

Variation in Citizen Participation: Resources & Free-Riding Incentive

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Agenda Driving Questions

- 1 What does Madison's *Theory of the Republic* posit for the role of citizens in republican government?
- 2 What critical assumption does Madison's *Theory of the Republic* make with respect to citizen participation in politics and why do contemporary political scientists refute this assumption?
- 3 How do political scientists think of participation costs in politics? What variables predict variation in the ability to pay these costs and participate in politics?
- 4 What are the implications of the *resource bias* in political participation for Madison's *Theory of the Republic*? Does the relationship between citizens and their elected representation posited by Madison exist in contemporary Congressional representation?

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Madisonian Model of Representation

Defining the Problem: State of Nature

“Complaints are everywhere heard from our most considerate and virtuous citizens . . . that our governments are too unstable, that the public good is disregarded in the conflicts of rival parties, and that measures are too often decided, not according to the rules of justice and the rights of the minor party, but by the superior force of an interested and overbearing majority.”

Motivating the Solution

“It could never be more truly said than of the first remedy, that it was worse than the disease. Liberty is to faction what air is to fire. . . the regulation of these various and interfering interests forms the principal task of modern legislation, and involves the spirit of party and faction. . . a government in which the scheme of representation takes place the delegation of the government. . .

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Formalizing the Theory of Madison's *Republic*

Motivating Political Participation

“... By a faction, I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.”

Representing Faction (Primarily Federalist 10)

- ▶ Human Nature \rightarrow_1 Factions \leftrightarrow_2 Representation
- ▶ Where: \rightarrow_1 = Self-interest & \leftrightarrow_2 = Elections
- ▶ Election & re-election (\leftrightarrow_2) critical to theory: protects against agency loss by principal faction (voters)

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- ▶ How does Madison conceptualize political participation?
- ▶ ***Political Participation***: Any activity that citizens can undertake to influence government action
- ▶ What are some examples of political participation?
 - ▶ Writing/calling member of Congress
 - ▶ Giving to campaigns/political organizations
 - ▶ Attending rallies & getting out the vote
 - ▶ Running for office (from school board to U.S. Senate/President)
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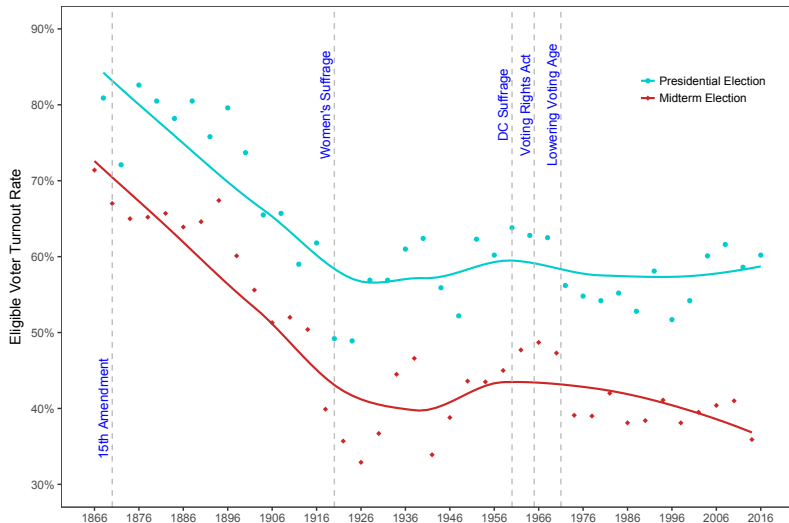
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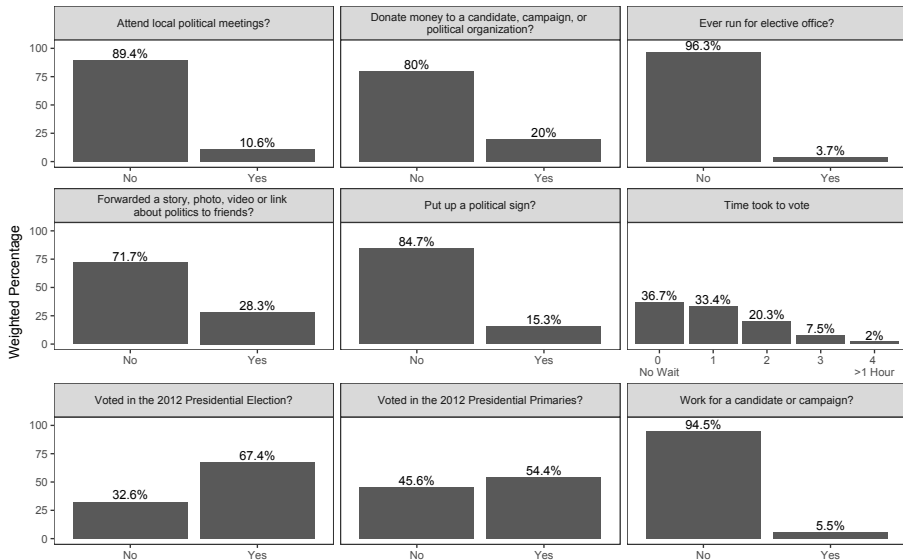
Is Madison Correct?

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



Variation in Other Forms of Participation?

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



Participation Costs

- ▶ Madisonian Theory of human behavior ignores the problem of collective action & the constant incentive to free-ride
- ▶ How is *political participation* a costly enterprise?
- ▶ Intrinsic costs to participation:
 - ▶ Time off work to vote, attend political events, receive "voter ID" card
 - ▶ Costs related to *operational* act of participation
- ▶ Information costs to participation:
 - ▶ Developing set of issue beliefs (ideology)
 - ▶ Gathering information of candidate positions & ballot propositions
 - ▶ Study how election of single representative affects ideological distribution of legislature
- ▶ Information costs inherently tied to development of *political self-interest* (preferences)

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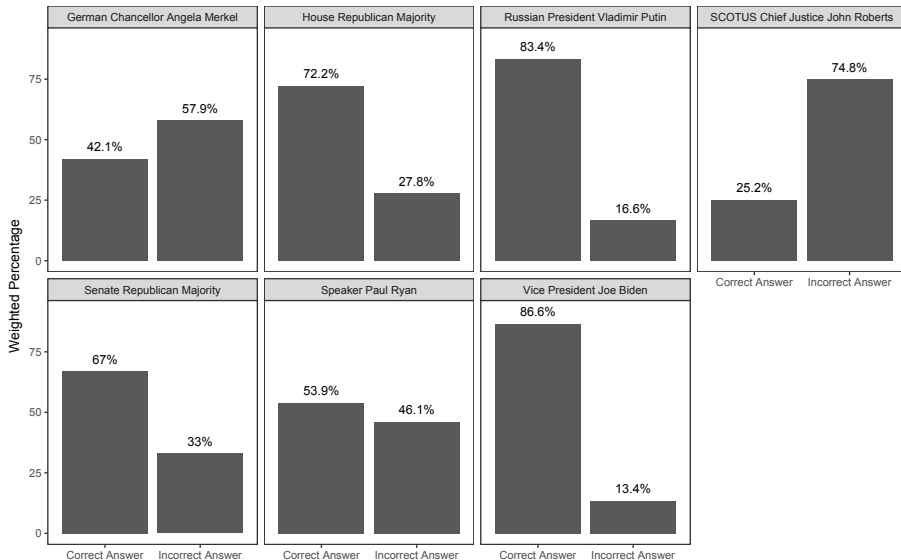
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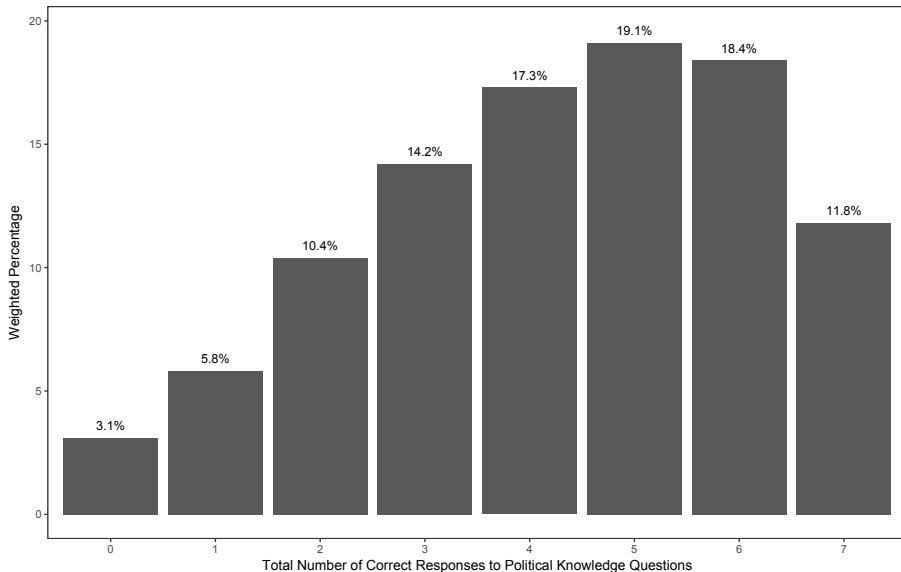
Low political sophistication

Variation in Citizen Response to Office Recall Battery, 2016 American National Election Study



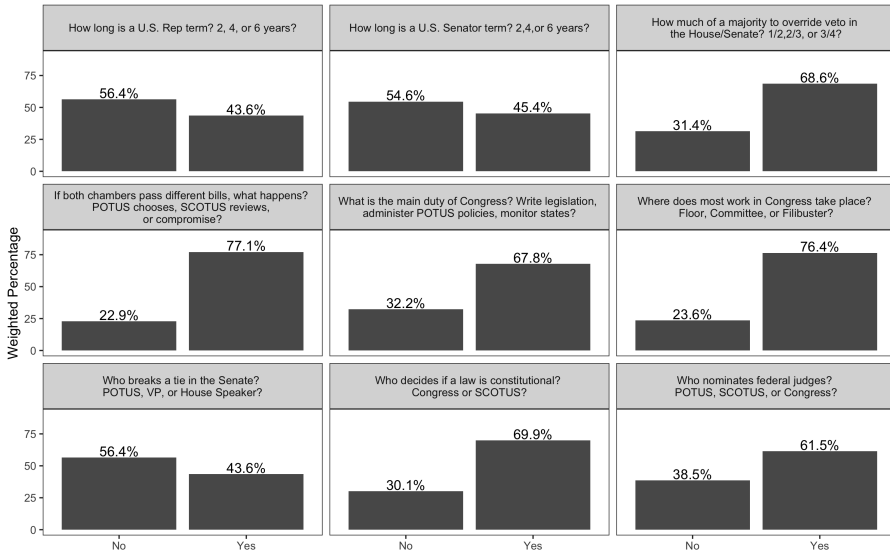
Aggregate Sophistication Distribution

Total Number of Correct Responses to Office Recall Battery, 2016 American National Election Study

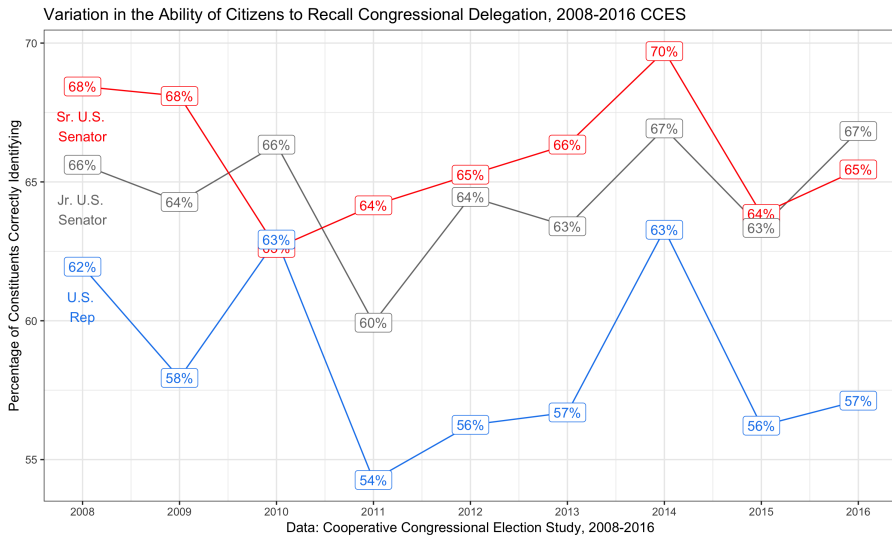


Low Knowledge of Congress

Variation in Knowledge about Congress, 2002 ADS Survey



Ability to Identify Representative Agents?



Implications for Madisonian Model of Representation

Thinking about *Implications*

What are the implications of variation in political participation and knowledge for Madison's *Theory of the Republic*?

- ▶ ***Democratic Dilemma:*** expectation that citizens must be fully informed to engage in politics even though they have a rational incentive not to be
- ▶ ***Resource bias:*** notion that only “resource-rich” citizens are more likely to overcome the costs of participation and participate in political activities
- ▶ What two salient variables do you think predict variation in political participation & knowledge?

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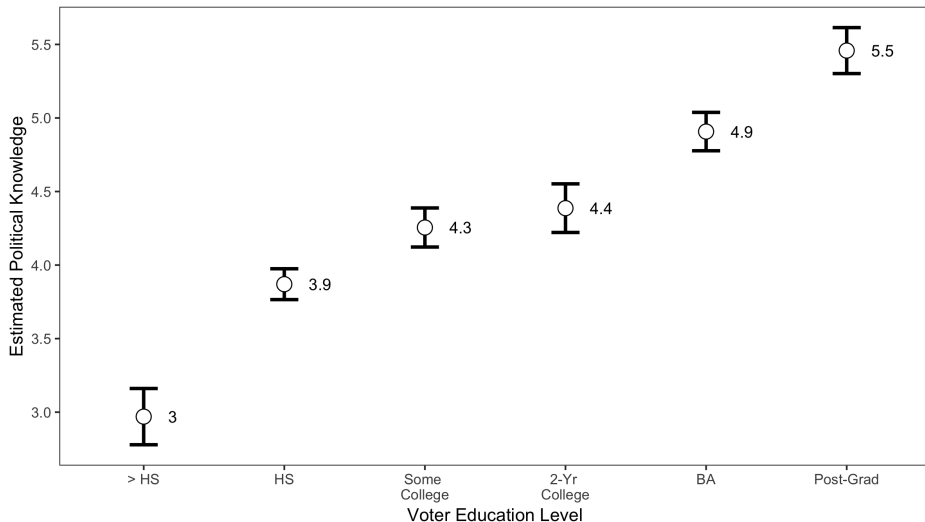
Evaluating the Variation in Political Knowledge & Participation

Bivariate Hypotheses of Interest

- ▶ H_1 : \uparrow Income = \uparrow Political Knowledge
- ▶ H_2 : \uparrow Education = \uparrow Political Knowledge
- ▶ H_3 : \uparrow Income = \uparrow Political Participation
- ▶ H_4 : \uparrow Education = \uparrow Political Participation

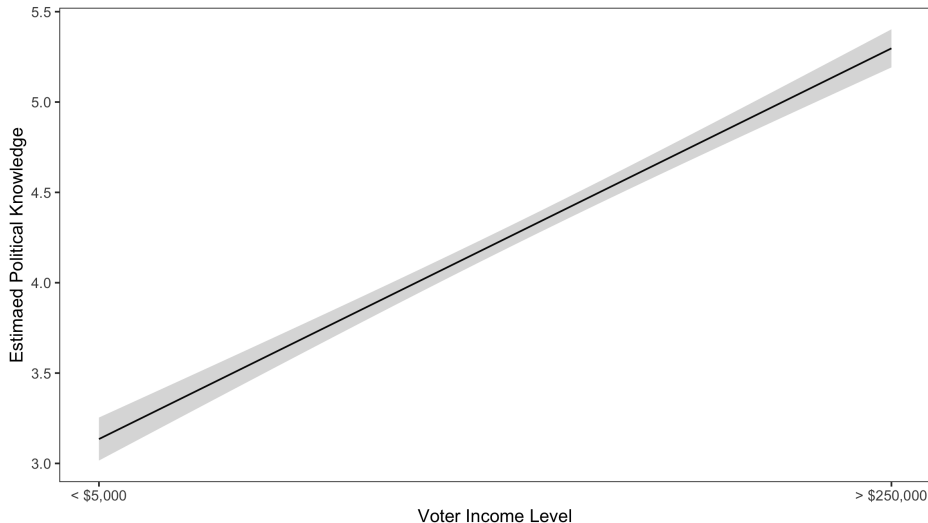
Variation in Political Knowledge: *Education*

Effect of Education on Citizen Political Knowledge,
2016 American National Election Study



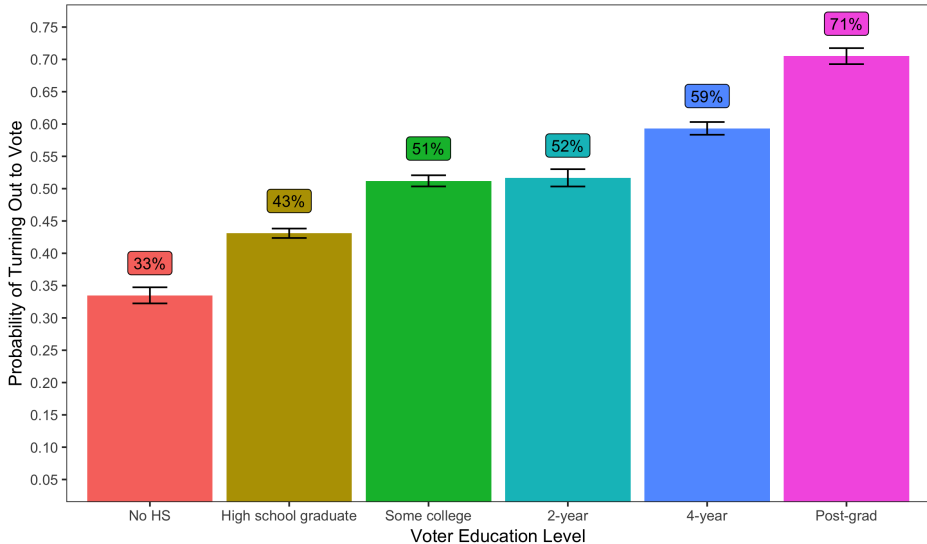
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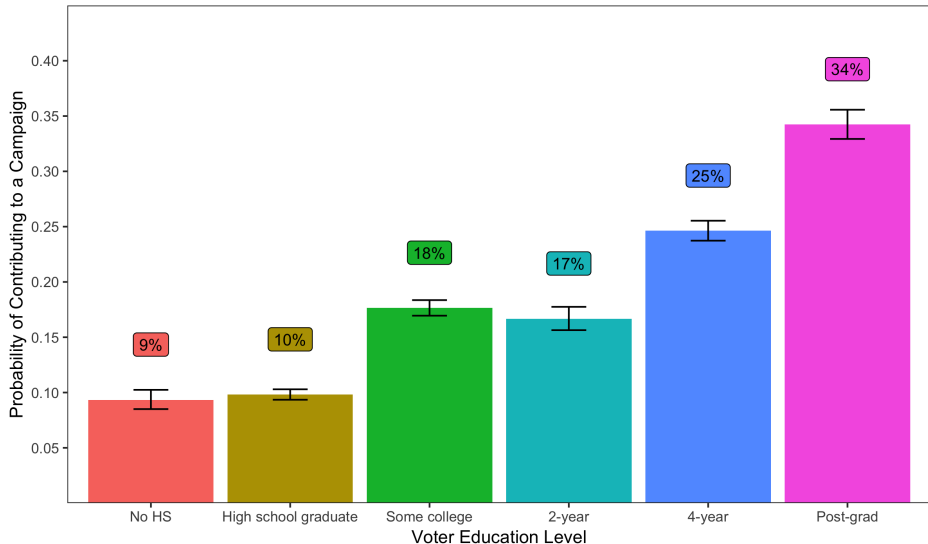
Education Levels & Voter Turnout, 2014 Elections

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

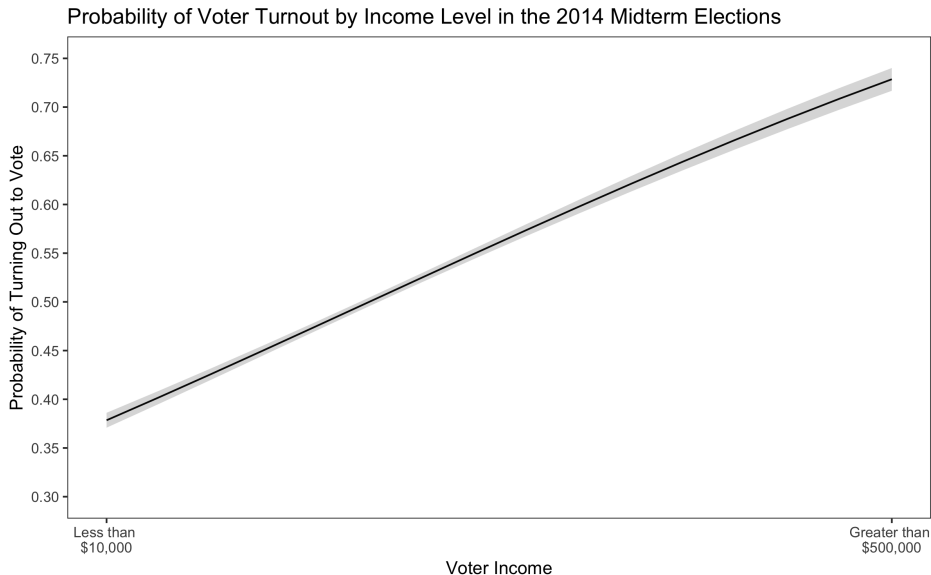


Education Levels & Campaign Contributing, 2014 Elections

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

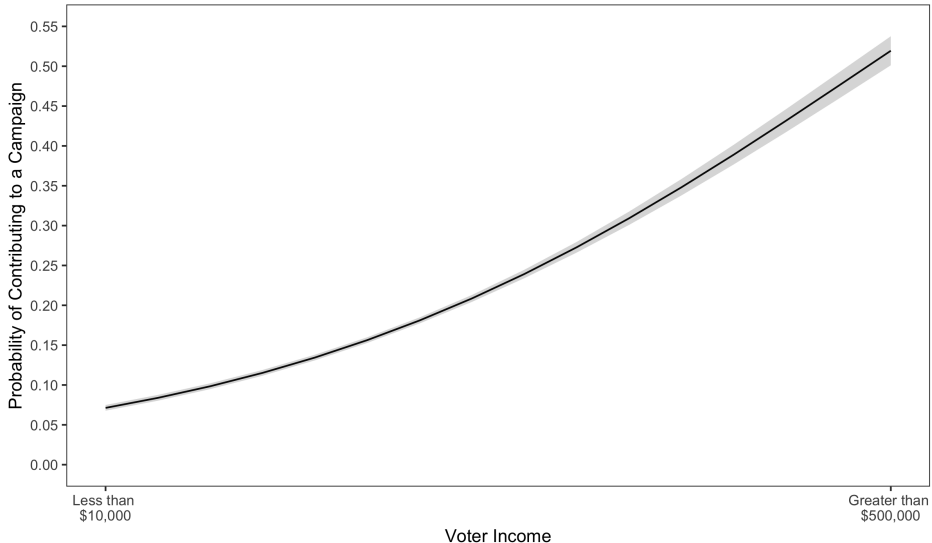


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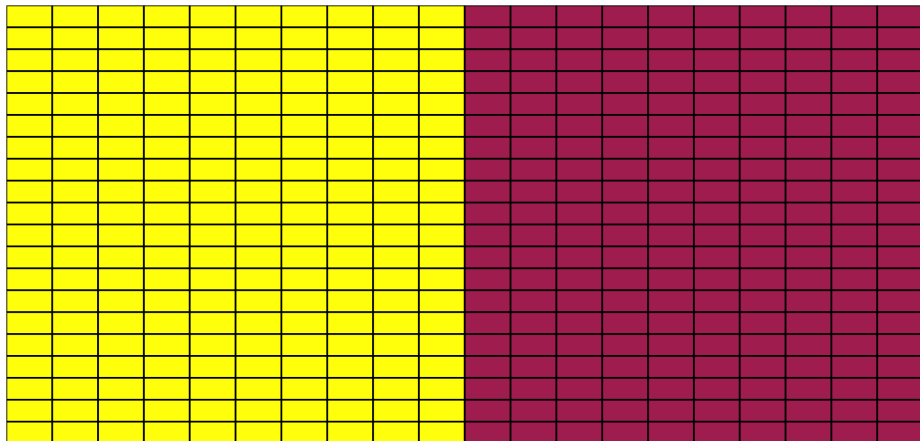
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Resource Bias: A Hypothetical District

Fictional Even District of Lutes & Loggers

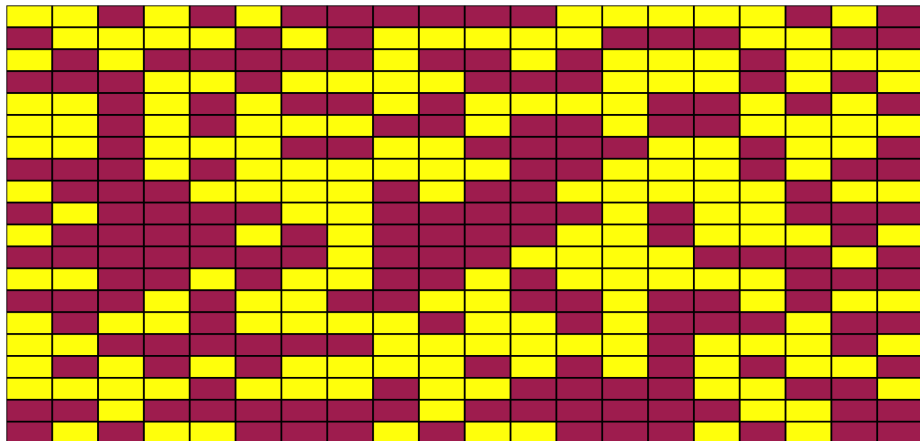


 PLU Lutes  UPS Loggers

Each Square Represents a Single Voter
(N = 200 PLU & 200 UPS voters)

Resource Bias: Non-Bias Turnout

Non-Bias Turnout in Fictional Even District of Lutes & Loggers

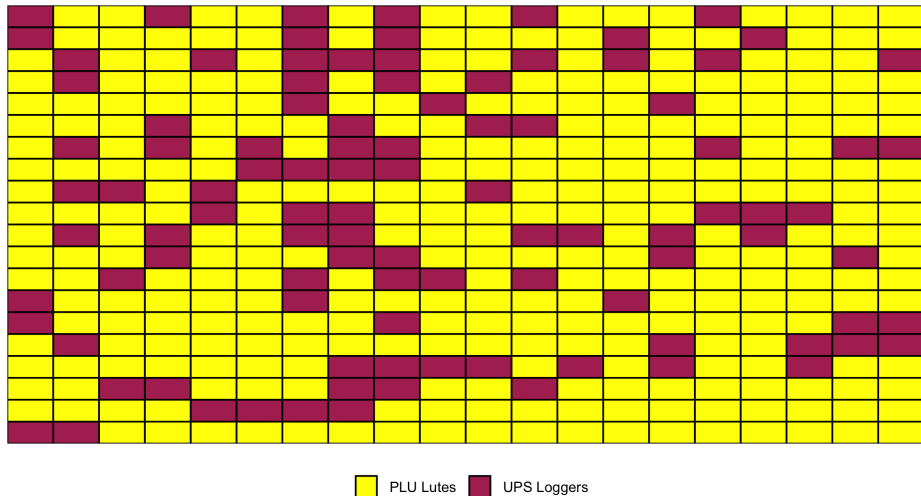


■ PLU Lutes ■ UPS Loggers

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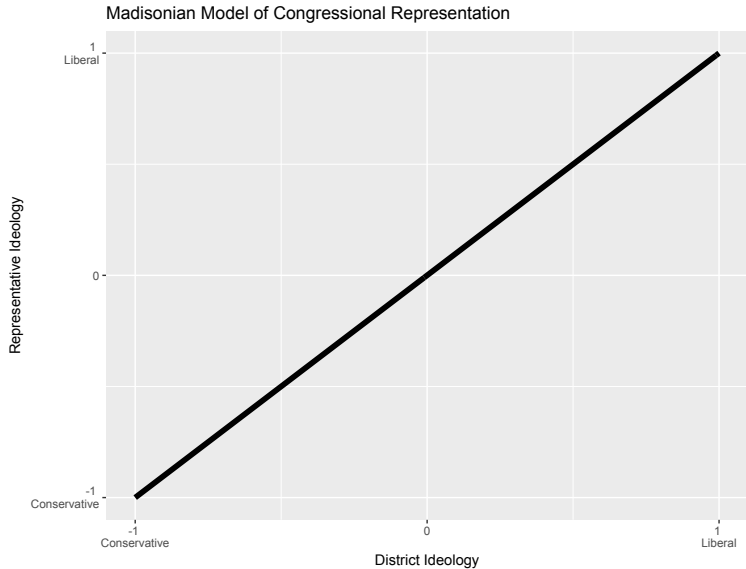
Resource Bias: Bias Turnout

Bias Turnout in Fictional Even District of Lutes & Loggers



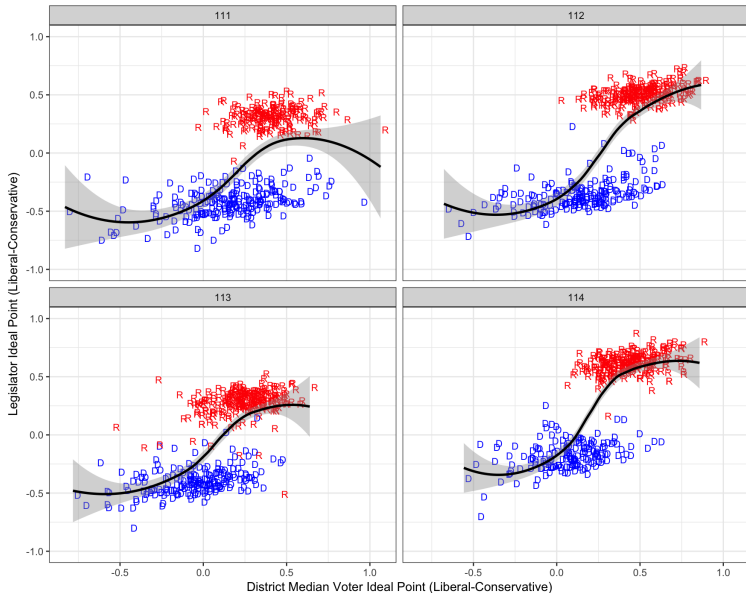
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- What does district-centered representation look like with respect to congruence between constituent & member ideology?



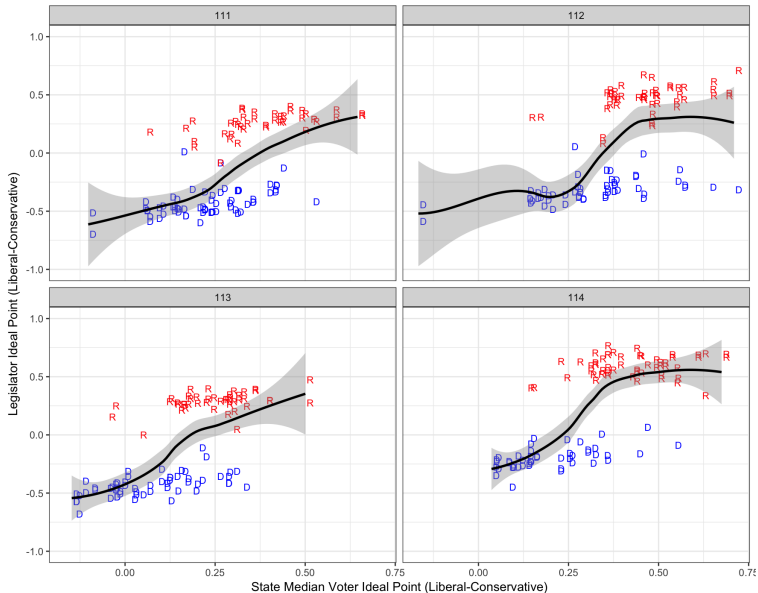
Evidence of District-Centered Representation?

Legislative Representation in the U.S. House, 2008-2014



Evidence of District-Centered Representation?

Legislative Representation in the U.S. Senate, 2008-2014



Cutting Information Costs with Political Heuristics

Models of Electoral Control

<i>Heuristic</i>	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.

Key Points

- 1 Fundamental role of citizens to serve as *fully informed principals* in Madison's *Theory of the Republic*
- 2 Madison posits that citizens motivated to participate in politics by *common impulse of passion or of interest*
 - ▶ Political scientists suggest Madison ignores costs to participation & rational incentive to abstain from politics
- 3 Political scientists believe costs not distributed *uniformly*, with high income & educated citizens best positioned to pay costs
- 4 *Resource Bias* suggests distortions in sample of participation & ultimately who gets elected
- 5 Evidence of distortion in contemporary election outcomes, heuristics to the rescue?

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Questions & Feedback:

✉ calgara@ucdavis.edu

🌐 <https://calgara.github.io>

🔗 ***Replication Materials:***

https://calgara.github.io/PLU_Teaching_Talk_Replication.html