

Variation in Citizen Participation: Resources & Free-Riding Incentive

Carlos Algara
calgara@ucdavis.edu

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Agenda

- 1 Recapping Madison's Republic
- 2 Participation Costs
- 3 Bias & Madison's Theory

Formalizing *The Republic* Theory of Government

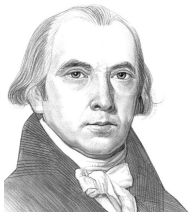
Representing Faction (Primarily Federalist 10)

- ▶ Human Nature \rightarrow_1 Factions \leftrightarrow_2 Representation
- ▶ Where: \rightarrow_1 = Self-interest & \leftrightarrow_2 = Elections
- ▶ Election & re-election (\leftrightarrow_2) critical to theory: protects against agency loss by faction (voters)

Harnessing Self-Interest & Ensuring Conflict (Federalist 51)

- ▶ Three *Departments*: Congress \Leftrightarrow President \Leftrightarrow Judiciary
- ▶ Bicameralism of Congress: U.S. House \Leftrightarrow U.S. Senate
- ▶ Federalism: State governments \Leftrightarrow Federal government
- ▶ Where \Leftrightarrow = conflict & “constitutional rights of place” (i.e. checks & balances/dependence of action)
- ▶ Result: *strong status-quo bias*, why?
- ▶ Differing incentives insured primarily by varying terms & constituency

Revisiting Madison's Theory of the Republic



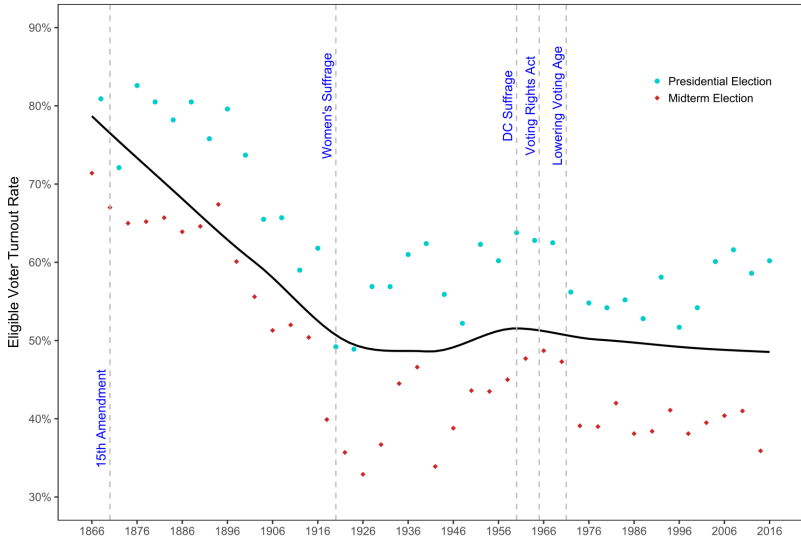
If men were angels, no government would be necessary.

James Madison

- ▶ Opening Question₁: Why is Madison fundamentally concerned about the effects of *human nature*?
- ▶ Opening Question₂: Given that Madison does not seek to limit liberty & control the *causes* of human nature, how does his institutional setup control the *effects*?
- ▶ Opening Question₃: What is one of the main criticisms contemporary political scientists with respect to Madison's *Theory of the Republic*?

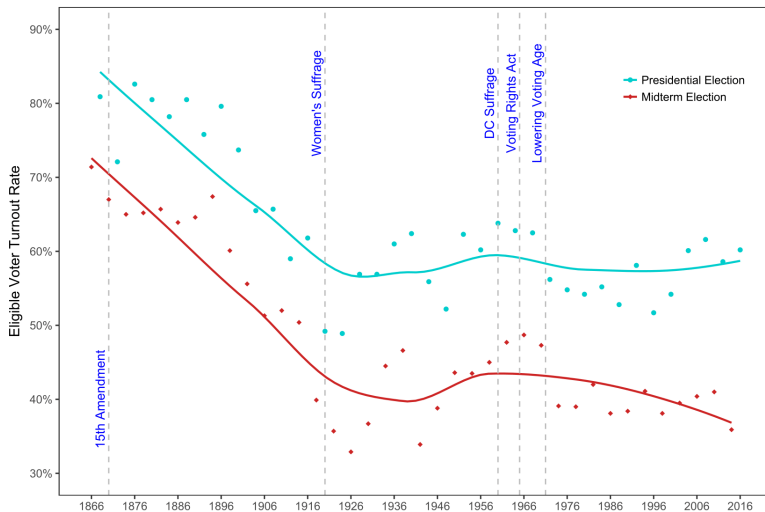
Variation in Political Participation: *Voter Turnout*

National Voter-Turnout in Presidential & Midterm Elections in the United States, 1866-2016



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Defining Political *Participation*

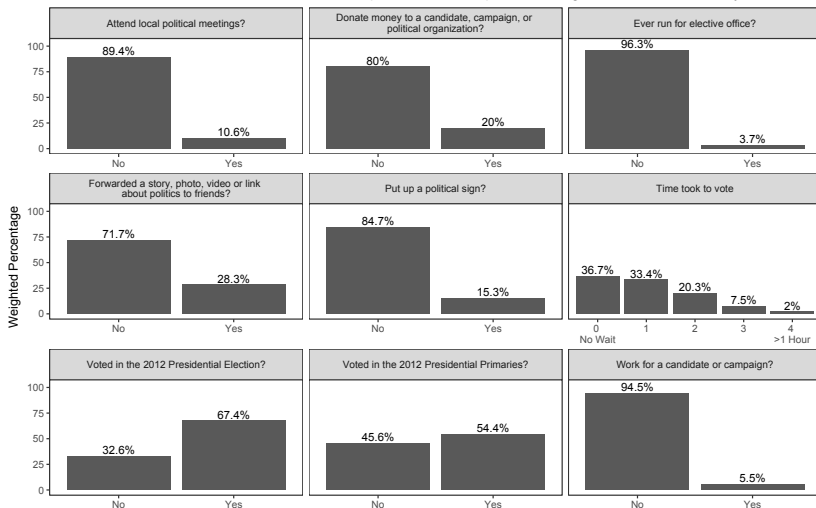
- ▶ ***Political Participation***: Any activity that citizens can undertake to influence government action
- ▶ What are some examples of political participation?
 - ▶ Writing/calling member of Congress
 - ▶ Giving to campaigns/political organizations
 - ▶ Attending rallies & getting out the vote
 - ▶ Running for office (from school board to U.S. Senate/President)
- ▶ How does Madison conceptualize political participation?
- ▶ Believes citizens are motivated by *some common impulse of passion* (self-interest), which guides political behavior
- ▶ Problem with Madison's model of participation?

Participation Costs

- ▶ Madisonian Theory of human behavior ignores the problem of collective action & the constant incentive to free-ride
- ▶ How is *political participation* a costly enterprise?
- ▶ Intrinsic costs to participation:
 - ▶ Shoe-leather walking to polling station/attending rally
 - ▶ Time off work to vote
 - ▶ Time at DMV to receive “voter ID” card
 - ▶ Costs related to *operational* act of participation
- ▶ Information costs to participation:
 - ▶ Developing set of issue beliefs (ideology)
 - ▶ Gathering information of candidate positions & ballot propositions
 - ▶ Study how election of single representative affects ideological distribution of legislature
- ▶ Information costs inherently tied to development of *political self-interest* (preferences)

Variation in Various Forms of Political Participation

Variation in Different Activities of Political Participation, 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study

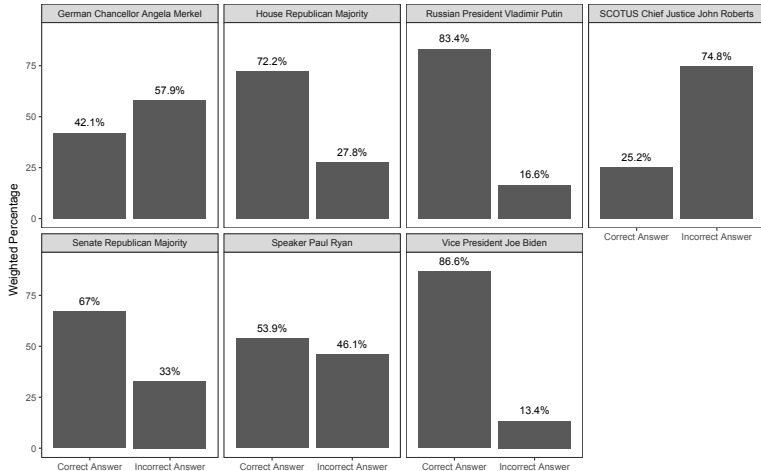


America's Ignorant Voters?

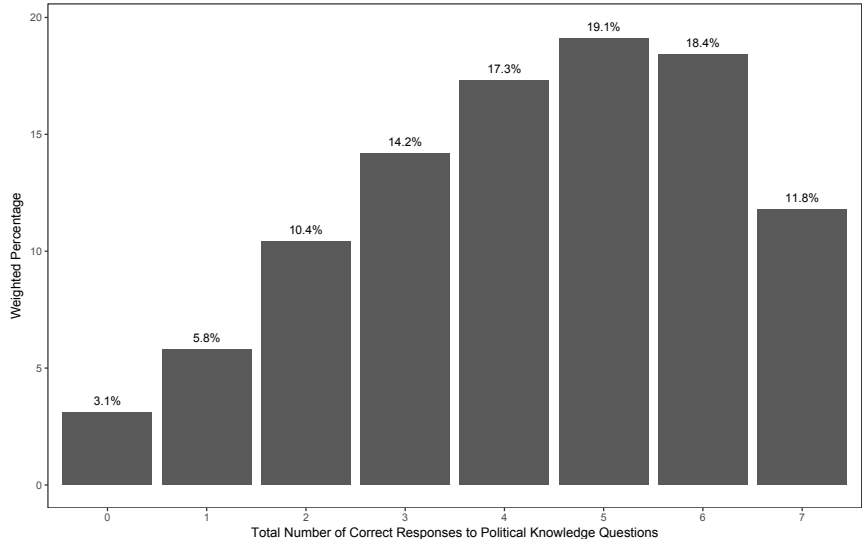
- ▶ What is the thesis presented by Schudson's argument in the article?
- ▶ While some argue: "How can the U.S. **claim** to be a model democracy if its citizens know so little about political life?", Schudson argues that informed citizenry not what founders envisioned
- ▶ Why are Americans ignorant of politics?
 - ▶ *Rational ignorance*
 - ▶ Complexity of political system
 - ▶ Demands of candidate vs. partisan-centered elections?
- ▶ Not much variation in voter ignorance over time, what does this mean?
- ▶ Potential solutions? Cutting down the cost of participation (*heuristics*) or alternative model of representation through civic engagement in groups (*pluralism*) . . . that's where we're headed

Evidence of Low Political Sophistication

Variation in Citizen Response to Office Recall Battery, 2016 American National Election Study



Total Number of Correct Responses to Office Recall Battery, 2016 American National Election Study



Citizens Ignorant of Congress! (Mondak et al. 2007)

TABLE 1 Knowledge about Congress: Procedures, Politics, and Policies

	Percentage of Respondents Answering Correctly
Procedures	
1. Who has the final responsibility to decide if a law is constitutional or not? Is it the president, the Congress, or the Supreme Court?	69.9
2. Whose responsibility is it to nominate judges to the federal courts? Is it the president, the Congress, or the Supreme Court?	61.5
3. How much of a majority is required for the U.S. Senate and House to override a presidential veto? Is it a bare majority, a two-thirds majority, or a three-fourths majority?	68.6
4. What is the main duty of the U.S. Congress? Is it to write legislation, to administer the president's policies, or to supervise the states' governments?	67.8
5. How long is the term of office for a United States senator? Is it two years, four years, or six years?	45.4
6. And how long is the term of office for the U.S. House? Is it two years, four years, or six years?	43.6
7. If the House and the Senate pass different versions of a bill, what happens? Does the president choose which version he wants to sign, does the Supreme Court review the two versions, or do the House and Senate attempt to work out a compromise?	77.1
8. Where in Congress does most of the work on legislation take place? In committees, in floor debates, or in filibusters?	76.4
9. If there is a tie vote in the Senate, who casts the tie-breaking vote? The president, the vice president, or the Speaker of the House?	43.6
Politics	
10. Which one of the parties is more conservative than the other at the national level? Is it the Democrats or the Republicans?	77.0
11. As things currently stand, which party has the most seats in the U.S. House of Representatives? (post-election wording: As things currently stand, which party will have the most seats in the next session of the U.S. House of Representatives?)	66.1
12. As things currently stand, which party has the most seats in the U.S. Senate? (post-election wording: As things currently stand, which party will have the most seats in the U.S. Senate?)	60.5
Policies	
13. Congress has considered many bills since George W. Bush was elected president. In the last two years, has Congress passed tax cut legislation?	78.2
14. Has Congress issued a formal declaration of war in the last two years?	65.2
15. Has Congress passed legislation to restrict the sale of handguns in the last two years?	56.6
16. Has Congress passed campaign finance reform legislation in the last two years?	59.9

Source: 2002 Exercising Citizenship in American Democracy survey.

Revisiting Collective Action & *Paradox of Voting*

Modeling the calculus to vote¹

$$R = P(B) - C$$

Where:

- ▶ R = utility from voting/participation
- ▶ P = probability of a pivotal vote
- ▶ B = benefit of voting/advocating for candidate
- ▶ C = the cost of participating

When to expect voting & participation:

- ▶ $R > 0$ which means $C < (P * B)$
- ▶ What would the model predict?
- ▶ Model predicts rational abstention & free-riding by citizens
- ▶ However, yet people vote/participate! This is the **Paradox of Voting**

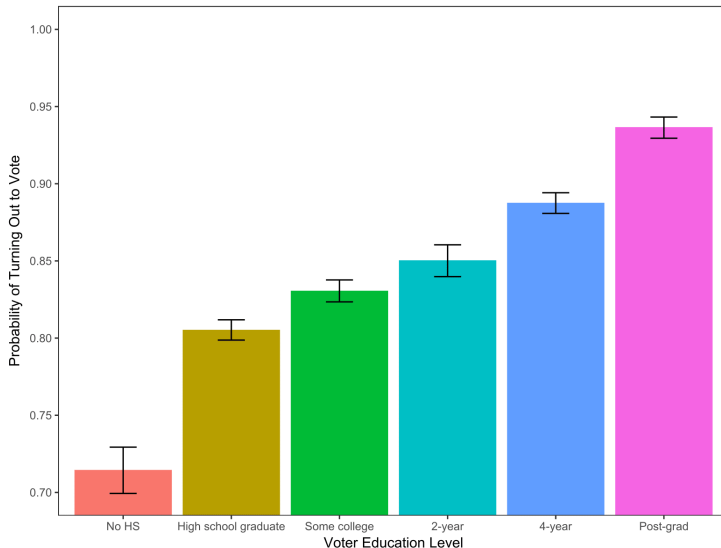
¹I also apply Riker & Ordeshok's (1968) model to political participation

Riker's & Ordeshok's *Paradox* Cont.

- ▶ Is the cost constant across citizens or even factions (aggregations of citizens)?
- ▶ What salient variables predicts variation in political participation?
- ▶ Education helps cut down on information costs through various means, professions/formal education/interpersonal networks

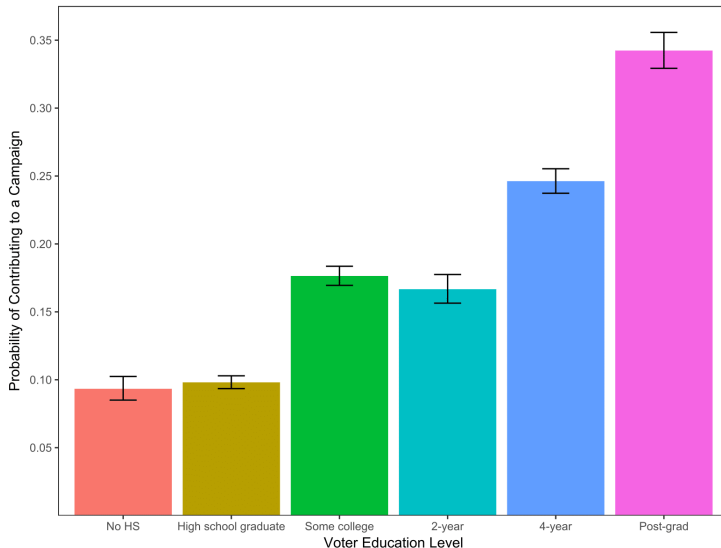
Education Levels & Voter Turnout, 2014 Elections

Probability of Voter Turnout by Education Level in the 2014 Midterm Elections



Education Levels & Campaign Contributing, 2014 Elections

Probability of Being a Campaign Donor by Education Level in the 2014 Midterm Elections

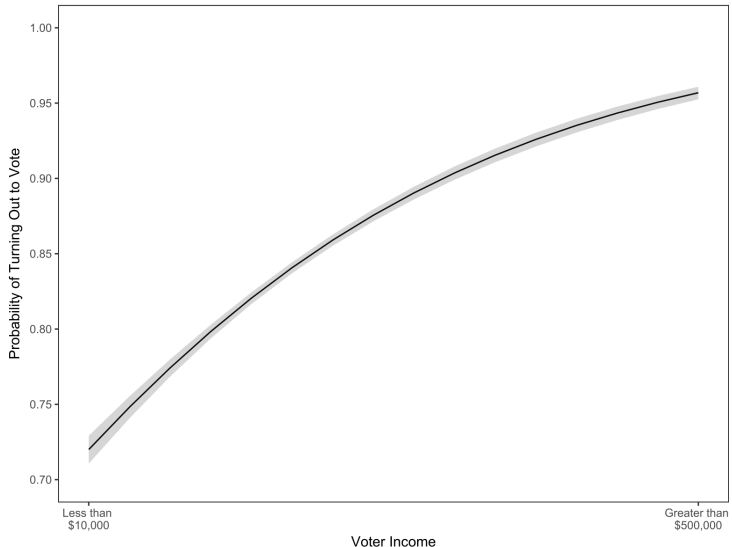


Riker's & Ordeshok's *Paradox* Cont.

- ▶ Is the cost constant across citizens or even factions (aggregations of citizens)?
- ▶ What salient variables predicts variation in political participation?
- ▶ Education helps cut down on information costs through various means, professions/formal education/interpersonal networks
- ▶ Education less of a predictor for becoming a campaign donor than voting, why?
- ▶ Income also helps cut down on information & intrinsic costs through various mechanisms (interpersonal networks, personal investment in policy outcomes, etc.)

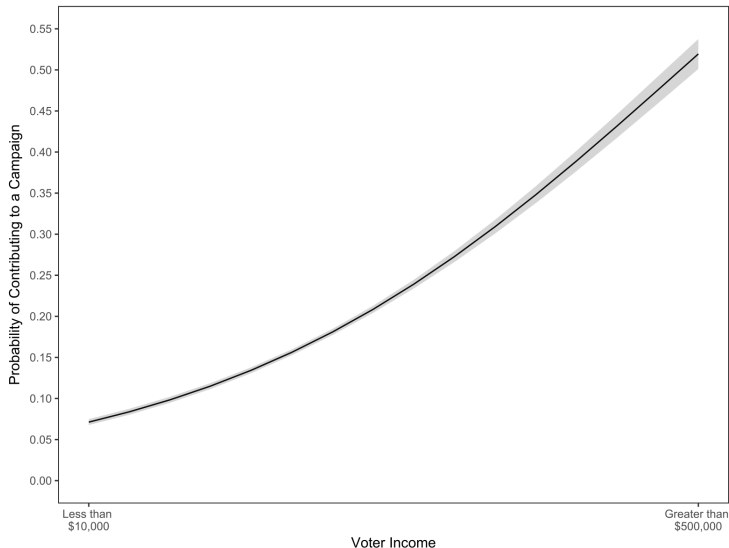
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Implications for Madison's Theory

- ▶ Why is the effect of education on voting turnout higher than the effect of income? Why might this pattern be reversed for contributing money to a campaign?
- ▶ How do the figures overcome the “paradox of voting?”
- ▶ Thinking about Madison's theory, why would resource bias in who participates be a problem? Why might it not be?
- ▶ Madison would be worried if *resource bias* exists, in that the preferences of those that participate in “faction” is incongruent with the preferences of the faction as a whole.
- ▶ *Implication*: Representatives would be responsive to preferences of only those that participate, not faction at-large

What does a Resource Bias Look Like?

Eligible Participants

**No Bias**

Actual Participants

=



Eligible Participants

**Bias**

Actual Participants

≠

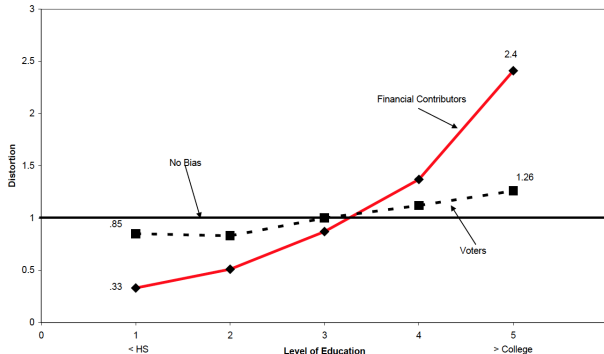


Imagine a society in which individual “sneetches” with stars on their bellies (“stars on thars”) are high status, high resource individuals, whereas individuals without “stars on thars” are low status, low resource individuals.¹ In the “no bias” situation, star-bellied sneetches are no more likely to participate than sneetches without stars. In the “bias” situation, star-bellied sneetches participate at higher rates than their less fortunate compatriots.

Source: Stone (2016) UC Davis Pol 1 Seminar

Bias in Representation?

Evidence of Resource Bias: Representation Ratios for Contributors and Voters by Education Level

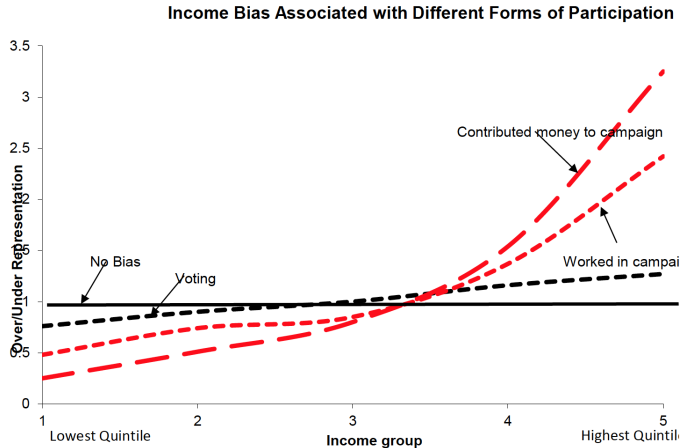


Source: Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen, *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America* (Macmillan, 1993) p. 237.

Note: "Distortion" or "bias" is measured on the Y axis as the ratio of the (rate of participation in the group)/(rate of participation in the population). Thus if 10% of the population contributes money to a campaign, the absence of bias would mean that all education groups would contribute at a rate of 10%:

No bias = $(10\% \text{ in the group}) / (10\% \text{ in the population}) = 1.0$. There is substantial bias associated with level of education in the graph because the lowest level of education is under-represented in its rate of contributing (e.g., $3.3\% / 10\% = .33$) and the highest education group is contributing at a much higher than average rate (e.g., $24\% / 10\% = 2.4$).

Bias in Representation?



Is Madison Salvageable? Models of Electoral Choice

Models of Electoral Control

<i>Heuristic</i>	Vote-Choice Model	Implications for Representatives	Analytical Purposes
Ideology	Spatial/Proximity Voting	Responsive to Median Voter	Representation & Candidate Positioning
Partisanship	Michigan Model	Responsive to Partisan Base	Explaining vote choice/partisan bias
Valence	Retrospective Model/Valence Rule	Develop reputation, (honesty/integrity), monitor economy	Explaining electoral outcomes, pres. forecasting

Note: Partisanship & ideology are generally prospective models.

Key Points:

- ▶ Madison fails to account for the problem of collective action in his model of human nature
- ▶ Citizens not simply motivated by self-interest, strong incentive to free-ride from like-minded citizens
- ▶ Madison fails to account for cost of participating in politics
- ▶ Information costs dominate ability of citizens to participate, variation in participation across different modes
- ▶ Riker & Ordeshok's Model predicts no one would participate, yet they do (*Paradox of Voting*)
- ▶ Education & income help citizens overcome information costs
- ▶ Resource bias exists in the system due to participation costs, Madison would be concerned