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

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Agenda

1. Revisiting the Paradox

2. Low Information Voters

3. Heuristics as Short-Cuts

Revisiting the Paradox of *Voting*

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

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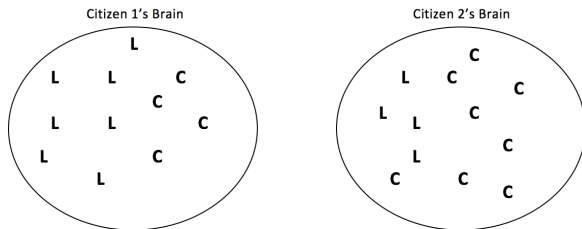

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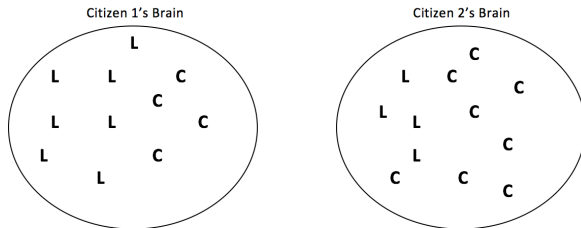
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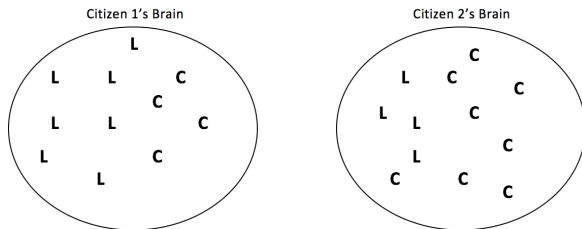
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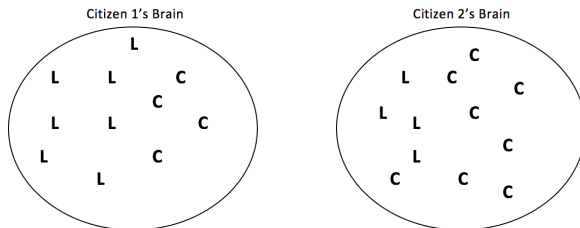
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- ▶ Where L = liberal considerations & C = conservative considerations
- ▶ Can you think of a *consideration* & predict how both citizens would respond to an opinion question based on the subject of your consideration?

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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
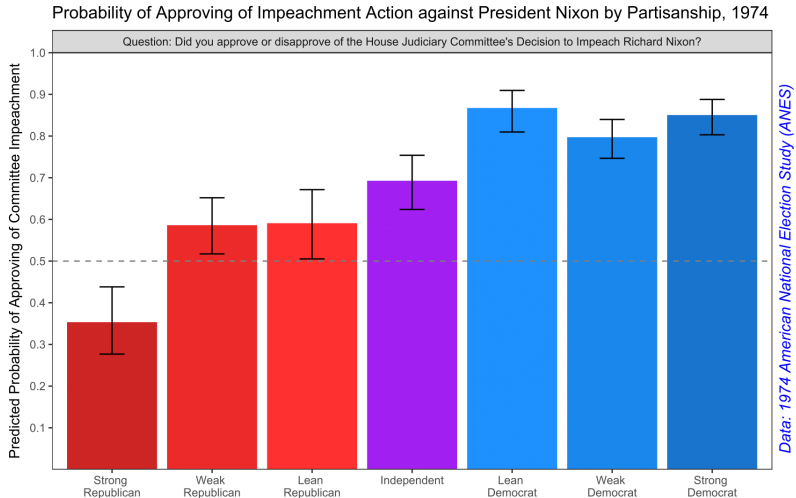
Probabilities estimated from bivariate logistic regression model. Confidence intervals estimated with Huber-White Robust standard errors.

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  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-cut* to make *correct* decisions

Models of *Electoral Control*

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Heuristic	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

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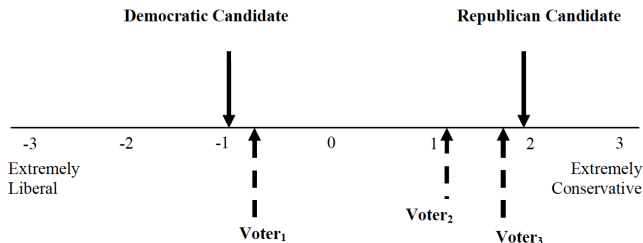
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- ▶ "Correct" vote is voting for the candidate closest to voter in ideological proximity

The Spatial Model of Voters & Candidate

Democratic Candidate   **Republican Candidate**

| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Extremely
Liberal

Extremely
Conservative

Voter₁

Voter₂

Voter₃

▶ 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?

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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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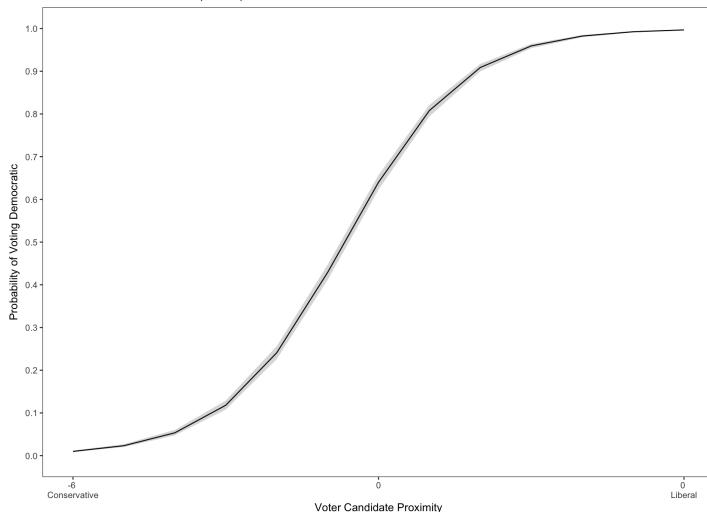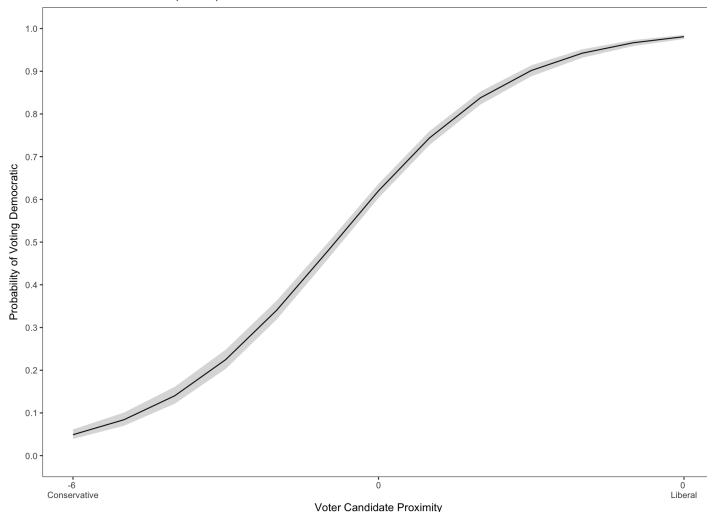
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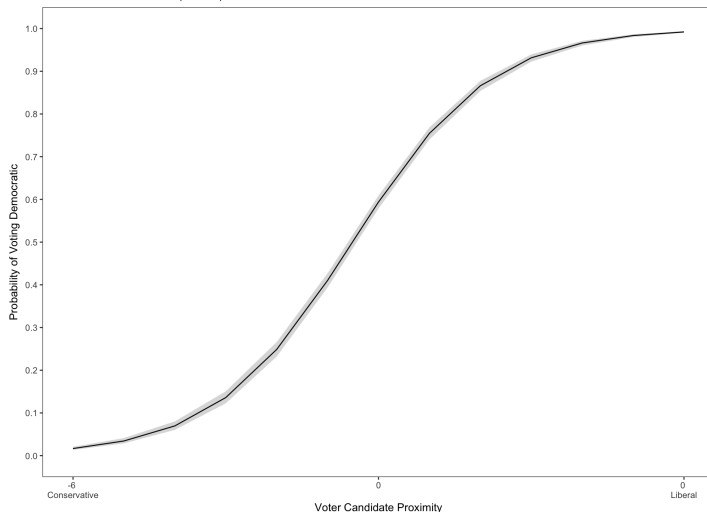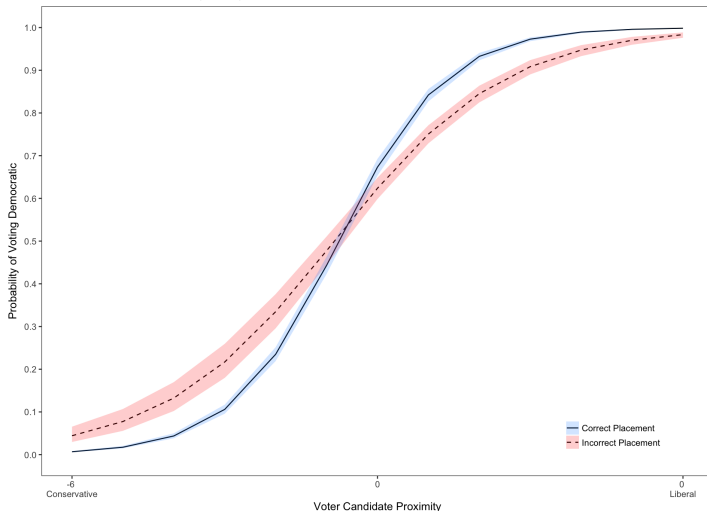
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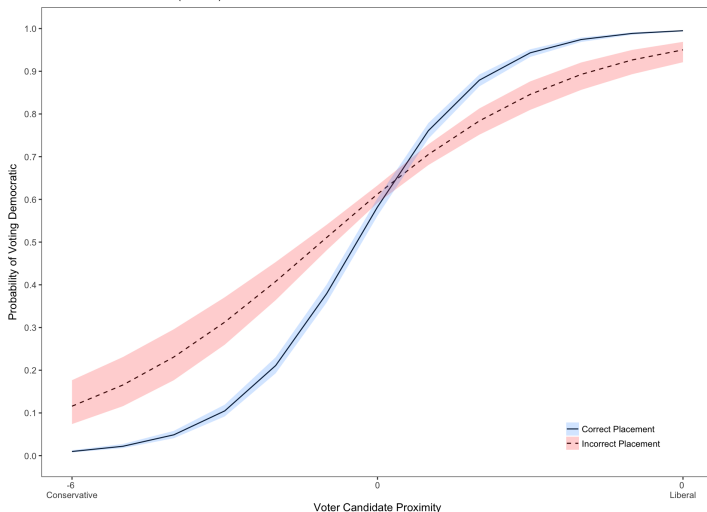**Carlos Algara**   *Introduction to American Politics: Meeting 6*

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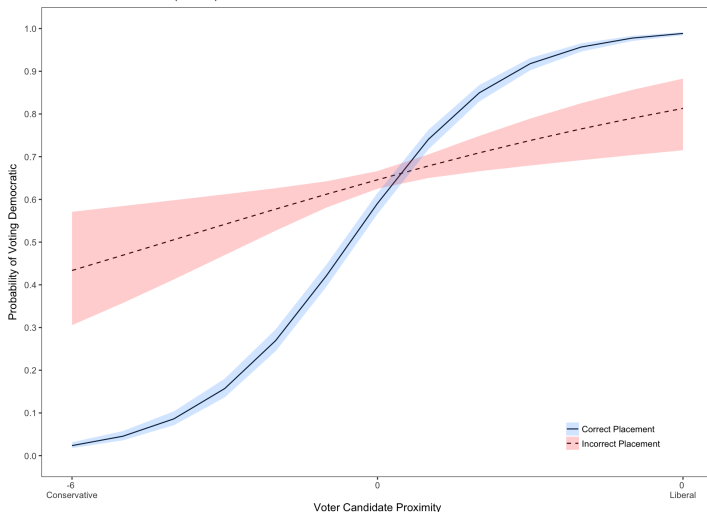
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▶ Evidence of convergence towards the median voter?

Distribution of Ideological Preference in the Electorate, 2016 ANES Pilot Study
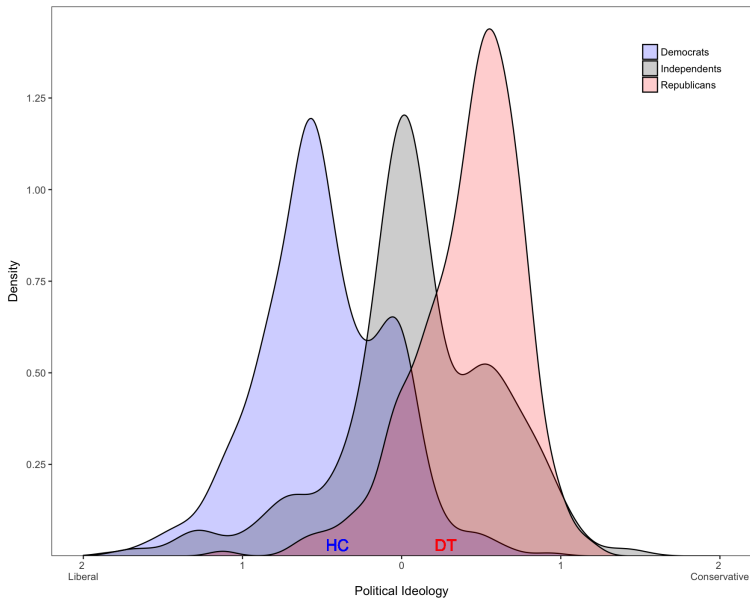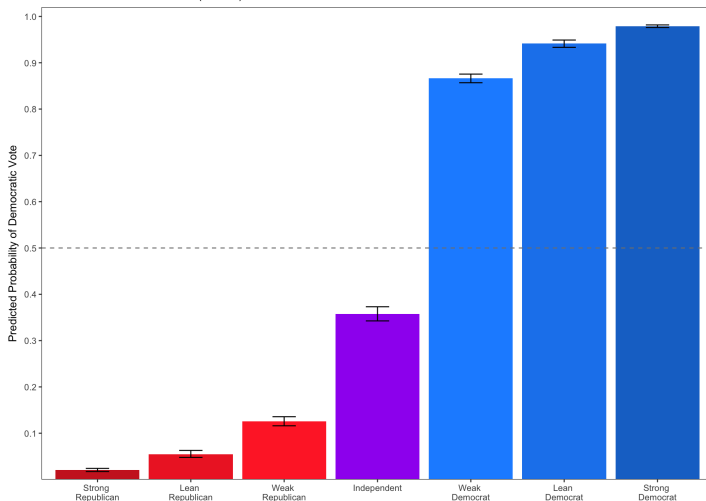
The Partisan Model of Voting

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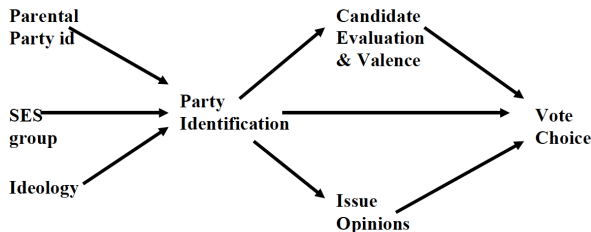
- ▶ "The first & perhaps most important political heuristic is relying on a candidate's party affiliation." (Lau & Redlawsk)
- ▶ Partisanship influenced by socialization, resources, & ideology
- ▶ Important heuristic for voting, valence evaluations (economy, candidates) & issue opinions

Partisan Voting in the 2016 Presidential Election
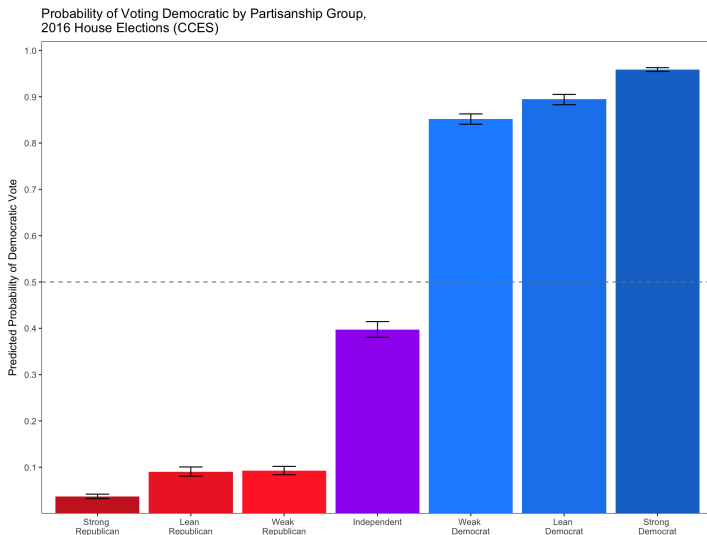

Probability of Voting Democratic by Partisanship Group,
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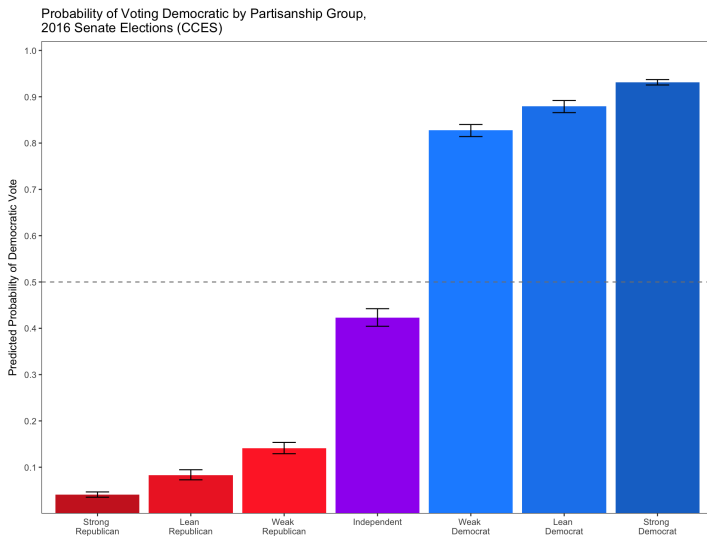
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▶ Can distort *objective* valence assessments: such as state of economy.

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  - ▶ Data: 2010 UC Davis Election Study

Evidence of Valence Effect in U.S. House Elections, 2010
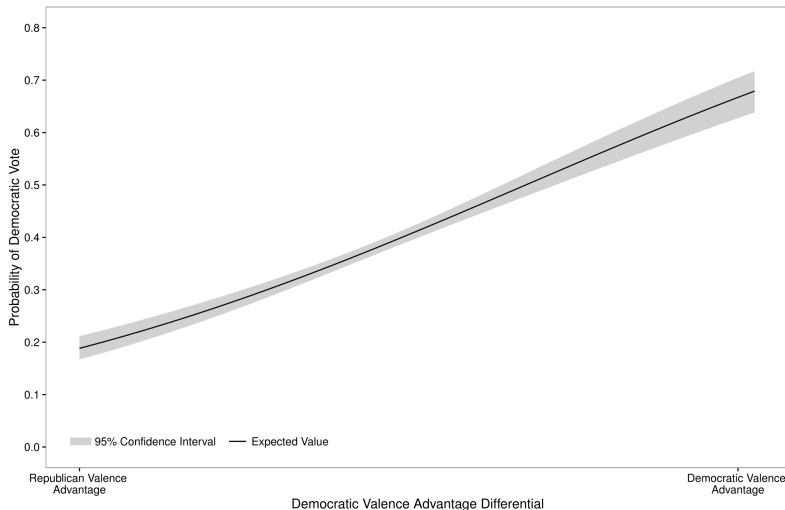
Robust standard errors clustered by 404 districts. DV: Democratic vote, N = 32,243

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