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Attitude-Dependent Altruism, Turnout and Voting

by [Julio J. Rotemberg](#)

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Abstract

This paper presents a goal-oriented model of political participation based on two psychological assumptions. The first is that people are more altruistic towards individuals that agree with them and the second is that people's well-being rises when other people share their personal opinions. The act of voting is then a source of vicarious utility because it raises the well-being of individuals that agree with the voter. Substantial equilibrium turnout emerges with nontrivial voting costs and modest altruism. The model can explain higher turnout in close elections as well as votes for third-party candidates with no prospect of victory. For certain parameters, these third-party candidates lose votes to more popular candidates, a phenomenon often called strategic voting. For other parameters, the model predicts "vote-stealing" where the addition of a third candidate robs a viable major candidate of electoral support.

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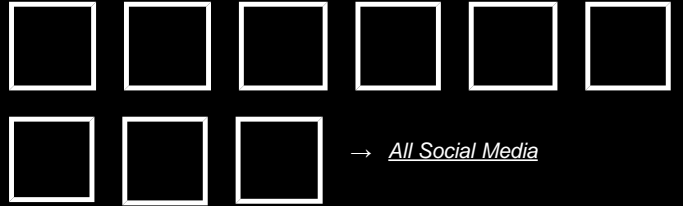
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