

Uncertainty, Ambivalence, and Ticket-Splitting in the United States

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Abstract:

This paper examines voter uncertainty and ambivalence toward the major political parties as antecedents of ticket splitting in American national elections. Significant portions of the American electorate can be characterized as uncertain or ambivalent voters, although partisan ambivalence is generally not an intensely held mental state. Uncertainty toward the major parties has declined in the last twenty years, which helps explain the drop in ticket splitting in the United States. Uncertain voters and ambivalent voters appear quite distinct from one another in terms of ideology, political knowledge, and interest in politics, although both groups are more likely to split their tickets than other (more polarized) voters. Thus, uncertain voters and ambivalent voters appear to take different routes to split-ticket voting in the United States.

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Introduction

Divided partisan control of the legislative and executive branches of national government has been a common feature of American politics during the last forty years. Although their numbers have declined in recent elections, split-ticket voters are still a large enough bloc to make a difference in national elections. With an electorate roughly evenly divided between the two major parties, ticket splitters are in a position to swing the outcome of presidential and congressional contests.

Split-ticket voting is a common topic of study in the United States, and several theories have been proposed to explain ticket splitting. However, more can be learned about the types of voters who are susceptible to ticket splitting. This paper examines voter uncertainty and ambivalence as antecedents of ticket splitting in the United States. Significant segments of the American electorate can be classified as uncertain or ambivalent about the two major political parties. In addition, there is evidence that voter uncertainty and partisan ambivalence both contribute to ticket splitting in the United States.

Ticket Splitting in the United States

Ticket splitting in American national elections has declined substantially during the last few decades. Figure 1 shows the percentage of split congressional districts (i.e., districts carried by a presidential candidate of one party and a House candidate of another party) and the percentage of split Senate delegations going back to 1900, as well as the percentage of major-party President-House ticket splitters since 1952 (measured in NES

surveys). The same trends are evident from all three measures: ticket splitting increased starting in the 1950s, peaked around 1980, and has declined substantially in the last twenty years.¹ The 2004 election produced the lowest levels of ticket splitting seen in the United States since the 1950s and 1960s. These aggregate voting trends are consistent with other evidence of growing party polarization and resurgent mass partisanship in the United States (Miller 1991; Bartels 2000; Hetherington 2001). Explanations of ticket splitting in the United States need to account for these trends over time.

[Figure 1 about here]

Some of the features (or alleged defects) of divided party government in the United States are viewed differently depending on whether divided government is the product of strategic voters. One of the main scholarly debates about ticket splitting in the United States involves the degree to which ticket splitters act on a desire for ideological moderation in government. Some argue that voters strategically split their tickets to produce divided government and ideological balance between a conservative Republican Party and a liberal Democratic Party (Fiorina 1988; Alesina and Rosenthal 1995; Lacy and Paolino 1998; Mebane 2000).

In contrast, other explanations of ticket splitting emphasize non-strategic factors. For example, some argue that ticket splitting is the result of sincere policy-based proximity voting (Frymer 1994; Grofman et al. 2000; Burden and Kimball 2002). Other explanations posit that ticket splitting in the United States is a by-product of other factors,

¹ The bivariate correlations between these measures are all larger than .6.

such as the power of incumbency and the lack of competition in congressional campaigns (Born 2000; Mattei and Howes 2000; Burden and Kimball 2002).

Some of the non-strategic theories of ticket splitting point to voter uncertainty (or lack of information) as a contributing factor. For example, people who see no important differences between the two major parties rely less on partisanship and ideology in voting decisions, making them likely ticket splitters (Kimball 2005). Similarly, Karp and Graham (2005) find that voter uncertainty about candidate positions increases the probability of ticket splitting. However, it is possible that uncertainty is not the only state of awareness that contributes to ticket splitting. Ambivalence may also play a role in ticket splitting.

Ambivalence

Recently, scholarly attention has turned to political ambivalence among the American public. Ambivalence is generally defined as simultaneously holding positive and negative beliefs about an object. Thus, it denotes some degree of internal conflict. For example, a voter may like the Democratic Party's positions on social justice issues but dislike the party's record on national security matters.

Several studies argue that political ambivalence is quite common among the American public across many policy domains and election contexts (Hochschild 1981; Zaller 1992; Huckfeldt and Sprague 2000; Lavine 2001; McGraw et al. 2003; Meffert, Guge, and Lodge 2004). According to these studies, ambivalence delays voting decisions (Lavine 2001), makes political attitudes less stable (Zaller and Feldman 1992; Huckfeldt

and Sprague 2000; Lavine 2001; Meffert, Guge and Lodge 2004; Martinez, Craig and Kane 2005), conditions the effect of other attitudes on voting decisions (Lavine 2001; Basinger and Lavine 2005), and makes political attitudes less predictable (Lavine 2001; Alvarez and Brehm 2002). On the other hand, other studies suggest that relatively few Americans are politically ambivalent, and that ambivalence often has little influence on public policy attitudes (Alvarez and Brehm 2002; Steenbergen and Brewer 2004; Jacoby 2005).

A renewed focus on voter ambivalence brings voting behavior research in the United States back to its roots. The Columbia and Michigan voting studies examined the impact of “cross pressures” on voting behavior (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Campbell et al. 1960), reporting several findings replicated in the more recent studies cited above. Both studies define cross-pressured voters as holding a mix of issue positions or candidate evaluations that could support either major party, depending on which considerations are most important. In addition, the authors of *The American Voter* observe that cross-pressured voters are more likely to split their tickets (Campbell et al. 1960; Campbell and Miller 1957).²

The distinction between uncertainty and ambivalence is important for ticket splitting. Part of the debate over strategic ticket splitters centers on the difficulty of measuring voter preferences for divided government or policy balancing (Sigelman et al. 1997), at least using secondary survey data (Lacy and Paolino 1998). Policy balancing theories of ticket splitting clearly portray ideologically moderate voters as ambivalent – they like (or dislike) some positions of the Democratic Party, but they also like (or

² One recent study finds that ticket splitting is more common among partisans with favorable evaluations of the opposing party’s presidential candidate, suggesting another form of ambivalence (Mattei and Howes 2000).

dislike) some of the Republican Party's positions (Fiorina 1996: 74). If ambivalence toward the major political parties is a source of ticket splitting, it is at least consistent with policy balancing theories and may provide a link between individual political attitudes and collective outcomes (Fiorina 1996: 72, 80).

If uncertainty about political parties and their candidates is a cause of ticket splitting, then more information (e.g., more vigorous campaigns, more ideologically distinct political parties, and stronger partisan cues) may reduce voter uncertainty and thus reduce ticket splitting. In contrast, if ambivalence is a strong predictor of ticket splitting, it is less clear whether more information would change the frequency of ticket splitting. Some contend that additional information, particularly the mixed messages that characterize two-party campaigns in the United States, only heighten ambivalence (Alvarez and Brehm 2002). Others contend that any new information may tip an ambivalent voter toward one party or the other (Zaller 1992).

Measurement

There are several measures of political ambivalence (see Martinez, Craig, and Kane 2005 for a summary). At the aggregate level, one inferential strategy measures ambivalence based on the error variance in regression analyses (Alvarez and Brehm 2002). At the individual level, some measure ambivalence by asking people directly whether they have conflicted feelings about an object (e.g., Priester and Petty 2001). Others measure ambivalence among individuals by counting the number of positive and negative comments made about an object in response to open-ended questions or a series

of close-ended questions (Zaller and Feldman 1992; Lavine 2001). This final approach is the most common measurement used in political science.

Several studies in political science use a measure of ambivalence introduced by Thompson, Zanna, and Griffin (1995) and based on two principles. The *similarity* principle is that the number of positive and negative considerations about an object should be similar when a person is ambivalent. The *intensity* principle is that a greater number of positive and negative considerations indicates higher levels of ambivalence (Lavine 2001; Martinez, Craig and Kane 2005). These principles are translated into a numerical index using survey questions that offer respondents several opportunities to report positive and negative comments about political candidates, parties, groups, institutions, or issues. Following Basinger and Lavine (20005), I use responses to the likes/dislikes questions about political parties commonly used in NES surveys to measure ambivalence toward the parties. The questions ask: “Is there anything in particular that you [like/dislike] about the [Democratic/Republican] Party? What is that?” NES codes up to five mentions for each question. If we let P_D indicate the number of positive mentions of the Democratic Party and N_D indicate the number of negative mentions of the Democratic Party, then the Thompson, Zanna, and Griffin (1995) measure of ambivalence toward the Democratic Party is calculated using the following formula:

$$Ambivalence_D = \frac{P_D + N_D}{2} - |P_D - N_D|$$

The first part of the equation represents the intensity principle, as greater positive and negative mentions of the party increase the ambivalence score. The second part of the

equation represents the similarity principle, as equal numbers of positive and negative comments keep the score high. Values of the ambivalence scale range from -2.5 (most partisan) to +5.0 (most ambivalent). For example, a voter with five positive mentions and zero negative mentions about the Democratic Party will have a score of -2.5. A voter with five positive mentions and five negative mentions about the Democratic Party will have a score of +5.0. Those who offer no comments (neither likes nor dislikes) have a score of 0, which serves as a demarcation line. Positive scores indicate some level of ambivalence (both positive and negative mentions of the party), while negative values indicate some level of polarization (generally only positive or negative reactions to the party).

Figure 2 reports the distribution of scores in the measure of ambivalence for the Democratic Party (top panel) and the Republican Party (bottom panel) for all NES respondents who were asked the party likes/dislikes questions from 1952 to 2000 (N=31,544). There are a couple of points to make about the distribution of party ambivalence scores. First, there is a large modal category at zero in both distributions. Roughly one-third of NES respondents make no mention (either positive or negative) of each party.³ The zero category is slightly larger for the Republican Party than for the Democratic Party, probably a result of the GOP's minority party status for much of the period. Second, both distributions are skewed, with substantially more negative values than positive values. More than forty percent of the observations are less than zero (indicating polarized attitudes toward each party), but less than twenty percent are above zero (the ambivalent side of the scale). Furthermore, while the ambivalence scale can

³ There is one exception. The ambivalence measure equals zero if the respondent mentions 3 positives and 1 negative (or vice versa) about a political party. This is rare (roughly 7 percent of the zero values in Figure 1). All the remaining zeroes in the ambivalence measures reflect no likes or dislikes of the party.

extend to a high score of +5, only one percent of the observations are above +2.

Ambivalence towards each of the major parties in the United States appears to be neither widespread nor intense.

[Figure 2 about here]

It is possible that examining each political party in isolation understates partisan ambivalence. For example, some voters may have positive (or negative) reactions to both parties. Basinger and Lavine (2005) have modified the Thompson, Zanna, and Griffin (1995) index to create a measure of comparative ambivalence toward the two major parties. Let D equal the average number of positive mentions of the Democratic Party and negative mentions of the Republican Party (so $D = (P_D + N_R)/2$). Similarly, let R equal the average number of positive mentions of the Republican Party and negative mentions of the Democratic Party ($R = (P_R + N_D)/2$). The following formula measures comparative ambivalence toward the two parties:

$$Ambivalence_{comp} = \frac{D + R}{2} - |D - R|$$

This index compares the similarity and intensity of a person's comparative party mentions in a fashion similar to the formula used to measure ambivalence toward a single political party. Values for the comparative measure range from -2.5 (most polarized) to +5.0 (most ambivalent). At one extreme, a voter with five positive mentions of the Republican Party, five negative mentions of the Democratic Party, and no other party

comments, will have a score of -2.5. At the other extreme, a voter with five positive mentions and five negative mentions about both parties will have a score of +5.0. Those who offer no likes or dislikes of either party have a score of 0. As with the previous measures, positive scores indicate some level of ambivalence, while negative values indicate some level of polarization (Basinger and Lavine 2005: 173). Intermediate values indicate lesser amounts of one-sided partisan beliefs (for negative scores) or ambivalent beliefs about the two parties (for positive scores).

The distribution of scores for the comparative measure of partisan ambivalence is presented in Figure 3 for the same set of NES respondents. Overall, the distribution resembles those in Figure 2, although slightly flatter and spread out by comparison. Again, there is a large modal category at zero. Roughly twenty-six percent of NES respondents make no mention (either positive or negative) of either political party.⁴ The distribution is also skewed, with substantially more negative values than positive values. More than forty percent of the observations are less than zero (indicating polarized partisan comments), while roughly twenty-five percent are above zero (the ambivalent side of the scale). Again, even though the ambivalence scale extends to +5, only one percent of the observations are above +2. Thus, comparative partisan ambivalence in the United States is not very intense.

[Figure 3 about here]

⁴ Eighty-six percent of the zero values in the ambivalence index result from no mentions about either party. The exceptions include the following scenarios (D=3, R=1; D=4.5, R=1.5, D=1.5, R=.5; and vice versa).

Nevertheless, twenty-five percent of the American public registers some level of partisan ambivalence, a non-trivial amount in American elections. These voters merit closer examination with respect to split-ticket voting. However, the distribution of scores on the comparative ambivalence index suggests a potential problem in using the measure as a predictor of ticket splitting. One nice feature of the ambivalence scale is that no data are lost for respondents who do not offer any likes or dislikes of the parties. The disadvantage, however, is that all of those (non-)respondents have to be placed somewhere on the scale, and if they are numerous they can greatly skew the distribution and subsequent correlations with other variables. As it turns out, there is a positive correlation between the comparative ambivalence measure and President-House ticket splitting ($r=.09$, $p<.0001$). Most would expect ticket splitting to be less common among the polarized partisans toward the left end of the comparative ambivalence scale. However, is the positive correlation being driven by the ambivalent voters on the positive side of the scale or by the large neighboring cluster of uncertain voters at the zero point on the scale?

One way to examine the measure more closely is to collapse the ambivalence scale into three different sections (Basinger and Lavine 2005: 173). Voters with positive scores are classified as having ambivalent beliefs about the two parties, since they tend to provide a mix of positive and negative responses about both parties. Voters with negative scores are classified as having polarized views of the parties, since they offer comments

that tend to only favor one party. Finally, voters with a score of 0 are classified as uncertain, since they provide no positive or negative mentions about the parties.⁵

Table 1 compares the three categories of voters created from the comparative partisan ambivalence scale in terms of several political dimensions. The top panel of the table examines ticket splitting.⁶ The results indicate that ticket splitting does not rise monotonically as one moves from left to right on the comparative ambivalence scale. Ticket splitting is slightly more common among uncertain voters than among ambivalent voters, although the difference is marginal in terms of statistical significance ($p=.09$). This may not be a surprise since Independents tend to fall in the uncertain category much more often than Democrats or Republicans (Basinger and Lavine 2005). Nevertheless, ticket splitting is significantly more common among uncertain and ambivalent voters than among polarized voters. However, ambivalent voters are distinct from polarized voters and uncertain voters in their greater propensity to place themselves between the two major parties on a liberal-conservative spectrum. Thus, there is a likely political motivation for many of them to be ambivalent about the two parties in the United States.

[Table 1 about here]

⁵ Basinger and Lavine (2005) use different terminology for the last two categories, labeling the uncertain group “indifferent” and the polarized group “univalent.” I have chosen terms that I hope are more politically relevant.

⁶ Split-ticket voting in the United States tends to be driven by voting decisions in congressional elections. During the last thirty years, the vast majority of ticket splitters defected from their identified party in the congressional contest (Kimball 1997: 96). A significant amount of President-House ticket splitting in the United States occurs in uncontested districts, where one of the major parties fields no House candidate. In these districts, voters essentially have no choice about whether to cast a split ticket. Thus, voters in districts with uncontested House races are excluded from Table 1 and the ticket splitting analyses that follow.

When we examine political knowledge and interest in politics, it is the uncertain voters who stand apart from the others.⁷ As one might expect, voters in the uncertain category are significantly less knowledgeable than polarized and ambivalent voters. In addition, uncertain voters are much less likely to care about the presidential election than the other two groups. What may be a surprise is that the ambivalent group is the most informed category, with a mean political knowledge score a full item higher (on a 4-point scale) than the mean score for uncertain voters. In addition, political knowledge among ambivalent voters is significantly higher than among polarized voters.

Thus, while uncertain voters and ambivalent voters are both likely ticket splitters, they are quite distinct political groups even though they reside next to each other on the comparative ambivalence scale. Uncertain voters are less interested and less informed about politics than other voters. Ambivalent voters are likely moderates who are relatively well-informed and interested in elections. These comparisons reveal intransitivities in the comparative partisan ambivalence scale. This may create problems if researchers use the scale as a continuous variable (e.g., Lavine 2001; Basinger and Lavine 2005). In the analyses that follow, I will examine the separate groups of uncertain and ambivalent voters rather than the full comparative partisan ambivalence scale.

⁷ The political knowledge measure is constructed from four factual questions in the NES survey (identifying which party is more conservative, which party controls more seats in the House and Senate, and correctly recalling the names of local House candidates). These are especially appropriate knowledge questions to study ticket splitting and divided government since they involve ideological positions and partisan control of government. I summed the number of correct responses to the four items, creating a scale from 0 to 4.

Multivariate Analysis of Ticket Splitting

To see whether uncertainty and partisan ambivalence are important determinants of ticket splitting when controlling for other factors, I estimate a multivariate model of President-House ticket splitting. Several independent variables are included in the model to test different theories of ticket splitting. It is commonly held that ticket splitting reflects a weak psychological attachment to either major party (Campbell et al. 1960; Wattenberg 1998). Strong partisans (as opposed to independents) are less prone toward ticket splitting (Campbell and Miller 1957; Mattei and Howes 2000). Thus, strength of partisanship, created by folding the seven-point party identification scale, is included as an independent variable in the analysis.

Second, the multivariate model includes a measure to test policy balancing theories of ticket splitting. Other things being equal, ideological centrists should be more motivated to split their ballots than other voters. Thus, the model includes a dichotomous variable indicating whether a voter places herself in between the two major parties on the liberal-conservative spectrum.

Third, it is important to control for the quality of the competing House candidates. One obvious determinant of ticket splitting is incumbency. Voters are more likely to split their ballots when confronting an incumbent of the opposite party on the ballot (Sigelman et al. 1997; Born 2000; Burden and Kimball 2002). Thus, the model includes two dummy variables indicating whether the House contest features an incumbent of the same party or the party opposite the voter's chosen presidential candidate. Given that incumbency is a crude measure of candidate quality, it is important to also control for candidate

familiarity in the congressional race. Some incumbents face strong, highly visible challengers while many others face relatively unknown, token opposition. Ticket splitting should be more common in the latter contests. To account for these variations in candidate quality (especially for challengers), the model includes measures indicating whether voters can recall the names of the House candidates from their own party and the opposite party.

Finally, I include controls for region and ballot format. A dummy variable for residents of southern states accounts for higher rates of ticket splitting among those voters. There is a historical pattern unique to the South of selecting Republican presidential candidates while electing Democrats to Congress, although this regional distinction has gradually disappeared (Burden and Kimball 2002). An additional dummy variable indicates states with a straight-party device on the ballot, which tends to reduce ticket splitting (Campbell and Miller 1957; Burden and Kimball 2002).

[Table 2 about here]

The results of a multivariate analysis of president-House ticket splitting can be seen in Table 2. The sample used for this analysis includes NES respondents from 1980 to 2000 and excludes third party votes and House races that were not contested by both major parties.⁸ Thus, the analysis covers a period during which the parties polarized at the elite level (Poole and Rosenthal 1997; Layman 2001) and president-House ticket splitting declined substantially in the United States (from 27% in 1980 to 17% in 2000

⁸ Third party votes are relatively rare and confound tests of policy balancing. The name recall questions were not included in the NES battery before 1978. Otherwise the variables used for this analysis go back to 1976.

among voters in this sample). The first column in Table 2 provides the estimated logit coefficients and standard errors for each explanatory variable. The second column reports the change in predicted probability of casting a split ballot when varying each independent variable from its minimum to maximum value while holding the other explanatory variables constant.⁹ The change in probability values provides a more substantive comparison of the relative impact of each explanatory variable.

As expected, uncertainty and ambivalence are statistically significant predictors of ticket splitting even after controlling for several other important factors. While candidate-centered factors (incumbency and name recall in House contests) have the strongest impact on ticket splitting in the United States, some ticket splitting can be attributed to voters who are uncertain or ambivalent about the political parties. It also appears that uncertain voters are slightly more prone to ticket splitting than ambivalent voters.

Assuming the effects are constant across years, we can use these results to understand the decline in ticket splitting from 1980 to 2000. In particular, changes in the composition of the American electorate with respect to the independent variables in the logit model may account for the declining frequency of ticket splitting over time. Table 3 provides the distribution of polarized, uncertain, and ambivalent voters in each presidential election since 1980. It shows a substantial decline in uncertain voters, from 30% of the electorate in 1980 to slightly below 21% in 2004. As the political parties have polarized during the last twenty years, voter uncertainty about the major parties has

⁹ The strength of partisanship variable is held constant at 0 (pure independent) and all other variables are held constant at 0. These are the median values for each variable except for strength of partisanship (median is 2, a weak partisan). These values were chosen to simulate a voter susceptible to many forces that produce ticket splitting.

declined (Hetherington 2001). The drop in the share of uncertain voters during the last twenty years has similarly reduced the number of likely ticket splitters. Meanwhile, there has been a modest increase in the frequency of partisan ambivalence in the last twenty years. In 2004 and other recent elections, ambivalent voters outnumber uncertain voters by a significant amount. Finally, the polarized segment of the electorate has held steady, with perhaps a slight increase in the last two elections.

[Table 3 about here]

Two other factors may help explain the drop in ticket splitting since 1980. The first is that partisanship has strengthened. In 2000, 38% of the voters were strong partisans, as compared to 30% in 1980. Thus, increasing partisanship among American voters helps explain part of the decline in ticket splitting. Second, increased electoral competition in the South, where voters gradually shifted to the Republican Party, accounts for some of the drop in ticket splitting (Brunell and Grofman 1998; Burden and Kimball 2002). In the three most recent presidential elections, president-House ticket splitting was no more common in the South than in any other region of the country. None of the other variables in the regression model move in a direction that would lead to less ticket splitting over the last twenty years.

It is worth noting that there is some evidence in Table 2 consistent with policy balancing theories. Ticket splitting is positively associated with being located between the parties on an ideological spectrum (note the positive logit coefficient and change in

probability score for the “place self between the major parties” variable). While statistically significant, the substantive impact of being a moderate is weaker than most of the other explanatory variables.¹⁰ In addition, the number of voters who place themselves in between the two major parties has remained steady over the last twenty years (at around 22%), so ideological moderation does not help account for the decline in ticket splitting.

Conclusion

While the analyses presented here are somewhat exploratory, they suggest several conclusions and avenues for further study. While partisan ambivalence is neither widespread nor intense among the American public, more than half of the electorate can be characterized as ambivalent or uncertain toward the two major political parties. In addition, both types of voters seem to play a role in ticket splitting. The large drop in voter uncertainty helps explain the decline in ticket splitting observed since the 1980s. At the same time, the modest increase in ambivalent voters in recent elections suggests a growing segment of the electorate that is open to split-ticket voting.

In addition, uncertain voters and ambivalent voters appear quite distinct from one another in terms of ideology, political knowledge, and interest in politics, although both groups are more likely to split their tickets than other (more polarized) voters. The comparative partisan ambivalence scale described in this paper is gaining use in political science (Basinger and Lavine 2005). However, the fact that uncertain and ambivalent

¹⁰ In a separate analysis not presented here, it appears that being an ideological moderate has a positive and statistically significant effect on ticket splitting for ambivalent voters, but not significant for uncertain or polarized voters.

voters are located at adjacent points on the scale means that researchers should exercise caution when using this measure. More importantly, these findings suggest that uncertain voters and ambivalent voters may take different routes to split-ticket voting in the United States. In particular, it appears that the route to ticket splitting for ambivalent voters is more likely to involve political moderation, as well as greater knowledge and interest in the election. This dichotomy may resemble the “motivated” and “unmotivated” ticket splitters identified by Campbell and Miller (1957). Future studies should explore that possibility.

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Figure 1
Indicators of Ticket Splitting in the United States, 1900-2004

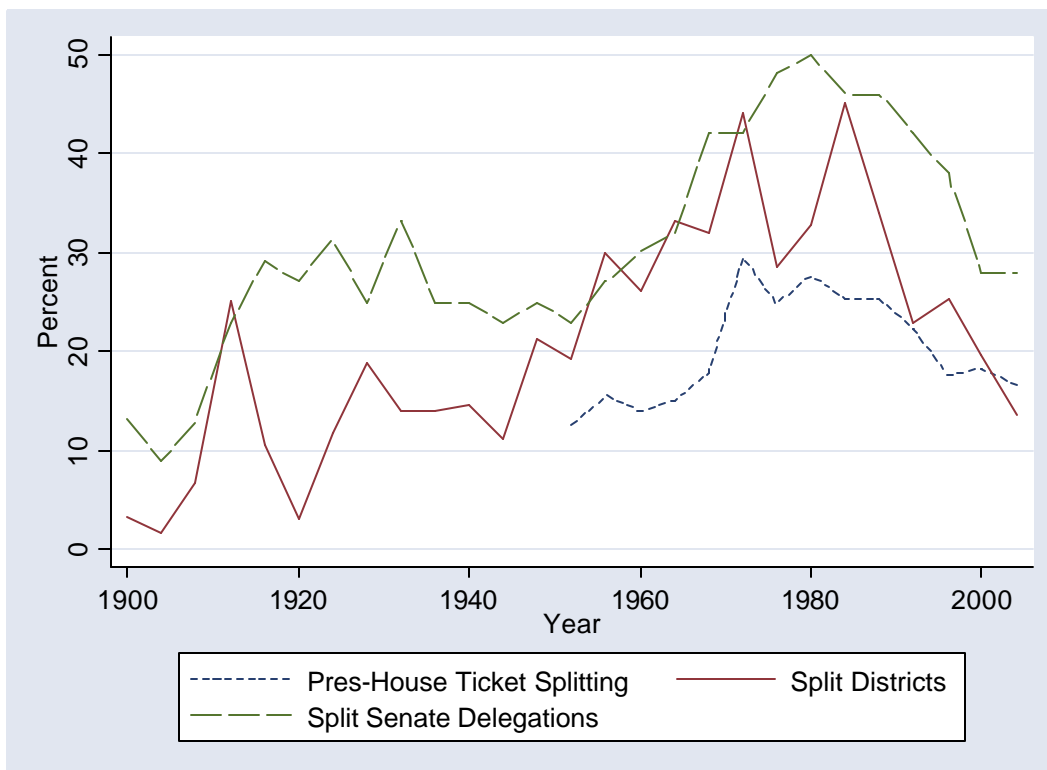


Figure 2
Ambivalence toward American Political Parties, 1952-2000

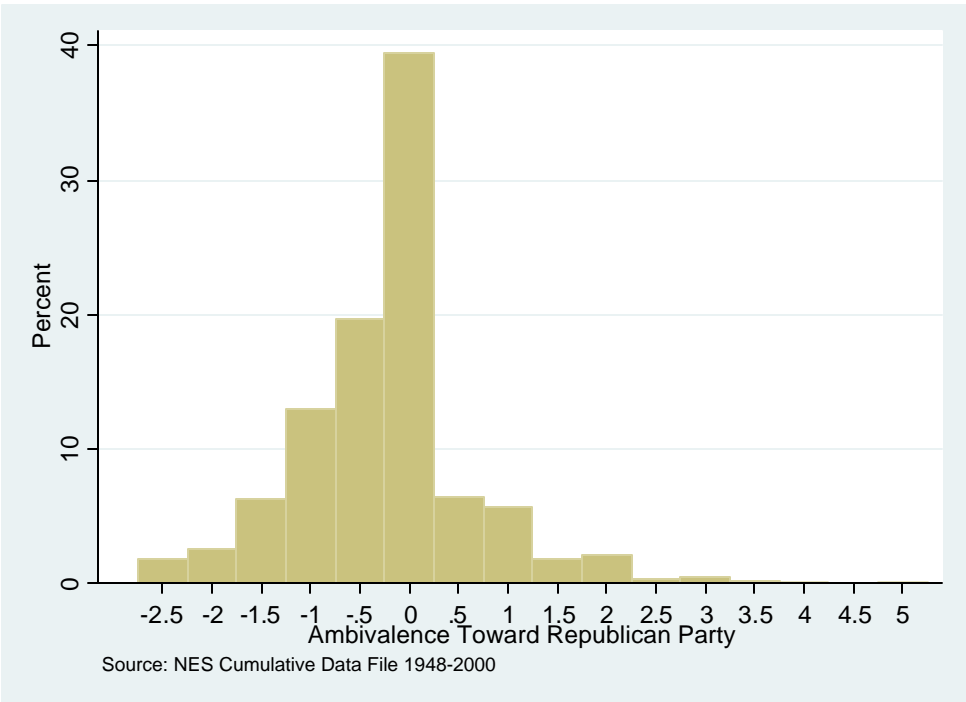
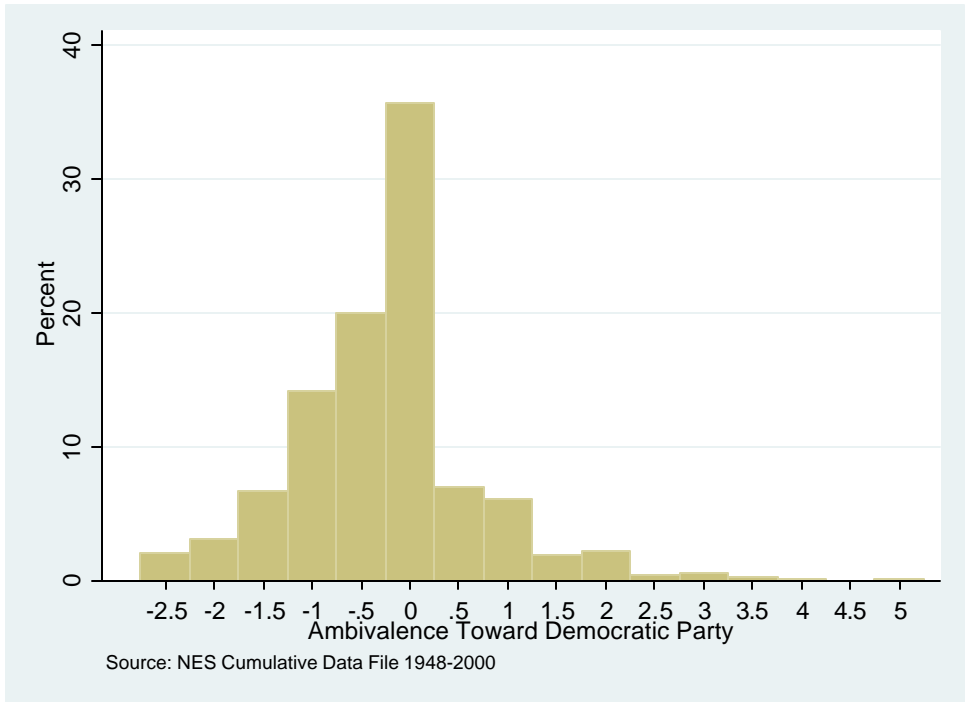


Figure 3
Comparative Partisan Ambivalence in the United States, 1952-2000

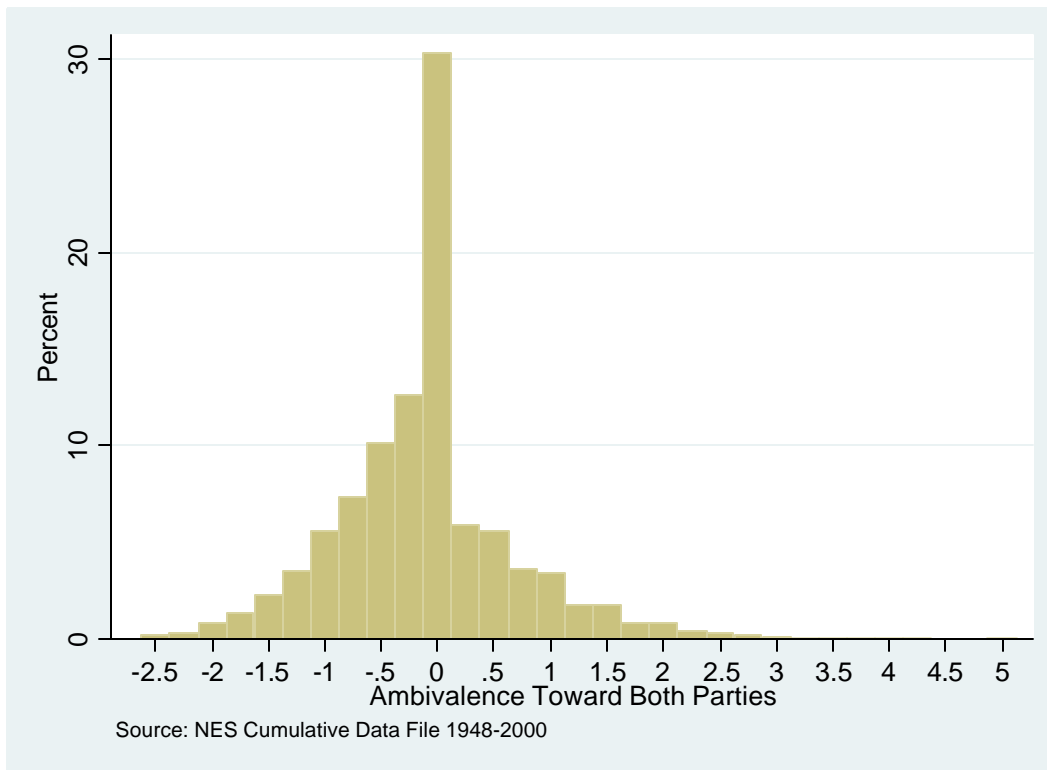


Table 1
 Political Profiles of Polarized, Uncertain, and Ambivalent Voters
 in the United States, 1982-2000

	Type of Voter		
	Polarized	Uncertain	Ambivalent
President-House Ticket Splitter	16.9%	27.4%	24.5%
	N=4,820, $\chi^2 = 58.7$ (p<.001)		
Care about Election Outcome	83.6%	62.3%	78.9%
	N=7,099, $\chi^2 = 307.9$ (p<.001)		
Place Self Between Both Parties	18.0%	16.0%	30.8%
	N=5,397, $\chi^2 = 122.2$ (p<.001)		
Mean Political Knowledge	2.3*	1.8*	2.8*

Note: Analysis only includes voters. Ticket splitting row only includes House races contested by both major parties.

*Value is statistically different from values in other columns (p<.0001).

Source: NES Cumulative Data File 1948-2000

Table 2
A Multivariate Analysis of President-House Ticket Splitting
in the United States, 1980-2000

Independent Variables	Coefficient (Std. Error)	Probability Change
Uncertain Voter	.49*** (.10)	.10
Ambivalent Voter	.31** (.10)	.06
Strength of Party Identification	-.33*** (.04)	-.14
South	.20* (.09)	.04
Straight-Party Ballot Device	-.17* (.08)	-.03
Place Self Between the Major Parties	.21* (.10)	.04
House Incumbent of Own Party	-1.11*** (.15)	-.15
House Incumbent of Opposite Party	1.09*** (.13)	.25
Recall Name of Own Party House Candidate	-1.03*** (.11)	-.15
Recall Name of Opposite Party House Candidate	.91*** (.10)	.20
Constant	-1.08*** (.17)	---
Number of cases	4737	
Model Chi-square	1202.9***	
Pseudo-R ²	.24	

Analysis only includes House races contested by both major parties. The dependent variable is coded 1 for a split ticket and 0 for a straight ticket. Cell entries are logit coefficients (std. errors in parentheses). Change in probability values are calculated by moving the variable of interest from its minimum to maximum value while holding all other variables constant.

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, +p<.1 (two-tailed)

Sources: NES Cumulative Data File 1948-2000

Table 3
 Frequency of Partisan Ambivalence in American Presidential Elections
 (Voters Only)

Year	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000	2004
Ambivalent	27.2%	24.0%	31.0%	29.1%	34.6%	33.6%	32.7%
Uncertain	30.4%	31.2%	23.6%	27.6%	21.6%	20.4%	20.6%
Polarized	42.4%	44.8%	45.3%	43.4%	43.8%	46.0%	46.7%
N	1,004	1,464	1,235	1,700	573	1,182	837

Note: NES asked the party likes/dislikes questions of a split-half sample in 1996.
 Source: NES Cumulative Data File 1948-2000; 2004 Pre- and Post-Election Study