

Unequal representation

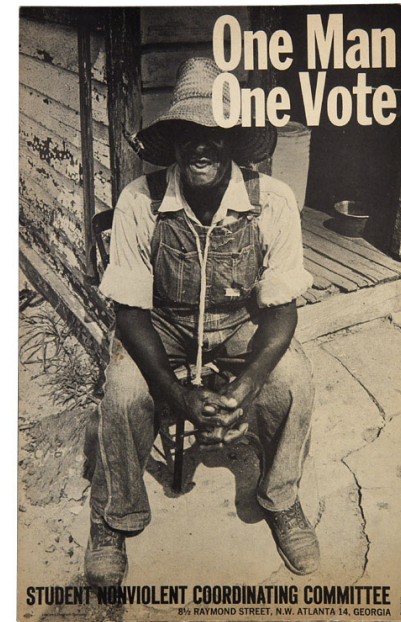
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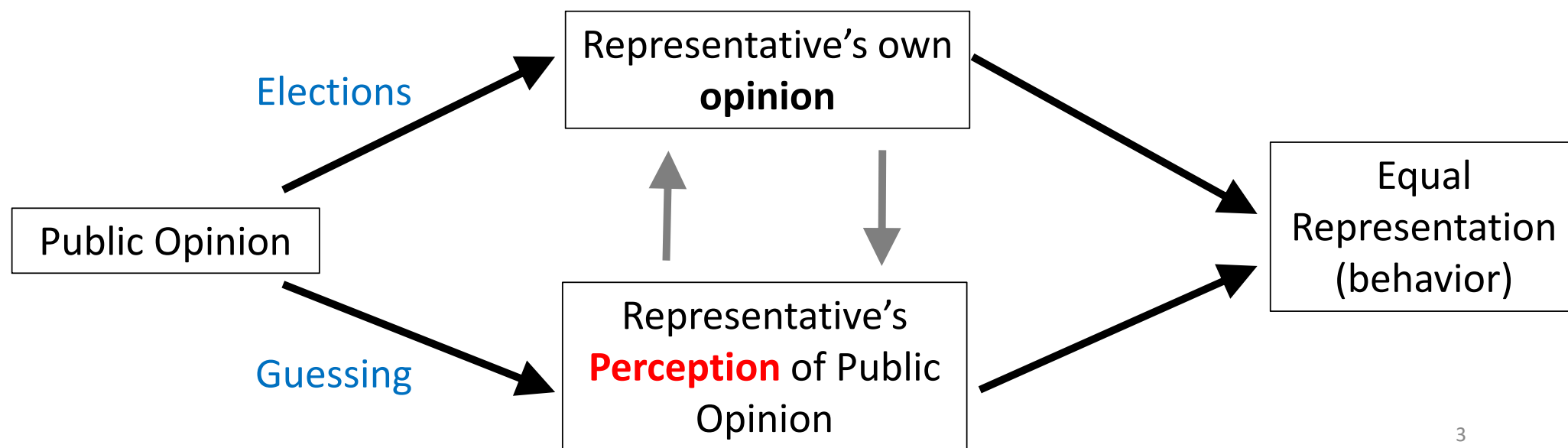
Inequality in political representation

- Are preferences/interests of disadvantaged (weaker) groups underrepresented?
 - Congruence = one possible test of 'good democracy'
- Why would we care?
 - Normative: fair policies (One person, one vote)
 - Empirical: alienation, turnout, volatility, populism...
- Evidence at the aggregate level (policy output) and mostly in U.S.
- What are the underlying mechanisms?
 - > Look at individual representatives



Individual representatives

- Representatives' perceptions, opinion, and behavior can be 'unequal
- Two tracks of representation



Perceptions of public opinion

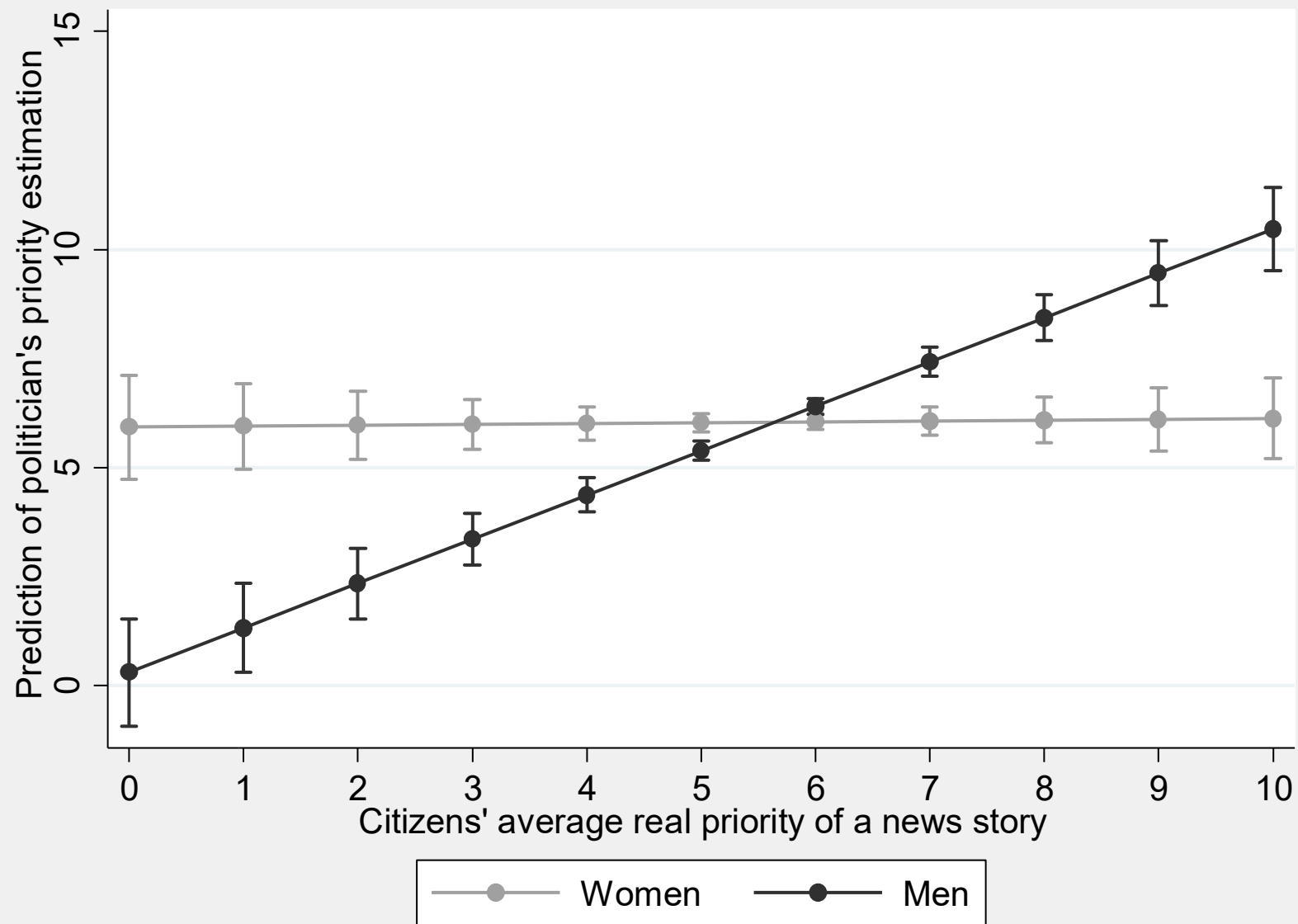
- Why would representatives hold biased perceptions of what the public wants?
 - Because of who they are
 - Because of who they talk to
- What varies across representatives, issues and groups is...
 - the *capacity* to learn about preferences
 - the *willingness* to learn about preferences

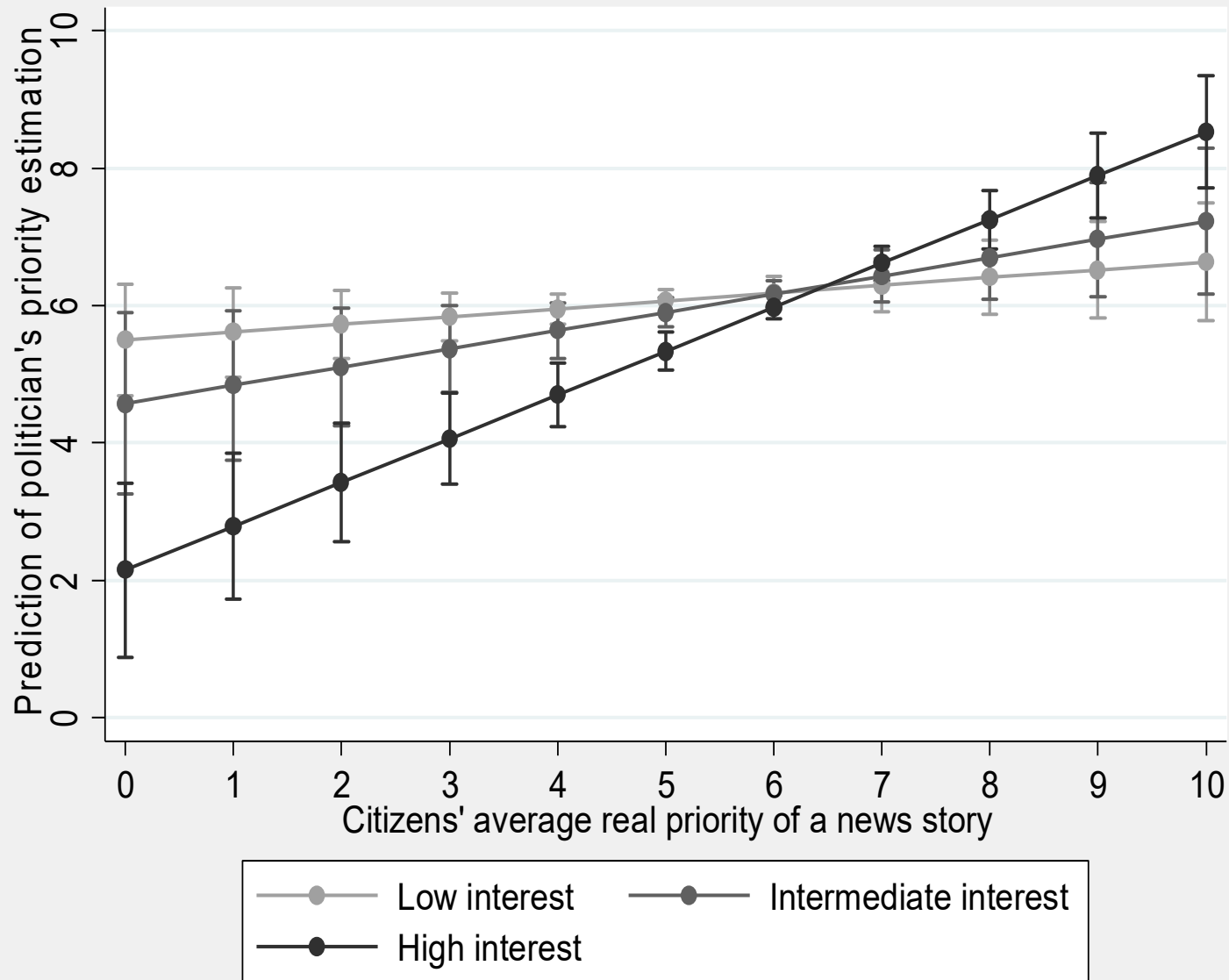


Example: inequality in perception of priorities



- Belgium, Canada, Israel (very different)
- Interviewed 410 representatives and 5,000 citizens
- 395 prominent media stories (real world events)
- Citizens: *To what extent do you want politicians to take action upon this topic?*
- Elites: *To what degree do citizens want politicians to take action upon this topic?*





Results for education
are similar

Towards a research program

- Scrutinize mechanisms of representational inequality
- Social networks? Lobbying? Polling? Donations? Turnout?
- Willingness or capacity?
- Solutions?
 - Descriptive representation – quota
 - Better information for representatives about public opinion
 - Better information for citizens about representatives' behavior (accountability)

