The Maze and the Mirror: Voting Correctly in Direct Democracy*

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Objectives. This article assesses the conditions under which voters are more likely to vote "correctly" in direct democratic ballots. We look for determinants of correct voting simultaneously at the individual and contextual levels through a multilevel approach. At the individual level we provide special attention to the level of sophistication and the use of cognitive heuristics. At the contextual level we will investigate how the nature and content of political campaigns—more specifically, their intensity and negativity—enhance correct voting. We test our empirical models in the "hard-case" scenario of Swiss direct democracy. We propose an alternative approach for the measure of correct voting, one that makes a full use of survey data but that tries to replicate the original idea of comparison between uninformed and informed voters to establish the "correctness" of a decision. *Methods.* We use two different data sets that cover all direct democratic votes held in Switzerland, at the federal level, between 1999 and 2005; this period covers 23 ballots, during which 75 different projects were voted. To measure correct voting and all individual variables we rely on the VOX survey data, collected on a representative sample of about 1,000 individuals after each direct democratic vote in Switzerland. To measure campaign intensity and negativity we rely on an original data set that codes the content of every campaign ad published in the six major Swiss newspapers during the month prior to each ballot. *Results.* We show that political sophistication and the use of referential heuristics strongly enhance correct voting. Furthermore, at the contextual level, we show that campaigns with high intensity decrease correct voting, especially when combined with high negativity, even though the direct effect of negativity on correct voting is positive. *Conclusion.* We contribute to the existing literature in a threefold way. First, our results provide an additional confirmation that correct voting exists under both individual and contextual influences. Second, we assess the presence and determinants of correct voting in direct democracy, a "hard-case" scenario, and find that the share of citizens who vote correctly is in line with the levels found for American citizens during elections, and that the main determinants seem to hold for both elections and direct democracy. Third, our alternative approach to measure correct voting highlights that the original idea of comparison between uninformed and informed voters, usually dealt with through experimental protocols, can be replicated with survey data.

You do not have to be a pessimist to realize that the average citizen in Western democracies has only vague notions of politics. Hardly motivated by or interested in political affairs, when asked to vote he seems unable to take a knowledgeable decision and often makes no serious effort to compensate the lack of information he suffers. In brief, the average citizen seems ill equipped for the maze of political tasks he is confronted with (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Zaller, 1992; Alvarez and Brehm, 2002).

Drawing a more optimistic portrait (Bartels, 1996), a strong tradition of research on information processing and decision making shows that quite often citizens are able to simplify their decisions by relying on cognitive shortcuts (Lupia, 1994; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock, 1991; Sniderman, 2000; Kriesi, 2005; Nai, 2014b). Those shortcuts take several forms (Lau and Redlawsk, 2001), and provide those who use them with "dependable answers even to complex problems" (Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock, 1991:19). Research on information processing has received strong attention in the scientific community but, quite surprisingly, has little to say on what such a "dependable answer" is. Is showing how citizens cope with incomplete information enough to reassure the pessimists? At the end, this does not yet say that much on perhaps the most fundamental issue for democracy: Are citizen's decisions *good enough*?

Lau and Redlawsk (1997) argue that one way to assess the quality of citizens' decisions is to see whether or not ordinary citizens are able to cast a *correct vote*. Following an "as-if" premise (Lupia, 1994; Bartels, 1996; Christin, Hug, and Sciarini, 2002), correct voting is defined as "the likelihood that citizens, under conditions of incomplete information, nonetheless vote for the candidate or party they would have voted for had they had full information about those same candidates and/or parties" (Lau, Andersen, and Redlawsk, 2008:396). Confronted with the maze of hard political choices and conflicting information, some citizens are able to mirror a sophistication that is usually beyond their grasp.

Literature on correct voting and its determinants has grown exponentially over the last 20 years or so (see, e.g., Lau and Redlawsk, 1997, 2001, 2006, 2015; Holbrook and McClurg, 2006; Lau, Andersen, and Redlawsk, 2008; McClurg and Sokhey, 2008; Lau et al., 2014; Ha and Lau, 2015). In this literature, two competing—although related—approaches exist to measure correct voting: one, experimental, that manipulates the quantity of information provided to the voters and compares their decision before and after the manipulation, and a second "normative-naïve" measure that gauges correct voting, through survey data, by assessing objectively the best decision any given respondent should take given his or her self-reported values and interests.

We contribute to the existing literature by proposing an alternative approach, one that makes a full use of survey data but that tries to replicate the original idea of comparison between uninformed and informed voters to establish the "correctness" of a decision. More specifically, we propose two alternative measures of correct voting following an "as-if" premise, the first based on "incomplete information voters," and the second on "nonsystematic" reasoners.

We test our alternative measures by assessing the determinants of correct voting in Swiss direct democracy. Virtually all existing literature on correct voting deals with elections, and therefore with the "correctness" of decisions to support (or oppose) competing candidates. Our contribution innovates by assessing the presence and determinants of correct voting in direct democracy, a "hard-case" scenario. Direct democracy, as some elections do, confronts voters with a binary choice; unlike elections, however, direct democracy demands a decision on two opposing *policies*, the existing one (the "status quo" scenario) and a legislative or constitutional revision. This has some substantial implications. First, the connection between voting choices and party affiliation is more loose in direct legislation

than in elections; in direct democracy political parties do usually campaign for the support (or refusal) of policy changes, but voters have to take a decision that goes well beyond a mere support for those parties. Second, direct democratic decisions are naturally more complex and multidimensional than, say, a choice between two opposing candidates, as voters have to weigh between the advantages and pitfalls of the current situation and the potential outcomes of a policy change; furthermore, quite often voters have to decide on rather complex issues. Third, direct democratic decisions are enforceable and thus shape political life straightforwardly, whereas electoral decisions shape policies indirectly. We might therefore assume that correct decisions are harder to achieve when voters are confronted with direct legislation instead of electoral choices. In this sense, testing correct voting and its determinants in direct democratic votes presents a harder scenario, a subsample of what usually happens in electoral dynamics; our analyses should thus provide more conservative results, which should more easily apply to elections; the opposite seems rather unlikely.

Switzerland is an excellent laboratory for the study of direct democracy. First, a huge part of the popular votes held around the world take place there (Butler and Ranney, 1994; Trechsel and Sciarini, 1998). This creates a vast amount of data that can quite easily be used for our purposes. Second, Swiss direct democracy allows citizens to vote on a wide range of different issues, from international relations to fiscal policies (Trechsel and Sciarini, 1998). Third, direct democracy has a defining role for the Swiss political system. As Kobach states, "Switzerland is the only nation in the world where political life truly revolves around the referendum" (Kobach, 1994:98). The institutions of direct democracy—popular initiative, optional, and mandatory referenda—bound the control of the elites on the political processes in a twofold way (Trechsel and Sciarini, 1998:101 ff.): first, they create a new arena for direct intervention by the electorate in some major decisions; second, they force the elites to moderate key propositions, since they can quite easily be attacked from the bottom. In such a context, where the role of ordinary citizens is at the very heart of the political system, an analysis of the quality of their decisions naturally warrants some special attention.

In recent literature, some attempts have been made to assess the quality of voters' decisions in direct democracy though survey data. Among others, Nai (2014) investigates the conditions under which Swiss voters support their decisions through ambivalent opinions, Lanz and Nai (2015) assess the causes of "consistent" decisions, that is, decisions that are in line with the voter's position on the issue at stake and hence reflect his opinion on the principal issue-related arguments, and Milic (2012) compares argument-based opinions and vote decisions for three projects voted on in November 2009. Those existing studies are informative on how lack of information and knowledge affects the quality of the decisions taken by voters in direct democracy, but they do so rather indirectly; this contribution, to the best of our knowledge, is the first attempt to assess systematically the determinants of correct voting in the "hard-case scenario" of direct democracy.[1]

Following what has been done elsewhere (Lau, Andersen, and Redlawsk, 2008; Lau et al., 2014), we look for determinants of correct voting simultaneously at the individual and contextual levels through a multilevel approach. At the individual level we provide special attention to the level of sophistication and the use of cognitive heuristics. Citizens, however,

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[1]Note that Milic (2012) also claims to measure "correct voting" in Swiss direct democratic ballots. However, as we discussed elsewhere (Lanz and Nai, 2015) we are rather skeptical of this label, in that Milic's measure does not take into consideration the voter's profile in terms of values and preferences (see Milic, 2012:404), and thus considerably diverges from the standards of the "normative-naïve" measure used in the literature. This, of course, is just a matter of label and does not say anything about the quality of his results.

do not form their opinions on their own, and even less without being subjected to a series of external influences. Political campaigns are an important source of information during opinion formation, and their influence is today highly studied (e.g., Holbrook, 1996; Bowler and Donovan, 1998; Schmitt-Beck and Farrel, 2002; Lau and Redlawsk, 2006). For this, we will investigate how the nature and content of political campaigns—more specifically, their *intensity* and *negativity*—enhance correct voting.

Our article is structured as follows: first, the concept of correct voting is introduced, and expectations are formulated on what should enhance its presence. Second, a brief methodological section will discuss how our principal variables are measured. Third, we will present and compare two alternative measures of correct voting, a first based on "incomplete information" voters and a second based on "nonsystematic" reasoners. Finally, empirical results on the conditions under which correct voting is more likely to happen will be presented and discussed.

Voting "Correctly"?

Every decision, if taken freely, is legitimate (Downs, 1957); in a democratic system that allows free and independent reasoning, every single choice is as rightful as the others. This does, however, not imply that all decisions are equally "good." How to assess the "goodness" of a vote? One, rather crude, way is to draw from external criteria that identify if a given decision is good or bad intrinsically; for instance, it is not uncommon to hear political analysis and pundits argue that support for populist, racist, or homophobic parties or programs translates into poor voting choices. Of course, this approach faces a strong risk of subjectivity and bias. When assessing if decisions are sound or good, "the difficulty is to find criteria independent of the decision-making process. . . . Unfortunately, as in any other public-opinion research, standards of quality turn on values, debatable facts, or both. In general, we can discriminate between better and worse political opinions only by positing normative criteria, which are in all cases open to criticism" (Kuklinski and Quirk, 2000:157). Therefore, a definition of what a correct decision is should be based "on the values and beliefs of the individual voter, not on any particular ideology that presumes the values and preferences which ought to be held by members of different social classes, for instance, and not on any larger social goods or universal values" (Lau and Redlawsk, 1997:586).

As we know, incomplete information is a quite common situation when facing a decision. Having this in mind, Lau and Redlawsk (1997, 2006, 2015) define a vote as "incorrect" if it would be different if taken under favorable conditions of full information on the issues at stake. With their words, "correct voting refers to the likelihood that citizens, under conditions of incomplete information, nonetheless vote for the candidate or party they would have voted for had they had full information about those same candidates and/or parties" (Lau, Andersen, and Redlawsk, 2008:396). Such citizens are able to mimic the behavior of the more informed ones, and cast a vote that is similar to the one they would have taken if they were more informed.

Following this general definition, two rather divergent approaches to measure correct voting exist in the literature. Although both are empirically related, the two measures consistently diverge in their theoretical foundations. The first approach measures correct voting through experimental simulations where the quantity of information provided during voting decisions is manipulated via a dynamic information board (see Lau and Redlawsk, 2006:279 ff.). The correctness of a decision is measured through a before-after

comparison. This first approach has the clear advantage to provide a measure that efficiently reflects the basic definition of correct voting as a hypothetical choice under conditions of full information. However, as Lau et al. (2014) argue, this first measure "is only available in a controlled experimental setting in which 'all alternatives in the choice set' and 'all dimensions of judgment' can be carefully controlled, and complete information can be provided to voters after they have made their decisions" (Lau et al., 2014:241). As we will discuss below, we disagree with this stance.

Given the practical limitations they recognize in the first measure, Lau and Redlawsk (1997, 2006) propose an alternative approach. This second approach measures correct voting via survey data, by objectively assessing the best decision any given respondent should take given his or her self-reported values and interests. Lau and Redlawsk (1997, 2006) call this second measure normative-naïve, "naïve in that it is based on the voter's own preferences . . . and normative because . . . it's based on experts' judgments of which party of candidate is closes to the voter's expressed preferences" (Lau et al., 2014:241). This second measure has the clear advantage of being easily estimated with common survey data, and virtually all empirical research that has been done since on correct voting has adopted it (see, e.g., Lau and Redlawsk, 2006; Lau et al., 2014; Ha and Lau, 2015). This "normative-naïve" measure has, however, the disadvantage of moving somehow away from the original conception of correct voting as a situation in which uninformed voters take a decision "as if" they were fully informed.

We propose here an alternative approach, one that makes a full use of survey data but that tries to replicate the original idea of comparison between uninformed and informed voters to establish the "correctness" of a decision. Put simply, our revised approach starts from the premise that a correct vote, for a person with incomplete information, should reflect the decision of the most informed ones.

Before digging further into this alternative approach, let us briefly elucidate our theoretical models on the conditions under which correct voting is more likely to happen.

What Enhances Correct Voting? Some Multilevel Expectations

Following Lau, Andersen, and Redlawsk (2008) and Lau et al. (2014), we start from the premise that correct voting is simultaneously enhanced by who the citizens are, and the contextual conditions they decide within.

At the individual level, first, correct voting seems necessarily a function of political sophistication, which translates into how interested, motivated, and skilled a given citizen is to accomplish the political task he is confronted with. Sophistication has often been shown as a strong determinant of political behavior; it enhances a higher attention and more generally a more efficient information treatment (Zaller, 1992; Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Alvarez and Brehm, 2002), and is usually a good determinant of higher cognitive engagement (Kam, 2005; Kriesi, 2005; Nai and Lloren, 2009; Nai, 2014b). Following Zaller's RAS model, the higher the level of political sophistication, the higher the propensity for reception of political communication, but also the higher the likelihood of resisting inconsistent information. More sophisticated citizens are more likely to acquire political information coming from the elites, but they easily evaluate the directional content of the information received in light of their preexisting predispositions and are thus more likely to resist incongruent information. For this, we logically assume that more sophisticated citizens have stronger skills to take a correct decision.

We furthermore expect that citizens who at least try to compensate for their lack of relevant information through cognitive shortcuts should more likely cast a correct vote. Following Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock (1991:19), "insofar as [heuristics] can be brought into play, people can be knowledgeable in their reasoning about political choices without necessarily possessing a large body of knowledge about politics." The rationale for this expectation is rather intuitive. Heuristics are meant to simplify the choice in a way that citizens can achieve "dependable answers even to complex problems" (Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock, 1991:19); in this sense, relying on heuristics should increase the quality of the decision. Furthermore, "if heuristics did not 'work', at least most of the time, they would not be developed and utilized" (Lau and Redlawsk, 2001:955; see also Lau et al., 2008).

Political decisions depend on a delicate balance between predispositions, knowledge, and available information. No model wishing to say something relevant on those decisions and, by extension, on their "correctness," would be complete without taking into account the nature of the information available to those who decide. Our models thus take into account the nature and content of political campaigns before the vote. We do so by looking at two principal dimensions of political campaigns, that is, their *intensity* and their *tone*.

First, more intense campaigns signal that something big is at stake. If political actors are willing to spend money and time to turn the tide, then, from the standpoint of voters, they logically must have good reasons to do so. The direct consequence is that intense campaigns activate the interest of citizens on the topics, motivate their participation, and enhance their attention (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1995; Bowler and Donovan, 1998; Norris, 2002; Valentino et al., 2001; Kriesi, 2005; Wolak, 2009; Nai, 2014b). Given that information is a necessary condition for correct voting, and that intense campaigns stimulate attention and exposure to such information—in other terms, they translate "into the greater availability of (or ease of obtaining) information" (Lau, Andersen, and Redlawsk, 2008:398)—we might logically expect intense campaigns to increase correct voting.

Intensity of campaigns—that is, how massively they cover the issues at stake—is, however, only part of the story. Beyond the quantitative coverage of an issue, an important characteristic of modern political campaigns is their *tone*, that is, the share of negative versus positive appeals (see Nai and Walter, 2015 for a comprehensive overview of negative campaigning research).

Research on negative campaigning effects has produced over the years a wealth of results on a wide range of attitudes and behaviors, such as attention to and memorability of information (Lau, 1982), election outcomes (Lau and Pomper, 2004; Mattes et al., 2010), strength of issue ambivalence (Nai, 2014a; Lanz and Nai, 2015), approval of Congress (Globetti and Heterington, 2000), information search (Lau and Redlawsk, 2015); support and affect for the attacker (Arceneaux and Nickerson, 2005; Hitchon and Chang, 1995; Kahn and Kenney, 2004; Pinkleton, 1997), affect for the target (Arceneaux and Nickerson, 2005; Fridkin and Kenney, 2004; Kahn and Kenney, 2004; Pinkleton, 1997), cynicism (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997; Valentino et al., 2001; Yoon et al., 2005), and turnout (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1995; Ansolabehere et al., 1994; Nai, 2013; Kahn and Kenney, 2004; Lau and Pomper, 2004). Such research has, however, failed in providing a unified framework on negative campaigning effects. Conflicting results emphasize nowadays a (sometimes harsh) confrontation between the partisans of a demobilizing effect—that is, highlighting how harmful negative campaigns are for the conduct of democracy on the whole (e.g., Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1995; Ansolabehere et al., 1994, 1999)—and those showing globally positive effects and pointing even to a mobilization effect (e.g., Finkel and Geer, 1998; Freedman and Goldstein, 1999; Kahn and Kenney, 2004; Niven, 2006; Jackson and Carsey, 2007).

Those two opposing rationales could be summarized as follows. On the one hand, negative messages are nasty by definition. From a moral standpoint, calling your opponent an idiot or a liar certainly has less intrinsic value than complimenting him. The general public dislikes nasty messages, and it is unlikely that constantly using such rhetoric strategies makes citizens fonder of your work. Negative messages have thus the potential to alienate citizens from elites, increasing the gap between representatives and represented, and discouraging political involvement. On the other hand, however, negative messages are more likely to attract attention. They "stick to the mind" of those who are exposed to them, arouse curiosity, and, thus, have the potential to increase the saliency of the issue. Indeed, "negative information produces a much stronger psychophysiological response than does positive information; . . . people are more reactive and attentive to negative news than they are to positive news" (Soroka and McAdams, 2010:2). As Brooks and Geer cleverly exemplify, sometimes a negative campaign "becomes a colorful, exciting display that reminds voters that politics isn't boring and dull. Just as people are drawn to celebrity disagreements in tabloids or the viewing of car accidents on freeways, it may be that malicious, personal politics garners interest from people who would not otherwise notice the electoral process" (Brooks and Geer, 2007:19).

This leads us to anticipate a globally positive effect of negative campaigning on correct voting; if negative campaigning does indeed increase memorability of information and issue attention, information processing should be easier and lead to a more correct decision.[2]

Data and Methods

To measure individual characteristics we rely on the VOX survey data (see, e.g., Sciarini, Nai, and Tresch, 2014), collected after each federal ballot. After each ballot, a random three-stage sample of about 1,000 individuals is surveyed via a structured questionnaire. In Switzerland, citizens have to vote simultaneously on several projects in a given ballot; our period covers 23 federal ballots between 1999 and 2005, in which 75 different projects were voted on.[3]

We measure sophistication through a factor analysis of five variables: issue-related factual knowledge, interest in politics, difficulties during opinion formation, and perceived importance of the project (both for the citizen and for the country).

Issue-related factual knowledge is measured through two project-related questions, one asking the respondent to state the exact title of the project submitted, and the other asking him or her to briefly explain its content; for each correct answer one point is attributed, which are added up into a 0–2 variable, where 2 points signals the highest knowledge. Interest in politics is measured through a 0–3 ordinal variable (from "not interested at all" to "highly interested"). The presence of difficulties is measured through a direct question, which produces a binary variable in the VOX data (presence/absence of difficulties). Finally, perceived importance of the project (both for the citizen and for the country) is measured through a 0–10 scale variable (10 signals the higher level of perceived importance of the project). The first dimension extracted through principal components factor analysis of those five variables explains 34 percent of the variance (KMO = 0.55***), and is used in our models as the principal measure of political sophistication. We opted for this solution in

[2]Note, however, that Lau and Redlawsk (2015), in a controlled experimental situation with simulated campaigns, find rather puzzlingly that correct voting is at its lowest when both candidates go negative, but also when both candidates stay positive.

[3]For more details on the 75 projects covered in our analysis, see Nai (2014b:260–64).

order to overcome multicolinearity issues, those dimensions being logically quite strongly correlated (see, for instance, Luskin, 1990). Models built on the separate variables yield similar and consistent results.

The use of heuristics is deducted indirectly, since no direct measure exists in the VOX data (Nai, 2014b). For a given respondent, we deduced the use of a partisan heuristic when he voted accordingly to the cue of his preferred political party and he justifies a strong of party affiliation for that party. Similarly, when trust in government is high, a vote identical to the government's instruction signals the use of a trust heuristic. Our measure of partisan heuristics is somewhat different than the one used in Lau et al. (2008), given that they use strength of party identification as a direct variable for political heuristics (Lau et al., 2008:402). Our measure of partisan heuristics takes into account strength of party identification, but goes somewhat further by looking also at the effective vote cast. Instead of simply looking at "the existence or availability or salience of a party cue" (Lau et al., 2008:402), we believe that proving that citizens effectively followed such cues (i.e., by voting in line with that particular cue) measures more efficiently a tangible strategy.

At the contextual level the dimensions of political campaigns are measured through a structured content analysis of political ads found in the press before the vote. Political ads provide voting instructions, and are financed by institutional or independent political actors. For 1999–2005, we looked into six major Swiss journals,[4] from which we collected every political ad published in the month before the vote (about 7,200 ads in total). Where only a few ads were found, indicators were not considered as robust.[5]

Intensity of the campaign is measured through the overall size of the ads found in the press for a specific object (in cm^2). Logically, we expect that campaigns with the higher overall size are the most intense. A similar procedure has been done elsewhere for the Swiss case (Kriesi, 2005:40 sgg.; Marquis, 2006:403 sgg.; Nai, 2013, 2014a, 2014b). Lau et al. measure intensity quite similarly by taking into account the overall "number of political advertisements each candidate aired in the state and the number of times the candidate visited the state during the campaign" (Lau et al., 2008:402).

Negative campaigning is measured by attributing one point to each ad that contains one or more explicit attacks on political adversaries (Nai, 2013). The value for each campaign is simply the percentage of ads containing those attacks.

In order to isolate the effects of negative campaigning, our models will control for two additional characteristics of the campaign content: the diversity of arguments and their quality. This will allow making sure that what effects are found for negative campaigning are not spurious with regards to the specific arguments that are discussed in the campaign, but rather depend on their *tone*. Diversity of arguments looks at the absolute number of *different* arguments developed in each campaign. Campaign arguments[6] are retraced starting from the classification of the spontaneous vote motivations in the VOX data, following a well-established procedure in Swiss literature (Marquis, 2006:467; Nai, 2014b:116–19).

The quality of arguments is measured indirectly via their level of justification, following what has been done by Steiner et al. (2004) for parliamentary debates. Their main idea is that "the tighter the connection between premises and conclusions the more coherent the justification is" (Steiner et al., 2004:21). They isolate four levels of justification (2004:57

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[4]Tribune de Genève, Le Temps (French), Neue-Zürcher Zeitung, Tages-Anzeiger (German), Regione, Giornale del Popolo (Italian).

[5]Robust indicators are possible only for 56 projects out of 75.

[6]Following Petty and Priester (1994; in Marquis, 2006:466), an argument is any information that says something on the validity of the decision. In other terms, an argument is an explicit reason that supports the vote instruction provided in the ad. Several arguments may be contained in every single ad.

ff., 171–73): absent (no justification provided by the author of the ad), inferior (there is a justification, but the inference between the reason and the vote recommendation is not explicit), qualified (explicit link between justification and recommendation; full inference), and sophisticated (two or more qualified justifications present in the ad). During content analysis, we attributed to each ad a value on a 0–3 scale (3 signals the presence of sophisticated justification, 0 the absence of any justification, and so on); for each campaign, the value of justification is simply the mean value on this scale for each ad; the higher average value, the stronger the justification level of the arguments on average in the campaign.

All campaign dimensions (intensity, negative campaigning, diversity, and justification) have been standardized and vary in our models between 0 (lowest level) and 1 (highest level).

The next section discusses how correct voting is measured in our specific setting. Two related measures will be presented, a first attempt based on "incomplete information" voters, and a second one based on "nonsystematic reasoners."

Correct Voting with Survey Data: An Alternative Approach to the "Normative-Naïve" Measure

As discussed before, two approaches have been used in the literature to estimate a correct vote. The first approach measures correct voting through experimental simulations where the quantity of information provided during voting decisions is manipulated (e.g., Lau and Redlawsk, 2006), and the "correctness" of a decision is measured through a before–after comparison. The second approach, "normative-naïve," measures correct voting via survey data by objectively assessing the best decision any given respondent should take given his or her self-reported values and interests. As discussed, both approaches have advantages and disadvantages. In a nutshell, the experimental measure has the advantage of reflecting the "original" idea of voting under conditions of complete information, but has proved difficult to measure through survey data. On the other hand, the "normative-naïve" measure has the advantage of being easily implemented through survey data and has been adopted as a standard measure of correct voting, but somewhat abandons the original idea of voting under conditions of complete information. We contribute to this state of affairs by proposing an alternative measure of correct voting based on survey data and one that is more faithful to the original foundations of the concept.

Our revised measure, based on survey data, starts from the premise that a correct vote, for a person with incomplete information, should reflect the decision of the most informed ones. In this sense, we diverge from the common "normative-naïve" measure (Lau and Redlawsk, 1997, 2006) based on the respondent's profile. Instead, we propose a protocol to replicate through survey data the idea of comparison between informed and uninformed groups, at the heart of the original experimental measure. In a nutshell, we propose an easily replicable method to estimate correct voting following an "as-if approach" through survey data.

Our attempt bears some resemblance to Bartels's (1996) article on the overall electoral consequences of a fully informed electorate. In his seminal article, Larry Bartels reestimates the electoral outcomes for six presidential elections by simulating a situation where all voters are "fully informed." We diverge from Bartels's (1996) study in that our approach is to pinpoint the capacity of less informed voters to act "as if" they were better informed and to uncover under which conditions this is more likely to happen, instead of looking at the overall electoral outcomes of a hypothetically "fully informed" electorate.

TABLE 1

Percentage of Correct Voting During Swiss Direct-Democratic Ballots at the Federal Level;
"Incomplete Information Voters"

	Valid Percent
No correct vote	36.7
Correct vote	63.3

NOTE: Percentages are for citizens with incomplete information having participated in the ballot.

Starting from an "as-if" approach, correct voting is all about information use during electoral decisions. With this in mind, and as a first attempt, we measure correct voting, for citizens with incomplete information, as a vote that reflects the decision supported by a clear majority[7] of the citizens with complete information (complete issue-related factual knowledge, see above), with identical ideological profiles. More specifically, correct voting is measured by isolating a proxy group of well-informed citizens (*well-informed proxy group*) (Kuklinski and Quirk, 2001:296), whose decision is mirrored by citizens with incomplete information (see, e.g., Lupia, 1994; Lau and Redlawsk, 1997, 2006). The basic idea is that the members of the proxy group "should make, in some serious sense, well-informed and capable decisions on the issue at hand. The more informed and capable the proxy group is, the more rigorous is the resulting criterion" (Kuklinski and Quirk, 2001:302).

In order to isolate different ideological profiles we used a battery of 11 ordinal variables measuring support for several *values*, such as gender equality, unemployment, environment protection, state intervention in the economy, and so on. We extracted the first underlying dimension through a series of principal component analyses, and we recoded it into four different categories (based on the quartiles of the underlying variable). Those categories represent four different ideological positions, in a broad way. Our approach to measure the voter's ideological profile is somewhat simpler than the one used in Bartels (1996:205 ff.), based on the voter's social and demographic characteristics. Although Bartels's approach has the merit of providing a rather fine-grained profile, our measure takes directly into account the ideological components of the profile by putting the emphasis on the voter's *values* (e.g., Schwartz, 1992); in order to avoid any spurious effects, we will control for all relevant sociodemographical characteristics in the empirical models estimating the likelihood of a correct vote.

Preliminary analyses of our data show that about 63 percent of "incomplete information" voters voted correctly (see Table 1), which is quite in line with the levels found elsewhere for American electors (Lau and Redlawsk, 1997, 2006; Lau, Andersen, and Redlawsk, 2008; McClurg and Sokhey, 2008).

These are rather encouraging preliminary results. We believe, however, that such a measure of correct voting could be theoretically improved. In fact, isolating the proxy group on the basis of full information raises some concerns (Kuklinski and Quirk, 2001:302 ff.), as the causal link between factual knowledge and attention on the issue is not straightforward. Is a person with high factual knowledge really "informed"? In other terms, focusing only

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[7]We use here 60 percent as a threshold. We agree with Milic (2012:403) that this is rather arbitrary, and was decided out of pragmatic and empirical reasons; a lower threshold (say, 50 percent) does not qualify theoretically as a decision that reflects a majority, and a higher threshold (above 70 percent) was empirically difficult to achieve with our data. At the end, this simply reflects the nature of direct democracy, where trends along ideological and sociodemographic lines do exist, but where full consensus among large groups of voters is almost impossible.

factual knowledge underestimates the fact that what really matters is not the information held, but how this information is treated when taking a decision. More informed citizens "might differ from others in a variety of relevant ways . . . , for example, in cultural values or cognitive styles . . . . If these unmeasured differences have important effects on preferences, they would tend to confound comparisons between the two groups" (Kuklinski and Quirk, 2001:302).

More informed citizens should be able to take decisions based on "considered" opinions, that is, following the growing literature on "deliberative polling" (Fishkin, 1991; Luskin et al., 2002; Fishkin and Luskin, 2005), opinions that are produced by learning and reflection when confronted with political arguments and ideas. The proxy group should hence be composed of citizens able to take decisions in an *informed* and *capable* way, and not on the basis of the factual information they hold. Our second attempt focuses thus more seriously on whether or not a citizen is able to take a decision in a *capable* or *considered* way. This could be measured by looking at his willingness to engage in demanding *information processing*.

In most dual models of decision taking (e.g., Eagly and Chaiken, 1993; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986) a simple and heuristic reasoning is opposed to a central or systematic reasoning, which usually represents the highest cognitive engagement. Systematic reasoning can be defined as a "controlled processing of information" (Stanovich and West, 2000:658–59), an analytic orientation to information processing in which individuals access and scrutinize a great amount of information for its relevance to their judgmental task (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993:326). In other words, systematic reasoning "occurs when an individual makes a judgment by carefully examining arguments and relates those arguments to information already held" (Trumbo, 2002:368). We argue here that a citizen who decided on the basis of such a reasoning scheme can be seen as a particularly *capable* one.

Our second conception of correct voting hence states that correct voting exists when a citizen who has not activated systematic reasoning during information processing takes the very same decision as those who did activate such a cognitive process.

As for heuristics, we have an indirect measure of systematic reasoning. In line with the theoretical definition (Chaiken, 1980; Eagly and Chaiken, 1993) and with recent research using similar data as ours (Kriesi, 2005; Nai and Lloren, 2009; Nai, 2014b),[8] a systematic reasoner is defined according to two cumulative conditions: (1) he accessed a high amount of information, and (2) he was able to assimilate the information he was exposed to.

First, in the VOX data several variables ask which information sources the responder accessed while forming his opinion (newspapers, TV, radio, and so on). We computed the number of different information sources accessed by each citizen (mean of 5.4), and we discriminated between citizens having performed a high information search (6 or more sources used), and those with a lower information search (less than 6).

Second, information assimilation was measured by looking at the strength of positioning toward the main campaign arguments. The idea is quite straightforward; those who have a strong position on those arguments have probably been exposed to campaign information, and have been able to treat the information they received. The positioning toward those arguments is extracted via a series of principal components factor analyses of the original questions asking respondents to declare if they support or reject six main campaign arguments (three in favor of the reform, and three against it). We use the first extracted dimension[9] as "a summary measure of the central conflict dimension underlying the issue-specific debate. The individual voters' scores on this first factor correspond to

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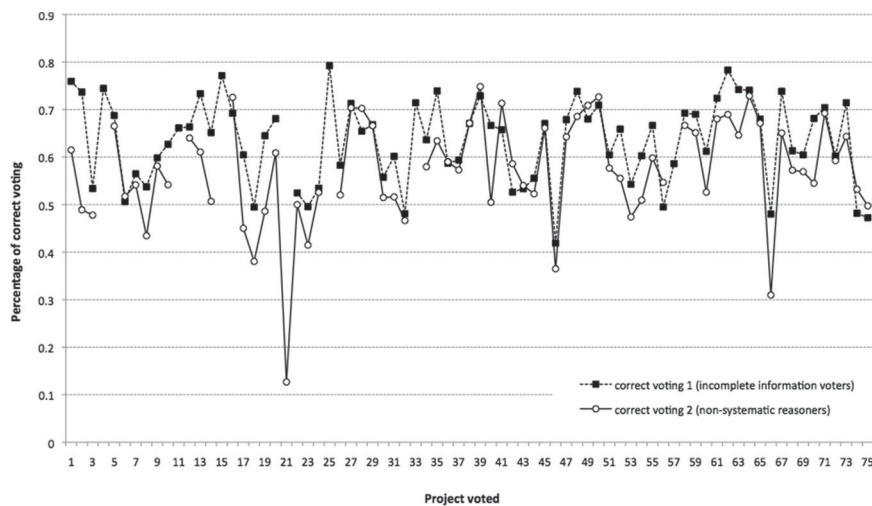[8]More details on the measure of systematic reasoning are available upon request.

[9]The operation was performed for each of the 75 projects voted on between 1999 and 2005, as the variables on campaign arguments are project-specific. The percentage of explained variance was never lower than 30

TABLE 2

Percentage of Correct Voting During Swiss Direct-Democratic Ballots at the Federal Level; "Nonsystematic Reasoners"

	Valid Percent
No correct vote	41.6
Correct vote	58.4

NOTE: Percentages are for nonsystematic citizens having participated in the ballot.

FIGURE 1

Percentage of Correct Voting (Both Measures) for the 75 Projects

their positioning with regard to the central conflict dimension on the issue-specific debate" (Kriesi, 2005:179). The original continuous variable was then recoded into a binary variable, starting from its quartiles.

Per se, neither media use nor arguments assimilation are direct indicators of systematic reasoning (see, e.g., Schemer et al., 2008). However, they measure two underlying dimensions of high cognitive engagement: access and treatment of relevant information.

In our data, this second measure shows that about 58 percent of "nonsystematic reasoners" voted correctly (see Table 2),[10] which is slightly less than the portion of correct voters obtained through the measure for "incomplete information voters" (about 63 percent; see Table 1). Note that the two measures of correct voting are strongly correlated (Pearson's $R = 0.86^{***}$), as also clearly emerges from Figure 1.

Rather interestingly, information, on which the first measure is computed, and systematic reasoning, the basis of the second measure, are significantly less correlated (Eta = 0.11^{***}) than the two measures of correct voting. The second measure, more demanding

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percent, and sometimes as high as 65 percent; see Kriesi (2005) and Nai and Lloren (2009) for a similar procedure.

[10]Correct voting is measured, for citizens who did not activate systematic reasoning, as a vote that reflects the decision supported by 60 percent or more of systematic citizens (with identical ideological profile). Ideological profile is computed as in the "original" measure of correct voting (see above).

theoretically, seems to be a subset of the first one: about 10 percent of citizens who voted correctly according to the first measure are not considered as correct voters in the second measure, whereas only 2 percent of correct voters according to the second measure are not correct voters in the first measure. In other terms, the measure based on "nonsystematic reasoners" seems to be more restrictive than the first one, without altering its core.

Multilevel Determinants of Correct Voting

What are the conditions under which correct voting is more likely to happen? As we saw in Figure 1, the share of citizens having voted correctly varies substantially across different projects voted.

We run a series of eight hierarchical generalized linear models[11] to explain the presence of correct voting. The first four models (from A1 to A4) are based on the first measure ("incomplete information" voters), whereas models B1 to B4 are based on the second measure ("nonsystematic" reasoners). For both variables, the first model (A1 and B1) is based on the direct effect of political sophistication (and controls), whereas the second model (A2 and B2) includes the direct effect of the information processing and heuristics use. The last two models introduce the effect of contextual variables (and especially the dimensions of political campaigns), first directly (models A3 and B3), then through interaction effects (A4 and B4). Table 4 presents the results for the eight models. All models are run only on citizens having participated in ballots, and all variables are entered in the models as grand centered. Descriptive statistics for all variables in our models are presented in Table 3.

Our results highlight, first, some support for the sophistication hypothesis, but the effects have an interesting magnitude and a statistical significance only in fixed effects models without contextual variables (models A1, A2, B1, B2). In those models, voters scoring higher on the political sophistication variable have a higher likelihood that their decision may be qualified as correct. Overall, no sensitive difference exists on how sophistication affects correct voting across the two measures. The direct effect of political sophistication is, however, less intense in models controlling for heuristic use and information treatment (models A2 and B2), and disappears almost entirely in models controlling for contextual variables.

Cognitive processes affect quite strongly the presence of correct voting. Like in Lau et al. (2008) and McClurg and Sokhey (2008), our results provide great support for the heuristic hypothesis. Even in a direct-democratic situation, where the link between choice and party affiliation is more indirect than in elections, partisanship is a very strong predictor of correct voting. Our results clearly show that the likelihood that nonsystematic citizens vote correctly strongly increases when a partisan heuristic was used to decide how to vote. In all models controlling for this variable, a partisan heuristic has a strongly positive (and significant at $p < 0.001$) effect on correct voting. A similar effect can be found for the trust heuristic.

We also note that if both variables affect quite similarly the first measure of correct voting, the second measure seems more sensitive to the activation of the partisan heuristic. The second measure of correct voting takes more seriously into consideration how citizens integrate the arguments coming from the political elite, and seems hence more likely to be influenced by individual cognitive strategies that are based on elites' cues (partisan

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[11]We work with a binary dependent variable (presence or not of correct voting); a logit transformation is therefore used. Our models are run with HLM 6.06 (Raudenbush et al., 2004) through restricted PQL estimations; all variables entered in the models as grand centered.

TABLE 3

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Min	Max	Std. Dev.	Median	Mean
Correct voting (incomplete information voters)	0.00	1.00	0.48	1.00	0.63
Correct voting (nonsystematic reasoners)	0.00	1.00	0.49	1.00	0.58
Sophistication	–3.92	1.70	1.00	0.07	0.00
Partisan heuristic	0.00	1.00	0.45	0.00	0.27
Trust heuristic	0.00	1.00	0.43	0.00	0.24
Position on arguments	–3.92	3.83	1.00	–0.01	0.00
Information use	0.00	12.00	2.19	5.00	5.22
Education	1.00	3.00	0.83	1.00	1.66
Age	1.00	6.00	1.54	4.00	4.00
Sex	0.00	1.00	0.50	0.00	0.49
Intensity of campaign	0.00	1.00	0.29	0.17	0.29
Negative campaigning	0.00	1.00	0.26	0.1	0.21
Diversity of arguments	0.02	1.00	0.20	0.28	0.30
Justification of arguments	0.00	1.00	0.13	0.42	0.44
Issue: International and security policies	0.00	1.00	0.43	0.00	0.24
Issue: Energy, environment, and land use	0.00	1.00	0.36	0.00	0.15
Popular initiative	0.00	1.00	0.50	0.00	0.45
Optional referendum	0.00	1.00	0.47	0.00	0.33
Complexity	0.24	1.00	0.18	0.60	0.60

heuristic). This contrast shows that the first measure of correct voting, based on incomplete information, should be improved in order to grasp more efficiently the relationships between citizens and the elite.

We also introduced in models 2–4 (for both measures) two variables controlling for the activation of systematic reasoning: information use and assimilation. Those variables seem globally not to affect correct voting in a sensitive way. The same holds for sociodemographic controls.

Our results for political sophistication and cognitive processes show that what really matters at the individual level is more how individuals cope with their tasks than the cognitive predispositions they possess (such as their level of political sophistication). What really matters in order to vote correctly is not what you know, but how you use what you get from the elites. Additionally, our results highlight that partisan shortcuts (based on elites' cues) are sensibly more important in explaining the presence of a correct vote according to our second measure than trust shortcuts (based on trust on government).

Table 4 also illustrates how political campaigning shapes the quality of citizens' decisions in terms of correct voting.

The first clear effect we find is that the intensity of political campaigns does not enhance the use of correct vote, quite the contrary; this clearly goes against our hypothesis, and appears both for the first measure (but only in the model with interaction effects, A4) and for the second measure (model B3 and especially the full model B4). In analyzing the effect of network disagreement on correct voting, McClurg and Sokhey find that being subjected to multiple and contrasting points of view (which signals a high network disagreement) diminishes the quality of the vote. They imagine that being exposed to multiple points of view may enhance the ambivalence of citizens, which makes their final decision more difficult (McClurg and Sokhey, 2008:15). In our case, we could therefore imagine that being

TABLE 4

Hierarchical Generalized Linear Models for Correct Voting (Both Measures)

Multilevel Determinants	Correct Voting: "Incomplete Information Voters"				Correct Voting: "Nonsystematic Reasoners"			
	Model A1 Odds Ratio (S_e)	Model A2 Odds Ratio (S_e)	Model A3 Odds Ratio (S_e)	Model A4 Odds Ratio (S_e)	Model B1 Odds Ratio (S_e)	Model B2 Odds Ratio (S_e)	Model B3 Odds Ratio (S_e)	Model B4 Odds Ratio (S_e)
Intercept	2.12 (0.05)***	2.55 (0.06)***	2.59 (0.08)***	2.63 (0.09)***	1.51 (0.06)***	1.96 (0.05)	1.84 (0.06)***	1.86 (0.06)***
Individual variables								
Sophistication	1.18 (0.05)***	1.09 (0.05)*	1.08 (0.04)	1.08 (0.04)	1.20 (0.03)***	1.07 (0.03)**	1.05 (0.03)	1.05 (0.02)
Partisan heuristic	.	1.69 (0.11)***	1.81 (0.12)***	1.81 (0.12)***	.	1.76 (0.07)***	1.71 (0.08)***	1.70 (0.08)***
Trust heuristic	.	2.49 (0.21)***	1.76 (0.31)*	1.76 (0.31)*	.	1.57 (0.15)***	1.20 (0.27)	1.21 (0.27)
Position on arguments	.	0.78 (0.12)*	0.89 (0.13)	0.89 (0.13)	.	0.96 (0.09)	0.94 (0.11)	0.94 0(.11)
Information use	.	1.01 (0.01)	1.00 (0.01)	1.00 (0.01)	.	0.98 (0.01)*	0.97 (0.01)**	0.97 (0.01)**
Education level	1.01 (0.03)	1.00 (0.04)	1.03 (0.04)	1.03 (0.04)	1.02 (0.03)	0.96 (0.03)	0.98 (0.03)	0.98 (0.03)
Age	1.03 (0.02)	1.00 (0.02)	0.99 (0.02)	0.99 (0.02)	0.98 (0.01)	0.97 (0.02)*	0.96 (0.02)*	0.96 (0.02)*
Sex	0.96 (0.05)	1.02 (0.05)	1.09 (0.06)	1.09 (0.06)	1.01 (0.04)	1.02 (0.03)	1.04 (0.03)	1.04 (0.03)
Context variables								
Intensity			1.07 (0.32)	0.77 (1.06)			0.83 (0.23)	0.17 (0.71)*
Negative campaigning			1.00 (0.24)	2.95 (0.46)*			1.06 (0.16)	1.57 (0.31)
Intensity * Negative campaigning				0.07 (0.78)***				0.33 (0.58)
Diversity of arguments			0.97 (0.36)	0.39 (0.75)			1.31 (0.30)	1.10 (0.61)
Justification of arguments			0.94 (0.43)	0.90 (0.45)			0.64 (0.37)	0.44 (0.32)**
Intensity * Diversity of arguments			.	6.57 (1.26)			.	1.39 (1.03)
Intensity * Justification of arguments			.	3.21 (1.93)			.	54.44 (1.13)***
Topic: Int'l and security policies			1.08 (0.14)	0.95 (0.14)			1.22 (0.13)	1.15 (0.13)
Topic: Energy, environm., land use			1.00 (0.15)	0.96 (0.15)			1.00 (0.11)	1.02 (0.11)
Popular initiative			0.62 (0.16)**	0.61 (.16)**			0.81 (0.09)*	0.83 (0.09)*
Optional referendum			0.88 (0.17)	0.99 (0.15)			0.89 (0.12)	0.94 (0.11)
Complexity			0.99 (0.01)	0.98 (0.01)*			0.99 (.)	1.00 (.)
Variance components	Chi-Square	Chi-Square	Chi-Square	Chi-Square	Chi-Square	Chi-Square	Chi-Square	Chi-Square
Intercept	.	.	294.52***	313.51***	.	.	364.27***	353.50***
Sophistication	.	.	118.23***	118.12***	.	.	93.03**	93.05**
Partisan heuristic	.	.	154.71***	154.39***	.	.	207.95***	208.03***
Trust heuristic	.	.	375.94***	377.34***	.	.	560.42***	562.03***
Position on arguments	.	.	837.94***	835.68***	.	.	777.72***	777.32***

TABLE 4—continued

| | Correct Voting: "Incomplete Information Voters" | | | | Correct Voting: "Nonsystematic Reasoners" | | | |
	Model A1 Odds Ratio (S_e)	Model A2 Odds Ratio (S_e)	Model A3 Odds Ratio (S_e)	Model A4 Odds Ratio (S_e)	Model B1 Odds Ratio (S_e)	Model B2 Odds Ratio (S_e)	Model B3 Odds Ratio (S_e)	Model B4 Odds Ratio (S_e)
Multilevel Determinants								
Information use	·	·	69.46	69.43	·	·	88.94**	88.95**
Education level	·	·	59.99	59.86	·	·	97.01**	96.92**
Age	·	·	85.15*	85.09*	·	·	120.78***	120.71**
Sex	·	·	65.61	65.93	·	·	51.32	51.31
Interclass correlation[a]	$\rho = 0.04$	$\rho = 0.04$	$\rho = 0.04$	$\rho = 0.04$	$\rho = 0.06$	$\rho = 0.06$	$\rho = 0.06$	$\rho = 0.06$
N (level-1)	40,408	40,408	40,408	40,408	40,408	40,408	40,408	40,408
N (level-2)	71	71	71	71	71	71	71	71

NOTES: For all models, the dependent variable is the presence of a correct vote (binary variable). Models A1–A4 are for "incomplete information" voters, whereas models B1–B4 are for "nonsystematic" reasoners. Models A1, A2, B1, and B2 have fixed effects; models A3, A4, B3, and B4 have random effects. All models calculated only for citizens declaring having participated in ballots, and run with HLM 6.06 through restricted PQL estimations. Controls in italics.

[a] Interclass correlation (ρ) for multilevel logistic models is calculated through the following approximation: $\rho = (\sigma^2_{u0}) / (\sigma^2_{u0} + \pi^2/3)$. The variance of level-2 residuals (σ^2_{u0}) is divided by the total variance (σ^2_{u0} plus the variance of the logistic distribution for level-1 residuals $\pi^2/3 = 3.29$). See Snijders and Bosker (1999:224) for more details.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

exposed to a high *quantity* of information increases the difficulties faced when mimicing the behavior of the systematic citizens.

Second, negativity in political campaigns increases the presence of correct voting, which confirms our expectations. Negativity may certainly increase the gap between the citizens and the elite, and hence discourage turnout for some citizens (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1995; Ansolabehere et al., 1994), but some sort of "stimulation effect" (Finkel and Geer, 1998; Freedman and Goldstein, 1999; Martin, 2004) seems at work among those who did participate (remember that our models are run only on those citizens). For those who participate, negativity may enhance interest, thus increasing the saliency of the issue. Citizens' attention to the project should increase in such situation, which in turn should make it easier for them to cope with their lack of cognitive sophistication, hence increasing the likelihood of correct voting. In other terms, negativity may discourage part of the electorate, but may also facilitate access to information for those who participate (Crigler et al., 2006; Geer, 2006).

The positive direct effect of negativity on correct voting exists in both models that explain the second measure (B3 and B4), whereas it does not exist within the model explaining the first measure without interactive contextual effects (A3).

Conclusions about negativity effects on correct voting have, however, to be reassessed in light of the results found for its interaction with campaign intensity. In both models A4 and B4 our results show that high negativity reduces the presence of correct voting when associated with high campaign intensity, which means, in fine, that for correct voting the quantity of information matters more than its content.

Table 4 also shows some interesting effects for the two controls on the content of campaigns. First, campaigns with more justified arguments produce less correct voting. This might seem counterintuitive, but makes full sense if we consider that better highly justified arguments are, almost by nature, more complex. Understanding and integrating complex arguments demands higher attention, and logically translates into fewer correct decisions. We may therefore conclude that "easier" arguments (i.e., less justified) are more useful for those citizens who desire to mimic a behavior they could not afford.

Second, campaigns with a richer diversity of arguments increase the presence of correct voting, but only for the second measure (B3 and B4). The full model for the first measure (A4) presents an opposite effect; however, the direct effect of diversity on the first measure of correct voting does not exist in the model without interactions (A3), whereas a positive effect exists on the second measure both with and without interactions. Disposing of a wider range of arguments probably makes it easier to compensate for the lack of sophistication, hence increasing the quality of decision. Such arguments should, however, not be too complex (high justification) or be "drowned" in too much information on and about the ballot (high intensity).

Concluding Remarks

The quality of a political system stems from the quality of citizens' decisions: "if we are going to make judgments about the 'democratic' nature of different forms of government, we should do so at least initially on the basis of the quality of correctness of the political decisions that citizens make . . . rather than on the basis of the ways in which those decisions are reached" (Lau and Redlawsk, 2006:74). As some authors argue, the quality of such decisions can be measured through the overall presence of "correct voting" (Lau and Redlawsk, 1997, 2006; Lau et al., 2014; Ha and Lau, 2015).

This article discussed a series of empirical models that tested the joint effect of individual (political sophistication and cognitive processes) and contextual determinants (nature and content of political campaigns) on correct voting through multilevel estimations. Our results show, first, that what really matters at the individual level is more how individuals cope with their tasks than the cognitive predispositions they possess (such as their level of political sophistication, which has a positive effect on correct voting only when models are not controlled by contextual determinants). What really matters in order to vote correctly is not what you know, but how you use what you get from the elites. In this case as well, then, "[t]he voice of the people is but an echo chamber" (Key, 1966:2). Second, at the contextual level, our results show that correct voting is more likely with less intense campaigns, when negativity is higher, and when campaign arguments are diverse and not too complex. As pointed out by Kuklinski et al. (2001:412), "a small amount of highly pertinent information will often enhance citizens' competence far more than a mountain of peripherally relevant facts and arguments. Rather than the volume, then, it is the diagnostic value of information that influences how well citizens are able to cope with policy choices."

The effects shown for the contextual variables on correct voting are not only empirically interesting. They provide consistent support for the idea that the quality of political processes can be enhanced top-down. By intervening in the content of political interventions—for example, by providing more focused information, composed of various but easier arguments, and even by increasing the saliency of the issue through more negative acclaims—political actors can directly push the citizens toward "better behavior." Citizens should, however, not adopt a wait-and-see approach, and justify their defection solely on the deficiencies of the informational environment. Independently of the nature and content of the available information, individual determinants still play a key role in the quality of their behavior.

Beyond the results found, our article contributes to the existing literature in a twofold way.

First, we proposed an alternative approach to measure correct voting, one that combines the advantages of the two commonly used approaches: one, experimental, which manipulates the quantity of information provided to the voters and compares their decisions before and after the manipulation, and a second "normative-naïve" measure that gauges correct voting, through survey data, by assessing objectively the best decision any given respondent should take given his or her self-reported values and interests. Our approach makes a full use of survey data but replicates the original idea of comparison between uninformed and informed voters to establish the "correctness" of a decision, thus providing an interesting alternative to the most commonly used "normative-naïve" approach.

Second, we tested our alternative measures by assessing the determinants of correct voting in Swiss direct democracy. Virtually all existing literature on correct voting deals with elections, and therefore with the "correctness" of decisions to support (or oppose) competing candidates. Our contribution innovated by assessing the presence and determinants of correct voting in direct democracy, a "hard-case" scenario. Our aggregative results showed that the share of citizens who vote indeed correctly is in line with the levels found for American citizens during elections (Lau and Redlawsk, 1997, 2006; Lau, Andersen, and Redlawsk, 2008; McClurg and Sokhey, 2008). This is not purely informative. By showing that way more than 50 percent of less informed citizens are able to take a decision that can be considered as having sufficient external quality, the more virulent critiques against citizens' inclusion within decisional procedures lose their biting power. This seems clear for electoral votes: "If voters can live through an election campaign and in the end choose the candidate or party who best reflects their interests, then at least one leg upon which democracy stands

is firm. But if they cannot, if voters are bamboozled into voting for candidates they should not support by a flashy appeal, a pretty face, or a simple message repeated over and over again, then what happens to the basic link between the governors and the governed?" (Lau and Redlawsk, 2006:259). This is even more evident in direct-democratic situations, where citizens have to choose between different options concerning policy changes, and where the link between one citizen's partisan affiliation and vote decision is weaker than in electoral situations. Democracy, even when exercised directly as in the case discussed here, has indeed "at least one leg upon which to stand" (Lau and Redlawsk, 2006:259). Citizens are sometimes lost in the maze of complex political decisions, but most of them are able to go through the mirror with satisfactory results.

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