B.J.Pol.S. **30,** 173–191
Printed in the United Kingdom
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Notes and Comments

Explaining Divided Government in the United States: Testing an Intentional Model of Split-Ticket Voting

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In recent years the study of divided government has been a growth industry. Numerous scholars have sought to explain patterns of divided government in the United States,[1] while others have attempted to explore the consequences of the phenomenon.[2] No doubt this scholarly interest in the subject is due in large part to the attention paid by the political media to divided control of the presidency and Congress during the 1980s, as well as the resulting 'gridlock' that dominated policy making in Washington during that time period.

Divisions in partisan control of Congress and the presidency during presidential election years are most certainly due to split-ticket voting, i.e., a willingness of voters to cast votes for one party for president and the other party for their members of Congress. Since scholars have documented the increase in split-ticket voting since the 1950s,[3] it is easy to see how one might link divided government during the 1980s with increases in split-ticket voting during the 1970s and 1980s. Moreover, it is not surprising that scholars interested in studying divided government have focused their attention on trying to explain patterns of split-ticket voting in the electorate.[4]

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[1] Morris Fiorina, *Divided Government* (New York: Macmillan, 1992); Morris Fiorina, 'An Era of Divided Government', *Political Science Quarterly*, 107 (1992), 387–410; Morris Fiorina, 'Response to Born', *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 19 (1994), 117–25; Gary Jacobson, *The Electoral Origins of Divided Government: Competition in US House Elections, 1946–1988* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990); Michael Alvarez and Matthew Schousen, 'Policy Moderation or Conflicting Expectations: Testing the Intentional Models of Split-Ticket Voting', *American Politics Quarterly*, 21 (1993), 410–38; Gary Cox and Samuel Kernell, eds., *The Politics of Divided Government* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1991); and the chapter within that book by John Petrocik, 'Divided Government: Is It All in the Campaigns?', pp. 13–38.

[2] Cox and Kernell, eds., *The Politics of Divided Government*; and particularly the chapters within it by Matthew McCubbins, 'Government on Lay-Away: Federal Deficits and Spending Under Divided Party Control', pp. 113–53; and by Charles Stewart, 'Lessons from the Post-Civil War Era', pp. 203–38; Lilliard Richardson and John M. Scheb, 'Divided Government and the Supreme Court: Judicial Behavior in Civil Rights and Liberties Cases, 1954–89', *American Politics Quarterly*, 21 (1993), 458–72; James Alt and Robert Lowry, 'Divided Government, Fiscal Institutions, and Budget Deficits: Evidence from the States', *American Political Science Review*, 88 (1994), 811–28; Morris Fiorina, 'Divided Government in the American States: A Byproduct of Legislative Professionalism?' *American Political Science Review*, 88 (1994), 304–16.

[3] Fiorina, 'An Era of Divided Government'.

[4] Fiorina, *Divided Government*; Fiorina, 'An Era of Divided Government'; Alvarez and Schousen, 'Policy Moderation or Conflicting Expectations'; Richard Born, 'Split-Ticket Voters, Divided Government, and Fiorina's

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123400000089 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Numerous explanations of split-ticket voting have been tendered in the literature. Fiorina has put forth a policy moderation explanation, which suggests that voters prefer divided government in order to create moderate policy outputs from government.[5] Petrocik advocates an issue-ownership explanation, suggesting that the relatively issueless nature of congressional elections insulates congressional incumbents from the very political tides that dominate presidential elections.[6] Jacobson suggests that voters utilize different criteria for determining their vote choice in presidential and congressional elections, and that the application of these different decisional criteria results in different outcomes for presidential and congressional elections.[7]

For Petrocik and Jacobson, split-ticket voting and, ultimately, divided government occur almost accidentally, with voters responding inadvertently to different messages emanating from presidential and congressional campaigns. In essence, voters do not make conscious decisions to cast a split-ticket vote, but instead react either to the different issue messages coming out of presidential and congressional races (Petrocik) or to the different criteria that they use in evaluating presidential and congressional candidates (Jacobson). In contrast, Fiorina's policy-moderation explanation of split-ticket voting presents voters as being somewhat more purposive in their behaviour. Fiorina sees voters as casting split-ticket votes as a means to achieve certain goals – in his case, the moderation of federal policy outcomes. To be sure, Fiorina does not suggest that most (or even many) voters make a conscious choice that connects explicitly the moderation of public policy with their vote choice in favour of divided government. Instead, Fiorina recognizes that such linkages may be unconscious, but seemingly purposive none the less.

Of course, it is not impossible that there are some voters who are making a more conscious decision to support divided government. Over the past several years survey researchers have asked citizens about the extent to which they support divided government. Fiorina reports data from the 1988 pre-election NBC News *Wall Street Journal* survey in which 54 per cent of likely voters stated that they preferred different parties to control the presidency and Congress, as opposed to only 32 per cent who preferred one-party control.[8] Based on responses to a similar item from the 1992 American National Election Study (ANES), 40 per cent of respondents indicated that they preferred divided control of the presidency and Congress, 28 per cent indicated that it did not make much of a difference, and only 32 per cent stated that they preferred unified control of these two institutions. Other scholars have documented variation in respondents' support for divided government, but in almost all surveys for which such questions have been asked a substantial proportion (usually a plurality or majority) support divided government.

At present, the empirical support for Fiorina's policy moderation model has been limited. Born[9] and Alvarez and Schousen[10] have found only mixed evidence to support

(F'note continued)
Policy-Balancing Model', *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 19 (1994), 95–116; Richard Born, 'Rejoinder,' *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 19 (1994), 126–30; Paul Allen Beck, Lawrence Baum, Aage Clausen and Charles Smith, 'Patterns and Sources of Ticket Splitting in Subpresidential Voting,' *American Political Science Review*, 86 (1992), 916–28.

[5] Fiorina, *Divided Government*; Fiorina, 'An Era of Divided Government'.

[6] Petrocik, 'Divided Government'.

[7] Jacobson, *The Electoral Origins of Divided Government.*

[8] Fiorina, 'An Era of Divided Government'.

[9] Born, 'Split-Ticket Voters, Divided Government, and Fiorina's Policy-Balancing Model'.

[10] Alvarez and Schousen, 'Policy Moderation or Conflicting Expectations'.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123400000089 Published online by Cambridge University Press

one of the key linchpins of Fiorina's thesis – i.e., that moderate voters are more likely than ideological voters to cast split-ticket votes. Moreover, Sigelman, Wahlbeck and Buell test the 'cognitive Madisonian' component of Fiorina's model, but they find little evidence that citizens who express support for divided government are actually more likely to split their ballots than other citizens.[11] Thus far the empirical support for Fiorina's theoretical arguments is far from definitive.

In this Note we consider whether and under what conditions voters act strategically by linking split-ticket voting behaviour to their preferences for divided government. Specifically, are voters who state a clear preference for divided government more likely to cast split-ticket votes than other voters, as Fiorina asserts, once the confounding effects of other variables are taken into account? In order to address this question, we utilize data from the 1992 American National Election Study (ANES) to specify a full model of split-ticket voting. Many of the independent variables utilized in our study are borrowed liberally from models presented and tested by scholars such as Alvarez and Schousen and Born.[12] Like Sigelman *et al.*,[13] we build on previous research on split-ticket voting by modelling explicitly the impact of respondents' stated preferences for divided government as a means of testing for purposive or intentional effects, as suggested by Fiorina. However, unlike other scholars, we consider the possibility that the relationship between support for divided government and split-ticket voting varies as a function of voters' level of political knowledge, and that intentional split-ticket voting requires voters to have sufficient knowledge to be able to link preferences with aggregate electoral outcomes.

MODELLING SPLIT-TICKET VOTING

In this section we lay out the general contours of a model of split-ticket voting. The variables included in our model fall into several broad categories: (1) respondents' explicit preferences for divided government; (2) spatial variables, such as those that form the core of Fiorina's policy-moderation model; (3) system-support variables, such as external efficacy and political trust, as well as related variables such as strength of partisanship, interest in presidential election outcome, and political knowledge, all of which reflect respondents' support for the political system and/or adherence to the tenets of 'good citizenship'; (4) incumbency variables; and (5) socioeconomic and demographic control variables. Many of these variables have been at the core of recent work on split-ticket voting and divided government.[14]

We should note at the outset that the dependent variable in our analysis is split-ticket voting in the 1992 presidential and House elections, coded 1 for respondents who cast votes for different parties for these two offices, and 0 otherwise.[15] Because the dependent

[11] Lee Sigelman, Paul Wahlbeck and Emmett Buell, 'Vote Choice and the Preference for Divided Government: Lessons of 1992', *American Journal of Political Science*, 41 (1997), 879–94.

[12] Alvarez and Schousen, 'Policy Moderation or Conflicting Expectations'; Born, 'Split-Ticket Voters, Divided Government, and Fiorina's Policy-Balancing Model'.

[13] Sigelman *et al.*, 'Vote Choice and the Preference for Divided Government'.

[14] Alvarez and Schousen, 'Policy Moderation or Conflicting Expectations'; Born, 'Split-Ticket Voters, Divided Government, and Fiorina's Policy-Balancing Model'.

[15] Any analysis of split-ticket voting conducted using data from 1992 will be confounded by the candidacy of Ross Perot. We are left with two alternatives. First, because Perot did not run for president with a slate of same-party congressional candidates, any voter casting a vote for Ross Perot cannot be considered a straight-ticket voter. One could code all Perot voters who cast a vote in congressional races as split-ticket voters, and then estimate our model of split-ticket voting using this as the dependent variable. Secondly, because the Perot phenomenon is conceptually

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123400000089 Published online by Cambridge University Press

variable is dichotomous, all of our models are estimated using logistic regression. A brief description of this variable and the independent variables used in our analysis can be found in Appendix 1.

Preferences for Divided Government

One of the expectations associated with a purposive or intentional model of split-ticket voting is that individuals who prefer divided government to unified government will behave in such a way as to increase the probability that divided government will occur. If an individual prefers divided government to its alternative, one would expect that individual to exhibit a greater probability of casting a split-ticket vote by voting for presidential and congressional candidates of different parties. In casting a split-ticket vote a citizen maximizes his or her contribution to increasing the probability that divided government will occur.

In order to capture the effects of preferences for divided government, we rely on an item included for the first time in the 1992 ANES.[16] Respondents were asked whether they thought that it was 'better when one party controls both the presidency and Congress,' 'better when control is split between the Democrats and Republicans', or 'doesn't it matter'? We created two variables from this item. The first is a simple dichotomous variable, coded 1 for respondents who support divided government, and 0 otherwise. The second variable is measured as a trichotomous variable, coded 1 for those who think that divided control is better, -1 for those who think that unified control is better, and 0 for those who think that it does not matter. If voters are casting votes purposively (i.e., with the intention of affecting whether divided government occurs or not), one would expect each of these variables to have a positive impact on split-ticket voting.

The Mediating Effects of Political Knowledge

The degree to which stated preferences for divided government are translated into split-ticket voting behaviour rests in no small part on the voter making the logical connection between the behaviour (i.e., casting a split-ticket vote) and the desired outcome (i.e., divided government). It is possible that some (and perhaps many) voters will not make that connection. The translation of a preference for divided government into a split-ticket vote is mediated by the voter's understanding of the connection between his or her vote and subsequent electoral outcomes.

(F'note continued)
distinct from (albeit similar to) the phenomenon of split-ticket voting, one could exclude Perot voters from the analysis completely. This means that voters would be classified as split-ticket voters if they cast a vote for one of the two major-party candidates for president and for a House candidate of the opposite party. We suggest that split-ticket voting (and possible support for divided government) is conceptually distinct from the act of voting for Ross Perot for president, and hence we have opted for the second alternative. However, we have also re-estimated all of our models using the alternative measure of split-ticket voting, and we present the results for this alternative measure in Appendix 2. Although the effects of some of the independent variables are different when we employ the measure of split-ticket voting that encompasses Perot voters, it is noteworthy that the effects of our key independent variables are found to be similar across models using either of the two alternative measures of the dependent variable.

[16] Questions concerning voters' preferences for divided government have been asked only in recent surveys. Unfortunately, the ANES series has included such an item only in the 1992 and 1994 surveys, so our analysis of split-ticket voting is limited to the 1992 presidential election.

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We speculate that voters' level of political information and knowledge of electoral and political processes will determine the extent to which preferences for divided government are translated into split-ticket voting. Specifically, we suggest that the effect of voters' preference for divided government on split-ticket voting requires voters to be able to link their vote choices in House and presidential elections with a particular governmental outcome (i.e., divided government). Such a linkage assumes a degree of knowledge about political process and the current partisan character of government. Given this, we posit that voters will be more likely to translate their preference for (or opposition to) divided government into split-ticket voting as a function of their level of political knowledge. Voters who support divided government *and* who have high levels of political knowledge will be more likely to cast split-ticket ballots than similarly-situated voters who support divided government but have low levels of political knowledge. For high-knowledge voters, the linkage between their vote and a partisan governmental outcome is likely to be somewhat clear. For low-information voters, such a linkage may be much more ambiguous, and so these voters may have a more difficult time voting purposively than high-information voters.

In order to capture the effects of political knowledge, we create a simple additive scale based on six informational items included in the 1992 ANES survey. This scale ranges from 0 (low information) to 6 (high information). This approach has been found to result in reliable measures of political information and knowledge.[17] We create an interaction variable for political information and our measures of support for divided government. If political information has the hypothesized interactive effect on split-ticket voting, the coefficients for the interaction variables should be positive.

Spatial Variables

Fiorina suggests that voters' support for divided government is at least partially a function of their desire for moderate government.[18] If a conservative Republican president is elected, so the reasoning goes, it is best to balance the conservative dispositions of the president with the election of a liberal Democratic Congress that will serve as a check on the possibility of the presidency run amok. Fiorina suggests that split-ticket voting will be more likely among relative political moderates (i.e., those whose ideological views are between those of the two political parties) than those with more extreme views (i.e., those whose ideological positions place themselves outside of those of the two political parties).

In addition to how voters place themselves in the ideological space in comparison to the placement of the two political parties, it is arguable that how voters place the two parties will have an independent impact on the probability of split-ticket voting.[19] Simply, we suggest that voters who view the parties as ideologically polarized will be less likely to cast a split-ticket vote than voters who perceive the parties as being ideologically identical. When a voter views the parties as ideologically identical – the proverbial 'Tweedle-Dee and Tweedle-Dum' – there is little from a policy or ideological standpoint to differentiate the two parties. Minus candidate-specific information, policy

[17] Michael X. Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter, 'Measuring Political Knowledge: Putting First Things First', *American Journal of Political Science*, 37 (1993), 1179–206; John Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Public Opinion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[18] Fiorina, *Divided Government*.

[19] Barry Burden and David Kimball, 'A New Approach to the Study of Ticket Splitting', *American Political Science Review*, 92 (1998), 523–34.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123400000089 Published online by Cambridge University Press

matters should have an essentially random effect on voting for the president and the House, resulting in an increased pattern of split-party voting. However, when the parties are perceived by the voter as staking out clear-cut policy positions that are ideologically polarized from one another, policy ambivalence in the voter's assessment of the two parties is less likely to occur. Except for voters who place themselves around the midpoint between the positions of the two parties, it becomes difficult for the typical voter to cast a vote for a presidential candidate of one party (representing one set of policy positions) and a House candidate for the opposition party (representing a completely different set of policy positions).

In order to capture these effects, we rely on data from the ANES series consisting of respondents' placement of the parties and themselves on a seven-point ideology scale, ranging from 0 (strong liberal) to 6 (strong conservative). These items permit respondents to place themselves and the parties on a left–right ideological continuum, and provide the basis for our measurement of relative ideological placement and polarized party placement. For our first variable, relative ideological placement, we follow the lead of Born,[20] who measures this concept as a dichotomous variable, coded 1 for voters who stake out a position between the two political parties, and 0 otherwise. We would expect this variable to have a positive impact on the propensity of voters to cast a split-ticket ballot. Secondly, we measure polarized party placement as the absolute value of the distance between respondents' placements of the Republican and Democratic parties. Because we expect voters who perceive polarized parties to be less likely to split their ticket, this variable should have a negative impact on our dependent variable.

System-Support Variables

Fiorina also suggests that split-ticket voting is a form of political behaviour that represents a degree of disenchantment with the American political system.[21] Following this view, individuals who are disillusioned with the performance of party-based government can express their views by casting votes in a way to increase the likelihood that divided government will occur. As Fiorina suggests:

> Ticket-splitting reflects disenchantment with both parties, a disenchantment that has grown into cynicism about getting acceptable government from either party. The disenchantment does not stem primarily from issue stands, but rather stems from the perceived incompetence, corruption, oppressiveness, and/or arrogance of party elites. When they split their tickets, voters are not simply trying to bring about a moderate compromise between two polarized parties, as in the policy-balancing explanation; rather, voters are seeking to create a deadlock where neither party can do anything, and both dissipate their resources and energy fighting with each other.[22]

In essence, voters achieve a sort of partisan 'checks and balances' by electing different parties to control different institutions, thereby permitting the two competing parties to direct their energies at fighting each other rather than at making life difficult for American citizens. Given this view, one would expect that various manifestations of political distrust, alienation and inattention to politics will be related positively to split-ticket voting.

[20] Born, 'Split-Ticket Voters, Divided Government, and Fiorina's Policy-Balancing Model'.
[21] Fiorina, 'An Era of Divided Government'.
[22] Fiorina, 'An Era of Divided Government', p. 403.

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Given this argument, we include several indicators of system support as independent variables in our model of split-ticket voting. First, we utilize responses to four items from the 1992 ANES to create a scale of political trust: (1) the degree to which respondents think that government wastes money paid in taxes; (2) whether respondents would say that government is run by a few big interests; (3) how much of the time respondents would say that they can trust the government in Washington to do what is right; and (4) the extent to which respondents think that the people running the government are crooked. We employ principal components analysis to create a single factor score that represents the concept of political trust (eigenvalue = 1.875, 46.9 per cent of the variance explained). Following Fiorina's arguments, we would expect political trust to be inversely related to split-ticket voting.

Secondly, we employ two items to represent respondents' feelings of external political efficacy: (1) degree of agreement with the statement that 'I don't think public officials care much what people like me think'; and (2) respondents' assessments of how much heed government pays to what people think when it decides what to do. Again using principal components analysis, these two variables create a single factor score for external political efficacy (eigenvalue = 1.242, 62.1 per cent of the variance explained). Here again, we suggest that respondents who exhibit a high degree of external political efficacy (and hence view government officials as responsive to their wishes) will be less likely to cast split-ticket votes than those who are externally inefficacious.

Finally, in previous research scholars have found that interest in the outcome of elections is related inversely to split-ticket voting.[23] Those voters who are relatively ambivalent about the outcome of the presidential election have been found to cast split-ticket votes with greater frequency than those voters who care about the election outcome. This finding has stood up in multivariate models of split-ticket voting as well.[24] Given this, we include a variable to indicate whether or not each respondent cares about the outcome of the presidential election; this variable is coded 1 for respondents who care about the outcome, and 0 for those who do not. We would expect this variable to have a negative impact on split-ticket voting.

Incumbency

The effects of incumbency on partisan defection and split-ticket voting has been well-documented in the literature.[25] Both Born[26] and Alvarez and Schousen[27] present evidence that split-ticket voting is associated with the incumbency status of candidate choices confronting voters. On one hand, voters residing in districts represented by an incumbent of their own party are expected to be *least* likely to cast a split ballot, since the dual impacts of partisan and incumbency forces would lead such voters in the same direction for their presidential and House votes. At the other extreme, voters residing in districts represented by an incumbent of the opposition party are significantly *more* likely to cast a split-ticket vote than other voters.[28] Voters residing in open-seat districts

[23] Fiorina, 'An Era of Divided Government'; Born, 'Split-Ticket Voters, Divided Government, and Fiorina's Policy-Balancing Model'.

[24] Born, 'Split-Ticket Voters, Divided Government, and Fiorina's Policy-Balancing Model'.

[25] Thomas Mann and Raymond Wolfinger, 'Candidates and Parties in Congressional Elections', *American Political Science Review*, 74 (1980), 617–32; Gary Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (New York: Longman, 1997).

[26] Born, 'Split-Ticket Voters, Divided Government, and Fiorina's Policy-Balancing Model'.

[27] Alvarez and Schousen, 'Policy Moderation or Conflicting Expectations'

[28] Born, 'Split-Ticket Voters, Divided Government, and Fiorina's Policy-Balancing Model'.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123400000089 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(i.e., those without incumbents) should fall between these two extremes in terms of their propensity to cast a split-ticket ballot.

In order to capture these effects, we include two dichotomous variables in our model. The first is coded 1 if a voter resides in a district that is represented by an incumbent whose partisanship is the opposite of his/her own (i.e., a Democratic voter facing a choice that includes a Republican incumbent, or a Republican voter facing a choice that includes a Democratic incumbent), and 0 otherwise. We also include a variable for open-seat races, coded 1 for voters in open-seat races, and 0 otherwise. We expect the coefficients for each of these variables to be positive, indicating that voters who hold partisanship opposite that of their incumbent or who reside in open-seat districts will be more likely to cast a split-ticket vote than voters who share the partisanship of their incumbent.

Strength of Partisanship

One variable that should have a very strong impact on split-ticket voting is strength of partisanship. Simply, voters lacking strong partisan ties should be more likely to cast a split-ticket vote than voters whose partisan ties are very strong. For independent voters, there is little of the psychological attachment to a given party that would be expected to motivate the voter to cast a straight-party vote. By contrast, strong partisans will have strong attachments to their party, and it will normally be quite unusual for such voters to deviate from their party and cast a split-ticket ballot. We measure strength of partisanship with a folded version of the seven-point partisan identification scale that has been used in each ANES going back into the 1950s. This scale ranges from 0 (pure independents) to 3 (strong partisans). Since this variable is measured in the direction of strong partisanship, we would expect this variable to have a negative impact on split-ticket voting.

Demographic/Socioeconomic Variables

Finally, we include in our model several socioeconomic/demographic variables, most of which have served as control variables in previous studies of split-ticket voting. Of these variables, the effect of age has been given the most theoretical development in the literature. Born contends that younger voters have not had the time and experience to solidify and reinforce their attitudinal and partisan behaviour patterns, and posits that younger voters will be the most likely to cast split-ticket votes.[29] We measure age as the voter's chronological age (in years). Secondly, we also speculate that race may be inversely related to split-ticket voting. Black citizens are among the most loyal Democratic identifiers, and they are more likely than other voters to support Democratic candidates for president and Congress, even in the face of controls for partisan identification.[30] Given this, we expect black voters to be less likely to split their tickets than other voters, even accounting for the effects of other variables. This variable is

[29] Born, 'Split-Ticket Voters, Divided Government, and Fiorina's Policy-Balancing Model'.

[30] In an auxiliary analysis (not shown), we have estimated separate models of vote choice in presidential and House elections. Our findings provide strong assurances that black voters are significantly more likely than other voters to vote for Democratic candidates, even after controlling for the effects of partisanship and ideological orientation. Black voters are more Democratic in their behaviour in both presidential and House elections than would be suggested by their partisan and ideological orientations. Hence, one might expect their likelihood of being split-ticket voters to be lessened considerably, even in the face of controls for other variables.

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measured as a binary variable, coded 1 for black respondents and 0 otherwise. Finally, we include three other variables as controls in the model: (1) south region: a dummy variable, coded 1 for respondents residing in southern states, and 0 otherwise; (2) family income: measured as a 24-point income scale; and (3) education: measured in terms of the respondents' number of years of formal education.

EMPIRICAL RESULTS

In Table 1 we present the parameter estimates from a series of logistic regression models of split-ticket voting described above. The models estimated in columns (1) and (2) are additive models that do not include interaction variables for political knowledge and support for divided government, but do differ from each other in that the dichotomous measure of divided government is used in column (1) while the trichotomous measure is used in column (2). The results for the interaction models with dichotomous and trichotomous measures of support for divided government are reported in columns (3) and (4), respectively.

Additive Models

Clearly, the results from the additive models presented in columns (1) and (2) of Table 1 provide little initial support for the intentional model of split-ticket voting. While simple cross-tabulation (not shown) reveals that voters who support divided government are about 5 per cent more likely than others to cast a split-ticket vote, this difference disappears once the confounding effects of other variables are taken into account in our additive multivariate model. The coefficients for the key variable in our model, support for divided government, are far removed from conventional levels of statistical significance, indicating that respondents who prefer divided government to its alternatives are no more likely to cast a split-party vote than other voters. In column (1) the coefficient for the variable representing support for divided government is negative, but virtually indistinguishable from 0; in column (2) the trichotomous version of this variable has the correct (positive) sign, but again fails to reach significance. Based on these results, and consistent with the findings of Sigelman *et al.*,[31] one would be hard pressed to infer any systematic effect of purposive support for divided government on the probability that voters will cast a split-party ballot.

Interaction Models

In columns (3) and (4) of Table 1 we present the results of our full models that include the interactions between political knowledge and our measures of support for divided government. Perhaps our most important finding is that the effects of preferences for divided government on split-ticket voting are strongly mediated by voters' levels of political knowledge. We find that the coefficient for the interaction variable is positive and significant in both columns (3) and (4), indicating that as political knowledge increases the impact of support for divided government on split-ticket voting becomes less negative and, eventually, positive. As political knowledge increases, voters seem to behave in a manner that is more consistent with their expressed preferences for divided government. The possibility of an intentional basis for split-ticket voting and,

[31] Sigelman *et al.*, 'Vote Choice and the Preference for Divided Government'.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123400000089 Published online by Cambridge University Press

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123400000089 Published online by Cambridge University Press

TABLE 1 *Parameter Values (LOGIT Coefficients) for Models of Split-Ticket Voting in the 1992 American National Elections*

	Additive models		Interactive models	
Variable†	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Intercept	− 0.417	− 0.510	− 0.123	− 0.430
	(0.737)	(0.736)	(0.750)	(0.738)
Support for divided government	− 0.005	0.094	− 0.888*	− 0.361
	(0.188)	(0.107)	(0.456)	(0.269)
Knowledge-support interaction	—	—	0.271**	0.133**
			(0.126)	(0.073)
Relative ideological placement	0.353*	0.307*	0.348*	0.306*
	(0.217)	(0.221)	(0.218)	(0.221)
Polarized party placement	− 0.224***	− 0.219***	− 0.229***	− 0.225***
	(0.068)	(0.069)	(0.069)	(0.069)
Care about presidential outcome	− 0.069	− 0.029	− 0.051	− 0.028
	(0.262)	(0.268)	(0.263)	(0.269)
Political trust	− 0.181**	− 0.181**	− 0.182**	− 0.187**
	(0.099)	(0.100)	(0.099)	(0.100)
External efficacy	− 0.065	− 0.051	− 0.065	− 0.051
	(0.102)	(0.103)	(0.102)	(0.103)
Political knowledge	− 0.062	− 0.049	− 0.159*	− 0.054
	(0.068)	(0.068)	(0.082)	(0.068)
Folded partisanship	− 0.471***	− 0.457***	− 0.483***	− 0.470***
	(0.103)	(0.104)	(0.104)	(0.104)

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Partisanship opposite of incumbent	1.515***	1.459***	1.504***	1.443***
	(0.209)	(0.211)	(0.209)	(0.212)
Open-seat race	0.511**	0.521**	0.491**	0.496**
	(0.248)	(0.249)	(0.249)	(0.250)
Age	− 0.002	− 0.002	− 0.002	− 0.003
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Race: black	− 0.464	− 0.501	− 0.503	− 0.536
	(0.442)	(0.442)	(0.444)	(0.444)
South region	0.239	0.237	0.249	0.250
	(0.206)	(0.208)	(0.207)	(0.209)
Family income	0.014	0.014	0.014	0.013
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Education	0.008	0.011	0.014	0.013
	(0.045)	(0.046)	(0.045)	(0.046)
Pseudo-R^2	0.124	0.119	0.131	0.124
Proportion predicted correctly	0.777	0.778	0.780	0.783
Predicted probabilities				
$Y = 0$	0.198	0.199	0.196	0.198
$Y = 1$	0.323	0.320	0.328	0.323
T-statistic for difference	10.711	10.395	11.049	10.607
Prob.	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
N	814	796	814	796

***prob $<$ 0.01, one-tailed test.
**prob $<$ 0.05, one-tailed test.
*prob $<$ 0.10, one-tailed test.
†The dependent variable is the split-ticket vote.

subsequently, divided government rests on voters having the level of political knowledge to link their vote choices with aggregate electoral outcomes.

Low-information voters are much less likely to translate their preferences for divided government into split-ticket voting. In column (4) we find that the logit coefficient for our trichotomized measure of support for divided government suggests a negative, but nonsignificant, impact of this variable on split-ticket voting; as expected, voters whose scores on the political knowledge scale are equal to 0 exhibit virtually no relationship between their preferences for divided government and split-ticket voting behaviour. To be sure, the coefficient for the support variable is negative and significant in the model results based on the dichotomous measure of support for divided government, as reported in column (3). But the inference that one can draw from these two sets of results is that voters with low levels of political knowledge do not convert their preference for divided government into split-ticket voting in a manner that one would expect from the rational, self-interested voters depicted by Fiorina. At worst, low-information voters who prefer divided government are less likely to cast a split-ticket vote; at best, low-information voters who prefer divided government are no more or less likely to cast a split-ticket vote. Either way, these voters do not cast votes in a manner consistent with their stated preferences for divided government.

The importance of political knowledge in mediating the relationship between preferences for divided government and split-ticket voting behaviour can be seen by comparing the coefficients for high- and low-information voters. Based on the results presented in column (4) of Table 1, for instance, one can see that the logistic regression coefficient for low information voters is $b = -0.361$. This coefficient does not achieve conventional levels of statistical significance, so we cannot reject the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between support for divided government and split-ticket voting for low-information voters. For voters who achieve the highest score on the political-information scale, however, we find a reasonably strong positive coefficient. For such voters, the effect of support for divided government is $+0.437$ (i.e., $-0.361 + [6 * 0.133]$), indicating that among high-information voters support for divided government is related positively to split-ticket voting.[32]

Of course, the degree to which an intentional model of split-ticket voting can account for divided government is limited by the proportion of high-information voters in the electorate. Given the coefficients in the model, only those voters whose score on the political information scale is 3 or higher begin to exhibit a positive relationship between preferences for divided government and split-ticket voting. In 1992 this level of information characterizes a nontrivial proportion of citizens; those scoring 3 or higher on the political information scale represent 51.1 per cent of all respondents (and 72.0 per cent of voters), suggesting a relatively large group in the population for which there is at least some reasonable likelihood of intentional voting in favour of divided

[32] In a supplementary analysis (results not shown), we examine the relationship between stated support for divided government and split-ticket voting, estimated separately for high-knowledge voters (i.e., the roughly 50 per cent of citizens scored between 3 and 6 on the political knowledge scale) and low-knowledge voters (i.e., the remaining 50 per cent of citizens between 0 and 2 on the political knowledge scale) voters. Our findings of a mediating influence of political knowledge on intentional split-ticket voting are reinforced by these separate estimates. For low-knowledge voters, the coefficients for the variable representing support for divided government generally fail to achieve statistical significance, even under a variety of alternative specifications. However, for high-knowledge voters, the coefficients for support for divided government are positive and significant, suggesting a linkage between attitudinal support for divided government and split-ticket voting behaviour. These findings are further reinforced by the coefficients from interaction models that differentiate the effects of support for divided government for high- and low-information voters.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123400000089 Published online by Cambridge University Press

government. Our results suggest that at least some purposive or intentional support for divided government is being translated into patterns of split-ticket voting, even after the effects of other confounding variables are taken into account, and that the proportion of the electorate that is susceptible to these influences is nontrivial.

The findings for some of the other independent variables are also worth noting. First, our results provide a reasonable amount of support for our hypotheses concerning the spatial variables. We find that relative ideological placement is related positively, albeit modestly, to the probability that a voter will cast a split-ticket vote. Voters who place themselves between the two political parties on the left–right ideological continuum are somewhat more likely to cast a split-party ballot than are other voters. The coefficient is significant at only the 0.1 level, but is strong enough to suggest that voters' relative ideological placement does enter into their decision calculus as they are casting presidential and House votes.

Secondly, we find very strong support for the expected (negative) effect of voters' perception of ideologically-polarized parties on split-ticket voting. In the results for both interaction models, the polarized party placement variable is negative and highly significant. Like Burden and Kimball,[33] we find that voters who perceive the two political parties as being far apart ideologically are much less likely to cast a split-ticket vote, controlling for the effects of other variables, while voters who see the two parties as being ideologically undifferentiated are much more likely to split their ballots.

Thirdly, the only system-support variable that has a significant effect on split-ticket voting is political trust. In all of our models we find that political trust is negatively and significantly related to split-ticket voting, indicating that voters who trust government officials and the political-governmental system are less likely to be split-ticket voters than are other citizens. This makes quite a bit of sense theoretically, and is a finding that is consistent with bivariate results presented by Fiorina.[34]

Finally, the partisan strength and incumbency variables have strong significant effects that are consistent with theoretical expectations. Our folded partisanship variable is found to have a very strong negative effect on split-ticket voting. In essence, the coefficients for this variable suggest that strong partisans are very unlikely to cast split-ticket votes, with pure independents relatively likely to be split-ticket voters. Also as expected, the incumbency characteristics of the House candidates listed on voters' ballots have a powerful impact on the probability of split-ticket voting behaviour. Voters whose partisanship is opposite that of an incumbent who is running for re-election are much more likely to cast a split-party vote than voters whose partisanship is consistent with an incumbent running in their district. Presumably, voters facing the choice of an opposite-party incumbent defect from their partisanship to vote for that incumbent, all the while casting a vote for the presidential vote of their party. Moreover, we find that voters are more likely to cast a split-ticket vote in open-seat races than in races in which the incumbent shares the partisanship of the voter.

CONCLUSIONS

In this Note we test an intentional model of split-ticket voting. We explore the extent to which voters who state a preference for divided government are actually more likely to cast a split-ticket vote than are other voters. We do so while controlling for the effects

[33] Burden and Kimball, 'A New Approach to the Study of Ticket Splitting'.
[34] Fiorina, 'An Era of Divided Government'.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123400000089 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of a full range of variables thought to have an effect on split-ticket voting. Most importantly, we suggest that the degree to which voters translate their preferences for divided government into split-ticket voting behaviour is related systematically to the level of knowledge these voters have about politics. We speculate that voters who are knowledgeable about politics should be more likely than voters with low levels of political knowledge to behave purposively or intentionally by translating their support or opposition for divided government into paired vote choices in congressional and presidential elections.

Our findings provide reasonably strong support for our intentional model of split-ticket voting. On one hand, it is true that the inclusion of variables to represent simple preferences for divided government in an additive multivariate model of split-ticket voting does not lead to the conclusion that intentional behaviour is taking place. In these basic models the coefficients for the preference variables are nonsignificant, suggesting that voters who prefer divided government are no more and no less likely to cast split-ticket votes. On the other hand, when the effect of preferences for divided government on split-ticket voting is mediated by political knowledge, our results provide reasonably strong confirmation for our knowledge hypothesis. It would appear that voters with high levels of political knowledge are able or willing to translate their preferences for or against divided government into split-ticket voting.

There may be two reasons why low information voters are less likely to vote in such a way that is consistent with intentional split-ticket voting. First, among low-information voters their response to questions about preferences for or against divided government may be subject to more measurement error or, possibly, more of the non-attitudes problem than is the case for high-information voters.[35] In essence, it is possible that support for divided government is more random among low-information voters, and the result of this would be a random relationship between preferences for divided government and split-ticket voting. Among high-information voters, it is possible that there is less measurement error, so the observed relationship between support for divided government and split-ticket voting is a more accurate reflection of what is going on in the real world. Secondly, it is possible that high- and low-information voters actually vote the way that our model says they vote. It is possible that high-information voters have the cognitive capacity and knowledge about politics to link successfully their attitudes towards divided government with their voting behaviour, while low-information voters lack either or both of these characteristics that might be viewed as important in framing a relationship between preferences for divided government and split-ticket voting.

We should also note that the purposive or intentional model of split-ticket voting is reinforced somewhat by the finding that voters who place themselves between the parties are more likely to divide their presidential and House votes between the two parties. Fiorina's assertion that voters who are closer to the midpoint between the two parties will prefer moderate government and hence divided control of the Congress and the office of the presidency can be viewed as representing the notion of intentional support for divided government, although the conception of 'intention' in such a formulation is a bit less direct than is ours. None the less, even the relatively weak positive coefficient for the relative ideological placement variable suggests some additional support for the idea that voters act purposively in casting split-ticket votes.

[35] See Philip Converse, 'Attitudes and Non-Attitudes: Continuation of a Dialogue', in Edward Tufte, ed., *The Quantitative Analysis of Social Problems* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1970), pp. 166–89; Sigelman *et al.*, 'Vote Choice and the Preference for Divided Government'.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123400000089 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Finally, our intentional model of split-ticket voting would seem to suggest a potentially strong impact of intention on subsequent divided government. Although only high-information voters behave in such a way as to link their preferences for or against divided government with the decisions to cast a split-ticket or straight-party vote, it is worth noting that as much as half of the electorate falls within the group for whom there is a positive relationship between support for divided government and split-ticket voting. Even if the proportion of voters who are likely to exhibit intentional effects in their split-ticket voting is relatively small, it does not take a large proportion of such voters to affect aggregate election outcomes that could result in split control of government.[36] Clearly, other variables (such as folded partisanship, polarized party placement, incumbency) account for patterns of split-ticket voting, and many of these do not fit neatly into what one might think of as a purposive approach to vote choice. But it would appear that our intentional model finds a fair amount of empirical support, even though its applicability as a broad-based model of divided government is limited by the proportion of high-knowledge voters in the electorate.

[36] Patterns of changing control of governmental institutions need not involve large changes in the behaviour of the aggregate electorate. For instance, the electoral revolution in 1994 noted by many political observers involved a change in the national aggregate vote of only about 5 per cent. We are indebted to an anonymous reviewer for making this point.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123400000089 Published online by Cambridge University Press

APPENDIX 1 *Description of Variables Used in Model of Split-Ticket Voting in the 1992 American National Elections*

Variable	Description
Split-ticket vote choice	1 = respondent casts vote for presidential candidate of one party and House candidate of the opposition party; 0 = all other voters.
Support for divided government (a)	1 = respondent expresses support for divided government; 0 = all other respondents.
Support for divided government (b)	1 = respondent expresses support for divided partisan control of the presidency and Congress; 0 = respondent is neutral regarding divided partisan control of the presidency and Congress; −1 = respondent is opposed to divided partisan control of the presidency and Congress.
Knowledge-support interaction (a)	Interaction variable using political knowledge and support for divided government (dichotomous measure).
Knowledge-support interaction (b)	Interaction variable using political knowledge and support for divided government (trichotomous measure).
Relative ideological placement	1 = respondent places self between the positions of the two parties on the seven-point liberal–conservative scale; 0 = all other respondents.
Polarized party placement	Absolute value of the difference in respondent's placement of the Republican and Democratic parties on the seven-point liberal–conservative scale.
Care about presidential outcome	1 = respondent cares which candidate wins the presidential election; 0 = all other respondents.
Political trust	Respondents' level of political trust, based on factor scores obtained through principle components analysis of the following four items: (1) the degree to which respondents think that government wastes money paid in taxes; (2) whether respondents would say that government is run by a few big interests; (3) how much of the time respondents would say that they can trust the government in Washington to do what is right; and (4) the extent to which respondents think that the people running the government are crooked.
Political efficacy	Respondents' level of external political efficacy, based on factor scores obtained through principle components analysis of the following two items: (1) degree of agreement with statement that 'I don't think public officials care much what people like me think': and (2) respondents' assessments of how much government pays to what people think when it decides what to do.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123400000089 Published online by Cambridge University Press

APPENDIX 1 *Description of Variables Used in Model of Split-Ticket Voting in the 1992 American National Elections*

Variable	Description
Political knowledge	Six-point, (additive) scale of political knowledge, based on respondent's responses to the following six political knowledge items: (1) correctly identifies Dan Quayle as the Vice President; (2) correctly identifies William Rehnquist as Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court; (3) correctly identifies Boris Yeltsin as President of Russia; (4) correctly identifies Tom Foley as Speaker of the US House of Representatives; (5) correctly identifies the Supreme Court as having 'the final responsibility to decide if a law is constitutional or not'; and (6) correctly identifies the President as having the responsibility 'to nominate judges to the Federal Courts'. For each item, 1 = respondent exhibits knowledge of subject; 0 = all other respondents.
Partisanship opposite of incumbent	1 = respondent's partisanship is opposite that of the House incumbent; 0 = all others respondents.
Open-seat race	1 = the House seat in the respondent's district is open – no incumbent is running for re-election; 0 = all other districts.
Folded partisanship	Four-point scale for strength of partisanship, ranging from 0 (pure independent) to three (strong partisan).
Age	Respondent's age (in years).
Race: black	1 = black respondent; 0 = all other respondents.
South region	1 = respondent lives in a state in the Southern region; 0 = all other respondents.
Family income	24-point scale for yearly family income, ranging fom 1 ($2,999 per year or less) to 24 ($105,000 per year or greater).
Education	Number of years of formal education completed.

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APPENDIX 2 *Parameter Values (LOGIT Coefficients) for Models of Split-Ticket Voting in the 1992 American National Elections (Perot Voters Included)*

	Additive models		Interactive models	
Variable†	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Intercept	1.747***	1.678***	1.990***	1.728
	(0.572)	(0.573)	(0.585)	(0.576)
Support for divided government	0.099	0.103	− 0.640*	− 0.316
	(0.145)	(0.082)	(0.359)	(0.214)
Knowledge-support interaction	—	—	0.224**	0.121**
			(0.099)	(0.057)
Relative ideological placement	0.592***	0.554***	0.581***	0.549***
	(0.166)	(0.168)	(0.166)	(0.169)
Polarized party placement	− 0.243***	− 0.231***	− 0.247***	− 0.237***
	(0.054)	(0.054)	(0.054)	(0.055)
Care about presidential outcome	− 0.253*	− 2.270*	− 0.262*	− 0.289*
	(0.195)	(0.198)	(0.196)	(0.198)
Political trust	0.022	0.012	0.013	0.001
	(0.080)	(0.081)	(0.080)	(0.082)
External efficacy	− 0.103	− 0.088	− 0.103*	− 0.087
	(0.079)	(0.079)	(0.079)	(0.080)
Political knowledge	− 0.033	− 0.027	− 0.116**	− 0.031
	(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.064)	(0.053)
Folded partisanship	− 0.532***	− 0.530***	− 0.539***	− 0.540***
	(0.079)	(0.080)	(0.079)	(0.080)

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123400000089 Published online by Cambridge University Press

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123400000089 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Partisanship opposite of incumbent	0.871***	0.842***	0.866***	0.829***
	(0.163)	(0.165)	(0.163)	(0.165)
Open-seat race	0.040	0.017	0.025	− 0.006
	(0.191)	(0.194)	(0.191)	(0.195)
Age	− 0.015***	− 0.015***	− 0.015***	− 0.015***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Race: black	− 1.192***	− 1.199***	− 1.222***	− 1.221***
	(0.410)	(0.410)	(0.411)	(0.410)
South region	0.043	0.049	0.048	0.056
	(0.166)	(0.168)	(0.166)	(0.168)
Family income	0.031**	0.033**	0.031**	0.033**
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Education	− 0.031	− 0.026	− 0.024	− 0.021
	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.036)
Pseudo-R^2	0.155	0.154	0.157	0.156
Proportion predicted correctly	0.690	0.688	0.680	0.684
Predicted probabilities				
$Y = 0$	0.330	0.331	0.329	0.329
$Y = 1$	0.484	0.484	0.487	0.486
T-statistic for difference	13.735	13.554	13.880	13.678
Prob.	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
N	1,034	1,011	1,034	1,011

***prob < 0.01, one-tailed test.
**prob < 0.05, one-tailed test.
*prob < 0.10, one-tailed test.
†Dependent variable is the split-ticket vote.