

CSAP American Politics Conference 2019 Presentations

Titles and Abstracts

CONFERENCE PAPER PRESENTERS:

Scott Ashworth, Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago

“Strategic Entry and Female Representation: Comparing Election Aversion and Voter Bias”

Abstract: A central question animating the study of women in American politics is why so few women hold elected office. The literature exploring this phenomenon has uncovered three empirical facts that require explanation: (i) women are under-represented in the pool of candidates, (ii) conditional on winning, women perform better than men in office, and (iii) conditional on running (and controlling for incumbency), women and men win at equal rates. The literature also posits two key explanatory mechanisms: election aversion and voter bias. We study a formal model of elections that endogenizes male and female potential candidates' strategic decision to enter politics in order to explore the explanatory power of these mechanisms relative to the empirical facts. Our analysis shows that neither mechanism, on its own, can explain all three facts. But it also shows that a model incorporating both election aversion and voter discrimination can. The reason is that each mechanism implies each of the first two facts and so they are mutually reinforcing. However, each mechanism is inconsistent with the third fact, but in off-setting ways—election aversion implies that women should win at higher rates than men while voter bias implies that women should win at lower rates than men. Hence, it takes a combination of the two mechanisms to make sense of all three empirical facts.

David Doherty and Conor M. Dowling, Department of Political Science, Loyola University Chicago, and Department of Political Science, University of Mississippi (Ole Miss)

“The Primary Electorate and Party Polarization”

Abstract: Observers often point to primary elections as playing a critical role in fostering polarization, positing that primary voters harbor distinctive policy preferences and demand ideological purity from candidates. Here we reexamine this claim using data from a conjoint experiment that allows us to compare how the positions adopted by hypothetical candidates affect how partisan primary voters and their non-voting counterparts evaluate them. We also leverage data from a novel survey of local party chairpersons to assess whether local party chairs' assessments of what makes a candidate viable in a primary diverge from primary voters' preferences. Given that local party chairpersons play an important role in recruiting and supporting candidates, if they *believe* that ideological purity is a prerequisite for primary success, they may foster polarization by promoting unnecessarily ideological candidates at this stage of the electoral process. We find evidence that, on some issues, partisan primary voters respond differently to candidates' positions than their non-voting counterparts. We also find that chairs' perceptions regarding the positions that improve a candidate's viability do not consistently reflect primary voters' preferences. Each of these rifts is particularly pronounced among Republicans.

Seth J. Hill, Department of Political Science, University of California, San Diego
“Communicating Intensity of Preference: A Theory of Costly Political Action and Expression”

Abstract: Many individuals take costly political action of unclear individual benefit like volunteering for campaigns or making donations. Some also express opinions that seem biased toward political parties or in-group candidates. Existing theories attribute such actions and expressions to mechanisms like duty, norms, and identities. This paper presents a theory that instead connects action and expression to a difficulty of communication. In the theory, costly political actions are tools to communicate intensity of political preference, which is often unobserved and thus subject to misrepresentation. I show in a strategic model that costly political action can improve societal welfare without assuming psychological or affective motives. Intensity theory also provides explanation for a variety of patterns of politics. The theory proposes causes of political polarization, describes conditions where citizens demand malfeasant politicians, shows that policy opposed by the majority of citizens is sometimes implemented in equilibrium, suggests that opinion surveys may not accurately measure respondent attitudes, and predicts when individuals choose costly collective action.

Samara Klar, School of Government & Public Policy, University of Arizona
“Re-Evaluating Affective Polarization among Married Couples: How Changes in Gender Roles, not Partisan Biases, Leads to Politically Homophilous Marriages” (*With Nicole Bauer, Yanna Krupnikov, and John Barry Ryan*)

Abstract: Affective polarization – the growing personal dislike between members of opposing parties – is becoming an axiomatic depiction of contemporary American politics. In this paper we reevaluate one trend that is often attributed to partisan bias: the increase in political agreement between spouses. We argue that, in fact, political homophily in marriages is due to changes in women’s political involvement over time – not to partisan bias. With multiple surveys and one experiment, we show that couples who share an interest in politics are more likely to include political views as a relevant trait in selecting a mate. As women became increasingly interested in politics over the twentieth century, politics became more relevant to mate selection. Our work helps to put contemporary American politics – one plagued by division and polarization – into a broader historical context, with implications for both partisan discourse and women’s role in politics and society.

Sharece Thrower, Department of Political Science, Vanderbilt University
“Presidential Decision-making and the Political Costs of Unilateral Policy Revision”

Abstract: Despite widespread attention surrounding policy formation, few study its alteration – particularly through presidential unilateralism. Accordingly, this paper develops a new theory explaining when executive orders are amended or revoked based on their associated political costs. Specifically, I argue that such costs can inhibit presidents’ ability to make the largest policy gains through revocations. Alternatively, they must pursue less drastic unilateral change

under these conditions. Using data on executive orders issued between 1949 and 2013, I find empirical support for this theory. Particularly, presidents are more likely to revoke orders issued by ideologically-distant predecessors when the economy is strong, their public approval is high, and during non-election years. As these political costs increase, however, presidents instead make smaller changes to the status quo with amendments. Overall, this study demonstrates how presidents adjudicate between multiple policymaking strategies, while providing additional insights into policy duration more broadly.

Hye Young You, Department of Politics, New York University (NYU)

“Dynamic Lobbying: Evidence from Foreign Lobbying in the U.S. Congress”

Abstract: How do lobbying strategies change as legislation advances, and do lobbying activities influence the voting behaviors of legislators? Answering these questions is crucial to understanding special interest politics, however, systematic observation of lobbying contacts over time and across political actors is challenging. Using a novel dataset constructed from foreign lobbying reports, I analyze lobbying activities by the governments of Colombia, Panama, and South Korea regarding their respective free trade agreements over a span of ten years (2003 - 2012). I find that lobbyists on behalf of foreign countries target different groups of legislators, both regarding their opinions on free trade and institutional positions, between the agenda-setting and voting stages. Contributions made to members who serve on trade-related committees are associated with higher quality contacts - contacts with members as opposed to contacts with staffers - and there is a tighter link between contributions and access among members who are in leadership positions or who face more electoral competition. I also find that lobbying contacts are significantly correlated with voting outcomes.

GRADUATE STUDENT POSTER PRESENTERS:

Talbot M. Andrews, Department of Political Science, Stony Brook University

"Conditional on what? Disentangling Intention and Equity Motivations Behind Conditional Cooperation"

Abstract: Why citizens engage in costly political participation is one of the most persistent puzzles in political science. They overcome collective action problems, for example by voting and turning out to protest. Extensive work using public goods games show conditional cooperators, those who cooperate with other cooperators, are critical to overcoming such dilemmas, but we know very little about what motivates these cooperators. Are they swayed because they perceive those around them to have good intentions? Or are they driven by general concerns for equity? Using a novel incentivized experiment, I find positive intentions sustain conditional cooperation, not a desire to maintain an equitable distribution of resources. I use the results of this study to construct a novel model of conditional cooperation in N-player social dilemmas and discuss implications for research on political behavior.

Jaclyn Kaslovsky, Department of Government, Harvard University

"Complements Not Substitutes: Home Style and its Consequences for Representation in the Senate"

Abstract: While "home style" is often heralded as critical to understanding the legislator-constituent relationship, few studies have provided a comprehensive accounting of legislator behavior in the district. As a result, the question of whether district focus and policy representation are complements or substitutes remains unanswered. In this paper, I use two original datasets - on senator staffing and travel patterns - to show where senators allocate their resources and how these decisions relate to roll call voting. In addition to analyzing overall patterns of behavior, I geolocate local offices and travel receipts to the county-level. I find that the number of trips a senator dedicates to a county interacts positively with the policy preferences of constituents living in that area, indicating that activities in the district and the legislature are used as complements, and not substitutes.

Chris McConnell, Graduate School of Business, Stanford University

"The Burden of Office: How the Costs of Serving Impact Legislator Behavior"

Abstract: When it becomes easier for legislators to serve, how does political selection and behavior change? Previous studies have generally approached this question by measuring the impact of salary increases, which may lead to biased estimates due to self-selection. I study a change in the Internal Revenue Code that allowed state legislators living more than 50 miles away from the state capitol to take additional deductions on their federal taxes. While in some states these deductions per se exceeded the standard deduction at the time, I find that this additional income did not change the behavior of qualifying legislators in expected ways. Specifically, exploiting both within and cross-state variation, I find that legislators who benefited from the change were no more likely to stand for reelection, and that highly qualified candidates were no more likely to enter the treated districts. Additionally, across various measures of a legislator's effort, I estimate minimal effects. My results suggest that existing studies of legislator pay may overstate the impact of financial compensation on politician behavior.

Michael Olson, Department of Government, Harvard University

"'Restoration' and Representation: Legislative Consequences of Black Disfranchisement in the American South, 1879-1916"

Abstract: The restriction of black voting rights in the U.S. South in the decades following Reconstruction is the greatest instance of democratic backsliding in American history. Despite this, little attention has been afforded to the consequences of disfranchisement for legislative representation. In this study, I draw on original roll call data from state legislatures in the U.S. South to explore these consequences. I use these roll call votes to describe the main dimensions of legislative conflict in each of these legislatures, and then demonstrate that black disfranchisement was associated with large shifts in ideological representation away from black preferences. In addition to providing new understanding of the first-order consequences of one

of the most significant events in American political history, these results contribute to a broader understanding of the relationship between electoral institutions and legislative representation, and provide a new backdrop for the broad political science literature on the “Solid South.”

Min Hee Seo, Department of Political Science, Washington University in St. Louis
“Examining How Municipal Governments Deliver Citizen-Requested Services using a Field Experiment”

Abstract: Are municipal governments responsive in providing constituent-requested government services? This is the first study investigating whether and how municipal governments grant fundamental government services through a 311 system. First, I conduct a field experiment by actually submitting pothole repair requests to the 311 system (treatment), and explore whether submitting a formal service request to the 311 system draws an effective response from the municipal government. Then, I investigate whether the effectiveness of the 311 system varies based on the extent of political participation and the racial composition of the neighborhoods in which the pothole service was requested. Beyond pothole repair requests, I additionally analyze approximately 1 million citizen-driven service requests on all types of issues collected over a decade. The findings from the field experiment show that the 311 system is highly effective, and I find the limited evidence on the racial and political discrepancies in effectiveness of the 311 system. Furthermore, the findings from big data analytics show very small racial and political discrepancies in municipality responses on all types of issues.

Andrew Thompson, Department of Political Science, Northwestern University
“Clear and Present Danger? How Group Threat Shapes Opinions and Perceptions”

Abstract: The US population is rapidly changing with recent projections showing significant expected shifts along racial and ethnic lines—soon whites will no longer be the majority. Here I explore whether these projections generate feelings of threat among the current majority population. I then go further by studying how such feelings of threat consequently shape policy attitudes and perceptions of ongoing political events. I address these issues with an experiment embedded within an exit poll where the treatment is information about increasing Asian immigration. I find that when non-Asians learn this information, they feel economically threatened, are less likely believe Asian-Americans face discrimination in college admissions while at the same time are more supportive of racial limits in college admissions. These results show that demographic projections can cause particular types of threat that shape policy attitudes, even support for discriminatory policy.

Dan Thompson, Department of Political Science, Stanford University
“How Partisan is Local Law Enforcement? Evidence from Sheriff Cooperation with Immigration Authorities”

Abstract: Is local law enforcement conducted differently based on the party in power? I offer an answer to this question by focusing on a case in which law enforcement is elected and has meaningful independent discretion: sheriff compliance with federal requests to detain unauthorized immigrants. Using a regression discontinuity design in a new dataset of over 3,200 partisan sheriff elections and administrative data on sheriff behavior, I find that Democrats and Republicans comply at nearly the same rate. These results contribute to ongoing research into the role that partisanship plays in local policymaking, indicating that law enforcement officers make similar choices across party lines even when they have broad authority. I also present evidence that sheriffs hold more similar immigration enforcement views across party than the general public, highlighting the role of candidate entry and selection in determining the level of partisan polarization.

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