Developing Political Preferences: Citizen Self-Interest

Carlos Algara

calgara@ucdavis.edu

July 5, 2017
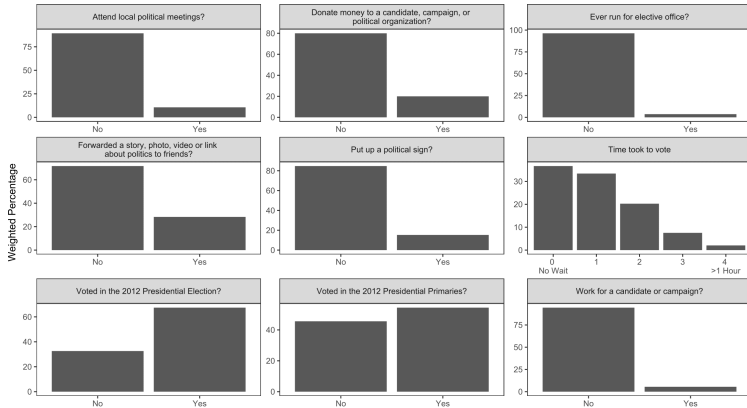
UCDAVIS
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Agenda

1 Revising the "Paradox"

2 How to Measure Preference & Public Opinion

Revisiting Variation in Political Participation

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

▶ Opening question: Why do you think people participate in politics when it's rational to abstain?

Paradox of Voting & Rational Abstention

Revisiting Riker & Ordeshok's (1968) Calculus of Voting Theory:

Paradox of Voting & Rational Abstention

Revisiting Riker & Ordeshok's (1968) Calculus of Voting Theory:

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

Paradox of Voting & Rational Abstention

Revisiting Riker & Ordeshok's (1968) Calculus of Voting Theory:

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

▶ What do the variables in the equation ($R, P, B,$ & C) operationalize?

Paradox of Voting & Rational Abstention

Revisiting Riker & Ordeshok's (1968) Calculus of Voting Theory:

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

- ▶ What do the variables in the equation ($R, P, B,$ & C) operationalize?
- ▶ Under what conditions do citizens vote or participate in politics?

Paradox of Voting & Rational Abstention

Revisiting Riker & Ordeshok's (1968) Calculus of Voting Theory:

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

- ▶ What do the variables in the equation (R, P, B, & C) operationalize?
- ▶ Under what conditions do citizens vote or participate in politics?
  - ▶ When the utility provided by voting is greater than 0 (i.e. $R > 0$)

Paradox of Voting & Rational Abstention

Revisiting Riker & Ordeshok's (1968) Calculus of Voting Theory:

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

- ▶ What do the variables in the equation ($R, P, B,$ & C) operationalize?
- ▶ Under what conditions do citizens vote or participate in politics?
  - ▶ When the utility provided by voting is greater than 0 (i.e. $R > 0$)
  - ▶ For $R > 0$, inherently the benefit derived from their preferred electoral outcome B must be greater than the cost of voting C

Paradox of Voting & Rational Abstention

Revisiting Riker & Ordeshok's (1968) Calculus of Voting Theory:

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

- ▶ What do the variables in the equation ($R, P, B,$ & C) operationalize?
- ▶ Under what conditions do citizens vote or participate in politics?
  - ▶ When the utility provided by voting is greater than 0 (i.e. $R > 0$)
  - ▶ For $R > 0$, inherently the benefit derived from their preferred electoral outcome B must be greater than the cost of voting C
  - ▶ P will inherently be a very small number, given the **very** low probability of a citizen's vote being pivotal

Paradox of Voting & Rational Abstention

Revisiting Riker & Ordeshok's (1968) Calculus of Voting Theory:

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

- ▶ What do the variables in the equation ($R, P, B,$ & C) operationalize?
- ▶ Under what conditions do citizens vote or participate in politics?
    - ▶ When the utility provided by voting is greater than 0 (i.e. $R > 0$)
    - ▶ For $R > 0$, inherently the benefit derived from their preferred electoral outcome B must be greater than the cost of voting C
    - ▶ P will inherently be a very small number, given the **very** low probability of a citizen's vote being pivotal
- ▶ Recall C captures both intrinsic & information costs to voting

Why do people participate? A *Revised Theory*

- ▶ Why would the *Calculus of Voting* need to be respecified?

Why do people participate? A *Revised Theory*

- ▶ Why would the *Calculus of Voting* need to be respecified?
- ▶ If not respecified, model would predict that no one participates in voting or politics, which is not an empirical reality

Why do people participate? A *Revised Theory*

- ▶ Why would the *Calculus of Voting* need to be respecified?
- ▶ If not respecified, model would predict that no one participates in voting or politics, which is not an empirical reality
- ▶ Riker & Ordeshok rework the theory in the following way:

Why do people participate? A *Revised Theory*

- ▶ Why would the *Calculus of Voting* need to be respecified?
- ▶ If not respecified, model would predict that no one participates in voting or politics, which is not an empirical reality
- ▶ Riker & Ordeshok rework the theory in the following way:

$$R = P(B) - C - [D + M + b]$$

- ▶ Where: R is the utlity of voting, P is the probability of pivotal vote, B is the benefit from preferred electoral outcome, C is the cost of voting
    - ▶ D is the sense of civic duty (i.e. "good feeling") provided by voting
    - ▶ M is the material benefit of voting (i.e. "I voted sticker")
    - ▶ b is the social benefit yielded from being mobilized to participate

Why do people participate? A *Revised Theory*

► Why would the *Calculus of Voting* need to be respecified?

► If not respecified, model would predict that no one participates in voting or politics, which is not an empirical reality

► Riker & Ordeshok rework the theory in the following way:

$$R = P(B) - C - [D + M + b]$$

► Where: R is the utlity of voting, P is the probability of pivotal vote, B is the benefit from preferred electoral outcome, C is the cost of voting

Why do people participate? A *Revised Theory*

- ▶ Why would the *Calculus of Voting* need to be respecified?
- ▶ If not respecified, model would predict that no one participates in voting or politics, which is not an empirical reality
- ▶ Riker & Ordeshok rework the theory in the following way:

$$R = P(B) - C - [D + M + b]$$

- ▶ Where: R is the utlity of voting, P is the probability of pivotal vote, B is the benefit from preferred electoral outcome, C is the cost of voting
 - ▶ D is the sense of civic duty (i.e. "good feeling") provided by voting

Why do people participate? A *Revised Theory*

▶ Why would the *Calculus of Voting* need to be respecified?

▶ If not respecified, model would predict that no one participates in voting or politics, which is not an empirical reality

▶ Riker & Ordeshok rework the theory in the following way:

$$R = P(B) - C - [D + M + b]$$

▶ Where: R is the utlity of voting, P is the probability of pivotal vote, B is the benefit from preferred electoral outcome, C is the cost of voting

    ▶ D is the sense of civic duty (i.e. "good feeling") provided by voting

    ▶ M is the material benefit of voting (i.e. "I voted sticker")

Why do people participate? A *Revised Theory*

▶ Why would the *Calculus of Voting* need to be respecified?

▶ If not respecified, model would predict that no one participates in voting or politics, which is not an empirical reality

▶ Riker & Ordeshok rework the theory in the following way:

$$R = P(B) - C - [D + M + b]$$

▶ Where: R is the utlity of voting, P is the probability of pivotal vote, B is the benefit from preferred electoral outcome, C is the cost of voting

    ▶ D is the sense of civic duty (i.e. "good feeling") provided by voting

    ▶ M is the material benefit of voting (i.e. "I voted sticker")

    ▶ b is the social benefit yielded from being mobilized to participate

A Causal Model of Political Participation
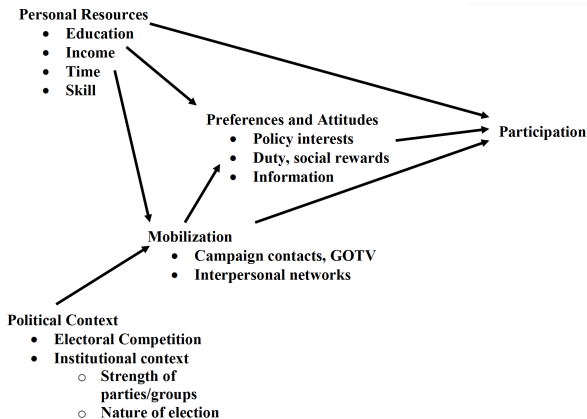
"*Strategic mobilization without individual motivation is impossible, and individual motivation without strategic mobilization is illogical.*" - Rosenstone & Hansen (1992)

Descriptive Evidence of Causal Model: *2016 Donors*

Variation in the Incentive for Political Donors to Donate to Campaigns, 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study

Carlos Algara   *Introduction to American Politics: Meeting 5*
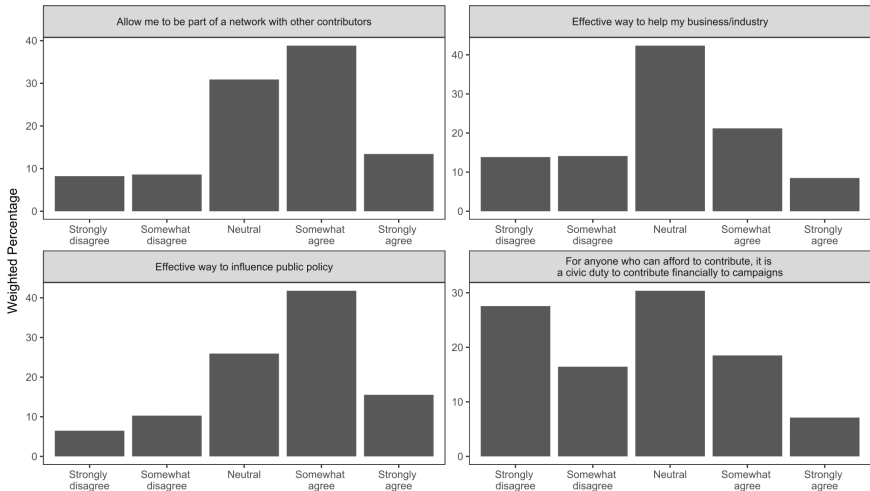
Overcoming the Cost C to Participate

Retrospective & "Pocket Book" Voting

Overcoming the Cost C to Participate

Retrospective & "Pocket Book" Voting

▶ What's the argument presented by MacKuen & Stimson?

Overcoming the Cost C to Participate

Retrospective & "Pocket Book" Voting

▶ What's the argument presented by MacKuen & Stimson?

▶ Voters behave *prospectively* (i.e. bankers) and punish presidents if they perceive the economy will not get better

Overcoming the Cost C to Participate

Retrospective & "Pocket Book" Voting

- ▶ What's the argument presented by MacKuen & Stimson?
- ▶ Voters behave *prospectively* (i.e. bankers) and punish presidents if they perceive the economy will not get better
- ▶ What does that substantively mean?

Overcoming the Cost C to Participate

Retrospective & "Pocket Book" Voting

- ▶ What's the argument presented by MacKuen & Stimson?
- ▶ Voters behave *prospectively* (i.e. bankers) and punish presidents if they perceive the economy will not get better
- ▶ What does that substantively mean?
- ▶ Key Independent Variables: Prospective & Retrospective Economic Indicators
- ▶ Dependent Variable: Presidential approval evaluation

Overcoming the Cost C to Participate

Retrospective & "Pocket Book" Voting

- ▶ What's the argument presented by MacKuen & Stimson?
- ▶ Voters behave *prospectively* (i.e. bankers) and punish presidents if they perceive the economy will not get better
- ▶ What does that substantively mean?
- ▶ Key Independent Variables: Prospective & Retrospective Economic Indicators
- ▶ Dependent Variable: Presidential approval evaluation
- ▶ Contrary to the retrospective model (i.e. peasant), where voters punish president based on retrospective evaluations of economy

Overcoming the Cost C to Participate

Retrospective & "Pocket Book" Voting

- ▶ What's the argument presented by MacKuen & Stimson?
- ▶ Voters behave *prospectively* (i.e. bankers) and punish presidents if they perceive the economy will not get better
- ▶ What does that substantively mean?
- ▶ Key Independent Variables: Prospective & Retrospective Economic Indicators
- ▶ Dependent Variable: Presidential approval evaluation
- ▶ Contrary to the retrospective model (i.e. peasant), where voters punish president based on retrospective evaluations of economy
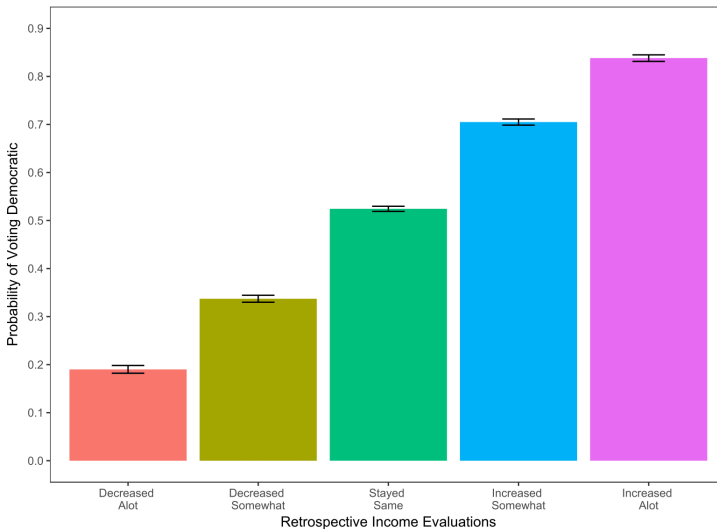- ▶ Economic perceptions a short-cut in democratic accountability

Overcoming the Cost C to Participate

Retrospective & "Pocket Book" Voting

- ▶ What's the argument presented by MacKuen & Stimson?
- ▶ Voters behave *prospectively* (i.e. bankers) and punish presidents if they perceive the economy will not get better
- ▶ What does that substantively mean?
- ▶ Key Independent Variables: Prospective & Retrospective Economic Indicators
- ▶ Dependent Variable: Presidential approval evaluation
- ▶ Contrary to the retrospective model (i.e. peasant), where voters punish president based on retrospective evaluations of economy
- ▶ Economic perceptions a short-cut in democratic accountability
- ▶ Is this just limited to approval evaluations of the president or does it extend to voting at various levels?
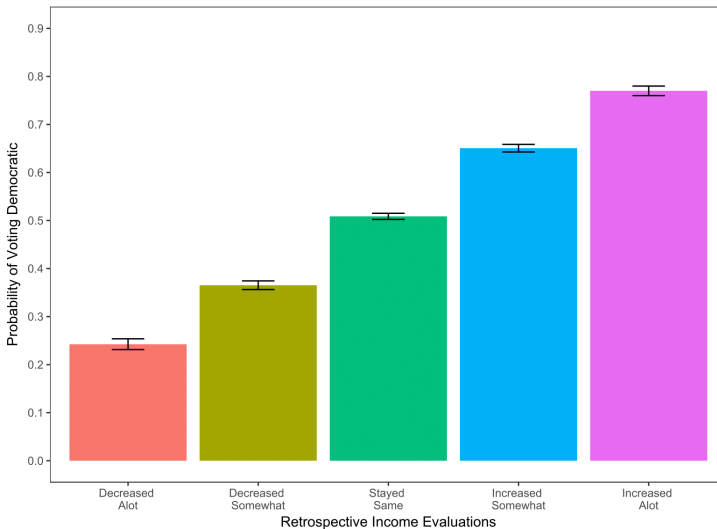
Overcoming the Cost C to Participate

Retrospective & "Pocket Book" Voting

- ▶ What's the argument presented by MacKuen & Stimson?
- ▶ Voters behave *prospectively* (i.e. bankers) and punish presidents if they perceive the economy will not get better
- ▶ What does that substantively mean?
- ▶ Key Independent Variables: Prospective & Retrospective Economic Indicators
- ▶ Dependent Variable: Presidential approval evaluation
- ▶ Contrary to the retrospective model (i.e. peasant), where voters punish president based on retrospective evaluations of economy
- ▶ Economic perceptions a short-cut in democratic accountability
- ▶ Is this just limited to approval evaluations of the president or does it extend to voting at various levels?

Role of *Retrospective* Economic Evaluations & Voting

Probability of Voting Democratic by Retrospective Income Evaluations in the 2016 Presidential Election, Cooperative Congressional Election Study
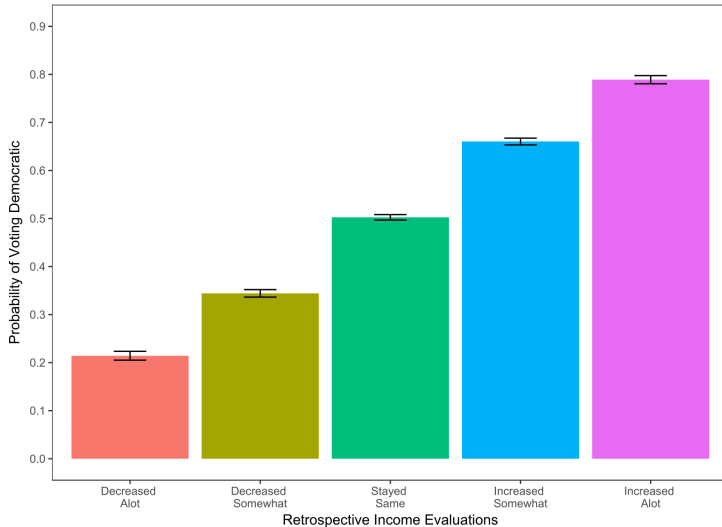
Role of *Retrospective* Economic Evaluations & Voting

Probability of Voting Democratic by Retrospective Income Evaluations in the 2016 Senate Elections, Cooperative Congressional Election Study
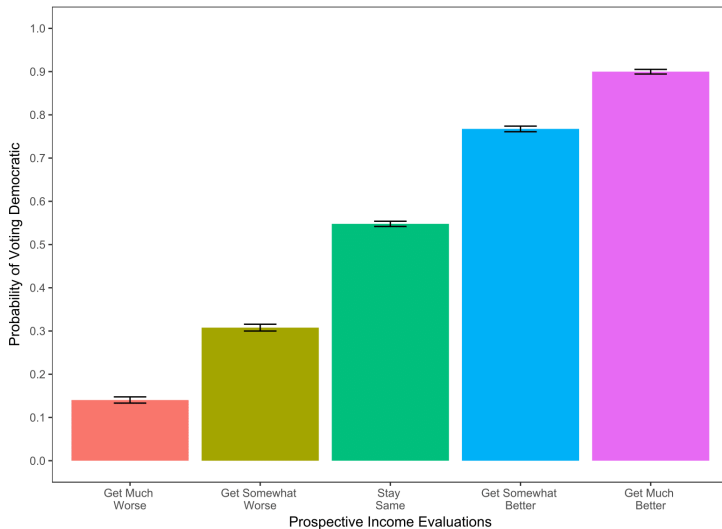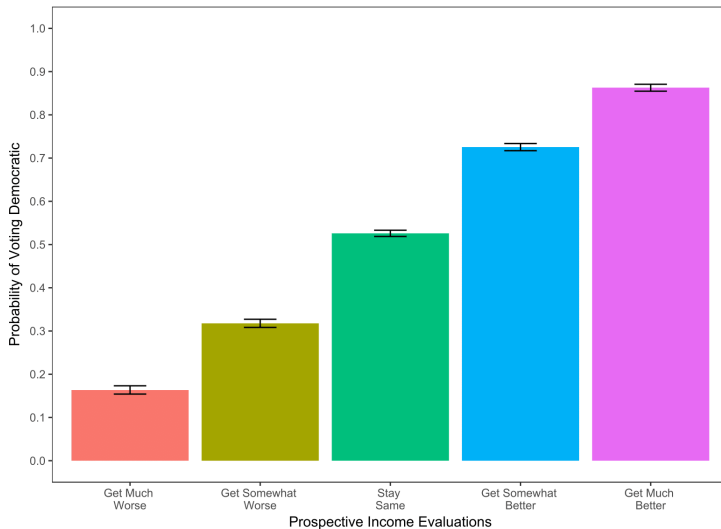
Role of *Retrospective* Economic Evaluations & Voting

Probability of Voting Democratic by Retrospective Income Evaluations in the
2016 House Elections, Cooperative Congressional Election Study

Role of *Prospective* Economic Evaluations & Voting

Probability of Voting Democratic by Prospective Income Evaluations in the 2016 Presidential Election, Cooperative Congressional Election Study
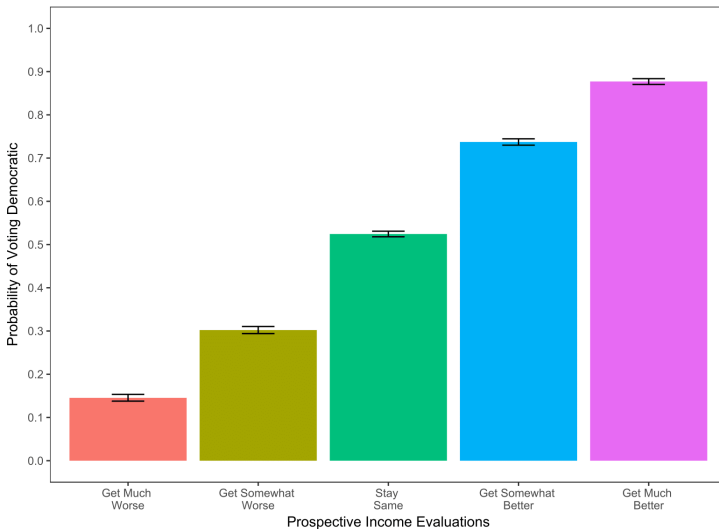
Role of *Prospective* Economic Evaluations & Voting

Probability of Voting Democratic by Prospective Income Evaluations in the
2016 Senate Elections, Cooperative Congressional Election Study

Role of *Prospective* Economic Evaluations & Voting

Probability of Voting Democratic by Prospective Income Evaluations in the 2016 House Elections, Cooperative Congressional Election Study

Reactive & Proactive Voters

▶ What does the results of the prospective & retrospective model of economic voting say with respect to voters, are they proactive or reactive?

Reactive & Proactive Voters

▶ What does the results of the prospective & retrospective model of economic voting say with respect to voters, are they proactive or reactive?

▶ Voters are reactive to *valence* considerations, such as bad economic conditions

Reactive & Proactive Voters

- ▶ What does the results of the prospective & retrospective model of economic voting say with respect to voters, are they proactive or reactive?
- ▶ Voters are reactive to *valence* considerations, such as bad economic conditions
- ▶ Example of *collective accountability*, president not only rewarded or punished based on economic perceptions, but also his party

Reactive & Proactive Voters

- ► What does the results of the prospective & retrospective model of economic voting say with respect to voters, are they proactive or reactive?
- ► Voters are reactive to *valence* considerations, such as bad economic conditions
- ► Example of *collective accountability*, president not only rewarded or punished based on economic perceptions, but also his party
- ► Politics ultimately *abstract* to citizens, economy/valence considerations easier concept for citizens to grasp

Reactive & Proactive Voters

- ▶ What does the results of the prospective & retrospective model of economic voting say with respect to voters, are they proactive or reactive?
- ▶ Voters are reactive to *valence* considerations, such as bad economic conditions
- ▶ Example of *collective accountability*, president not only rewarded or punished based on economic perceptions, but also his party
- ▶ Politics ultimately *abstract* to citizens, economy/valence considerations easier concept for citizens to grasp
- ▶ Citizens ultimately have incentive to act based on the *minimal amount* of information they encounter

Reactive & Proactive Voters

▶ What does the results of the prospective & retrospective model of economic voting say with respect to voters, are they proactive or reactive?

▶ Voters are reactive to *valence* considerations, such as bad economic conditions

▶ Example of *collective accountability*, president not only rewarded or punished based on economic perceptions, but also his party

▶ Politics ultimately *abstract* to citizens, economy/valence considerations easier concept for citizens to grasp

▶ Citizens ultimately have incentive to act based on the *minimal amount* of information they encounter

▶ This leads to the *democratic dilemma*, where we expect voters to be fully informed with respect to their self-interest (preference) but they are not

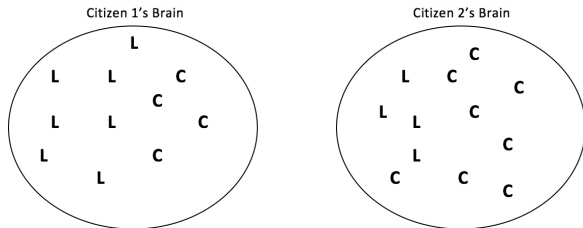# Variation in Political Knowledge

Effect of Education on Citizen Political Knowledge,
2016 American National Election Study
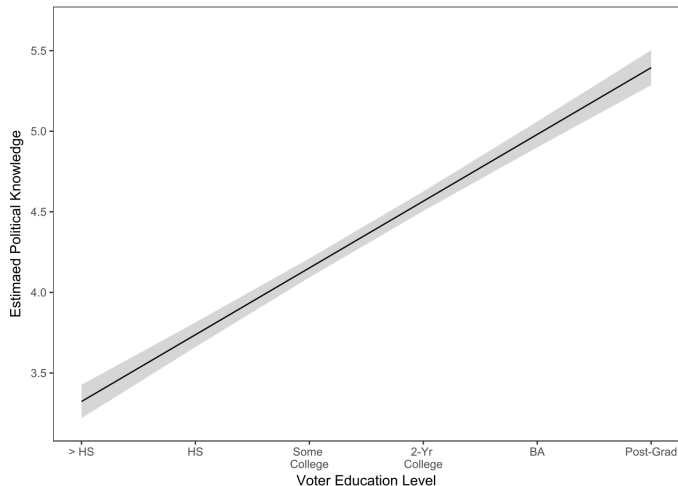
Variation in Political Knowledge
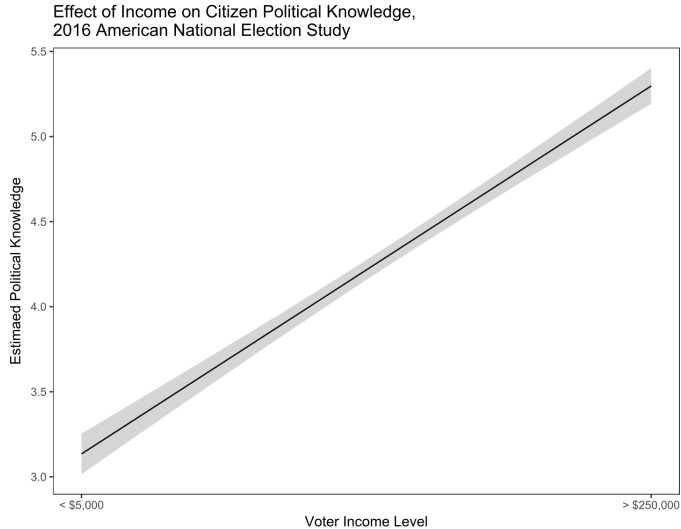
Effect of Income on Citizen Political Knowledge,
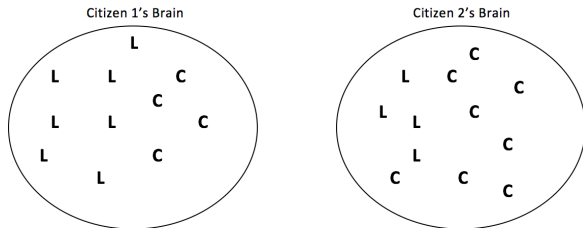2016 American National Election Study
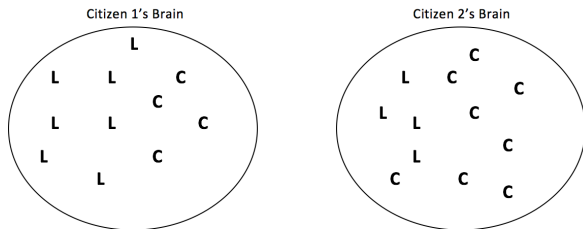
Zaller's "Top of the Head" Model

▶ Voters are bombarded with political *considerations* in everyday life

Zaller's "Top of the Head" Model

- ▶ Voters are bombarded with political *considerations* in everyday life
- ▶ *Consideration* is anything such as a belief, attitude, or fact that might support an opinion
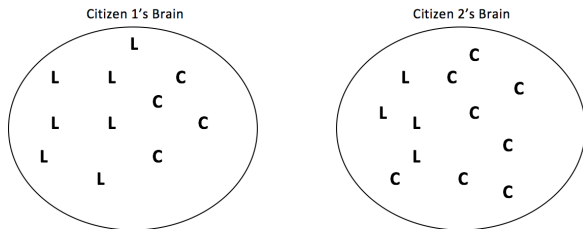
Zaller's "Top of the Head" Model

- ▶ Voters are bombarded with political *considerations* in everyday life
- ▶ *Consideration* is anything such as a belief, attitude, or fact that might support an opinion
- ▶ Where L = liberal considerations & C = conservative considerations

Zaller's "Top of the Head" Model

- ▶ Voters are bombarded with political *considerations* in everyday life
- ▶ *Consideration* is anything such as a belief, attitude, or fact that might support an opinion
- ▶ Where L = liberal considerations & C = conservative considerations
- ▶ Can you think of a *consideration* & predict how both citizens would respond to an opinion question based on the subject of your consideration?

16/19

Axioms of Zaller's Model

1. **Ambivalence:** Citizens are generally susceptible to conflicting considerations

Axioms of Zaller's Model

1. **Ambivalence:** Citizens are generally susceptible to conflicting considerations
   1. **Reception:** Citizens with *higher levels* of political interest & awareness are more likely to receive political information

Axioms of Zaller's Model

1. **Ambivalence:** Citizens are generally susceptible to conflicting considerations
   1. **Reception:** Citizens with *higher levels* of political interest & awareness are more likely to receive political information
   2. **Resistance:** Citizens *resist* political information that are contrary to their predispositions (especially partisan & ideological preferences)

Axioms of Zaller's Model

1. **Ambivalence:** Citizens are generally susceptible to conflicting considerations
   1. **Reception:** Citizens with *higher levels* of political interest & awareness are more likely to receive political information
   2. **Resistance:** Citizens *resist* political information that are contrary to their predispositions (especially partisan & ideological preferences)

2. **Accessibility:** Considerations that are more recent to a citizen are more accessible when responding to surveys or forming attitudes

Axioms of Zaller's Model

1 Ambivalence: Citizens are generally susceptible to conflicting considerations

    1 Reception: Citizens with *higher levels* of political interest & awareness are more likely to receive political information

    2 Resistance: Citizens *resist* political information that are contrary to their predispositions (especially partisan & ideological preferences)

2 Accessibility: Considerations that are more recent to a citizen are more accessible when responding to surveys or forming attitudes

3 Response: Probability of a liberal or conservative survey response (or preference) given considerations present at the "top of the head". For example: Citizen 1 (2) has a 64% probability a liberal (conservative) response (7/11).

Evidence of the *Resistance Axiom*: Nixon Impeachment

Probability of Approving of Impeachment Action against President Nixon by Partisanship, 1974
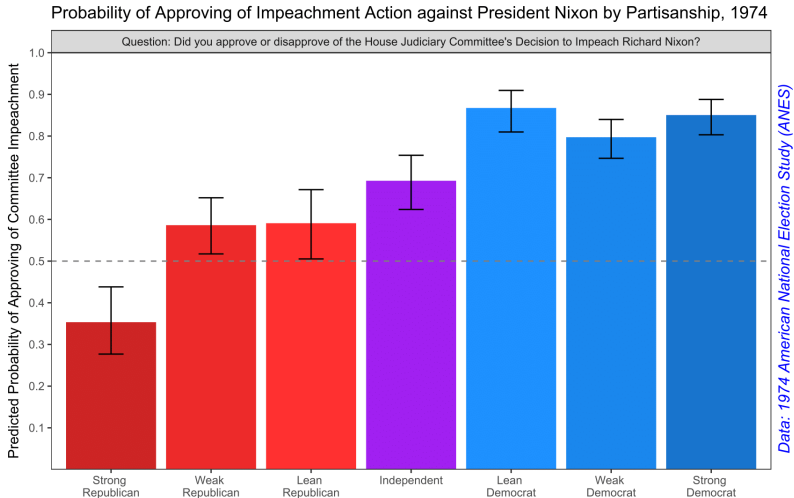
Probabilities estimated from bivariate logistic regression model. Confidence intervals estimated with Huber-White Robust standard errors.

Key Points:

▶ Cost of political participation provides incentive for citizens to rationally abstain & free-ride off of others

▶ Citizens largely motivated by sense of civic duty & social benefits to participate politically

▶ However, key is to reduce the cost (C) in order to stimulate participation/voting in politics

▶ *Economic* voting helps as a "valence-shortcut" & for collective accountability

▶ However, citizens fundamentally fall short of Madison's ideal given *democratic dilemma*

▶ Citizens bombarded with political considerations, which leads to resistance to new information (bias) & unstable political opinions