

Diversity and Democracy Revisited

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Draft Date: May 16, 2013

Abstract

Does diversity hurt democracy? I find a robust negative relationship between diversity and turnout in Indian elections using a measure of diversity which considers how multiple layers of social structure might overlay one another. In presenting this model, I offer suggestions for conceptualizing diversity and for the study of any effects it might have on democracy.

1 Introduction

The path between democracy and diversity is puzzling and full of potential pitfalls for scholars seeking to elucidate the causal mechanism linking the two. Nevertheless, the allure of this problem has attracted considerable attention. To date, studies which explore the connection between diversity and democracy suffer from two problems. First, as an independent variable, diversity, modeled using ethno-linguistic fractionalization (ELF), captures diversity on a single dimension of social structure. Multidimensional measures of diversity recognize that the formation of social groups and individual social identity can take many forms and, significantly, these different cleavages interact with one another. In this paper I explain and apply one well-developed measure of multidimensional social structure developed by Selway (2011), cross-cuttingness, to research on diversity and democracy.

The second major problem scholars face in studying the diversity-democracy relationship is that democracy itself is hard to conceptualize. As a dependent variable, scholars frequently use either binary ([?, ?, ?]) or ordinal measures (Freedom House, Polity IV) which aggregate many aspects of the overwhelmingly complex concept that is democracy. Focusing on the individual components which make democracies “democratic” is important given the wide variety of economic, social, political and environmental goals and achievements of states. Rather than rely on a more complicated measure of democracy which combines numerous facets of democracy, this paper accepts a limiting, but theoretically clean measure of democracy—participation in the democratic process by voting. Moreover, by focusing on variation within one country, India, I avoid problems which come from studying turnout across diverse

electoral systems. Subnational bodies are also a more ideal unit of analysis because they more accurately capture diversity which affects individuals on a daily basis in democracies as large as the United States, India, Indonesia or Nigeria where aggregate diversity might be large, but local diversity minimal.

The paper proceeds as follows: The next section (section 2) provides a brief overview of the social structure in my case country of India. In section 3 I build the case for the use of multidimensional measures of social structure in regards to the study of Democracy and in section 4 I conduct a preliminary analysis of the empirical evidence for diversity as a hinderance to democracy. Section 5 concludes.

2 Social Structure in India

India's complex social structure illustrates the problems which arrises when scholars consider diversity along a single dimension without regard to other forms it might take. Group identity in India can form along any of many individual-level identifiers including ethno-linguistic, religious and economic characteristics. Since independence, in its uphill battle to remain democratic, India has faced Hindu-Muslim violence, Maoist insurgency and caste discrimination. Clearly, religion, class and caste divisions in the Indian context matter, and thus a measure of diversity which ignores how multiple layers of identity interact would be insufficient.

India is an ideal case for the analyzing the effect diversity has on democracy because within the country political institutions are relatively constant, but there is significant variation in social structure and levels of diversity of all types.

3 Theory of Cross-cuttingness and Democracy

Cross-national studies exploring the effect of diversity on democracy have produced mixed findings. Fish & Brooks (2004) find that levels of democracy are not significantly different in countries with varying levels of diversity. They acknowledge, but do little to control for multicollinearity between diversity and levels of economic development. Alesina & La Ferrara (2005) use a measure of ethno-linguistic fractionalization to test the theory that an abundance of ethnicity hurts a state's chances for democratization. While in many instances ethnic or linguistic diversity might represent the most salient cleavage in society. But, as in India, this is not always the case. In this case, it would seem that additional indices of fractionalization for religion, class or caste should be incorporated into analyses.

This solution is lacking however when we consider that identity formation on one a single dimension might occur because of the composition of society on another. In other words, layers of social identity interact, either reinforcing or cross-cutting potential groups. Loyalties to identity groups on a single cleavage (e.g. religion) can either conflict or reinforce loyalties to groups on a second dimension (e.g. ethnicity or class). When these loyalties are reinforced, they can lead to a polarized, fractured society (low cross-cuttingness). On the other hand, when loyalties to different social dimensions come into conflict with one another, society tends to be more cohesive and continuous (high cross-cuttingness). To illustrate this point and its possible effects, consider a community with two religions, Hinduism and Islam. The Hindus and Muslims in this hypothetical community speak either Hindi or Urdu. If equal portions of people from the two religious groups speak the two languages we would

say that linguistic-religious cross-cuttingness is high (the two cleavages “cross-cut” one another).

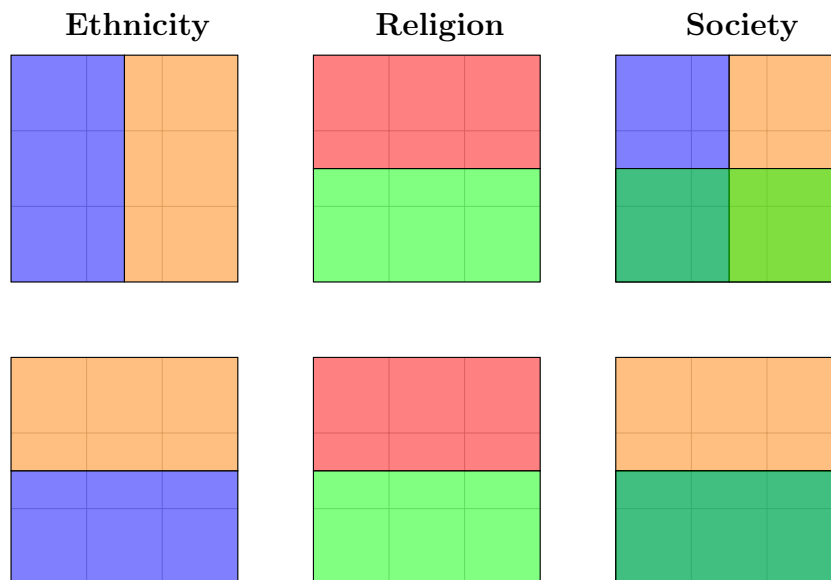


Figure 1: The left most column represents two equally sized groups along a single dimension of identity (e.g. ethno-linguistic group). The middle column represents two equally sized groups along another dimension (e.g. religion). The far right column shows how these two layers of identity might overlap with perfect cross-cuttingness (top-right) and zero cross-cuttingness (bottom-right) on two dimensions.

4 Empirical Analysis

Using data on average turnout in state-level elections from 1987 to 2012, I test the effect of two dimensional cross-cuttingness (ethnolinguistic-religious cross-cuttingness) on turnout in Indian state-level elections. Table 4 contains results from weighted least squares regressions for this relationship with a number of controls for each state: per-

cent urban, literacy rates, GDP, sex ratio and population. The dependent variable is an average measure for turnout across all election years in the designated period. Models 1 and 3 use weights for the variance in turnout across time for each state while the remaining models are weighted according to the state's population size.

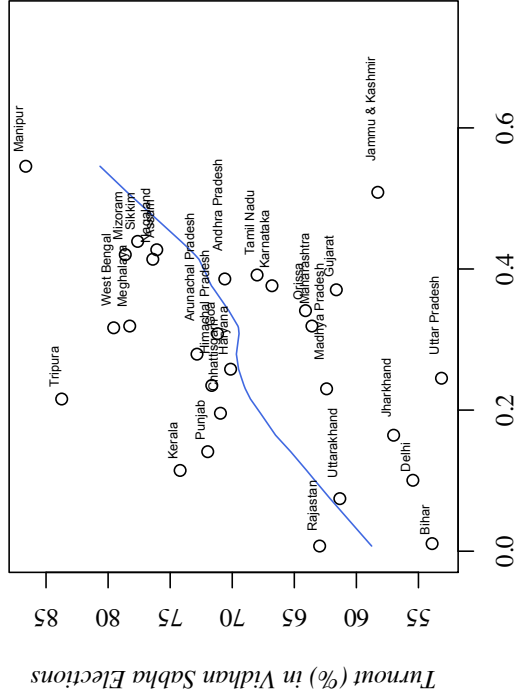
Interestingly, ethno-linguistic fractionalization alone is not significant at the .05 level with or without the measure of linguistic-religious fractionalization. I also include religious fractionalization in model 5 to demonstrate that above and beyond the value each might provide on their own, LRC is valuable in explaining group behavior. This relationship is visualized in figure 4.

Note: I plan to obtain additional data which will allow me to treat each state-election year as a unit of analysis. For this future model I will use time fixed effects, cluster at the state-level, and control for persistence in turnout with generalized method of moments (gmm).

5 Conclusion

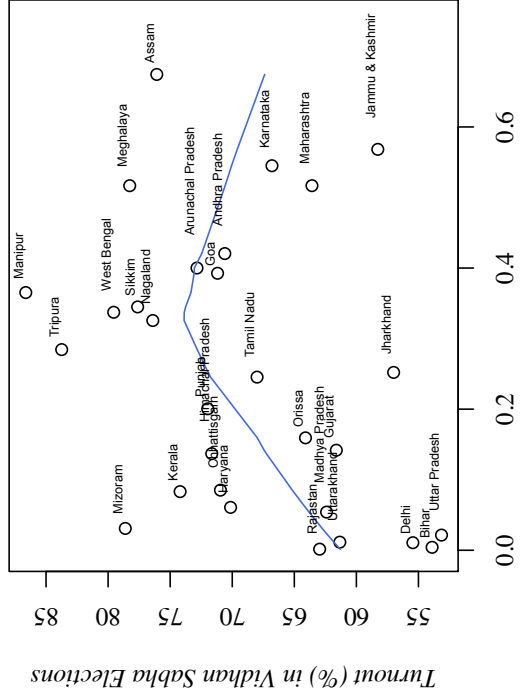
This paper provides preliminary evidence that diversity does hamper democracy. Multidimensional measures of social structure can be useful in studying group formation and group cohesion which are manifest in civic participation. I hope to collect additional data which might facilitate replicating this analysis in Indonesia and Nigeria, two other large and diverse developing democracies.

LRC and Turnout in Indian Elections



Linguistic-Religious Cross-cuttingness

ELF and Turnout in Indian Elections



Ethno-Linguistic Fractionalization

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<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
Turnout in Vidhan Sabha Elections					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
LRC	22.803*** (5.910)	18.331* (9.548)			20.600** (8.793)
EF			-6.362 (10.442)	-20.852 (14.526)	-23.944* (12.937)
RF					16.116 (9.540)
% Urban	-8.231 (7.820)	-15.274 (17.961)	-11.925 (10.673)	-22.223 (18.669)	-20.382 (16.597)
Literacy Rates	0.138 (0.128)	0.312 (0.280)	0.185 (0.187)	0.314 (0.290)	0.202 (0.261)
GDP 2009-10	-0.00003 (0.0001)	0.00003 (0.0001)	-0.00002 (0.0001)	0.0001 (0.0001)	0.00004 (0.0001)
Sex Ratio	0.033 (0.020)	0.052 (0.034)	0.025 (0.026)	0.068* (0.034)	0.044 (0.032)
Population	0.00000*** (0.00000)	0.00000** (0.00000)	0.00000 (0.00000)	0.00000** (0.00000)	0.00000*** (0.00000)
Constant	28.655 (21.713)	-3.774 (30.691)	42.373 (29.147)	-2.576 (32.815)	23.100 (30.570)
Observations	28	29	28	29	29
R ²	0.621	0.598	0.364	0.571	0.694
Adjusted R ²	0.513	0.489	0.182	0.454	0.572
Residual Std. Error	1.238	38,813.120	1.604	40,102.380	35,522.920
F statistic	5.738***	5.462***	2.001	4.885***	5.674***

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 1: Models 1 and 3 use weights for the variance in turnout across time for each state. Models 2, 4 and 5 use population weights. Model 5 includes both ethnic and religious fractionalization and demonstrates that LRC is significant in addition to either alone. The key finding is robust across models.