Variation in Citizen Participation: Resources & Free-Riding Incentive

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Agenda

1. Recapping Madison’s Republic
2. Elections as Mechanisms of Institutional Control
3. Participation Costs
4. Bias & Madison’s Theory
Revisiting Madison’s Theory of the Republic

If men were angels, no government would be necessary.

James Madison

Opening Question 1: Why is Madison fundamentally concerned about the effects of human nature?
Revisiting Madison’s Theory of the Republic

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- **Opening Question 1:** Why is Madison fundamentally concerned about the effects of *human nature*?
- **Opening Question 2:** Given that Madison does not seek to limit liberty & control the *causes* of human nature, how does his institutional setup control the *effects*?
Revisiting Madison’s Theory of the Republic

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- Opening Question\textsubscript{1}: Why is Madison fundamentally concerned about the effects of human nature?
- Opening Question\textsubscript{2}: 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\textsubscript{3}: What is one of the main criticisms contemporary political scientists with respect to Madison’s Theory of the Republic?
## Models of Electoral Control

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**Note:** Partisanship & ideology are generally prospective models.
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    \item Problem with Madison’s model of participation?
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- Information costs inherently tied to development of political self-interest (preferences)
Variation in Political Participation: Voter Turnout

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

- 15th Amendment
- Women’s Suffrage
- DC Suffrage
- Voting Rights Act
- Lowering Voting Age

- Presidential Election
- Midterm Election

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Events:
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**Key Dates:**
- 1866: 15th Amendment
- 1926: Voting Rights Act
- 1956: Lowering Voting Age

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Variation in Various Forms of Political Participation

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

- **Attend local political meetings?**
  - No: 75%
  - Yes: 25%

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

- **Ever run for elective office?**
  - No: 75%
  - Yes: 25%

- **Forwarded a story, photo, video or link about politics to friends?**
  - No: 60%
  - Yes: 40%

- **Put up a political sign?**
  - No: 80%
  - Yes: 20%

- **Time took to vote**
  - No Wait: 30%
  - 1: 20%
  - 2: 10%
  - 3: 10%
  - >1 Hour: 10%

- **Voted in the 2012 Presidential Election?**
  - No: 40%
  - Yes: 60%

- **Voted in the 2012 Presidential Primaries?**
  - No: 40%
  - Yes: 60%

- **Work for a candidate or campaign?**
  - No: 75%
  - Yes: 25%
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
Revisiting Collective Action & *Paradox of Voting*

Modeling the calculus to vote

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

Where:

- \( R \) = utility from voting/participation

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

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Recapping Madison’s Republic  Elections as Mechanisms of Institutional Control  Participation Costs  Bias & Madison’s Theory

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

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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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Education Levels & Campaign Contributing, 2014 Elections

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

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Voter Education Level
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Income Levels & Voter Turnout, 2014 Elections

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

- Probability of Turning Out to Vote
- Voter Income

Graph shows an upward trend indicating that as voter income increases, the probability of turning out to vote also increases.
Recapping Madison’s Republic Elections as Mechanisms of Institutional Control Participation Costs Bias & Madison’s Theory

Income Levels & Campaign Contributing, 2014 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?
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▶ 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.
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- Implication: Representatives would be responsive to preferences of only those that participate, not faction at-large.
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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 vs. Income group

Lowest Quintile | 1st Quintile | 2nd Quintile | 3rd Quintile | 4th Quintile | Highest Quintile

0 | 0.5 | 1 | 2 | 2.5 | 3 | 3.5

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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.