

Rationality and Representation in Direct Legislation Voting

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Abstract

This paper investigates nearly a quarter of a million Los Angeles County ballots from 1994 and 1996, to provide insights into proposition voting which are available with no other methodology. I analyze degree of proposition rolloff, patterns of initiative vote choices, and associations between ballot measure and partisan voting. Joining ballot patterns to census and voter registration data from the precincts in which these ballots were cast, I employ Gary King's (1997) new methodology to make a number of important ecological inferences about the demographic foundations of proposition voting behavior.

I find that the "office electorate" and "proposition electorate" are largely coterminous, and that office contest participation is in some respects even more biased than ballot measure participation. Furthermore, I demonstrate that voters use clear organizing principles to guide their vote patterns in proposition contests. These patterns, which are based on the same norms and values which underlie partisanship, are considerably less capricious and considerably more structured than previous research has found.

INTRODUCTION

A century ago, progressive reformers believed that instruments of direct democracy, such as the initiative, referendum, and recall, would increase interest and participation in government. Recent scholarship has raised questions about the fairness and utility of the initiative process, arguing that the voters who decide issue elections either do not rationally translate preferences into initiative votes (Magleby, 1984; Mueller, 1969; Benedict, 1980; Groth and Schultz, 1976) or are unrepresentative of the electorate as a whole (Clubb and Traugott, 1972; Shepard, 1975; Magleby, 1984). Comparatively few (Lupia, 1994; Wolfinger and Greenstein, 1968) have argued the contrary: that voters do use low-information cues to cast rational votes on propositions. This paper examines nearly a quarter of a million Los Angeles County ballots from 1994 and 1996, to provide insights into proposition voting which are available with no other methodology. Joining ballot patterns to census and voter registration data from the precincts in which these ballots were cast, I will use Gary King's (1997) new methodology to make a number of important ecological inferences about the demographic foundations of proposition voting behavior.

The paper is organized as follows. I begin by reviewing and discussing recent scholarship which has addressed the issues of representativeness and rationality under investigation. After describing my own data, I compare the degree of participation (and the sorts of voters who participate) in ballot measure contests and partisan office elections. I then examine substantive patterns of votes on propositions themselves, and conclude that voters use clear organizing principles to guide their choices. These patterns are considerably less capricious and considerably more structured than previous research has found.

THINKING ABOUT DIRECT LEGISLATION VOTING

Voter Representativeness and Bias

Direct legislation voting generally requires more political awareness than does partisan office voting. The issues involved can be quite complex, and information shortcuts (such as party labels) are less readily available. Because higher status voters tend to be more interested in politics and have a greater understanding of political issues, lower status voters may be effectively shut out of the direct legislation process. Thus, although direct legislation was designed as a means for the electorate *writ large* to enact popular reforms, direct legislation voting may in fact have become a vehicle for white and other upper-status voters to enact their own policy preferences. In other words, in this era of complex ballot measure proposals, direct legislation may no longer be a voice of “all the people.”

Similarly, the recent adoption of anti-affirmative action, anti-illegal immigration, and strongly anti-crime initiatives in California have led some to speculate that the presumed social bias described above has led to a *political* bias in direct legislation balloting. If proposition voters are predominantly higher-status, this would seem to give conservatives and Republicans a disproportionate voice in the adoption of direct legislation. It might be more difficult for “liberal” measures to pass, and easier for “conservative” initiatives to be enacted. Indeed, one recent California statewide survey found that while 59% of Republicans vote on all statewide ballot propositions, only 47% of Democrats do. Just over half (54%) of all voters say they participate for all of the propositions. (Field, 1997)

Previous research has demonstrated considerable demographic biases in the “proposition electorate.” For example, David Magleby used National Election Study data to show that blacks and lower-status voters were much less likely than whites to report voting on “all” or “most” ballot propositions. Between 1970 and 1974, an average of 82% of whites --- but only 57% of blacks --- in states with initiatives said they had voted on most or all of the propositions; this is a chasm of 25 percentage points. For those with a college degree, 9 out of 10 said they voted on

most or all of the propositions; this slipped to 63% for those with less than a high school education.

Jerome Clubb and Michael Traugott used a 1968 post-election study to compare those who said they voted on propositions with those who said they voted in the contests for President and U.S. Representative. The authors find that proposition voters, compared to those who voted only on office contests, tended to be overwhelmingly high status and white. For example, 42% of referenda voters had high family incomes --- versus just 30% for those who voted only in partisan races. Fewer than one-fourth (22%) of referenda voters had low incomes; 41% of “office only” voters did. Of those who voted for offices only, 12% were black; only 7% of referenda voters were black.

Magleby confirmed this bias by compiling post-election survey data from 21 California races between 1972 and 1980 and computing the average self-reported dropoff (across nine candidate contests and twelve propositions) for a wide variety of demographic groups. He concluded that the average voter dropped off from ballot measures at a rate roughly double the rate for candidate races, and that lower status voters were responsible for most of this differential. In particular, Magleby identified less-educated voters, blue collar workers, non-whites, and those over age 65 as particularly likely to drop off for propositions. Voters in these same categories were *not* more likely to abstain for candidate contests; often the rate of proposition dropoff for these lower status voters was twice or three times the rate of candidate-contest dropoff. Those with the highest social status, by contrast, tended to have extremely low rates of dropoff from both propositions and partisan candidate contests.

W. Bruce Shepard (1975) also found a status-based bias in proposition voting. In approximately 40% of the 470 referenda he examined, proponents and opponents of the measures had different rates of participation, and many of the winning margins could have been reversed had electoral participation been equalized. Importantly, Shepard also found that the preferences of higher status voters on referendum issues differed from the preferences of lower

status voters --- and that higher status citizens were more likely to vote. This, Shepard implies, introduces an inherent bias into the direct democracy process.

On the other hand, Thomas Cronin (1989) largely accepted past research which purported to find a status bias in the proposition electorate, but he shifted the terms of debate and concluded that while the “proposition electorate” may be a little biased in the upper-status direction compared to other voters, this makes proposition voters more informed about voting on issues and capable of exercising more reason in their decisions. Also, Cronin argued, proposition voters remain much more representative of the general public than state legislators (the other group which could be determining policy).

With the exception of Cronin’s work, the normative implication of much of this previous research, whether stated or implied, is that the progressive reformers were mistaken in their expectations for direct democracy. Proposition voting does not lead to broader participation; rather, it is simply an easy way for high-status voters to enact their own policy preferences. As Clubb and Traugott conclude, “In 1968, statewide referenda constituted an even less effective means to communicate with, and receive communications from, the poor and the poorly educated, blacks, and residents of large cities and rural areas than did other electoral mechanisms.”

Although it has been fairly well established that there is considerable rolloff for proposition voting, and that this rolloff is higher for minorities and other low-status voters than it is for whites, the key question is the degree of rolloff *compared to that for partisan office contests*. To what degree do the “office electorate” and “proposition electorate” overlap? To what degree does minority rolloff for propositions parallel minority rolloff for office contests? Previous research has illustrated the difficulty of using survey data to establish a consistent measure of the “office electorate” and the “proposition electorate.” Some surveys have included more partisan offices and more ballot measures than others, but few (if any) surveys have measured voting on *all* partisan offices and *all* ballot measures.

For example, although some surveys reported a 25-point gap in participation between blacks and whites for ballot measures, it is difficult to establish whether these lower-status groups were dropping off from propositions at a significantly higher rate than they were dropping off from partisan office contests. There very well could have been a 25-point gap in black-white participation in partisan contests as well.

Although Clubb and Traugott tried to make this kind of comparison, the available survey data also caused problems for them. They counted as “office voters” anyone who did not vote on propositions but did cast a ballot for either President *or* U.S. Representative; anyone who reported voting on at least one proposition was classified as a “proposition voter.” These definitions may seem quite loose, but they were driven by what was available in the survey data. Almost everyone votes for President or U.S. Representative, and counting as “proposition voters” anyone who reports voting on any propositions does not seem to identify the true “proposition electorate.” (In 1994, 99% of Los Angeles County voters punched the ballot for at least one proposition, but few researchers would call this the “proposition electorate.”) If the data were available, it would be much more revealing to compare those who voted on many offices with those who voted on many propositions --- and to examine the degree of overlap between these groups of voters. In short, although Clubb and Traugott made an excellent approximation of “candidate” and “proposition” electorates, things may look different when actual degree of rolloff across the ballot is taken into account.

Magleby’s use of 21 races across eight years was another outstanding attempt to build approximations of the “candidate” and “proposition” electorates. Even these races, however, because of the available post-election survey data, were somewhat limited in scope. The candidate races tended to be relatively high-visibility, with several presidential, gubernatorial, and U.S. Senate contests, and with nothing less prominent than one race for Attorney General and one race for Lieutenant Governor. The ballot measure results, by contrast, were somewhat skewed by the extremely obscure Proposition 4 (1974), which by its nature (because it addressed a technical matter regarding the University of California Regents) would be unlikely to interest

lower-status and elderly voters. When the results are re-computed excluding Proposition 4, the average proposition dropoff across all years falls from 13% to 10% for voters with less than a high school diploma; among senior citizens, average proposition dropoff slips from 11% to 8%. Furthermore, the average candidate dropoff would likely be considerably higher if races for offices such as treasurer, controller, and board of equalization were included.

It is quite probable that the voters who abstain from low-visibility propositions are the same voters who fail to cast a ballot on low-visibility candidate offices, but existing survey data (which tend not to measure voting in *any* obscure races) can tell us little about this relationship. Magleby does show that a voter's degree of interest in proposition contests is related to the voter's degree of interest in candidate races. These findings imply that proposition dropoff *should* increase with office dropoff; voters who ignore many office races should also ignore many propositions. Presumably, those who have little interest will stay on the ballot for only the most prominent of each type of contest; those with the most interest will stay on the ballot for more of each. If this relationship can be verified, it would confirm that there is considerable overlap between the "proposition electorate" and the "office electorate." This would demonstrate that proposition voters are not as unique of a subset as previous research has portrayed them as being.

The Rationality of Direct Legislation Voting

The second chief question about the direct legislation process concerns voter rationality and consistency. The actual wording of many ballot measures can be quite complex; as a result, considerable numbers of voters (regardless of social status) may not even understand the meaning of a "yes" or "no" vote. This could lead many people to vote contrary to their objective interests or their stated beliefs about the issues. Such confusion could also be reflected in seemingly-contradictory votes (for example, in favor of two measures which have starkly antagonistic goals).

When faced with propositions which evoke deep-seated ideological cues and values, to what degree are voters consistent across the bulk of those propositions? And to what degree are voters' ideological proposition choices consistent with their partisan choices in office contests? If voters are consistent, those who support proposition tax increases, for example, should also have a more heavily Democratic vote pattern; those who oppose tax increases should tend to vote Republican.

Robert Benedict (1980) presented some evidence confirming a lack of sophistication in the proposition electorate. In his study of voting behavior in Washington state, Benedict found that few voters could correctly identify the core issues at stake in ballot measures which lacked the highest visibility. Furthermore, in only three of eleven ballot measures could even half of the electorate cite at least one pro and one con argument. From this, Benedict concluded that the cost of assimilating information about ballot measures is too high for the typical voter.

Magleby concurred with Benedict, arguing that the complexity of proposition wording acts as a barrier to widespread informed participation. Only the most educated and attentive voters, he contended, can cast an informed vote for propositions. Voters, especially those of a lower socioeconomic status, often have trouble translating preferences into votes. In one 1980 exit poll, for example, over three-fourths of California voters had a mismatch between their views on rent control and their votes on Proposition 10 (which would have ended rent control). Magleby presented other poll results showing similar confusion over issues such as nuclear power and a graduated income tax --- and that lower-status voters were the most likely to be confused and vote contrary to their beliefs.

By contrast, Raymond Wolfinger and Fred Greenstein (1968) found that most people voted according to their issue preferences on a well-publicized 1964 fair housing referendum, and were not pressured or swayed by outside advocacy groups. Even when faced with considerably more obscure ballot measures, Arthur Lupia (1994) found that badly informed proposition voters were able to use information shortcuts (such as knowledge of a proposition's supporters and

opponents) to emulate the behavior of relatively well informed voters --- and vote *as though* they were well informed.

Another aspect of voter rationality is consistency of individual proposition votes. Philip Converse's (1964) discussion of belief systems in mass publics, while not focused on proposition voting *per se*, has remained the classic statement of voter sophistication (or lack thereof). Converse found that very few voters had a coherent belief system, or "configuration of ideas and attitudes in which the elements are bound together by some form of constraint or functional interdependence." In a 1958 study, for example, the correlations between specific issue beliefs were very low for the general public --- and, when tracked over time, individuals' opinions on particular issues were highly volatile. Converse concluded, therefore, that "low constraint among belief elements in the mass public are not products of well knit but highly idiosyncratic belief systems." Converse's findings imply that many people should vote capriciously and inconsistently for propositions.

John Mueller (1969), in his examination of ballot punch cards from the 1964 election in California, was able to investigate voters' actual patterns of proposition voting across the ballot -- and he found almost no relationship between individual proposition votes. In 1964, there were nearly as many unique patterns of proposition votes as there were ballots, and as many as 60% cast a capricious or contradictory vote on at least one of two propositions concerning the state lottery. The only logical source of influence Mueller unearthed was partisan in nature; for those few measures on which the Democratic party campaigned and made its preferences known, there was an association between a person's proposition vote and his selections for partisan offices. Otherwise, Mueller concluded, "voting on the propositions is a strikingly idiosyncratic process."

Mueller's ballots were drawn from one presidential election. Angus Campbell's (1960) theory of surge and decline suggests that a midterm electorate might behave differently in making proposition choices than would a presidential electorate. Campbell argues that midterm elections, because of their lower salience and visibility, draw only the most interested and

informed (“core”) voters to the polls. Presidential elections, by contrast, draw both “core” and “peripheral” (less informed and less interested) voters. Although a number of aspects of this theory have been questioned or refuted (Arsenau and Wolfinger, 1973; DeNardo, 1987; James Campbell, 1993; Magelby, 1984), Campbell’s work might still have implications for both ballot measure rationality. If Campbell is right, ideological consistency in proposition votes should be higher in midterm elections. With supposedly larger numbers of peripheral voters at the polls in 1996, the correlations between proposition votes should grow smaller and there should be less structure to proposition vote patterns.

Mueller’s work suggests that partisanship might hold the key to understanding what little sophistication may be found among proposition voters. As noted above, in 1964, the California Democratic party strongly urged a “no” vote on Proposition 14 (which would have eliminated fair housing statutes) and a “yes” vote on the three bond measures; the state Republican party, by contrast, took no official positions on any ballot measures. Mueller found that Democratic voters were 30 to 50 percent more likely than Republicans to support the bonds and reject Proposition 14; there were no other correlations this strong between ballot items.

Norman Thomas (1968) found a similar impact in Michigan. Between 1958 and 1961, three separate statewide referenda were held, which led to the calling of a constitutional convention. The actual constitution this convention drafted was then put to a statewide ratification vote in 1963. On the first three of these constitutional revision votes, socioeconomic status and rural/urban residence had had the strongest association with voting behavior; party had been substantially less important. Republicans dominated the writing of the actual constitution, however, and campaigned hard for its ratification. As a result, partisanship increased sharply in importance for the final ratification vote. Thomas concluded that party identification has the “capacity to influence referendum voting if parties choose to structure the alternatives for the electorate.”

Parties, however, are seldom so explicit in their support for or opposition to initiatives, and it is difficult to measure in any systematic way the degree of campaign attention particular parties

give to particular measures. Seldom, for example, is an ad campaign aired which tells voters to “join the Democratic party in supporting Proposition X.” Even the 1994 campaign for Proposition 187 relied more on raising “Republican” cues than it did on campaigning by the Republican party *per se*. It is possible that the underlying demographic and ideological cleavages which cause differences in party identification are the same ones which underlie “yes” and “no” choices on individual ballot measures --- which should lead, in turn, to a strong association between partisan vote pattern and voting behavior on “ideological” ballot measures. There should be a weak (or nonexistent) association between partisanship and voting on those measures which do not evoke ideological cues. The difficulty of systematically quantifying party campaign efforts on various propositions makes it almost impossible to test the degree to which direct campaign effects or simple ideological cues are more responsible for a partisan association with ballot measure choice. Nevertheless, it seems that partisan and ideological factors, to the degree with which they are associated with and embodied in the meaning of individual ballot measures, could be the organizing principle which gives structure to proposition voting behavior.

One reason for Mueller’s finding of few other patterns in proposition balloting may have been the nature of the times; the 1964 propositions were largely non-ideological and most were placed on the ballot by the state legislature. And with the exception of the two lottery items, few of the propositions seemed to have anything objectively in common (ideologically or otherwise) with each other. More recent years, by contrast, have seen a greater incidence of ideologically-charged propositions which evoke underlying cues and cleavages; as a result, there should be greater consistency now than in 1964.

Ballot measure campaign managers seek to appeal to sympathizers in both parties --- and would be hurt by too close of an association with one party organization or the other. Initiative campaigns, through emphasizing norms and themes favorable to themselves (such as excessive taxation, fear of crime, resentment of illegal immigrants, the need for clean air, and so forth), may both directly and indirectly end up appealing to voters who favor, on balance, one party

over the other. The indirect appeal comes through a simple announcement of themes which happen to overlap with the existing party cleavage structure. A “three strikes” message may evoke in a Republican the same favorable emotional response which led him to the Republican party in the first place. The direct appeal can occur through either the intervention of party notables or be driven by the initiative campaign itself. In this era of sophisticated direct-mail campaigning, ideologically-charged initiative campaigns (both pro and anti) almost certainly use Republican and Democratic registered voter lists to target literature distribution most efficiently. In this manner, both the Republican and Democratic rank and file should end up “over-exposed” to messages which evoke the same ideological norms and cues which underlie partisanship itself. But to what extent do the Republican and Democratic rank and file *actually cast initiative ballots in accord with these norms and cues?* To what degree do partisans distinguish between non-ideological (“technical”) measures and those which are more ideologically charged?

Unfortunately, the available survey data allow for few such tests of voter consistency and partisan associations. For example, the limited number of propositions included in any survey prevent investigation of voter consistency across different propositions in the same election. It would be interesting to know, for example, how many people cast a “conservative” vote on one referendum (e.g., in favor of nuclear power) but a “liberal” vote (e.g., in favor of rent control) for another. John Mueller’s approach, using actual ballot punch cards, has the potential to answer many of these questions. Although other studies (Gitelson, 1978; Gitelson and Richard, 1983) have investigated ballot punch cards, these studies have tended to focus on ticket-splitting or other office-level voting behavior questions.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

I have compiled 121,626 ballot images from 325 precincts for the 1996 general election; I also gathered 119,796 ballot images from 411 Los Angeles County precincts for the 1994 general election. For both years, these precincts constitute a widely varied geographic and demographic sample of one of California’s most diverse counties. The ballots themselves, which

are complete and exhaustive for each precinct, are very much representative of the County as a whole; had the 1994 and 1996 elections been held only in these precincts, outcomes for all propositions and statewide partisan contests would have been within a few percentage points of the overall County results. The appendix supplies technical details about these data and their distribution.¹

From these ballots, I was able to determine the proportion of propositions on which each person voted, the proportion of partisan offices² on which each person voted, and each person's overall partisan vote pattern. For each person, I computed the proportion of Republicans supported, the proportion of Democrats supported, and built a master index of partisanship by subtracting the proportion Democratic from the proportion Republican. This yields a left-right scale running from -100 (straight Democratic) to +100 (straight Republican). Not surprisingly, 1996 was a somewhat more Democratic year (average score of -25.0) than 1994 (-9.3).³

I built a separate file with census and voter registration data for the precincts from which these ballots were drawn⁴. In each precinct, I have included the proportion of voting age population which is Latino, non-Latino white, and non-Latino black. In addition, I have

¹ Los Angeles County stores these data in an obscure, COBOL-based column binary format on magnetic tapes, making them extremely difficult to translate into a workable ASCII file. Without the assistance of Peter Saama, UCLA consultant, none of this data translation would have been possible. Many thanks also to Gretchen Kalsow (University of Virginia) for her help in understanding these data formats. Any errors remain my own.

² In 1994 ballot order: Governor, Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, Controller, Treasurer, Attorney General, Insurance Commissioner, State Board of Equalization, U.S. Senator, U.S. Congress, State Senate, and State Assembly. In 1996 ballot order: President, U.S. Congress, State Senate, and State Assembly. Only half of the voters in any year have a State Senate race on the ballot, so I used proportion of races participating in rather than raw number of races.

³ I also computed a second version of partisanship, based on only those races in which a voter actually participates. For example, a person who votes in only nine of twelve races but votes Democratic in all nine would be considered a straight Democratic voter (-100); under the first --- more stringent --- measure, this person would earn a score of -75. Despite the somewhat different method of computation, the distribution of this second measure is quite similar to the first in both 1994 (-10.5) and 1996 (-27.8). It is needed when making comparisons between those who vote on most offices and those who vote on most propositions. If I were to use the first scale for these comparisons, those who vote on most (but not all) offices would automatically seem to have a weaker partisanship than those who vote on most propositions --- because the office participation scale is built from the same races as the partisanship scale.

⁴ Institute of Governmental Studies, U.C. Berkeley. Data and documentation available from <http://www.igs.berkeley.edu:8880/>

included the proportion of voters in each of six age categories⁵, the proportion of renters⁶, and married women⁷. It is a relatively simple matter to compute special vote-pattern variables from the ballots which would not be available from any other source (for example, the proportion in each precinct voting a straight Democratic ticket or the proportion in each precinct supporting both Pete Wilson and Proposition 187) and to add those new variables to the precinct data set.

I will use Gary King's (1997) new methodology to make ecological inferences from these data. King's method computes the most likely proportion of, say, Latinos opposing Proposition 187, in each precinct by using as constraints the proportion of Latinos and proportion of Proposition 187 opponents in all other precincts. His public-domain software computes an estimate of turnout for the group in question, and then in a second step makes an estimate of the voting behavior of members of that group who went to the polls. These precinct-level point estimates are then summed across all precincts, yielding a final (district-wide) estimate of, say, Latino voters opposing Proposition 187.⁸

I tested King's methodology by using it to predict something for which I knew the "true" answer: the proportion of Proposition 187 supporters who also voted for Governor Wilson. King's method of inference, based on precinct-level aggregates, estimates that 69% of Proposition 187 supporters would choose Wilson in the gubernatorial contest. This estimate is remarkably accurate: the "true" level of Wilson support, as found in the actual ballots, is 71% among Proposition 187 supporters. King's methodology also proved very much in line with the conventional wisdom for other inferences. For example, of Latinos who went to the polls in my 1994 precincts, more than two-thirds (68.1%) voted "no" on Proposition 187. Only 38% of non-

⁵ Age categories: 18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-64, 65 and over. Those leaving date of birth blank on registration card are excluded.

⁶ Based on the listing of apartment/unit numbers on voter registration cards and/or three or more registered voters with different last names registered to vote at the same address. All others are assumed to be homeowners. While this is not a perfect enumeration of homeowners and renters (i.e. condominiums with unit numbers are counted as renters and someone renting a house is counted as a homeowner), it is the best status measure available.

⁷ Based on the number of registered voters checking the "Mrs." box on the registration card.

⁸ I am grateful to Gary King for his personal assistance in using and understanding this new method of ecological inference. Details about the methodology, and public domain software, are available from Professor King's web site, <http://gking.harvard.edu>.

Latinos voted “no” on this measure. Similarly, for Proposition 209 (the 1996 anti-affirmative action measure), 94.5% of blacks in my precincts voted no --- while only 43% of whites did so.

TESTS AND HYPOTHESES

These data allow for a number of tests of both the representativeness and rationality of proposition voters. If the proposition electorate is largely representative of the electorate as a whole, the typical voter should participate in roughly the same proportion of ballot measure decisions and partisan office contests. Those who abstain from many propositions should be the same people who abstain from many partisan offices; those who participate in most or all of the office contests should also cast a ballot for most or all of the propositions. In other words, there should be a great deal of overlap between the “proposition electorate” and the “office electorate.” If, by contrast, the proposition electorate is highly selective and unrepresentative, there should be much more rolloff for propositions than for partisan office races. Also, many people who vote on most or all offices should not stay on the ballot for most or all propositions.

Furthermore, if the proposition electorate is a representative subset of the entire electorate, the gap between white and minority participation for ballot measures should be about the same (or even smaller) than the gap between white and minority participation for office contests --- and the same should be true of other demographic subgroups. If, by contrast, proposition voters are an unrepresentative subset of the electorate, there should be a very wide gap between white participation and minority participation for ballot measures (relative to the gap for office voting).

I will also use these ballots to determine the degree of rationality in the substance of ballot measure voting. If voters are relatively sophisticated, factor analysis should yield distinctive and logical substantive patterns of choices on propositions. If not, no factors should emerge from the data. Furthermore, if voters are largely capricious, they should miss the ideological cues present in particular propositions. There should be uniformly high or uniformly low correlations between individual proposition votes, meaning that voters are either (1) blindly yea or nay saying across many different ballot measures (uniformly high correlations) or (2) vote patterns

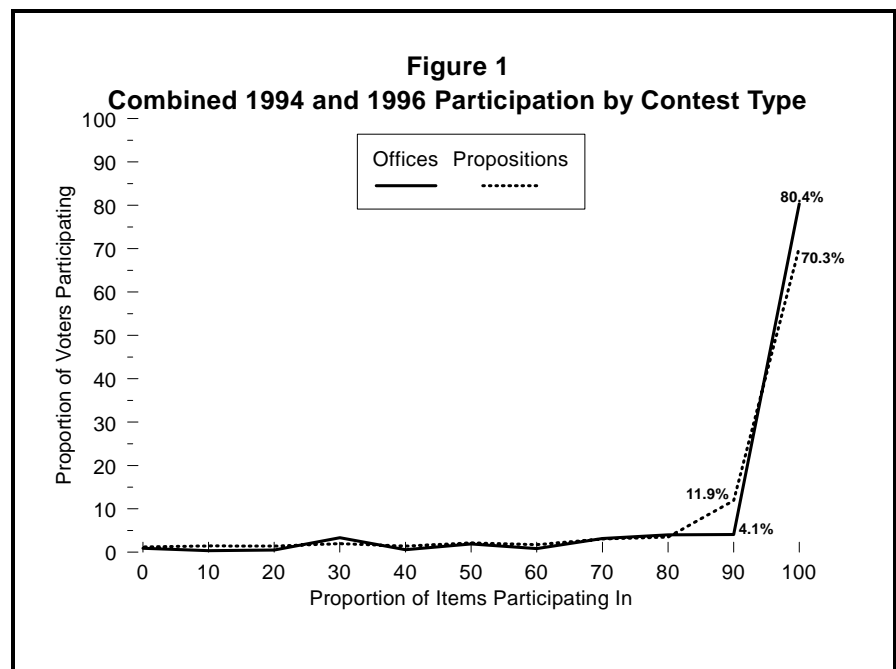
are truly capricious and unconstrained by choices on other measures (uniformly low correlations). Also, there should be no relationship between partisanship and proposition votes. If, by contrast, voters are more sophisticated, there should be both (1) significant correlations between individual proposition votes for those measures which raise salient ideological cues (or have otherwise related content) and (2) substantial association between partisanship and voting for “ideological” measures (even in the absence of party campaign activity). There should be little (if any) association between party preference and proposition voting for those measures which do not raise such ideological cues.

Finally, if Campbell’s surge and decline hypothesis applies to direct legislation elections, 1994 voters should be considerably more sophisticated than 1996 voters. The presidential election should draw many “peripheral” voters to the polls, who are interested only in the races at the top of the ballot. If, on the other hand, voters in both years evidence roughly equal levels of sophistication and comparable proposition rolloff, Campbell’s theory would not seem to apply to ballot measure elections. I would not expect to see much of a surge and decline effect for these data, for the simple reason that there was only a nine-point differential in turnout for Los Angeles County between 1994 (46.48%) and 1996 (55.47%). Still, increasing the electorate by roughly 18% may have some impact on voter sophistication --- and, because many discuss the optimal election “placement” for initiatives, I will investigate what effects may exist.

FINDINGS: VOTER REPRESENTATIVENESS

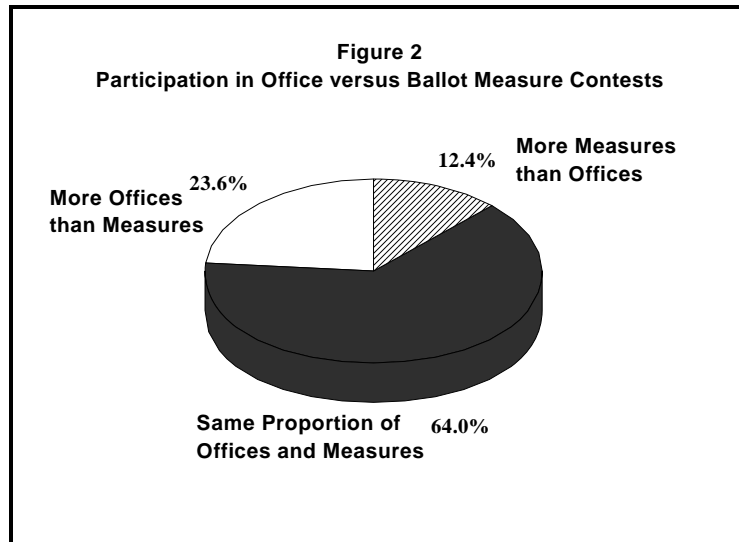
Looking at participation patterns for 1994 and 1996 combined, Figure 1 confirms that there is somewhat more rolloff for propositions than for partisan offices. Across both years, nearly eight in ten voters expressed a preference in *all* partisan office contests; seven in ten marked the ballot for *all* propositions. However, once the definitions of “office electorate” and “proposition electorate” are broadened only slightly, patterns of participation were remarkably similar for both types of contests in these years. More than 82% participated for *nearly all* (defined as at least 90%) propositions, compared to 84% who participated in nearly all partisan office contests.

The proportions of the electorate participating in only a few office contests or only a few ballot measures were nearly identical. Most importantly, the average person cast a ballot on 92.1% of offices and 89.7% of measures. (These averages were almost identical for 1994 and 1996.



The typical person participated in 92% of offices in both years; the average number of propositions voted on was 88.7% in 1994 and 90.7% in 1996.) Proposition rolloff, therefore, does not appear to be significantly higher than office contest rolloff.

The question remains, however, as to the degree of overlap between office and proposition participation for individuals. The ballots confirm that participation in office contests is closely related to participation on ballot measures. As Figure 2 shows, the great majority had either equal levels of participation for both types of contests (64%) or participated for more ballot measures than offices (12%); just under one-fourth voted on a greater proportion of offices than ballot measures. Looking at the total



degree of participation for both types of contests, more than six in ten (63.5%) participated in all partisan contests and all ballot measures; roughly three-fourths (74%) participated in nearly all partisan contests and nearly all ballot measures. Nine out of ten (89%) participated in at least half of each type of contest. (Table A3, in the appendix, gives the complete degree of overlap for each level of office and proposition participation.)

Table 1 shows the degree of ballot measure participation for each level of partisan office participation. Among those voting for all offices, for example, 79% went on to participate for all ballot measures and nearly nine out of ten (88.6%) participated for at least 90% of them. At the other end of the spectrum, among those who participated in fewer than half of the partisan races, a majority also participated in fewer than half of the ballot measures. All told, there was a correlation of $r=.56$ between degree of proposition participation and degree of partisan office participation. People who participated in many office contests also punched the ballot for many measures; those who rolled off for many offices also rolled off for many ballot measures. Therefore, although those who vote on propositions tend to be a slightly more selective group, the “proposition electorate” still appears, all things considered, to be largely coterminous with the “office electorate.”

		Proportion of Ballot Measures Participating in					
Office Participation↓		100%	90-99%	75-89%	67-74%	50-66%	0-49%
	Total	70.3%	9.9	5.4	3.1	3.4	8.0
100%	80.4%	79.0%	9.6	4.5	2.1	1.9	2.9
90-99%	4.1	57.6%	14.3	8.1	5.3	6.6	8.2
75-89%	4.0	42.8%	14.1	11.2	7.9	8.7	15.3
67-74%	3.1	38.1%	12.4	12.5	7.4	9.1	20.5
50-66%	2.4	24.8%	9.8	10.2	8.7	13.1	33.4
0-49%	6.0	15.3%	6.3	7.3	6.7	10.5	53.9

The similarity of the office and proposition electorates is especially evident when compared to a truly unique and highly selective electorate: that which votes for judges. In 1994, there were 22 judicial races on the ballot in Los Angeles County⁹; fewer than half (44%) of those going to the polls voted on all of these, and only a slight majority (53%) voted on at least 90% of them. Even among those voting on nearly all offices, only 61% voted on nearly all judicial contests. In fact, the average person voted on just 62.5% of judicial races --- very much lower than the average proportion of initiative (89%) or office (92%) contests voted on.

Although there is considerable overlap between the “proposition” and “office” electorates, it is still possible that whites are responsible for that overlap and minorities or other low-status voters are responsible for the differential. Ecological inferences demonstrate, however, that the two electorates are quite demographically similar. For example, Table 2 shows that although whites had the highest absolute levels of participation on propositions in 1994 (80.7% voted on nearly all, which is 3.8 points higher than for non-whites), whites also had the highest levels of participation (86.5% voted in nearly all) for partisan offices ---- and the 4.9-point spread between white and non-white office participation was even wider than the 3.8-point white/non-white spread for ballot measures. In other words, there may indeed be a slight demographic bias in proposition voting --- *but there is an even greater bias in office voting*. More importantly, the

⁹ Nineteen of these were yes/no retention contests, and 3 were contested Superior Court races. There was only one judicial race on the ballot in 1996, so I will limit this discussion to 1994.

3.8-point gap between white and non-white voting on nearly all propositions is minuscule when compared to the 25-point gap found in surveys relying on self-reports.

Looked at another way, 76.9% of non-whites voted on nearly all propositions, 4.7-points lower than the proportion of this group voting on nearly all partisan office contests. This gap, however, is *even narrower than the 5.8-point spread between office and proposition participation for whites.*

Table 2					
Estimated 1994 Office and Ballot Measure Participation Patterns for Demographic Subgroups					
	Pct Pop	Proportion Voting on Nearly All			
		Offices	Measures	Net Office	Judges
Total	100	84.6	79.2	5.4	53.3
Race ¹⁰					
White	54.5	86.5	80.7	5.8	48.8
All Non-White	45.5	81.6	76.9	4.7	59.8
Black	9.4	81.8	73.8	8.0	60.8
Latino	25.8	80.5	77.1	3.4	62.3
Status					
Married Women	24.0	88.9	86.0	2.9	58.2
Homeowner	71.3	85.2	79.7	5.5	51.6
Renter	28.7	82.0	77.3	4.7	59.5
Age					
18-25	10.8	82.5	83.4	-0.9	69.9
26-35	21.8	79.6	79.2	0.4	57.1
36-45	20.7	83.4	80.7	2.7	56.7
46-55	14.0	87.0	85.1	1.9	53.0
56-64	7.2	86.2	81.5	4.7	67.1
65+	9.7	82.0	74.8	7.2	50.4

Part of this pattern can probably be explained by the mobilizing effect that Proposition 187 had on Latinos; publicity over this highly controversial measure appears to have piqued Latino interest in ballot measures generally, because they had the narrowest gap (3.4-points) between office and proposition voting. Blacks, by contrast, had an 8-point gap between voting on offices and ballot measures --- but this is still only slightly larger than the 5.8-point gap for whites.

In 1996, Proposition 209 seems to have had an impact similar to that of Proposition 187, but on both black and Latino participation; both groups perceived that they would lose if the measure passed. Again, however, the effect was somewhat stronger for Latinos; these voters maintained an almost identical (3.7-point) gap between office and proposition participation as in

¹⁰ From 1990 census, non-Latino VAP for whites and blacks.

1994 ---but for blacks, the gap narrowed to only 6.9-points (in a year which saw the gap for all voters narrow from 5.4-points to 3.2-points).

Lest one conclude that minorities (and especially blacks) are inherently shut out of low-information contests, however, a startling pattern emerges for judicial voting. Strong majorities of both blacks (61%) and Latinos (62%) voted on nearly all judicial contests ---- but fewer than half (49%) of whites bothered to do so. This is a greater differential than any of the point spreads for proposition voting, and is one of the truly surprising findings from this research. One black attorney in Los Angeles speculated that because African Americans have long perceived the judicial branch to be their most reliable ally, and because the criminal justice system is more of an “immediate reality” for a disproportionate number of blacks and Latinos, members of these groups may sense more of a “stake” in the outcome of judicial elections --- and therefore feel more compelled to participate in shaping those outcomes (Davis, 1997). Also, in 1992, blacks were strongly mobilized to vote against a local judge who was perceived to have “gone soft” on a Korean grocer who had shot a black shoplifter. It is possible that this heightened salience of judicial races could have continued driving high minority participation in 1994 (Baum, 1997). Although an in-depth investigation of judicial vote patterns is beyond the scope of this paper, the important point is that low-information contests do not necessarily exclude minority participation.

Aside from race, it is difficult to measure a status bias in proposition voting using these data. (Regrettably, precinct-level data for education and income are not readily available.) In 1994, homeowners participated in proposition decisions (79.7% voted on nearly all) slightly more than renters (77.3%) did --- but this 2.4-point gap was even smaller than the 3.2-point gap between homeowners and renters for partisan office voting. (And renters were nearly eight points more likely than homeowners to participate in nearly all judicial contests.) I do confirm the age bias which Magleby found, however: senior citizens were less likely than any other age group to participate in proposition elections --- but they were quite likely to vote in partisan contests. These patterns were even more pronounced in 1996, when the office-proposition spread for

seniors grew to 8.8 points from 7.2 points (and remained much higher than for other age groups.) Similarly, although the office-proposition gap for homeowners shrank from 5.5 points in 1994 to 3.6 points in 1996, the gap for renters shrank even more (from 4.7 points to 1.7 points). Most interestingly, renters participated in proposition elections at an even greater rate (82.9%) than homeowners (80.5%) in 1996.

Table 3				
Estimated 1996 Demographic Participation in Proposition and Office Contests				
		Percent Voting on Nearly All		
	Pct Pop	Offices	Measures	Net Office
Total	100	84.3	81.1	3.2
Race				
White	54.4	86.6	83.6	3.0
All Non-White	45.6	78.5	74.7	3.8
Black	10.7	74.7	67.8	6.9
Latino	25.6	82.9	79.2	3.7
Status				
Married Women	22.8	82.7	80.8	1.9
Homeowner	71.9	84.1	80.5	3.6
Renter	28.1	84.6	82.9	1.7
Age				
18-25	11.4	80.6	78.5	2.1
26-35	21.9	81.2	76.2	5.0
36-45	20.8	82.1	79.2	2.9
46-55	14.0	83.7	80.0	3.7
56-64	6.6	77.6	76.2	1.4
65+	9.7	78.8	70.0	8.8

Importantly, although some racial and age biases in proposition voting do exist, these do not translate into a partisan bias. In both the midterm and presidential elections, those voting on nearly all propositions were only slightly less Democratic than those voting in most office contests. In 1994, for example, those voting on nearly all offices tended to favor Democrats 9.4 percentage points more (on balance) than Republicans; those voting on nearly all propositions had an almost indistinguishable net Democratic vote pattern (8.7%). (This gap in partisanship was almost identical in 1996.) In 1994, 74% of straight Democratic voters and 80% of straight Republican voters stayed on the ballot for nearly all propositions --- a spread very similar to that between straight Democrat (84%) and straight Republican (89%) participation for offices.

Table 4: Partisan Participation in Proposition and Office Contests								
			Proportion Voting on Nearly All					
	Pct of Electorate		Offices		Measures		Net Office	
	1994	1996	1994	1996	1994	1996	1994	1996
Total	100	100	84.6	84.3	79.2	81.1	5.4	3.2
Partisan Vote¹¹								
Straight GOP	17.8	22.3	88.5	87.7	80.1	85.5	8.4	2.2
Mostly GOP	14.1	6.6	88.5	94.3	84.0	89.7	4.5	4.6
Mixed	24.8	13.8	78.5	73.8	78.6	76.4	-0.1	-2.6
Mostly Dem	21.2	9.5	86.3	92.3	81.3	85.7	5.0	6.6
Straight Dem	22.2	47.9	84.1	82.8	74.2	78.3	9.9	4.5

Table 5: Partisan Participation in Proposition and Office Contests								
			Among Those Voting on Nearly All					
	Electorate Average		Offices		Measures		Net Office	
	1994	1996	1994	1996	1994	1996	1994	1996
Avg. Net GOP Vote	-10.5	-28.1	-9.4	-26.1	-8.7	-24.9	-0.7	-1.2
Avg. Partisan Strength ¹²	71.6	82.3	73.4	83.5	71.8	82.8	1.6	0.7
Cor.: Partisan Vote			0.03	0.06	0.05	0.08		
Cor: Partisan Strength			0.14	0.14	0.02	0.06		

The key point is that while whites are more likely than minorities to vote on propositions, whites are *even more likely* than minorities to participate in office contests. And even in absolute terms, the white/non-white gap for proposition voting is quite small compared to the gap for judicial voting --- and that gap is in a pro-minority direction. In short, I find little evidence that minorities and lower-status voters are “shut out” of direct legislation (or other nonpartisan) contests to any greater relative degree than they are shut out of partisan races. Furthermore, debunking the alleged “conservative” bias of proposition voters implied by some studies, I find that those who vote on nearly all propositions are only slightly less Democratic than those who vote on nearly all partisan offices. If there is any bias to proposition voting, it is due to lower turnout among minorities (which, of course, equally biases participation in office contests).

¹¹ Partisan vote pattern ranges from -100 (straight Democrat) to +100 (straight Republican) and is computed from those offices for which a valid ballot was cast --- rather than from all 11 or 12 possible offices. Because the partisan vote variable is built from the same races which built the “most office” variable, this step is necessary to allow meaningful comparisons between those voting for most offices and most propositions. Otherwise, those voting on most (but not all) partisan contests would, by definition, have weaker scores across the board.

¹² Absolute value of net partisan vote pattern. Perfectly balanced pattern is zero and straight partisan ticket is 100.

FINDINGS: VOTER RATIONALITY AND SOPHISTICATION

Factor analysis reveals that there were three distinct dimensions around which voters patterned their choices in 1994; together these three dimensions explain nearly half (48.5%) of the variance in proposition voting. The first factor consists of measures placed on the ballot by the state legislature. These tend to be either so “technical” in nature that they inspired considerable abstention (Propositions 190, 191, and 183), or so non-controversial (such as Proposition 189, which enacted a bail exception for sex offenders) that they faced no serious opposition. The other two factors capture those issues which *do* evoke underlying ideological cleavages. Factor 2 includes those which are more “economic” in nature: a bond measure to build passenger rail transportation and clean the air (Proposition 181), a gasoline tax increase (Proposition 185), and a tax increase to fund health care (Proposition 186). Factor 3 is more “social,” capturing the anti-illegal immigration Proposition 187, the anti-crime “three strikes and you’re out” Proposition 184, and a measure (Proposition 188) which would have replaced local anti-smoking laws with a single (looser) statewide smoking statute. Importantly, the factor analysis reflects more than a simple separation of popular initiatives from those placed on the ballot by the legislature. Rather, it shows that voters can tell the difference between a rail/clean air bond, which evokes ideological values, and other legislative measures --- and voters make a further distinction between initiative measures which involve “economic” issues (costing money) and those which address “social” issues (such as immigration, crime, and smoking). By comparison, no significant patterns emerge when I attempt to factor the judicial retention contests.

Table 6 summarizes the correlations between individual proposition votes and with overall partisan vote patterns in 1994.¹³ These correlations largely confirm the factor analysis. The “technical” measures tend to be substantially correlated with each other, as do the economic and social items. Interestingly, however, although factor analysis identifies Proposition 188 as a “social” measure, this initiative does not correlate with either Proposition 187 or Proposition 184

¹³ Proposition votes coded: Yes=1, No=-1, Abstain/Invalid=0.

(the other social items). This demonstrates that even though voters recognize the same general “factor” (social relations) underlying all three measures, voters also recognize that Proposition 188 does not carry the same ideological implications as Propositions 187 and 184. This sophistication is further reflected in the strong correlation of Propositions 187 and 184 with the partisan vote --- but the lack of correlation between Proposition 188 and the same partisan vote. Note also the substantial intercorrelation of all three “economic” items (Propositions 181, 185 and 186) --- and the correlation of all three with partisan voting. All three of these measures would have brought higher taxes and greater governmental regulations of the environment and the workplace; differences of opinion on taxes and governmental regulation are also important themes underlying partisanship.

Prop Number	Net GOP	Proposition Number									
		190	191	183	189	181	185	186	184	187	
190	-.09	1.0									
191	-.04	.55	1.0								
183	-.13	.40	.37	1.0							
189	.06	.43	.35	.35	1.0						
181	-.26	.11	.09	.19	-.01	1.0					
185	-.21	.06	.08	.08	-.13	.56	1.0				
186	-.37	.12	.07	.10	-.08	.41	.48	1.0			
184	.34	.08	.02	.06	.43	-.06	-.21	-.17	1.0		
187	.52	.00	.01	-.08	.16	-.24	-.26	-.26	.48	1.0	
188	.04	-.03	-.02	-.05	-.04	.13	-.01	.10	.10	.20	

Importantly, correlations between individual measures are neither uniformly high nor uniformly low. Correlations are higher for those measures which share a common content (i.e. Propositions 184 and 189) or ideological goal (i.e. Propositions 181, 185, and 186); correlations are much lower for those items which have nothing in common. In other words, voters were

¹⁴ Because of the highly skewed distributions of many of these variables, Gamma is a more appropriate measure of association than Pearson’s r. When the distribution of either variable is far from normal, Pearson’s r is limited in its ability to detect relationships. As MacRae (1970) shows, however, Gamma is an excellent measure of association for these situations; it can be thought of as the probability that a random pair of observations is concordant minus the probability that the pair is discordant. Gamma is symmetric and ranges between -1 and +1.

neither blindly yea/nay-saying nor completely capricious in their choices; rather, voters exercised considerable constraint in choosing between ballot measures.

These ballot patterns demonstrate that those same issues which divide the parties also divide partisans in voting on propositions. Issues which evoke the traditional norms and values over which political parties differ (e.g., crime, immigration, taxes, and regulation) tend to be highly correlated with the party vote pattern. Those which do not evoke these values and norms (e.g., smoking laws and technical legal changes) tend to be less tightly associated with partisanship.

In addition to underlying ideological cleavages, there are almost certainly some campaign effects at work in these correlations. Governor Wilson's strong support for Propositions 187 and 184 was well-known, for example, and the Governor's media consultant (Don Sipple) was the same person who produced television spots for Proposition 187. It would be natural to assume that rank-and-file Republicans, especially those who are attentive to politics and vote, would pick up partisan cues about these propositions from their party's leader (Zaller, 1992).

However, a partisan slant to proposition voting does not require campaigning from parties or party leaders themselves. There are many cross-cutting cleavages which comprise modern American party organizations, and parties naturally seek to avoid too close of an association with a single issue which may alienate part of its coalition. Parties are in the business of electing candidates, not enacting or defeating propositions.

The factor analysis and correlation matrix can be used to build composite measures of economic and social attitudes. I classify those supporting both Propositions 184 and 187 as "social conservatives;" those who opposing both can be thought of as "social liberals." By contrast, "economic conservatives" opposed at least two of the three economic items (Propositions 181, 185 and 186) and did not support any of them; "economic liberals" supported at least two of the three and did not oppose any. In addition, for both the social and economic sets of variables, I built an overall scale measuring degree of conservative and liberal inclination, based on the number of items supported and opposed. Both scales are coded to range from -1 (pure liberal) to +1 (pure conservative), based on the total number of items supported, opposed,

and ignored. The average 1994 voter scored +.27 on the social index and +.40 on the economic index; Los Angeles voters are basically conservative, but more conservative on fiscal issues than on social.

Importantly, party voting is strongly related to both social ($r=.46$) and fiscal ($r=.32$) attitudes. More than seven in ten straight Republican voters can be classified as social (77%) or economic (72%) conservatives. Furthermore, the overall net partisan vote is very much on the Republican side for both social (+28.6) and economic (+18.2) conservatives, but very much on the Democratic side for both social (-61.4) and economic (-55.1) liberals. This is additional evidence that voters use the same underlying principles to organize their choices across the ballot. Interestingly, social attitudes are even more strongly aligned with partisanship than are fiscal attitudes; this seems to indicate that there is considerably more fiscal conservatism than social conservatism in the Democratic Party. Table 7 also demonstrates that the same racial cleavages which drive party identification and voting are closely associated with ideological voting in proposition contests as well --- even more evidence that the “fault lines” determining proposition voting and partisan voting are the same.

Table 7 Partisan and Racial Foundation of 1994 Ideological Proposition Voting					
	Pct Pop	Social Attitudes		Economic Attitudes	
		Conservative	Liberal	Conservative	Liberal
Total	100	42.4%	16.2	44.1%	7
Partisan Vote					
Straight GOP	14.6%	77.2%	2.2	72.2%	1.6
Mostly GOP	15.1	66.2%	4.5	61.8%	2.4
Mixed	30.3	41.5%	11.3	41.8%	5.5
Mostly Dem	23.1	24.4%	26.4	31.9%	10.4
Straight Dem	16.9	17.2%	33.5	24.8%	14.1
Avg. Net GOP Vote	-9.3	28.6	-61.4	18.2	-55.1
Correlation: Partisan Vote		.46		.32	
Race					
White	54.5%	54.1%	13.8	55.4%	6.1
All Non-White	45.5	24.9%	19.7	27.3%	9.0
Black	9.4	21.1%	26.0	16.1%	8.9
Latino	25.8	19.1%	18.4	28.8%	8.8

It is possible, however, that this structure and sophistication in proposition voting is only evidenced among midterm voters; if Campbell's surge and decline theory is applicable in such situations, presidential electorates should show at least somewhat more caprice in their proposition voting patterns.

In fact, 1996 voters evidenced almost as much sophistication as those turning out in 1994. Factor analysis identifies four distinct patterns to proposition voting and again explains nearly half of the variance. However, due at least in part to the nature of the propositions themselves, the factors are somewhat more muddled than in 1994.

The first factor is again largely legal or technical, comprised of issues which do not provoke obvious ideological cues. The second two contain more of the traditional issues over which voters take ideological sides: one is composed of "liberal" issues (such as a minimum wage increase and medical marijuana), while the other is distinctly "conservative" (including such issues as voter approval for local tax increases and the anti-affirmative action CCRI). The final factor includes all three of the bond measures. Both of the health care items cross-load on the "legal" and "liberal" factors --- and the clean water bond cross-loads with Bonds and the liberal items. The clean water bond is probably cross-loading because its environmentalist goal triggers "liberal" cues; I will discuss probable reasons for the cross-loading of the health care items below.

Table 8 summarizes the correlations between individual proposition votes and with patterns of partisan choice. Note that, as in 1994, those measures which evoked underlying ideological cues were most closely associated with partisan voting. For example, Proposition 209 concerned race, 210 increased the minimum wage, and 217 and 218 concerned taxes; these are highly salient issues which also organize partisanship. Correlations between such propositions and partisanship were therefore much stronger than the correlations between partisanship and other initiatives. Those items which did not evoke such cues were largely uncorrelated with the vote.

As was true in 1994, correlations between individual ballot measures were neither uniformly high nor uniformly low. Those which shared a common subject matter (such as Propositions

207/211, Propositions 208/212, Propositions 214/216) or were strongly ideologically charged (such as those discussed above) tended to have the most highly intercorrelated votes. Those measures with less in common had considerably lower intercorrelations.

Table 8															
Voting Correlations (Gamma) between 1996 Ballot Measures															
Prop Numb.	Net GOP	Proposition Number													
		211	207	212	214	215	217	216	210	213	218	209	208	205	206
211	-.18	1.0													
207	-.06	.59	1.0												
212	-.04	.44	.43	1.0											
214	-.26	.51	.38	.35	1.0										
215	-.28	.16	.11	.08	.25	1.0									
217	-.38	.35	.24	.23	.41	.28	1.0								
216	-.22	.48	.37	.34	.75	.23	.41	1.0							
210	-.52	.37	.23	.25	.43	.33	.53	.39	1.0						
213	.32	-.18	.01	.15	-.13	-.05	-.10	-.08	-.19	1.0					
218	.35	.00	.12	.21	-.03	-.08	-.17	.04	-.20	.42	1.0				
209	.63	-.10	.03	.03	-.19	-.19	-.34	-.14	-.50	.47	.46	1.0			
208	.02	.16	.28	.40	.23	.09	.09	.24	.07	.30	.26	.16	1.0		
205	-.12	.01	-.01	-.01	.03	.07	.10	.00	.10	.09	-.08	-.07	.10	1.0	
206	-.26	.13	.11	.07	.18	.12	.25	.17	.34	-.08	-.14	-.25	.05	.43	1.0
204	-.39	.10	.04	.07	.25	.32	.31	.19	.43	-.02	-.25	.19	.19	.54	.46

Proposition 215, which legalized marijuana for medical use, is a very interesting case of the primacy of ideology and cleavage structure over partisan campaign effects *per se*. High-ranking Republican and Democratic officials *both* opposed Proposition 215. Despite this official rejection, however, voters still aligned themselves as the partisan cleavage structure would predict: Republican voters picked up the cue that this measure was “soft on drugs” --- a Republican theme --- and opposed it; Democratic voters broke with their party officials and supported the measure anyway.

Examples of Consistency

The 1996 ballots allow tests similar to what Mueller used for his two lottery items. Propositions 214 and 216 both concerned health care reform and “consumer protection;” both were quite technical, and both would have cost state and local governments considerable money to implement. (This is probably why the items cross-loaded on two different factors.) More than three-fourths (77%) cast a “consistent” vote on these two measures (gamma=.75): 39% opposed

both, 29% supported both, and 9% abstained from both. Furthermore, support for and opposition to both measures is correlated with partisanship; “health care” and “taxes” trigger salient cues.

Similarly, Propositions 207 and 211, though not explicitly the same in content, were both sponsored by trial attorneys and both would have benefited members of that profession. Proposition 207 would have preserved attorneys’ rights to negotiate contingency fees; Proposition 211 would have done the same thing--- and made securities fraud lawsuits permissible (opening up a whole new field of cases attorneys could have prosecuted). Although these two items were not as explicitly linked as the two health care initiatives, the high correlation ($\gamma=.59$) between them indicates that voters still seem to have recognized that Propositions 207 and 211 shared a common goal. More than two-thirds (69%) cast a consistent vote on these two measures: 16% supported both, 48% opposed both, and 5% abstained from both. Much as Lupia’s (1993) work would predict, voters grew suspicious over so many attorney-proposed changes to the legal system. As a result, voters opted for the status quo.

Although trial attorneys tend to be a “Democratic” group, it is unlikely that many voters align themselves with the Democratic or Republican parties because of their feelings about lawyers. Propositions 211 and 207, therefore, did not trigger partisan cues the way Proposition 209 or 210 did. People used satisfaction with the status quo, rather than the norms and values which evoke partisan cleavages, to guide their votes on Propositions 207 and 211.

CONCLUSIONS

Although recent scholarship has raised questions about the utility and fairness of proposition voting, my own analysis of California ballot patterns demonstrates a great deal of both representativeness and rationality. The “office electorate” and “proposition electorate” are largely coterminous, and participation in office contests has an even larger demographic bias than does ballot measure participation. Furthermore, voters use clear organizing principles to guide their choices in proposition contests. These patterns, which are based on the same norms

and values which underlie partisanship, are considerably less capricious and considerably more structured than previous research has found.

The similar degree of structure to vote patterns in 1994 and 1996 casts some doubts on Campbell's theory of "core" and "peripheral" electorates, but this result is not surprising given the relatively small turnout differential between the two years. Despite a somewhat more muddled factor analysis in 1996 (probably due to the content of the initiatives themselves), both the "core" and "peripheral" electorates had clearly organized vote patterns, and both used ideological norms to guide their choices. Importantly, correlations between individual ballot measures in both years were neither uniformly high or uniformly low; rather, correlations were higher for those measures which shared a common objective or ideology and lower for those which had little in common. While it would be interesting to investigate the behavior and consistency of *extremely* "exclusive" voters (such as those who turn out for primary elections), the current research shows that voter sophistication does not vary much with the natural oscillation of presidential and midterm general electorates.

My research also demonstrates the value of analyzing actual ballot punch cards. Although quantitative surveys are valuable research tools and have greatly contributed to our understanding of initiative voting, surveys (by their nature) rely on self-reports and are often incomplete. Researchers have tended to ignore the wealth of information available in ballot punch cards, largely because of their inaccessibility and lack of demographic data. This paper shows that it is possible to overcome these hurdles, and that election ballots can add an important perspective to our understanding of voting behavior.

APPENDIX

The 1994 ballots are stored on 22 reels; the 1996 ballots comprise 26 reels. I used one complete reel for each year: Reel #4 in 1994 and Reel #10 in 1996. The County assures me that there is no bias whatever to which precincts' ballots end up on which reels. I selected the reels I did because (1) neither contained any absentee ballots (absentee voting is an entirely different area of research) and (2) these reels contained the largest number of ballots in each year.

The County stores these ballot images in an obscure COBOL-based column binary format. After translating the 1994 punch cards into ASCII, I had 312 variables (one for each of the punch positions on the voter's card) for each of the 120,000 cases. If a given position was punched, it is recorded as "1". Unpunched positions are shown as "0." Further complicating matters, names in all contests are rotated by assembly district; Pete Wilson might correspond to punch #1 in some precincts but punch #4 in others; all told, there are hundreds of versions of the ballot across Los Angeles County. All of these factors had to be taken into account when building the final data file.

A MORE COMPLETE LISTING OF BALLOT MEASURE WORDING:

- 181: Passenger Rail and Clean Air Bond Act of 1994
- 183: Allow recall elections of state officers
- 184: Increased sentences for repeat offenders ("Three Strikes and You're Out")
- 185: Public Transportation Trust Funds. Gasoline Sales Tax Increase.
- 186: Health Services. Taxes.
- 187: Illegal Aliens made ineligible for public services.
- 188: Smoking and Tobacco Products, local preemption by statewide regulation
- 189: Bail exception for felony sexual assault
- 190: Commission on Judicial Performance, Legislative Constitutional Amendment
- 191: Justice Courts, Legislative Constitutional Amendment

- 204: Safe, Clean, Reliable, Water Supply Act (Bond)
- 205: Youthful and Adult Offender Local Facility Bond Act
- 206: Veterans' Bond
- 207: Attorneys. Fees. Right to Negotiate. Frivolous Lawsuits. (Anti-attorney measure)
- 208: Campaign contributions and spending limits. Restricts lobbyists.
- 209: Prohibition against discrimination or preferential treatment by state and other public entities.
- 210: Minimum wage increase.
- 211: Prohibits restrictions on attorney-client fee arrangements. Securities fraud lawsuits allowed.
- 212: Campaign contributions and spending limits. Repeals gift and honoraria limits.
- 213: Limitation on recovery to felons, uninsured motorists, drunk drivers.
- 214: Health care. Consumer protection.
- 215: Medical Use of Marijuana
- 216: Health care. Consumer protection. Taxes on corporate restructuring.
- 217: Reinstate top income tax bracket
- 218: Vote approval required for local government taxes. Limitations on fees, assessments, and charges.

As Tables A1 and A2 demonstrate, the ballots used in this analysis are highly representative of the County as a whole.

Table A1						
Measures: Ballots and Official LA County Results						
Prop #	Ballots			Official L.A. County Results		
	Yes	No	Abstain	Yes	No	Abstain
181	35.7	64.3	11.5	35.9	64.1	12.6
183	68.5	31.5	16.2	68.1	31.9	14.6
184	73.1	26.9	9.4	73.0	27.0	10.2
185	17.8	82.2	10.1	19.0	81.0	10.9
186	29.5	70.5	7.7	29.3	70.7	8.5
187	55.8	44.2	4.2	56.0	44.0	4.8
188	32.2	67.8	5.3	31.1	68.9	6.0
189	79.5	20.5	11.7	80.7	19.3	12.4
190	63.2	36.8	17.5	64.3	35.7	18.7
191	61.0	39.0	19.5	61.4	36.1	20.8
204	67.1	32.9	7.3	66.7	33.3	7.8
205	40.1	59.9	9.1	40.8	59.2	9.7
206	56.8	43.2	10.3	56	44	10.9
207	34.8	65.2	10.1	35.1	64.9	10.6
208	56.3	43.7	11.1	57.4	42.6	11.7
209	43.2	56.8	5.8	45.8	54.2	6.6
210	65.3	34.7	6.3	63.6	36.4	7
211	28.9	71.1	8.6	28.5	71.5	9.1
212	48.1	51.9	11.3	47.7	52.3	11.9
213	71.9	28.1	8.8	74.1	25.9	9.3
214	46.7	53.3	11.5	45.9	54.1	12
215	56.7	43.3	6.7	55.7	44.3	7.4
216	42.4	57.6	11.9	41.2	58.8	12.6
217	50.5	49.5	10.4	49.8	50.2	11
218	51.8	48.2	11.4	53.4	46.6	12

Table A2						
Partisan Offices: Ballots and Official LA County Results						
Office	Ballots			Official L.A. County Results		
	GOP	Dem	Other	GOP	Dem	Other
President	28.6	60.6	10.8	31	59.3	9.7
U.S. Senate	40.9	50.4	8.7	40.4	51.5	8.1
Governor	49.8	46.4	3.8	50.4	46.1	3.5
Lt. Gov.	34.7	58.1	7.2	35.3	58.1	6.6
Sec. of State	38.7	50.3	11	39.1	50.8	10.1
Controller	38.1	55.9	6	39.2	55.1	5.7
Treasurer	42.9	47.2	9.9	44	46.9	9.1
Atty. Gen	47.3	45.9	6.8	48.4	45.3	6.3
Ins. Com.	42.3	50.7	7	43	50.2	6.8

Table A3 shows the overlap between partisan office participation and ballot measure participation. For example, 63.5% participated in all office contests and all ballot measure decisions. 76.5% participated in all offices and at least two-thirds of ballot measures.

Table A3							
Overlap Between Partisan Office and Ballot Measure Participation: 1994 and 1996 Combined							
<i>Percentages are of the total electorate</i>							
		Proportion of Ballot Measures Participating in					
Office Participation↓		100%	90%+	75%+	67%+	50%+	0-49%
	Total	70.3%	80.2%	85.6%	88.7%	92.0%	8.0%
100%	80.4%	63.5	71.2	74.8	76.5	78.0	2.3
90%+	84.4%	65.8	74.2	78.1	80.0	81.8	2.7
75%+	88.4%	67.5	76.4	80.8	83.0	85.2	3.3
67%+	91.6%	68.7	78.0	82.8	85.2	87.7	3.9
50%+	94.0%	69.3	78.9	83.9	86.5	89.3	4.7
0-49%	6.0%	0.9	1.3	1.7	2.2	2.8	3.3

Tables A4 and A5 show the rotated factor analysis solutions for both years.

Table A4				
Factor Analysis of 1994 Ballot Measures				
		Technical	Economic	Social
Prop #	Variance explained = 48.5%	18.2%	16.4%	13.9%
190	Constitutional Amendment	.751	.057	-.018
191	Constitutional Amendment	.718	.032	-.065
183	Allow recall of officials	.596	.160	-.070
189	Bail exception-sexual assault	.582	-.062	.333
181	Rail bond	.088	.742	.048
185	Gas tax	.063	.704	-.085
186	Mandated health ins.	.044	.652	-.069
184	Three Strikes	.118	-.078	.737
187	Anti-Immigration	-.002	-.256	.670
188	Smoking laws	-.140	.245	.510

Table A5					
Factor Analysis of 1996 Ballot Measures					
		Legal	Liberal	Conservative	Bonds
Prop #	Variance Explained=49.7%	14.1%	12.7%	11.7%	11.2%
211	Securities fraud/Pro-attorney	.725	.095	-.113	.022
207	No Attorney fee limits/Pro-attorney	.713	-.021	.074	.047
212	Campaign contribution limits	.569	.115	.270	.045
214	Health care/taxes	.518	.513	-.019	-.016
215	Medical Marijuana	-.162	.706	.088	.021
217	Income tax reinstatement	.239	.535	-.151	.141
216	Health care, taxes on.	.488	.532	.044	-.078
210	Minimum wage hike	.227	.522	-.248	.222
213	Drunk drivers/damages	-.111	.000	.712	.077
218	Voter approval for local taxes	.110	-.095	.634	-.157
209	CCRI	.002	-.326	.591	-.180
208	Campaign spending	.259	.171	.529	.162
205	Bond: jails	-.058	-.034	.103	.769
206	Bond: veteran benefits	.163	.015	-.143	.686
204	Bond: clean water	-.030	.347	-.040	.668

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