's will. People just wanted to avoid war. So being forced to obey such laws is, by the lights of the negative conception of self-rule, freedom-destroying. And, equally, ordinary citizens do not, through such laws, achieve any autonomous authorship of their affairs. Thus, on either way of understanding the value of self-rule, the vote choice must be autonomous to achieve this value. So: what makes a vote choice autonomous?

In this section, I explore one factor that affects the autonomy of any choice: the nature of one's option-set. My central claim is that a choice is more autonomous, all else equal, when the chooser has more diverse acceptable options. I'll start by making two preliminary points. First, autonomy is scalar rather than binary. We don't just want to know whether a choice is or isn't autonomous. We're interested,

[15] He ran on the election slogan "He killed my ma; he killed my pa; but I'll still vote for him." (Meredith 2011, 568).

more fundamentally, in the degree to which a choice is autonomous. The nature of one's option isn't the only thing that affects this degree, but it is a key factor. Second, we can understand your option-set at a time as the set of things one is able to do at that time. Imagine that you're deciding whether to apply to law jobs, banking jobs, or mechanic jobs. These are all actions one can do, and so count as your options. Becoming an NBA basketball player might not be something you can do (you're too short) and so isn't within your option-set. Generally, when voting, your options are to vote for different candidates running for office. My claim is that when your *acceptable* options are not very *diverse*, you cannot make a very autonomous choice.

Let's explain the ideas central to this claim. The first idea is that the diversity of your options affects the autonomy of a choice. The claim heralds from Joseph Raz: he stresses that, for a choice to be autonomous, one must have "a variety of options available" (Raz 1986, 375). To illustrate the point, imagine that you're making a career choice. The government says you can only be a lawyer. You can be any kind of lawyer you want—a family lawyer, a corporate lawyer, a criminal defense lawyer—but you must practice law. Here your options are not sufficiently diverse for you to have a very autonomous choice. Two things contribute to the diversity of one's options. First, their dissimilarity: a choice between being a lawyer and being a mechanic is more diverse than the choice between being a corporate lawyer and being a family lawyer. Second, their number. The more (dissimilar)

options one has, the more diverse is one's option-set. Suppose you are choosing between being a mechanic, a family lawyer or a corporate lawyer. This is a more diverse option-set than that in the choice between being a corporate lawyer or a mechanic. Adding options adds diversity.

The second idea is that of acceptability. As Raz, again, stresses, to be autonomous one must have acceptable options to choose between. Options that fall below a minimum prudential or moral bar are unacceptable. Raz motivates this thought with judgments about cases. He asks us to imagine a woman hounded by a carnivorous beast that aims to eat her. As Raz says, "if she ever puts a foot wrong, she will be devoured by the beast" (1986, 374). The hounded woman, as Raz says, is not autonomous. Most of her options have an unacceptably deleterious impact on her well-being. Autonomous choice requires one's options are prudentially acceptable. It also requires that one's options are morally acceptable. As Raz says, "imagine a person who can pursue an occupation of his choice but at the price of committing murder for each option he rejects" (1986, 379). This person is offered the choice of becoming an electrician or murdering someone, then a choice between becoming a dentist or murdering someone, and so on. This person's choice of career isn't autonomous. They have decisive moral reasons against accepting all but the first career that they're offered.

How exactly do these features of one's option set affect the autonomy of one's choice? One might think of this wholly in terms of thresholds. On this view, when the diversity of one's acceptable options falls below a certain threshold, one's choices are not at all autonomous. When your option-set reaches the threshold, your choices are autonomous, but having more diverse acceptable options above this threshold does not add to one's autonomy. This view seems unappealing. The issue is deciding exactly where the threshold lies. Consider an option-set that falls just below the threshold. On this view, a choice from such options is wholly non-autonomous. Now add a just barely acceptable option to this option-set that is the tiniest bit different from an option already in it. This will push the option-set to the threshold, allowing one's choice to be autonomous. And, on the threshold view, adding more diverse options to the option-set won't augment the chooser's autonomy in the slightest. I don't know where one could put the threshold such that this would be plausible. This threshold view commits us the momentous significance of very tiny changes in the nature of one's option-set. Yet tiny changes seem to lack such a momentous significance.

I prefer, then, a scalar view of how features of an option-set and autonomy interact. On this view, the more diverse are one's acceptable options, the more

autonomous is one's choice.[16] This connection between breadth of acceptable options and the autonomy of choices likely isn't linear. The difference between having one adequate option and having two adequate options is more substantial than is the difference between having seven adequate options and having eight adequate options. Still, on this view, when people have more diverse acceptable options, ceteris paribus, their choices are more autonomous. For the choice argument, I will merely assume that the difference between having two options and having seven or eight makes a substantial difference to one's autonomy.

Let's clarify two features of this view. First, we're often unsure what outcomes our actions will yield. To evaluate one's options under conditions of uncertainty, we associate each option—each action we can perform—with a lottery. This is the possible consequences of the action weighted by their probability. Consider career choices. When one chooses to go to medical school, one is choosing a lottery over future medical careers: there's some probability one becomes a successful surgeon, a psychiatrist, a gastroenterologist and so on. There's some probability one drops out. The lottery one picks is the set of possible consequences of one's choice, together with the probability of it having those consequences. If this lottery is terrible, the associated option is unacceptable. If

[16] Would Raz endorse a scalar or threshold view? I suspect the former, but a reviewer suggests the latter. The key point is that my goal here is not Raz interpretation. It is to spell out the most plausible view on how the features of one's option-set affect the autonomy of one's choices.

one has many different options, but they are all associated with the same lottery, then you do not have a very diverse option-set. That is just like just having only one option. The more dissimilar are different lotteries the more diverse is the choice between the associated options.

Second, should we interpret these criteria—acceptability and diversity—objectively or subjectively? Take acceptability. An objective view says that the objective prudential and moral value of an option determines whether it is unacceptable. A subjective view says that how the chooser views the option determines whether it is unacceptably. In favor of a subjective view, consider a war leader who revels in the slaughter of their enemies. Their bellicosity has left them with only violent, morally reprehensible, options. Objectively speaking, the war leader has only morally unacceptable options. But they see their violent options as perfectly acceptable. Such a person, I think, can make autonomous choices. That is only compatible with a subjective account of adequacy.

Nonetheless, the subjective view does have some surprising consequences. Suppose you prevent the war leader from killing someone. Have you really restricted their autonomy? One might doubt this. But I suspect that such doubts are misplaced. Crucial here is that sometimes it is perfectly permissible to restrict people's autonomy. In this case, you restrict the war leaders' autonomy, but you do not thereby wrong them—because your restriction protects the rights of their

victims.[17] So I'm inclined to endorse a subjectivist view. Unacceptable options are those the chooser views as unacceptable. A similar point goes for diversity. What matters to diversity is not how objectively dissimilar one's options are, but rather how dissimilar one believes one's options to be. This choice-point affects how we understand the choice argument (see fn.18). But one can mount the argument on either objectivist or subjectivists views of these criteria.

In sum, the more diverse one's acceptable voting options, the more autonomous is one's vote choice. This completes the normative premises required to give the choice argument.

The Choice Argument

The choice argument is based on a critical empirical premise. I've said that there's a lot we don't know about the effects of electoral systems. We don't know for sure how they affect policy congruence, polarization, deliberation, turnout or descriptive representation. But we know how they affect the party system. SMP leads to fewer viable candidates at the district-level than does PR. That means that, in each district, SMP leads to fewer candidates who have any chance of winning an election than does PR. To be clear, the claim here is not that SMP leads to

---

[17] For a parallel political case, consider very committed neo-Nazis in contemporary Germany. The subjectivist view implies that Germany banning neo-Nazi parties restricts the autonomy of their political choices. But that seems to me plausibly, partly because it doesn't guarantee that banning such parties is wrong.

fewer parties at the national level or in the legislature than does PR. The claim is only that it leads to fewer viable candidates in each electoral district. And the claim is not that SMP deterministically guarantees fewer candidates. It is that, as a probabilistic matter, PR tends to lead to more candidates than does SMP.

The empirical evidence for the effect's existence comes from looking at district-level electoral returns. Chhibber and Kollman (2004, 40), for example, study district-level returns in India, the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. They show that in these SMP systems, the effective number of parties in each district is on average 2.08. Singer (2013) looks at district-level data from all twenty-two SMP systems running elections between 1994 and 2008. He finds that, in this sample, the effective number of parties in each district was on average 2.2. The top two parties in such systems win 92 or 93 percent of the vote in a district. PR systems like the Netherlands and Israel have a much higher effective number of parties in their (nationwide) districts. In the last election in the Netherlands it was well over eight and in Israel well over six. Probably, the mechanism behind this effect is strategic voting (Cox 1997). Many voters are disinclined to vote for third-parties in SMP elections, because when one does so one's vote has very little chance of deciding an election. But, whatever the mechanism, there are fewer viable candidates at the district-level under SMP than under PR.

We can now connect this claim to the value of self-rule. The key idea is that when voters are faced with fewer viable candidates in the ballot booth, the diversity of their acceptable options is diminished. Partly, this is because voters simply have fewer options on their ballot paper, and under most systems voters cannot vote for candidates not on their ballot paper. But suppose voters have a bunch of "no-hopers" on their ballot papers—candidates they know won't win. Or suppose the electoral system permits write-in candidates, as in parts of the US. Still, that doesn't much enrich the diversity of voter's options. This is for two reasons. First, voting for a no-hopers is not usually a genuinely distinct option from abstaining. That is because these candidates are sure to lose however you vote. So the lottery associated with voting for them is just the probability of victory for the frontrunner and the probability of victory for the second-place candidate, if you didn't vote. The same lottery is associated with abstaining. In SMP, third- and fourth- and fifth-parties are typically no-hopers. So their presence on the ballot paper doesn't make voters' option-sets more diverse.

Second, often voting for a no-hoper (and abstaining) will be an unacceptable option. On the one hand, that is because if you vote for a no-hoper, you can be sure that your vote will have no causal influence on policy. So such a vote forfeits any achievement of the value of self-rule. This, I've claimed, is a critical democratic value. So forfeiting it is prudentially unacceptable. Forfeiture gives up on a substantial domain of autonomy. On the other hand, when you vote for a no-

hoper, you make it more likely that your dispreferred frontrunner will win. But often voters see a big moral difference between the two frontrunners. They think that the victory of one of the candidates would have terrible consequences. Under these circumstance, it's often morally impermissible to vote for a no-hoper (or abstain). So, under SMP, voting for a third-party is often an inadequate option.[18]

What, then, do voters option-sets usually look like under SMP? At most, voters have three distinct acceptable options under SMP: voting for each of the two frontrunners in their district or voting for any of the no-hopers (or, equivalently, abstaining). If voting for a no-hoper is prudentially unacceptable to them—on the grounds that it forfeits their enjoyment of self-rule—then they'll have at most two adequate options: the choice between the two frontrunners. Unfortunately, one of these options is often morally unacceptable. Consider, for instance, the situation of a typical Democratic voter in the 2024 U.S. presidential election. From their perspective, Donald Trump was a threat to democracy. Voting for him was morally unacceptable. Under these conditions, voters have at most one acceptable option in the ballot booth. Thus, under SMP voters do not have very diverse adequate options. Their set of acceptable options is so constrained than they

[18] Here the decision between subjectivist or objectivist construal of acceptability and diversity matters to the formulation of the choice argument. On the subjectivist construal, the argument relies on claims about voter perceptions. On the objectivist construal, it relies on claims about objective acceptability and dissimilarity.

simply cannot make very autonomous vote choices. So they cannot enjoy much of the value of self-rule.

Under PR, voters have a much wider range of choices. Consider the 2023 Dutch elections. In these elections, fifteen parties won seats and so each voter had at least fifteen options. PVV won 23.5% of the vote, GL and VVD both won about 15% of the vote, NSC won 13% of the vote and many parties won single digits. These parties will push policy in substantively different directions if they get more legislative representation. So a vote for each party is associated with quite different lotteries. Additionally, many of these parties have a decent chance of forming government. So one's vote for many parties might contribute to policy. And such a vote isn't guaranteed to make some terrible candidate more likely to win office. So, plausibly, voting for many of these parties is an acceptable option. The point generalizes to other PR systems. In Israel, Germany, and New Zealand, for example, voters usually have many acceptable options to choose between at election time. So, under PR, voters can make a decently autonomous choice in the ballot booth. They can enjoy the value of self-rule to a substantial degree.

We're now in a position to state the choice argument very explicitly. The first premise is normative: the degree to which voters enjoy the value of self-rule depends on the diversity of their acceptable options at election time. The second premise is empirical: there tend to be many more viable candidates at the district-

level under PR than under SMP. I've argued that that means that, under PR, voters have more diverse acceptable options at election time than they do under SMP. So, PR better engenders the achievement of the value of self-rule. That completes the choice argument. We should adopt PR over SMP because PR predictably enriches voters' option-sets, which helps realize a core democratic value.

Let me make one final point about this argument. I think this argument provides a weighty *prima facie* consideration in favor of PR. But if PR has terrible consequences, that would outweigh this consideration. Fortunately, the empirical evidence seems to suggest that PR has no worse consequences than SMP (Lijphart 1999, ch.15; Persson and Tabellini 2003; Knutsen 2011). So I suspect that the choice argument, if sound, does imply that we ought, all-things-considered, to adopt PR. Thus let us turn to whether the argument really is sound. In the next three sections, we'll address objections to it.

Party Positioning

I've claimed that, in SMP, voting for a third-party is usually causally inefficacious. It won't make a difference to outcomes people care about, because third-parties are usually sure to lose. Thus, voting for a third-party is not an acceptable option and voting for different third-parties aren't genuinely distinct options. One might dispute this. Perhaps voting for a third-party under SMP will change the

positioning of one of the leading parties. Consider, for example, people who voted for Ralph Nader in the 2000 U.S. presidential election. Perhaps their voting for Nader pulled the Democratic party leftwards in subsequent elections. Democratic politicians might have been concerned about losing future elections unless they won left-wing support, and so might have changed their policies to court leftist voters. So perhaps voting for Nader was causally effectual. More generally, maybe voting for far-left (right) parties pulls center-left (right) parties further to the extremes. So such votes do have an effect on policy in the future, and are acceptable (and distinct) options after all.

The main reply to this suggestion is that such effects on party positioning usually occur far in the future and are always highly uncertain. On the former point, parties under SMP elections usually only change their positions gradually. And they usually try to enact the platforms they ran on if they win office. Thus, these effects should be expected to eventuate at best in the next electoral cycle: several years in the future. Yet it is commonplace to discount future benefits—to think they are less valuable than present ones.[19] On the second point, it is always very unclear whether votes for an extreme competitor to a centrist party will change the positioning of that party. This depends on the internal dynamics of the centrist party, on whether its leaders think moving to the extreme will win them more

---

[19] For discussion, see Parfit (1984, 313–15).

extremist votes than lose them centrist votes, on how much they care about simply winning future elections. All that is usually inscrutable *ex ante*. And so usually one simply shouldn't be highly confident that voting for a third-party will have any effect on the positioning of the frontrunners.

This greatly weakens the hope that such effects might rescue the adequacy and distinctness of voting for a third-party. I argued that voting for a third party under SMP was an inadequate option because, usually, it involves forfeiting the chance of causally influence government policy and, often, it increases the chance a morally unacceptable candidate will win. Having a low chance of influencing government policy long in the future will not get one much of the value of self-rule. So this will still be inadequate on prudential grounds for many voters. Additionally, usually a low chance of influencing far in the future is not of sufficient value to justify increasing the chances that a morally unacceptable candidate wins election tomorrow. And, anyway, different lotteries that contain only different tiny chances of affecting policy long in the future are not very dissimilar lotteries. So the effect of voting behavior on party positioning does relatively little to weaken the choice argument.

Coalitions

Let's look at a different concern about the choice argument. In multiparty systems, parties have to form coalitions to govern. One might worry that the dynamics of coalition formation undermine voter's knowledge. The concern is that, to make an autonomous choice, one needs to know about one's options (Lovett 2020). If German voters have no idea what the effects of voting for, say, the CDU, will be, they cannot make autonomous voting decisions. But coalitional dynamics can reduce voter knowledge in two ways (Leydet 2021). For one thing, voters might not know, before they vote, who parties are likely to form coalitions with. For another, voters might not know which parties are responsible for past policies. So PR might contribute to self-rule by expanding voters' options but detract from it by reducing their knowledge about those options.

My response to this concern has two prongs. First, these worries can both be mitigated. On the one hand, parties can inform voters about who they intend to form coalitions with (Leydet 2021, 304–6). In fact, past histories of coalition formation, and the ideological distance between parties, already tell voters a lot about what coalitions each party would join. But, going beyond this, parties can be encouraged, by informal norms or legal requirements, to publicize their coalitional intentions before the election. Such publicization can consist of simple pre-electoral announcements. At the start of Danish campaigns, for example,

parties announce whether they support or oppose the incumbent Prime Minister. This tells voters a lot about what coalitions they would join. Or publicization can consist of more formal pre-electoral agreements between parties. Both help dispel voter ignorance about what the coalitions parties would join if they win sufficient legislative representation.

On the other hand, voters can be informed about which party is responsible for what policies (Leydet 2021, 306–8). Public coalition agreements are one way to do this. Before joining a coalition government, parties should publicly discuss a negotiated coalition agreement, making clear what parts they have pushed for. At the same time, when parties are in government they should be permitted to publicly express dissent on government policies. This identifies the relevant policy with one (subset of) coalition partners. And when a party supports a minority government on a specific package of policies, it should do so on the basis of a formal, public, agreement. Requiring such things, either with informal norms or laws, helps prevent the dynamics of coalition government from muddying who is responsible for what policies.

The second prong of my response to the worry about coalitional dynamics is that similar issues arise without coalitions. It is often unclear exactly what a candidate or party will do in office even in a two-party system. Consider, here, U.S. presidential elections. Candidates make hundreds of policy commitments on the

campaign trail. They can usually only push a handful of them through Congress. Which ones they decide to push for is decided behind closed doors—by bargaining among coalition partners and by their own personal preferences. This is no more transparent than coalition negotiations. At the same time, voters often do find responsibility attributions even in two-party systems tricky. Healy and Malhotra (2009), for example, argue that U.S. voters punish incumbents for natural disasters regardless of their pre-disaster policies.[20] Responsibility is often obscure even under SMP. So two-party systems don't wholly escape the problems that afflict multiparty systems. These are general problems for electoral institutions, not purely ones for PR.

In light of these points, I don't think one can confidently conclude that properly designed systems of proportional representation leave citizens much worse off, in epistemic terms, than they are under SMP. The lesson is that such systems of proportional representation should be properly designed—the worries raised by coalitional dynamics should be mitigated in the ways described above—not that we should reject PR.

---

[20] For similar findings, see Achen and Bartels' (2016, 128–46) discussion of U.S. voter reactions to floods and droughts. For corroborating evidence from Latin American presential elections, see (Campello and Zucco Jr 2015). Some striking findings in this literature have been disputed (see e.g. Fowler and Hall 2018) but the more systematic ones just mentioned seem to me to remain convincing.

Fragmentation

A different concern hinges on fragmentation. One might worry that PR leads to too many parties. The best way to articulate this concern is, again, in epistemic terms. If one has fifteen parties to choose between but no idea what their different policies are or how the character of their leaders differs, then one is not able to make a very autonomous choice in the ballot booth. The worry is that proportional representation, by proliferating parties, reduces voters' knowledge about their options in the ballot booth. The less voters know about these options, the less autonomous is their vote choice. So, by reducing voter knowledge, proportional representation reduces voter autonomy.

To respond to this, we have to say a little more about what people need to know about their options to make an autonomous choice. Proportional representation surely reduces what voters know on average about the parties (Cunow et al. 2021). When one has more parties, unless citizens invest much more time in political learning, they will no less about each party. So the objection is strongest if we assume that when people know less about their options on average, they can make less autonomous choices. But this average view is implausible. To see that compare two choice situations. In the first, you're deciding whether to be a corporate lawyer or a surgeon. In the second, you're deciding whether to be a corporate lawyer, a prosecutor, a surgeon or a gastroenterologists. In the latter

case you'll have less knowledge on average about your options (since you'll have less time to learn about each of them). But that doesn't reduce your autonomy. Autonomy is not, then, reduced by a reduction in average knowledge.

The more plausible view is that how much knowledge one has about one's options consists in one's total knowledge about all of them. There are several ways one might evaluate voters' total knowledge about their options. One might look at how much they know about each party—say, its policies, record and competency—and sum up that knowledge. Or one might look at how much they know about the differences between every pair of parties and sum up that knowledge. The details don't really matter for our discussion. What matters is that voters' total knowledge about their options is not going to reduce merely when their options expand, since voter's total knowledge is not equivalent to how much voters know on average about their options.

Might proportional representation, nonetheless, reduce voter total knowledge about their options? I doubt it. PR correlates correlate with higher rather than lower levels of political knowledge (Arnold 2008, 46-47, 57). Some scholars have argued that this connection is causal (Amy 2002, ch.3). The thought is that candidates in SMP elections benefit more from unclarity about their policy positions. This is because, when they are competing against just one other candidate, they win by alienating as few voters as possible. Being clear about their

policy positions risks alienating voters. In contrast, in PR elections candidates win by finding a constituency which favors them intensely, over multiple alternatives. When a party makes its policies clear, voters who favor those policies intensely can more easily find that party, increasing its votes. So campaigns in PR should be more informative than in SMP. And, thus, we should expect PR to generate more total political knowledge among voters than does SMP.[21] The epistemic worries about fragmentation seem uncompelling.

Let me mention a second worry about fragmentation. Some people think that excessive fragmentation is very instrumentally bad. If there are many parties in the legislature this can make governments in parliamentary systems very unstable. That, they worry, leads to less predictable policies, more short-termist politicians, and—in extremis—democratic collapse. If true, this motivates implementing institutions that contain the proliferation of parties within PR. Standardly, this is done with high legal thresholds on legislative representation or relatively low district magnitudes.[22] The important point is that such institutions are entirely compatible with adopting proportional representation. Instrumental

[21] Cunow et al. (2021) provides some interesting conflicting evidence. But their experimental design cannot capture the campaign effects discussed in the text.

[22] More radically, one can adopt semi-parliamentarism (Ganghof 2021). All these institutions may also discourage unserious candidates running for office, and thus distracting voters.

considerations can mold the form of proportional representation we adopt, without weakening the case for proportional representation in general.[23]

So we have good replies to the objections to the choice arguments grounded in concerns about party positioning, coalitional dynamics, and fragmentation. In the next section, I look at whether the choice argument really tells in favor of PR uniquely, as opposed to some broader class of electoral systems.

Two-Round Systems

PR gives voters more diverse adequate options than does SMP. But those are not the only institutional options. What about two-round systems? These systems involve two rounds of voting. In the first round, all but the top two candidates are knocked out. The second round is then a majority-wins contest between these two candidates. This system governs French presidential elections and most presidential elections across Latin America. Such systems often have many viable candidates in the first round of voting. Singer (2013) finds that the average effective number of parties in the first round of two-round systems is 3.8. So one might think that, in two-round systems, voters have a diverse range of adequate

[23] One might have other worries. Perhaps, for example, fragmentation leads to people having too many choices, and so reduces their motivation to choose (Iyengar and Lepper 2000). But the existence of the effect is, in general, controversial (Scheibehenne, Greifeneder, and Todd 2010). And, since there is not lower turnout in PR, it seems unlikely that the effect occurs in electoral contexts.

options in round one. Thus, one might think, voters are able to enjoy self-rule via their vote in this round. Their vote in the first round is the causal channel by which they are autonomous authors of government policy. So perhaps the choice argument is an argument not for PR, but rather against SMP. We can, one might think, gives voters sufficient options by adopting a two-round system.

This is incorrect. The problem is that, to enjoy the value of self-rule, there must be a causal connection between one's vote and government policy. Yet most voters in the first round of two-ballot systems vote for a party that ultimately loses. Consider the 2022 French presidential elections. Only 27.9% of French voters voted for Macron—the ultimate winner—in the first round. Most voters voted for second- and third- and fourth-parties. These votes don't contribute to the election of the ultimate winner and so don't contribute to the policies that the winner enacts. Thus, the first round of vote is not a causal channel through which most voters get their will manifest in government policy. Voters may have made an autonomous choice in the first round. But that choice does not help many of them to achieve the value of self-rule.

Meanwhile, in the second round of voting, voters face a very constrained choice situation. In 2022, French voters chose between Macron and Le Pen. Each of the 58.5% of voters who voted for Macron contributed to his eventual victory. But probably, for most of them, Macron was their only adequate option. So this was

not a very autonomous choice. The point generalizes for all two-round systems. The second-round vote is not autonomous for the same reason than most votes under SMP are not autonomous: voters have very few adequate options. And the first-round vote doesn't enable most voters to achieve the value of self-rule, because most voters vote for candidates who lose. So the choice argument is not just an argument for PR over SMP. It is an argument for PR over both SMP and two-round systems.

These points also shed more light on the comparison between PR and SMP. In the prior sections, I left aside an important objection to the choice argument. Perhaps open nomination procedures rescue self-rule under SMP. U.S. parties, for example, nominate their candidates through primaries. These primaries often have many candidates. The choice between such diverse primary candidates is often an autonomous choice. So, one might think, U.S. voters enjoy self-rule via this choice. This thought is incorrect. Leaving aside the low turnout in primaries—fewer than 20% of U.S. voters participate—most voters in U.S. primaries vote for a candidate who ultimately loses the election. In the 2016, for example, fewer than 5% of Americans voted for Trump in the Republican primary. Voting for Ted Cruz of Chris Christie or Bernie Sanders in the 2016 primary campaign did not contribute to Trump ultimately getting elected, and thus didn't contribute to his policies. And so most voters in U.S. primaries do not, via their primary vote, enjoy

the value of self-rule. Open nomination procedures don't rescue SMP from the choice argument.

Let us discuss one final competitor to PR—the Alternative Vote (AV). This system is instantiated, uniquely at the national level, by elections to the Australian House of Representatives. AV retains single-member districts, but voters vote by ranking the candidates. If a voter's most-preferred candidate has the least first-preference ballots, the candidate gets eliminated and each of their votes gets redistributed to that voter's second-preference candidate. This continues until we have a winner. On the face of it, this system, gives voters many options. Voters can fill in their ballot with any of many different rankings. But, in practice, the Australian case suggests that AV does not provide voters with very diverse options. At the national level, the effective number of parties in Australian elections level is around 3 (less than in the U.K.), and in most district the vast majority of voters vote for one of the two major parties (McAllister and Makkai 2018). So there is rarely much chance of a fourth- or fifth-party winning election. And so the lotteries associated with giving a first-preference to a fourth- or fifth-party are very similar to those associated with giving a first-preference to one of the major parties. Thus voters' many options in Australia are not very diverse. Australia might, of course, be an aberrant case. But it provides us with reason to doubt that AV furnishes voters with as much choice as does PR.

If that is correct, then the choice argument is not just an argument against SMP, but an argument *for* PR—relative to all other widely-used electoral systems.

Conclusion

Long ago, J.S. Mill suggested that proportional representation had "transcendent advantages" (1861, Ch.XII). My goal in this paper has been to spell out one of these advantages: that it expands voters' options. To understand this advantage we start with the idea that democratic institutions are valuable, in part, because they conduce to citizen's autonomy. This makes a normative premise plausible: the more diverse are voters' acceptable options in the ballot booth, the better for citizen autonomy. We then introduce an empirical premise: proportional representation expands the number of viable candidates in district-level elections. Those two premises get us to the conclusion of the choice argument. We should adopt proportional representation to augment citizens autonomy by expanding their options in the ballot booth.

References

Achen, Christopher H., and Larry M. Bartels. 2016. *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*. Princeton, N. J: Princeton University Press.

Altman, Andrew, and Christopher Heath Wellman. 2009. *A Liberal Theory of International Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Amy, Douglas J. 2002. *Real Choices / New Voices: How Proportional Representation Elections Could Revitalize American Democracy, Second Edition*. Columbia University Press.

Arnold, Jason Ross. 2008. "Public Ignorance and the Quality of Democracy." PhD Thesis, University of Minnesota.

Blais, André, and Kees Aarts. 2006. "Electoral Systems and Turnout." *Acta Politica* 41 (2): 180–96. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.ap.5500148.

Blais, André, and Marc André Bodet. 2006. "Does Proportional Representation Foster Closer Congruence Between Citizens and Policy Makers?" *Comparative Political Studies* 39 (10): 1243–62. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414005284374.

Campello, Daniela, and Cesar Zucco Jr. 2015. "Merit or Luck? International Determinants of Presidential Performance in Latin America." *The Journal of Politics* 78 (2). https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2182187.

Carey, John M. 2017. "Electoral System Design in New Democracies." In *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems*, edited by Erik S. Herron, Robert J. Pekkanen, and Matthew S. Shugart, 85–108. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190258658.013.6.

Chapman, Emilee Booth. 2020. "Shared Agency and the Ethics of Democracy." *The Georgetown Journal of Law & Public Policy* 18 (S).

———. 2022. *Election Day: How We Vote and What It Means for Democracy*. Princeton Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Chhibber, Pradeep, and Ken Kollman. 2004. *The Formation of National Party Systems: Federalism and Party Competition in Canada, Great Britain, India, and the United States*. Princeton University Press.

Christiano, Thomas. 1996. *The Rule of the Many: Fundamental Issues in Democratic Theory*. Boulder: Westview Press.

———. 2008. *The Constitution of Equality: Democratic Authority and Its Limits*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Cox, Gary W. 1997. *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems*. Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139174954.

Cunow, Saul, Scott Desposato, Andrew Janusz, and Cameron Sells. 2021. "Less Is More: The Paradox of Choice in Voting Behavior." *Electoral Studies* 69 (February):102230. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2020.102230.

Drutman, Lee. 2020. *Breaking the Two-Party Doom Loop: The Case for Multiparty Democracy in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Duverger, Maurice. 1954. *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*. 2nd ed. London: Law Book Co of Australasia.

Ferland, Benjamin. 2021. "Electoral Systems and Policy Congruence." *Political Studies* 69 (2): 344–65. https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321719895428.

Fowler, Anthony, and Andrew B. Hall. 2018. "Do Shark Attacks Influence Presidential Elections? Reassessing a Prominent Finding on Voter Competence." *The Journal of Politics* 80 (4): 1423–37. https://doi.org/10.1086/699244.

Ganghof, Steffen. 2021. *Beyond Presidentialism and Parliamentarism: Democratic Design and the Separation of Powers*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Gidron, Noam, James Adams, and Will Horne. 2020. *American Affective Polarization in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge University Press.

Golder, Matt, and Jacek Stramski. 2010. "Ideological Congruence and Electoral Institutions." *American Journal of Political Science* 54 (1): 90–106.

Goldman, Alvin I. 1999. "Why Citizens Should Vote: A Causal Responsibility Approach." *Social Philosophy and Policy* 16 (2): 201–17.

Hare, Thomas. 1873. *The Election of Representatives, Parliamentary and Municipal: A Treatise*. Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer.

Healy, Andrew, and Neil Malhotra. 2009. "Myopic Voters and Natural Disaster Policy." *American Political Science Review* 103 (3): 387–406. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055409990104.

Huber, John D., and G. Bingham Powell. 1994. "Congruence Between Citizens and Policymakers in Two Visions of Liberal Democracy." *World Politics* 46 (3): 291–326. https://doi.org/10.2307/2950684.

Iyengar, S. S., and M. R. Lepper. 2000. "When Choice Is Demotivating: Can One Desire Too Much of a Good Thing?" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79 (6): 995–1006. https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.79.6.995.

Knutsen, Carl Henrik. 2011. "Which Democracies Prosper? Electoral Rules, Form of Government and Economic Growth." *Electoral Studies*, Special Symposium: Electoral Democracy in the European Union, 30 (1): 83–90. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2010.09.006.

Kolodny, Niko. 2014a. "Rule Over None I: What Justifies Democracy?" *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 42 (3): 195–229. https://doi.org/10.1111/papa.12035.

———. 2014b. "Rule Over None II: Social Equality and the Justification of Democracy." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 42 (4): 287–336.
———. 2023. *The Pecking Order: Social Hierarchy as a Philosophical Problem*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
Leydet, Dominique. 2021. "Ideological Diversity, Intelligibility and Electoral Design: A Deliberative Perspective." *Representation: Journal of Representative Democracy* 57 (3): 297–312.
Lijphart, Arend. 1991. "Constitutional Choices for New Democracies." *Journal of Democracy* 2 (1): 72–84.
———. 1999. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
Lovett, Adam. 2020. "Democratic Autonomy and the Shortcomings of Citizens." *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 18 (4): 363–86.
———. 2024. *Democratic Failures and the Ethics of Democracy*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
Lovett, Adam, and Jake Zuehl. 2022. "The Possibility of Democratic Autonomy." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 5 (4): 467–98.
Macleod, Colin. 2017. "Democratic Deliberation and Electoral Reform." In *Should We Change How We Vote?: Evaluating Canada's Electoral System*, edited by Andrew Potter, Daniel Weinstock, and Peter Loewen, 74–85. Montréal Kingston London Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press.
McAllister, Ian, and Toni Makkai. 2018. "Electoral Systems in Context: Australia." In *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems*, edited by Erik S. Herron, Robert J. Pekkanen, and Matthew S. Shugart, 0. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190258658.013.31.
McCoy, Jennifer, and Murat Somer. 2019. "Polarizing Polities: A Global Threat to Democracy." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 681 (1).
Meredith, Martin. 2011. *The State of Africa: A History of the Continent Since Independence*. London: Simon & Schuster.
Mill, John Stuart. 1861. *Considerations on Representative Government*. Cambridge Library Collection - British and Irish History, 19th Century. United Kingdom: Parker, Son and Bourn. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511783128.
Moser, Robert G., and Ethan Scheiner. 2012. *Electoral Systems and Political Context: How the Effects of Rules Vary Across New and Established Democracies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Parfit, Derek. 1984. *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Persson, Torsten, and Guido Tabellini. 2003. *The Economic Effects of Constitutions*. MIT Press.

Pettit, Philip. 2012. *On The People's Terms*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Powell, G. 2000. *Elections as Instruments of Democracy: Majoritarian and Proportional Visions*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Raz, Joseph. 1986. *The Morality of Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1968. *The Social Contract*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Scheibehenne, Benjamin, Rainer Greifeneder, and Peter M. Todd. 2010. "Can There Ever Be Too Many Options? A Meta-Analytic Review of Choice Overload." *Journal of Consumer Research* 37 (3): 409–25. https://doi.org/10.1086/651235.

Singer, Matthew M. 2013. "Was Duverger Correct? Single-Member District Election Outcomes in Fifty-Three Countries." *British Journal of Political Science* 43 (1): 201–20. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123412000233.

Smith, Daniel M. 2017. "Electoral Systems and Voter Turnout." In *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems*, edited by Erik S. Herron, Robert J. Pekkanen, and Matthew S. Shugart, 193–212. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190258658.013.17.

Stilz, Anna. 2019. *Territorial Sovereignty: A Philosophical Exploration*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Stockemer, Daniel. 2008. "Women's Representation: A Comparison between Europe and the Americas." *Politics* 28 (2): 65–73. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9256.2008.00313.x.

Viehoff, Daniel. 2019. "Power and Equality." In *Oxford Studies in Political Philosophy Volume 5*, edited by David Sobel, Peter Vallentyne, and Steven Wall, 3–37. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wilson, James Lindley. 2021. "An Autonomy-Based Argument for Democracy." In *Oxford Studies in Political Philosophy Volume 7*, 194–226. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wodak, Daniel. 2019. "The Expressive Case against Plurality Rule." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 27 (3): 363–87. https://doi.org/10.1111/jopp.12188.