

# **Partisanship, Sophistication, and Public Attitudes about Majority Rule and Minority Rights in Congress**

## **Abstract**

The balance between majority rule and minority rights is a central issue in the design and operation of democratic institutions and remains a contested issue in debates of policy-making processes. Remarkably, public attitudes about this balance are not subjected to scholarly investigation. In this paper, we report the findings of the first survey experiment in which the American public's attitudes about majority rule and minority rights in legislative bodies are explored. We find robust support for both majority rule and minority rights, discover that only a few Americans distinguish between the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate in the application of these principles, and demonstrate that views of majority rule and minority rights can be moved once we introduce respondents to the partisan implications of procedural rules. Moreover, with conflicting theoretical expectations about the effect of political sophistication on attitudes about majority rule and minority rights, we find that higher levels of political sophistication are associated with stronger partisan effects on attitudes about the balance between majority rule and minority rights in Congress.

The balance between majority rule and minority rights is a central issue in the design and operation of democratic institutions and remains a contested issue in debates of policy-making processes (Binder 1996, 1997; Binder and Smith 1997; Cox 2000; Koger 2010; Schickler 2000, 2001; Sinclair 1995; Wawro and Schickler 2006). It is a complicated design issue that includes many mechanisms, including the arrangement of decision-making institutions, the nature of agenda-setting procedures, the allocation of voting and participation rights, and the setting of majority or super-majority voting thresholds for adopting policies or changing rules. The number of ways that simple majority rule can be qualified or checked is large, which may contribute to the difficulty of gauging public views about how majority rule and minority rights should be balanced.

The issue remains alive. In mid-2015, conservatives, including Republican presidential candidates and prominent commentators, advocated reform of the Senate filibuster to remove an obstacle to repealing the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The Senate Republican leader, Mitch McConnell (R-KY), and other Senate Republicans insisted that their long-term position in favor of retaining the filibuster is in the long-term interest of the conservative cause (Bolton 2015; Chait 2015), but pressure continued to build after the Supreme Court upheld the ACA's insurance subsidies in June of that year and they continued to explore ways to use reconciliation procedures to circumvent the Senate's cloture rule.

Remarkably, public attitudes about the balance between majority rule and minority rights have not been subject to scholarly investigation. Only one study (Smith and Park 2013) examines these attitudes and its focus is limited to a field test of change in attitudes toward the Senate filibuster. In this paper, we report the results of the first

survey experiment in which the American public's attitudes about majority rule and minority rights in legislative bodies are explored. We are not surprised to find robust support for both majority rule and minority rights, but we also discover that only a few Americans distinguish between the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate in the application of these principles. Moreover, we find that views of majority rule and minority rights can be moved once we introduce respondents to the partisan implications of procedural rules. Furthermore, with conflicting theoretical expectations about the effect of political sophistication on attitudes about majority rule and minority rights, we find that higher levels of political sophistication are associated with stronger partisan effects on attitudes about the balance between majority rule and minority rights in Congress.

**THE REMARKABLY LIMITED SCHOLARSHIP ON  
PUBLIC ATTITUDES ABOUT MAJORITY RULE AND MINORITY RIGHTS**

Social science has long been concerned about citizens' willingness to support basic democratic institutions and processes, but it has not addressed public attitudes about the tradeoffs between majority rule and minority rights. In the research on Americans' democratic values, which dates at least to Stouffer's 1955 study of political tolerance during the McCarthy era and has generated a large literature in recent decades (Stouffer 1955; Gibson 2007), scholars have given support for majority rule little attention, perhaps because they assumed wide support for majority rule as the least difficult democratic value. Even in the broad literature on Americans' "core" beliefs or values, attitudes about majority rule and minority rights are not considered (Devine

1972; Feldman 1988; Hurwitz and Peffley 1987; Lipset 1979; McClosky and Zaller 1984; Rokeach 1973). There are several other places we might look for guidance, but we find little foundation for predicting American public attitudes.

Similarly, in the expansive set of studies about Americans' procedural attitudes (Durr, Gilmour, and Wolbrecht 1997; Gangl 2003; Gibson and Caldeira 1995; Gibson, Caldeira, and Spence 2003; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2001a; Hurwitz and Peffley 2005; Tyler 1990, 1994), no study inquires into public support for the tradeoff between majority rule and minority rights that is an essential feature of American Constitution and the rules of legislative bodies. We know that political processes are valued by the mass public, that certain procedural features affect the perceived legitimacy of institutions, and that preferences for abstract decision-making processes are to some degree separable from policy preferences (Gangl 2003, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2001). Nevertheless, we simply do not know how Americans balance the competing demands of majority rule and minority rights and what effect that balance has on attitudes toward old and prominent procedural features of real political institutions.

In American public discourse, the legislative procedure related to majority rule and minority rights that is mentioned most frequently surely is the Senate filibuster. Under the Senate's rules, a large minority may prevent a vote on a motion, bill, or nomination even when it is supported by a majority of the Senate (Binder and Smith 1997). On a few occasions since the 1930s, pollsters have quizzed national samples about the filibuster. As Smith and Park (2013) detail, the general pattern in polls conducted by the American Institute of Public Opinion and Gallup is that when a majority of respondents favors a measure (say, civil rights legislation) that is being filibustered, a majority opposes the filibuster practice, and vice versa (AIPO 1963; also

see Wawro and Schickler 2010). Rules and practices in the U.S. House of Representatives certainly are controversial, particularly with respect to the ability of the majority to limit minority amendments, but public opinion polling has never included questions about the practice, as far as we can determine.

There is only one study that has asked a national sample directly about majority rule, minority rights, and congressional procedure (Smith and Park 2013). In that study, attitudes about the filibuster were asked to a panel before and after Senate action on healthcare reform legislation in late 2009. Republicans started with a somewhat stronger pro-filibuster attitude and exhibited a significant pro-filibuster shift during the episode, both consistent with the minority status of Republicans in the Senate at the time. Democrats showed a somewhat smaller anti-filibuster shift during the episode. The study also finds that a weak relationship between general procedural attitudes (about majority rule and minority rights) and filibuster attitudes existed before Senate action, but weakened further as pro-majority rule Republicans became more likely to approve of the filibuster during the episode.

The panel design of the Senate filibuster study is certainly an improvement over the few cross-sectional surveys of attitudes about the filibuster conducted by Gallup and others. The panel allowed the analysts to measure individual-level change in attitudes about the filibuster and estimate the influence of a variety of potential sources of change and stability in those attitudes. Moreover, the study focused on a highly salient Senate debate that gave the analyst a rare opportunity to observe public attitudes about congressional procedure that had a reasonable chance of being influenced by events.

The limitation of the study is that the 2009 healthcare episode necessarily involved partisan directionality—Republicans were in the minority and exploiting the

opportunity to filibuster—and other issue-specific features that may have influenced respondents' views of majority rule and minority rights. An experimental design in which all respondents are randomly assigned to treatments will avoid the potential problems of causal inference. We report such a study here.

The 2009 Senate study also does not explore the relationship between attitudes about majority rule and those about minority rights. While every legislature establishes rules and practices that represent some tradeoff between these competing values, it is reasonable to suppose that American civic values require that both values be preserved to some degree. When people are asked separately about them in a generic or applied context, we might expect responses to be two-dimensional in a way that reflects the possibility that respondents can favor (or oppose) both majority rule and minority rights.

### **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PROCEDURAL VALUES**

The scarcity of descriptive studies of public attitudes toward majority rule and minority rights is accompanied by a paucity of theoretical development on the forces that might shape those attitudes. The 2009 Senate study suggested that short-term policy and partisan advantages influence such attitudes, but there is little additional commentary in social science. Nevertheless, there are theoretical perspectives that may account for the presence and direction of such attitudes. In particular, accounts of American civic culture predict wide support for both majority rule and minority rights, while theories of motivated reasoning and issue framing by elites predict systematic variation in procedural attitudes that are perceived as relevant to social and political identities. Moreover, political knowledge, information, and sophistication have been

shown to condition the translation of values and events into attitudes about issues and political actors, which necessitates that we explore how sophistication conditions the effects of identities on attitudes about majority rule and minority rights.

### ***Political Culture, Civic Education, and Institutional Learning***

American political culture and civic education emphasize the normative importance of both majority rule and minority rights. Nevertheless, there is little theoretical guidance from political science on the subject. The *Civic Culture* (Almond and Verba 1963) literature on the foundations of liberal democracy skirts the issue of balancing majority rule and minority rights. The Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (1995, 2001b) studies of “public preferences for governmental procedures” and attitudes about the U.S. Congress summarize the literature and observe that “although people may care about process, they do not have sophisticated conceptions of these variations [in process] or of how minority rights should be protected, how interests should be articulated and aggregated, and what specific institutions are needed to approximate given process preferences” (2001, 148). Yet, neither the studies they cite nor their own studies question the American public about the way majority rule and minority rights should be balanced. Even the study of democratic values among elites, while addressing political tolerance, consensus, egalitarian protection, and other subjects related to majority rule and minority rights, has not addressed the balance of majority rule and minority rights (for a review, see Peffley and Rohrschneider 2007).

The distinction between majority rule and minority rights is closely related to other pairs of competing values, such as liberty and equality. Thomassen (2007), who has examined commitments to liberty and equality in the mass public in several polities,

notes that “Dahl argued that ‘Madisonian democracy’ as originally developed by the American founding fathers was at best a one-sided compromise between two principles, majority rule or ‘the republican principle’ and the protection of the liberties of minorities.” Thomassen then observes that “as much as these two principles together constitute the modern conception of democracy, there is no fixed balance between them. The relative weight of the two principles can be different in different stages, it can be different within one state at different periods of time, and different people can give different weights to these two principles” (Thomassen 2007, 423).

Clues about the forces that shape procedural attitudes can be found Rohrschneider’s (1999) examination of modern Germany. Rohrschneider argued that citizens are influenced by exposure to elite discussion of the values and norms that underlie a nation’s configuration of political institutions. Rohrschneider gave no attention to the balance of majority rule and minority rights, focusing instead on egalitarian, plebiscitarian, and republican preferences, their relationship to political ideology, and their consequences for institutional support and trust. Nevertheless, the central theme—that elite discussion of procedural principles can influence public attitudes—comports with the study of the 2009 Senate study described above. “Institutional learning,” as Rohrschneider calls evolution in procedural preferences, takes place in the short-term and appears to be influenced by the ideological values of citizens.

The leading modern organization that advocates for American civic education in schools and elsewhere is the Center for Civic Education. The Center’s widely distributed materials state the standard view--“although ‘the majority rules,’ the fundamental rights of individuals in the minority are protected”--without any discussion of the need for



balance or how the balance is to be achieved (Center for Civic Education, n.d.). Remarkably, however commonplace this kind of observation is, American political culture gives no clear guidance about how majority rule and minority rights are to be balanced.

The strength and consistency of civic guidance about the importance of both majority rule and minority rights in the United States suggests a reasonable empirical proposition in need of testing: support for both majority rule and minority rights is widespread among Americans.

*Hypothesis 1: The American public favors both majority rule and minority rights in general.*

Another important theme in American civic culture and public discourse is the difference between the House from the Senate. The American public has long been told that the two houses of Congress were designed with two distinct principles in mind: majority rules in the House, but the minority is protected in the Senate (for an introduction to the issue, see Smith 1989). Moreover, usually in the context of debate about Senate procedures, many politicians and pundits have argued that the two chambers should function differently (for example, see Arenberg and Dove 2012). The 2009 Senate study suggests that these elite arguments about the Senate may register with the public, although that study did not explicitly contrast the House and Senate.

Recent history suggests that, over time, the public receives changing signals from Senators about the exercise of minority rights in the Senate. In the period before the 2006 elections, Republican Senators voiced salient complaints about Democrats'

exercise of minority rights under Senate rules, but the tables were turned for the next eight years as Republicans became very obstructionist in their parliamentary tactics (Smith 2014). At this writing in mid-2015, it appears that the tables have turned again as the new Democratic minority exploits its procedural prerogatives to slow and block the Republican majority's agenda. Therefore, it would be appropriate to test a widely spread belief on the role of the House and Senate in the application of majority rules and minority rights.

*Hypothesis 2: The public favors greater emphasis on majority rule for the House and greater emphasis on minority rights for the Senate.*

### ***Predispositions, Motivated Reasoning, Cues, and Framing***

While American civic culture provides some reasonable empirical propositions on majority rule and minority rights, it does not seem to yield clear guidance about how to balance majority rule and minority rights so it is unlikely that Americans have strong attitudes, or even attitudes at all, about that balance. The weakness of civic guidance about the balance may leave Americans open to short-term influences that bias attitudes in systematic ways.

The science of political behavior has identified a wide range of cognitive, emotional, and environmental processes that shape or bias attitudes about political issues, actors, and institutions. Predispositions, which may originate in ideology or belief systems, may affect individuals' ability to accept or reject particular political communications (Converse 1964; Zaller 1992). The way issues are framed and primed by elites, the media, and other cue givers to which individuals are attuned may affect

when self interest or other values determine attitudes about issues, including procedural issues (Chong 2013). Prior beliefs, self interest, and group affinities, when made relevant, may generate motivated reasoning in which individuals discount information running counter to their preferences and giving greater weight to information supporting their preferences (Redlawsk and Lau 2013).

Many of these biases are related to social or political identity. A reasonable hypothesis is that preferences about the balance of majority rule and minority rights reflect the forces of social identity and social circumstance (Monroe, Hankin, and Van Vechten 2000; Sigel, Brewer, Huddy, Ross, and Gerson 2001; Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, and McDermott 2006). Life experiences—the family, race, gender, and so on—may shape individuals' identification with groups and openness to communication from elites in those groups. The identity of majority or minority status in salient social categories, for example, has been shown to shape dispositions about the U.S. Supreme Court (Gibson and Caldiera 1992). We might expect that these identities with minority status in society, and certainly with the elite cues associated with group identity, influence views about the proper balance of majority rule and minority rights in the political realm. Unfortunately, these worthy hypotheses have not been tested in previous studies.

Perhaps the longest standing hypothesis about political attitudes and identity is that it is influenced by partisan identities (Bolsen, Druckman, and Cook 2014; Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1960/1980). The central argument, as for other social identities, is that partisan identity shapes the interpretations and elite cues that mediate between facts and opinions about political matters. Recent studies find that the strength of party identification biases the way in which new information updates

opinions about political or policy affairs (Gaines, *et al.*, 2007; Taber and Lodge 2006). It is reasonable to hypothesize that similar and reinforcing processes are at work whenever partisan differences on democratic procedures are cued by elites and the media.

*Hypothesis 3: Partisan identity biases attitudes about the proper balance of majority rule and minority rights.*

### ***Sophistication***

A considerable body of political science demonstrates the importance of sophistication and knowledge for individuals' interaction with the political world. An individual's political knowledge provides a context in which new information is processed and interpreted (Popkin and Dimock 2000; Price and Zaller 1993; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991). Indeed, we know that political sophistication conditions a wide range of political attitudes and behavior (Bartel 1996; Benoit 2004; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Gilens 2001; Koch 2008; Lau, Anderson, and Redlawsk 2008; Zaller 1991, 1992).

It is reasonable to hypothesize that sophistication is positively related to having strong and stable views about democratic values, including the mix of majority rule and minority rights that is appropriate in various contexts. As a complex concept, the balance of majority rule and minority rights may resonate only with more sophisticated Americans who appreciate the tradeoffs and recognize the implications for social or political groups. The intuition then is that sophisticated individuals' democratic values—their views of the balance between majority rule and minority rights—will be

less likely to be responsive to the short-term partisan implications than the values of less sophisticated individuals.

The hunch that sophistication dampens partisan effects on attitudes about the balance of majority rule and minority rights runs contrary to two other theoretical arguments that appear well justified. First, it is important to recognize that the absence of civic guidance about the balance between majority rule and minority rights applies to both more and less sophisticated individuals. The weakness of attitudes about the appropriate balance opens both more and less sophisticated individuals to the influence of sources of bias when they are exposed to them. Second, while sophistication is positively related to acceptance of democratic norms (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996) and to having more stable opinions (Krosnick and Milburn 1990; Sniderman and Bullock 2004), sophistication also is positively related with stronger political and social identities that are associated with bias (Converse 1964; McCloskey and Zaller 1984). Chong (2013) summarizes the evidence:

...the best informed may be an imperfect standard of good decision-making because they are also the most partisan and ideological members of the electorate. Ideology and party identification can motivate biased interpretations of evidence, especially when that evidence has partisan implications. Therefore, the beliefs of the best informed may reflect an ideologically distorted perspective rather than the objective state of the world. Those who are less ideological may have more accurate beliefs about aspects of the world that are subject to ideological or partisan conflict. The stronger tendency of the more informed individuals to engage in motivated reasoning raises questions about using this group as the

standard for optimal preferences (Chong 2013, 109).

There is no existing evidence on attitudes about majority rule and minority rights that allows us to determine whether the intuition that sophistication dampens partisan effects is right or wrong. Certainly, as Chong indicates, the balance of scholarship indicates that sophistication is associated with stronger identities, which, in the presence of weak predispositions, would yield more bias. We test this hypothesis here.

*Hypothesis 4: Political sophistication increases the effect of partisan identity on attitudes about the proper balance of majority rule and minority rights.*

#### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA**

To test the four hypotheses, we exploit a survey experiment conducted in 2012. The data allow us to estimate the effects of acquired attitudes about the two houses of Congress, partisanship, and political sophistication on opinions about majority rule and minority rights. The party identification and political sophistication of the respondents were measured independently of the experiment, which allows for an analysis of the conditions under which partisanship and sophistication influence attitudes about majority rule and minority rights.

Data for our analysis are drawn from the *The American Panel Survey* (TAPS). TAPS is a monthly online survey of about 2000 people. Panelists were recruited as a national probability sample with an address-based sampling frame in the fall of 2011 by GfK/Knowledge Networks for the Weidenbaum Center at Washington University.

Individuals without internet access were provided a laptop and internet service at the expense of the Weidenbaum Center. In a typical month, over 1700 of the panelists complete the online survey, which yields three groups of about 500 subjects. More technical information about the survey is available at the TAPS website ([taps.wustl.edu](http://taps.wustl.edu)).

In May 2012, we designed an experiment in TAPS. Each respondent was randomly assigned to one of three treatment groups, as outlined in Table 1. Group 1 was asked about a generic legislature with no reference to parties. Group 2 was asked about the U.S. Congress and asked separately about the House of Representatives and the Senate. Like Group 2, Group 3 was asked about the U.S. Congress and asked separately about the House of Representatives and the Senate, but Group 3's treatment emphasized the identity of the majority and minority parties in each house.

( Table 1 about here )

Then, each respondent was asked to indicate his or her degree of agreement or disagreement with four statements:

- (1) the majority party should be able to pass legislation that is supported by a majority of legislators (*Majority Passing Legislation*);
- (2) the majority party should be able to limit or prohibit amendments to its legislation (*Majority Limiting Amendments*);
- (3) the minority party should be able to delay or block action on legislation supported by a majority of legislators (*Minority Blocking Legislation*); and
- (4) the minority party should be able to get a vote on its amendment to legislation (*Minority Offering Amendments*).

The first two questions emphasize the majority party and were asked early in the survey; the second two questions emphasize the minority party and were asked late in the

survey. The specific text varies to emphasize the identity of the legislative body and party, as is shown in Table 1.

This design allows us to draw inferences about the effects of several factors that influence attitudes about the principles of majority rules and minority rights. From the experimental manipulation we can evaluate the effect of the identity of the legislative body (generic versus U.S. House versus U.S. Senate). From the match of the respondent's party identification with the manipulation of party stimuli in Groups 2 and 3, we can evaluate the effect of partisanship. And from our independent measure of political sophistication for all respondents, we can evaluate the direct and conditioning effects of sophistication on institutional and partisan factors.

We operationalize attitudes about majority rule and minority rights, ideology, party identification, and political sophistication from the May 2012 TAPS survey. We list the variables and their measurement in Table 2, and place question wording in Appendix A.

( Table 2 about here )

## **EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

### ***Attitudes about Majority Rule and Minority Rights***

The American public supports both majority rule and the minority rights in general. The mean responses on a five-point scale (where 5 is strongly agree and 1 is strongly disagree) are shown in Table 3. A mean score above 3.0 represents net agreement with the statement and below 3.0 represents net disagreement. Net agreement is registered for both the majority party's right to pass legislation (first row)



and the minority party's right to offer amendments (third row). Net disagreement is registered for the minority party's ability to block a vote on a legislation supported by a majority (second row). These outcomes hold for a generic legislature, and, when the institutions are mentioned, they hold for both the House and the Senate.

( Table 3 about here )

A puzzle is that a slim majority against allowing a majority to limit amendments in legislatures in general is not matched by similar pattern when the House and Senate are mentioned. At least some Americans are more tolerant of majority limiting amendments in the context of Congress specifically than they are about a generic legislature.

*Majority Rule Versus Minority Rights.* The results of paired samples t-tests between mean responses of two pairs of questions are shown in the separate rows of Table 3.<sup>1</sup> The first pair is (a) "the majority party should be able to pass legislation that is supported by a majority of legislators" and (b) "the minority party should be able to delay or block action on legislation supported by a majority of legislators." The second pair is (a) "the majority party should be able to limit or prohibit amendments to its legislation" and (b) "the minority party should be able to get a vote on its amendment to legislation." For each experimental group and institution, the right of the majority party to get a vote and the right of the minority to offer amendments is favored.

*House Versus Senate.* In general, the public makes little distinction between the House and Senate when expressing a view about majority rule and minority rights. The

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<sup>1</sup> It is informative to check if the pattern of mean responses is similar to the pattern of proportion of agreement (i.e. proportion of respondents who either strongly agree or agree with the statement to respondents who either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement). We find that the pattern is extremely similar (see Appendix B).

results of paired samples t-tests of mean responses for the House and Senate, with and without parties mentioned, are shown in the separate columns. None of the differences between the houses is significant and none straddles the mid-point of the scale. Thus, we find no public endorsement of the common argument that minority rights should be the special emphasis of the Senate and majority rule the emphasis of the House.

*Balance between Majority Rule and Minority Rights.* A large number of American does not appear to recognize the trade-off between majority rule and minority rights and are readily influenced by whether majority rule or minority rights is primed. We might expect a negative correlation between support for majority rule and support for minority rights, but, as we show in Table 4, this is not found for any of the three experimental groups.<sup>2</sup> Emphasizing the majority party in question wording yields support for both the majority's ability to pass legislation supported and to prohibit amendments and a correlation between responses, while emphasizing the minority party yields correlated support for the minority's ability to block votes on legislation and its right to offer amendments and a correlation between responses. On the other hand, when majority and minority interests are primed separately, support for majority rule and support for the right of the minority to offer amendments are not correlated.

( Table 4 about here )

We see why in Table 5, where we report the percent of respondents who agree or disagree the majority rule statement and the minority rights statement. If the public recognizes the trade-off between the two principles, there should be a large number of respondents located on the anti-diagonal line from the top-right corner to the bottom-

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<sup>2</sup> In Appendix C, we also report the actual distributions of responses to different questions by the three experimental groups in Figure 2. The pattern there corresponds to the correlation values reported here.

left corner (bold in the table), which is not the case. Rather, people tend to support both majority rule and minority rights at the same time. At least a large plurality of Americans support both majority rule and minority rights, and it does not matter whether they are primed to think about the House and the Senate.

( Table 5 about here )

There is one important pattern worth noting in Table 4: party matters. When the identity of the majority and minority parties is mentioned (Group 3), the correlation between responses to the two questions is stronger for the majority-framed and minority-framed questions than when parties are not mentioned. Partisanship appears to stimulate more respondents to interpret majority rule and minority rights in a common frame of reference.

### ***Effects of Partisanship and Sophistication***

Party identification influences the attitudes about majority rule and minority rights, but only when parties are explicitly mentioned (Group 3). Mean responses for the three experimental groups, with paired sample t-tests for respondents' party identification and level of sophistication, are shown in Table 6. As panels 6a and 6b show, the party effects are weak in general but strongest when party and chamber are mentioned.

( Table 6 about here )

The pattern in responses comports with the party that held a majority of seats in the House (Republicans) and in the Senate (Democrats) at the time of the survey. For a generic legislature and for the House, there is a tendency for Republicans to have a higher score than Democrats for the majority passing legislation and a lower score than

Democrats for the minority offering amendment, whatever the experimental group. The difference is sometimes (weakly) statistically significant and sometimes not. In contrast, for the Senate, Republicans tend to have a lower score for the majority passing legislation and a higher score for minority amendments. This is statistically significant only when party and chamber are mentioned (Group 3). Overall, Republicans favor the majority in the House and a generic legislature and the minority in the Senate, while Democrats favor the majority in the Senate and the minority in the House and a generic legislature.

Political sophistication is more strongly related to attitudes about majority rule and minority rights than party identification. As panel 6c shows, high sophistication is associated with stronger support for the right of the majority to get a vote in all three experimental groups. As panel 6d shows, high sophistication is *not* associated with stronger support for minority rights, with the important exception of the case in which the Senate and the party in the minority is mentioned (Group 3). In that case, the more sophisticated respondents provided greater support for the right of the minority to offer amendments than the less sophisticated respondents.

The net effects of partisanship and sophistication can be inferred from the multivariate results in Table 7. Partisanship matters only for majority rule questions, but this pattern correctly reflects the partisan advantage in Congress at the time of the 2012 survey: Republicans are more likely to support majority rule in the House but are less likely to support majority rule in the Senate. Sophistication is important for both majority rule and minority rights questions. Highly sophisticated respondents are more likely to support the two procedural attitudes in both the House and the Senate.

( Table 7 about here )

In order to investigate a somewhat asymmetric nature of partisanship effects on majority rule and minority rights, we employ the three-way interaction models – partisanship, sophistication and treatment groups. Table 8 reports the effects of party identification for various levels of sophistication in different treatment groups.<sup>3</sup> Only highly sophisticated respondents show the partisanship effect for majority rule in the House, and then only when parties are mentioned. That is, Republicans are more likely to support the right of the majority to pass legislation in the House, once they are aware of partisan control of the chamber and only for more sophisticated respondents. A similar pattern is observed for minority rights in the Senate: Republicans, but only for the more sophisticated respondents, are more likely to support the right of the minority to offer amendments in the Senate once they know that their party is in minority. Attitudes about majority rule and minority rights correctly reflect the partisan implications of procedural rules only for respondents who are sophisticated and made aware of which party controls the two chambers.

( Table 8 about here )

Graphs of predicted probabilities, provided in Figure 1, show the conditioning effect of sophistication more vividly. Because our dependent variable is a 5-category variable, we combine the first two categories (4: agree, 5: strongly agree) into one (agreement). Then, we calculate the predicted probability for placement in this category for three different levels of sophistication, by party identification, holding other

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<sup>3</sup> We report the results of full three-way interaction models in Appendix D. They are used to construct Table 8. A three-way interaction model is difficult to understand in most cases, thus, following the recommendations of Brambor, Clark, and Golder (2006), we calculate the coefficient for one independent variable, holding the other two independent variables at certain levels. Five different levels of sophistication are chosen, and the new sets of coefficients and standard errors for the party identification variable are calculated for the three treatment groups.

independent variables at their mean values. These figures are drawn for Group 3, where both chamber and party are mentioned.

( Figure 1 about here )

For both majority rule in the House and minority rights in the Senate, the effect of party identification is conditioned on levels of sophistication.<sup>4</sup> At the time of the study in 2012, Republicans were the majority party in the House. For responses about the House among the most sophisticated respondents, the support for majority rule increases significantly from around 0.5 to almost 1.0 as party identification changes from strong Democrat to strong Republican. On the other hand, the least sophisticated people seem to get it wrong, but in fact the relationship (i.e. slope) is not statistically significantly different from zero.

Democrats were the majority party in the Senate. The pattern is very similar for the support of minority rights in the Senate. For the most sophisticated respondents, their general support for the minority rights are already high enough, but still increases as the party identification changes from strong Democrat to strong Republican. The effect is statistically significant. For the medium level of sophistication, there is no party effect. Low sophistication respondents “get it wrong”—low sophistication is associated with a higher level of support for minority rights in the Senate among Democrats than among Republicans, contrary to what would be expected on the basis of which party was in the majority—but, as before, the relationship is not statistically significant.

The overall pattern indicates the sophistication is associated with stronger partisan bias of the predicted kind. Sophisticated Republicans bend in favor of majority

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<sup>4</sup> In Appendix E, we report similar predicted probabilities for minority rights in the House and majority rule in the Senate. Contrast to Figure 1 that we analyze here, all the effects are not statistically significant in Appendix E.

rule when their party is in the majority and in favor of minority rights when their party is in the minority. Democrats show less bias—more modest levels of support for both majority rule in the House and minority rights in the Senate are exhibited by Democrats of all levels of sophistication. These effects of sophistication are substantively large.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have reported the first survey experiment in which the American public's attitudes about majority rule and minority rights in legislative bodies are explored. We find robust support for both majority rule and minority rights, discover that only a few Americans distinguish between the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate in the application of these principles, and demonstrate that views of majority rule and minority rights can be moved once we introduce respondents to the partisan implications of procedural rules. Moreover, we find political sophistication strongly conditions on the strength of the partisanship on attitudes about majority rule and minority rights in Congress. The most sophisticated are the most likely to interpret the procedural issues through the lens of their party's interests; they are not the most committed to some procedural principles. The combination of strong partisanship and political sophistication yields the strongest support for majority rule or minority rights, depending on which one advantages one's party.

The findings are consistent with our original hunch that, while Americans favor both majority rule and minority rights, they do not have a strong attitude about the proper balance between majority rule and minority rights. Lacking a strong attitude about that balance, partisan dispositions have an opening to influence opinions once

those partisan dispositions are primed. This also reconfirms previous findings that sophisticated people have the strongest partisan dispositions and will, in the right circumstances, show the strongest bias in their expressed opinions.

The experimental design allowed us to draw causal inferences about treatment effects, but the experiment was limited to the real-world context of May 2012. With Democrats as the Senate majority party since early 2007 and Republicans as the House majority party since only early 2011, we found party effects in attitudes among the more sophisticated citizens. With no changes in party control, we may see a deepening of partisan bias and less conditioning by level of sophistication over time. With a change in party control, we may be able to explore the interaction between chamber and party effects that cannot be fully evaluated at one point in time.

On balance, Americans favor both majority rule and minority rights for a generic legislature and for both houses of Congress. That is, most Americans want the majority party to be able to acquire a vote on its legislation and the minority party to be able to offer amendments. Most Americans do not favor minority obstruction or “closed rules” for amending activity. Both houses of Congress, each in a different way, violate the balance of values exhibited by Americans.

Perhaps equally important, each party can expect a sympathetic audience among its attentive, sophisticated partisans in the general public for their proclamations about procedural fairness, whether they are in the majority or in the minority. For these people, who are most likely to be aware of developments in Congress, party identity appears to have a significant pull on attitudes about the proper distribution of legislative rights between the majority and minority parties. This certainly is consistent with the shifting rhetoric from members of Congress that accompanies a change in party control



in one of the two houses.

The political bias that influences attitudes about majority rule and minority rights is likely to be stronger than we demonstrate. In the experiment reported here, the priming stimulus was merely the mention of the party in the majority and the party in the minority, without mention of a legislative issue. Attitudes about many legislative issues—taxes, abortion, war, and so on—may strengthen and even eclipse the effects of party identity on procedural attitudes. That possibility awaits examination in future research.

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**Table 1. Experimental Groups and Treatments.**

	Preliminary Statement	Statements with Majority Party Emphasis	Statements with Minority Party Emphasis
Group 1	We would like to know your views on how a legislature, such as a city council, state legislature, or Congress, should operate when it is making law. We are not interested in how legislatures actually operate; rather, we want your views about how they <i>should</i> operate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority party should be able to pass legislation that is supported by a majority of legislators.</li> <li>• The majority party should be able to limit or prohibit amendments to its legislation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The minority party should be able to delay or block action on legislation supported by a majority of legislators.</li> <li>• The minority party should be able to get a vote on its amendment to legislation.</li> </ul>
Group 2	We would like to know your views on how the U.S. Congress in Washington, D.C., should operate when it is making law. We are not interested in how Congress actually operates; rather, we want your views about how Congress <i>should</i> operate. We will ask you first about the U.S. House of Representatives, and then about the U.S. Senate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the House of Representatives, the majority party should be able to pass legislation that is supported by a majority of representatives.</li> <li>• In the House of Representatives, the majority party should be able to limit or prohibit amendments to its legislation.</li> <li>• In the Senate, the majority party should be able to pass legislation that is supported by a majority of senators.</li> <li>• In the Senate, the majority party should be able to limit or prohibit amendments to its legislation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the House of Representatives, the minority party should be able to delay or block action on legislation supported by a majority of legislators.</li> <li>• In the House of Representatives, the minority party should be able to get a vote on its amendment to legislation.</li> <li>• In the Senate, the minority party should be able to delay or block action on legislation supported by a majority of legislators.</li> <li>• In the Senate, the minority party should be able to get a vote on its amendment to legislation.</li> </ul>

	Preliminary Statement	Statements with Majority Party Emphasis	Statements with Minority Party Emphasis
Group 3	<p>We would like to know your views on how the U.S. Congress in Washington, D.C., should operate when it is making law. We are not interested in how Congress actually operates; rather, we want your views about how Congress <i>should</i> operate. We will ask you first about the U.S. House of Representatives, and then about the U.S. Senate.</p> <p>...</p> <p>As you probably know, in today's House of Representatives, the Republicans are the majority party and the Democrats are the minority party.</p> <p>...</p> <p>The next statements are about the U.S. Senate in Washington, D.C. As you probably know, in today's Senate, the Democrats are the majority party and the Republicans are the minority party.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the House of Representatives, with a Republican majority, the majority party should be able to pass legislation that is supported by a majority of representatives.</li> <li>• In the House of Representatives, with a Republican majority, the majority party should be able to limit or prohibit amendments to its legislation.</li> <li>• In the Senate, with a Democratic majority, the majority party should be able to pass legislation that is supported by a majority of senators.</li> <li>• In the Senate, with a Democratic majority, the majority party should be able to limit or prohibit amendments to its legislation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the House of Representatives, with a Democratic minority, the minority party should be able to delay or block action on legislation supported by a majority of legislators.</li> <li>• In the House of Representatives, with a Democratic minority, the minority party should be able to get a vote on its amendment to legislation.</li> <li>• In the Senate, with a Republican minority, the minority party should be able to delay or block action on legislation supported by a majority of legislators.</li> <li>• In the Senate, with a Republican minority, the minority party should be able to get a vote on its amendment to legislation.</li> </ul>

**Table 2. Variables and Measures**

Name	Operationalization
Majority Passing Legislation	5-point response: (1) Strongly disagree ~ (5) Strongly agree
Majority Limiting Amendments	5-point response: (1) Strongly disagree ~ (5) Strongly agree
Minority Blocking Legislation	5-point response: (1) Strongly disagree ~ (5) Strongly agree
Minority Offering Amendments	5-point response: (1) Strongly disagree ~ (5) Strongly agree
Gender	1 = Male 0 = Female
Race	1 = Non-Hispanic white 0 = others
Income	16-point scale: (1) below \$10,000/year ~ (16) \$300,000/year or more
Party Identification	7-point scale: (1) Strong Democrat ~ (7) Strong Republican
Sophistication	Principal component from the four sets of survey questions: a larger value indicates a higher level of sophistication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Education: 15-point response</li> <li>- Political knowledge: 11-point scale (the number of correct answers for 10 knowledge questions: 0-10)</li> <li>- Attention to media: 7-point response</li> <li>- Interest in politics: 4-point response</li> </ul>
Group	1 = Generic legislature 2 = Only chamber mentioned 3 = Both chamber and party mentioned
<p>Note: The response of “don’t know” is treated as a neutral position, whenever possible. However, the response of “refuse to answer” is treated as missing.</p>	



**Table 3. Mean Agreement-Disagreement Scores,  
by Experimental Group**

	Group 1: Generic Legislature	Group 2: Only Chamber Mentioned			Group 3: Chamber & Party Mentioned		
		House	Senate	t	House	Senate	t
Majority Passing Legislation	3.51	3.77	3.78	<b>0.66</b>	3.43	3.50	<b>-0.49</b>
Minority Blocking Legislation	2.82	2.82	2.86	<b>-0.39</b>	2.94	2.91	<b>0.54</b>
t	<b>6.48*</b>	<b>10.05*</b>	<b>10.08*</b>		<b>3.24*</b>	<b>5.03*</b>	
Minority Offering Amendments	3.59	3.62	3.59	<b>0.35</b>	3.53	3.43	<b>0.94</b>
Majority Limiting Amendments	2.92	3.28	3.29	<b>0.48</b>	3.13	3.17	<b>-0.20</b>
t	<b>6.34*</b>	<b>4.13*</b>	<b>3.34*</b>		<b>3.40*</b>	<b>2.45*</b>	
Weighted N	516.9 (34.21%)	515.7 (34.13%)			478.3 (31.66%)		

Note: Weighted by CPS; \* p < 0.05 for paired samples t-test

**Table 4. Correlations between Difference Questions,  
by Experimental Groups**

	Group 1 Generic Legislature	Group 2 Only Chamber Mentioned		Group 3 Chamber & Party Mentioned	
		House	Senate	House	Senate
Majority Passing Legislation & Majority Limiting Amendments	0.47*	0.32*	0.37*	0.59*	0.51*
		0.35*		0.55*	
Minority Blocking Legislation & Minority Offering Amendments	0.33*	0.17*	0.17*	0.44*	0.39*
		0.17*		0.42*	
Majority Passing Legislation & Minority Offering Amendments	0.05	0.11	0.08	0.03	0.18*
		0.09		0.09	

Note: Weighted by CPS.

**Table 5. Preference Distribution of Majority Rule and Minority Rights, by Experimental Groups**

Group 1: Generic Legislature					
		Majority Passing Legislation			Total
		Disagree	Neutral	Agree	
Minority Offering Amendments	Disagree	3.58%	0.70%	<b>6.24%</b>	10.53%
	Neutral	2.53%	<b>7.45%</b>	15.45%	25.43%
	Agree	<b>13.55%</b>	7.54%	42.95%	64.04%
Total		19.67%	15.69%	64.64%	100% (516.9)
Group 2: Only Chamber Mentioned – House					
		Majority Passing Legislation			Total
		Disagree	Neutral	Agree	
Minority Offering Amendments	Disagree	1.07%	0.49%	<b>7.93%</b>	9.49%
	Neutral	1.28%	<b>7.33%</b>	14.90%	23.51%
	Agree	<b>5.92%</b>	7.23%	53.84%	66.99%
Total		8.28%	15.05%	76.67%	100% (515.7)
Group 2: Only Chamber Mentioned – Senate					
		Majority Passing Legislation			Total
		Disagree	Neutral	Agree	
Minority Offering Amendments	Disagree	0.69%	0.40%	<b>9.07%</b>	10.16%
	Neutral	1.34%	<b>10.66%</b>	12.64%	24.64%
	Agree	<b>5.65%</b>	8.06%	51.50%	65.20%
Total		7.68%	19.11%	73.21%	100% (515.7)
Group 3: Chamber & Party Mentioned – House					
		Majority Passing Legislation			Total
		Disagree	Neutral	Agree	
Minority Offering Amendments	Disagree	1.41%	3.93%	<b>6.48%</b>	11.83%
	Neutral	5.55%	<b>14.93%</b>	9.21%	29.68%
	Agree	<b>13.22%</b>	6.76%	38.51%	58.49%
Total		20.18%	25.62%	54.21%	100% (478.3)
Group 3: Chamber & Party Mentioned – Senate					
		Majority Passing Legislation			Total
		Disagree	Neutral	Agree	
Minority Offering Amendments	Disagree	1.45%	6.32%	<b>6.83%</b>	14.60%
	Neutral	4.25%	<b>15.23%</b>	11.42%	30.90%
	Agree	<b>9.93%</b>	5.17%	39.39%	54.50%
Total		15.63%	26.72%	57.65%	100% (478.3)
Note: Weighted by CPS.					

**Table 6. Preferences about Majority Rule and Minority Rights, by Partisanship and Sophistication**

Group	Group 1: Generic Legislature	Group 2: Only Chamber Mentioned		Group 3: Chamber & Party Mentioned	
		House	Senate	House	Senate
(6a) Majority Passing Legislation					
Democrats	3.40	3.70	3.75	3.10	3.75
Republicans	3.69	3.86	3.68	3.75	3.49
t	1.72	1.52	-0.51	<b>2.97*</b>	-1.93
(6b) Minority Offering Amendments					
Democrats	3.80	3.81	3.34	3.69	3.24
Republicans	3.40	3.51	3.47	3.49	3.69
t	-2.55*	-2.19*	0.67	-1.07	<b>2.41*</b>
(6c) Majority Passing Legislation					
Low sophistication	3.33	3.66	3.47	3.16	3.32
High sophistication	3.68	3.83	3.91	3.75	3.68
t	<b>2.52*</b>	<b>2.00*</b>	<b>4.20*</b>	<b>4.05*</b>	<b>2.91*</b>
(6d) Minority Offering Amendments					
Low sophistication	3.55	3.66	3.61	3.51	3.25
High sophistication	3.65	3.61	3.59	3.52	3.63
t	0.83	-0.42	-0.17	0.10	<b>2.94*</b>
Note: Weighted by CPS; * p < 0.05 for paired samples t-test.					

<b>Table 7. Multivariate Models of Majority Rule and Minority Rights</b>				
	Majority Passing Legislation		Minority Offering Amendments	
	House	Senate	House	Senate
Gender – Male	-0.24 (-1.29)	-0.30 (-1.56)	-0.26 (-1.25)	-0.27 (-1.42)
Race – White	0.20 (0.88)	-0.29 (-1.08)	-0.01 (-0.04)	-0.05 (-0.23)
Income	0.06* (2.32)	-0.03 (-1.04)	0.00 (0.08)	0.04 (1.48)
Party ID	<b>0.12*</b> <b>(2.34)</b>	<b>-0.13*</b> <b>(-2.49)</b>	-0.05 (-0.92)	0.02 (0.32)
Sophistication	<b>0.34*</b> <b>(4.05)</b>	<b>0.33*</b> <b>(2.90)</b>	<b>0.32*</b> <b>(2.97)</b>	<b>0.40*</b> <b>(4.22)</b>
Group 2	0.54* (2.54)	0.10 (0.47)	0.05 (0.23)	0.30 (1.33)
Group 3	-0.29 (-1.27)	-0.23 (-0.95)	-0.48* (-1.97)	-0.22 (-0.93)
(Weighted) N	1196.80	1134.55	1137.18	1214.77
F-statistic	9.96*	4.07*	3.41*	6.20*
Note: Weighted by CPS; All models are estimated via ordered logit; The cut-points (or thresholds) from the model estimation are excluded here and available from the authors; Coefficients are shown and t-values are in parentheses. * p < 0.05.				

**Table 8. Estimated Effects of Party Identification, by Level of Sophistication**

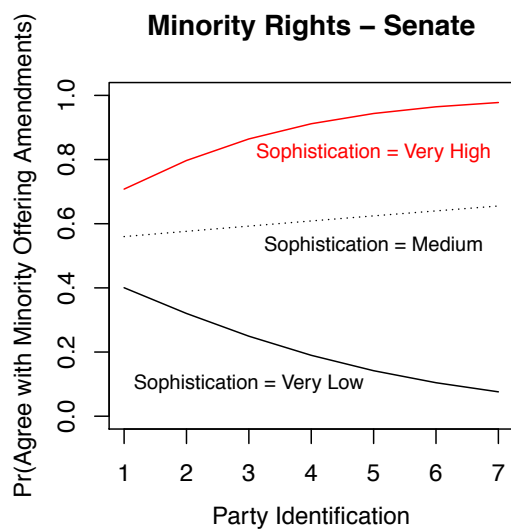
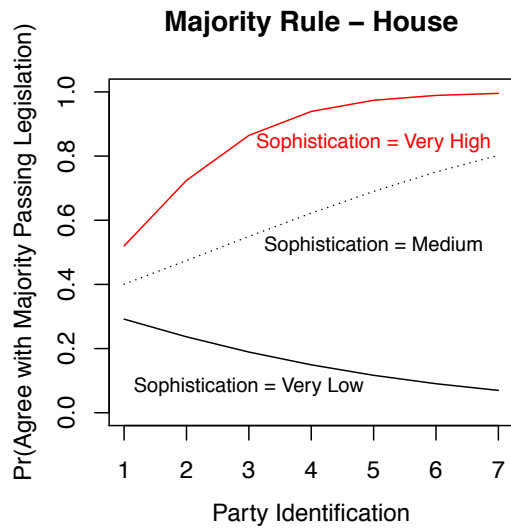
Level of Sophistication	Majority Passing Legislation In the House			Majority Passing Legislation In the Senate		
	Generic legislature	Only Chamber Mentioned	Chamber & Party Mentioned	Generic legislature	Only Chamber Mentioned	Chamber & Party Mentioned
Very Low	-0.24 (-0.70)	0.09 (0.42)	-0.17 (-0.36)	-0.51 (-1.47)	0.02 (0.07)	0.40 (0.72)
Low	-0.16 (-0.60)	0.07 (0.43)	-0.03 (-0.06)	-0.42 (-1.57)	-0.02 (-0.09)	0.36 (0.69)
Medium	0.08 (0.92)	0.01 (0.17)	0.41 (1.04)	-0.16* (-2.24)	-0.14 (-1.88)	0.23 (0.50)
High	0.32 (1.30)	-0.05 (-0.25)	<b>0.85*</b> <b>(1.97)</b>	0.10 (0.43)	-0.25 (-1.26)	0.10 (0.20)
Very High	0.40 (1.23)	-0.07 (-0.28)	<b>1.00*</b> <b>(2.16)</b>	0.19 (0.60)	-0.29 (-1.11)	0.06 (0.11)

Level of Sophistication	Minority Offering Amendments In the House			Minority Offering Amendments In the Senate		
	Generic legislature	Only Chamber Mentioned	Chamber & Party Mentioned	Generic legislature	Only Chamber Mentioned	Chamber & Party Mentioned
Very Low	-0.62 (-1.66)	0.02 (0.09)	0.74 (1.37)	-0.17 (-0.49)	-0.03 (-0.10)	0.16 (0.32)
Low	-0.51 (-1.78)	-0.02 (-0.09)	0.64 (1.26)	-0.10 (-0.37)	-0.05 (-0.24)	0.27 (0.59)
Medium	-0.20* (-2.57)	-0.14 (-1.85)	0.31 (0.70)	0.11 (1.31)	-0.10 (-1.65)	0.58 (1.34)
High	0.12 (0.46)	-0.25 (-1.32)	-0.01 (-0.03)	0.32 (1.33)	-0.16 (-0.82)	<b>0.89</b> <b>(1.88)</b>
Very High	0.22 (0.66)	-0.29 (-1.18)	-0.12 (-0.22)	0.39 (1.23)	-0.18 (-0.71)	<b>0.99*</b> <b>(1.97)</b>

Note: Weighted by CPS; Entries are re-calculated by the authors, following Brambor, Clark and Golder (2006) – based on the models in Appendix D; Coefficients for party identification are shown and the corresponding t-values are in parentheses. \* p < 0.05.

**Figure 1. Predicted Probability of Agreement for Majority Rule in the House and Minority Rights in the Senate**



Note: Predicted probabilities are calculated by the authors based on the models in Appendix D. All three lines in each graph represent “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” positions combined, with different levels of sophistication in different formats. X-axis: 1 = strong Democrat; 7 = strong Republican.

## APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONS

**Attitudes about Majority Rule and Minority Rights.** The following question is asked after we provide the respondents with the preliminary statement and the majority/minority emphasis statement – these statements for each treatment group is listed in Table 1.

- Please tell us whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each statement. (1) Strongly agree; (2) Agree; (3) Neither agree nor disagree; (4) Disagree; and (5) Strongly disagree.

**Gender.** The following question is asked to create a dummy variable for male:

- Are you female or male? (1) Male; and (2) Female

**Race.** The two questions that are combined to create a dummy variable for non-Hispanic white include:

- This question is about Hispanic ethnicity. Are you of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino descent? (1) Yes; (2) No
- Please check one or more categories below to indicate what race(s) you consider yourself to be. (1) White; (2) Black or African American; (3) American Indian or Alaska Native; (4) Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander

**Income.** The following question is asked to create a 16-point scale measure:

- We want to know about the total income in your household. What was your household income in the past year? (1) below \$10,000; (2) \$10,000 ~ \$19,999; (3) \$20,000 ~ \$29,999; (4) \$30,000 ~ \$39,999; (5) \$40,000 ~ \$49,999; (6) \$50,000 ~ \$59,999; (7) \$60,000 ~ \$69,999; (8) \$70,000 ~ \$79,999; (9) \$80,000 ~ \$89,999; (10) \$90,000 ~ \$99,999; (11) \$100,000 ~ \$124,999; (12) \$125,000 ~ \$149,999; (13) \$150,000 ~ \$199,999; (14) \$200,000 ~ \$249,999; (15) \$250,000 ~ \$299,000; (16) \$300,000 or more

**Party Identification.** The three questions that are combined to create a single 7-point scale measure of party identification include:

- Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent, or what? (1) Democrat; (2) Republican; (3) Other (Specify); and (4) Independent
- [If response = 1 or 2] Would you call yourself a strong Democrat/ Republican or not a very strong Democrat/Republican? (1) Strong; and (2) Not a very strong
- [If response = Others] Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or to the Democratic Party? (1) Closer to Republican; (2) Neither; and (3) Closer to Democrat



**Sophistication.** The four sets of questions that we use to conduct the principal component analysis for creating a single measure include:

- Education (15-point scale): What is the highest grade or year of school you have completed? (1) No formal education; (2) 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, or 4<sup>th</sup> grade; (3) 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade; (4) 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade; (5) 9<sup>th</sup> grade; (6) 10<sup>th</sup> grade; (7) 11<sup>th</sup> grade; (8) 12 grade, NO diploma; (9) High school graduate (high school diploma or the equivalent); (10) Some college, but no degree; (11) Associate degree; (12) Bachelor's degree; (13) Master's degree; (14) Professional degree; and (15) Doctorate degree
- Political knowledge (11-point scale): The number of correct answers for the ten below questions is recorded (0-10).
  1. Which party holds a majority of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives? (1) Democrats; (2) Republicans; and (3) Independents
  2. How many votes are required in Congress to override a presidential veto? (1) A simple majority of one house of Congress; (2) A simple majority of both houses of Congress; (3) a two-thirds majority of one house of Congress; (4) a two-thirds majority of both houses of Congress
  3. How long is one term for a member of the US Senate? (1) 2 years; (2) 4 years; (3) 6 years; and (4) 8 years
  4. The ability of a minority of Senators to prevent a vote on a bill is known as ... (1) Veto; (2) Filibuster; (3) Enrollment; and (4) Suspension of the rules
  5. Who is the Vice President of the United States? (1) Nancy Pelosi; (2) John Boehner; (3) Joseph Biden; and (4) Harry Reid
  6. A President may serve ... (1) One term; (2) Two terms; (3) Three terms; and (4) Any number of terms
  7. Members of the US Supreme Court serve ... (1) Two-year terms; (2) Ten-year terms; (3) Life terms; and (4) Terms determined by the President
  8. Who is Chief of Justice of the United States Supreme Court? (1) John Roberts; (2) Antonin Scalia; (3) Mitt Romney; and (4) Hilary Clinton
  9. Social Security is ... (1) The benefit program for senior citizens; (2) The responsibility of the Department of Defense; (3) Operated by state governments; and (4) Funded by the personal income tax
  10. On which of the following programs is the most money spent each year? (1) Aid to foreign countries; (2) Medicare; (3) Subsidies to farmers; and (4) Education
- Attention to media (7-point scale): How frequently do you pay attention to news about national and international issues? (1) Every day; (2) Several times a week; (3) Once a week; (4) Several times a month; (5) Once a month; (6) Less often; and (7) Never
- Interest in politics (4-point scale): In general, how interested are you in politics and public affairs? (1) Very interested; (2) Somewhat interested; (3) Slightly interested; and (4) Not at all interested

**APPENDIX B**

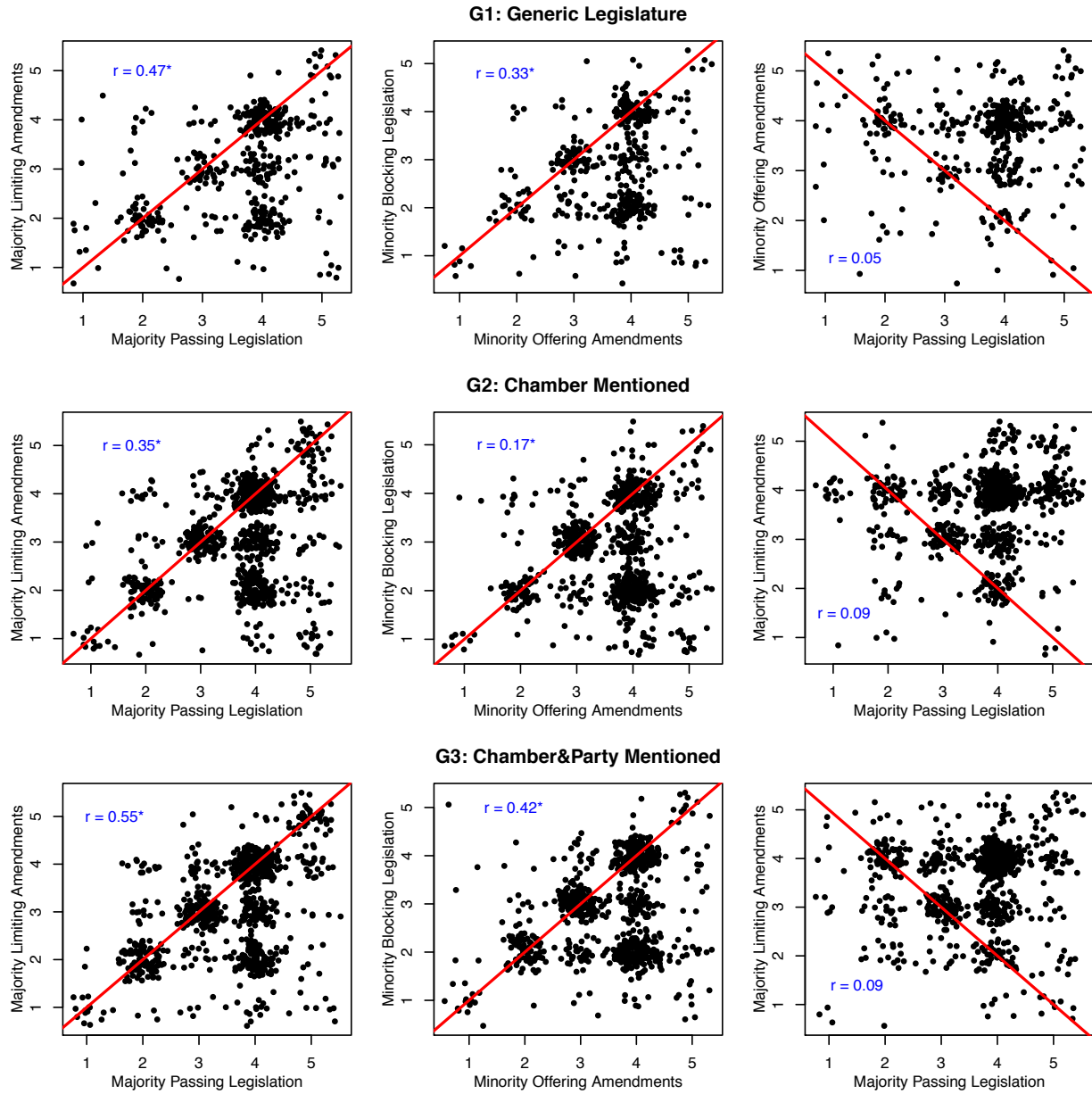
**Table 9. Proportion of Agreement about Majority Rule and Minority Rights**

		Majority Passing Legislation	Minority Blocking Legislation	z	Minority Offering Amendments	Majority Limiting Amendments	z
Group 1: Generic legislature		76.70%	41.83%	<b>9.35*</b>	86.26%	47.87%	<b>10.44*</b>
Group 2: Only Chamber Mentioned	House	90.26%	39.64%	<b>14.27*</b>	87.58%	69.29%	<b>5.79*</b>
	Senate	88.75%	42.72%	<b>12.71*</b>	86.88%	66.76%	<b>6.14*</b>
Group 3: Chamber & Party Mentioned	House	73.65%	47.23%	<b>6.92*</b>	82.94%	58.57%	<b>6.73*</b>
	Senate	77.72%	43.83%	<b>8.95*</b>	78.30%	61.47%	<b>4.55*</b>

Note: Entries for 100 \* (Strongly Agree + Agree) / (Strongly Agree + Agree + Disagree + Strongly Disagree) – the pattern (and z-statistics) remains extremely similar when the denominator is total number of respondents; Weighted by CPS; \* p < 0.05 for difference of proportions test.

## APPENDIX C

**Figure 2: Preference Distributions Of Different Questions, by Different Experimental Groups**



Note: For the visualization purpose, each dot is generated by the response value added by a random disturbance from  $N(0,0.2)$ .

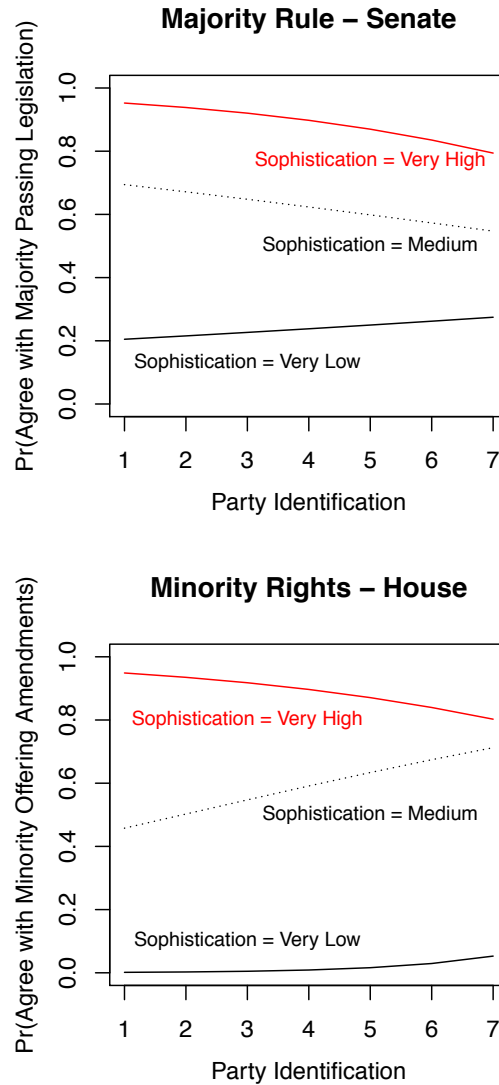
**APPENDIX D**

**Table 10. Three-way Interaction Models,  
for Partisanship, Sophistication, and Treatment Groups**

	Majority Passing Legislation		Minority Offering Amendments	
	House	Senate	House	Senate
Gender – Male	-0.19 (-1.02)	-0.29 (-1.48)	-0.25 (-1.27)	-0.26 (-1.38)
Race – White	0.22 (0.93)	-0.30 (-1.14)	-0.04 (-0.16)	-0.05 (-0.22)
Income	0.07* (2.51)	-0.03 (-0.98)	0.01 (0.19)	0.04 (1.36)
Party ID	0.08 (0.92)	-0.16* (-2.24)	-0.20* (-2.57)	0.11 (1.31)
Sophistication	-0.02 (-0.06)	-0.00 (-0.00)	-0.14 (-0.34)	0.08 (0.26)
Group 2	0.86 (1.85)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.16 (-0.36)	1.22* (2.58)
Group 3	-1.03* (-2.06)	-0.36 (-0.68)	-1.75* (-3.75)	-0.01 (-0.03)
Party ID * Sophistication	0.08 (0.99)	0.09 (1.08)	0.11 (1.22)	0.07 (0.88)
Party ID * Group 2	-0.07 (-0.65)	0.03 (0.26)	0.06 (0.62)	-0.21* (-2.08)
Party ID * Group 3	0.22 (1.94)	0.06 (0.44)	0.38* (3.21)	-0.05 (-0.41)
Sophistication * Group 2	0.33 (0.86)	0.39 (0.84)	0.51 (1.13)	0.47 (1.09)
Sophistication * Group 3	-0.01 (-0.01)	0.59 (1.25)	1.02* (1.99)	-0.03 (-0.06)
Party ID * Sophistication * Group 2	-0.10 (-1.02)	-0.13 (-1.21)	-0.14 (-1.38)	-0.09 (-0.88)
Party ID * Sophistication * Group 3	0.07 (0.66)	-0.13 (-1.19)	-0.21 (-1.84)	0.03 (0.33)
(Weighted) N	1196.80	1134.55	1137.18	1214.77
F-statistic	7.07*	2.45*	2.95*	3.82*
<p>Note: Weighted by CPS; All models are estimated via ordered logit; The cut-points (or thresholds) from the model estimation are excluded here and available from the authors; Coefficients are shown and t-values are in parentheses. * p &lt; 0.05.</p>				

## APPENDIX E

**Figure 3. Predicted Probability of Agreement for Majority Rule in the Senate and Minority Rights in the House**



Note: Predicted probabilities are calculated by the authors based on the models in Appendix D. All three lines in each graph represent “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” positions combined, with different levels of sophistication in different formats. X-axis: 1 = strong Democrat; 7 = strong Republican.