

abstract:

This paper develops a model of voters' and politicians' behavior based on the notion that voters focus disproportionately on, and hence overweight, certain attributes of policies. We assume that policies have two attributes---benefits and costs---and that voters focus more on the attribute in which their options differ more. First, we consider exogenous policies and show that voters' focusing polarizes the electorate. Second, we consider the endogenous supply of policies and show that focusing leads to inefficient policies, which cater excessively to social groups that are larger, have more distorted focus, and are more sensitive to changes in a single attribute