

# Information Effects Conditioned by Partisanship in Electoral Participation:

An American Case and Its Implication

**Lee, So Young**  
(Yonsei University)

## CONTENTS

I. Introduction	2. Three Different Partisanship Strata
II. Establishing a Hypothesis	3. Comparison of the Effects across Samples
III. A Participation Model for the 2000 NES Respondents	V. Discussion
IV. Analysis	
1. Entire Sample	

· **Keywords** : political information, electoral participation, partisanship, extended beta-binomial (EBB), information shortcut

## ABSTRACT

This study explores how the lack of information can be compensated for by partisan strength in relation to electoral participation. The question of how political information affects electoral participation is examined in three different strata of partisan strength using the extended beta-binomial (EBB) model applied to the 2000 U.S. election data. The results of the analysis suggest that, while information is an important predictor of electoral participation, partisan strength can compensate for the lack of information. Strong partisans may not need to depend on political information to engage in electoral activities. This implies that, as political information is necessary for a sound democracy where political processes proceed based on broad citizen participation, strong partisanship may also be an important factor promoting the quality of democratic political process. However, because of their consistency bias and decisions leaning toward their supporting party, partisans do not uniformly have superior democratic citizenship characteristics. This emphasizes again the importance of political knowledge as a prior condition for political decision by the public.

## I . Introduction

The purpose of this article is to explore how information affects Americans' electoral participation by focusing on the relative strengths of party affiliation and information level in determining electoral participation.

Scholars have agreed on the importance of citizen participation for a sound democracy. Citizen participation is the main way in which the public communicates its needs and preferences to the government and induces the government to be responsive.<sup>1)</sup> In particular, electoral participation of the majority is a necessary condition for a sort of electoral polyarchy, which implies the competition on the electoral market results in the attribution of power to the people.<sup>2)</sup>

Among various predictors of political participation, some political behavior scholars have found political information or political knowledge<sup>3)</sup> is one, although the scholars' main focuses have not been on political information in most cases. They find that individual's variability in electoral participation, especially in voting turnout, is influenced by the levels of their political information.<sup>4)</sup> They seem to agree that political information boosts participation, not only because it provides the specific knowledge about politics, but also because it promotes civic qualities such as political interest and efficacy and because it provides relevant information mobilizing citizens to participate in political activities.

On the other hand, scholars in political participation have placed partisanship on a fundamental political orientation in engaging U.S. citizens in politics.<sup>5)</sup> Since the authors

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1) Sidney Verba, "The Citizen as Respondent: Sample Survey and American Democracy," *American Political Science Review* 90-1 (1996), pp. 1-7.

2) Giovanni Sartori, *Democratic Theory* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965), p. 124.

3) Political behavior scholars use different terms to express knowledge citizens have about politics -- political sophistication, political information, political awareness, and political knowledge. While these four do not have exactly the same meaning, the scholars have used them to express similar connotations. In this article, I mainly use "political information" that embraces a broader sense of the amount of resources forming people's knowledge about politics.

4) Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Robert C. Luskin and Joseph C. Ten Barge, "Education, Intelligence, and Political Sophistication" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, 1995); Michael X. Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter, *What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Robert C. Luskin, James S. Fishkin, Roger Jowell and Alison Park, "Learning and Voting in Britain: Insights from the Deliberative Poll" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta, GA, 1999); Michael E. MacKuen and George Rabinowitz, *Electoral Democracy* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

of *The American Voters*<sup>5)</sup> discovered that partisanship is the primary resource for political behavior, many scholars have argued that party loyalty influences electoral participation by providing motivations for participation, and making citizens more involved in politics. These benefits from partisanship in causing participation are overlapping with the benefits obtained from political information to encourage people to participate in political activity. From a rational choice perspective, party affiliation can reduce information cost and thus reduce the cost of participation, particularly of electoral participation. In other words, party affiliation may be used in participation decision as an information shortcut, which compensates for the lack of information, as in the case of candidate choice. In this sense, the strong psychological attachment on a party, which is more possible under the strong party system, can be an affirmative signal for a better democracy where citizens participate in political process actively.

Given this perspective, this article explores how the lack of information can be compensated for by partisan strength in relation to electoral participation. The question of how political information affects electoral participation is examined in three different strata of partisan strength -- low, middle, and high levels. This article does not restate the significance of information effect on electoral participation, which scholars already have dealt with. Rather, it focuses on whether information still has a strong impact among strong partisans who, I expect, use party affiliation as a shortcut to decide participation in political activity. Nevertheless, it first tries to confirm the findings of the previous studies with a different model. This may be worthwhile, given the fact that the previous studies have rarely dealt with information as the main focus of their studies, even though some research discusses the importance of the information in participation decision. The article then shifts to the main interest of this study -- how information affects electoral participation among citizens of different levels of partisanship. The hypothesis created to discuss this question is applied to the 2000 NES data, using a participation model that is expected to be more theoretically improved

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5) Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller and Donald E. Stokes, *The American Voter* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Sidney Verba and Norman H. Nie, *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); Sidney Verba, Norman H. Nie and Jae-on Kim, *Participation and Political Equality: A Seven-Nation Comparison* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978); Paul R. Abramson and John H. Aldrich, "The Decline of Electoral Participation in America," *American Political Science Review* 76-3 (1982), pp. 502-21; G. Bingham Powell, "American Voter Turnout in Comparative Perspective," *American Political Science Review* 80 (1986), pp. 17-43; Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen, *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America* (New York: Macmillan, 1993); Verba, Scholzman and Brady (1995).

6) Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes (1960).

compared to the models that the previous studies employed. The results of this study suggest the significance of political information in boosting political participation, which is a fundamental element for a representative democracy, particularly in a society where citizens lack strong partisan affiliation.

## II. Establishing a Hypothesis

While most recent studies have had a minimal interest in information effect on participation, one thing that researchers are in agreement on is that a high level of political information implies a high degree of participation in the political process, especially in electoral politics. Delli Carpini and Keeter<sup>7)</sup> find a nearly monotonic increase in turnout as political knowledge rises and substantial increases in other types of electoral participation such as campaign participation and contribution of money. They argue that political knowledge boosts participation by promoting an understanding of why politics is relevant. That is, political knowledge matters because it contains the specific information necessary to make citizens aware of opportunities to participate, which is called mobilizing information, which may include possible differential benefits from their preferred candidates. As Downs<sup>8)</sup> points out in relation to voting turnout, people would not be expected to participate if the outcomes of the alternative choices were evaluated to be indifferent. Therefore, the role of political knowledge providing information which strengthens individuals' perceptions of differential benefits is very important to encourage people to engage in electoral activities. In the same vein, Luskin and Ten Barge insist that the knowledge may include information about the mechanics of participation or the policy stakes that motivate participation, and that more informed people should be better able to grasp all this.<sup>9)</sup>

Based on the level of ideological conceptualization as a measure of political information, Converse shows that persistent and varied participation is most heavily concentrated among the most informed people.<sup>10)</sup> This is because, he insists, public reaction to political events depends on public visibility in which more informed people are more engaged in politics. In relation to this, Delli Carpini and Keeter also point out that political knowledge makes citizens psychologically engaged in politics by promoting civic

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7) Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996).

8) Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957).

9) Luskin and Ten Barge (1995), p. 22.

10) Philip E. Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," in David Apter (ed.), *Ideology and Discontent* (New York: Basic Books, 1964), p. 226.

attitudes such as political interest, efficacy, and media use.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Zaller argues that political awareness itself is cognitive engagement connecting an individual to the political process.<sup>12</sup> In this sense, Verba et al. categorize political information as a political engagement, which has a significant effect on both electoral and non-electoral participation.<sup>13</sup>

These roles of political information promoting civic attitudes and providing mobilization information are worthy of comparing with the role of partisanship in determining participation.

Given the conventional wisdom from many existing empirical studies that partisan strength promotes political participation, Verba et al. find that partisanship as a political engagement, like information, is significantly related to political interest.<sup>14</sup> Partisanship may promote political interest, which in turn promotes participation. Campbell et al. also argue that the stronger the individual's sense of attachment to one of the parties, the greater his psychological involvement in political affairs. According to them, strong partisans tend in their interests in the campaign and their concerns over the outcome to be more involved than the political independent.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Abramson and Aldrich pay attention to the fact that strong partisans are more likely to have strong preferences among the candidates, and thus evaluate a greater differential benefit from the election of their preferred candidate.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, from a rational choice view, party loyalties contribute to electoral participation by reducing information costs and thereby reducing participation costs.

Given this role of partisanship, which is overlapping with that of political information, strong partisans may not have to depend on political information to the same degree as the political independents do. Political psychology scholars have argued that low levels of information may not be a significant problem because many people can compensate for their lack of knowledge with information shortcuts.<sup>17</sup> Although I don't expect that the

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11) Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996).

12) John R. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

13) Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995).

14) Ibid.

15) Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes (1960), p. 143.

16) Abramson and Aldrich (1982), p. 505.

17) Paul M. Sniderman, Richard A. Brody, and Philip E. Tetlock, *Reasoning and Choice: Explorations in Political Psychology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Samuel L. Popkin, *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Zaller (1992); Jeffery J. Mondak, "Public Opinion and Heuristic Processing of Source Cues," *Political Behavior* 15-2 (1993), pp. 167-92; Arthur Lupia, "Shortcuts Versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in

lack of information can always be compensated for by other predisposition and attitudes, when a certain political attitude provides a motivation fairly overlapping with what information provides in connecting an individual to the political process, it might be reasonable to expect that it will compensate for the lack of information. According to Basinger and Lavine, who compare the effects of univalent and ambivalent partisan attitudes in people's electoral choices, voters having ambivalent partisan attitudes are motivated to search additional cognitive resources to compensate for the reduced value of partisan cues.<sup>18)</sup> Although not directly discussing political participation in relation to partisanship and political information, their finding provides a significant implication for the current study.

Placing greater weight on the studies which emphasize the role of information shortcuts, I hypothesize that partisan strength functions as a significant judgmental shortcut in participation decision in the sense that partisanship is parallel to information in its role in promoting electoral participation: promoting political interest, providing mobilizing information and a sense of differential benefits from the alternatives, and as a result, promoting psychological involvement in politics. Therefore, it is anticipated that strong partisans with a low level of political information will not have to be different from those with more information in their participation rates, while the independents with a low level of political knowledge will participate significantly less than the highly informed independents.

### III. A Participation Model for the 2000 NES Respondents

To test the hypothesis that information effects vary depending on the strength of party attachment, I create a maximum likelihood regression model for an extended beta-binomial distribution to be applied to the 2000 NES data. The reason for using the 2000 election data here is clear. Although the most recent presidential election data available are the 2004 data, the fact that the U.S. electorate in 2004 was severely more polarized along the party line<sup>19)</sup> may exaggerate the partisan effect so that it may be

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California Insurance Reform Elections," *American Political Science Review* 88-1 (1994), pp. 63-76; Arthur Lupia and Mathew D. Mc Cubbins, *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Really Need to Know?* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

18) Scott J. Basinger and Howard Lavine, "Ambivalence, Information, and Electoral Choice," *American Political Science Review* 99-2 (2005), pp. 169-184.

19) Alan Abramowitz and Kyle Saunders, "Why Can't We Just All Get Along? The Reality of a Polarized America," *The Forum* 3-2 (2005): Article 1.

hard to generalize the results to other election years. The electoral context of the 2004 presidential election was highly polarized particularly on the issues of war in Iraq and the war on terror. Both candidates' strategies were clearly to mobilize their own partisans rather than uncommitted voters.<sup>20)</sup> Under this polarized campaign environment, the mobilized or partisans were more likely to be active and informed than under normal political circumstances. In this vein, the 2000 election held in peacetime (or in an ordinary year) would be a better case for this subject as it would better represent the common American election particularly with respect to the partisan influence.

As the dependent variable to be explained by the predictors, electoral participation is created as the sum of seven random binary variables of participation modes: *voting*, *contribution to candidate*, *contribution to parties*, *going to meetings or rallies for particular candidates*, *other campaign activities*, *trying to influence vote of others*, and *displaying button, sticker or sign*. Given the sum of seven Bernoulli random variables, because the probability of each individual participating in a particular mode of participation is not identical but heterogeneous, and because each binary variate is not independent but correlated, I employ a model for the extended beta-binomial distribution, which is revised from the binomial distribution that assumes independent and identically distributed binary variables, and which is defined as<sup>21)</sup>:

$$\Pr(Y_i = y_i | \pi, \gamma, N) = \frac{N!}{y_i!(N - Y_i)!} \prod_{j=0}^{y_i-1} (\pi + \gamma_j) \prod_{j=0}^{N-y_i-1} (1 - \pi + \gamma_j) / \prod_{j=0}^{N-1} (1 + \gamma_j)$$

Where  $y_i = 0, \dots, N$  and conventionally  $\prod_{j=0}^y C_j = 1$  for any  $x < 0$ , and  $Y_i$  and  $Y_j$  are independent for all  $i \neq j$ . The parameter  $\pi$  is an average probability of a binary variable in  $Y$  and the parameter  $\gamma$  governs the degree to which  $\pi$  varies across the unobserved binary variables making up each observation. While other distribution models only permit  $\gamma \geq 0$ , this extended beta-binomial is extended to the cases with negative values of  $\gamma$ .

According to King, if  $\bar{\gamma}$  is not near zero, using the binomial model can produce substantially inefficient coefficients and biased standard errors.<sup>22)</sup> As the correlations

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20) Michael Barone, "American Politics in the Networking Era," in Michael Barone and Richard E. Cohen (eds.), *Almanac of American Politics* (Washington, DC: National Journal, 2006); Gary C. Jacobson, "The Iraq War and the 2004 Presidential Election" (paper presented at the OSU Mershon Center Conference on "The Wartime Election of 2004," Columbus, Ohio).

21) Gary King, *Unifying Political Methodology: The Likelihood Theory of Statistical Inference* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1989), p. 47.

22) Gary King (1989), p. 121.

among the binary participation variables ( $\bar{\gamma}$ ) are substantial, I use the extended beta-binomial models, which are expected to have unbiased and smaller standard errors in all the variables included in the model. This theoretical advantage accounts for an explicit reason for employing the extended beta-binomial models instead of OLS regression models.

Given  $\pi_i = [1 + \exp(-x_i\beta)]^{-1}$ , the full component of this model takes the following form:

$$\Pr(Y_i = y_i | \beta, \gamma, N) = \prod_{i=1}^n \frac{N!}{y_i!(N - Y_i!)} \times \prod_{j=0}^{y_i-1} \{1 + \exp(-x_i\beta)^{-1} + \gamma_j\} \\ \times \prod_{j=0}^{N-y_i-1} \{1 + \exp(-x_i\beta)^{-1} + \gamma_j\} / \prod_{j=0}^{N-1} (1 + \gamma_j)$$

Where  $x_i\beta = \beta_1x_{i1} + \beta_2x_{i2} + \dots + \beta_kx_{ik}$ .

In this model, the dependence of the rate  $\pi(x)$  on  $x$  is usually of primary interest. The dependence of  $\gamma(x)$  on  $x$  may be of secondary interest, while it may be necessary for  $\gamma(x)$  to be flexibility modeled in order to adequately fit the data and render appropriate the procedures for estimating parameters in  $\pi(x)$ .<sup>23)</sup>

The explanatory variables are as follows:

*Partisanship:* As seen above, partisanship is expected to have a strong effect on overall electoral participation. Partisanship in this article is stratified as three different levels of strength: strong partisans, weak partisans and the independents.

*Political Information:* Information is measured by adding three different types of information questions: an interviewer's subjective assessment of respondent information level, six factual knowledge questions, and the relative ideological locations of two major parties and those of Bush and Gore.<sup>24)</sup>

*Political Interest:* Numerous studies have agreed that political interest is strongly related to political participation. In this article, I created an additive variable by adding four different variables: interest in the campaign, caring about the outcomes of the

23) R. L. Prentice, "Binary Regression Using an Extended Beta-Binomial Distribution, With Discussion of Correlation Induced by Covariate Measurement Errors," *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 81 (1986), pp. 321-27.

24) This measure basically follows Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) and Althaus (1998)'s information measures, even though it doesn't include relative positions on several issues of each party because inclusion of those variables produces a large number of missing cases.



presidential election and of the congressional election, and respondents' following of public affairs.

*Political Efficacy:* Based on the measures of Timpone<sup>25)</sup>, Finkel<sup>26)</sup> and Verba et al.<sup>27)</sup> I include in this index two external and two internal efficacy questions.

*Socioeconomic Variables:* family income and education are included. Expected to have a positive relationship with electoral participation, family income is divided into eight categories. Education seems more complicated, even though it is also expected to have a positive effect. This concern is because, as Luskin and Ten Barge find,<sup>28)</sup> the effect of education might be substantially reduced when information is analyzed together with education, since information depends directly on education. In addition, empirical research such as Verba et al.'s demonstrates that education has no effect on electoral participation, while other time-based acts need educational attainment to decide participation.<sup>29)</sup>

*Gender:* Gender is coded as a dummy variable (male=1 and female=0), with the expectation that male respondents are slightly more likely to participate in electoral activities. But the gender difference is not expected to be great, since the dependent variable is created by summing up several different modes of participation, in most of which gender gap does not have a significant effect.

*Organizational Affiliation and Religious Attendance:* With the expectation of a strong effect based on most existing research that mentions the importance of the institutional affiliation,<sup>30)</sup> organizational affiliation is measured by the number of organizational memberships. Religious attendance is measured by the frequencies of individuals' attendance at religious services, with the expectation of some effects since it contributes to obtaining civic skill and political information.<sup>31)</sup> But a substantial effect is not expected, because, while religious attendance would have a substantial impact on voting and some other participation modes, it would not significantly affect contribution of money and campaign work.

*Age and Marital Status:* Usually regarded as significant predictors of voting turnout, these two variables are not expected to be significant predictors of overall electoral

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25) Richard J. Timpone, "Structure, Behavior, and Voter Turnout in the United States," *American Political Science Review* 92-1 (1998).

26) Steven E. Finkel, "Reciprocal Effects of Participation and Political Efficacy: A Panel Analysis," *American Journal of Political Science* 29-4 (1985), pp. 891-913.

27) Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995).

28) Luskin and Ten Barge (1995).

29) Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995), p. 363.

30) Verba, Nie and Kim (1978); Rosenstone and Hansen (1993); Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995).

31) Rosenstone and Hansen (1993); Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995).

participation modes, since these factors would not have similar patterns of effects across different modes of participation. These variables are included for the model specification purpose.<sup>32)</sup>

The questionnaires and measures of all the variables analyzed in the model are demonstrated in the appendix.

After testing the effects of all the factors on overall electoral participation in the whole sample, I divide the sample into three different samples, according to the partisanship strata: strong partisans, weak partisans, and the political independents.<sup>33)</sup>

These three samples are analyzed in the same model as the model for the whole sample, with the only difference being the omission of partisanship. Through this stage, I anticipate that, among strong partisans, information will have no significant impact because of the role of strong partisanship as an information shortcut, while the other two samples will show substantial effects of information in deciding electoral participation.

#### IV. Analysis

Table 1 displays the results of the maximum likelihood analysis for the grouped participation modes using the extended-beta binomial model. Table 1 shows somehow unexpected results in that, in every sample, most socioeconomic and demographic factors are much less influential on electoral participation than was expected.

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32) But I exclude the race variable that is usually controlled for as an explanatory variable for participation, because, in the 2000 NES survey, race is observed by interviewers only through the face-to-face interview but not shown in phone mode of the survey. Therefore, the inclusion of race creates a huge number of missing cases, leading the whole sample to become only 478, which makes it problematic to divide the sample into different strata, which I employ as a method of this study. Omitting race would not cause a significant distortion in the direction and the statistical significances of the coefficients in the model. In fact, the model having the race variable in its covariates shows no significant effect of race and shows only one important difference in the significance of the effect of partisanship. Based on this, I take the more parsimonious model without the race variable to keep a larger sample size which I believe makes the analysis more reliable.

33) While inclusion of an interaction term (partisanship x political information) provides similar information about the relationship between partisanship and political information, this stratification can illustrate a more detailed picture about how each level of the partisan strata interact with political information, particularly when partisanship and political information do not have an exact linear relationship.

## 1. Entire Sample

The analysis in the whole sample confirms the findings of the previous information studies, most of which depend on multiple regression models with the explanatory variables similar to those of this binary regression model: political information has a significant positive influence on electoral participation.

(Table 1) Causes of Electoral Participation among the 2000 NES Survey Respondents

Variable	Entire sample	Non-partisans	Weak-partisans	Strong-partisans
Eq1 (for $\pi$ )				
Partisanship	.0451* (.0203)	–	–	–
Political Information	.0277** (.0076)	.0357** (.0132)	.0327* (.0142)	.0122 (.0128)
Political Interest	.1052** (.0103)	.1283** (.0172)	.0829** (.0177)	.0918** (.0191)
Political Efficacy	.0351 (.0217)	.0478 (.0369)	–.0033 (.0397)	.0490 (.0368)
Family Income	.0264** (.0095)	.0166 (.0159)	.0478** (.0175)	.0326* (.0163)
Education	–.0226*** (.0133)	–.0504* (.0224)	–.0169 (.0254)	–.0008 (.0224)
Male	–.0720* (.0353)	–.1838** (.0572)	–.0580 (.0630)	.0438 (.0608)
Age	–.0014 (.0012)	–.0038 (.0018)	.0019 (.0022)	–.0008 (.0021)
Married	.0360 (.0380)	.0451 (.0646)	.0030 (.0703)	.0392 (.0652)
Organizational Affiliation	.0634** (.0108)	.0648** (.0193)	.0505** (.0169)	.0734** (.0208)
Religious Attendance	.0169 (.0111)	.0192 (.0199)	.0321*** (.0195)	.0102 (.0189)
Constant	–2.319** (.1083)	–2.256** (.1646)	–2.272** (.1870)	–2.134** (.2099)
Eq2 (for $\gamma$ )				
Constant	–.0289** (.0050)	–.0389** (.0073)	–.0434** (.0066)	–.0025 (.0106)
N	881	305	259	317
Log likelihood	–1175.2101	–375.36761	–308.38856	–473.09852

Dependent variable = sum of seven participation variables

Standard errors are in parentheses.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .10$

For the entire sample, among the variables which Verba et al.(1995) call political engagement, only political efficacy has no significant effect with a z-statistic of only 1.62.<sup>34)</sup> This result may imply that, while political efficacy has a significant influence on voting turnout as several scholars have discovered, it may not have a direct impact on overall engagement in political activities.

Political interest ( $p=.000$ ) and partisan strength ( $p=.026$ ) as well as political information ( $p=.000$ ) display statistically significant effects. In addition, organizational affiliation is also a significant predictor of electoral participation ( $p=.000$ ), while religious attendance does not have a significant effect.

Somewhat deviant results are found with the socioeconomic and demographic factors. Only family income meets the expectation in the direction and the significance of the coefficient. And as expected, marriage appears to have no significant effect. But with respect to gender, in opposition to the expectation, female respondents appear to participate more than male respondents in electoral activities.

Age has no significant effect, with a z-statistic of only  $-1.19$  and the direction is also in opposition to what is expected. This might be not only because age is not linearly related to participation but also because the dependent variable is the addition of the seven different electoral participation modes, having heterogeneous age effects (see Table A-2 in the Appendix).

Educational attainment appears to be negatively associated with overall electoral participation and the effect comes out to be marginally significant at  $\alpha = .10$  level ( $p=.091$ ). As mentioned above, this marginal significance may not be surprising, based on the previous empirical research that finds a small or no effect of education on overall participation, as mentioned above. The negative sign of the coefficient might be either from the addition of several modes, each of which has a different directional sign, or from the inclusion of information. In fact, when information is taken out of the model, education shows a positive coefficient, but with a smaller and still insignificant effect ( $p=.525$ ).

## 2. Three Different Partisanship Strata

As expected, the most important finding in the comparison of the three different partisanship strata is shown in information. Political information appears to be

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34) Political efficacy here is measured by two external efficacy variables and two internal efficacy variables. To test if the insignificant coefficient is from the fact that some of the efficacy variables, especially internal efficacy, do not contribute to political participation, I ran the same model with only external efficacy as well as with only internal efficacy. In all cases, the efficacy variable shows no statistical significance.

significantly associated with the decision of electoral participation among non-partisans ( $p=.007$ ) and weak partisans ( $p=.021$ ) but not among strong partisans ( $p=.341$ ). Political interest and organizational affiliation are still strong predictors of electoral participation in all three strata of partisanship. Political efficacy is not significantly related to electoral participation in any stratum. Religious attendance also does not present a significant relationship with electoral participation.

Socioeconomic and demographic variables satisfy the expectation still less. Among non-partisans, family income is no longer a significant predictor of their electoral participation decision with the  $z$ -statistic of 1.04, while among partisans, whether their partisanship is strong or weak, income is still importantly related to the decision of electoral participation. As in the entire sample, age has no significant effect in all types of samples and shows negative signs among non-partisans and strong partisans. Similarly, marriage is still not related to the overall electoral participation in all three samples. On the other hand, among non-partisans, female respondents are significantly more likely to participate in electoral activities, but among partisans, gender difference is not significantly associated with their electoral participation. Finally, education is still problematic, showing a negative sign even in non-partisan sample where education is a statistically significant predictor, as well as in the other two samples, where education obtains no significance as a predictor.

In sum, while socioeconomic and demographic variables are shown as less influential than they have been expected, psychological engagement in politics and organizational affiliation look to be stronger predictors of overall electoral participation. In particular, political interest and organizational affiliation seem strongly associated with participatory decision for electoral activities in any degree of partisanship.

Political information turns out to be a strong predictor of electoral participation for overall citizens and specifically for non-partisans and weak partisans, but not for strong partisans. Since all three different samples do not present a difference in depending heavily on political interest and organizational membership in their decision of electoral participation, among the three variables having significant impacts across the samples, only information shows the most important disparities among the three partisan strata.<sup>35)</sup> Given the fact that the partisan strength is a strong predictor of

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35) Family income also shows differences among the samples. Non-partisan appears not to be affected by their family income in deciding electoral participation. That is, regardless of the income levels, non-partisans may participate less in electoral activities. But since this is not a main interest of this article and since the effect of income does not show an increase as partisanship becomes stronger, I do not deal more with the relationship between income and partisanship.

electoral participation, this finding may have the implication that, among the strong partisans, those who participate in electoral activities do so, because they are interested in politics and affected by the organizations they are involved in and somehow because they are rich, rather than because they are well informed. Less informed strong partisans do not have to participate to a lesser degree because of their lack of information, since their lack of information can be compensated for by other factors including their strong feelings of party attachment.

<Table 2> The Effect of Partisanship among Low-, Mid- and High-levels of Information (When controlling for all the same variables as those in Table 1)

Variable	Entire sample	Low-information	Mid-information	High-information
Partisanship	.0451* (.0203)	.0643*** (.0376)	.0446 (.0323)	.0516 (.0365)
N	881	307	324	250

Standard errors in parentheses.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .10$

But this does not necessarily mean that information and partisanship have an interchangeable relationship in their effects on electoral participation. While the strong partisanship might compensate for the lack of information, information seems not to compensate for the lack of strong partisanship. As seen in Table 2, there seems no evidence that, as information increases, people depend less on partisanship. Only poorly informed people appear to depend on their partisanship to participate in political activities, while those with middle and high levels of political information do not.

### 3. Comparison of the Effects across Samples

Table 3 presents how the effects of the strong predictors -- information, interest, and organizational affiliation -- on the average probability of electoral participation ( $\pi$ ) change as respondents' feelings of party attachment increase. Although  $\pi$  is no longer equal to the expected value in the extended beta-binomial model, where the expected value of  $Y$  is based on the probability  $\pi$  constrained by the parameter  $\gamma$ , an obvious relationship does exist between  $E(Y_i)$  and  $\pi_i$ . Given the fact the primary interest of the extended beta-binomial model is in  $\pi$ ,<sup>36)</sup> I present the estimated  $\pi$  values to discuss the relative effects of certain variables across the samples.

36) Prentice (1986).

〈Table 3〉 The Effects of Information, Interest and Organizational Affiliation Based on  $\bar{\pi}$  Ratio Differences  
(Comparing the effects of the high levels and low levels of each item)

Variable	$\bar{\pi}$ Ratios and Differences of $\bar{\pi}$ (D)					
			Whole sample	Non-partisans	Weak-partisans	Strong-partisans
All to be held at the means or modes <sup>a</sup>	$\bar{\pi}$	Average	0.320	0.280	0.294	0.351
Political Information	$\bar{\pi}$	Low half	0.304	0.261	0.280	0.344
		High half	0.334	0.298	0.311	.0356
	D	High-Low	0.030	0.037	0.031	0.012
		High-Avg.	0.014	0.018	0.017	0.005
Political Interest	$\bar{\pi}$	Low half	0.267	0.225	0.265	0.312
		High half	0.354	0.326	0.325	0.369
	D	High-Low	0.087	0.101	0.060	0.057
		High-Avg.	0.034	0.046	0.031	0.039
Organizational Affiliation	$\bar{\pi}$	Low half	0.307	0.267	0.284	0.335
		High half	0.336	0.297	0.306	0.369
	D	High-Low	0.029	0.030	0.022	0.034
		High-Avg.	0.016	0.017	0.012	0.018
	$\bar{\gamma}$		-.029**	-.039**	-.043**	-.003
		N	881	305	259	317

Note: a. While all the variables except the variables analyzed for the first difference are held at their means, two dichotomous  
 - variables (gender and marriage) are held at their modes.  
 -  $\bar{\pi}$  ratios are obtained from  $\pi_i = [1 + \exp(-x_i\beta)]^{-1}$   
 -  $\bar{\pi}$  ratios for the different levels of each item are calculated based on the means of the high half and of the low half, while all other variables are held constant at their means or modes.

With Table 3, I am not mainly interested in whether a specific variable has a greater impact on the likelihood of participation than the other variables do, because it seems not reasonable and less meaningful to compare those which have different units of measurement, by which we might have a problem of so-called standardized fruit.<sup>37)</sup> Rather, my main interest is in comparing the effects of a certain variable across samples. In spite of that, it seems clear that political interest is the strongest predictor of electoral participation, given the largest differences in  $\pi$  values according to the degree of the levels (high half-low half). As interest moves from the low level to the high level, the probability of electoral participation increases by 8.7 percent in the whole sample, while different levels of both information and organizational affiliation make about 3 percent difference in the probability.

37) King (1986).

In Table 3, strong partisans show the largest and most distinctive probabilities of electoral participation in any case, compared to the other two sub-samples, whereas non-partisans and weak partisans do not present a notable disparity between them. Moreover, if considering values, the gap in the probabilities between strong partisans and other samples becomes larger.

As expected from Table 1, both political interest and organizational affiliation are strongly related to higher probabilities of electoral participation in all three partisan strata. With an exception among non-partisans demonstrating that political interest has a distinctively greater impact, in an overall sense, interest and organizational affiliation do not show significant variations across the samples.

On the other hand, the most noteworthy finding is seen in political information. As also expected, change in the information level among strong partisans does not shift the probability as much as it does among non- and weak partisans. When the information level changes from the low to the high, the probability of electoral participation among strong partisans increases only by 1.2 percent, which is less than one-third of the probability change among non-partisans (3.7 percent). Moreover, this change is far from obtaining a statistical significance as seen in Table 1. This disparity in the effect of information between strong partisans versus non- and weak partisans, given other factors having similar effects across the partisan strata, confirms the hypothesis that partisan strength may act as a significant judgmental shortcut in electoral participation decision.

## **V. Discussion**

The 2000 NES survey data suggest that, while information is an important predictor of electoral participation, partisan strength can compensate for the lack of information. Strong partisans may not need to depend on political information to engage in electoral activities. Given the similar impacts of other strong predictors across all the partisan strata, it seems clear that partisanship is an important psychological engagement variable that can be used as an information shortcut in deciding electoral participation.

This study has not paid attention to why partisanship can compensate for the lack of information. It seems not reasonable to suppose that strong partisans' more unified high levels of information make the information effect small and insignificant, because strong partisans do not show a distinctively greater homogeneous pattern in their information level than the political independents. 36 percent of strong partisans lie



below or equal to 8 (of the range of 1–15), while 38 percent of non-partisans are below or equal to 9. Rather, the reason for no dependence of strong partisans on information may be that they already obtained from their attachment to the parties such civic attitudes as political interest and enough mobilizing information to decide electoral participation.

The result of this study demonstrates that the role of political knowledge can be substituted by that of strong party identification in mobilizing the electorate and boosting political participation. As the public's political information or political knowledge is necessary for a sound democracy in which political processes proceed based on broad citizen participation, strong partisanship may also be an important factor promoting the quality of democratic political process.

As a matter of fact, strong partisanship is a necessary and sufficient condition for institutionalization of party politics. In the political system where parties are highly institutionalized along the ideological spectrum, citizens tend to be strongly attached to a party. But in the system where parties are weak, people are usually not firmly affiliated with a party. This study shows that, when people do not strongly attach themselves to a party, they should have other factors of civic engagement to be politically active, and among various factors is political knowledge (political information) as a critical element for political participation, particularly for electoral participation.

The American parties are weak relative to those in Europe where multiple parties represent various interests and people are relatively strongly attached to a party along their ideological positions. In this sense, the result of this study implies that political knowledge is more important in the United States than in Europe with respect to political participation. This also means that in countries like Korea where the party system is not well institutionalized, political knowledge provides citizens with important sources for political activities.

On the other hand, the fact that strong partisanship can substitute for political knowledge in promoting political participation may raise a question of whether it is good for strong partisans, often without proper information and knowledge about politics, to participate in political process. This leads to a general concern of democracy scholars: How good and meaningful is the decision made by those participants who do not have understanding about the context of politics? Does the public fall short of democratic aspiration despite their active participation based on their strong partisan attachment?

While further studies are needed to answer these questions, it can be said that strong partisans at least can have a committed interest in the issue at hand, although they are not informed about overall politics. This would make them respond to persuasive appeals

of politicians and help the society promote the democratic principle of equality (equal representation).

However, partisanship itself is not sufficient for so-called “correct decision.” As Lodge and Hamill point out,<sup>38)</sup> partisans are more likely to be subject to consistency bias, selecting and recalling only those facts that support their beliefs and their parties. In fact, partisans do not uniformly have superior democratic citizenship characteristics. This emphasizes again the importance of political knowledge as a prior condition for political decision by the public.

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38) Milton Lodge and Ruth Hamill, “A Partisan Schema for Political Information Processing,” *American Political Science Review* 80 (1986), pp. 505–20.

## Appendix

〈Variables Included in the Model: The 2000 NES data〉

**Dependent variable:** adding seven binary electoral participation modes

Voting (1241)  
 Contributing to candidate (1229)  
 Giving money to party (1231)  
 Doing any other campaign work (1228)  
 Trying to influence vote of others (1225)  
 Displaying button /sticker / sign (1226)  
 Going to meetings / rallies for particular candidates (1227)

### Independent variables

- *Partisanship*: 3-scale of independents, weak partisans, strong partisans
- *Political Information* (An additive index of 11 variables)
  - 5-scale Interviewer's assessment of respondents' knowledge level (1745)
  - Identifying office (1447, 1450, 1453, 1456)
  - Majority party in house and senate (1356, 1357)
  - Lib-Con location of the parties (1382, 1383)
  - Lib-Con location of the candidates (463, 473)
    - All information variables but the interviewer's assessment are recoded as 1 for correct answer and 0 for incorrect answer.
    - "Don't know"s are recoded as incorrect answer, since the information index here measures the knowledge level of the respondents.
- *Political Interest* (additive index of 4 variables)
  - Interest in Campaigns (301): 3-scale
  - Caring about Presidential election (302): 2-scale
  - Caring about congressional election outcomes (342): 4-scale
  - Following public affairs (1367): 4-scale
- *Efficacy* (additive index of four 5-scale variables)
  - External efficacy
    - Public officials don't care (1527)
    - How much attention does government pay people (1539)
  - Internal efficacy
    - People don't have say about what government does (1528)
    - Politics so complicated (1529)

- *Organizational Affiliation* (1494+1495): Number of membership
- *Religious Attendance* (877+879): frequencies of attending religious services (5-scale: 1 for non and 5 for every week)
- *Socioeconomic and Demographic variables*
  - Family Income (994): 8 categories of actual income
  - Education (913): 7 categories of years of education
  - Male (1029): coded as 1 for male and 0 for female respondents
  - Age (908): years
  - Married (909): coded as 1 for the married and 0 for unmarried status

〈Table A-1〉 Descriptive Statistics for the Variables Included in the Model

Variable	Entire sample		Non-partisans		Weak-partisans		Strong-partisans	
	Mean (Std. Dev)	Range	Mean (Std. Dev)	Range	Mean (Std. Dev)	Range	Mean (Std. Dev)	Range
Electoral Participation	1.58 (1.20)	0-7	1.45 (1.15)	0-7	1.35 (0.99)	0-5	1.89 (1.33)	0-7
Partisanship	2.02 (0.84)	1-3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Political Information	8.65 (3.01)	1-15	8.37 (3.14)	1-15	8.11 (2.78)	1-15	9.36 (2.93)	1-15
Political Interest	9.85 (2.18)	4-13	9.49 (2.29)	4-13	9.29 (2.03)	4-13	10.66 (1.96)	5-13
Political Efficacy	2.99 (0.88)	1-5	2.89 (0.89)	1-5	2.98 (0.89)	1-5	3.12 (0.86)	1-5
Family Income	4.57 (2.19)	1-8	4.59 (2.17)	1-8	4.53 (2.15)	1-8	4.58 (2.19)	1-8
Education	4.62 (1.54)	1-7	4.59 (1.57)	1-7	4.61 (1.48)	1-7	4.65 (1.57)	1-7
Male	0.49 (0.50)	0-1	0.51 (0.50)	0-1	0.44 (0.50)	0-1	0.50 (0.50)	0-1
Age	46.48 (15.77)	18-93	44.22 (16.35)	18-89	45.00 (14.89)	19-90	49.84 (15.37)	19-93
Married	0.55 (0.50)	0-1	0.54 (0.50)	0-1	0.55 (0.50)	0-1	0.56 (0.50)	0-1
Organizational Affiliation	1.00 (1.49)	0-15	1.02 (1.52)	0-8	0.99 (1.57)	0-15	0.98 (1.39)	0-10
Religious Attendance	2.91 (1.61)	1-5	2.65 (1.57)	1-5	2.98 (0.89)	1-5	3.11 (1.62)	1-5
N	881		305		259		317	

〈Table A-2〉 Logistic Regression Coefficients of Each Electoral Participation Mode

Voting	Voting	Contribution to candidate	Contribution to party	Other campaign works	Influence on other's vote	Meetings / rallies	Display button, etc.
Partisanship	.173	.035	.217	.195	-.000	.168	.324*
Political Information	.233**	.104	.073	.031	.022***	.079	.051
Political Interest	.257**	.453**	.363**	.246*	.375**	.388**	.304**
Political Efficacy	.313*	-.084	.122	.255	.149	.039	-.034
Family Income	.113**	.275**	.303**	-.084	.017	.047	.036
Education	.008	.019	-.098	-.036	-.090	-.022	-.186*
Male	-.552*	-.362	.194	-.022	-.182**	-.268	-.095
Age	.008	.032**	.030**	-.009	-.026	-.009	-.013
Married	.309	-.107	-.415	.312	.023	-.080	.634*
Organizational Affiliation	.462**	.111	.123***	.315**	.167**	.228**	.141*
Religious Attendance	.132**	-.043	.076	.020	.017	.090	.089
Constant	-5.329	-11.065**	-10.787**	-7.052**	-3.450**	-8.156**	-5.729**
Log likelihood	-302.390	-196.816	-196.049	-123.852	-524.824	-184.993	-288.464
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.294	0.203	0.182	0.100	0.114	0.125	0.104
N	883	881	883	883	883	883	883

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .10$

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