

# 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 →<sub>1</sub> Factions ↔<sub>2</sub> Representation
  - ▶ Where: →<sub>1</sub> = Self-interest & ↔<sub>2</sub> = Elections
  - ▶ Election & re-election (↔<sub>2</sub>) 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-cut*s to make *correct* decisions

# Models of *Electoral Control*

## *Models of Electoral Control*

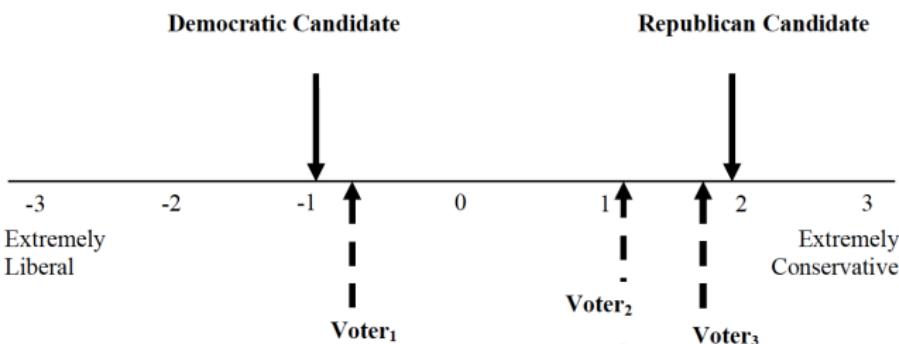
<b>Heuristic</b>	<b>Vote-Choice Model</b>	<b>Implications for Representatives</b>	<b>Analytical Purposes</b>
Ideology	Spatial/Proximity Voting	Responsive to Median Voter	Representation & Candidate Positioning
Partisanship	Michigan Model	Responsive to Partisan Base	Explaining vote choice/partisan bias
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

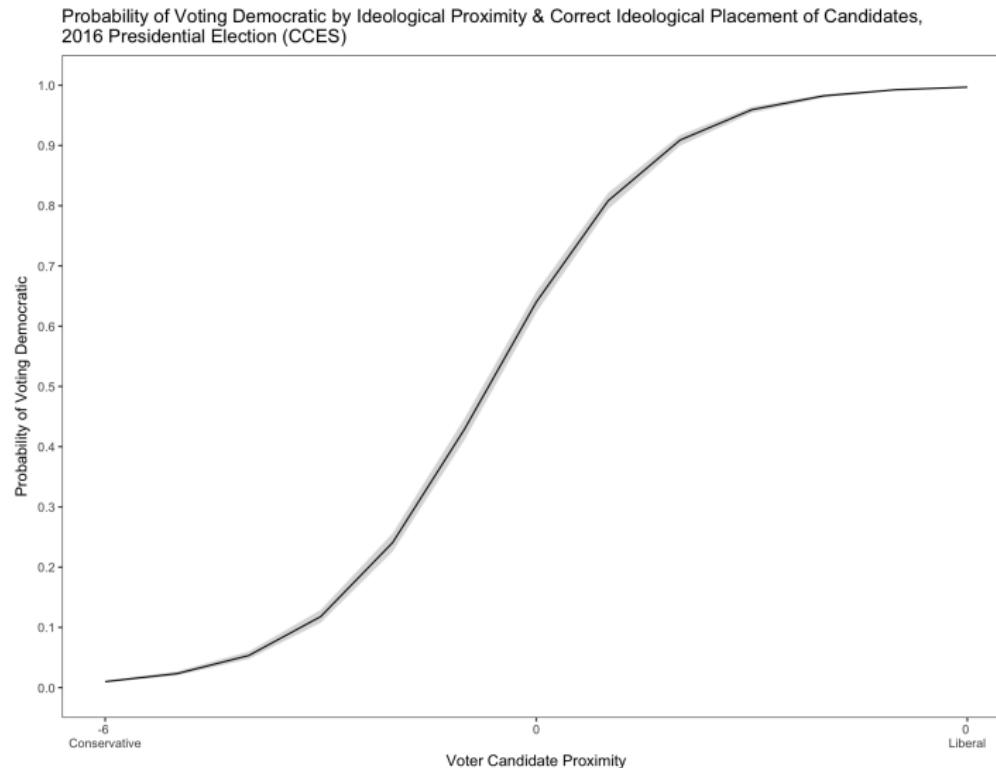
- ▶ Ideology = coherent & consistent *belief system* around a set of policy issues
- ▶ Traditional view is that ideology limited to elites rather than mass public, costly to develop *consistent* issue beliefs
- ▶ Heuristic where voters are able to place themselves & candidates on the same scale, with 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

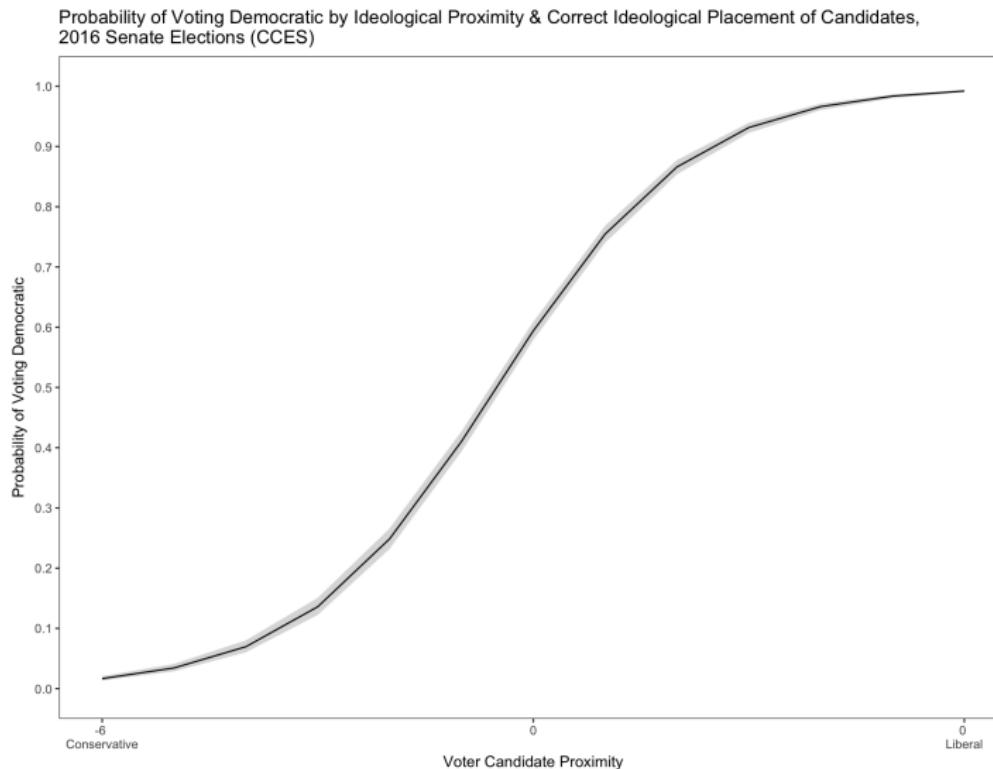


- ▶ Assume that the three voters are able to place themselves on the unidimensional liberal-conservative space & the positions of the two candidates are known
- ▶ How will each voter vote according to the spatial model of “proximity voting?” Why?
- ▶ What would be a spatially incorrect vote for each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

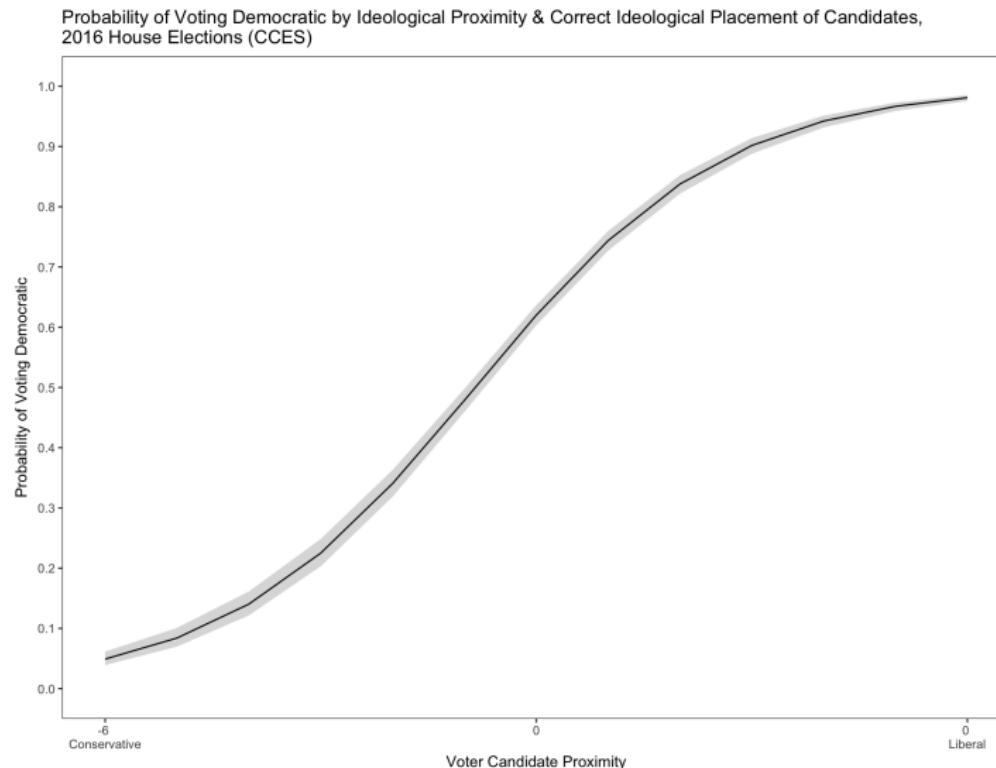
# Evidence of Spatial Voting in 2016 Presidential Election



# Evidence of Spatial Voting in 2016 Senate Elections

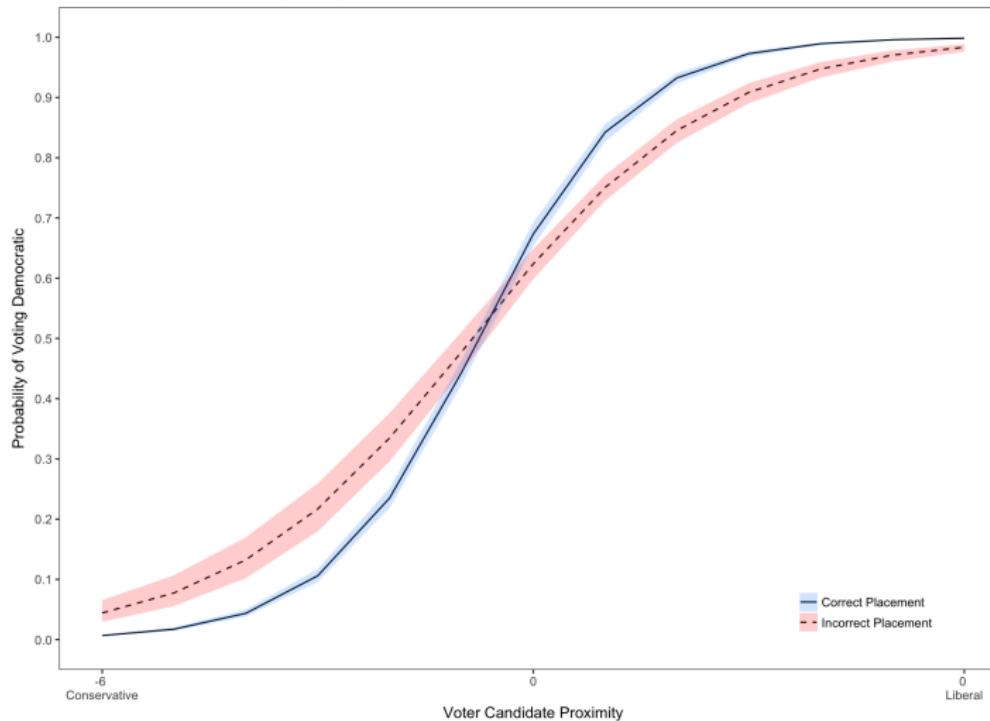


# Evidence of Spatial Voting in 2016 House Elections



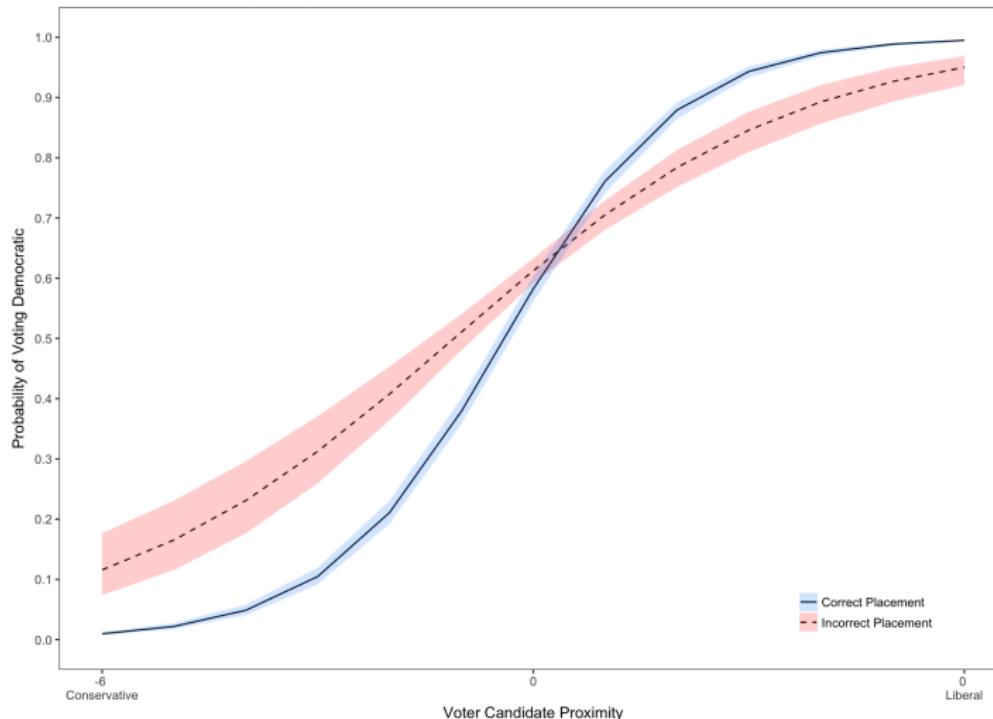
# Limitation of the Heuristic? Presidential Election

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



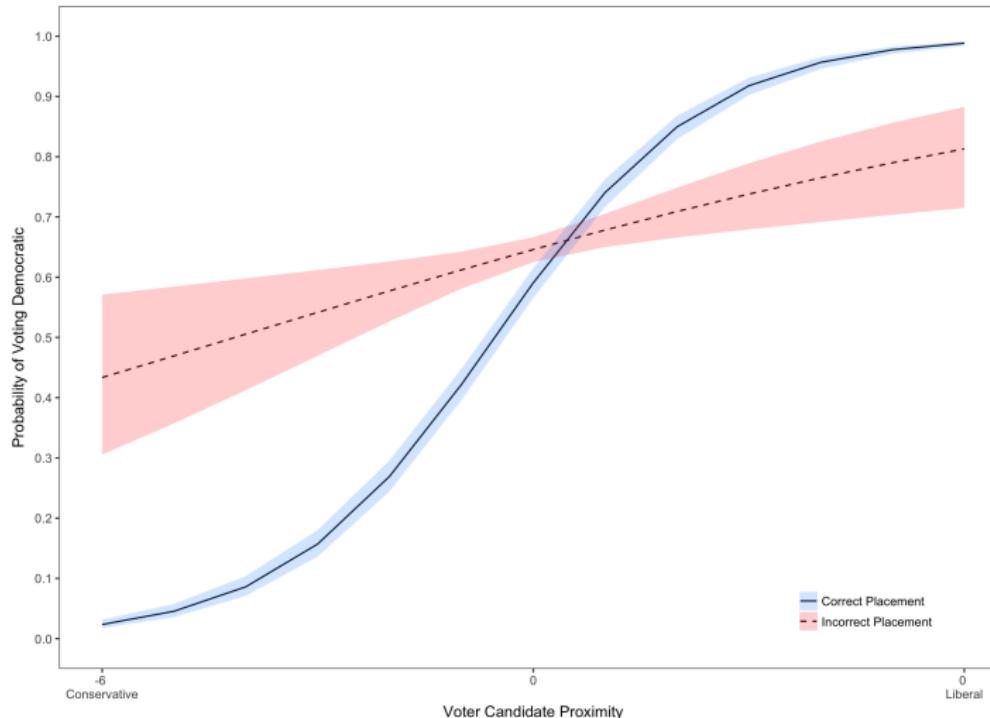
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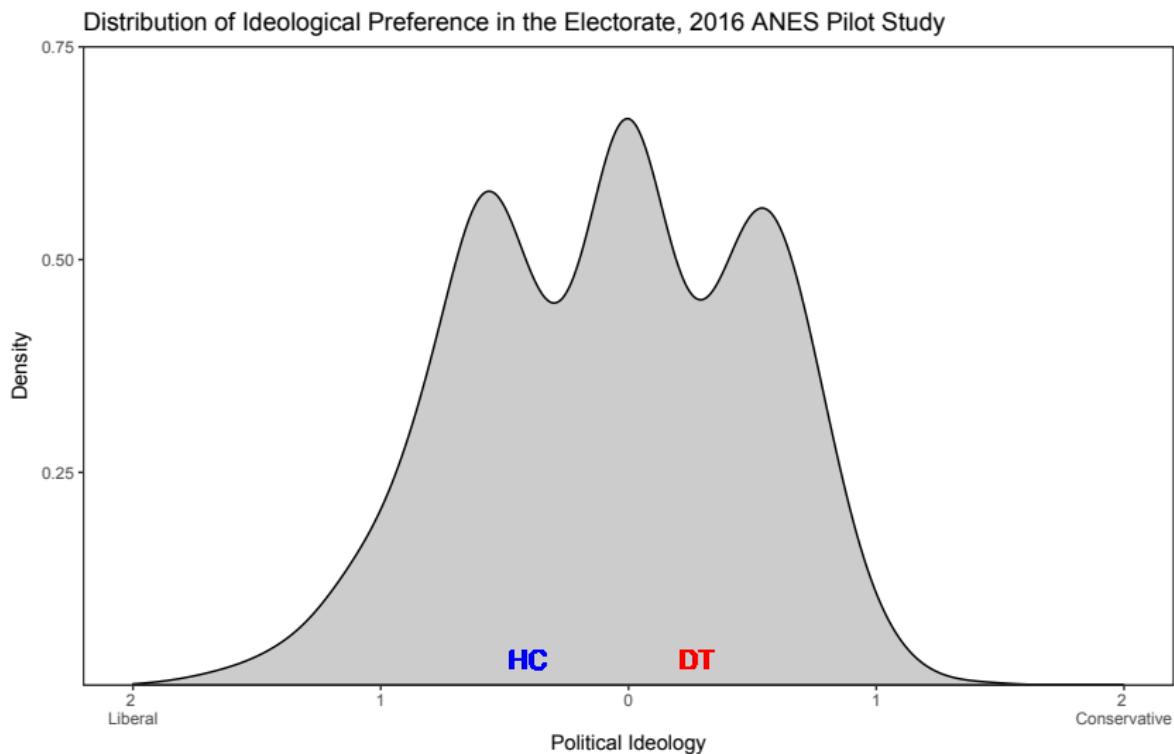
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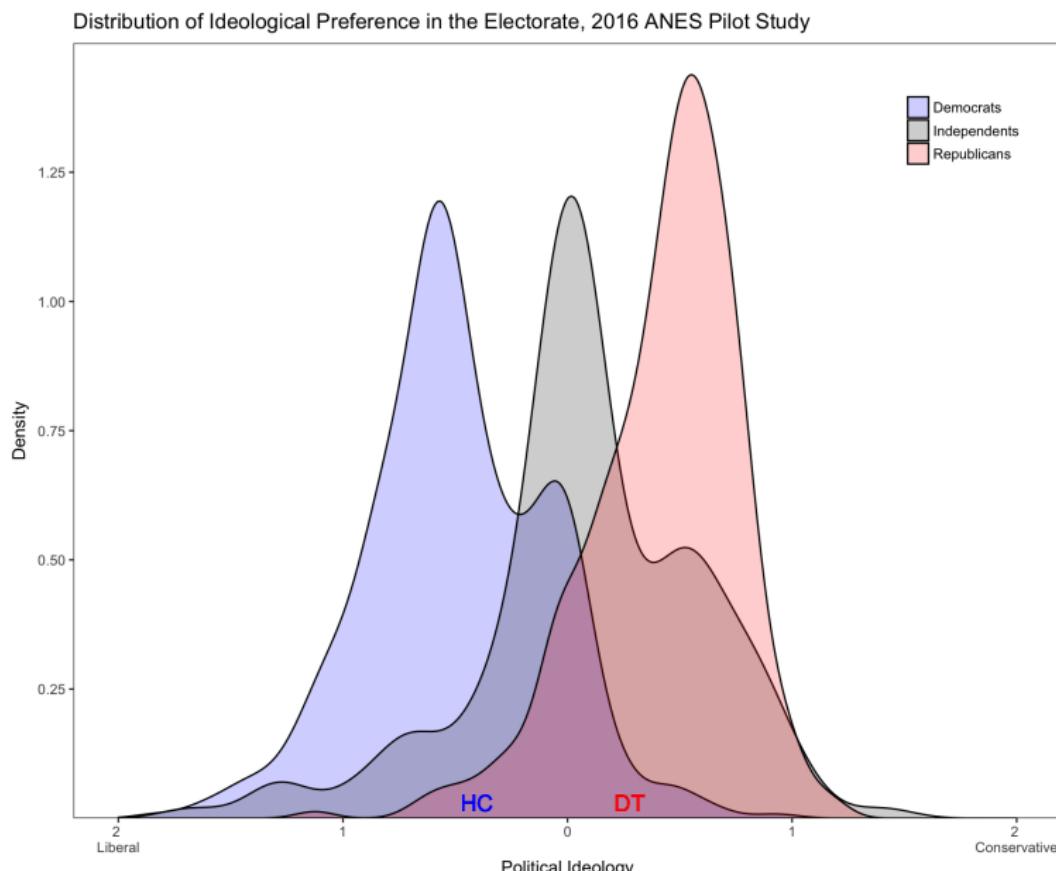
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# Assessing the Spatial Model

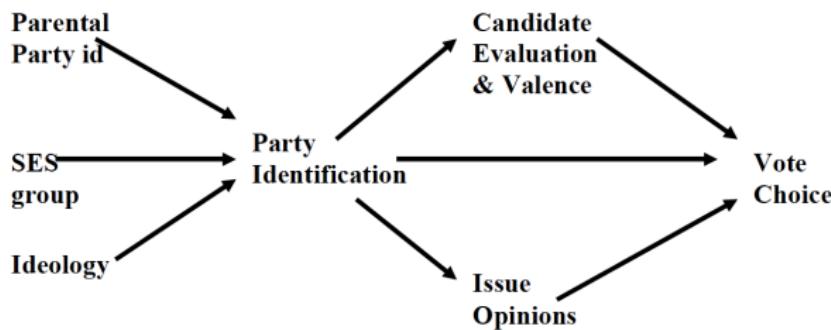
- ▶ Does the spatial model help explain vote-choice?
- ▶ What are the fundamental assumptions of the spatial model & how citizens form political opinions?
- ▶ Why would you think there is variation in the effect of ideology on voting different among voters that are able to place candidates “correctly” 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?





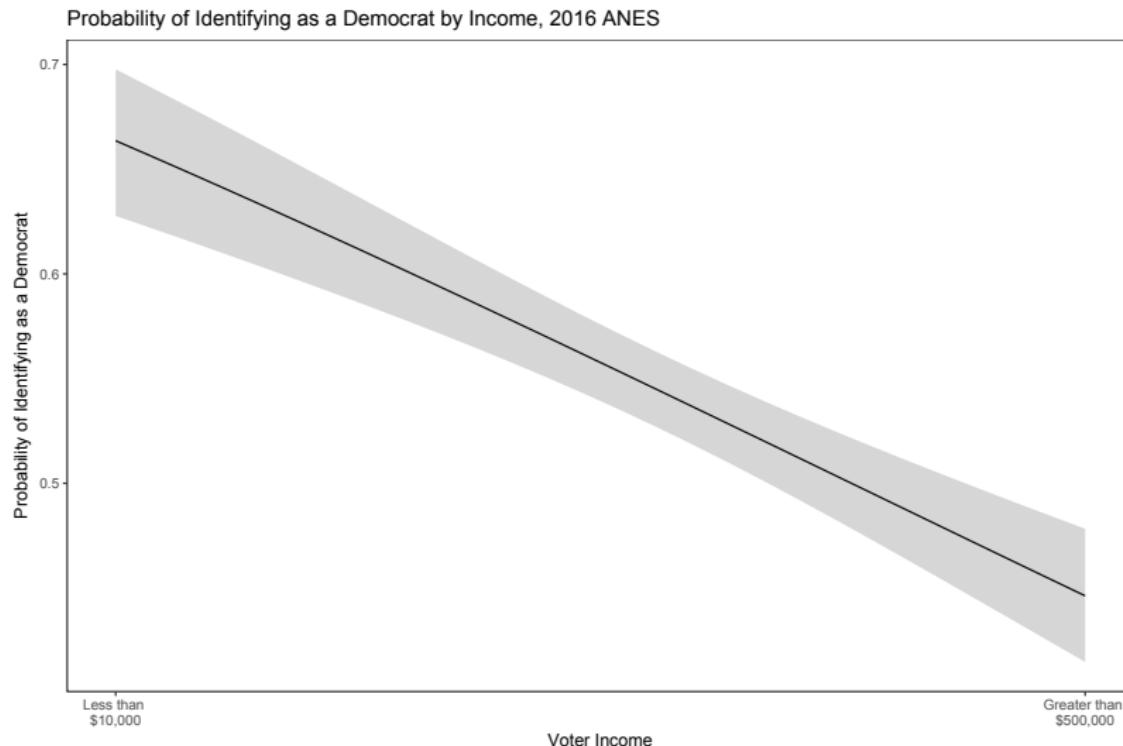
# The Partisan Model of Voting

“MICHIGAN MODEL” OF VOTING CHOICE

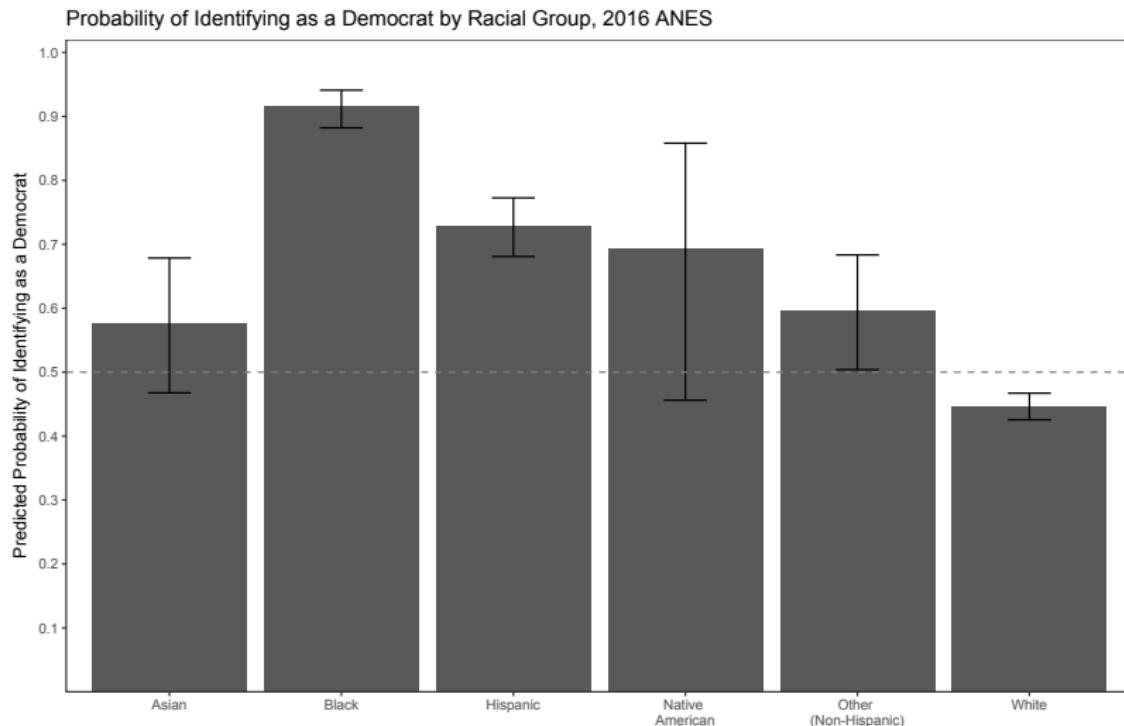


- ▶ “The first & perhaps most important political heuristic is relying on a candidate’s party affiliation.” (Lau & Redlawsk)
- ▶ Partisanship influenced by socialization, resources, & ideology
- ▶ Important heuristic for voting, valence evaluations (economy, candidates) & issue opinions

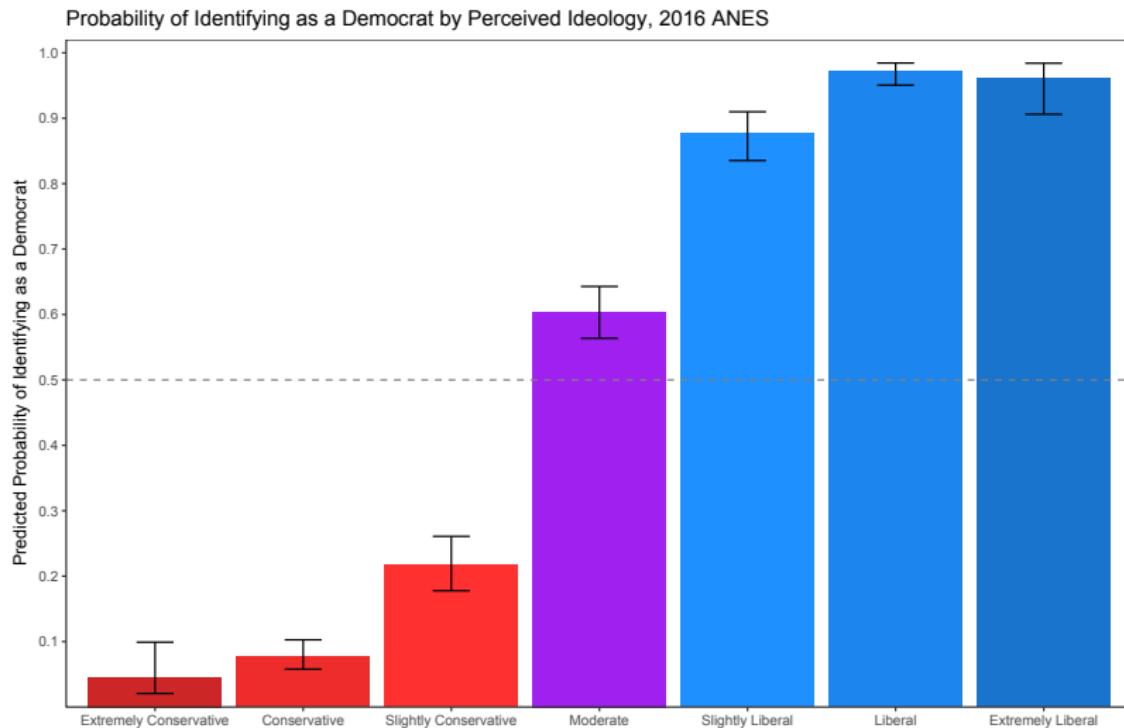
# Evidence of Michigan Model?: Determinants of PID



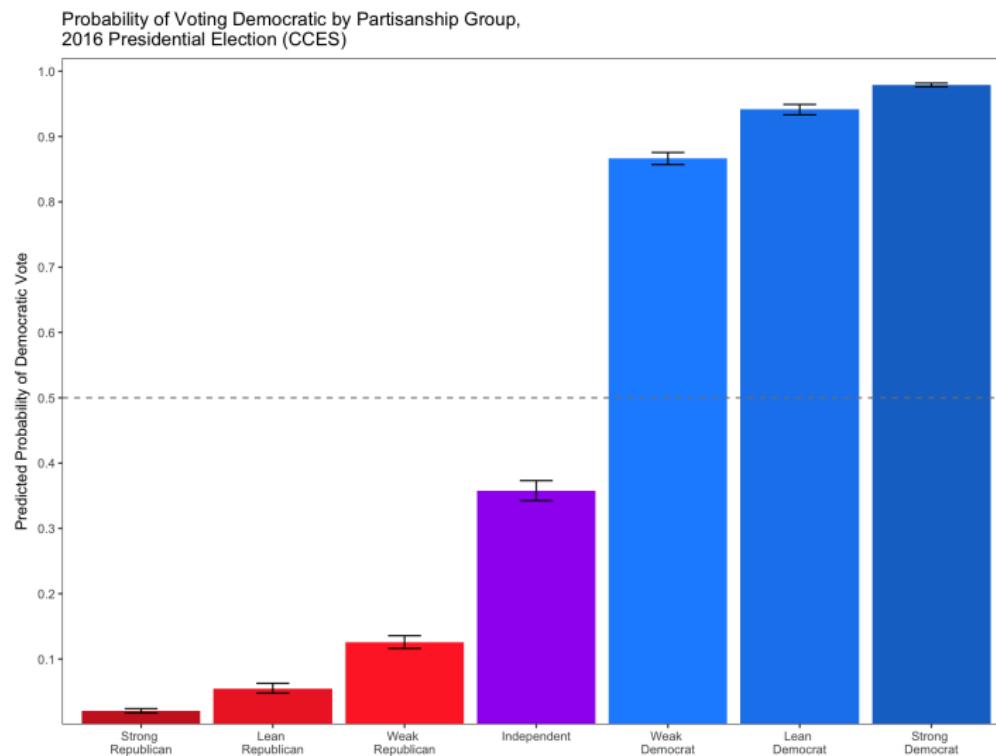
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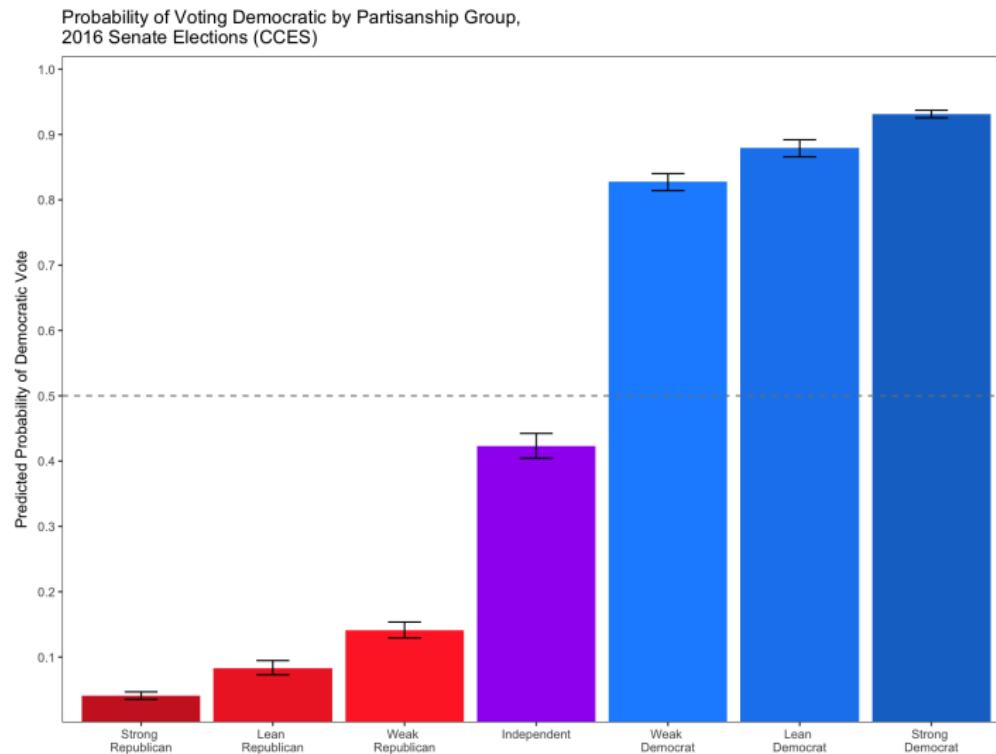
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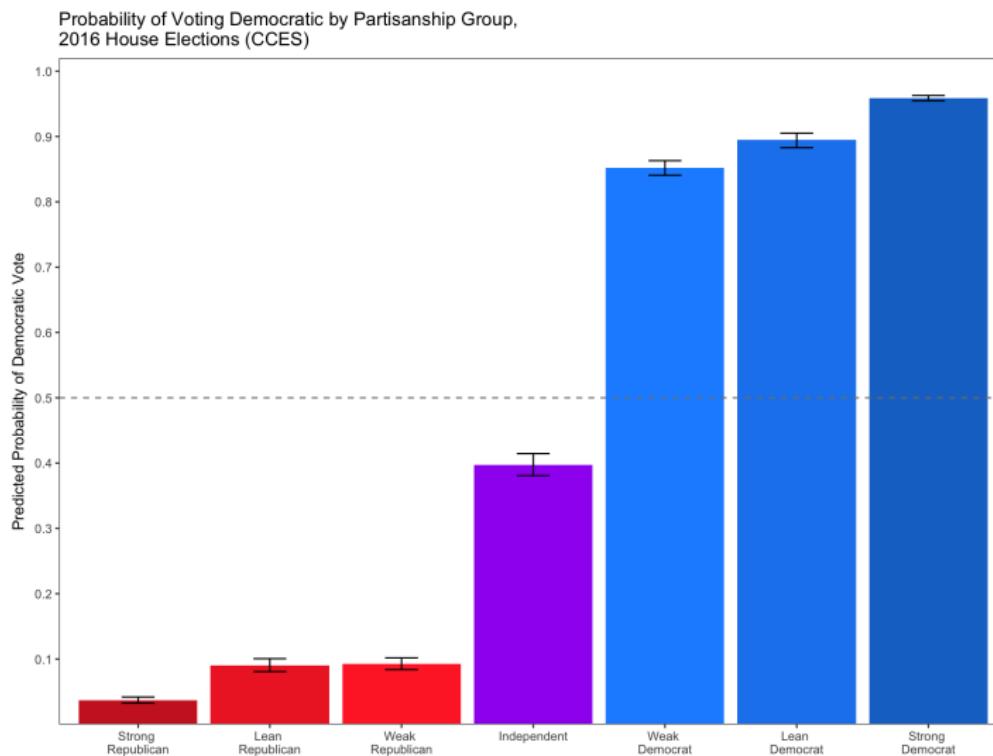
# Partisan Voting in the 2016 Presidential Election



# Partisan Voting in the 2016 Senate Elections

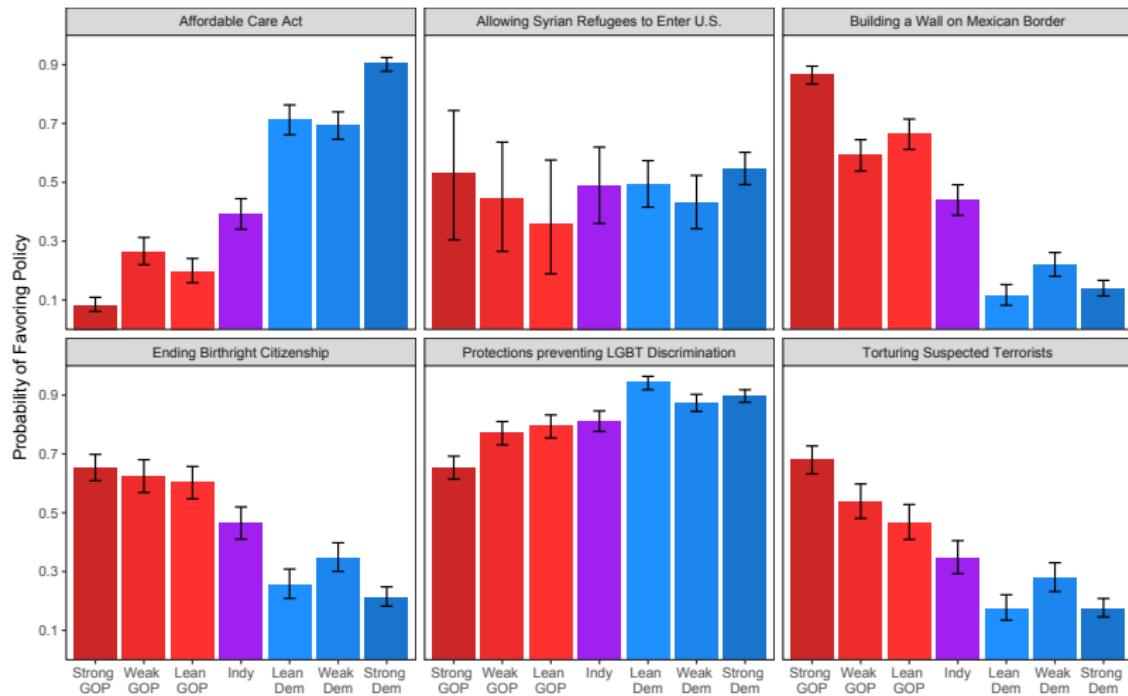


# Partisan Voting in the 2016 House Elections



# Partisan Effect on Policy Preferences

Predicted Probability of Favoring Various Policies by Partisanship, 2016 ANES



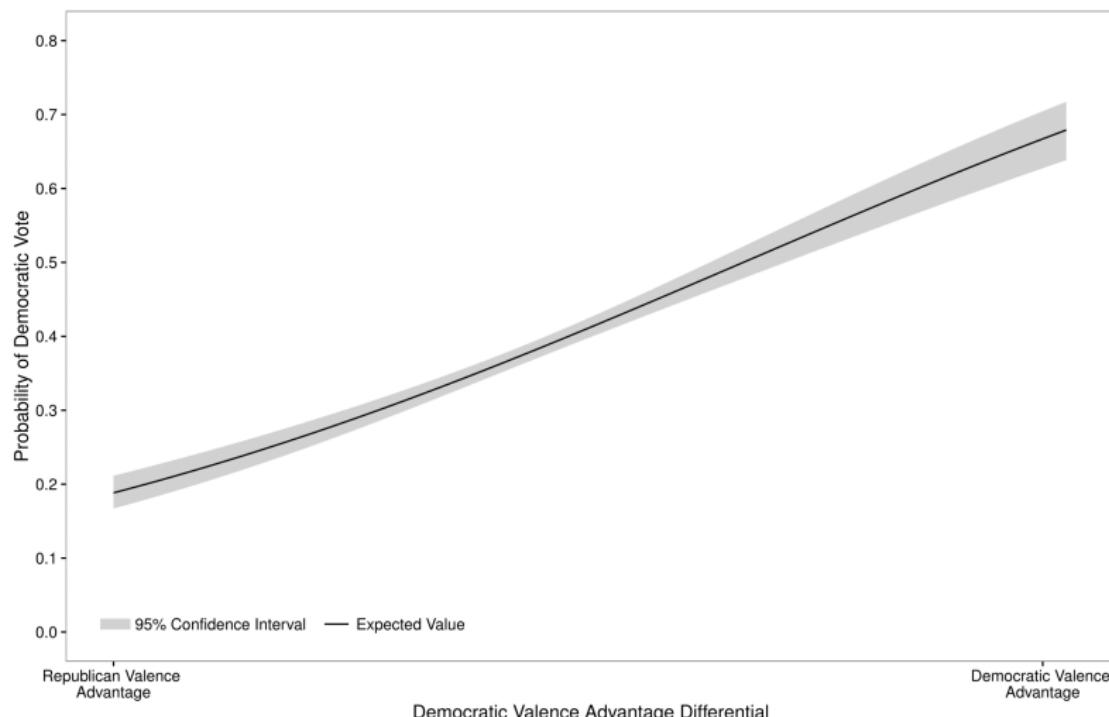
# Assessing the *Partisan Model*

- ▶ 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.

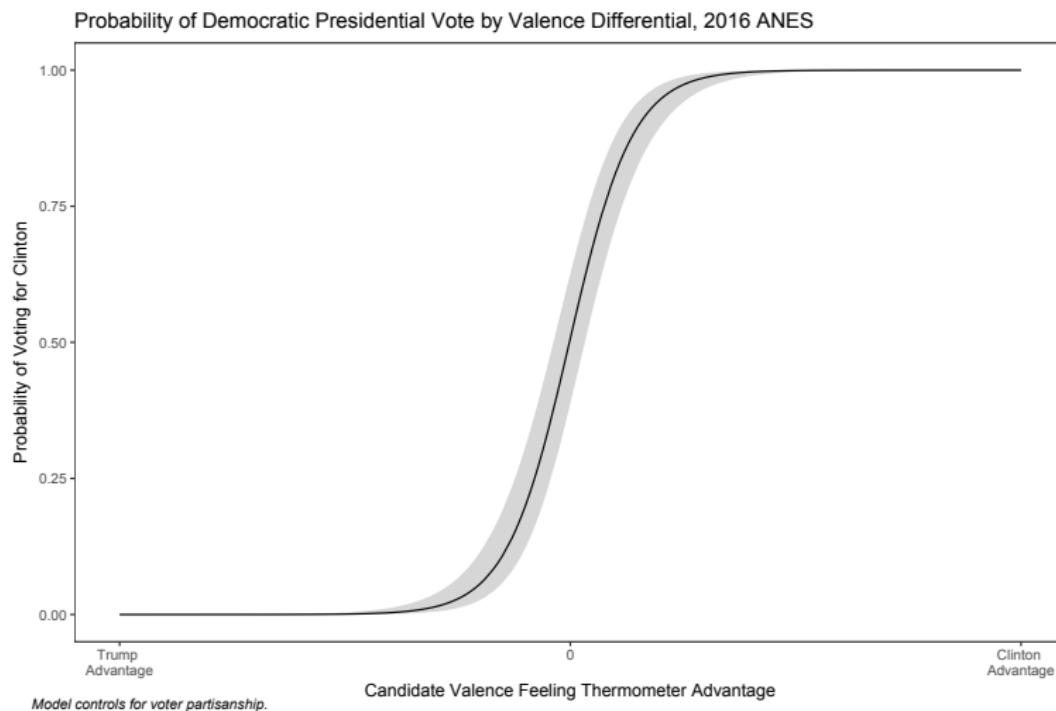
# Valence as a Heuristic

- ▶ 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

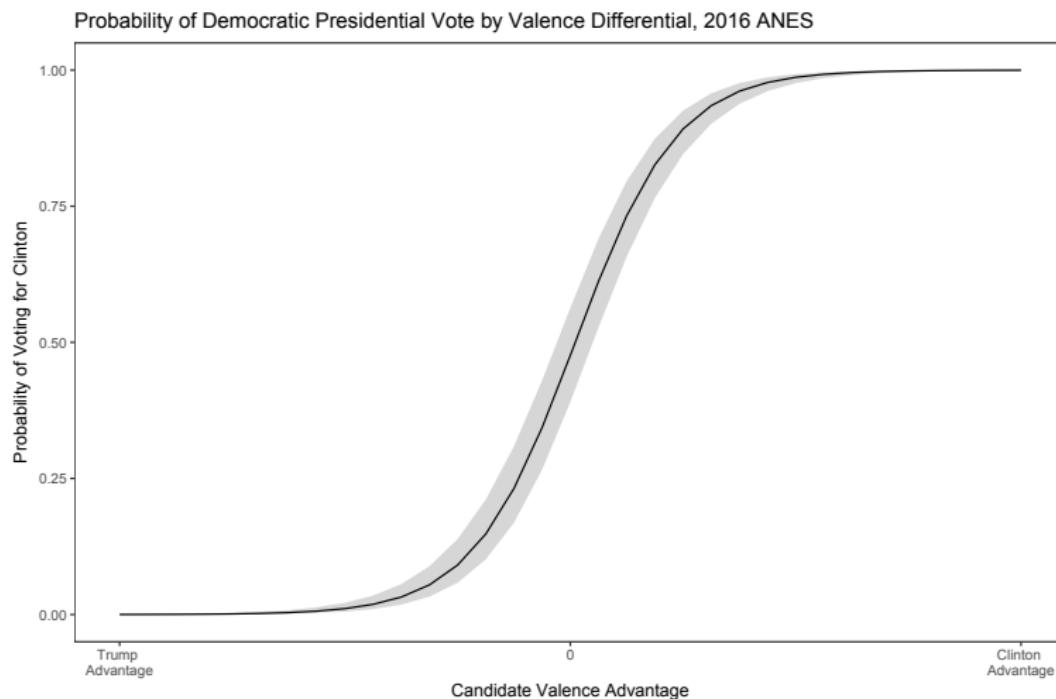
# Evidence of Valence Effect in U.S. House Elections, 2010



# Evidence of Valence Effect in 2016 Presidential Election

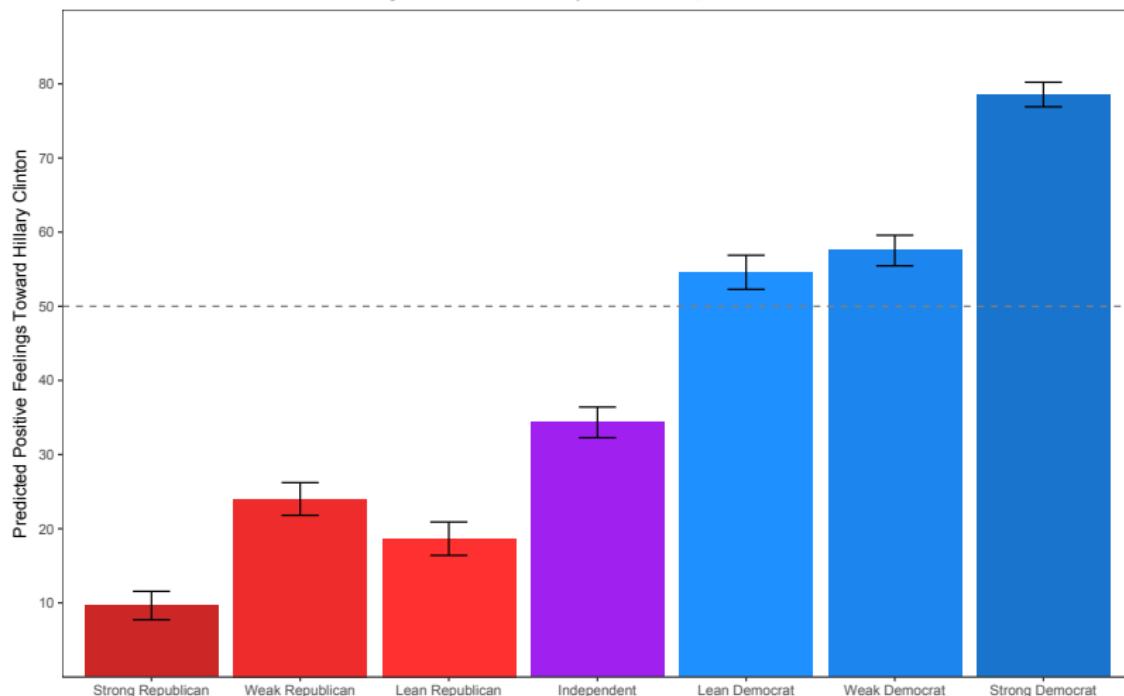


# Evidence of Valence Effect in 2016 Presidential Election



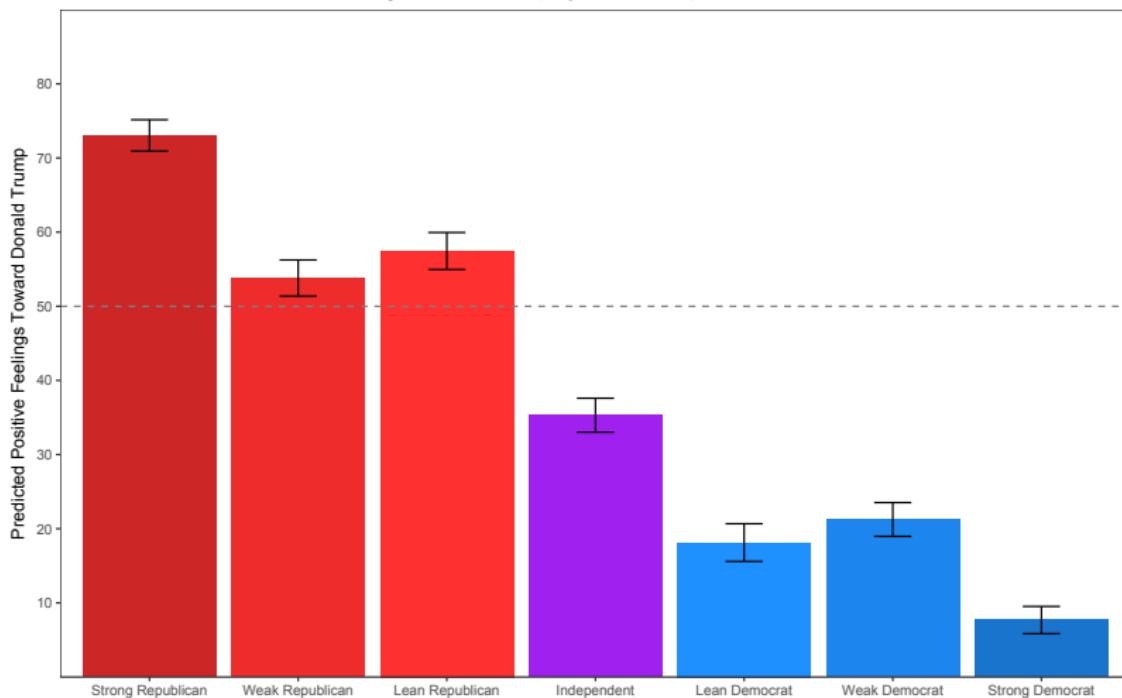
# Potential Pitfall: *Partisan Bias in Valence*

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



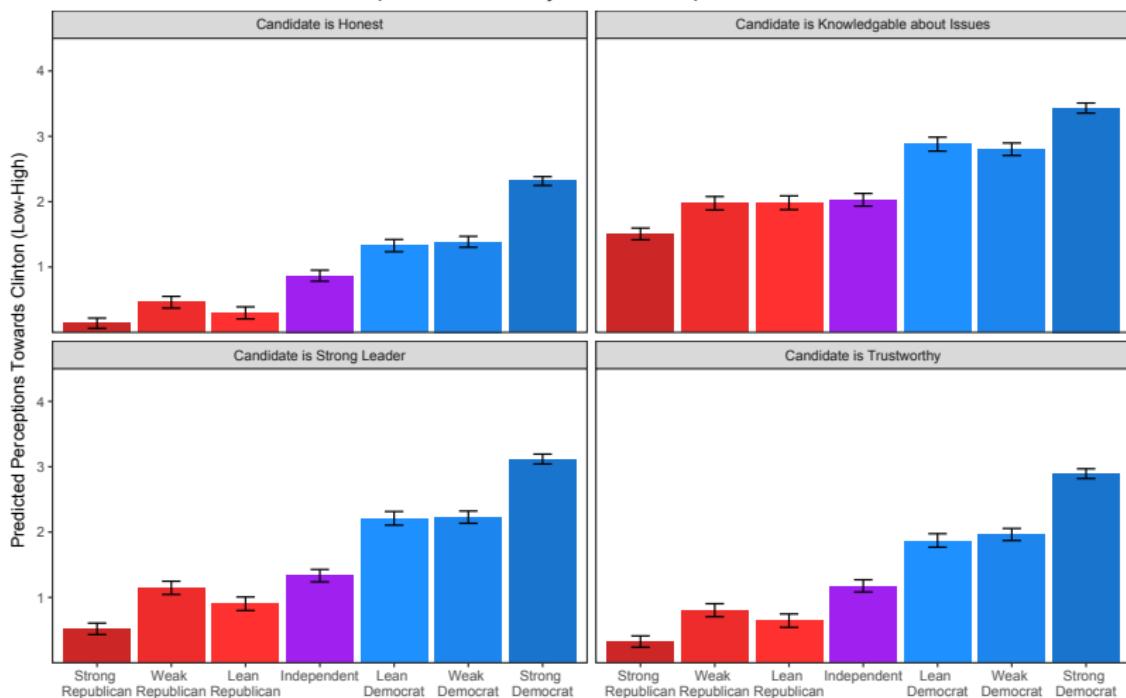
# Potential Pitfall: *Partisan Bias in Valence*

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



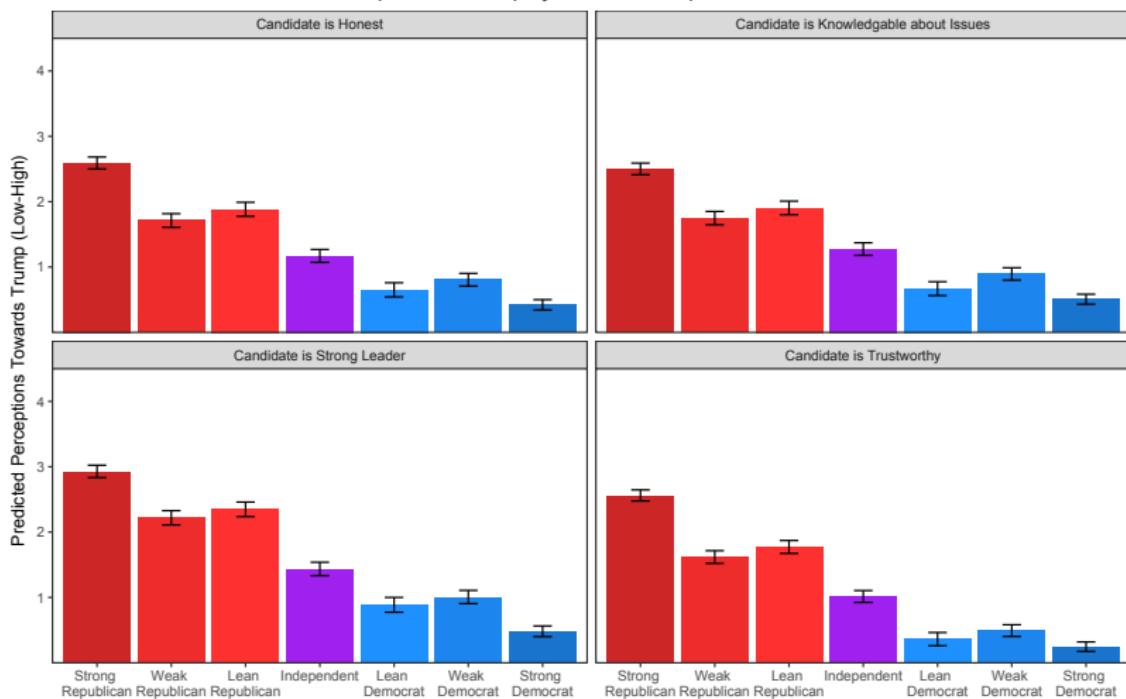
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Linear Prediction of Valence Perceptions of Clinton by Partisan Group, 2016 ANES



# 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