

Change Over Time: Strategic Retirement of Appellate Court Judges and the Polarization of U.S. Political Parties

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Has strategic retirement of appellate court judges changed over time? Understanding this has crucial implications for explaining the past and present relationship between politics and the courts. A number of studies have demonstrated that politics plays an important role in a judges' decision to retire. However, most of these studies focus on the retirement of Supreme Court justices and provide only broad interpretations of retirement trends. My study, in contrast, examines the explicit mechanisms by which politics affects judicial retirement at the appellate court level. I will specifically focus on the changing impact of political party activists over time, and how that has been expressed through increased polarization of political parties. Thus, my study tests the hypothesis that the strategic retirement of appellate court judges has increased due to the increased polarization of activists within political parties, beginning in the 1960's.

Peering Beyond Party: Examining Senate Votes on ANWR Drilling in 2005

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During 2005, the United States Senate considered opening up the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to oil drilling. Although most Senators appeared to vote along party lines, I set out to explore the other factors at work. Drawing upon studies of legislative voting decisions, I identified other factors which could impact voting on ANWR. In particular, I argue that constituency beliefs should influence representatives' decisions, particularly if they are soon seeking reelection. In addition, the impact of constituency beliefs should be greater when the issue receives a lot of media attention, as this one did. As a result, I hypothesize that when environmentalism is greater amongst a senator's constituency; the more likely she will be to oppose ANWR drilling. I also collect data on and analyze the impact of additional factors, including senators' personal beliefs (represented by the scores given to them by the League of Conservation Voters).

Are There More Michael Moores? Examining the Relationship of Artistic Involvement and Political Participation in College Students

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Recent studies have shown that college-age Americans are less likely to be politically active than their older counterparts. So what explains why some allegedly apathetic college students become involved in politics (by voting, working on campaigns, or being civically engaged)? An accepted explanation is that "participation begets participation," or that involvement in one organization leads to involvement in others. This model works particularly well for religious organizations and community groups, but what about the arts? Is there something unique about arts organizations and the people who are involved with them that affects political participation? My study examines this relationship and seeks to prove that it is not just the acquisition of civic skills, via any organization, that leads to political participation, but also the necessity of creative civic-mindedness, which can be cultivated by artistic organizations.

Where Have All the Democrats Gone? Civil Rights & Vote Choice in the Political South

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Throughout much of post-Civil War American history, the South voted overwhelmingly Democratic in presidential elections. How did the solidly Democratic South transition into the solid Republican bloc popularized by today's electoral maps? The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by Democratic leadership alienated white Southerners from the Democratic Party and broke up the solid southern Democratic base. This project examines the way that views on civil rights affected voting patterns in presidential elections. Feelings on Civil Rights issues directly affected presidential vote choice in the presidential elections of 1968 and 1972, the years directly following the passage of the Civil Rights Act. Thus, this project explores the way that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 changed the patterns of American voting.

Whose voices do Ted Kennedy and John McCain hear? Representation in the U.S. Senate

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Washington politicians are notoriously polarized, but how reflective are they of American citizens? Some scholars have argued that polarization emerges because politicians heed the voices of activists more than those of average citizens. If this is true, it has important implications for the functioning and health of our representative democracy. Thus, this project examines who is represented in Senators' voting decisions, and whether active citizens are better represented than inactive citizens. It also examines if and how this contributes to polarization in American politics.

How effective are international environmental treaties? Measuring the environmental impact of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

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Because domestic environmental policy in one country can affect the environmental quality of neighboring countries, nations often negotiate multilateral environmental agreements; among those undertaken in recent decades, the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has received a great deal of international attention, due in part to the United States' refusal to ratify it. For those who seek a committed response to the issue of global climate change, the Bush administration's refusal to submit the Kyoto Protocol for ratification by Congress is a source of frustration. But how effective are multilateral environmental treaties? Citizens interested in environmental policy want to see effective measures taken toward reducing global warming; are multilateral treaties the best way to pursue that change? Do they actually have a measurable effect on environmental quality? If not, how can they be strengthened?

What Explains The Process of Democratization?

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How does a country become democratic? The study of *democracy* as an empirical theory is an ongoing debate because of the complexity of the concept. There are many different interpretations of what a democracy is in the world today. Some nations that were not democratic five years ago are now democratic. But how? Why? And by what standards? My research examines the factors that explain how a country becomes "more" or "less" democratic by examining transitions to democracy. By implication, it

will also help researchers understand why developing countries have a hard time with maintaining democracies and the key elements that are needed to have and maintain a democratic nation.

Women in Congress: Why So Few?

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If Congress is supposed to represent American citizens, why is the legislative body so disproportionately male? This project examines the dynamics of why women are less likely to run for a Congressional seat—and, thus, why we see so few women in Congress. The study ultimately argues that the gender gap lies not in the actual *abilities* of men and women, but in women's self-perception. Females who are well-suited to serve as Congressional representatives underestimate their potential to do so far more often than their male counterparts. Consequently, the American electorate is disproportionately represented by a male-dominated legislature, which has profound implications for current policy, as well as the future of national politics.

Will people vote if we make it easier to vote? Voting Laws and Turnout in Primary Elections

Leslie Viano, 2009

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Over the past 50 years, turnout in U.S. elections has experienced a general decline. This has important ramifications for American democracy. What are some ways to improve turnout among citizens? This project explores the impact that primary election laws have on voter turnout in congressional elections. Political scientists have noted that individual attributes like education, race, household income, and region influence turnout. What about election law? The study examines primary elections from 1982-1990 to determine the impact primary voting laws have on turnout at the district level.

Explaining the Gay Marriage Ban in Oregon

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In November 2004, Oregonians voted to ban gay marriage through a ballot proposition titled Measure 36. Measure 36 defined marriage as being solely between a man and a woman. Why did this measure pass in a state known for progressive laws on subjects like euthanasia and medical marijuana? This project explores the factors that influenced peoples' opinions on Measure 36. Oregon is somewhat equally divided into two political movements arranged loosely along party lines, neither of which traditionally seek to limit rights. If neither of the main political traditions in Oregon have a history of attempting to restrict individual rights, why was the gay marriage ban passed? The project looks specifically at the impact that regional segregation has on voter opinions.

British Sugar Consumption and the Growth of the 18th Century Transatlantic Slave Trade

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Great Britain's 18th century consumer revolution correlated with the rise of the transatlantic slave trade. Imported colonial luxury goods which were once only available to the upper classes were now bought by all sections of British society. By the end of the century, however, Britons were questioning the morality of enslaving Africans, linking consumption of colonial products with the

direct suffering of human beings. They began demanding for the abolition of the slave trade, and even called for boycotts of West Indian sugar. Were they correct in identifying sugar as the main cause of the rise of the slave trade? This project sets out to quantitatively analyze the relationship between sugar consumption and the British slave trade, controlling for variables such as war and peace and the demand for other slave-grown products.