Outline

1. Geography Matters

2. Geography Misleads
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1 Geography Matters

2 Geography Misleads
Tobler’s First Law of Geography

“Everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than distant things.”—W. F. Tobler

- **Segregation**: similar people **forced** to live together (e.g., black ghettos)
- **Homophily**: people **choose** to live near others like themselves (e.g., hipsters in Williamsburg)
- **Socialization**: people **become** more similar to those around them (e.g., Southerner moves north and loses drawl)
Different kinds of people (voters) are not distributed evenly across space.

Different areas have different political leanings.

The political effects of geography are greatest in single-member district plurality (SMDP) systems.
Example: Leftists Cluster in Cities

Across industrial societies…

- Industrial working class concentrated in urban areas
  \(\rightarrow\) economic liberalism (socialism)

- Highly educated professionals attracted to urban culture
  \(\rightarrow\) social liberalism (secular cosmopolitanism)

\[\implies\] Liberals (US Democrats) are highly concentrated in cities.

- Also true of conservative-leaning groups (wealthy white suburbs, Mormon Utah), but less extreme.
To see a map illustrating the 2012 Presidential Election Results by County, go to: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:2012nationwidecountymapshadedbypercentagewon.svg.
Electoral Bias: Democrats Are Inefficiently Distributed

Bush % of two-party vote: 49.7%
Districts carried by Bush: 52.4%

2000 Election

Bush % of two-party vote: 49.7%

Districts carried by Bush: 52.4%

Number of Districts

District Margin for Bush Relative to Nation (%)

207 Gore districts

228 Bush districts

left skew
Church Attendance, by State

States of the States (Church Attendance)

Frequency of Church Attendance:
- **Higher-range (45%-63%)**
- **Mid-range (36%-44%)**
- **Low-range (23%-35%)**

Image by MIT OpenCourseWare.
Median Income, by State

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
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The “ecological fallacy”: inferring relationships (correlations) among individuals from relationships among geographic units.
The Ecological Fallacy: Immigration and Income

% Immigrant $\times$ % Wealthy, by State

- Correlation across states: $+0.52$
- Correlation across people: $-0.05$
- How can this be?
Income and Republicanism: Individuals vs. States

- Richer states vote more Democratic (solid dots) → cultural differences
- Richer people vote more Republican (hollow dots) → economic differences
- Income variation is much greater within states than across, so national relationship is positive.

Image by MIT OpenCourseWare.
Income and Republicanism: State Context Matters

- Income matters more in rich states than in poor states.
- It is the rich whose voting differs across states, not the poor, probably because the cultural/religious attitudes of the rich vary more (homophily?)

Image by MIT OpenCourseWare.