

Recent advances in measurement

Public Opinion and Public Policy in Advanced Industrial Democracies

Jan Zilinsky, NYU

Slides are available in the class Dropbox folder

Themes

- 1 What can we learn from producing estimates of voter ideology on the same scale as candidate positions?
- 2 How far are elected representatives' ideal points from the median voter's ideal point?
- 3 What is the relationship between citizen ideology and vote choice? (Proximity voting?)

Bafumi, Joseph, and Michael C Herron. 2010. "Leapfrog Representation and Extremism: a Study of American Voters and Their Members in Congress." *American Political Science Review* 104(03): 519–42.

Jessee, S A. 2009. "Spatial Voting in the 2004 Presidential Election." *American Political Science Review* 103(1): 59–81.

Section 1

Legislators' extremity

Leapfrog Representation

- Members of Congress are more extreme than their constituents (i.e. lack of congruence between American voters and members of Congress)
- **Hypothesized explanations**
 - “elected officials tend to represent the preferences of engaged voters more than they do disengaged voters”
 - “engaged voters tend to be relatively extreme”

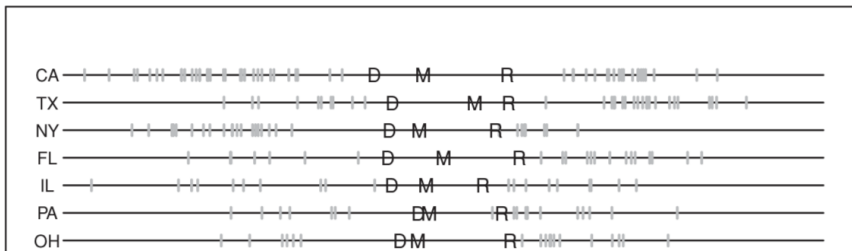
Leapfrog Representation

- The 109th House was too conservative compared to the median American voter
- The 110th House was too liberal
- The median American voter was leapfrogged
- No evidence of leapfrogging in the Senate
- The Senate seems insulated from public opinion

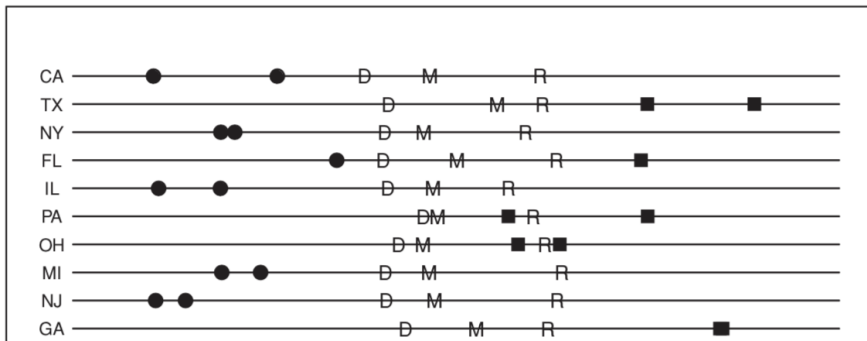
109th Congress: January 3, 2005 to January 3, 2007.

110th Congress: January 3, 2007, and January 3, 2009, i.e. the last two years of the second term of President George W. Bush.

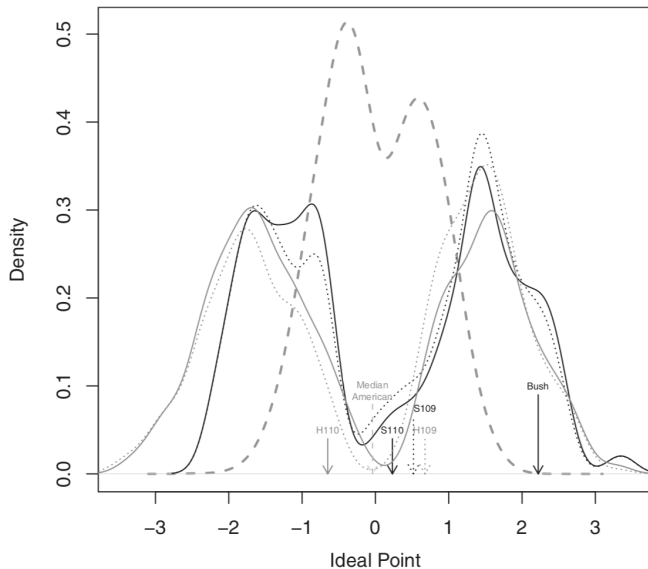
Voters and House Members from the 109th Congress



Voters and Senators from the 109th Congress



Voters and Institutions



Delegate vs. trustee roles

Legislators' behavior may hinge on context / issues on the table:
on a very salient issue over which elected officials do not have private information, representatives may privilege their electorates. On a more obscure issue or on a issue where the expertise of elected officials dominates the information available to constituents, representatives may act like independent trustees (Wahlke et al. 1962)

Issues

Is offering an opinion really a political choice? (“scholars use observed political choices (e.g., does a given individual support or not support abortion rights?) to estimate numeric ideal points on the real line.”)

Extremity results do not match Jesse's results

Section 2

Spatial Voting in the U.S.

Strong tests of the spatial model require direct measurements of the positions of voters and candidates on the same scale.

Hypothesis

more informed citizens would engage in either more precise or less biased spatial voting than those with lower levels of information.

HOWEVER: "Other scholars, such as Lodge and Taber (2000), argue that partisanship exerts the strongest biasing effects for those with higher levels of information."

Results

- "the majority of citizens do have ideologically organized preferences on the types of proposals voted on in the U.S. Senate
- "the choices of independent voters are shown to be largely consistent with the assumptions of spatial voting theory"
- "decision rules used by partisans differ strongly from what unbiased spatial voting would imply"

3 models

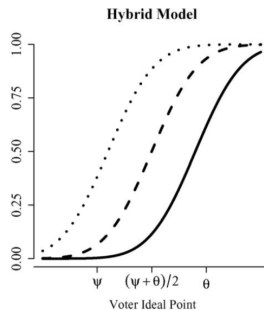
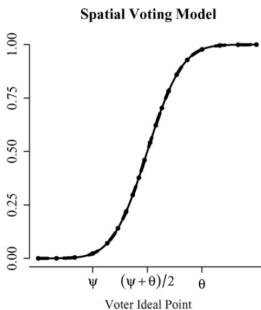
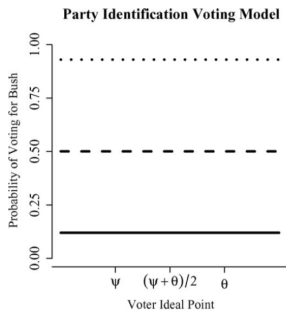


FIGURE 4. Estimated Senator and Respondent Ideal Point Densities

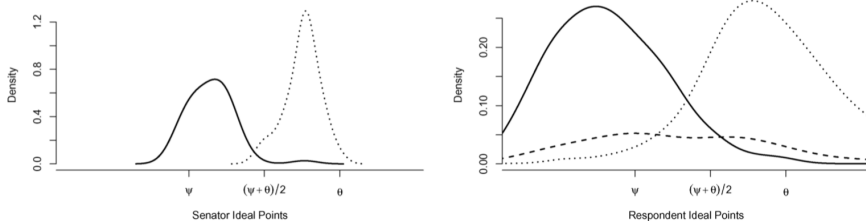
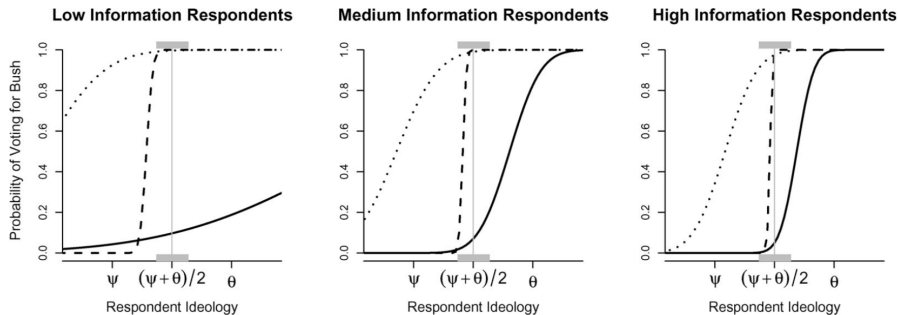


FIGURE 5. Differences in Party Identification Effects by Political Information Level

Note: Solid lines represent predicted probabilities for Democratic respondents, dashed lines represent those for independent respondents, and dotted lines represent probabilities for Republican respondents. Low, medium, and high political information respondents are defined as those at the 0.05, 0.5, and 0.95 quantiles of the sample distribution of political information, respectively. The vertical lines in each pane denote the estimated location of the midpoint between the positions of Bush and Kerry, and gray rugs on the top and bottom of the panes show the 95% highest posterior density regions for the midpoint.

TABLE 4. Presidential Voting Model Estimates

	Presidential Vote Equation Estimates		
	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
Intercept	-2.26 (-2.94, -1.73)	-3.08 (-6.18, -0.42)	1.75 (1.49, 2.03)
<i>Respldeal</i>	3.42 (2.03, 5.12)	29.70 (5.05, 54.31)	2.57 (1.88, 3.33)
<i>PollInfo</i>	-0.50 (-0.89, -0.15)	-2.63 (-5.40, -0.35)	-0.33 (-0.67, -0.02)
<i>Respldeal*PollInfo</i>	1.73 (0.80, 2.82)	7.89 (-1.66, 19.81)	0.48 (-0.11, 1.09)