

Testing Sincere Versus Strategic Split Ticket Voting :
Evidence from Split House-President Outcomes, 1900-2004

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Using data on the outcomes of elections for President and for Representative in U.S. House over the period 1900-2004, we consider the factors that affect the proportion of split outcomes for these two offices at the congressional district level. We develop a multivariate model with five factors: (1) margin of presidential victory, (2) magnitude of incumbency advantage, (3) magnitudes (standard deviations) of ideological differences among House members of the same party, (4) mean ideological differences between Republican and Democratic House members (DW-NOMINATE scores), and (5) mean ideological differences between Republican and Democratic presidential candidates. We predict that the fourth of these variables will be negatively linked to the proportion of split outcomes, but that the remaining variables will be positively linked to that proportion. While most of these hypotheses are consistent with the previous literature, for mean ideological differences between the presidential parties, the sign on the hypothesis (indirectly) contradicts the prediction of balancing models of ticket splitting (Fiorina 1996), in that the balancing model suggests that the further apart are the parties, the greater will be the degree of ticket splitting among individual voters, since there will be more voters close to neither party who need to balance off House and Presidential candidates to come closer to their own more centrist position. Over the 104 year time period, we provide a model with only three factors -- each statistically significant and with the predicted sign -- that explains 73% of the variance over that period, and a four variable model that explains 77% of the variance.

Introduction

Given the potential to have the Presidency and at least one branch of the Congress controlled by different parties because of the near even partisan balance in the country, scholars of American politics have responded with a plethora of research on ticket splitting as a key factor in accounting for divided government.¹ While both the degree of ticket splitting and the proportion of constituencies with different party outcomes for House and President have generally been on the rise from the minuscule levels observed in elections earlier in this century, both proportions have recently been declining.² This recent decline suggests that we need to take into account factors in addition to the rise of candidate-centered politics or policy-balancing to explain levels of ticket splitting, since these models either suggest that levels of split-ticket voting should be remaining the same or increasing (as parties become increasingly polarized).³ Although we look at data

¹ Note, however, that it is possible to have divided government without ticket splitting.

² Also relevant is the fact that the prediction of Brunell and Grofman (1998) that we should observe a further (post-1996) decline in the number of states with U.S. Senators of more than one party has been confirmed. Both the South and non-South have experienced declines in the number of states with divided delegations since 1996. In 1996 five of these ten states elected divided delegations. There are currently only two of ten -southern states with a divided delegation: Florida and Louisiana. Seven of the eight other southern states now elect unified Republican delegations, while Arkansas is the only state in the South with two Democrats in the Senate. There are also far fewer divided delegations from the Northeast. Only Rhode Island is currently represented by one Senator from each party. All the other states have either a unified Democratic delegation (like Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and Vermont), or a unified Republican delegation (like New Hampshire, Maine, and Pennsylvania).

³ In the Brunell and Grofman (1998) model, the key explanation for ticket splitting is the interaction between realigning trends, incumbency advantage and staggered elections. The basic idea is that while realignments are happening, we get split delegations temporarily. (This intuition has the implication that when we observe a clear inflection point in the proportion of split delegations we may use it as a clue to the status of the ongoing realignment, i.e., is it an ebbing or a still cresting tide.)

aggregated at the constituency level, the intuition underlying our approach to split ticket voting is that ticket splitting at the individual level is done for sincere, rather than strategic reasons. Thus we draw on ideas as in the work by Burden and Kimball (1998, 2002), Frymer (1994), Frymer et al (1997), and Grofman et al (2001), rather than relying on the balancing models of Fiorina (1996) or Alesina and Rosenthal (1995) as the main explanation for split-ticket voting patterns.⁴

Looking at split-ticket proportions in the House at the constituency level, we ask "How can we account for changes in the proportion of House districts that register a majority of votes for one's party presidential candidate but simultaneously give their support to another party's candidate for House over the period 1900-2004?" We offer a multivariate model of ticket splitting at the aggregate level with five key variables: (1) margin of presidential victory, (2) magnitude of incumbency advantage, (3) magnitudes (standard deviations) of ideological differences among House members of the same party members (DW-NOMINATE scores), (4) mean ideological differences between Republican and Democratic House members (DW-NOMINATE scores), and (5) mean ideological differences between Republican and Democratic presidential candidates. We predict that the first and fourth of these variables will be negatively linked to the

4 The balancing approach argues that voters ticket split in order to elect a "set" of elected officials that is more likely to achieve policies preferred by the voter. For example, if slightly left of center voters who generally support Democrat candidates see (or expect to see) a Democrat in the White House, they may now wish to vote for a conservative Republican for the House of Representatives in order to (try to) move overall policies (slightly) to the right and thus closer to their ideal point than would be obtained were the federal government unified under either a Democratic (leftist) or a Republican (rightist) regime. With supplementary assumptions about shifts in either voter preferences or party/candidate locations or about differences in voter certainty about probable election outcomes the policy-balancing model can also be used to explain variations in the amount of ticket splitting across elections (Alesina and Rosenthal 1995).

proportion of split outcomes, but that the remaining variables will be positively linked to that proportion.

Various authors, including Fiorina and Alesina and Rosenthal and the works referenced above, have looked at the empirical evidence on factors affecting split-ticket voting: see e.g. Alvarez and Schousen (1993), Born (1994), Sigelman, Wahlbeck & Buell. (1997), Smith et al (2001), Lacy and Paolino (1998). Most of these studies examine incentives for ticket splitting at the individual level, and use survey data, although a few do look at split outcomes at the aggregate (district or state) level as well). Here we build on the sincere split ticket voting literature and test some of the critical assumptions in both policy balancing and models of sincere voter choice..

We begin with three simple (stylized) empirical facts. One fact is that constituencies differ in their distribution of voter ideological preferences; in particular, districts may be expected to differ in the ideological location of their median voter (Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1989), i.e., in some districts the median voter is right of center, in some districts the median voter is left of center.⁵ A second fact a la Downs (1957) is that candidates in any given constituency will be pulled toward the median voter in that constituency if they wish to have any real chance of winning election. A third fact (here, contra Downs), is that convergence is never complete, and candidates of opposite parties within any given constituency tend to be on opposite sides of the median voter in that constituency. In particular, over the 1900-2004 time period, in general, we expect the Republican candidate in any constituency to be to the right of the position of

⁵ Also, the median Democrat or Republican voter in the district may be either to the left or the right of the national median voter of her party.

the overall median voter in that constituency and the Democrat to be to the left. Indeed, in general, we expect candidates of a given party to be located somewhere intermediate between their party's median voter in the constituency and the overall median voter in that constituency (Aranson and Ordeshook 1972, Coleman 1971, 1972, Shapiro and Brady 1990, and Fenno (1978).

Putting these facts together, we expect that, in most congressional districts, there will exist a set of voters who are to the Democratic side of the midpoint between, say, the Democratic and Republican candidates for House, but who also are to the Republican side of the midpoint between the Democratic and Republican candidates for president, or conversely.⁶

In our model, it is these voters who will (sincerely) split their tickets. Critical to our model is the ideological character of the district, which we proxy using the party and roll call voting behavior of the incumbent, using the Poole-Rosenthal DW-NOMINATE measure of roll call voting.⁷

⁶ The sincere split ticket voting literature implies that candidates of the same party who are running for office in different constituencies (e.g., running in different House districts, or running for nation-wide or state-wide office rather than locally) will not necessarily share the same policy positions. In particular, constituency characteristics can be expected to affect the policy positions of candidates from that district, even though candidates of opposite parties running from the same constituency are still expected to exhibit policy differences. On the other hand, when we compare candidates of the same party running for the same office in two successive elections within the same constituency, the policy positions of these two candidates are likely to be very similar -- especially, of course, when it is the same candidate in both elections!

⁷ Because of the absence of data over this entire time period that would allow us to locate the ideological locations of challengers, we focus on the ideological characteristics of winners/incumbents.

We should note, however, that in acting as if medians are fixed, we do not mean to exclude the possibility of random error in voter candidate location assignments. We recognize, also, the potential for voter biases in assigning candidate locations generated by rationalization, assimilation and contrast effects (see e.g. Page and Brody 1972; Merrill, Grofman and Adams, 2001). However, explicitly incorporating the potential presence of such individual-level effects would unduly complicate our exposition but not, we believe, fundamentally change the aggregate level results on which this paper focuses.⁸

We now tease out some previously unexamined implications for differences over time in the proportion of House districts that exhibit split Representative-President outcomes. In particular, we derive the implications that the proportion of House districts that exhibit split Representative-President outcomes should increase with greater ideological diversity within each party's set of Representatives and decrease as the mean difference between the two party's ideological distributions in the House increases.⁹ This latter prediction is contrary to one derived from the balancing model (Fiorina 1996). We also consider the effect of size of presidential victory margins, magnitude of ideological differences between the presidential candidates, and magnitude of the incumbency advantage effect on changes over time in the proportion of split outcomes. We show that all five factors have strong predictive power, but that a simple three-factor model can

⁸ Erroneous perceptions create the potential for split-ticket outcomes as an artifact of either “random” or “systematic” errors by the voters in locating candidates in terms of the policy dimension(s). Here, ticket splitting is most likely in constituencies where the candidates are symmetrically located around the median voter.

⁹ In other words the more the two distributions (ideology of Democrats and ideology of Republicans) overlap, the more split ticket voting we ought to see.

explain most of the variance in the proportion of House districts with incumbents running that exhibit split representative-President outcomes over the period 1900-2004.

The Basic Model

A simplified exposition of our sincere split ticket voting model is shown in Figure 1. In it, the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates are treated as being located at roughly equal distances on either side of the national median voter with results illustrated for three generic types of House districts: liberal (type 1), moderate (type 2) and conservative (type 3). In each district, the Democratic and Republican candidates for that district are shown on opposite sides of the median voter in that district, with each party's candidate roughly an equal distance from the district median. In Figure 1 capital letters refer to the location of the presidential candidates (D and R) and the national median (M), while lower case letters refer to the locations of each party's candidates in each of these three generic types of districts (i.e., d_1 and r_1 , d_2 and r_2 , d_3 and r_3 and to the locations of the district medians m_1 , m_2 , and m_3).

===Figure 1 about here===

In the sincere models of split ticket voting, congressional districts will exhibit a split outcome for House and President either when (1) the median voter in the district is to the Democratic side of the midpoint between the Democratic and Republican candidates for House but to the Republican side of the midpoint between the Democratic and Republican candidates for president, or conversely, when (2) the median voter in the district is to the Republican side of the midpoint between the Democratic and Republican

candidates for House but to the Democratic side of the midpoint between the Democratic and Republican candidates for president.¹⁰ A glance at Figure 1 reveals that the first case necessarily occurs when we have a Democratic Representative winning a generally conservative district, and the second case necessarily occurs when we have a Republican Representative winning a generally liberal district. Thus, if voters are sincere, when presidential and congressional voting outcomes in a district coincide is, by and large, determined by the ideological proximity of the median voter in the district to each of the pairs of candidates for President and House. Split outcomes for House and President are expected to be common in non-centrist districts won by a Representative of the “wrong party”, e.g., in conservative districts in the South held by Democrats, or liberal districts in New England held by Republicans (See also Frymer 1994, 1997).

Under the sincere voting, we expect that a Democratic presidential candidate should be least likely to carry the set of districts in which there are conservative winners of the opposite party and most likely to carry the districts in which there are liberal winners of his own party; while a Republican presidential candidate should be least likely to carry the set of districts in which there are liberal winners of the opposite party and most likely to carry the districts in which there are conservative winners of his own party. Thus, in a conservative district, if there is a split it will tend to occur, *ceteris paribus*, with a Democratic winning the congressional election and a Republican presidential candidate carrying the district; while the opposite is true for a liberal district. Under this model, it is also possible to have split-ticket outcomes even in perfectly centrist districts

¹⁰ In addition, sincere split ticket voting at the aggregate level can occur due to error when the candidates for one or the other office are located at equal distances from the median voter.

in which the median voter in the district is at the same location as the national median voter. *Ceteris paribus*, this will happen when the Republican presidential candidate is further away from the median voter in the district than is the Democratic presidential candidate, but the Democratic House candidate is closer to the median voter in the district than is the Republican House candidate, or conversely. Thus, in moderate districts, if there is a split outcome, it can occur either with a Republican winning the congressional election and a Democratic presidential candidate carrying the district, or the other way around.) Grofman et al (2001) present clear evidence for exactly this pattern of voting outcomes in the post-WW II period -- driven by the interaction of voters' sincere preferences with differences in candidate locations for the two offices relative to the placement of the median voter in each district.

Even if we accept the general story told in the sincere split-ticket voting literature (recognizing, of course that it is not the whole story and that other factors will also play a role in accounting for split House-President outcomes, including errors in estimating candidate positions), a critical question not really addressed by the literature is the following: How many districts can we expect to exhibit split outcomes? Relatedly, what accounts for changes over time in the proportion of districts exhibiting such split outcomes? Although the issues are not directly addressed by this literature, these models have some important implications for how we might answer such questions.

Under sincere voting in the comparative midpoints and related approaches, for there to be any substantial number of split outcomes it is necessary that there be conservative districts won by Democrats and liberal districts won by Republicans. But, *ceteris paribus*, for that to be true, we must have an ideological range within each party.

If every candidate from a given party were ideologically interchangeable with every other candidate from that party, regardless of which district they were competing in, with the Republicans more conservative than the Democrats, then, *ceteris paribus*, we would expect that Democrats would capture all (or virtually all) the districts where the median voter in the district was to the left of the midpoint between the Democratic and Republican party positions, while Republicans would capture all (or virtually all) the districts where the median voter in the district was to the right of the midpoint between the Democratic and Republican party positions. Thus, if a candidate's party label was fully descriptive of the product being franchised in the way that a McDonald's hamburger equals a McDonald's hamburger whether purchased in North Carolina, North Dakota, New York, or New Hampshire, then, except for non-ideological “noise” in the system (e.g., voter choices based on candidate attributes, such as incumbency or perceived trustworthiness, that are distinct from pure ideological positioning), we would expect no split ticket outcomes!

The magnitude of the presidential tide will affect how many districts exhibit a different outcome for House and for President. If (perhaps for reasons largely unrelated to ideological positioning, e.g., a backlash against the performance of the previous incumbent) the winning presidential nominee wins big, it is likely that he will win a majority of the votes even in some of the districts in which House victories are won by candidates (especially incumbents) of the opposite party. Thus,

Hypothesis 1: The larger the margin of victory for the winning presidential candidate, the greater the proportion of House seats we expect to exhibit split outcomes.¹¹

¹¹ However, a realigning election may “trump” local considerations, allowing a presidential landslide to translate into a partisan sweep of house districts as well. Such a

The magnitude of incumbency advantage effects also ought to matter. In particular, as theorists associated with the “rise in candidate-centered politics” thesis have observed, declines in voter party loyalty, an increase in the number of voters who call themselves independents, a change toward media-centered campaigns, a decline of party machines, have all, arguably, contributed to an increase in incumbency advantage as well as an increase in ticket splitting (see e.g. Wattenberg 1991, 1996). The basic idea is that changes in the magnitude of the incumbency advantage effect can be expected to affect the proportion of split House-President outcomes because a strong incumbency advantage means that House candidates will be expected to run ahead of their party's candidate for president,¹² and this is a recipe for split House-President outcomes at the aggregate level. Thus, we are led to the following prediction.

Hypothesis 2: The bigger the incumbency advantage in the House, the greater the proportion of House seats we expect to exhibit split outcomes.

phenomenon, as may have been observed in 1932, say, cuts against our argument. We might also wish to take into account how many seats the losing nominee's party previously held in Congress. Obviously, if the party of the losing presidential candidate had few House seats to begin with, that puts constraints on the proportion of House districts that we might expect to exhibit split outcomes in which the split involved the district being carried by the winning Presidential nominee and a House victory for the party of the losing presidential candidate.

¹² Take a district where the incumbent is further away from the median than her opponent. If the incumbent still wins, we may attribute this to a kind of “benefit of the doubt” (Feld and Grofman 1991) given to the incumbent by many voters that compensates for her ideological “disadvantage.” Similarly, if the incumbent retains her seat in a district where a presidential nominee of the opposite party carries the district, it is likely that either she is closer to the median voter in that district than the losing presidential nominee of her own party, or that she retained the district thanks to an incumbency advantage that helped her withstand the presidential tide in favor of the other party

It is the potential for a candidate with the Democrat label to distinguish himself from other Democrats by positioning himself closer to the median voter in his district, and the potential for a candidate with the Republican label to distinguish himself from other Republicans by positioning himself closer to the median voter in his district, that makes split ticket outcomes possible. Thus, we might expect that, when there are a lot of split ticket outcomes, we would find that Democratic incumbents (or candidates) in conservative congressional constituencies will, on average, be considerably more conservative in voting behavior than the average Democratic representative; and, similarly, Republican incumbents (or candidates) in liberal congressional constituencies will, on average, be considerably more liberal in voting behavior than the average Republican representative. Still, as suggested in Figure 1, the Democrat in a conservative constituency will not, in general, be quite as conservative as a Republican elected from that same constituency, and a Republican elected from a liberal constituency will still not be quite as liberal as a Democrat elected from that same constituency. This expectation is consistent with the empirical evidence (Brady and Lynn 1973). But, to put it the other way around, and to get the causal arrow correctly, we may derive the following expectation:

Hypothesis 3: The greater the range of ideological variation within each political party's House members, the greater the expected proportion of split House-President outcomes. That is, the wider the ideological distribution within each party, the more likely are split outcomes.

While this expectation seems quite straightforward once we think through the logic of the sincere ticket splitting models, as far as we are aware it has not previously been proposed.

We can also derive an implication about the expected link between the ideological differences between the parties and the expected proportion of split House-President outcomes. It is reasonable to believe that each party's candidates are pulled away (at least slightly) from the median voter in their own district toward their "party's" location (e.g., toward the position of the party's presidential nominee, or toward the position of the party's House leadership, or toward the location of the party's median supporter nationwide (see Shapiro and Brady 1990 for instance)). If so, then the further apart are the party's national positions, the less likely it is that each party will be able to win House seats where the location of the median voter gives us the other party a natural advantage. In other words, if each of the national parties exerts a pull on their own candidates, then we should expect that, if, nationally, Democrats and Republicans look very ideologically distinct, few Democrats will be elected from conservative House districts and few Republicans will be elected from liberal House districts. But, if few Democrats are being elected from conservative House districts and few Republicans are being elected from liberal House districts, then, we expect that there will be very few split outcomes for House and President. Thus,

Hypothesis 4: The greater the difference between the mean ideological location of each political party's House members, the lower the expected proportion of split House-President outcomes.

This leads us directly to a result rather different from the literature on split ticket voting that draws on the idea that voters are "policy balancing" across a (hypothetical) combined ticket for the offices of Representative and President. Fiorina (1996: 81) asserts: "When the parties are relatively close, near the center of the gravity of the electorate, ticket splitting declines. When the parties move away from each other, they

open up a large range in which ticket splitting is the voter response.” We propose what is near to the exact opposite implication. Our hypothesis and that of Fiorina are not fully contradictory because he is talking about incentives for ticket splitting at the individual level while we are talking about split outcomes at the aggregate level of whole congressional districts. At the individual level we would want to know both the (perceived) positions of the various candidates and the voter's ideal point in order to predict voting choices. However, it is important to note that Burden and Kimball (2002) demonstrate that “ticket splitting [at the individual level] increases as the parties/candidates move closer together.”

On the other hand, Hypothesis 4 is consistent with ideas that can be drawn from the analysis in Downs (1957) that would suggest that, when distinctions between the parties are blurred, voters will be forced to rely more on non-party cues for their votes, which would then increase the likelihood of split ticket voting.

The relative distance between the presidential candidates ought to have an effect on split outcomes as well. If the candidates for the presidency are far apart (i.e. the platforms diverge significantly) then members of Congress who take a more moderate position might win when even if the presidential candidate of their party loses, which would increase split outcomes. We quantify this variable by using data derived from the respective platforms of the two political parties (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994; Budge and Hofferbert 1990). These data are fairly good proxies for the stances of the two presidential candidates, especially given the role that the nominees play in drafting the platform and controlling the agenda of the platform.

Hypothesis 5: The greater the ideological distance between the two presidential candidates, the greater the number of split district outcomes.¹³

Finally, we will wish to consider the confounding effects of realignment. Because any recent partisan realignment in the country has been most marked in (or perhaps even isolated to) the South, with the replacement of conservative Democrats by (even more) conservative Republicans, we anticipate that, as that realignment has played itself out in the 1990s, the proportion of split-ticket outcomes in the South should go down. Now we turn to an empirical test of our hypotheses.

Data Analysis

We take as our dependent variable the yearly proportion of congressional districts with different partisan outcomes for President and House in presidential years over the period 1900-2004. We have graphed our dependent variable over time in Figure 2. Clearly, this proportion has varied from year to year with the most recent changes being significant declination in the number of split districts over the last twenty years or so.

To test Hypothesis 1, we take as our measure of presidential sweep the ratio of the vote share of the winning major party's presidential candidate to the vote share of the losing major party candidate.¹⁴ To test Hypothesis 2, we take as our index of incumbency advantage the measure developed by Gelman and King (1990). To test Hypothesis 3, we take as our measure of party ideological cohesion the standard deviations of Poole and

¹³ This hypothesis can also, however, be motivated by arguments from policy balancing.

¹⁴ We experimented with alternative operationalizations to reflect the existence of third parties, but the differences in results were so minimal that we decided to stick with the simplest specification.

Rosenthal (1997) DW-NOMINATE scores, and look at the yearly value of those standard deviations averaged over the two parties. To test Hypothesis 4, we take as our measure of party ideological differences the differences between the mean DW-NOMINATE scores for the House members of each party. Of course, these winner-only based measures are only proxies for within-district differences between the candidates of the two major parties. Yet we expect the former to be highly correlated with the range of variation in ideological stance within each party, and the latter is likely to be highly correlated with the differences in the national positions of the (congressional) parties. To test Hypothesis 5 we use data generated on the respective platforms of the two major political parties from 1920-2004 (see e.g. Klingemann 1994, Budge and Hofferbert 1990).¹⁵

Table 1 shows the bivariate correlations among the five variables we use as independent variables for each of the five hypotheses. We find strong statistically significant relations between the proportion of split congressional districts and both the degree of political diversity within parties (tapped by the average standard deviation of the DW-NOMINATE distributions for each of the two parties) and the difference in ideology between parties (tapped by the difference between the mean DW-NOMINATE scores of each party). Both relationships are in the predicted direction -- higher levels of variance within the parties leads to higher divided outcomes and higher party polarization leads to lower levels of divided outcomes. Thus, Hypothesis 3 and Hypothesis 4 are clearly supported at the bivariate level. Similarly, Hypothesis 2, about the relationship

¹⁵ An alternative to this measure would be to use the perceived differences between the major candidates from the American National Election Surveys, although those data only exist since 1972.

between incumbency advantage and the proportion of split outcomes is also strongly supported. The higher the incumbency advantage, the greater the likelihood of split ticket outcomes.¹⁶ As for the ideological difference between the presidential candidates of each party identified in Hypothesis 5 the correlation is positive and statistically significant, indicating the as two candidates for president are more ideologically apart, the likelihood of split outcomes increases. Only the presidential sweep variable (Hypothesis 1) is not statistically significant (and it actually appears to be negatively associated with our dependent variable, contrary to our hypothesis).¹⁷

===Table 1 about here===

Of course, bivariate relationships do not provide us the best evidence of what the impacts these variables might have on the dependent variable were each to be part of a properly specified multivariate model. We show in Table 2 what happens when we include various combinations of the five variables we have hypothesized to be important in a multivariate regression.

When the two variables proposed in Hypotheses 3 and 4, derived from the sincere split ticket voting models, are jointly entered in the equation (Model 1 in Table 2) the congressional party standard deviation variable remains statistically significant, but the party differences variable is the wrong sign and statistically significant. When entered

¹⁶ It might be suggested that this relationship is coincidental, in that both incumbency advantage and split outcomes have been on the rise. However, since we have provided a clear theoretically expected link between the two variables, and the relationship persists even after other controls have been introduced in multivariate models, we believe that the observed relationship is not spurious.

¹⁷ This same “non-result” holds for other ways of operationalizing presidential sweep, e.g., looking at the absolute difference in (two-party) Presidential vote shares.

jointly with a measure of presidential sweep (Model 2 in Table 2), the signs of coefficients on these variables and statistical significance are the same as in Model 1, and the presidential sweep variable is significant and signed correctly (positive). When we also add the incumbency advantage variable into the same equation (Model 3 in Table 2), the standard deviations variable remains positive and significant; the ideological differences variable is signed correctly, but still indistinguishable from zero; the presidential sweep variable remains signed correctly and significant; the incumbency advantage variable is positive, as expected, and significant. Finally in Model 4 we add the variable measuring the differences between the presidential platforms two major parties from Hypothesis 5. The model does not change appreciably. The platform differences variable is not significant and incorrectly signed.¹⁸ The other variables are comparable to the earlier models, although the coefficient for the party ideological differences variable is now correctly signed (negative) and statistically significant. Model 4 provides support for our first four hypotheses but does not support Hypothesis 5, the hypothesis that can be argued for either on sincere voting or on policy-balancing grounds.

===Table 2 about here===

Now, we take a somewhat different approach by thinking about the effects of within-party and between-party ideological differences from the perspective of ideological overlap in the party distributions. It is easy to see that overlap will be greater the larger is the standard deviation of each distribution and the smaller is the difference in

¹⁸ The reader should note that Model 4 has 5 fewer observations than the other three models due to limitations in the availability of the data for the party platform variable.

the party means. From the perspective of the sincere split ticket voting models, when the two party distributions overlap, the potential for split ticket voting should increase.¹⁹

Thus, we hypothesize that

Hypothesis 6: The greater the range of ideological variation between each party's House members as compared to the range of ideological variation within each political party's House members, the greater the expected proportion of split House-President outcomes.

Using the DW-NOMINATE score distributions for the House members of each party, we operationalize Hypothesis 6 by taking the mean party differences and dividing them by the square root of the sum of the squared party standard deviations.²⁰

The way in which we operationalize the overlap variable higher values will correspond to lower levels of overlap, while smaller values of this variable are indicative of higher levels of overlap. Thus, we expect when we include this variable in a statistical model the coefficient will be negative. Table 3 presents the results of our analysis when we include our various independent variables we have now proposed in the same regression equation. The variables we proposed in Hypothesis 6, which combines the two variables of Hypotheses 3 and 4 derived from the sincere split ticket voting literature into a single variable, is statistically significant and takes on the correct sign in all three of our models. The incumbency advantage variable and presidential ratio variable are

¹⁹ We might also note that from an analysis of variance perspective, two distributions are different to a statistically significant degree as a function of sample sizes of each, the mean difference between them, and the standard deviations of each distribution.

²⁰ While there are differences in relative party strength over the period, without great loss of generality, we shall simply disregard sample size effects, especially since there is little change in the number of representatives and no change in the size of the House after 1912.

correctly signed and significant in all models as well. Model 3 includes the platform differences variable which, as in the previous models, fails to achieve statistical significance.

===Table 3 about here===

One alternative explanation for the change in the number of split district outcomes involves the realignment in the South. It is well known that a secular realignment has been on going in the states that make up the former confederacy for roughly the last 30-40 years (Bullock 1988, Aistrup 1996, Brunell and Grofman 1998). Generally speaking, the South is transforming from an area in which the Democrats dominated party politics for some time, to a region of the country that is solidly Republican. This movement may, in part, explain a great deal of the variance in our dependent variable. In order to test this proposition we recalculated the dependent variable for only the non-southern states.²¹ The results do not change appreciably (full data omitted for space reasons).. The incumbency advantage and standard deviation variables fall out of the range of statistical significance, although this is partly due to the fact that we could only gather data for the non-south since 1956, which reduced our sample size by more than half. Still, we take the results as evidence against the proposition that the south is solely to blame for changes in the number of House-President splits..

²¹ Here we define the south as Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia.

Conclusion

We found incumbency effects and size of presidential sweep helped us predict levels of split-ticket voting outcomes between the House and the president over the 1900-2004 time period using congressional district as our unit of analysis. These findings generally support what we may call a model of “sincere” ticket splitting. Grofman et al (2000) point out that the policy balancing model cannot account for the fact that it is either very conservative or very liberal congressional districts that have the highest proportions of split outcomes, rather than the moderate districts where (a) moderate voters are presumably to be found in large numbers and (b) moderate voters might be thought to have the greatest incentive to shift their vote in a policy balancing fashion because the choices of voters like themselves are most likely to be decisive for outcomes.²² Here we have shown that an expectation that can be derived from the policy balancing model, namely that levels of ticket splitting should increase when the congressional parties become more ideologically distinct, is not supported empirically. Rather, the expectation we derived from the class of models based on sincere split ticket voting, that greater ideological differences between the congressional parties should, when appropriate controls are introduced, lead to fewer split outcomes, was strongly supported. Moreover there was no support (n.s. results) for the hypothesis that the greater the ideological distance between the two presidential candidates, the greater the number of split district outcomes – an hypothesis that can also be motivated by a policy

²² Note that since we posit that candidates will by and large reflect their party constituencies (see discussion above), only in constituencies where there are large numbers of moderates could we expect to get a moderate as a representative from either party.

balancing argument. However, the expectation that ideological cohesion within a (congressional) party should reduce the proportion of split House-President outcomes was supported, and we can get quite good results with a three variable model when we combine within-party differences and between-party differences in a single variable whose composition reflects insights from an analysis of variance perspective.

Divided government may occur as an unintended consequence of aggregating individual level preferences into election outcomes and as a function of changing patterns of within party and between-party polarization that may be linked to (regional) realignments. The voters are not necessarily pining for split control of the executive and legislative branches, as policy-balancing theory suggests, although some might be.

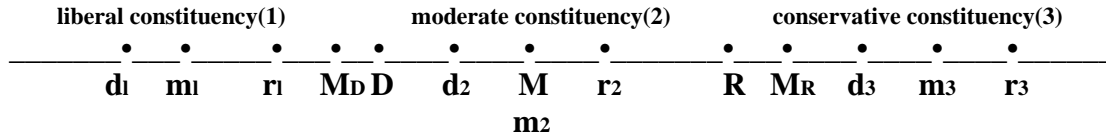
Rather, most voters who split tickets will choose to opt to do so when it makes sense (in a Downsian way) to do so. Also, when parties are “catch-all,” split ticket voting is more likely. In sum, we have shown that it is possible to explain a very large proportion of the variance in the proportion of split House-Presidential outcomes over the entire 1990-2004 period with very simple and intuitive ideas that combine the neo-Downsian approach (Burden and Kimball 2002, Frymer 1994, 1997, Grofman et al 2002) with the quite different candidate-centered perspective of scholars such as Wattenberg (1998) and Gelman and King (1990).

Finally, we would also note that our argument has applicability to more than just the United States. If candidates can “distinguish themselves” ideologically (or otherwise) from the rest of their party, they can win votes from those who, in other contexts, cast their votes for the candidates of other parties. Thus, for example, in mixed member systems such as that in Germany, where voters have two ballots to cast -- one to

determine party proportionality (PR), one to determine the winner of a single member district contest -- some of the voters who cast split votes may be doing so for “sincere” rather than for “tactical” reasons.²³

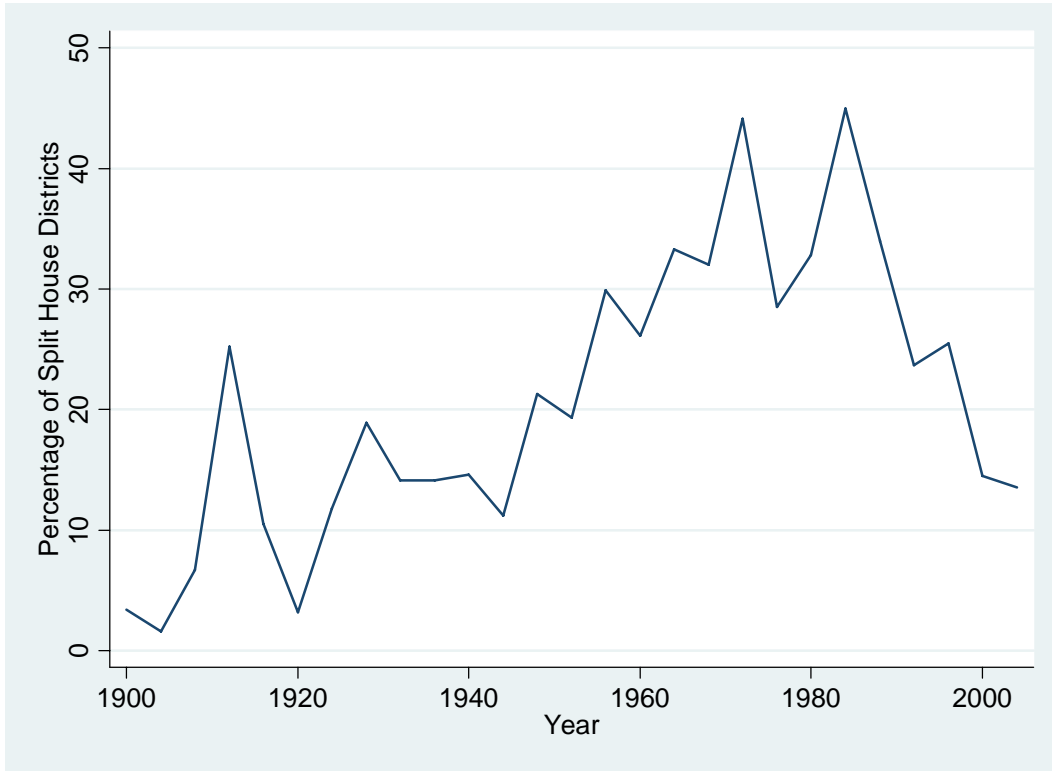
²³ By “tactical reasons” we refer to voter beliefs that the candidate of their most preferred party had no chance to win a plurality in the district but that a “PR” vote for their party of choice would not be similarly “wasted.” (see e.g. Cain 1974). However, we would emphasize that tests of tactical voting, like tests of policy-balancing, require analysis of individual level survey data, and thus the results in our paper can be only suggestive.

Figure 1. Relative Locations of Candidates and Voters in Three Constituencies



*R or r is used for Republicans. D or d for Democrats. Capital letters are used to represent the positions of presidential candidates and the location of the national median voter both overall and within each of the two parties; lower case letters are used to represent the positions of congressional candidates and the location of the median voter within each of the three types of congressional districts. Note that the relative location of r_1 , D and d_2 need not be the same as shown above; similarly the relative location of r_2 , R and d_3 need not be the same as shown above. Also the projected location of D relative to M_D and R relative to M_R reflects the view that a party's candidates are most likely to be found at policy positions located between the overall median voter and their own party's median voter.

Figure 2. Percentage of Split Districts, 1900-2004



*The graph depicts the percentage of House districts that voted for the President from one party and a member of the House of another party.

Table 1: Bivariate Correlations among the Dependent and Independent Variables

	Presiden tial Ratio	Incumbency Advantage	Standard Deviation s	Party Mean Differences	Platform Differences	Split Districts
Presidential Ratio	1	-0.379*	-0.29	0.145	-0.081	-0.016
Incumbency Advantage	-0.379*	1	0.63***	-0.20	0.37	0.652***
Party Standard Deviations	-0.29	0.63***	1	-0.784***	0.33	0.830***
Party Mean Differences	0.145	-0.20	- 0.784***	1	-0.204	-0.609***
Platform Differences	-0.081	0.37	0.33	-0.204	1	0.40*

* p < .05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 2: Models Explaining the Proportion of Congressional Districts with Split Outcomes between the President and the House, 1900-2004

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Presidential Ratio		11.69* (4.88)	14.11** (4.59)	17.63** (5.10)
Incumbency Advantage			118.12* (50.73)	178.46** (56.29)
Party Standard Deviations	363.44*** (47.59)	411.34*** (69.08)	240.28* (96.96)	200.85* (63.51)
Cong. Party Differences	8.93 (15.05)	13.59 (13.89)	-8.89 (15.96)	-29.60* (17.56)
Platform Differences				-0.007 (0.092)
Constant	-44.20* (20.83)	-70.52** (21.98)	-35.96 (25.00)	-24.32 (23.86)
N	27	27	27	22
Adjusted R ²	.67	.72	.77	.79

Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the percentage of congressional districts with split outcomes between the president and the member of the House. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Table 3: Additional Regression Models using a Composite Variable

	Model 1	Model 2	Model3
Overlap	-17.42*** (4.04)	-18.18*** (3.57)	-27.43*** (4.63)
Incumbency Advantage	145.96*** (39.88)	181.14*** (45.58)	228.69*** (38.20)
Presidential Ratio		13.98*** (4.95)	19.37** (5.29)
Differences in Platforms			-0.03 (0.09)
Constant	35.68*** (6.05)	16.66 (8.60)	17.16 (8.21)
N	27	27	22
Adjusted R ²	.65	.73	.77

Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the percentage of congressional districts with split outcomes between the president and the member of the House. * p < .05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

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