

# Why We Should Study Judicial Behavior

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School of Law & Department of Political Science

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**C. Herman Pritchett**

*Sometime in the fall of 1940 I was reading the current issue of the Supreme Court Reporter in my office, [when I saw] the inscription on the Social Science Research Building:*

***When you cannot measure,  
your knowledge is meager and  
unsatisfactory.***



**Sonia Sotomayor**

Position: Pitcher

At Bats: 341

Home Runs: 35

Strikeouts: 25



## Antonin Scalia

Position: Right Fielder

At Bats: 2418

Home Runs: 263

Strikeouts: 230

Pritchett and his Baseball Cards

# U.S. Supreme Court, 2015

**More Liberal**

RBG



SS



EK



SB



AK



JR



AS



SA



CT

**More Conservative**

# U.S. Supreme Court, 2015

## More Liberal



RBG



SS



EK



SB

## More Conservative



AK



JR



AS



SA



CT

Backstory  
○○○●○○○○

Courts

Individual Judge  
○○○○○

Collegial Court  
○○○○○○○○

Judicial Selection  
○○○○○○

The Future  
○○○○○○○○○

That's It

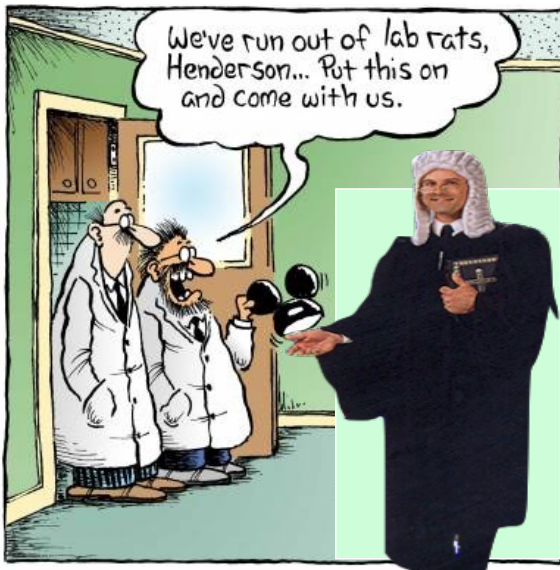
Fields

## CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS AND VOTING FOR BUSINESS LITIGANTS

	<i>Increased Probability of Vote for Business Litigant by Case Type</i>			
	<i>All Cases</i>	<i>Labor Cases</i>	<i>Tort Cases</i>	<i>Contract Cases</i>
\$1000 Contribution from Business Group	0.0003 <sup>a</sup> (1.69)	0.0004 <sup>+</sup> (2.27)	0.0005 <sup>a</sup> (1.69)	0.0002 <sup>+</sup> (2.02)
Log Likelihood	-8509	-1301	-4043	-2798
Business Groups' Share of Total Contributions	0.003* (2.55)	0.006* (2.88)	0.005* (2.57)	0.004* (2.90)
Log Likelihood	-8497	-1295	-4032	-2790

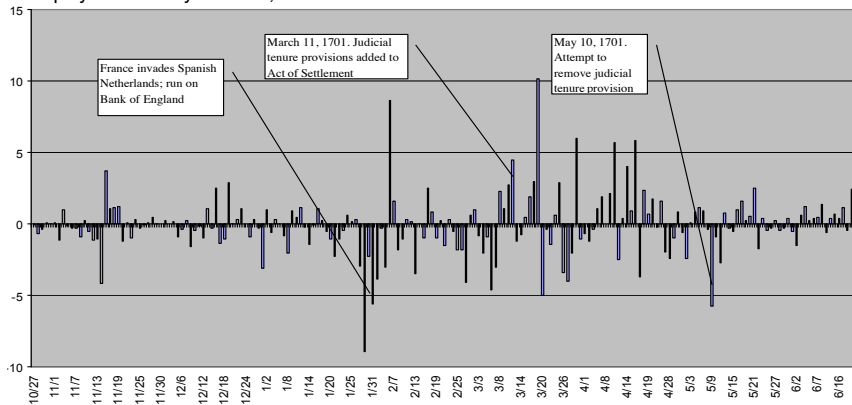
## CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS AND VOTING FOR BUSINESS LITIGANTS

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Equity Index Daily Returns, October 1700-June 1701



Backstory  
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Courts

Individual Judge  
○○○○○

Collegial Court  
○○○○○○○○

Judicial Selection  
○○○○○○

The Future  
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That's It

World-Wide



## World-Wide



## World-Wide



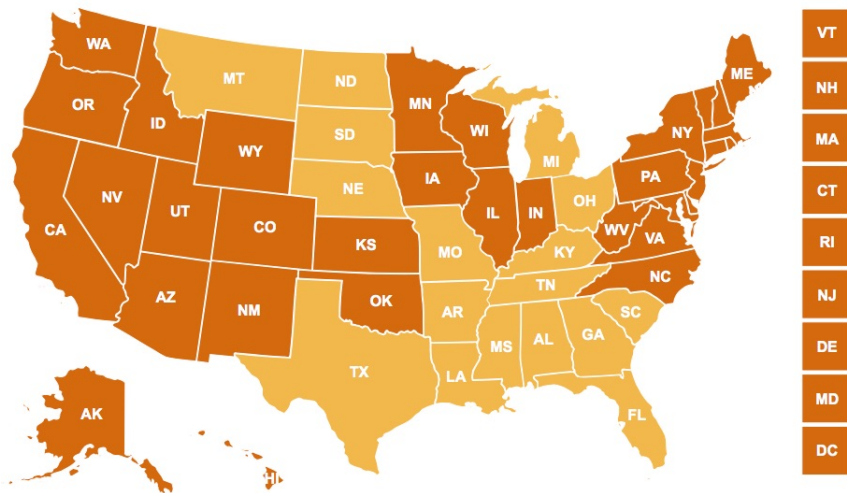
## World-Wide













Backstory  
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Courts

Individual Judge  
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Collegial Court  
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Judicial Selection  
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The Future  
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That's It

Data



<p>THE SUPREME COURT DATABASE</p>		
ABOUT	DATA	ANALYSIS
<p>The Supreme Court Database is the definitive source for researchers, students, journalists, and citizens interested in the U.S. Supreme Court. The Database contains over two hundred pieces of information about each case decided by the Court between the 1946 and 2012 terms. Examples include the identity of the court whose decision the Supreme Court reviewed, the parties to the suit, the legal provisions considered in the case, and the votes of the Justices.</p> <p><a href="#">Learn more about this growing collection</a></p>	<p><b>Current Dataset</b> <b>2013 Release 01</b></p> <p><b>released</b> July 17, 2013</p> <p><b>includes terms</b> 1946 - 2012</p> <p><b>Case Centered rows</b> 12,889</p> <p><b>Justice Centered rows</b> 115,535</p> <p><a href="#">View Download Options</a></p>	<p>Are you interested in a particular legal or political issue? Do you seek information solely about the current Court or about a particular year? Perhaps you are interested in the votes of the Justices in cases about religion, commerce, or another area of the law. The analysis tools allow you to select and summarize cases from the Database based on your needs.</p> <p><a href="#">Go to the Analysis Tools</a></p> <p><b>Getting Started</b> <b>SCDB Web 101</b></p> <p>Are you new to the Supreme Court Database? Wondering how to start doing your online analysis? The SCDB Web 101 series can get you underway on the quick.</p> <p><a href="#">View the 101 Lessons</a></p> <p>Looking for the Codebook? We have an online and downloadable version. Access them using the below links.</p> <p><a href="#">Online Codebook</a> <a href="#">PDF Codebook</a></p>
 <p>The Supreme Court Database has been generously supported by the National Science Foundation.</p> <p>WashU<span>Law</span></p>		

More liberal

70 percent of votes  
were liberal

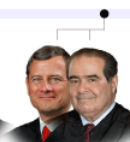
KAGAN 70.4%  
SOTOMAYOR 69.9  
GINSBURG 68.9



BREYER  
58.9



KENNEDY  
50.0



ROBERTS 44.6  
SCALIA 44.6



THOMAS 40.5  
ALITO 39.7

Less liberal

40 percent of votes  
were liberal

Significant clusters and gaps appear when the justices are ranked from most to least liberal.

- The Individual Judge
- The Collegial Court
- Judicial Selection & Retention
- Courts and the Elected Branches
- Agenda Setting
- Interactions between Higher and Lower Courts
- Litigants, Lawyers, & Interest Groups
- Public Opinion & Macroevents

Backstory

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Courts

Individual Judge

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Collegial Court

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Judicial Selection

oooooo

The Future

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That's It

Talk Organization



- Provide some basic information about courts

- Provide some basic information about courts
- Cover a few substantive topics

- Provide some basic information about courts
- Cover a few substantive topics
  - The Individual Judge
  - The Collegial Court
  - Judicial Selection & Retention
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- Offer some thoughts on the future of Judicial Behavior

Backstory  
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Courts

Individual Judge  
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Collegial Court  
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Judicial Selection  
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The Future  
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That's It

**High Courts**  
(Supreme Court,  
Court of Cassation)



**Courts of Appeals**



**Trial Courts**  
(Courts of First Instance,  
District Courts)



**High Courts**  
(Supreme Court,  
Court of Cassation)



**Courts of Appeals**



**Trial Courts**  
(Courts of First Instance,  
District Courts)





**High Courts**  
(Supreme Court,  
Court of Cassation)



**Courts of Appeals**



**Trial Courts**  
(Courts of First Instance,  
District Courts)



**High Courts**  
(Supreme Court,  
Court of Cassation)



**Courts of Appeals**



**Trial Courts**  
(Courts of First Instance,  
District Courts)



Individuals

Legislators

Municipalities





## European Model



## European Model



## American Model



- The Individual Judge
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Backstory  
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Courts

Individual Judge  
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Collegial Court  
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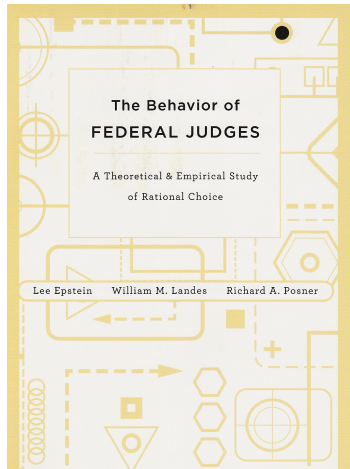
Judicial Selection  
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The Future  
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That's It

Our Book





*We present a realist model of judging, which views the judge as a participant in a labor market—the judicial labor market.*

*A judge so viewed is motivated and constrained, as other workers are, by personal and institutional concerns, by costs and benefits, by expectations, and by the tools and methods that the worker uses in her job.*

Backstory  
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Courts

Individual Judge  
o●ooo

Collegial Court  
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Judicial Selection  
oooooo

The Future  
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That's It

Our Book









Backstory  
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Courts

Individual Judge  
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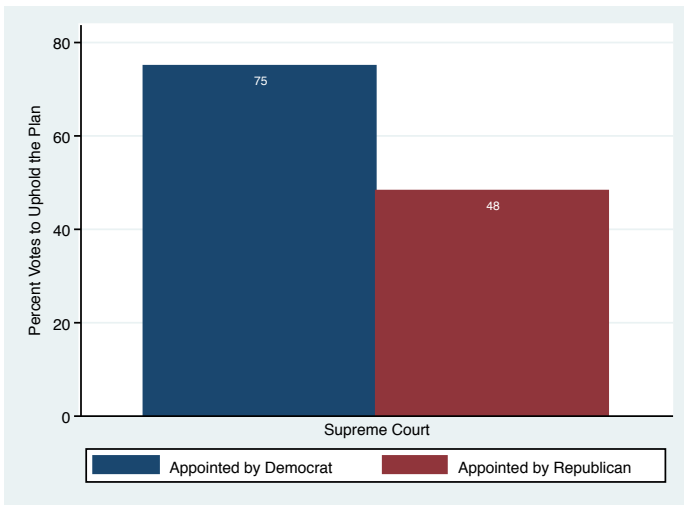
Collegial Court  
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Judicial Selection  
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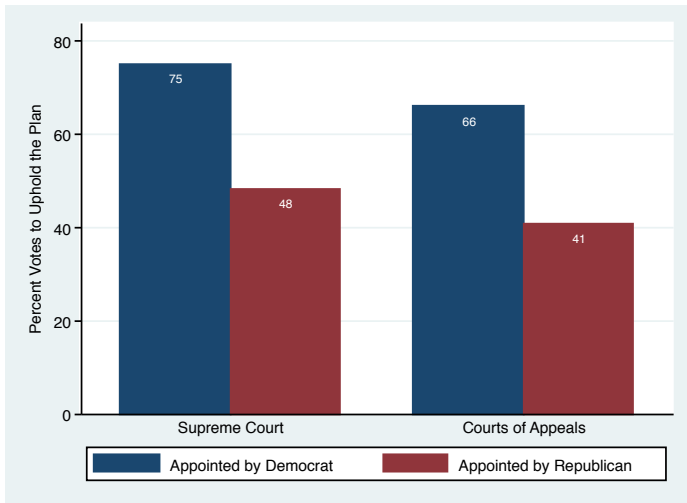
The Future  
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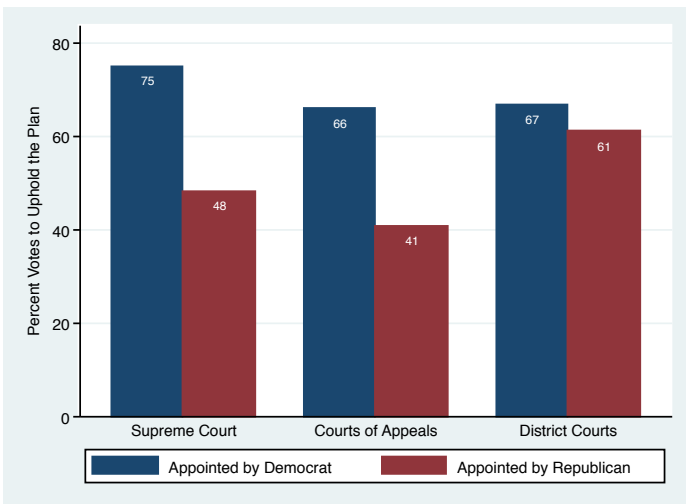
That's It

Policy









Backstory  
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Courts

Individual Judge  
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Collegial Court  
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Judicial Selection  
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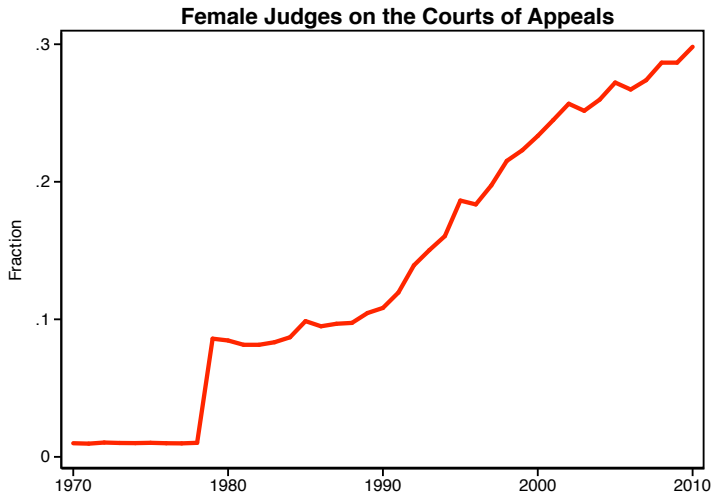
The Future  
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That's It

Personal Attributes & Professional Aspirations

# Gender

# Gender



# Gender

# Gender



Personal Attributes & Professional Aspirations

# Gender



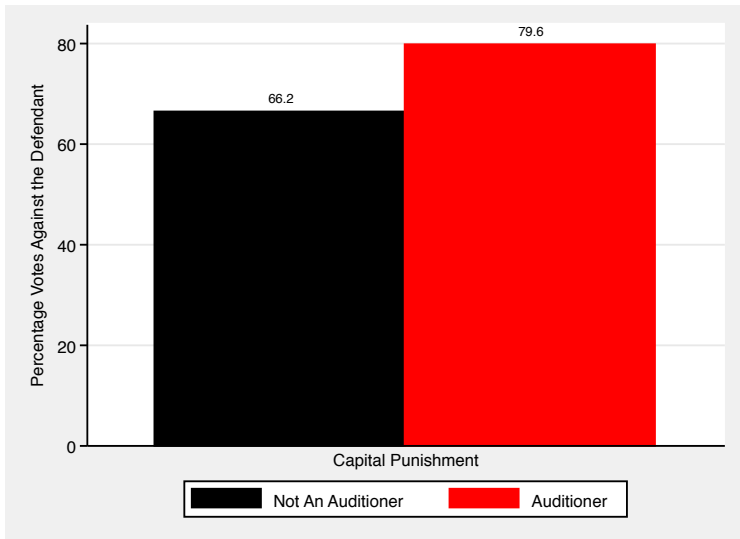
# Gender



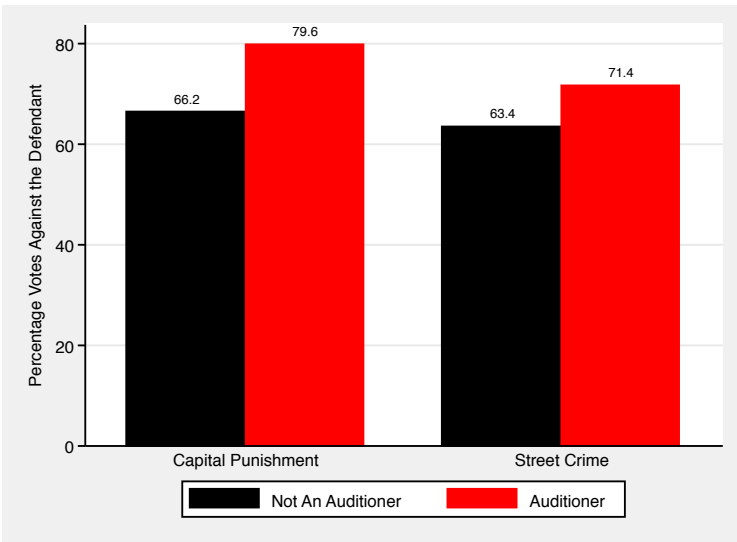


# The “Auditioners”

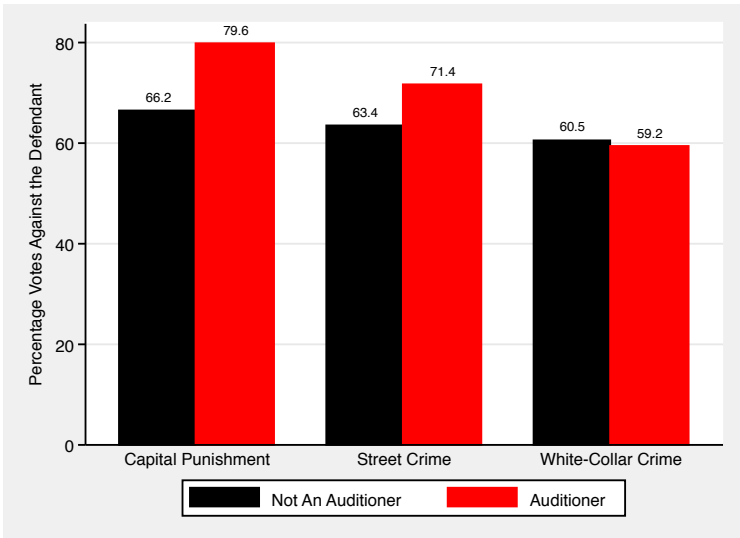
# The “Auditioners”



# The “Auditioners”



# The “Auditioners”



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Backstory  
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Courts

Individual Judge  
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Collegial Court  
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Judicial Selection  
oooo

The Future  
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That's It









Backstory  
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Courts

Individual Judge  
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Collegial Court  
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Judicial Selection  
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The Future  
oooooooo

That's It

Gender Effects

Backstory  
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Courts

Individual Judge  
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Collegial Court  
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Judicial Selection  
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The Future  
ooooooooo

That's It

## Gender Effects





## Gender Effects



## Gender Effects



Backstory  
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Courts

Individual Judge  
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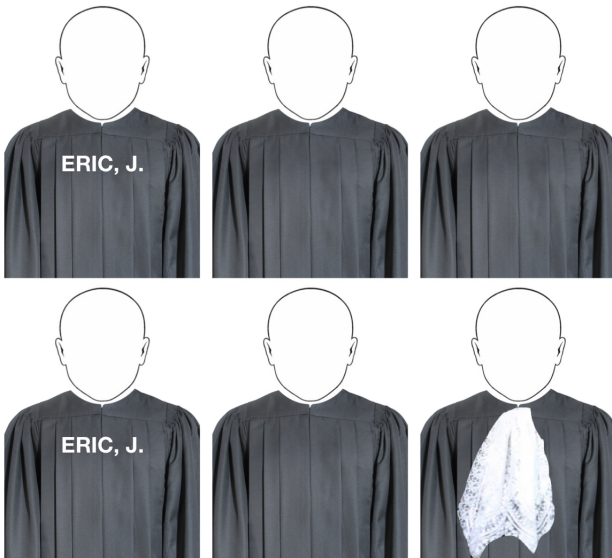
Collegial Court  
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Judicial Selection  
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The Future  
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That's It

## Gender Effects





## Gender Effects

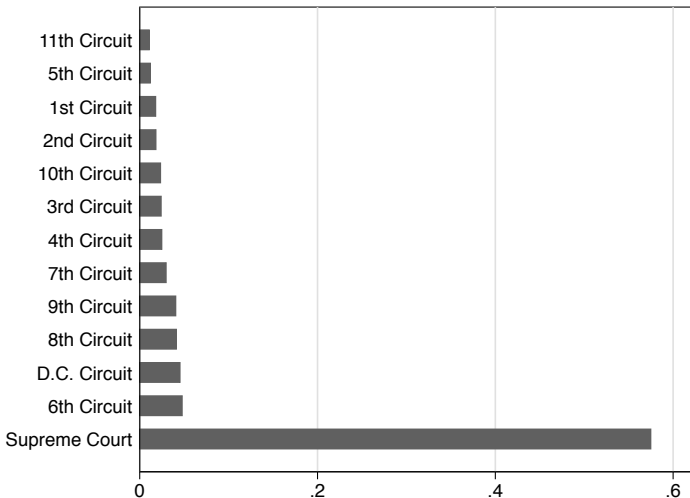


"Dissent Aversion"

# Fraction of Cases with Dissent

"Dissent Aversion"

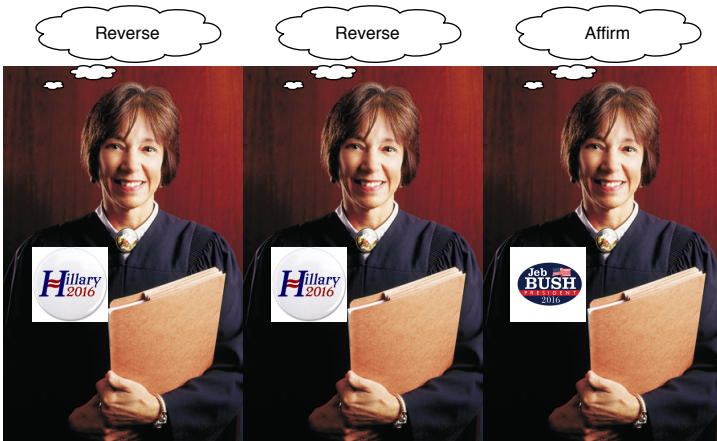
# Fraction of Cases with Dissent



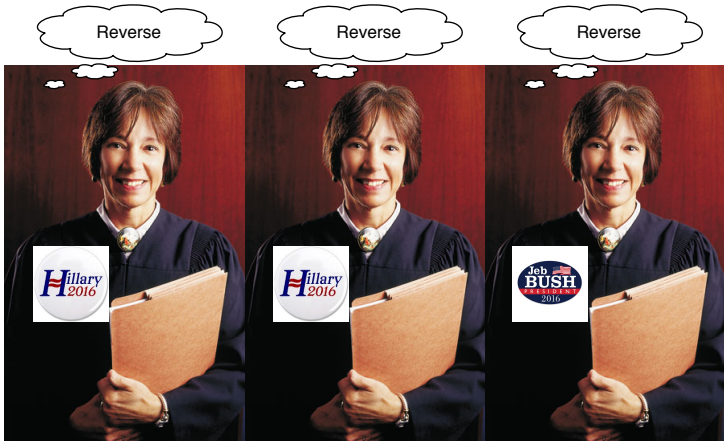
"Dissent Aversion"



"Dissent Aversion"



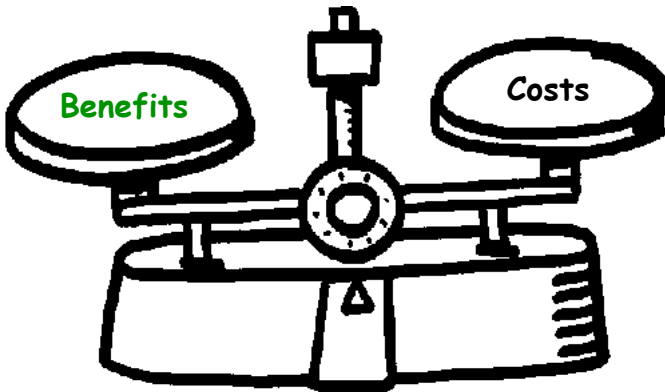
"Dissent Aversion"



"Dissent Aversion"



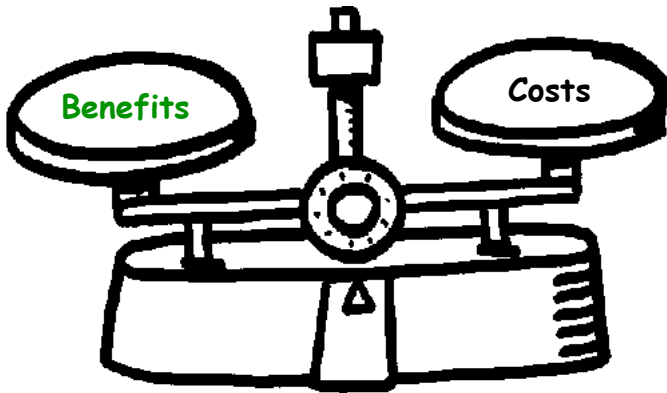
"Dissent Aversion"





"Dissent Aversion"

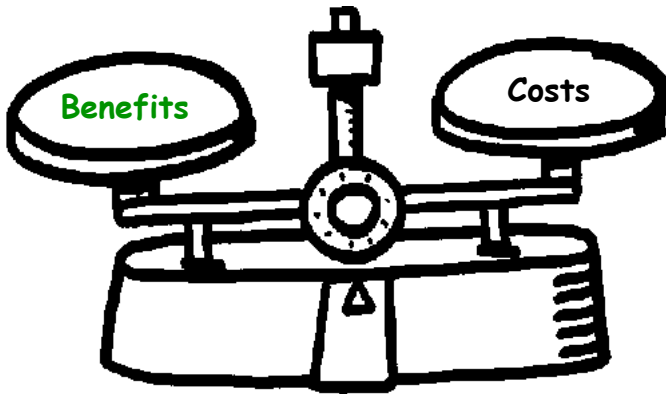
- Reputation
- Influence



"Dissent Aversion"

- Reputation
- Influence

- Collegiality
- Effort

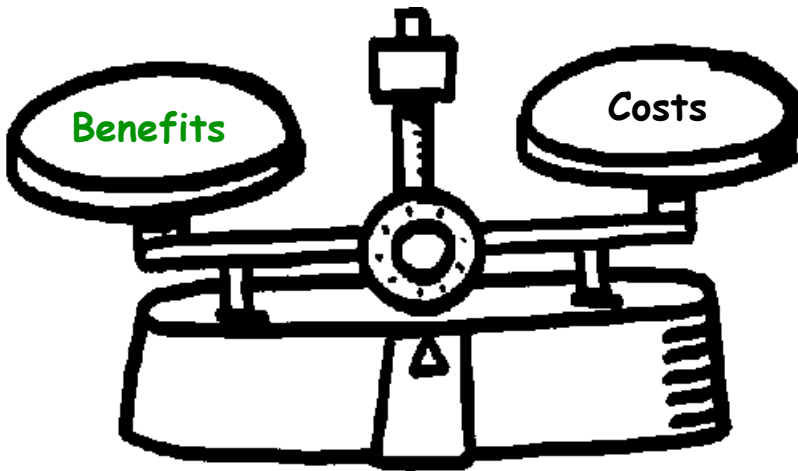


# The Costs Outweigh the Benefits

"Dissent Aversion"

- Reputation
- Influence

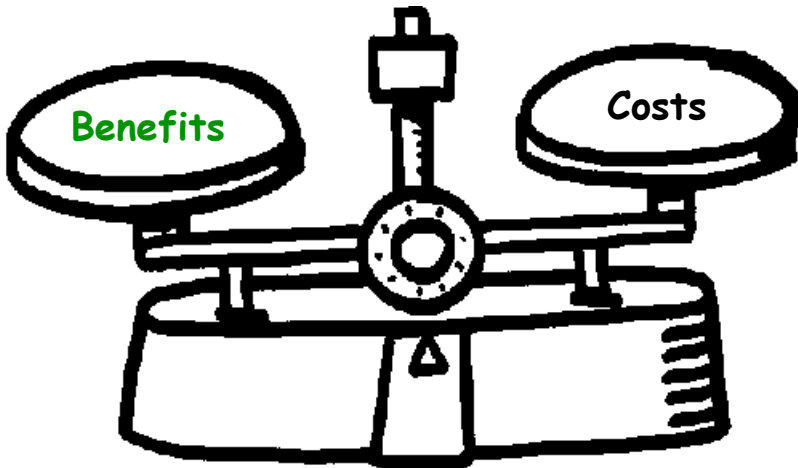
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"Dissent Aversion"

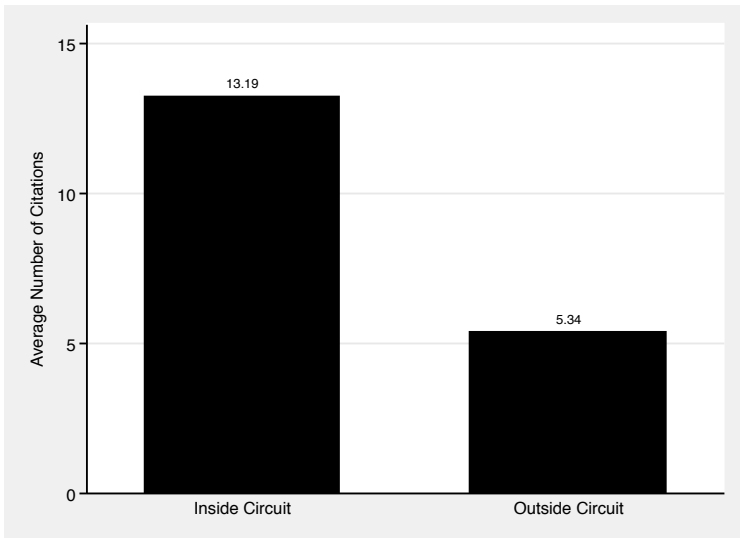
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- Influence

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- Effort

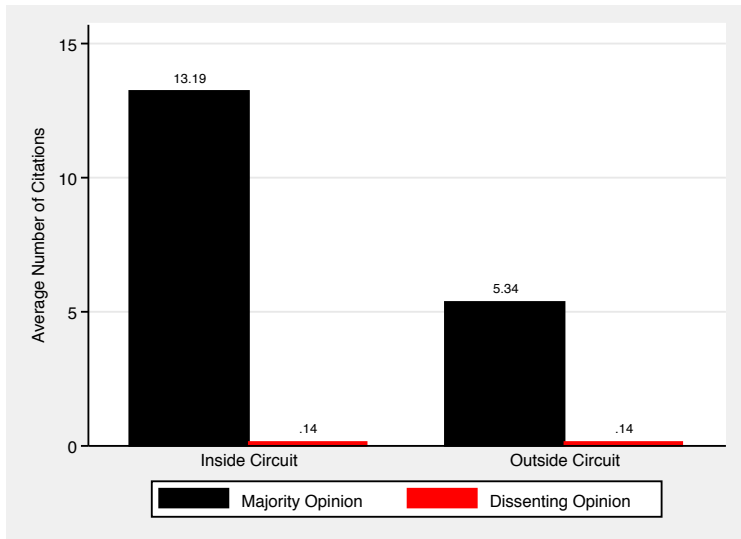


"Dissent Aversion"

## (Average) Citations to Court of Appeals Opinions



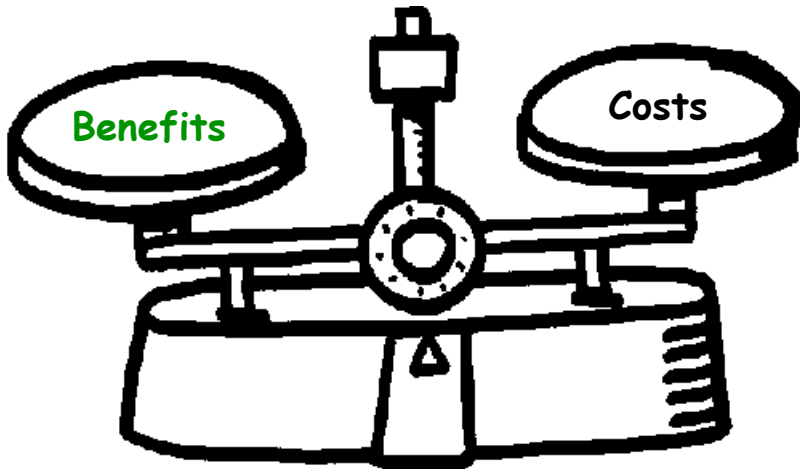
# (Average) Citations to Court of Appeals Opinions



"Dissent Aversion"

- Reputation
- Influence

- COLLEGIALLY
- Effort

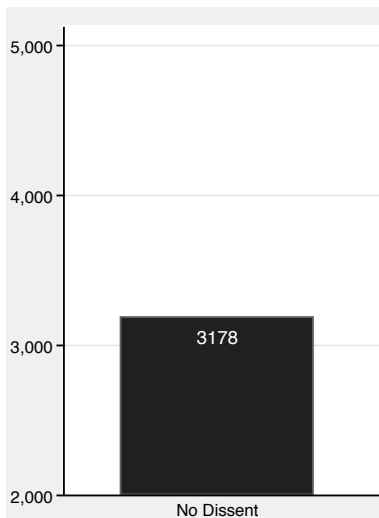




"Dissent Aversion"

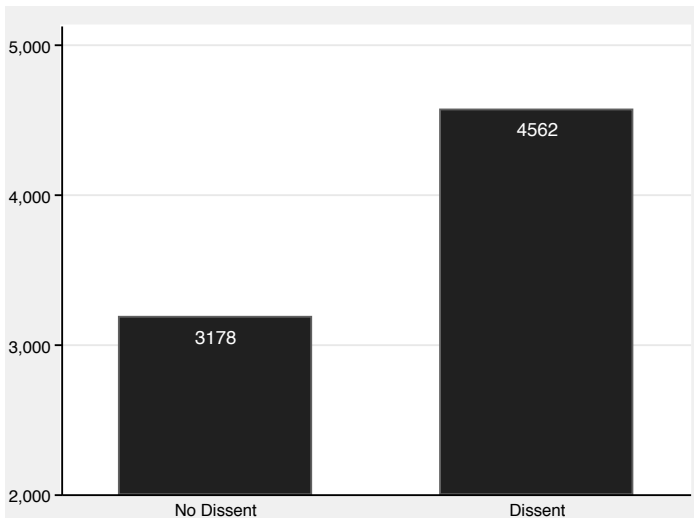
## Expected N of Words in the Majority Opinion

# Expected N of Words in the Majority Opinion



"Dissent Aversion"

## Expected N of Words in the Majority Opinion



- The Individual Judge
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# Long List of Retention Institutions

## Long List of Retention Institutions

- Life Tenure with No Mandatory Retirement
- Life Tenure with Mandatory Retirement
- Non-Renewable Terms without Possibility of Retention (6-12 years)
- Non-Renewable Terms with Possibility of Retention (6-12 years)
- Renewable Terms (5-12 years)
- Retention Elections
- Non-Partisan Elections
- Partisan Elections

# The Assumption

Greater Independence  
(Low Opportunity Costs)



**Life Tenure**



Greater Accountability  
(High Opportunity Costs)

**Periodic Electoral or  
Legislative Checks**





Elected Judges

# Some Findings

## Some Findings

**Criminal.** An analysis of 22,000 trial court sentences in assault, rape and robbery convictions finds that sentences are significantly longer as the judge's reelection moves closer (Huber & Gordon).

## Some Findings

- Criminal.** An analysis of 22,000 trial court sentences in assault, rape and robbery convictions finds that sentences are significantly longer as the judge's reelection moves closer (Huber & Gordon).
- Civil.** An examination of 7,000 cases across 48 states found tort awards against out-of-state firms were about \$140,000 higher in states with elected judiciaries. Authors suggest that "redistributing wealth from out-of-state defendants to in-state plaintiffs is a judge's way of providing constituency service" (Tabarrock & Helland).

Backstory  
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Courts

Individual Judge  
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Collegial Court  
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Judicial Selection  
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The Future  
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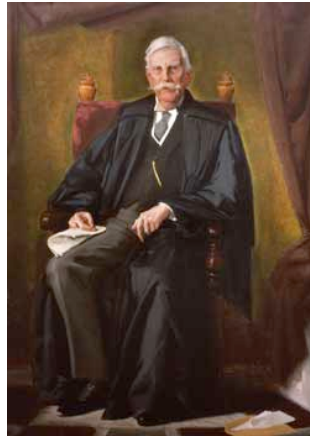
That's It

Life Tenured Judges

Life Tenured Judges

# Some Disappointments . . .

# Some Disappointments . . .



“I could carve out of a banana a judge with more backbone than Oliver Wendell Holmes”

# Some Disappointments . . .



“The biggest damn fool mistake I ever made.”

Life Tenured Judges

# But Many Successes



# But Many Successes



Life Tenured Judges

# But Many Successes



Backstory  
oooooooo

Courts

Individual Judge  
oooo

Collegial Court  
oooooooo

Judicial Selection  
oooo●o

The Future  
oooooooo

That's It

Life Tenured Judges

## Life Tenured Judges



## Life Tenured Judges



= 39.6%

## Life Tenured Judges



= 39.6%  
37.3%

## Life Tenured Judges



$$\begin{array}{r} = 39.6\% \\ 37.3\% \\ \hline 2.3\% \end{array}$$

Life Tenured Judges

Justice	President's Ideology	Predicted Fraction Conservative	Justice's Fraction Conservative	Error
Alito	0.724	63.20	63.67	0.47
Breyer	-0.472	36.68	41.42	4.74
Ginsburg	-0.472	36.68	37.60	0.92
Kagan	-0.329	39.85	36.36	3.49
Kennedy	0.693	62.51	57.82	4.69
Roberts	0.724	63.20	59.54	3.66
Scalia	0.693	62.51	64.49	1.98
Sotomayor	-0.329	39.85	35.91	3.94
Thomas	0.573	59.85	67.53	7.68



Backstory  
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Courts

Individual Judge  
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Collegial Court  
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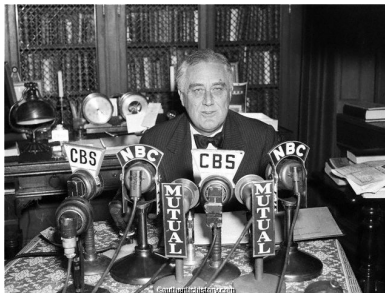
Judicial Selection  
oooo●

The Future  
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That's It

## Life Tenured Judges

## Life Tenured Judges



**(Mean Length of Service= 14 years)**

*"This plan will save our national  
Constitution from hardening of the  
judicial arteries."*



**(Mean Length of Service= 14 years)**

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# Suggestions

# Suggestions

- Move beyond the US!

# Suggestions

- Move beyond the US!
- Recognize the limits of the rationality assumption



Backstory  
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Courts

Individual Judge  
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Collegial Court  
oooooooo

Judicial Selection  
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The Future  
●oooooooo

That's It

Rationality



The International  
Bestseller

Thinking,  
Fast and Slow



Daniel Kahneman

Winner of the Nobel Prize



# The Experiments

# The Experiments

- Rachlinski, Johnson, Wistrich & Guthrie, "Does Unconscious Racial Bias Affect Trial Judges?," 84 *Notre Dame Law Review* 1195 (2009)
- Rachlinski, Guthrie, & Wistrich, "Heuristics and Biases in Bankruptcy Judges," 163 *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 167 (2007)
- Guthrie, Rachlinski, & Wistrich, "Blinking on the Bench: How Judges Decide Cases, 93 *Cornell Law Review* 1 (2007)
- Rachlinski, Wistrich, & Guthrie, "Probability, Probable Cause, and the Hindsight Bias," 8 *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies* 72 (2011)
- Rachlinski, Wistrich, & Guthrie, "Altering Attention in Adjudication," 60 *UCLA Law Review* 1586 (2013)
- Rachlinski, Guthrie, & Wistrich, "Consilience in the Courtroom," 98 *Cornell Law Review* 1189 (2013).

# The Experiment: Affect Heuristic

# The Experiment: Affect Heuristic

## Kahneman (2011)

- People often base decisions on feelings instead of reasoning
- They substitute an easy question (“Do I like it?”) for a more difficult question (“Is this a wise choice?”)

# The Experiment: Affect Heuristic

## Kahneman (2011)

- People often base decisions on feelings instead of reasoning
- They substitute an easy question (“Do I like it?”) for a more difficult question (“Is this a wise choice?”)

## The Study

Do judges have affective responses to litigants? Do their feelings toward litigants affect their decisions?

# The Experiment: Affect Heuristic



# The Experiment: Affect Heuristic





# The Experiment: Affect Heuristic

## The Experiment: Affect Heuristic

Tries to enter US to get a job to earn money to pay for critically ill daughter's liver transplant

## The Experiment: Affect Heuristic

Tries to enter US to get a job to earn money to pay for critically ill daughter's liver transplant

OR

Tries to enter the US to track down rogue member of a drug cartel who had stolen due proceeds from cartel

## The Experiment: Affect Heuristic

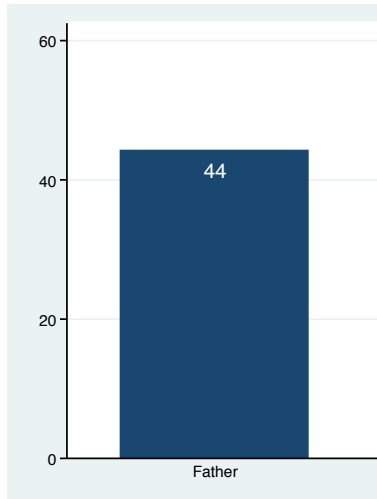
Tries to enter US to get a job to earn money to pay for critically ill daughter's liver transplant (**FATHER**)

OR

Tries to enter the US to track down rogue member of a drug cartel who had stolen due proceeds from cartel (**KILLER**)

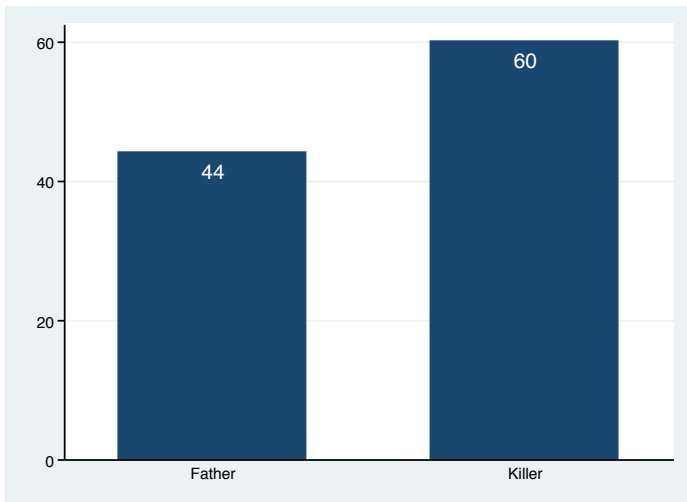
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# The Experiment: Affect Heuristic



# Rachlinski, et al. Conclusion

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# Suggestions

- Move beyond the US!
- Recognize the limits of the rationality assumption

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- Move beyond the US!
- Recognize the limits of the rationality assumption
- Make use of text

Backstory  
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Courts

Individual Judge  
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Collegial Court  
oooooooo

Judicial Selection  
oooo

The Future  
oooooooo●

That's It

Texts as Data

<p>THE SUPREME COURT DATABASE</p>		
<p>ABOUT</p>	<p>DATA</p>	<p>ANALYSIS</p>
<p>The Supreme Court Database is the definitive source for researchers, students, journalists, and citizens interested in the U.S. Supreme Court. The Database contains over two hundred pieces of information about each case decided by the Court between the 1946 and 2012 terms. Examples include the identity of the court whose decision the Supreme Court reviewed, the parties to the suit, the legal provisions considered in the case, and the votes of the Justices.</p> <p>Learn more about this growing collection</p>	<p><b>Current Dataset</b> <b>2013 Release 01</b></p> <p><b>released</b> July 17, 2013</p> <p><b>includes terms</b> 1946 - 2012</p> <p><b>Case Centered rows</b> 12,889</p> <p><b>Justice Centered rows</b> 115,535</p> <p>View Download Options</p>	<p>Are you interested in a particular legal or political issue? Do you seek information solely about the current Court or about a particular year? Perhaps you are interested in the votes of the Justices in cases about religion, commerce, or another area of the law. The analysis tools allow you to select and summarize cases from the Database based on your needs.</p> <p>Go to the Analysis Tools</p> <p><b>Getting Started</b> <b>SCDB Web 101</b></p> <p>Are you new to the Supreme Court Database? Wondering how to start doing your online analysis? The SCDB Web 101 series can get you underway on the quick.</p> <p><a href="#">View the 101 Lessons</a></p> <p>Looking for the Codebook? We have an online and downloadable version. Access them using the below links.</p> <p><a href="#">Online Codebook</a> <a href="#">PDF Codebook</a></p>
 <p>The Supreme Court Database has been generously supported by the National Science Foundation.</p>		



BROWN ET AL.  
v.  
BOARD OF EDUCATION OF TOPEKA ET AL.  
*APPEAL FROM THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR  
THE DISTRICT OF KANSAS.*  
*No. 1.*<sup>\*</sup>  
*Argued December 9, 1952. Reargued December 8, 1953.*  
*Decided May 17, 1954.*

MR. CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN delivered the opinion of the Court.

- 1 These cases come to us from the States of Kansas, South Carolina, Virginia, and Delaware. They are premised on different facts and different local conditions, but a common legal question justifies their consideration together in this consolidated opinion.<sup>1</sup> [347 U.S. 487]

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Transcript:

ORAL ARGUMENT OF THOMAS G. HUNGAR ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER

Chief Justice John G. Roberts: We'll hear argument first this morning in case 12-696, the Town of Greece v. Galloway.

Mr. Hungar.

Thomas G. Hungar: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice, and may it please the Court:

The court of appeals correctly held that the legislative prayers at issue in this case were not offensive in the way identified as problematic in Marsh, but the court then committed legal error by engrafting the endorsement test onto Marsh as a new barrier to the practice of legislative prayer.

Justice Elena Kagan: Mr. Hungar, I'm wondering what you would think of the following: Suppose that as we began this session of the Court, the Chief Justice had called a minister up to the front of the courtroom, facing the lawyers, maybe the parties, maybe the spectators.

And the minister had asked everyone to stand and to bow their heads in prayer and the minister said the following: He said, we acknowledge the saving sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

We draw strength from His resurrection.

Blessed are you who has raised up the Lord Jesus.

You who will raise us in our turn and put us by His side.

The members of the Court who had stood responded amen, made the sign of the cross, and the Chief Justice then called your case.

Would that be permissible?

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IN THE  
**Supreme Court of the United States**  
October Term, 1953

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**No. 1**OLIVER BROWN, ET AL., *Appellants,*

VS.

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF TOPEKA, ET AL., *Appellees.***No. 2**HARRY BRIGGS, JR., ET AL., *Appellants.*

VS.

R. W. ELLIOTT, ET AL., *Appellees.***No. 4**DOROTHY E. DAVIS, ET AL., *Appellants,*

VS.

COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD OF PRINCE EDWARDS COUNTY,  
*Appellees.***No. 10**FRANCIS B. GEBHART, ET AL., *Petitioners,*

VS.

ETHEL LOUISE BELTON, ET AL., *Respondents.*

APPEALS FROM THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF KANSAS, THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA AND THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA, AND ON PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE SUPREME COURT OF DELAWARE, RESPECTIVELY

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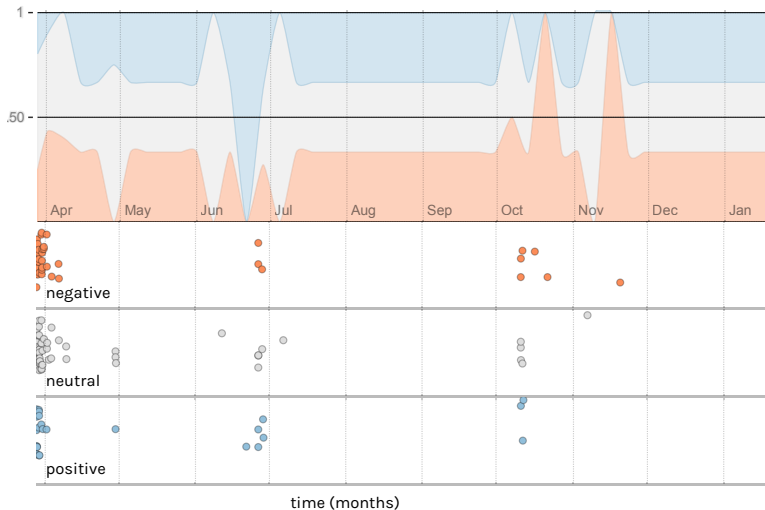
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**BRIEF FOR APPELLANTS IN NOS. 1, 2 AND 4 AND  
FOR RESPONDENTS IN NO. 10 ON REARGUMENT**

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## Dataset: Twitter Feed: Antonin Scalia Classifier: Twitter Sentiment



Backstory  
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Courts

Individual Judge  
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Collegial Court  
oooooooo

Judicial Selection  
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The Future  
oooooooo

That's It



**C. Herman Pritchett**

THANKS! MERCI! GRAZIE!