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 Question**: Why is Madison fundamentally concerned about the effects of *human nature*?
- **Opening Question**: Given that Madison does not seek to limit liberty & control the *causes* of human nature, how does his institutional setup control the *effects*?
- **Opening Question**: 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
Variation in Political Participation: Voter Turnout

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

- Presidential Election
- Midterm Election

Key Events:
- 15th Amendment: 1870
- Women’s Suffrage: Early 20th Century
- DC Suffrage: 1974
- Voting Rights Act: 1965
- Lowering Voting Age: 1971

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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?
Recapping Madison’s Republic

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

- **Attend local political meetings?**
  - No: 10.6%
  - Yes: 89.4%

- **Donate money to a candidate, campaign, or political organization?**
  - No: 20%
  - Yes: 80%

- **Ever run for elective office?**
  - No: 96.3%
  - Yes: 3.7%

- **Forwarded a story, photo, video or link about politics to friends?**
  - No: 28.3%
  - Yes: 71.7%

- **Put up a political sign?**
  - No: 15.3%
  - Yes: 84.7%

- **Time took to vote**
  - No Wait: 7.5%
  - 1: 36.7%
  - 2: 33.4%
  - 3: 20.3%
  - >1 Hour: 2%

- **Voted in the 2012 Presidential Election?**
  - No: 67.4%
  - Yes: 32.6%

- **Voted in the 2012 Presidential Primaries?**
  - No: 54.4%
  - Yes: 45.6%

- **Work for a candidate or campaign?**
  - No: 94.5%
  - Yes: 5.5%
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Correct Answer</th>
<th>Incorrect Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>German Chancellor Angela Merkel</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Republican Majority</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian President Vladimir Putin</td>
<td>83.4%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCOTUS Chief Justice John Roberts</td>
<td>74.8%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate Republican Majority</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker Paul Ryan</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President Joe Biden</td>
<td>86.6%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Total Number of Correct Responses to Office Recall Battery, 2016 American National Election Study

- Total Number of Correct Responses to Political Knowledge Questions
- Weighed Percentage
- Total Number of Correct Responses to Office Recall Battery
### Table 1: Knowledge about Congress: Procedures, Politics, and Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedures</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents Answering Correctly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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?</td>
<td>69.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Whose responsibility is it to nominate judges to the federal courts? Is it the president, the Congress, or the Supreme Court?</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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?</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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?</td>
<td>67.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How long is the term of office for a United States senator? Is it two years, four years, or six years?</td>
<td>45.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. And how long is the term of office for the U.S. House? Is it two years, four years, or six years?</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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?</td>
<td>77.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Where in Congress does most of the work on legislation take place? In committees, in floor debates, or in filibusters?</td>
<td>76.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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?</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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 |

**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 |

Revisiting Collective Action & *Paradox of Voting*

Modeling the calculus to vote

\[ R = P(B) - C \]

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

\(^1\)I 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

- No HS
- High school graduate
- Some college
- 2-year
- 4-year
- Post-grad

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

- No HS
- High school graduate
- Some college
- 2-year
- 4-year
- Post-grad

Education Levels & Campaign Contributing, 2014 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.)
Income Levels & Voter Turnout, 2014 Elections

Probability of Voter Turnout by Income Level in the 2014 Midterm Elections
Income Levels & Campaign Contributing, 2014 Elections

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

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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.
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. 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


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% in the group)/(10% 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?

Income Bias Associated with Different Forms of Participation

- No Bias
- Voting
- Contributed money to campaign
- Worked in campaign

Over/Under Representation

Income Group

Quintiles:
- Lowest Quintile
- Highest Quintile
## Is Madison Salvageable? Models of Electoral Choice

### Models of Electoral Control

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

*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.