

# Why are Subnational Governments Responsive?

Chris Tausanovitch\*  
UCLA

Friday 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2018

It is now well-established that states and localities differ substantially in their policies and that these differences are associated with differences in public opinion. However, this fact is puzzling. People are mostly ignorant of state and local government, and state and local elections appear increasingly linked to their federal counterparts despite very different candidates and policy stakes. The leading solution to this puzzle is the partisan accountability theory of Erikson et al. (1989). However, this explanation does not fit neatly with the recent literature. I show that ideological divisions in state level elections fit poorly with the theory as well. New theoretical developments are needed to address this puzzle. I suggest two directions that this could take.

Keywords: Representation, State Politics, Local Politics, Party Identification.

Replication files for this article are available in the JOP Data Archive on Dataverse (<http://thedata.harvard.edu/dvn/dv/jop>).

---

\*Chris Tausanovitch is an Assistant Professor at the UCLA Department of Political Science, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA, 90095, [ctausanovitch@ucla.edu](mailto:ctausanovitch@ucla.edu).

# 1 Introduction

One fact about representation in American subnational governments is now beyond dispute: more liberal public opinion is associated with more liberal policies. Recent work on states confirms this association, which was demonstrated in the 1980s (Wright et al., 1987; Gray et al., 2004; Erikson et al., 1989; Caughey and Warshaw, 2017). Large-scale empirical work on representation in cities goes back only a few years, but the findings resemble the findings at the state level (Einstein and Kogan, 2016; Tausanovitch and Warshaw, 2014). Caughey and Warshaw (2017) show that the relationship is not driven by the tendency of Democratic leaning states to elect Democrats and Republican leaning states to elect Republicans. More liberal states appear to have more liberal policies even after party is accounted for.

Even work that criticizes the states for being insufficiently democratic also shows that the relationship is strong- just not strong enough to ensure majoritarian outcomes (e.g. Lax and Phillips, 2009, 2012). Indeed, the fact that opinion and policy are related is not reason enough to be satisfied with the normative state of democracy (Achen, 1977; Matsusaka, 2015). A “high” correlation is compatible with many different types of relationships between two variables (Anscombe, 1973). Some of these relationships may look like “good” representation and others may not (e.g. Bafumi and Herron, 2010).

What makes this association interesting is that the literature provides ample reason to expect little or no association between public opinion and policy outcomes in subnational government. The best existing work shows little evidence that voters hold state level officeholders accountable (Rogers, 2017). Knowledge of elected officials at the state level is abysmal (Carpini et al., 1994; Patterson et al., 1992; Rogers, 2018; Songer, 1984; Treadway, 1985). And there is a growing set of scholars arguing that state politics is dominated by national issues (Abramowitz and Webster, 2016; Jacobson, 2015; Hopkins, 2018; Rogers, 2016). In other words, state level elections are not decided on the basis of what happens on the state level at all. Many accounts paint state government as hopelessly self-dealing or unprofessional (Weber, 1999; Kousser, 2005). Competition in state level elections is often

low. States are often constrained or coerced by the federal government, limiting their ability to chart their own course.

If anything, the literature on cities is more humbling. Unlike states, cities do not have any constitutionally prescribed jurisdiction. They are restricted by a host of top-down constraints and competitive pressures (Gerber and Hopkins, 2011; Leigh, 2008; Nivola, 1996; Peterson, 1981, 2012; Rae, 2008; Self, 2005). Politicians who wish to follow constituent opinion need to buck these forces. But their incentives to do so appear to be weak. Participation rates in city elections are dismal (Hamilton, 1971; Wood, 2002; Caren, 2007) and these elections suffer from a severe lack of competition (Welch and Bledsoe, 1988; Peterson, 1981; Schleicher, 2007). For much of the 20th century, cities were run by undemocratic political “machines,” and these were often replaced by “reform” governments that weren’t much better (Trounstein, 2009).

The main contender to resolve this seeming paradox comes from Erikson et al. (1989), henceforth “EWM,” one of the most influential papers in the literature, which gave rise to one of its most influential books (Erikson et al., 1993). They argue that variation in state parties allows for party-based accountability in state government. Voters need not know much about their state legislator as long as they have a sense of the typical profile of a Republican or Democratic officeholder in their state. Parties compete for the support of the state median voter, leading to policy accountability at the state level.

This theory accounts for some of the tensions in the literature. Voters need not know much about their officeholders to ensure accountability. Individual legislators may escape punishment for out-of-step votes, but if too many errant legislators affect the reputation of their state party then that party may lose control of government. EWM hypothesize that parties will have a tendency to overreach in places where they are favored, and that this explains the counterintuitive fact that state opinion is a poor predictor of party control in the late 20th century.

In what follows, I briefly summarize the evidence for an association between opinion and

policy in subnational government. Then I discuss the impediments to representation that challenge common notions of how this relationship could arise. I assess the case for the EWM theory using new evidence, and find that there are significant frictions between the theory and the data. I then discuss alternative explanations. There is a clear need for more theoretical development in our understanding of representation generally and state and local representation specifically. In the concluding section I point to some directions that may be fruitful.

## 2 Subnational Governments Are Responsive

The literature on representation has come to call the correlation between public opinion and government outcomes “responsiveness” (Canes-Wrone, 2015). Although this term implies a causal relationship that is not established by a simple correlation, this is not entirely without reason. It seems unlikely that a large correlation would persist without some kind of causal relationship. Even if the correlation is spurious, this sort of incidental responsiveness may have similar normative implications to the real thing. The exception of course is if government outcomes are the cause of public opinion. Although there is evidence of this on the federal level (Lenz, 2013), this sort of reverse causality is most likely to account for only part of the relationship. If we believed that reverse causality were the primary source of the relationship, we would have to entertain counterfactuals in which the political views of various states would be reversed if the policies of those states were reversed.

The relationship between subnational opinion and policy has now been demonstrated many times in many different contexts. To list only a few examples: Gerber (1996) shows that state preferences about parental consent and notification laws for abortion are related to state law (see also Arceneaux, 2002). Wright et al. (1987) demonstrate that mean ideological identification (liberal-conservative self-placement) of survey respondents is associated with a composite of state policy scores on eight issues taken from different points in the early

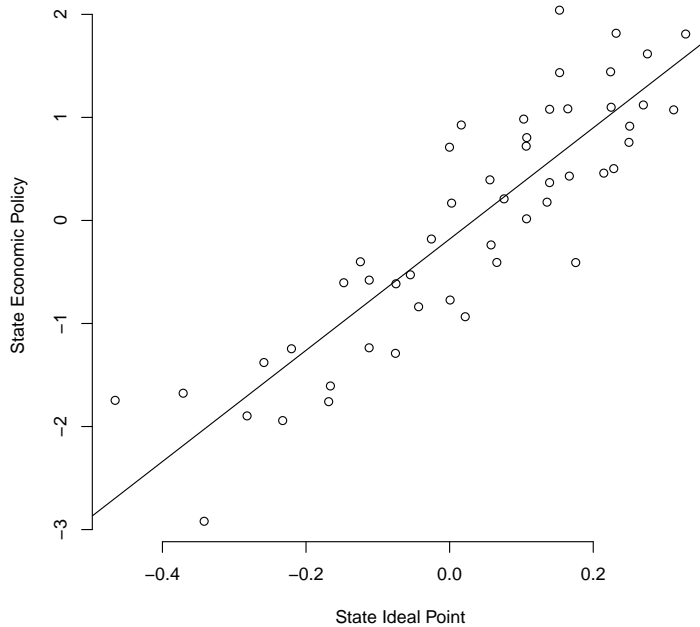
1980s. Einstein and Kogan (2016) show that city preferences, as measured by vote share for President Obama, are strongly related to a variety of local revenue and spending decisions. Likewise, Tausanovitch and Warshaw (2014) show that public opinion predicts municipal fiscal outcomes and a composite measure of city policy.

For a very simple demonstration of this relationship, consider the estimates of state level policy provided by Caughey and Warshaw (2016). These are time-varying estimates of state policy based on 148 policies. Then consider the state level estimates of public opinion provided by Tausanovitch and Warshaw (2013), based on hundreds of thousands of responses to policy questions. The policy estimates include economic and social policy separately, but for now I use the economic policy estimate. The public opinion estimates summarize the primary dimension underlying the responses to all of the policy questions. We can easily graph the cross-sectional relationship between these measures. For the policy measure I use the year 2012, and the public opinion measure uses data from 2008 through 2014.

Figure 1 shows the result. Not only is there a strong association ( $r=0.88$ ), but this association appears to be roughly linear, suggesting that party alone cannot account for the pattern. Otherwise the dependent variable would be divided into two partisan clusters, as it is for outcomes such as congressional roll call voting. The relationship is equally strong if we use social liberalism as the dependent variable ( $r=.86$ ).

This figure bears a remarkable similarity to Figure 1 from Wright et al. (1987, p. 989). Despite very different approaches to measurement, using data separated by almost four decades, the picture has hardly changed. The most liberal states still tend to enact the most liberal policies, and the most conservative states still tend to enact the most conservative policies- even though the set of states in question has changed somewhat over time.

Perhaps the best evidence on responsiveness comes from Caughey and Warshaw (2017). Using dynamic estimates of both state policy and state opinion, they show that changes in opinion predict changes in policy at the state level over the period from 1936 to 2014. Their measures of public preferences are based on responses to more than 300 policy questions on



**Figure 1:** Policy Representation

nearly 1,000 surveys. Their aforementioned measures of state policy use half that many state policies, recorded for each year in the data. This is the most comprehensive set of dynamic estimates of state-level opinion and policy available. They show that changes in opinion are related to future changes in policy. This confirms that an over-time relationship underlies the cross-sectional correlation between opinion and policy.

### 3 Obstacles to Democracy

In his study of voting in state legislative elections, Rogers (2017) estimates that a *three standard deviation* increase in the ideological distance between a state legislator and her constituents results in only a 1.3% decrease in vote share. Rogers uses that best available measures of state legislator positions (Shor and McCarty, 2011) and state legislative district preferences (Tausanovitch and Warshaw, 2013). The comparability of these measures on the same scale is doubtful, but they should nonetheless be strongly related if accountability is

strong. Instead, the relationship is tiny. Voters do not appear to actually hold their state representatives accountable for their voting records.

Rogers's paper provides the first direct evidence on this important topic. However it is unlikely that many scholars of state politics are surprised. After all, there is very little media coverage of state legislatures (Kaplan et al., 2003) and as a result voters have very little knowledge of their state representatives (Carpini et al., 1994; Patterson et al., 1992; Songer, 1984). How can voters be expected to hold representatives accountable if they don't know who they are or what they stand for?

There is an extensive literature that grapples with the fact that voters seem to have very little information relative to the complex and important choices that elected officials have to decide. Voters are thought to resolve this dilemma by using information-rich heuristics, particularly political party (Downs, 1957). However, this argument is problematic at the state and local level, because these elections are commonly thought to be "second order" elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). In the United States, states and local elections are almost always contested by the same two major political parties that dominate national politics. The application of a party brand defined at one level of government to vote choices at another level is what makes an election "second order." Schleicher (2016) argues that the national political parties provide an insufficient heuristic for decision making at lower levels of government. If party reputations are formed entirely at the national level, then all state and local candidates need to do to get reelected is avoid crossing party lines on national issues.

Which level of government defines party cues is of course an empirical question. A growing literature emphasizes the extent to which federal politics dominates subnational politics. This literature argues that parties are national entities, perhaps increasingly so, and voters view them that way. To the extent that party labels convey actual information, this information is about political issues that concern the federal government, and the labels are defined by officeholders and elites on the national level (Abramowitz and Webster, 2016;

Hopkins, 2018; Jacobson, 2015; Rogers, 2016; Schleicher, 2016).

The problem with the nationalization literature is that it provides no mechanism for responsiveness at the state and local level. And yet responsiveness is what we see in the data- just as much in recent years as in the early 1980s. It also directly contradicts the main mechanism in Wright et al. (1987). EWM argue that state governments are accountable to voters precisely because parties have their own state-level reputations which are distinct from their national counterparts. It is important to resolve this disagreement, not least because EWM's theory provides an elegant resolution to the seeming paradox that states are representative even though individual-level state representatives do not appear to be.

## 4 Statehouse Democracy?

Erikson et al. (1989) begin with the observation that party control has little association with state policy. This violates the basic intuition that for democracy to function, the more liberal (conservative) party needs to enact a more liberal (conservative) agenda if elected. Previous work took this as a demonstration that parties are not a vehicle of accountability in the states. EWM argued that this was the result of a confounding variable. Public opinion was determining both the positions of the parties and their electoral success. This gave rise to a subsequent literature on estimating the causal effect of party control at the state level (Alt and Lowry, 1994; Besley and Case, 2003; Caughey et al., 2017; Kousser, 2002; Leigh, 2008) and the city level (Gerber and Hopkins, 2011; de Benedictis-Kessner and Warshaw, 2016). The most recent work in this literature finds that there is a partisan effect that is small historically, but larger in recent years (Caughey et al., 2017) and larger at the city level (de Benedictis-Kessner and Warshaw, 2016).

State party organizations in the United States are subsidiaries of their national counterparts. But this does not prevent them from taking on very different characteristics in different places. Recent research confirms that there is substantial variance in the ideologies



of officeholders in each party across states (Shor and McCarty, 2011). EWM argue that voters perceive these differences and they use their knowledge of party positions to cast votes for the more proximate party.

At the same time, the population of voters directly affects the positions of the parties through the set of voters who become party activists and candidates. More extreme populations of voters push the parties to the extreme. According to the theory, this dynamic works against the party that is naturally favored by the politics of a particular state. Republicans will have a tendency to be too conservative in red states, and Democrats will have a tendency to be too liberal in blue states. This tendency is tempered by the requirement of partial convergence towards the median voter. Parties need to balance their ideologies with the need to win elections (Calvert, 1985; Wittman, 1983). Although EWM do not go into detail on this point, one could imagine that this takes the form of a collective action problem where individual legislators wish to take extreme positions but the party as a whole tries to conceal this fact, with mixed success (ala Van Houweling, 2013).

A key variable in Erikson et al. (1989) is what they call the party midpoint. The party midpoint is the point halfway between the ideological positions taken by the two parties in each state. It is important because it reflects the nature of the choice facing the electorate. The theory assumes that the parties diverge, deviating from the median voter. This divergence reflects a compromise between the desire to win election and the desire to achieve policy goals. In practice this means that parties adopt positions that are between the ideological positions of party activists and the ideological position of the state median voter. The result is that EWM expect party midpoints to roughly coincide with the position of state median voters, as the parties compete for votes from the center.

The party midpoint matters because it represents the *indifference point* in a choice between the two parties. Whichever party has more voters on its side of that point wins the election. EWM measure the ideology of party elites, calculate the mean for each party, and then take the midpoint between these party averages. They note that this measure is not

directly comparable to the measures used for voter ideology. However, it is worth repeating that the theory assumes that the midpoint is also the voter indifference point. EWM go to great lengths to acquire measures of the actual party positions so they can measure the party midpoint. This was important to them because they wanted to ground their empirics in elite behavior. However measuring the indifference point directly offers another way to test the theory.

Measuring indifference points requires some measure of the policy positions of the voters, and their vote choices. Armed with these, we can model vote choices based on policy positions and calculate the point at which voters have a 50% chance of selecting either choice. I take a one-dimensional measure of voter ideology and calculate the point at which voters are indifferent between, say, the Republican and Democratic parties or the Republican and Democratic candidate for governor. This approach has the advantage that preferences and indifference points are measured in the same one-dimensional space, allowing direct comparability.

In order to measure state-level indifference points, I use data from the 2010, 2012 and 2014 Cooperative Congressional Election Study. I estimate voter ideal points using the rich set of policy questions from these sources, as in Tausanovitch and Warshaw (2013).<sup>1</sup> Respondents report their votes for governor, senator, secretary of state, attorney general, state senator, and state assembly. Using a simple logistic regression, I can calculate indifference points for each race in each year. I estimate a Bayesian model with uninformative priors using Gibbs sampling, making it simple to calculate 95% credible intervals for the estimated indifference points.

To begin with, take party identification. We can calculate the indifference point between identifying as a Republican or a Democrat, and see if there is variance across states. If parties are nationalized, then we should expect little or none. In contrast, EWM's theory relies on the idea that parties have state level reputations that track the state median voter.

---

<sup>1</sup>Tausanovitch and Warshaw (2013) validate the measure extensively- consult the original paper for more information.

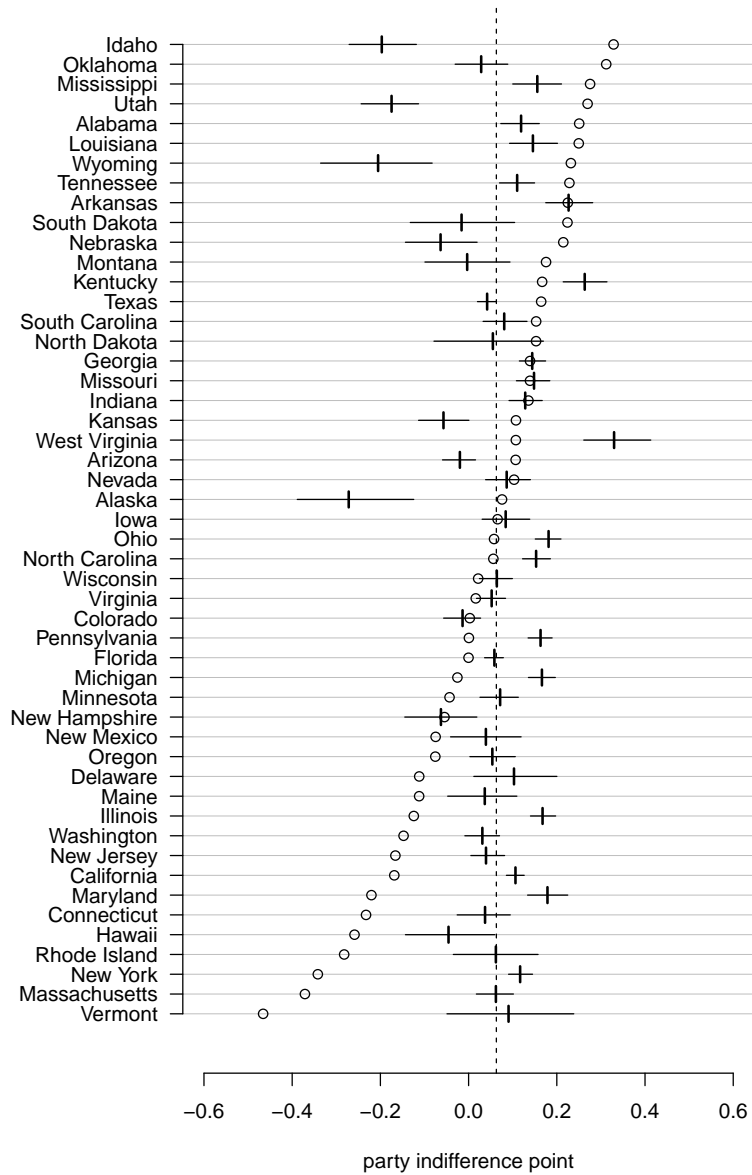
According to EWM “Party positions affect elections largely via their cumulative influence on the state electorate’s party identification” (Erikson et al., 1993, p. 245). It is through the party reputation that voters are able to hold state governments accountable. Contrast this with the foremost work on nationalization: “Just as an Egg McMuffin is the same in every McDonald’s, America’s two major political parties are increasingly perceived to offer the same choices throughout the country” (Hopkins, 2018, p. 3).

Figure 2 shows the indifference points for parties by state in 2014 and their associated 95% credible intervals. 17 states have party indifference points that are significantly different from the mean, and many of these differences are substantial. This comports well with the idea that parties have distinct reputations in different states. However, there is no relationship to speak of between the conservatism of the state, represented by the open circles, and the party indifference point. This does not fit well with either hypothesis about state level parties.

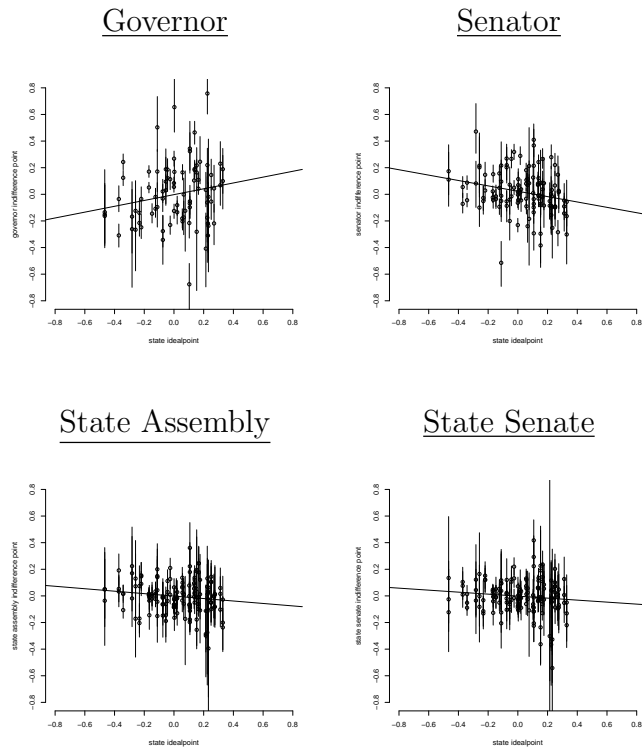
It is possible to salvage EWM’s argument if we modify it, allowing that party identification is not a determined by state medians, but insisting that voters still make state level vote determinations based on the state level parties. Figure 3 graphs the relationship between state level preferences and voter indifference points for three state offices. I include Senate races as well for comparison to a federal office. There is very little relationship. The  $R^2$  never exceeds .04 for the state-level races. This contrasts starkly with the prediction of the theory.

Finally, I test EWM’s hypothesis that voters make judgements based on the actual “party midpoint” dividing state level officeholders. I use measures of state legislative ideal points from Shor and McCarty (2011). Following EWM, I calculate the party midpoints by taking the average ideal point for each party in each legislature, and calculating the midpoint between them. Then I graph the relationship between this measure- the actual midpoint in the legislature- and the indifference point in voting for this office.

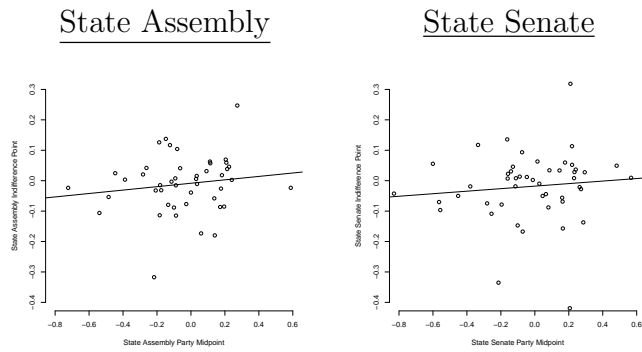
Figure 4 shows the results. Once again, there is almost no relationship to speak of. It doesn’t appear to be the case that voters are using knowledge of the positions of the parties



**Figure 2:** Indifference for parties at the state level, 2010 to 2014. The vertical lines are the indifference points, with credible intervals. The open circles represent the state ideal point. The dotted vertical line is the national party indifference point. The units of the x axis are standard deviations.



**Figure 3:** Relationship between indifference point in voting for each office and the corresponding state ideal point.



**Figure 4:** Relationship between the voter indifference point and the officeholder party midpoint for State Senates and State Assemblies

in the state legislature as a shortcut to make judgements about state legislative candidates.

These simple analyses flatly contradict the mechanism for state-level representation put forward by Erikson, Wright, and McIver in their pathbreaking works on state representation. What now?

## 5 Discussion

We have many reasons to doubt that voters are capable of holding subnational officeholders accountable, and yet policy and opinion are strongly related at lower levels of government. The best attempt to reconcile these facts comes from Erikson et al. (1989). However, the key mechanism does not appear to fit the data, at least for the 2010 to 2014 period. Differences in state level parties do not appear to explain differences in voting for state offices. With regard to subnational representation we are left not far from where EWM began: “Somehow, state electorates are up to this task. The puzzle is how they exert their control, given what modern political science knows about the limitations of individual voters” (Erikson et al., 1989, p. 247).

There’s no compelling reason to hold on to the wings if our plane is on the ground (contra Shepsle, 1995), but it is worth considering whether we still have some lift. Is there some modification we can make to the theory to reconcile it with the facts presented here? One possibility comes from balance theory (Alesina and Rosenthal, 1995; Erikson, 1988; Fiorina, 1996). If the parties are extreme and voters wish to secure moderate policy, they may intentionally vote for different parties for different offices. This may cause variation in indifference points as voters balance offices that are up for reelection or more competitive races against those that are not. While this explanation is worth further consideration, it is not obvious how it could be made consistent with the facts of historically low ticket splitting and almost no relationship between public opinion and indifference points. It may be necessary to think outside the bounds of existing theories.

For another possibility, consider the fact that the indifference point for party identification at the state level has almost no relationship with the indifference point in voting for governor even though governors are some of the most salient figures in American politics. If we are willing to consider the idea that partisan identification is not the be-all and end-all of political life, then perhaps we should upgrade the importance of those political figures that actually have a high profile. After all, some of the central evidence for the nationalization perspective comes from the association not with party but with presidential approval (Hopkins, 2018; Jacobson, 2015) and voting for president (Abramowitz and Webster, 2016; Jacobson, 2015). Like the President, governors are highly visible individuals responsible for the executive branch, with some ability to act unilaterally. It is not coincidental that being a governor is considered a useful stepping stone to being president. If there is one office at the state level that voters have the greatest chance of holding accountable, it is the governor. Much as members of congress fear being held accountable for the President's actions, members of the state legislature often act as if their careers depend upon the success or failure of the governor (Kousser et al., 2007) and there is evidence that they are correct in this belief (King, 2001). Mayors may play a similar role at the city level.

Nonetheless, I have shown that indifference points in voting for governor are not related to the mean preferences of voters in each state. This precludes a strong form of Downsian competition, in which candidates who are evenly matched on non-policy attributes compete for the ideological center. The variation in indifference points suggest that either candidates are not very evenly matched, they are not able or willing to compete spatially, or voters are not choosing the more ideologically proximate candidate. These possibilities conflict with theories of voter selection. However they are not necessarily in conflict with theories that depend on the incentives created by the potential that voters will sanction incumbents. This echoes the argument made by Caughey and Warshaw (2017, p. 261): “the evidence supports the hypothesis that the adaptation of reelection-motivated incumbents to shifts in public sentiment is an important, and perhaps the dominant, mechanism of responsiveness.”

There is a substantial literature on retrospective evaluations of state governors. For instance, Alt et al. (2011) show that second-term governors deliver better economic performance than first term governors, and that first term governors who are reelection-eligible do better than those who are not. Gasper and Reeves (2011) show that governors are rewarded electorally for requesting government assistance after natural disasters. There is a larger literature that extends findings on economic voting to the state level (e.g. Cohen and King, 2004; King, 2001; Svoboda, 1995). Evidence on the ability of voters to correctly attribute responsibility across levels of government is mixed (Brown, 2010; Arceneaux, 2006) but executive sanctioning remains a plausible source of accountability. After all, if governors behave strategically we should never observe actual electoral sanctions save for those that result from deliberate shirking or low levels of competence. Voter and media inattention are an equilibrium response to good performance.

Erikson et al. (1993) point to another route for accountability that forgoes the need for spatial voting in elections. "...the recruitment of candidates from the same constituencies as the voters they hope to represent means that the values of the legislators should reflect state ideology to some extent, even apart from any issue voting or ideological voting by the state electorate" (Erikson et al., 1993, p. 90). Indeed, if candidates were nominated completely at random, and voters voted at random, we would expect the median legislator to be quite similar to the median voter in the state thanks to the law of large numbers. A biased nomination process would be less representative but could still account for the substantial link between public opinion and lawmaking. Given the polarization of politics in the past several decades, research on candidate recruitment tends to emphasize the ways in which candidates differ from the general population, but candidate positions are nonetheless correlated with the positions of rank-and-file voters. This mechanism underscores the potential importance of research on biases in candidate selection (e.g. Bawn et al., 2012; Carnes, 2013; Hall, 2017; Thomsen, 2017).

Executive-centric retrospection and candidate-voter resemblance are two mechanisms



that can explain the fact that outcomes reflect opinion despite low voter knowledge and high associations between vote shares for different offices. Neither of these mechanisms requires any particular pattern in terms of the indifference points that should occur in elections. Both could be operative at the city level as well. Arnold and Carnes (2012) show that crime and economic conditions are associated with approval for New York mayors and that approval is associated with vote choice. New York City may be a special case, given the prominence of the mayor. Oliver and Ha (2007) show that vote choice in suburban city council elections is associated with subjective ratings of local government performance.

These are just two suggestions for the sorts of underexplored mechanisms for responsiveness that scholars should consider. Future research should not be bound by past theories. There is now a wealth of descriptive facts about representation from a large empirical literature. Scholars of representation should strive to develop theories that can account for these findings, especially when they appear to be contradictory.

## **6 Acknowledgements**

Thank you to the participants at the USC Studying Subnational Policymaking Symposium for helpful comments.

## References

- Alan I Abramowitz and Steven Webster. The rise of negative partisanship and the nationalization of us elections in the 21st century. Electoral Studies, 41:12–22, 2016.
- Christopher H Achen. Measuring representation: Perils of the correlation coefficient. American Journal of Political Science, pages 805–815, 1977.
- Alberto Alesina and Howard Rosenthal. Partisan politics, divided government, and the economy. Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- James Alt, Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, and Shanna Rose. Disentangling accountability and competence in elections: evidence from us term limits. The Journal of Politics, 73(1):171–186, 2011.
- James E Alt and Robert C Lowry. Divided government, fiscal institutions, and budget deficits: Evidence from the states. American Political Science Review, 88(4):811–828, 1994.
- F. J. Anscombe. Graphs in statistical analysis. The American Statistician, 27(1):17–21, 1973.
- Kevin Arceneaux. Direct democracy and the link between public opinion and state abortion policy. State Politics & Policy Quarterly, 2(4):372–387, 2002.
- Kevin Arceneaux. The federal face of voting: Are elected officials held accountable for the functions relevant to their office? Political Psychology, 27(5):731–754, 2006.
- R Douglas Arnold and Nicholas Carnes. Holding mayors accountable: New york’s executives from koch to bloomberg. American Journal of Political Science, 56(4):949–963, 2012.
- Joseph Bafumi and Michael C Herron. Leapfrog representation and extremism: A study of american voters and their members in congress. American Political Science Review, 104(3):519–542, 2010.

- Kathleen Bawn, Martin Cohen, David Karol, Seth Masket, Hans Noel, and John Zaller. A theory of political parties: Groups, policy demands and nominations in american politics. Perspectives on Politics, 10(3):571–597, 2012.
- Timothy Besley and Anne Case. Political institutions and policy choices: evidence from the united states. Journal of Economic Literature, 41(1):7–73, 2003.
- Adam R Brown. Are governors responsible for the state economy? partisanship, blame, and divided federalism. The Journal of Politics, 72(3):605–615, 2010.
- Randall L Calvert. Robustness of the multidimensional voting model: Candidate motivations, uncertainty, and convergence. American Journal of Political Science, pages 69–95, 1985.
- Brandice Canes-Wrone. From mass preferences to policy. Annual Review of Political Science, 18:147–165, 2015.
- Neal Caren. Big city, big turnout? electoral participation in american cities. Journal of Urban Affairs, 29(1):31–46, 2007.
- Nicholas Carnes. White-collar government: The hidden role of class in economic policy making. University of Chicago Press, 2013.
- Michael X Delli Carpini, Scott Keeter, and J David Kennamer. Effects of the news media environment on citizen knowledge of state politics and government. Journalism Quarterly, 71(2):443–456, 1994.
- Devin Caughey and Christopher Warshaw. The dynamics of state policy liberalism, 1936–2014. American Journal of Political Science, 60(4):899–913, 2016.
- Devin Caughey and Christopher Warshaw. Policy preferences and policy change: Dynamic responsiveness in the american states, 1936–2014. American Political Science Review, pages 1–18, 2017.

- Devin Caughey, Yiqing Xu, and Christopher Warshaw. Incremental democracy: The policy effects of partisan control of state government. The Journal of Politics, 79(4):1342–1358, 2017.
- Jeffrey E Cohen and James D King. Relative unemployment and gubernatorial popularity. Journal of Politics, 66(4):1267–1282, 2004.
- Justin de Benedictis-Kessner and Christopher Warshaw. Mayoral partisanship and municipal fiscal policy. The Journal of Politics, 78(4):1124–1138, 2016.
- Anthony Downs. An economic theory of political action in a democracy. Journal of political economy, 65(2):135–150, 1957.
- Katherine Levine Einstein and Vladimir Kogan. Pushing the city limits: Policy responsiveness in municipal government. Urban Affairs Review, 52(1):3–32, 2016.
- Robert S Erikson. The puzzle of midterm loss. The Journal of Politics, 50(4):1011–1029, 1988.
- Robert S Erikson, Gerald C Wright, and John P McIver. Political parties, public opinion, and state policy in the united states. American Political Science Review, 83(3):729–750, 1989.
- Robert S Erikson, Gerald C Wright, and John P McIver. Statehouse democracy: Public opinion and policy in the American states. Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Morris P Fiorina. Divided government. Allyn & Bacon, 1996.
- John T Gasper and Andrew Reeves. Make it rain? retrospection and the attentive electorate in the context of natural disasters. American Journal of Political Science, 55(2):340–355, 2011.
- Elisabeth R Gerber. Legislative response to the threat of popular initiatives. American Journal of Political Science, pages 99–128, 1996.

- Elisabeth R Gerber and Daniel J Hopkins. When mayors matter: estimating the impact of mayoral partisanship on city policy. American Journal of Political Science, 55(2):326–339, 2011.
- Virginia Gray, David Lowery, Matthew Fellowes, and Andrea Mcatee. Public opinion, public policy, and organized interests in the american states. Political Research Quarterly, 57(3): 411–420, 2004. doi: 10.1177/106591290405700306.
- Andrew B Hall. Who wants to run? how the devaluing of political office drives polarization. 2017.
- Howard D Hamilton. The municipal voter: Voting and nonvoting in city elections. American Political Science Review, 65(4):1135–1140, 1971.
- Daniel J Hopkins. The Increasingly United States: How and Why American Political Behavior Nationalized. University of Chicago Press, 2018.
- Gary C Jacobson. It’s nothing personal: The decline of the incumbency advantage in us house elections. The Journal of Politics, 77(3):861–873, 2015.
- Martin Kaplan, Kenneth R Goldstein, and Matthew Hale. Local tv news coverage of the 2002 general election. Lear Center Local News Archive, pages 79–95, 2003.
- James D King. Incumbent popularity and vote choice in gubernatorial elections. Journal of Politics, 63(2):585–597, 2001.
- Thad Kousser. The politics of discretionary medicaid spending, 1980–1993. Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law, 27(4):639–672, 2002.
- Thad Kousser. Term limits and the dismantling of state legislative professionalism. Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Thad Kousser, Jeffrey B Lewis, and Seth E Masket. Ideological adaptation? the survival instinct of threatened legislators. The Journal of Politics, 69(3):828–843, 2007.

- Jeffrey R. Lax and Justin H. Phillips. Gay rights in the states: Public opinion and policy responsiveness. American Political Science Review, 103(3):367–386, 2009. doi: 10.1017/S0003055409990050.
- Jeffrey R Lax and Justin H Phillips. The democratic deficit in the states. American Journal of Political Science, 56(1):148–166, 2012.
- Andrew Leigh. Estimating the impact of gubernatorial partisanship on policy settings and economic outcomes: A regression discontinuity approach. European Journal of Political Economy, 24(1):256–268, 2008.
- Gabriel S Lenz. Follow the leader?: how voters respond to politicians’ policies and performance. University of Chicago Press, 2013.
- John G Matsusaka. ‘responsiveness’ as a measure of representation. unpublished manuscript, 2015.
- Pietro S Nivola. Tense commandments: Federal prescriptions and city problems. Brookings Institution Press, 1996.
- J Eric Oliver and Shang E Ha. Vote choice in suburban elections. American Political Science Review, 101(3):393–408, 2007.
- Samuel C Patterson, Randall B Ripley, and Stephen V Quinlan. Citizens’ orientations toward legislatures: Congress and the state legislature. Western Political Quarterly, 45(2):315–338, 1992.
- Paul E Peterson. City limits. University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Paul E Peterson. The price of federalism. Brookings Institution Press, 2012.
- Douglas W Rae. City: Urbanism and its end. Yale University Press, 2008.

- Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt. Nine second-order national elections—a conceptual framework for the analysis of european election results. European journal of political research, 8(1):3–44, 1980.
- Steven Rogers. National forces in state legislative elections. The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 667(1):207–225, 2016.
- Steven Rogers. Electoral accountability for state legislative roll calls and ideological representation. American Political Science Review, 111(3):555–571, 2017.
- Steven M Rogers. Accountability in state legislatures. Unpublished Manuscript, 2018.
- David Schleicher. Why is there no partisan competition in city council elections: The role of election law. Journal of Law and Politics, 23:419, 2007.
- David Schleicher. Federalism and state democracy. Tex. L. Rev., 95:763, 2016.
- Robert O Self. American Babylon: Race and the struggle for postwar Oakland. Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Kenneth A Shepsle. Statistical political philosphy and positive political theory. Critical Review, 9(1-2):213–222, 1995.
- Boris Shor and Nolan McCarty. The ideological mapping of american legislatures. American Political Science Review, 105(3):530–551, 2011.
- Donald R Songer. Government closest to the people: Constituent knowledge in state & national politics. Polity, 17(2):387–395, 1984.
- Craig J Svoboda. Retrospective voting in gubernatorial elections: 1982 and 1986. Political Research Quarterly, 48(1):135–150, 1995.
- Chris Tausanovitch and Christopher Warshaw. Measuring constituent policy preferences in congress, state legislatures, and cities. The Journal of Politics, 75(02):330–342, 2013.

- Chris Tausanovitch and Christopher Warshaw. Representation in municipal government. American Political Science Review, 108(3):605–641, 2014.
- Danielle M Thomsen. Opting Out of Congress: Partisan Polarization and the Decline of Moderate Candidates. Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Jack M Treadway. Public policymaking in the American states. Praeger Publishers, 1985.
- Jessica Trounstine. Political monopolies in American cities: The rise and fall of bosses and reformers. University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- Robert P Van Houweling. Parties as enablers. Manuscript, University of California, Berkeley, 2013.
- Ronald E Weber. Presidential address: The quality of state legislative representation: A critical assessment. The Journal of Politics, 61(3):609–627, 1999.
- Susan Welch and Timothy Bledsoe. Urban reform and its consequences: A study in representation. University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Donald Wittman. Candidate motivation: A synthesis of alternative theories. American Political science review, 77(1):142–157, 1983.
- Curtis Wood. Voter turnout in city elections. Urban Affairs Review, 38(2):209–231, 2002.
- Gerald C. Wright, Robert S. Erikson, and John P. McIver. Public opinion and policy liberalism in the american states. American Journal of Political Science, 31(4):980–1001, 1987. ISSN 00925853, 15405907. URL <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2111232>.