

12 The Future of Election Studies and the Study of Elections

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The principal goal of this volume was to understand two related decisions that voters make in each election. First, will the citizen vote? Second, if they do decide to vote, for whom will they cast their ballot? For each of these decisions, how might the electoral system in which the voter is situated matter? The answers provided are as varied as they are interesting.

The first set of chapters in our volume addressed voter turnout. Kam, Cranmer, and Fowler show that concern for others can drive the decision to participate in an election, but that this causal force depends on the election being fought over policies that will change the distribution of wealth and create a net societal gain. Loewen, Dawes, and Arsenault demonstrate that individuals' traits – especially their tendencies to engage in behaviours not prescribed by rational choice theory – explains variation in voter turnout. Green's chapter provides a compelling picture of how social pressure and civic duty interact (and do not interact!) to affect voter turnout. Godbout and Turgeon provide evidence that voters and non-voters differ not only in their underlying commitments to electoral participation, but also in their policy views. Perhaps contrary to popular wisdom, they show slightly more conservatism around non-voters than voters. Taken together, these chapters represent well the diversity of work that is being undertaken on voter turnout.

The next set of chapters concerned vote choice. Nadeau, Bélanger, and Jérôme explore the role of the economy in influencing vote choice – a long-standing and ongoing concern of scholars of voter behaviour. In particular, they demonstrate that regional economic conditions matter in addition to national economic conditions. This is an important heterogeneity. If election campaigns turn solely on national economic