

Public Abstract

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For countries that possess a federal structure, this institution is a crucial component of the constitutional arrangement of the nation. This institution arguably plays a role in nearly all aspects of a country's political environment. Although political science has much to say about federalism in the abstract, each country's federal system works differently. Unfortunately this variation has gone underappreciated in much of the scholarship on voting behavior. This dissertation seeks to inject our theoretical understanding of federalism, largely stemming from the works of William Riker, into comparative empirical analysis of voting behavior. As argued here, federalism in and of itself does not have a direct effect on behavior, instead it has indirect effects largely through the party system in place in a country. These theories will be tested for explaining differences in voter turnout cross-nationally and then again in more focused analyses of voter party choice in the three federal countries of the United States, Canada, and Germany. Ultimately the dissertation finds support for the theoretical and hypothesized effect of federalism on voters' decisions to turn out to vote, as well as how such allows for a considerable portion of the voting electorate in federal countries to cast inconsistent votes between the levels of government. These findings bring federalism back to the forefront of academic consideration in these types of studies.