Models of Citizen Electoral Vote-Choice in Varying & Limiting Contexts

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Teaching Agenda

1. Ballot Referendums & Party Cues

2. Local Elections & The Spatial Model

3. Role of Partisanship in Non-Partisan Elections

How do citizens hold elites electorally accountable?

Motivating Question

Do you think the models of electoral choice are limited by electoral context? If so, are citizens really able to make "correct" decisions in accordance with their preferences?

Models of *Electoral Control*

Models of Electoral Control

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.

↑ Income Inequality

▶ Boudreau & MacKenzie ask: "What types of information affect public support for re- distributive taxes?"

▶ The electoral context: 2012 California general election on two different taxing propositions bundled in one referendum:

   ▸ Sales tax increase (regressive tax)

   ▸ Progressive sales tax increase (progressive tax)

▶ Goal of the *proposals*: to increase redistributive finances

▶ Experimental design: framing party cues & information about income inequality

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"Treatment" in the Experimental Design
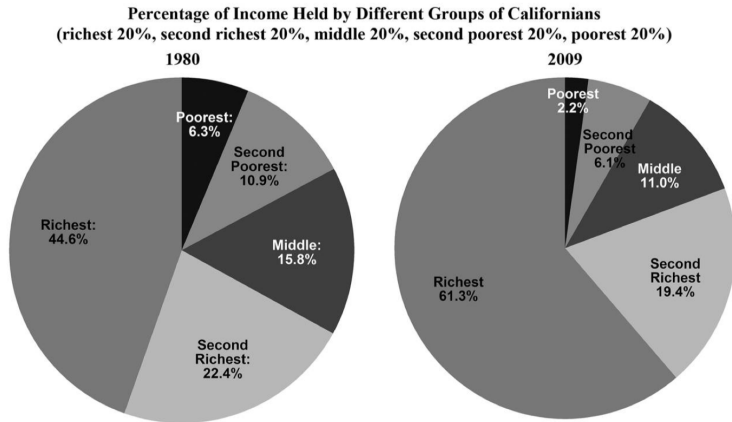
Raising the Progressive Income Tax

▶ Treatment: From 1980 to 2009, California's income distribution changed significantly. There has been a sizeable increase in the income earned by the richest 20% of Californians. The percentage of income earned by the poorest 20% and the second poorest 20% has decreased substantially.

Party Cues

▶ Treatment: Recently, state leaders proposed raising income taxes on Californians who earn more than $250,000 per year for seven years. Specifically, the proposal would raise income taxes by 1% on income between $250,000 and $300,000, 2% on income between $300,000 and 500,000, and 3% on income above $500,000.

Members of **California's Democratic Party** support this tax increase. They argue that it would affect less than 2% of Californians and would reduce the need to make further cuts to education programs and services for the elderly and poor. Members of **California's Republican Party** oppose this tax increase. They argue that the richest Californians already pay the most state taxes.

Do Citizens Respond to Preferences or Party Cues on Referendums?

Percentage of Income Held by Different Groups of Californians
(richest 20%, second richest 20%, middle 20%, second poorest 20%, poorest 20%)

1980

Poorest: 6.3%
Second Poorest: 10.9%
Richest: 44.6%
Middle: 15.8%
Second Richest: 22.4%

2009

Poorest 2.2%
Second Poorest 6.1%
Middle 11.0%
Second Richest 19.4%
Richest 61.3%

Source: Franchise Tax Board of California

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Figure 1. Inequality information treatment

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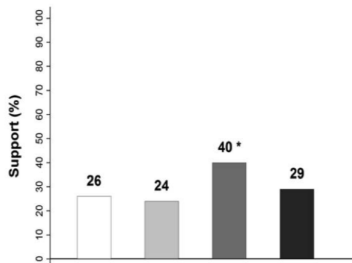

Progressive: Raise Income Tax on Those Earning More Than $250,000 per Year
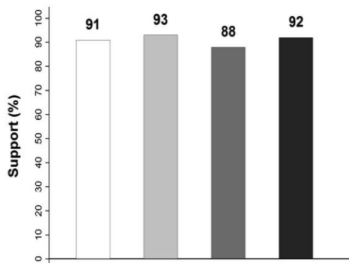Democratic Party: Supports
Republican Party: Opposes
Inequality Information: Reason for Supporting

A Republicans (Conflicting Info)   B Democrats (Reinforcing Info)

White=control, light gray=party cue, darker gray=inequality, black=cue+inequality info.

The Ideology Heuristic in Non-Partisan Elections

▶ Assume that the three voters are able to place themselves (**Assumption 1**) on the unidimensional liberal-conservative space & the positions of the two candidates are known (**Assumption 2**)

▶ Why would the spatial be harder to apply for non-partisan elections?

▶ **Real-world implications:** Local elections (mayoral, scholar board elections, county commissioner, etc.) tend to be non-partisan contests. They are in California.

▶ Case: 2011 San Francisco Mayoral Election. Overwhelming Democratic city with salient ideological cleavages, primarily on the left, with 11 candidates running

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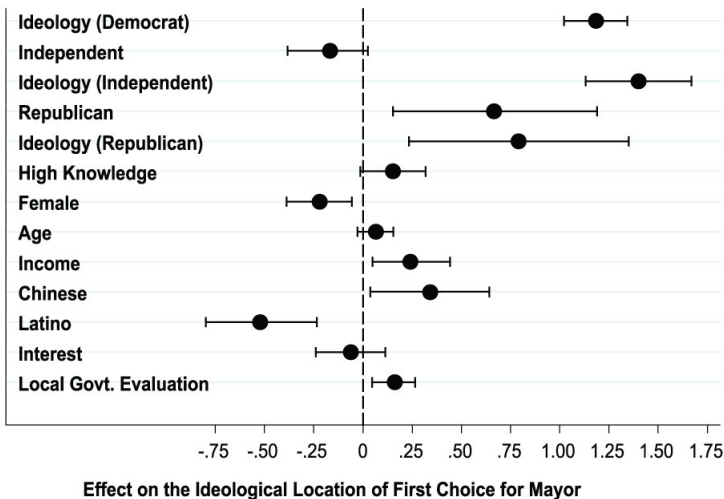
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2011 SF Mayoral Election Ideological Space
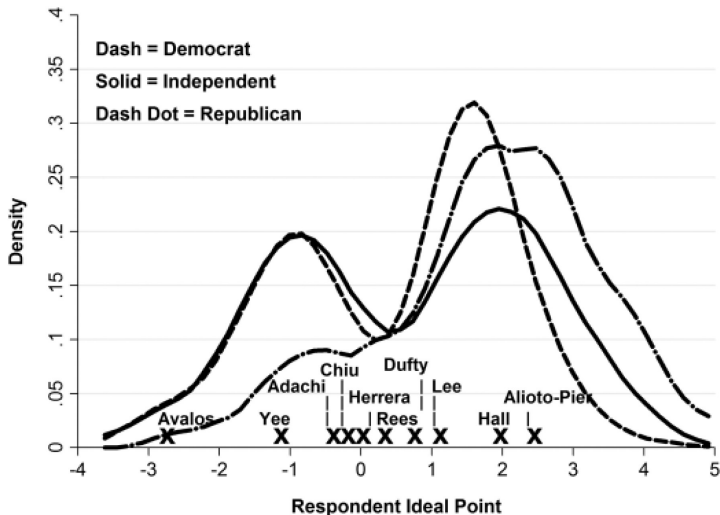
Spatial Voting in the 2011 SF Mayoral Election?

Effect on the Ideological Location of First Choice for Mayor

Partisan Non-Partisan Elections?

▶ Does the partisan model work in non-partisan electoral contexts?

▶ Recall that the Michigan Model of Partisanship: *Partisanship* →
  Electoral Choice

▶ Again note the prevalence of non-partisan elections in the United
  States:

  ① About 50% of American elections are *non-partisan* (Adrian 1959),
     including about 75% of municipal elections are *non-partisan* (DeSantis
     & Renner 1991)

  ② Judicial elections in America are largely partisan, as a result of the
     progressive movement to separate partisan & judicial preferences
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Sample/Provisional Ballot
November 6, 2018 General Election
Snohomish County, Washinton

State
Partisan Office

Legislative District 39
State Representative Pos. 2
2-year short and full term - vote for one

○ Carolyn Eslick
(Prefers Republican Party)
○ Eric Halvorson
(Prefers Democratic Party)
○ _____
Write-in (if any)

Legislative District 44
State Senator
4-year term - vote for one

○ Steve Hobbs
(Prefers Democratic Party)
○ Doug Roulstone
(Prefers Republican Party)
○ _____
Write-in (if any)

Legislative District 44
State Representative Pos. 1
2-year term - vote for one

○ John Lovick
(Prefers Democratic Party)
○ Jeff Sax
(Prefers Republican Party)
○ _____
Write-in (if any)

Judicial - Supreme Court
Nonpartisan Office

Supreme Court
Justice Position 2
6-year term - vote for one

○ Susan Owens
○ _____
Write-in (if any)

Supreme Court
Justice Position 8
6-year term - vote for one
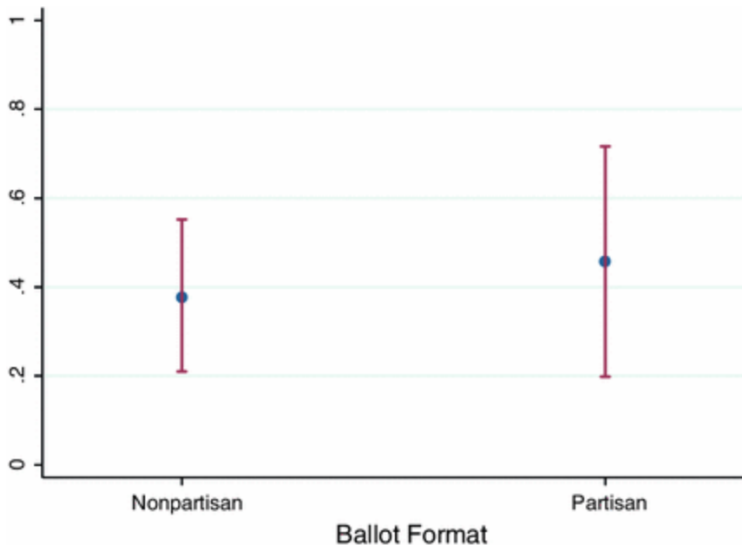
○ Nathan Choi

○ Steve Gonzalez

○ _____
Write-in (if any)

Supreme Court
Justice Position 9
6-year term - vote for one
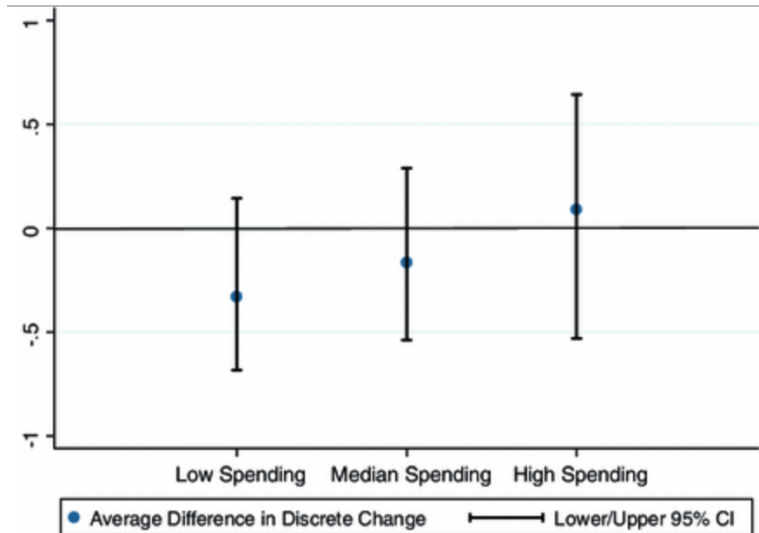
○ Sheryl Gordon McCloud

○ _____
Write-in (if any)

Judicial - District Court
Nonpartisan Office

Effect of Partisanship on Electoral Choice By Ballot Type

Differences in Partisanship Effect between Partisan and Nonpartisan Ballot Formats Across Campaign Intensity

Key Points

1. Models of electoral choice still salient across campaign contexts

2. Party cues & policy information are helpful when helping citizens make "correct" decisions in non-candidate electoral choice—but with limitations!

3. Ideological heuristic & spatial model still salient in non-partisan elections which, in theory, it's harder to place candidates in the ideological space

   ▶ Example: 2011 San Francisco mayoral election

4. Citizens still able to effectively use ideological proximity to make "correct" decisions as envisioned by Madison

5. Evidence that partisan model of electoral choice does not vary by election-type (non-partisan vs. partisan elections) or campaign intensity