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Electoral Outcomes and Support for Westminster Democracy

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Abstract: It is well established that those who supported the winning side in elections report greater specific democratic support – they are more satisfied with the functioning of their democracy – than those who supported the losing side. This literature, however, has focused almost exclusively on winning the presidency or premiership. This project extends that literature to incorporate the effect of district election victories and defeats on citizens' democratic opinions using post-election surveys in three Westminster-style democracies: Australia, Canada, and Great Britain. It also includes two indicators of democratic institutional support: believing it matters for whom people vote and believing it matters who is in power. It finds that district-level results moderate the win-loss satisfaction gap induced by national election results. Winning in the constituency offsets the negative effect of electoral defeat; among national winners, however, the district result has limited impact on democratic attitudes. Constituency-level victories, though, are less effective at mitigating the effect of national defeat on more diffuse democracy support.

Substantial research examines the impact of winning or losing at the national level on citizens' attitudes toward their democracy. Those who win nationally are more satisfied than those who lose (Anderson and Guillory 1997; Singh, Karakoç, and Blais 2012; Rich 2015). However, our understanding of district races' impact is far weaker. In the Westminster system, citizens vote in their district, but the attention is focused on the national outcome: the prime minister. En route to this national goal, these district races are potential secondary sources of electoral success for voters. They could sweep both levels. Their favored party could control the top job, while losing their home constituency. They could lose the premiership but win the parliamentary seat, or they could lose both. Is the effect of national-level winning and losing on democratic attitudes impacted by wins and losses in the concurrent elections?

Prior research has produced inconsistent results. Blais and Gélineau (2007, 425) find that district victories in Canada "matter as much as the outcome of the national election" in determining citizens' democratic satisfaction. Contrarily, Henderson (2008) and Singh, Lago, and Blais (2011) find that district election results in a pooled sample from Canada, Australia, and Great Britain do not significantly impact citizens' satisfaction. Using surveys from three Westminster-model-country elections from Module 4 of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), this study finds that district results *do* significantly impact citizens' satisfaction with democracy. It also addresses belief in the importance of democratic institutions. The victory effect, though, is weaker in these metrics.

Recognizing the impact of elections on democratic attitudes contributes to understanding democratic stability. For democracy to persist, losers must be willing to see the system continue. Scholars directly link satisfaction with democracy to willingness to accept the processes' continuance (Anderson and Guillory 1997; Aldrich et al. 2020; Ridge 2020). Specific support –

satisfaction with that democracy's functioning at that point in time – is linked to diffuse support – support for the idea of democracy in the abstract (Easton 1975; Aldrich et al. 2020; Linde and Peters 2020). In this case, district results, in conjunction with national results, impact specific democratic support, while national-level victory has a greater impact than district results on diffuse democratic support. By further clarifying the link between parliamentary elections and citizens' system satisfaction, this study advances the awareness of how democracies can foment their own perpetuation or undermine themselves.

This article proceeds as follows. First, it considers the literature on the satisfaction with democracy gap between election winners and losers and the potential impact of subnational elections on the public's view of democracy. It then presents results for three Westminster democracies. It finds that the effect of national electoral defeat can be softened by winning in one's home district but that the district result is not a significant influence for winners of the national contest. Support for democratic institutions – the perceived importance of who wins an election and of voting – is not significantly dependent on the result in the district. It closes with a consideration of the impact of multi-level-election outcomes for perceived democratic viability.

Elections and Democratic Satisfaction

Multiple cross-national studies have identified victory effects on satisfaction with democracy. Successfully running an election increases the public's institutional satisfaction generally (Singh, Karakoç, and Blais 2012; Esaiasson 2011). The winners, though, are more satisfied than losers (Anderson and Guillory 1997; Singh, Karakoç, and Blais 2012; Rich 2015; Ridge 2020). This discrepancy in satisfaction is durable, lasting years after the result in some cases (Loveless 2020).

Scholars identify several mechanisms by which winning impacts satisfaction. Some explanations are rational-choice oriented. The "system is a friendlier place for people who identify with the governing party" because they "believe that the government is interested in and responsive to their needs" (Anderson and Guillory 1997, 68). Winners are also more likely to anticipate the enactment of preferred policies (Curini, Jou, and Memoli 2012; Singh 2014) and less likely to believe the government has too much power to enforce those policies (Anderson and Tverdova 2002). Losers, in turn, are less dissatisfied when they retain tools for input on government decisions (Bernauer and Vatter 2012). Having a parliamentarian from one's party constitutes an avenue into decision-making. As such, it could reduce the negative effect of electoral defeat on satisfaction with democracy.

Another mechanism is emotional. Winning generally has positive psychological and emotional effects and that translates into satisfaction with the system that delivered the pleasing result (Howell and Justwan 2013; Singh 2014). Losing at something, on the other hand, is a negative emotional experience. This emotional response explains victory responses transcending the immediate election, such as influence on satisfaction with the European Union democracy based on the outcome of a regional election (Singh, Karakoç, and Blais 2012). Influence on EU satisfaction, Singh, Karakoç, and Blais argue, is purely an emotional effect, since policy representation at that level is unchanged. The emotional benefit of victory has diminishing returns. Subsequent elections produce only marginal gains in satisfaction; conversely, the dissatisfaction of a present loss is assuaged by prior successes (Curini, Jou, and Memoli 2012). The negative effect of losses, however, compounds. Winning in the constituency may not change citizens' anticipation of policy outcomes. It is nevertheless a victory, and it could trigger the

emotional effects of victory previously shown in national returns. Losing, however, could still sting doubly.

The effect of simultaneous electoral results, however, has been understudied, even though elections often feature multiple contests. Incorporating the multilevel structure better encapsulates citizens' experience of winning and losing. As Anderson and LoTempio (2002: 337), describing the effect of multi-branch victory on trust in government, explain, "Not only do political institutions define who wins and loses elections; they also determine how much people win or lose." This research contributes to filling in this gap by examining how citizens respond to the member of parliament election in which they vote during the election of a new prime minister.

Blais and Gélineau (2007) offer a first foray into the impact of district victories on satisfaction. Using the 1997 Canadian Election Study, they test the effect of winning a riding and winning nationally. Based on their belief that the victory effect results from liking or trusting the resulting government, they predict that "Canadians would focus on the national election" to the exclusion of district results (431). Instead, they find that "Canadian voters react to the local outcomes as well (and as much) as to the national one" (431). Only those who lose both are significantly less satisfied with Canada's democracy than double winners. Non-voters are also significantly less satisfied than double winners. The study is limited, though, in that it only considers one country. They propose subsequent research consider other single-member district parliamentary states, namely Great Britain and Australia, to determine if this any victory is equally good effect holds across contexts.

Henderson (2008) uses Module 1 (1996-2001) of the CSES to study the impact of district-level victory in a pooled sample of surveys from Canada, Great Britain, and Australia.

She suggests the election-satisfaction link stems from the sense of ideological representation and predicts a pure gradient of satisfaction. Winning doubly should be superior to losing locally, and winning locally should make up for some of the national loss. While her pooled sample results show both national-only winners and double winners are more satisfied than double losers, national loser/district winners are not found to be significantly more satisfied than double losers. These results then differ from Blais and Gélineau's findings.

There are several modeling differences between these studies. Henderson's study omits non-voters, an important bloc in Blais and Gélineau's study. Non-voters are significantly less satisfied than winners or, sometimes, than losers (Blais and Gélineau's 2007; Rich 2015). The act of voting makes individuals feel happy, proud, closer to their communities, and responsible for the future; it can make them more likely to perceive the election as legitimate (Bruter and Harrison 2017). Omitting non-voters misrepresents the citizenry's attitudes towards democracy by omitting the least satisfied citizens and skews the understanding of how citizen characteristics and political experience relate to support for democracy. In addition to being less satisfied, they may well also have different views on the importance of voting, reflecting different levels of diffuse democratic support. Henderson also, unlike Blais and Gélineau's analyses and this study, compresses the four-party satisfaction variable to a binary. These factors could contribute to their different findings.

Singh, Lago, and Blais (2011) follow Blais and Gélineau in anticipating that the district results will not matter. They expand Henderson's study with a wider view of democracy support by using other indicators from Modules 1 and 2 of the CSES. These additional questions are a pertinent contribution to the understanding of victory and its relationship to specific and diffuse support. They find a positive relationship between being a national winner and their metrics for

specific and diffuse support for democracy. While they do not find a significant relationship between the district result and satisfaction, they do find that it is related to some indicators, namely whether it matters who is in power and whether it matters for whom people vote. Their operationalization of district and national victory, however, treats these variables as distinct additive variables, rather than as related circumstances that could act in tandem in influencing respondents. Their operationalization, thus, cannot reveal whether double winners and single winners are significantly different from each other, only whether winning and losing at the district level – holding national result status constant – is significant. As such, their article cannot address this question alone. This study returns to these questions with an operationalization that allows for that distinction.

It is proposed here that the previous studies' predictions – that winning at the district level is irrelevant or that winning has linearly-graduated effects – do not give sufficient weight to the emotional and psychological elements of electoral success. The understanding of how district results affect democracy attitudes benefits from incorporating research on the psychology of electoral victory. How do citizens conclude that they have won an election? Certainly the national outcome matters; this election characterizes the media coverage of the event and is a strong predictor of feeling like a winner (Plescia 2018). Local results matter to voters too. Survey respondents in multiple countries aver caring who wins their district (Daoust and Blais 2017). Local district results also impact citizens' belief that they won or not. Using Canadian (national), Quebec (provincial), and Ontario (provincial) surveys, Stiers, Daoust, and Blais (2018, 28) find that those who won doubly "almost unanimously think their party won the election" and national winner/district losers "also overwhelmingly believe that their party won." Those who won their district but lost nationally are substantially less likely to think their party won than those who

won nationally, but they are still decidedly more likely to identify a victory than those who doubly lost. Stiers, Daoust, and Blais (2018, 28) conclude that "a good outcome in the district softens the blow of a bad result at the national level." These results are limited in that they consider only the respondent's own party, rather than each participating party, and that they test the relationship in only one country. However, their findings offer a strong indication that hierarchies of elections produce hierarchies of winners. This should drive predictions about the relationship between electoral outcome and support for democracy.

Predictions

Consistent with the large literature on satisfaction with democracy, significant differences in satisfaction between the national winners and the losers, even when controlling for the district-level results, are predicted. People who voted for a winning (coalition) party will be more satisfied than those who did not (*H1*). They feel like winners, and they experience the emotional benefits of being on the winning team. Also, governing parties have the greatest capacity to shape policy, which colors perceptions about what the election results mean in practice. To the extent that policy anticipation drives satisfaction, they have the best reason to be satisfied with what they think the government will do.

This should translate into more diffuse democratic support. Having just seen an election run and experiencing its results, do these citizens who feel like winners feel differently about the merits of participation or the efficacy of the outcome? Specific support for democracy, as indicated in system satisfaction, is viewed as a driver of diffuse support for democracy (Easton 1975; Aldrich et al. 2020); satisfaction is significantly correlated with belief that democracy is the best form of government (Ridge 2020). In that case, these national winners should be more

likely to believe that voting (H2) and who is in power matter (H3). This would accord with Singh, Lago, and Blais's (2011) finding.

What about the districts? Recent research on what makes voters believe that they have won an election introduces a curvilinear relationship. People who voted for the party that took the most seats believe that they won the election (Plescia 2018; Stiers, Daoust, and Blais 2018), but victory introduces a ceiling effect (Stiers, Daoust, and Blais 2018). Among national winners, losing locally does not significantly change perception of electoral success. As far as they are concerned, they still won. As such, it is not expected here that, among national winners, the local result significantly changes satisfaction. The ultimate policy implications are unlikely to be different, and the feeling of victory has largely taken hold, so the emotional payoff is not different. Not finding a difference does not prove that none exists. However, unlike in the linear satisfaction view, one is not predicted.

The curve comes in among national losers. Citizens whose party lost in any capacity are less likely to view themselves as winners. Still, those who won the constituency are significantly more likely to think of themselves as having won the election than those who lost doubly. As such, it is predicted that double losers will be less satisfied than those whose party won the constituency, even if they lost the national election (H4). By incorporating this political psychology research, different predictions are made than in prior studies. In total, the following hierarchy is anticipated: double winner ≈ national winner/district loser > national loser/district winner > double loser (Table 1).

[Table 1]

This difference could carry over into institutional support. While this sense of electoral victory is not anticipated to lead to different levels of belief in the value of voting among

national winners, double losers are predicted to place less value in voting (H5) and holding power (H6) than those whose party won the constituency but lost the national election. For the latter, voting was able to deliver some impact and a modicum of power, even if it does not deliver the top job.

Materials and Methods

The data used here, drawn from Module 4 of the CSES, provide more recent assessments of the countries targeted in the literature: Australia (2013), Canada (2011), and Great Britain (2015). The CSES compiles post-election surveys with shared questions, allowing cross-national comparisons. Country-specific demographic weights "adjust sample distributions of socio-demographic characteristics to more closely resemble the characteristics of the population" in the specific country (Comparative 2018).

These countries have "relatively similar social cleavages and political systems" and "comparable measures of partisanship" (Medeiros and Noël 2014, 1030). Each has two major political parties as well as a coterie of smaller parties capable of winning districts. These states also employ single-member district systems that apportion seats by plurality or majority vote share. Majoritarian systems make it easier for citizens to identify themselves as electoral winners compared to objective criteria like entering government than proportional representation systems (Plescia 2018). What it means to win a district is similar across these three Westminster countries.[1] That comparability would not exist if alternative institutional structures were

[1] This is not to say that the state structures are identical across the countries. Great Britain has a unitary central government, though some powers are devolved to regional parliaments. The upper houses in Canada and Great Britain are appointed, and the lower house has political power. The Australian Senate is elected and has more power than the other upper houses. This study focuses on the results in the lower house elections for each country. While Canada and Great Britain use plurality rule to decide who wins districts, Australia uses the alternative vote system to arrive at a majority candidate. If this system regularly changed the winner from the

introduced, and the underlying self-identification of victory, which cannot be studied with the CSES data, might be different than has been revealed in the Canadian studies. Focusing within this framework also limits a potential institutional influence. Satisfaction with democracy is lower in states with proportional representation governments (Aarts and Thomassen, 2008). These countries are also largely English-speaking countries. This reduces concerns about cross-national interpretability of questions and responses. As such, these countries are well suited to comparison.

Specific democratic support is a four-point ordered scale for citizens' satisfaction with the functioning of their democracy. The options are very satisfied (4), fairly satisfied (3), not very satisfied (2), and not at all satisfied (1). This scale is used in most previous studies on systemic satisfaction. It focuses on the way the democracy works in practice rather than whether democracy is supported in theory. As such it is more suited to consolidated democracies, like these countries, than to developing democracies (Linde and Ekman 2003). Some scholars have questioned the use of the measure due to its correlation with other indicators, such as regime support, particularly in newer democracies (Canache, Mondak, and Seligson 2001; Kornberg and Clarke 1994). Others argue that it can remain a summary indicator despite the manifold influences on citizen satisfaction (Wagner, Schneider, and Halla 2003), particularly in "the old democracies" (Anderson 2002, 7). Thus, the question is contextually appropriate for these democracies.

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plurality vote choice, then the relationship between vote choice and (perceived) result could be attenuated. Scholars seeking to expand the work on perception of electoral victory should address this case. However, in the 2013 election, 90% of districts were awarded to the majority or plurality first choice candidate; over a third won the majority on the first count (Green 2015). As such, it is anticipated that Australians will connect their vote preference with electoral victory readily. Not doing so would work against finding an effect here.

There are two indicators of support for democratic institutions, both of which were used in the Singh, Lago, and Blais (2011) study. The first rates how big a difference it makes who people vote for from "who people vote for won't make any difference" (1) to "who people vote for can make a big difference" (5). The second addresses the belief that it matters who is in power from "it doesn't make any difference who is in power" (1) to "it makes a big difference who is in power" (5). Disbelief in these principles indicates disbelief in the fundamentals of democracy. These citizens are on their way to, if not fully arrived at, indifference to democracy as a system of government.

The independent variables of interest are the indicators of electoral winning and losing. In the words of Clarke and Kornberg (1992: 191), "national elections may be conceptualized as independent variables – that is, as periodic and highly salient interventions that may influence a variety of important attitudes, beliefs, and opinions." In this case, the election creates winners and losers, which is projected to influence opinions about domestic democracy. Winners at the national level are those who voted for the party of the prime minister or a coalition member.[2] Winners at the district level are those that voted for the party that won their district. From these, four groups are identified. Another indicator classifies non-voters. Parliamentary structure means that a non-voter, by not voting in the district race, voted in neither race. The CSES does not code for winners and losers, but it does include vote choice; these variables are constructed based on election results and the respondents' reported vote.[3] It is not possible to test in this dataset

[2] Only Australia had a coalition government; 4.1% of the sample voted for the minority coalition partner, the National Party. Satisfaction among National Party voters is not significantly different than that of Liberal Party voters. Great Britain and Canada had single-party governments.
[3] Some scholars question voters' recall (Van Elsas et al 2014), though such errors or distortions have little impact on estimates of partisan allegiance (Durand, Deslauriers, and Valois 2015). Using reported vote choice is standard in the literature for distinguishing voters from non-voters and winners from losers.

whether respondents felt like winners or whether they knew who won in the district or national elections. Respondent unawareness, however, would work against finding a victory effect.

Respondent-level controls are also introduced as potential confounders. These include variables for age in years and level of education. Unemployment is a binary variable. Gender is an indicator for female. Demographics relate to vote choice, which determines winning or losing an election. These characteristics also influence democratic attitudes (Anderson and Guillory 1997; Blais and Gélineau 2007; Henderson 2008).

Ideological position influences citizens' party choice. It also governs the ideological congruence between the voter and the governing party, which influences democratic satisfaction (Curini, Jou, and Memoli, 2012; Singh 2014; Kim 2009). To account for this, the absolute distance on a 0 to 10 scale between respondent's left/right self-placement and experts' placement of the prime ministers' party is included.

National and personal economic circumstances influence citizens' view of their government as well as their preferences in elections (Lühiste 2014; Blais and Gélineau 2007). Respondents' perception of whether the national economic condition had improved, worsened, or stayed the same in the past twelve months are incorporated in a factor variable. Having had a stable economy is the reference category.

Expectation of victory can motivate or demotivate voters, ultimately influencing whether those citizens win, lose, or abstain. Expectation has also been found to impact satisfaction (Blais and Gélineau 2007; Howell and Justwan 2013). CSES surveys are post-election, so information about the respondents' expectations is unavailable. The incumbent party is taken as a rough indicator of the party voters might expect to win; it is a dummy variable for if the winning party already held the seat. This is not a perfect metric; for instance, upset elections and local scandals

would reduce its accuracy. It is taken, though, for a reasonable baseline of expected in-district outcome.[4]

Two district-level measures are included. The number of candidates influences the number of choices voters had, which changes their propensity to win, and party diversity influences democratic satisfaction (Ridge 2021). Turnout per district is also included. Turnout can reflect whether a race is viewed as close, expectations of victory, and a local culture of political participation. Non-voters are often less satisfied with the democracy, and they cannot win the election.

Because of the dependent variables' ordinal structure, ordered logistic models are used. This is akin to Blais and Gélineau's (2007) use of ordered probit models. Country fixed effects are included; Australia is the reference category. In all models the standard errors are clustered by voting district (Singh, Lago, and Blais 2011).

Results

The table shows models using double winner and double loser as the reference category.[5] The former demonstrates a negative effect of a district loss among national winners. The latter identifies the improvement from the district win among national losers. This also facilitates comparison with Blais and Gélineau (2007) and Henderson (2008), which used different reference categories.

[4] This study does not introduce variables for party identity. Blais and Gélineau (2007) include dummies for the political party to which the respondent feels closest; they assume that non-voters do not feel close to any party, which may not be true. Henderson (2008, 17) includes indicators for membership in the "two main losing competitors" (Conservative and Social Democratic parties). Introducing these variables means that losing the election, for some voters, is in each model twice. Furthermore, as the parties differ among countries, cross-party comparisons are uninterpretable.

[5] For models showing other reference categories, see Appendices 1 and 2.

[Table 2]

National losers are significantly less satisfied than national winners.[6] Single national winners are not significantly less satisfied than double winners (Model 1). The same pattern is evident with respect to believing it matters for whom people vote (Model 2) and who is in power (Model 3). Non-voters are less satisfied than double winners, and they are less likely to believe voting or who is in power matter. For a graphical representation, see Appendices 4-6.

Older citizens are more likely to be satisfied and to believe that who is in power matters. Satisfaction and institutional support increase with education. Those who believe that the economy is performing better than previously are more likely to be satisfied, to believe that voting matters, and to believe that who is in power matters. Those who believe it is doing worse are less likely to be satisfied, but they are more likely to believe that who is in power matters. Respondents who are ideologically distant from the governing party are less satisfied with that democracy; they are more likely though to believe that voting and who is in power matter.

Double losers are less satisfied than any of the winners (Model 4). They are less likely than national winners to believe that who is in power matters (Model 6) or that voting matters (Model 5). They are also less likely to believe these principles than national losers who win in their districts, but that effect is not significant. Non-voters are less satisfied and less likely to believe voting and who is in power matter than double losers.

Discussion

The results are consistent with the psychology of electoral victory. Broadly speaking, respondents' who voted for a party in the winning coalition are more satisfied than national losers. The pattern also appears in the indicators of democratic institutional support. National

[6] For national results without the district results see Appendix 3.

winners are more likely to believe that who people vote for and who is empowered matters. This could reflect both the anticipated policies and the emotional resonance of electoral success. This is consistent with the first three hypothesis.

Findings additionally demonstrate an effect of district-level election outcomes. Within-district loss does not significantly reduce satisfaction or belief in the importance of voting or being put in power among national winners. However, a within-district victory softens the dissatisfaction effect of national loss. This is not consistent with Henderson's (2008) predicted linear satisfaction effect, nor does it replicate Blais and Gélineau's (2007) finding that any and all victory is functionally equivalent in its effect on satisfaction. This is consistent with the fourth hypothesis based on the winner-identity studies. Among national winning party members, there is little room to be more likely to perceive one's group as having won the election, so there is little (and not significant) difference in the effect of winning on satisfaction. Among the national losers, though, there is more potential to identify success from the district results. The marked difference they identify between national loser/district winners and double losers is mirrored in the groups' different levels of democratic satisfaction. This accords with the emotional view of the victory/satisfaction with democracy linkage. This pattern appears also with the institutional support indicators, though the loss mitigation effect does not reach traditional levels of significance. The fifth and sixths hypotheses thus are less well supported. This could indicate that lower-level electoral outcomes have a stronger effect on specific support than on diffuse support.

The country fixed effects for Canada and Great Britain are generally not significantly different from Australia. This suggests that the preference voting system is not systematically driving satisfaction up or down. The exception is that Canadians are less likely than Australians

to say that who is in power matters. Whether the alternate vote system impacts satisfaction or democratic support in the few districts where the preference vote system impacts the outcome could be an area for future study.

The models were also tested in country subsamples (Appendices 7-9). While these results largely hold when the results are broken down by country, the effect of local victories identified in the pooled sample is not perfectly the same across election cases. It suggests that the effect is partially context dependent. Support for third parties, strategic voting, upset elections, and candidate profiles change each election and can drive changes in satisfaction separately from victory. This could also contribute to the differences in the results across the three previous studies, despite their different expectations. The identified effect is a general pattern.

The patterns in the pooled sample replicate in Australia for democratic satisfaction and institutional-support indicators. It is possible this is because the preference vote system more clearly sorts winners from losers. It could also reflect the distinct coalition that formed before the election and that pre-election polling accurately identified who would win the contest. The pain of loss is softened when it is anticipated (Blais and Gélineau 2007). It is likely that the absence of regional separatist parties allows the win/loss pattern of national parties to play out cleanly at the district level.

Great Britain is different. Pre-election polling showed a tight race, so partisans may have been pessimistic about their chances, attenuating the loss effects nationally, while losing seemingly safe constituencies would amplify them (Blais and Gélineau 2007). Conservative voters who lost their districts were less satisfied than Conservatives who won their districts but were not significantly more satisfied than double losers. Though seats were picked up in the aggregate, some were lost to Labour, which could cause hard feelings. Contrariwise, those who

opposed the Conservative party and won their constituency were not significantly less satisfied than double winners. This group is almost entirely made of Labour and Scottish National Party voters. This might be attributable to SNP's well-above-normal success, taking almost all Scottish seats while never anticipating taking Downing Street. For its partisans, those district wins are psychologically and politically important for demonstrating regional identity shortly after the failed independence referendum and showing strength for their party's preferences. With respect to the institutional support indicators, double losers are the only group that shows less belief than double winners. All winners are more likely to believe that who people vote for matters than double loser; the same is true for believing vote choice matters, though that does not reach traditional levels of significance for the it matters who is in power indicator.

In Canada, among national winners, there is no significant district effect. One was not anticipated. Furthermore, a Conservative win was consistent with the pre-election polls. Optimistic and pessimistic winners are not significantly different in their satisfaction, so the anticipation would not likely drive an effect. Optimism about the result, however, has been shown to significantly impact the satisfaction of national losers (Blais and Gélineau 2007). In this case, among national losers, satisfaction is not significantly different those who won in the district from those who did not. This group is largely composed of New Democratic Party members and, to a lesser extent, Liberal Party members. The New Democratic Party – which had its best outcome ever and formed the official opposition – picked up many seats from Bloc Quebecois, whose members may not have had a strong affective response to NDP's outcomes because they were voting strategically, possibly thinking NDP could oust the Conservative government. Strategic vote outcomes have less impact on democratic satisfaction than preference votes (Singh 2014). This is speculation about the nature of the victories in question. Detailed

examination of the cases must be left to other research. No win-loss pattern is evident in the institutional support indicators in Canada.

The relative dissatisfaction and institutional apathy among non-voters are not surprising. Surveys find lower satisfaction in non-voters (Rich 2015; Blais and Gélineau 2007). Especially dissatisfied citizens may decline to participate. Such selection seems most likely in Australia, where potential voters are fined for not voting; the extremely dissatisfied and those who truly think voting is pointless might make that choice as a statement. This would drag down the estimated satisfaction in that subset of the population. Additionally, elections increase the public's democratic satisfaction (Esaiasson 2011). Other positive effects of elections, such as improved impressions of government efficacy, concentrate in *voters* in pre/post-election comparisons (Ginsberg and Weissberg 1978). It is reasonable that the increased satisfaction induced by holding an election would show a similar pattern, meaning voters get a satisfaction bump non-voters do not. This would explain the lower levels of satisfaction, belief that for whom people vote matters, and belief that who holds power matters among non-voters.

Conclusion

This project has brought the established literature on the effects of national electoral wins and losses on citizens' satisfaction with democracy to the district context. Many electoral contests feature multiple elections. In the Westminster system, the national outcome is the result of the combination of the outcomes of many constituency elections. These district contests create an appreciable realm for electoral success apart from the final national victory. National winners and losers are thus subdivided by this institutional structure, which can cause them also to win partially or to lose partially, rather than either fully winning or fully losing, "which either intensifies or dampens the feelings of being on the losing side" (Dahlberg and Linde 2016, 2).

This effect is not fully accounted for in the national-level-focused literature. To understand properly the impact of victory and defeat on democratic attitudes, concurrent elections should be considered.

This study updates Blais and Gélineau's (2007) Canadian study and Henderson (2008) and Singh, Lago, and Blais's (2011) Westminster studies by examining elections in three Westminster-style democracies: Australia, Canada, and Great Britain. This article offers a revised set of predictions based on recent studies of when citizens are prone to *consider themselves* to have won the election. Namely, it proposes that the within-district result matters among national-election losers but not among national-election winners. It examines this with recent data and improved operationalization of the electoral-success variable.

Consistent with the previous literature, national victory increases citizens' satisfaction with their democracy's functioning. It also makes citizens more likely to believe that it matters who people vote for and who is in power. In addition to identifying a strong national-level effect, this project finds a moderating effect of local electoral results. The district-level victory softens the blow of the national loss. This could be because of the anticipated effect of the representation of their interests from their district member. It could also be psychological. The team they support won, and they feel like winners, which has an emotional payoff. In turn, they are more satisfied with the democratic system that permitted the outcome, demonstrating higher levels of specific support. This effect, though, does not reach traditional significance in the more diffuse support indicators.

On the other hand, constituency loss is not found to undermine satisfaction, the belief that voting matters, or the belief that being in power matters among national winners. This result was expected based on political psychology research on when voters conclude that they have won an

election. While a district win can make even a national loser more likely to feel like a winner, supporters of the nationally-winning party feel like winners regardless of the result in the district. The replication of this pattern in the connection between the election result and democratic attitudes suggests that it is this identification as a victor that is at work, rather than the objective fact of victory. This mechanism cannot be tested directly in this dataset, as respondents were not asked whether they feel that they won the election. It suggests, though, that further research in this vein is merited.

Why does it matter if citizens win in their district or if these district-level contests influence how they feel about their democracy? Scholars identify a connection between electoral results and how citizens' view their government, its efficacy, and its power (Anderson and Tverdova 2001), regime legitimacy, and citizens' satisfaction (Blais and Gélineau 2007; Esaiasson, 2011; Dahlberg and Linde 2016). Winners are more likely to view their government as legitimate and effective, and they are less likely to think it has too much power. As Anderson and LoTempio (2002, 349) explain, "One way for losers to have few incentives to bring about system change is for them to have opportunities to become winners as well and thus to be part of the decision-making process." By increasing the share of the population that feels it won, if only in the localized context, the district-level victories that the Westminster system creates allows these countries to improve the popular view of these governments.

That these citizens, even some of the losers, can be made to feel like winners enhances the durability of the Westminster structure in these states. Each of these countries has faced calls for electoral reform. Those satisfied with the current functioning would not feel the same pressure for change. Citizen responses to these proposals are colored by how they anticipate their preferred party will do in an alternative system, as recent studies of the UK demonstrate (Heller

2021). The voters would rather a system in which they can win. By generating these localized victories, which increase citizens' satisfaction with how democracy functions in their country, even in the face of national defeat, the Westminster structure has a pro-perpetuation structure.

Other institutional structures that generate multiple types of winners during the same election period merit consideration. Simultaneous but non-nested or hierarchical elections, for instance, could achieve some of the same effect. Separation of powers and federal systems offer other avenues for considering multiple victory effects. Research on the United States, which uses a different structure, has found that Americans are more satisfied when both the president and governor are from their party, but that they prefer winning only one of these offices to winning neither (VanDusky-Allen and Utych 2021). Future research could consider the impact of Australian Senate and gubernatorial elections or Canadian provincial elections on democratic attitudes. Other electoral systems could also be integrated into this discussion. Mixed-member systems offer additional considerations. Proportional seat assignment victories could mitigate the influence of the district results by sharing the influence of parliamentary results; alternatively, those seats could be separately influential, increasing the number of potential victories and victors. Additional studies are necessary to identify the sense of victory effects in these systems. Future research should consider the influence of the diverse win-loss arrangements on citizens' democratic satisfaction and democratic support.

Previous research has linked specific and diffuse support for democracy (Easton 1975). Researchers propose that citizens' satisfaction with democracy relates directly to states' democratic stability because losers represent "veto players of democratic governance" (Curini, Jou, and Memoli 2011: 244). Victory is evidently tied to the specific support. The relationship between immediate victory and more diffuse support, though, is harder to read. National winners

are more likely to demonstrate strong institutional support than losers. That the mitigating effect of district victory on national defeat is attenuated could be read multiple ways. This could suggest that local results do not protect diffuse democratic support. Alternatively, because specific support has been linked empirically to diffuse support (Ridge 2020), it could indicate that this effect occurs indirectly through the influence of local victories on specific support. By addressing specific support hits, district victories can protect against the erosion of the reserve of specific support that generates diffuse support (Linde and Peters 2020). Further testing on this topic would benefit from panel data that could test the effect over time. This must be left to further research.

Table 1: Anticipated Relative Levels of Support for Democracy Based on Election Outcome

1) Most Supportive		2) Less Supportive	3) Less Supportive	4) Least Supportive
National Winner		National Loser		Non-Voter
District Winner	District Loser	District Winner	District Loser	

Table 2: Ordered Logistic Regression Models for Electoral Outcome and Democratic Attitudes

	Satisfaction with Democracy	**Who People Vote for Matters**	**Who is in Power Matters**	**Satisfaction with Democracy**	**Who People Vote for Matters**	**Who is in Power Matters**
National Winner/				0.88***	0.66***	0.66***
District Winner				(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.07)
National Winner/	-0.06	-0.14	-0.11	0.82***	0.51***	0.54***
District Loser	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)
National Loser/	-0.49***	-0.51***	-0.61***	0.39***	0.15	0.05
District Winner	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.08)
National Loser/	-0.88***	-0.66***	-0.66***			
District Loser	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.07)			
Non-Voter	-1.51***	-1.99***	-1.63***	-0.63***	-1.34***	-0.98***
	(0.19)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.17)	(0.17)
Same Party	-0.01	-0.14	-0.08	-0.01	-0.14	-0.08
	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Age	0.01***	0.00	0.01**	0.01***	0.00	0.01**
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Female	0.02	0.03	0.05	0.02	0.03	0.05
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Education	0.04*	0.09***	0.06***	0.04*	0.09***	0.06***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Unemployed	-0.18	-0.06	-0.04	-0.18	-0.06	-0.04
	(0.18)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.18)	(0.15)	(0.15)

Economy: Worse	-0.53***	0.13	0.18*	-0.53***	0.13	0.18*
	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Economy: Better	0.49***	0.49***	0.40***	0.49***	0.49***	0.40***
	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Ideological Distance	-0.09***	0.13***	0.13***	-0.09***	0.13***	0.13***
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Number of Candidates	-0.01	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01	-0.02	-0.02
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)
District Turnout	0.00	-0.00	-0.02*	0.00	-0.00	-0.02*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Canada	-0.32	0.02	-0.60**	-0.32	0.02	-0.60**
	(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.23)	(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.23)
United Kingdom	-0.35	0.10	-0.33	-0.35	0.10	-0.33
	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.19)	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.19)
1|2	-2.92	-2.64	-3.83	-2.04	-1.98	-3.17
	(0.71)	(0.65)	(0.66)	(0.71)	(0.65)	(0.66)
2|3	-1.09	-1.58	-2.68	-0.21	-0.92	-2.02
	(0.71)	(0.65)	(0.66)	(0.71)	(0.65)	(0.66)
3|4	1.86	-0.39	-1.62	2.74	0.27	-0.96
	(0.71)	(0.65)	(0.66)	(0.71)	(0.65)	(0.66)
4|5		1.21	-0.15		1.86	0.51
		(0.65)	(0.66)		(0.65)	(0.66)
N	5548	5588	5581	5548	5588	5581

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05

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