

Overcoming Limited Information: How Citizens use Short-Cuts to Act

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Agenda

- 1 Revisiting the Paradox & Possible Solution
- 2 Spatial Model
- 3 Partisan (Michigan) Model
- 4 Candidate Valence Model

Implications of the “Top of the Head” Model

- ▶ Variation in citizen capacity to develop political preferences & participate in politics
- ▶ Citizens have *rational* incentives to abstain from politics & act on limited information as possible
- ▶ How does cost of participation & Zaller's Model fit with Madison's Theory of the Republic where:
 - ▶ 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)
- ▶ The implications of theory on Madison is the *democratic dilemma*, expectation that citizens must be fully informed to engage in politics even though they have a rational incentive not to be
- ▶ *Heuristics* help citizens *act* as if they are fully informed, providing *short-cuts* to make *correct* decisions

Models of *Electoral Control*

Models of Electoral Control

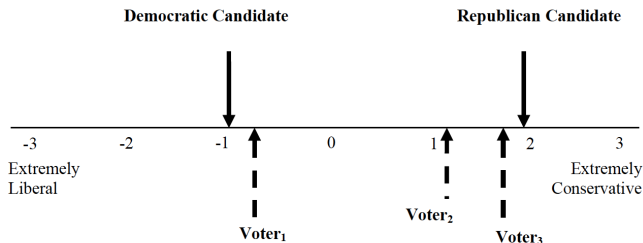
<i>Heuristic</i>	Vote-Choice Model	Implications for Representatives	Analytical Purposes
Ideology	Spatial/Proximity Voting	Responsive to Median Voter	Representation & Candidate Positioning
Partisanship	Michigan Model	Responsive to Partisan Base	Explaining vote choice/partisan bias
Valence	Retrospective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

Note: Partisanship & ideology are generally prospective models.

Using Ideological Self-Interest (Preferences) as a Short-Cut

- ▶ Ideology = coherent & consistent *belief system* around a set of policy issues
- ▶ Traditional view is that ideology limited to elites rather than mass public, costly to develop *consistent* issue beliefs
- ▶ Heuristic where voters are able to place themselves & candidates on the same scale, with voters choosing candidates that are closer to them in ideological proximity
- ▶ Model assumes voter capacity to place *themselves* & *candidate*
- ▶ “Correct” vote is voting for the candidate closest to voter in ideological proximity

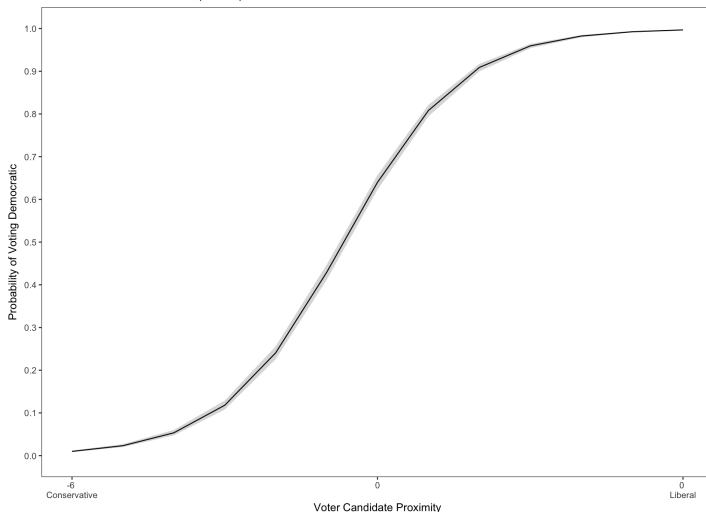
The Spatial Model of Voters & Candidate



- ▶ Assume that the three voters are able to place themselves on the unidimensional liberal-conservative space & the positions of the two candidates are known
- ▶ How will each voter vote according to the spatial model of “proximity voting?” Why?
- ▶ What would be a spatially incorrect vote for each voter?
- ▶ Which candidate is more “moderate” on the scale?

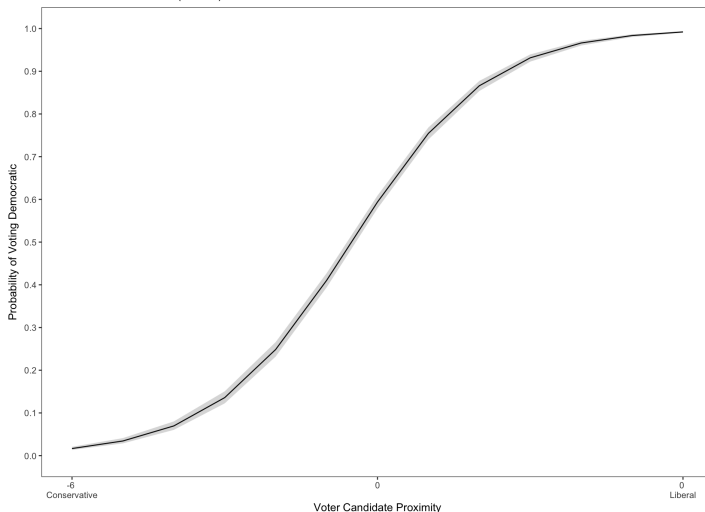
Evidence of Spatial Voting in 2016 Presidential Election

Probability of Voting Democratic by Ideological Proximity & Correct Ideological Placement of Candidates, 2016 Presidential Election (CCES)



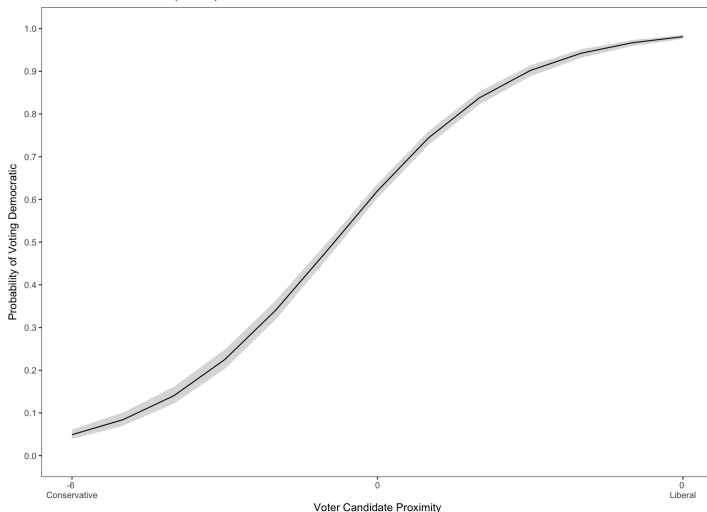
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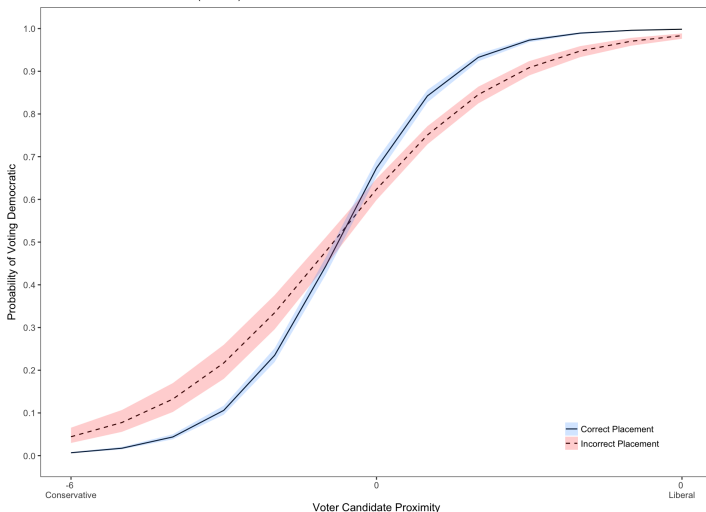
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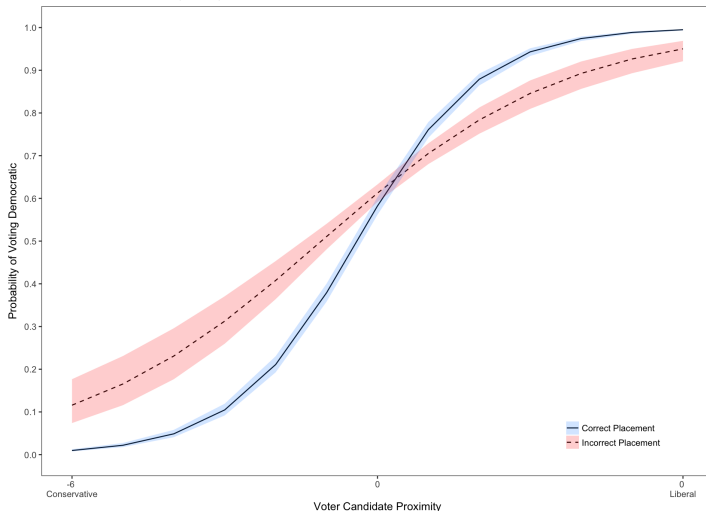
Limitation of the Heuristic? Presidential Election

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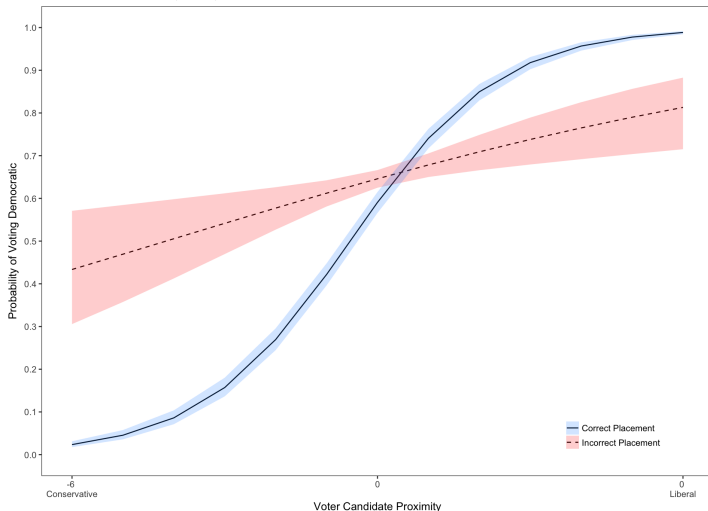
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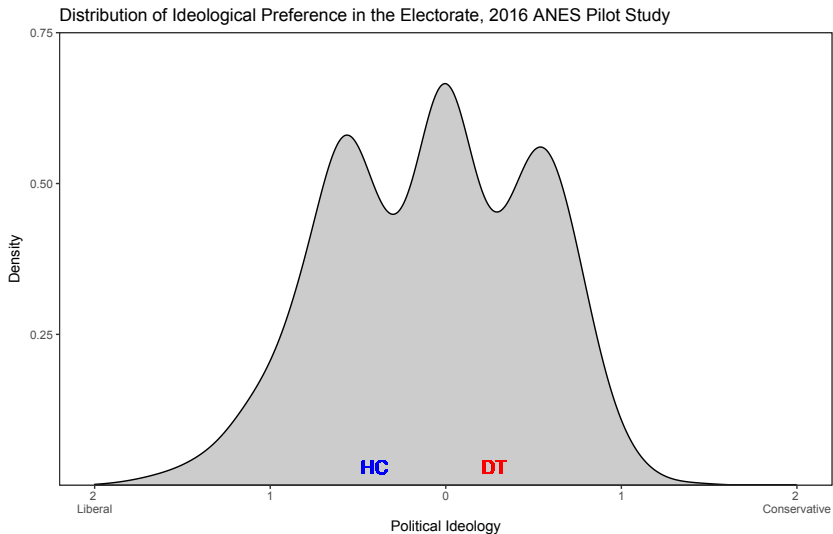
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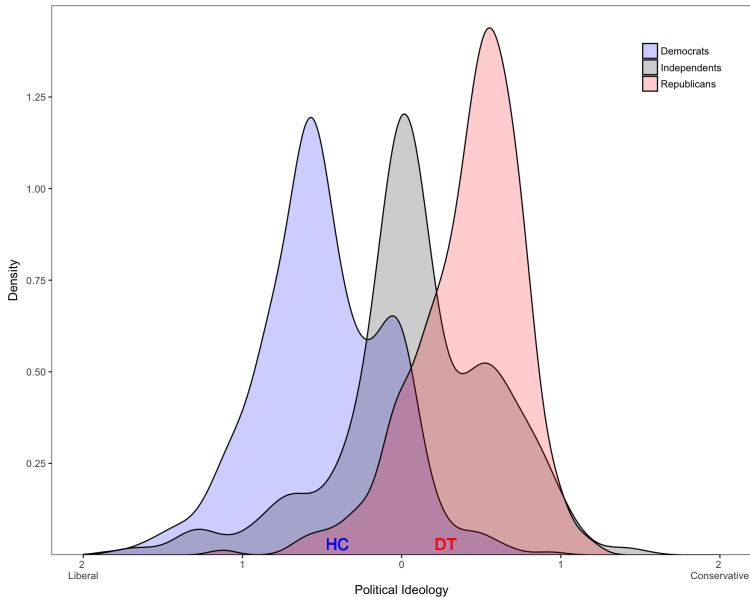


Assessing the Spatial Model

- ▶ Does the spatial model help explain vote-choice?
- ▶ What are the fundamental assumptions of the spatial model & how citizens form political opinions?
- ▶ Why would you think there is variation in the effect of ideology on voting different among voters that are able to place candidates “correctly” than those that can’t?
- ▶ Under this model, what should candidates in a two-candidate do?
- ▶ Evidence of convergence towards the median voter?
- ▶ If true, what are the implications for congressional representation?

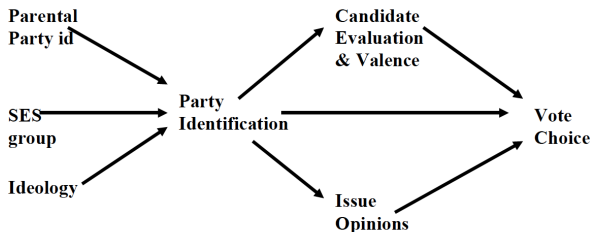


Distribution of Ideological Preference in the Electorate, 2016 ANES Pilot Study



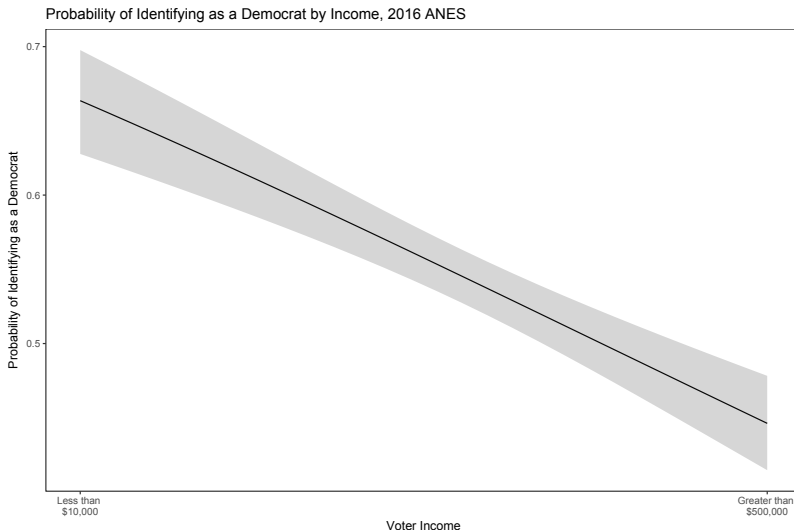
The Partisan Model of Voting

“MICHIGAN MODEL” OF VOTING CHOICE

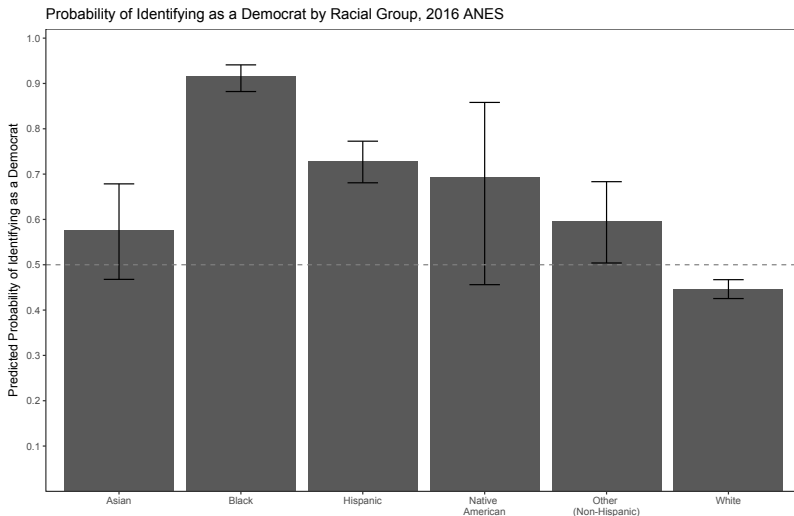


- ▶ “The first & perhaps most important political heuristic is relying on a candidate’s party affiliation.” (Lau & Redlawsk)
- ▶ Partisanship influenced by socialization, resources, & ideology
- ▶ Important heuristic for voting, valence evaluations (economy, candidates) & issue opinions

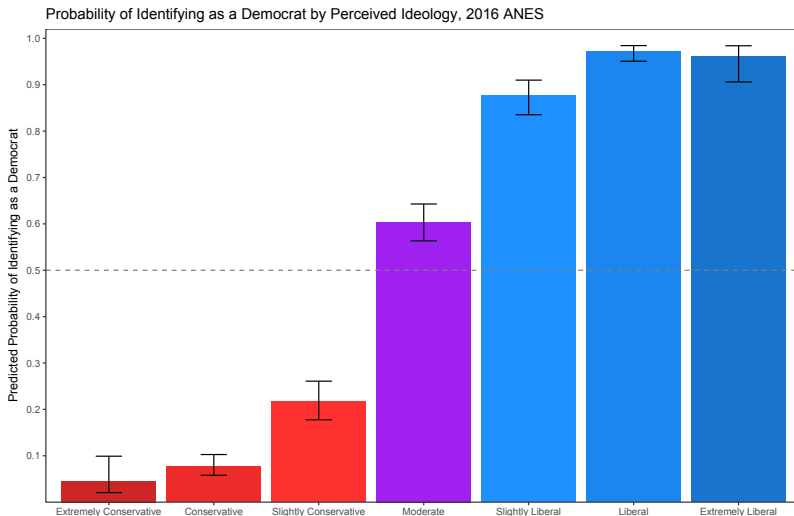
Evidence of Michigan Model?: Determinants of PID



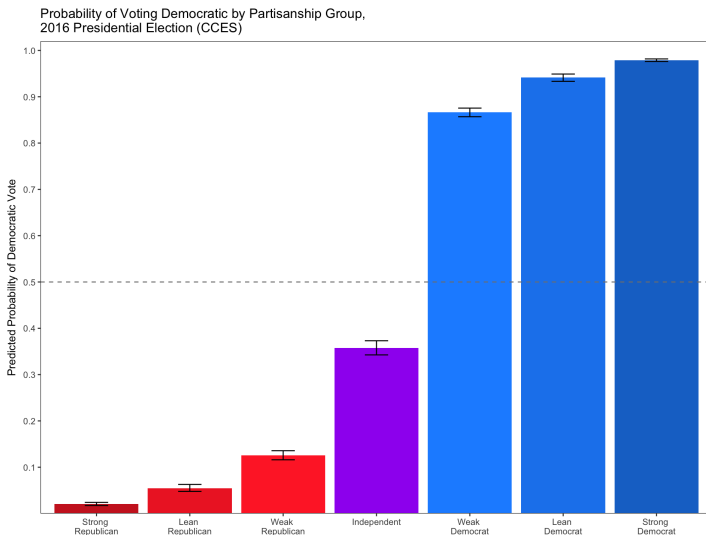
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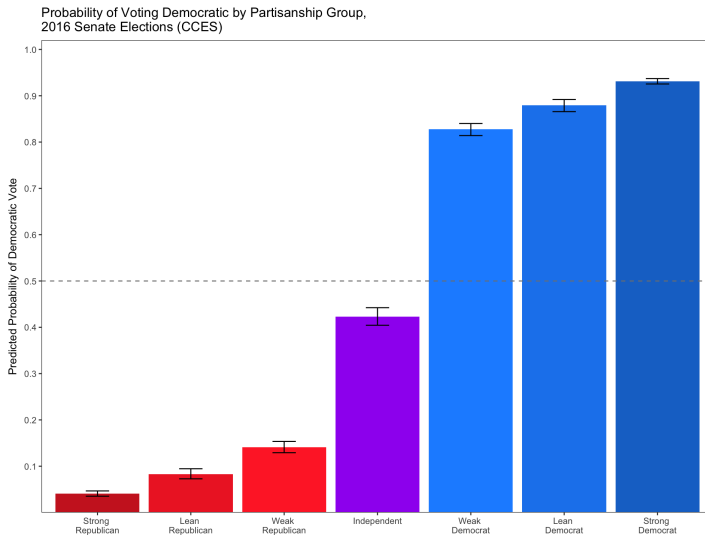
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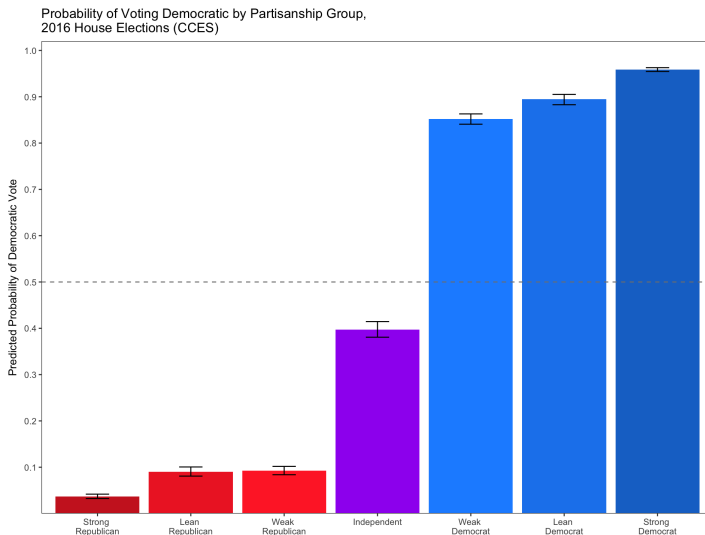
Partisan Voting in the 2016 Presidential Election



Partisan Voting in the 2016 Senate Elections

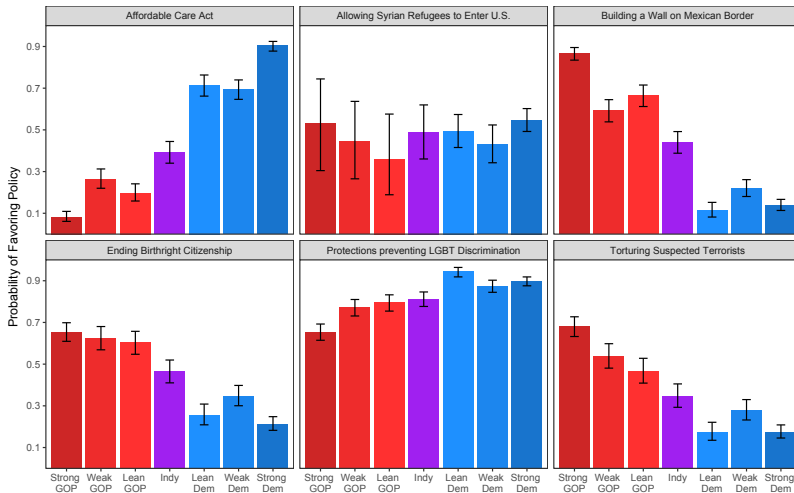


Partisan Voting in the 2016 House Elections



Partisan Effect on Policy Preferences

Predicted Probability of Favoring Various Policies by Partisanship, 2016 ANES



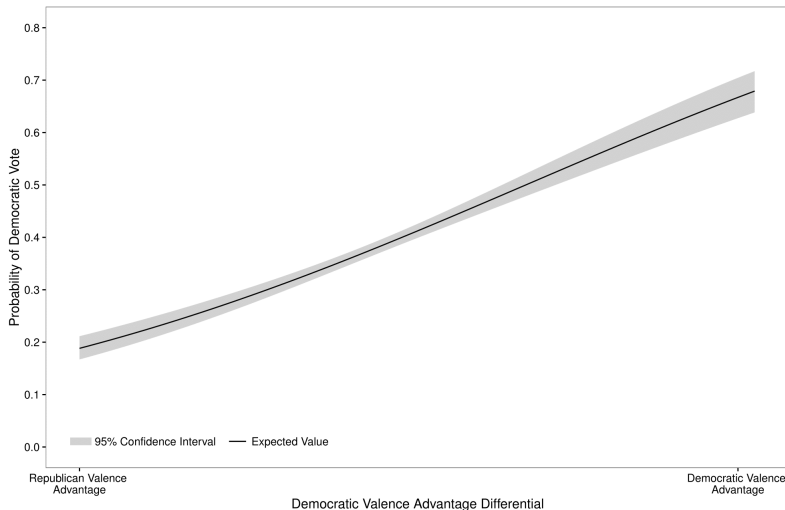
Assessing the *Partisan Model*

- ▶ Does this model help explain vote-choice in the 2016 presidential elections?
- ▶ Partisanship is a “sticky” form of identification, voters are “resistant” to changing their partisanship (Michigan Model)
- ▶ What are some of the potential pitfalls of the partisan model of voting?
- ▶ No mention of ideology on policy issues of candidates & parties
- ▶ Can distort spatial voting, especially in *depolarized* races and lead to incorrect inferences about candidate positions (conservative Democrats & Liberal Republicans)
- ▶ Can distort *objective* valence assessments: such as state of economy.

Valence as a Heuristic

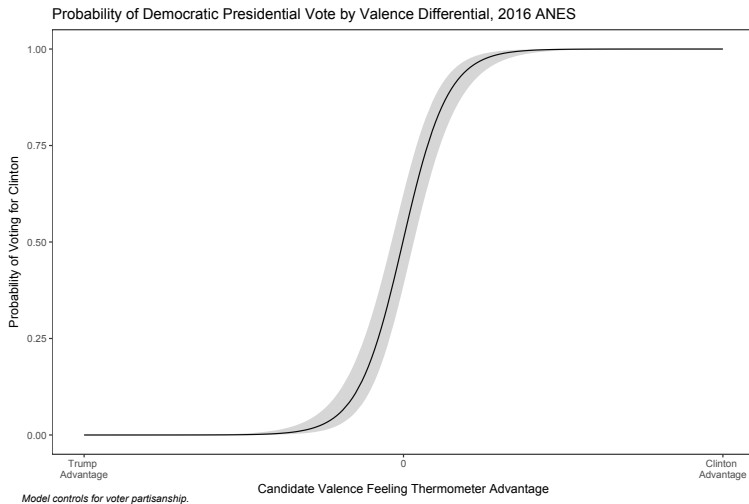
- ▶ What are valence considerations?
- ▶ Non-policy conditions valued by the electorate as a whole
 - ▶ “Good” & robust economy (see *Meeting 5*)
 - ▶ Trustworthy & competent (ability to *solve problems*) politicians
 - ▶ Politicians with integrity & grasp of important issues
- ▶ By definition, valence does not have a policy component to it
- ▶ Requires voters to form opinions about valence considerations
- ▶ Testing the effect of valence in U.S. House & Pres elections
 - ▶ DV: Vote for the Democratic candidate
 - ▶ IV: Difference in valence between the Democratic and Republican candidate
 - ▶ Valence = competency, integrity, trustworthiness, problem solver, issue grasp, qualified for office, public servant
 - ▶ Data: 2010 UC Davis Election Study & 2016 ANES

Evidence of Valence Effect in U.S. House Elections, 2010

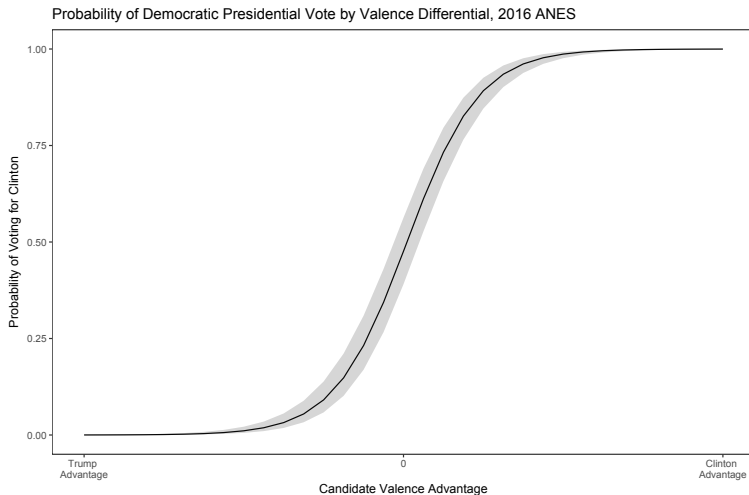


Robust standard errors clustered by 404 districts. DV: Democratic vote, $N = 32,243$

Evidence of Valence Effect in 2016 Presidential Election



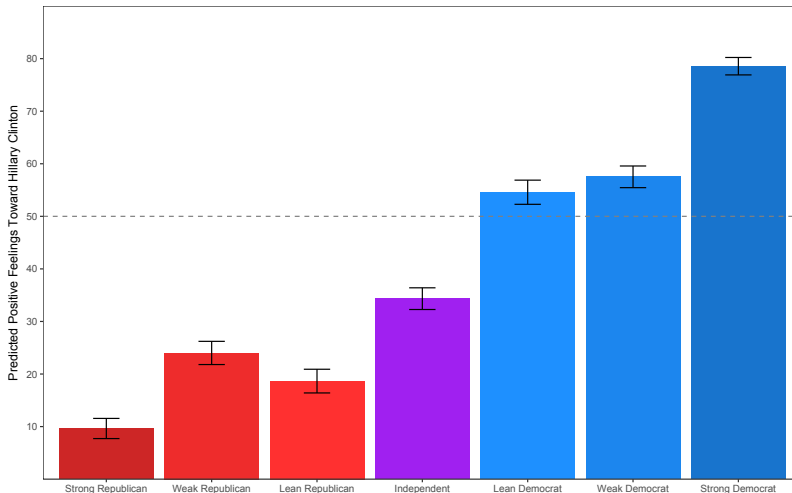
Evidence of Valence Effect in 2016 Presidential Election



Model controls for voter partisanship. Valence differential = difference in mean candidate valence evaluation (honesty, caring, knowledgeable, strong leader)

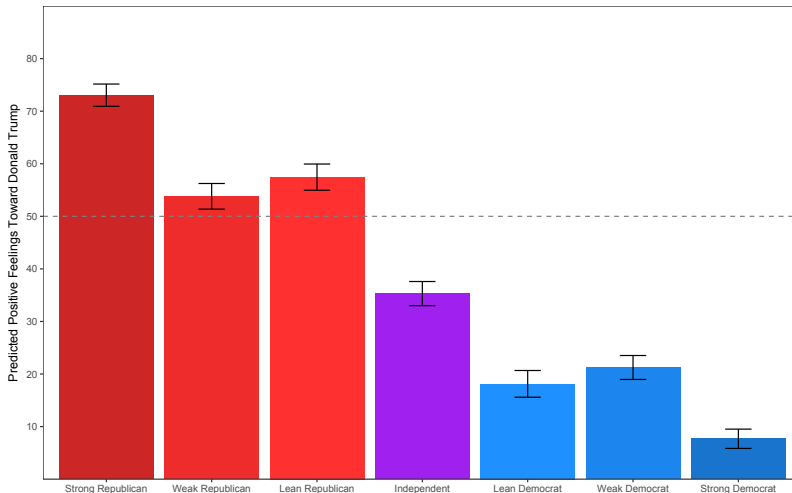
Potential Pitfall: *Partisan Bias in Valence*

Linear Prediction of Positive Feelings Toward Clinton by Partisanship, 2016 ANES



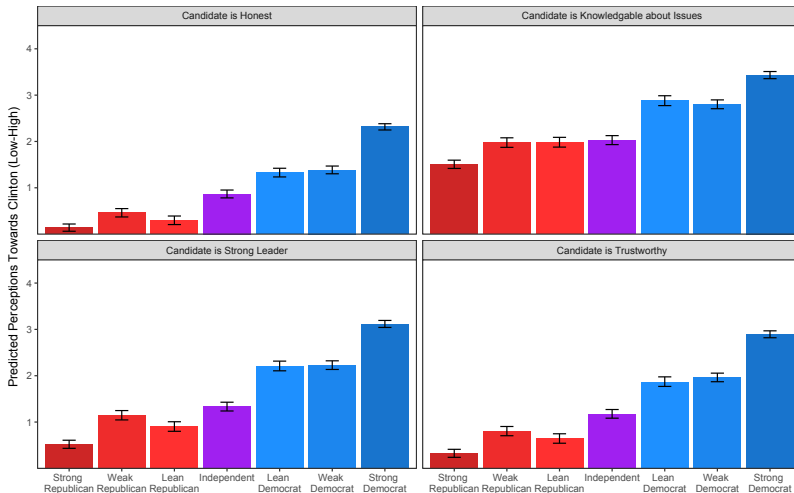
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Linear Prediction of Positive Feelings Toward Trump by Partisanship, 2016 ANES



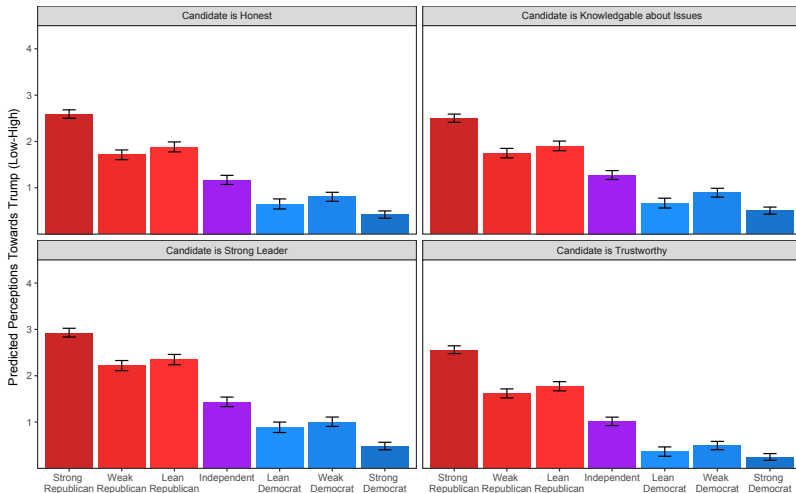
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Linear Prediction of Valence Perceptions of Clinton by Partisan Group, 2016 ANES



Potential Pitfall: *Partisan Bias in Valence*

Linear Prediction of Valence Perceptions of Trump by Partisan Group, 2016 ANES



Solving the *Democratic Dilemma*? Key Points:

- ▶ Madison's theory requires that citizens act on their "self-interest" when selecting their representatives (incentives)
- ▶ However, voters have a strong incentive to abstain from politics or act on as little information as possible (*democratic dilemma*)
- ▶ Heuristics help voters act rationally ("correctly") *as if they are fully informed*
- ▶ Support for spatial model, but requires voter ability to 1) have ideological preferences and 2) to place candidates on the left-right scale
- ▶ Support for partisan model but no mention of candidate positions, potential distortion & partisanship "sticky" identification
- ▶ Support for valence model but assessments abstract & open to partisan bias