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THE DIVIDED VOTER IN AMERICAN POLITICS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
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ABSTRACT

The last thirty years in American politics have been characterized by volatility and divided national government. A president often has to negotiate with a Congress controlled by the opposite party, and the president's approval ratings can swiftly lurch from positive to negative. To a large extent, these conditions are created by citizens who divide their votes between the major parties.

This dissertation examines several ways in which citizens deviate from consistent party-line voting (for example, by casting a split ballot in a single election). I argue for a broader definition of divided voting that includes voting behavior over the course of a four-year election cycle. For instance, swing voters who switch parties in consecutive House elections are more common, and more consequential, than previous studies suggest.

This study also seeks to explain why some people divide their votes between the two major parties in presidential and House elections. The evidence presented here suggests that divided voting is the result of many different forces. The relative visibility and quality of competing House candidates is an important factor, as most people split their votes by defecting from their identified party in the House contest. As House contests have become more competitive, ticket-splitting has declined in the last two national elections.

Retrospective evaluations of the president's performance, and ratings of the presidential candidates, also influence whether citizens divide their votes between the parties. Past supporters of the president's party change allegiances when the president's performance
fails to live up to expectations. In addition, voters who are less-than-enthusiastic about their presidential selection are more likely than others to produce a split ballot by supporting the opposite party in the House contest. This has implications for the future, as voter satisfaction with presidential choices has steadily declined since the late 1960s.

Citizens also divide their votes between the parties in response to sincere ideological considerations. For example, voters are more likely to switch parties when their ideological preferences put them at odds with the party they supported in previous elections. Increasingly, liberals have been moving to the Democratic party while conservatives have shifted to the Republican party.

Finally, the evidence presented here fails to support the hypothesis that sophisticated, moderate voters divide their votes in order to create divided government and take advantage of checks and balances in our constitutional system. Rather, less informed and less knowledgeable voters who are indifferent to political parties, and who blur or minimize the differences between the parties, are most likely to split their votes between the parties. At the aggregate level, ticket-splitting is more common when the parties converge toward the middle of the ideological spectrum. If polarization between the parties continues in the future, we should see a further decline in ticket-splitting.

Understanding why people divide their votes will help us make sense of divided government. Divided government occurs because candidates often avoid stiff competition in House elections, and because elected officials often obscure philosophical differences between the parties.
Dedicated to my parents, David W. and Carol L. Kimball, Jr.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project benefitted tremendously from the help and advice of many people. The dissertation started out as an independent readings project with Paul Beck in the summer of 1994, after I read an article on ticket-splitting that he published with Larry Baum, Aage Clausen, and Chuck Smith. The summer project produced an essay, which later turned into a research design, then a dissertation prospectus, and finally, this tome. Professor Beck provided detailed suggestions and encouragement at each point in the process. He gave me enough room to pursue my own lines of inquiry, but also kept me from getting too far off course. His guidance had a tremendous effect in helping me complete this project.

My debt to Herb Weisberg is equally substantial. He prodded me to think more about some of the big picture questions, and to focus on the more unique aspects of this study. In his own way, Herb taught me that there is something to be gained by approaching the same question from new and different perspectives. Herb also has been a mentor to me in many respects that go beyond this dissertation.

Dean Lacy and Katherine Tate, the other members of my committee, have been very helpful as well. Even though some of the arguments in this study do not necessarily square with parts of Dean's work, he has done everything to support me. Dean is also responsible for putting me on a panel on divided government and ticket-splitting at the 1997 American Political Science Association meetings. Katherine Tate read each of the chapters as well, and encouraged me to include more real-world examples. This is an improved document because of their help.
The faculty and graduate students in Ohio State's political science department created a terrific working environment. Several faculty provided advice and encouragement when I presented parts of this work in colloquia or practice job talks at Ohio State: they include Larry Baum, Janet Box-Steffensmeier, Greg Caldeira, Tim Groseclose, Tom Nelson, and Samuel Patterson. Finally, I am grateful to the Ohio State University graduate school for awarding me a fellowship which helped me devote more attention to the dissertation during the 1996-97 school year.

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I owe a profound debt to my parents, who supported me at every stage of my education. Both instilled in my sister and me an interest in politics, especially my mother, who received a Master's degree in political science from the University of Chicago. Our parents
encouraged my sister and me to develop our own political beliefs, even when we chose a path different from their intended orthodoxy. We sometimes sharply disagreed, occasionally persuaded one another of the merits of our position, and always respected each other's right to an opinion. Having been exposed to a more academic view of political socialization in graduate school, I am rather amazed that our parents reacted to our independence with such tolerance and good nature.

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In late 1995 and early 1996, Bill Clinton, the Democratic president, engaged in tense negotiations with Republican congressional leaders in an effort to produce a balanced federal budget. While the negotiations generated considerable acrimony on both sides, they did not yield a long-term budget agreement. In fact, the federal government shut down for nearly 30 days between November 1995 and January 1996 when negotiators failed to agree on short-term resolutions to continue funding the government. A divided national government did not help matters. The budget battle revealed stark philosophical differences between Republicans and Democrats over budget priorities and the role of the federal government. The negotiations also had a stop-and-go quality as each party pulled away from the bargaining table at different points during the process, each time professing its good faith intentions while heaping blame on the other side.¹

The government shutdowns, the partisan bickering and brinkmanship, and the failure of elected officials to reach an agreement on an important national problem clearly did not sit well with American citizens. Public approval of Congress and its leaders sunk to new depths at the end of 1995 (Patterson and Kimball, forthcoming). And while conventional wisdom holds that the budget standoff enhanced the stature of President Clinton at the expense of congressional Republicans, the president's approval ratings also dipped during the budget dispute (Moore 1996). When the president and Congress agreed to

¹For more detailed accounts of the budget negotiations, see Thurber (1996), and Maraniss and Weisskopf (1996).
pass temporary continuing resolutions in January of 1996 that would keep the government open through the November election, both sides proclaimed that the American electorate would have to decide which party better reflected its spending and revenue priorities.

Nevertheless, less than ten months later, American voters maintained the same pattern of divided government by reelecting President Clinton and returning Republican majorities in the House and Senate. Clinton won reelection by a larger margin than he had in 1992 at the same time that the Republican party gained two more seats in the U.S. Senate. In fact, all of the major players in the budget talks of 1995-96 (with the exception of Bob Dole) were reelected in 1996.

Why would voters give us divided government again after it seemed to fail so miserably in the winter of 1995-96? Do voters actually prefer divided government and policy stalemate? That is the conclusion reached by some observers. No less an authority than President Bill Clinton has remarked that "a lot of time in our history the American people would prefer having a president of one party and the Congress the other" (Broder 1996). The cartoon in Figure 1.1 makes the connection between voter decisions and election outcomes (including divided government), and it implies that voters in 1996 have forced Newt Gingrich, Bill Clinton, and Trent Lott, against their wishes, to jointly produce a federal budget, perhaps one that is neither too liberal nor too conservative. In any case, the perpetuation of divided government in 1996 once again demands that we explain why some people divide their votes between the two major parties.

---

In an abstract sense, the "voters" did elect Bill Clinton, Trent Lott, and Newt Gingrich in 1996. However, one could argue that these three politicians were not elected by the same voters. Most of the southern voters who helped elect Lott and Gingrich chose Dole for president. Bob Dole received almost twice as many votes as Bill Clinton did in Gingrich's congressional district, and Dole also outpolled Clinton in Lott's home state of Mississippi. In contrast, Clinton won most of the states in the northeast, midwest and far west, outside of the southern base represented by Lott and Gingrich.
Figure 1.1. Divided Government as a Shotgun Wedding

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This dissertation examines the underlying causes of "divided voting" behavior in American national elections. Why do some voters split their ballots by selecting a Republican for one office and a Democrat for another? Why do some voters switch parties from one election to the next? I define "divided voting" broadly to describe citizens who divide their votes among the two major parties (either on the same ballot in one election, or across several elections).

There are several reasons why voters with divided loyalties are a critical part of the current political landscape in the United States. First and foremost, divided voting behavior is important because it contributes to divided government (where control of government institutions is split between more than one political party). Second, divided voters (especially those who switch from one party to another) help sustain the volatile and unpredictable nature of the American political system. Few, if any, observers predicted that the Democratic party would lose control of both houses of Congress in 1994, only two years after finally winning all three elected branches of national government.

Third, it is important to understand the causes of divided voting behavior because political campaigns try to target those voters who are capable of supporting either party. Party loyalists can usually be counted on to support the same party every election without much stimulation. In contrast, "swing" or "switcher" voters are increasingly the focus of sophisticated campaign strategies designed by professional consultants (for example, see Hodgett and Tarr-Whelan 1997; Goeas and Tringali 1993).

Divided Government

Until recently, divided government in the United States typically occurred after a midterm election, when the president was not up for
election. This suggests that the electoral system was at least partly responsible for creating divided government. However, divided government has been created or perpetuated in six of the last eight presidential elections in the United States, and divided government has become the norm during the last few decades. We have had divided government in 22 of the last 28 years (from 1968 through 1996). By way of comparison, we had divided government during only eight of the 28 years before 1968. And the trend continues. The 1996 election ensures two more years of divided government (and probably four, given that the president's party almost never gains seats in Congress during midterm elections).

As this dissertation will show, the current era of divided government coincides with a greater frequency of divided voting behavior. The presence of divided government is undoubtedly due to the shifting and divided allegiances of many voters. If every voter cast a straight-party ballot and regularly supported the same party, then we would not have divided government.

A flurry of research has been devoted to the consequences of divided government. In many cases, political scientists have not reached unanimous conclusions. For instance, some argue that divided government increases inter-branch conflict, leading to gridlock as well as incoherent and ineffective policies (Sundquist 1988, 1993; Schick 1993; Kernell 1991), while others claim that gridlock is simply a natural byproduct of the separated system of government in the United States and that divided government is no barrier to legislative productivity (Mayhew 1991; Jones 1994; Krehbiel 1996). Similarly, some charge that divided governments produce higher budget deficits because neither party is given full responsibility for balancing the

---

3 Another line of research argues that incoherent policies are the result of the particularized interests of individual members of Congress, who use the advantages of incumbency and committee government to insulate themselves from party control (Mayhew 1974; Shepsle 1978; Fiorina 1989; Jacobson 1992).
budget (Schick 1993; McCubbins 1991; Cox and McCubbins 1991; for state-level evidence, see Alt and Lowry 1994 and Poterba 1994), although this argument is not without its sharp detractors (Barro 1991). Still others suggest that divided government has a moderating influence on the budget, preventing either party from drastically altering government spending and revenue priorities (Alesina and Rosenthal 1995; Fiorina 1992).

Divided government also can provide rough terrain for a president's agenda and substantially alter the final product of legislative action. There is evidence that relations with Congress are more confrontational (e.g., presidential vetoes are more common, congressional leaders are less deferential in setting policy priorities) when the president faces an opposition Congress (Kernell 1991; Bader 1994; Fiorina 1996). If recent history is any indication, government shutdowns (and "train wreck" allusions) also are more likely during periods of divided government.

Finally, divided government has an effect on public opinion. For example, since divided government leads to higher levels of conflict between Congress and the president, it often leads to lower levels of public support for Congress (Patterson and Caldeira 1990; Durr et al. 1994). In addition, there is evidence that divided government reduces people's ability to identify the parties controlling the two houses of Congress (Bennett and Bennett 1993). Thus, divided government reduces party accountability. It is easier for citizens to attribute responsibility for government performance to one of the parties when all elected branches of government are controlled by the same party (Sundquist 1993; Fiorina 1992; Jacobson 1991). Over the last 13 midterm elections, the president's party has lost an average of seven additional House seats when government was unified rather than divided. As the 1994 election demonstrates, unified government enhances the public's ability to pin the tail on the donkey, so to speak.
Understanding the causes of divided voting behavior will help us make sense of the effects of divided government. If divided voting behavior is purposeful, driven by the voters' desire for stalemate and divided government, we might be less enthusiastic about reforms intended to correct the consequences of divided government. On the other hand, if divided voting behavior is not intentional but the result of institutional features and short-term campaign forces, then we might redouble our efforts to minimize the harmful effects of divided government (Fiorina 1992).

The Volatile Nature of American Politics

Traditionally, voter loyalty has been studied only by examining voters in a single election. However, a longitudinal perspective on voting behavior is important because deviations from party-line voting contribute to the volatile nature of American politics, where a party or political figure may be a hero one day and a goat the next. For example, recent elections have dramatically changed the composition of national government in the United States. The 1992 election brought us the first Democratic president in 12 years; and yet, only two years later, Republicans won control of both houses of Congress for the first time in 42 years. But by 1996, in another turnabout, Bill Clinton had recovered sufficiently to win reelection handily.

Another sign of volatility is the tremendous amount of turnover in Congress in the last six years. Over half the members of the 104th House of Representatives were first elected in the 1990s. Consider the number of first-time winners in each of the last three House elections: 110 in 1992, 86 in 1994, and 74 in 1996. This is the largest number of newly elected members entering the House of Representatives since the 1940s (Jacobson 1997b). Finally, the 1992 elections produced a shift in
party control of 49 House seats, and over 55 House seats switched parties as a result of the elections of 1994.

Furthermore, the public popularity of the leaders of both parties resembles a roller coaster ride rather than the steady voyage usually granted to leaders of a relatively longstanding democratic nation. For example, President Bush's approval ratings reached record high levels shortly after the Gulf War, before plummeting to extremely low levels before the 1992 election. President Clinton has experienced his own highs and lows in opinion polls, though not of the same amplitude as President Bush. Even Newt Gingrich and Bob Dole saw their approval ratings drop suddenly and substantially in the span of one year following the Republican ascendance to majority status in Congress.

The leaders of both parties have been humbled by the transitory nature of public approval and electoral success in contemporary American politics. In this climate, elected officials seem unwilling to advocate bold policy changes for fear of overreaching and then suffering at the hands of the voters. Without a booming economy producing greater than anticipated government revenues, one wonders if Republican and Democratic officials could ever reach an agreement on a balanced budget plan. If more voters remained loyal to the same party, we would experience fewer dramatic short-term changes in our political system, and perhaps politicians would not be so apprehensive about innovative policy proposals.

Citizens are demonstrating relatively high levels of independence from the major parties and the political system more generally in the United States. This independence is manifested in split-ticket voting in national elections, which rose from about 15% in the 1950s to almost 30% in the 1980s, although there was a sharp decline in ticket-splitting in the 1996 election. Second, citizen efficacy and trust in government have declined over the same period. Third, in terms of party identification, there has been a rise in the number of independents and
a drop in strong party identifiers (see chapter 2). More recently, independent voting behavior blossomed in the form of Ross Perot's 19% share of the presidential vote in 1992. And in 1996, the movement to nominate Colin Powell for president (a man whose background and apparent policy views do not fit neatly into either party platform) was surprisingly popular. Recent surveys even suggest that a majority of Americans support the formation of a third party (Tollerson 1995; Moore and Saad 1995; Saad 1995b). Something is eating at American voters, causing many to forsake loyalty to one of the major parties, and we need to understand this phenomenon.

Finally, we need to understand what predicts divided voting behavior because it will help understand the swing voters who are important targets of political campaigns. Voting behavior researchers point out, for instance, that most straight-ticket voters are loyal partisans who have generally made their voting decisions long before election day, even before the official campaign has started (Campbell et al. 1960). Thus, significant campaign resources are devoted to identifying and targeting independent-minded voters who are still undecided (Key 1966; DeVries and Tarrance 1972; Maddox and Nimmo 1981; Boyd 1986).

The preceding discussion should convince the reader that there are a number of reasons why it is important to study divided voting behavior. There are several potential explanations of divided voting behavior that I will use as a point of departure for this dissertation. As it turns out, some of these explanations conflict with one another, and many have not been applied to the question of why some voters switch parties.
Explaining Divided Voter Behavior

Concern about divided government has generated several examinations of its causes. Theoretical arguments about the causes of divided government can be separated into two camps: (1) those who argue that citizens intentionally split their votes to produce divided government, and (2) those who argue that structural features of American electoral and party systems, as well as short-term electoral forces, both of which have nothing to do with the motivations of voters, account for the presence of divided government. For the latter camp, divided government occurs "accidentally" or unintentionally, a by-product of the peculiar features of the American political system and its election campaigns (Sundquist 1988). For the former camp, divided government is intended by voters, or at least by some voters (Fiorina 1996; Alesina and Rosenthal 1995, 1989). The following sections review what these arguments say about divided voting behavior.

Divided Government as Unintended: Structural Explanations

Many explanations of divided voting note that several structural features of American elections make it possible for people to split their votes between the major political parties. By separately electing executives and legislators, there is always a chance (depending on the relative abilities of the candidates, the relevant national and local issues, and the strength of the parties) that the collective outcome of an election is divided government. Furthermore, staggered terms for different offices is a contributing condition, since the midterm electorate is smaller and more partisan than the electorate in presidential elections (A. Campbell 1960; J. Campbell 1993; but see Sigelman and Jewell 1986; Wolfinger, Rosenstone and McIntosh 1981; Jacobson 1992). For example, Shugart (1995) finds that divided
government is more common in countries with staggered elections and terms for different offices.' As the last few American national elections show, we elect a president and a subsequent Congress under very different conditions, with very different results.

Finally, the Australian (or secret) ballot, instituted in most states at the end of the 19th century, reduced the intimidating power of party bosses and made it easier for voters to avoid casting straight-party ballots (Rusk 1970). In addition, Campbell and Miller (1957) and McAllister and Darcy (1992) find that citizens in states where the ballot offers a straight-party option (usually one lever or box) are more likely to split their tickets than citizens in states which do not provide a straight-party mechanism. This argument will be explored in more detail in this dissertation.

To some degree, divided government occurs by design. The American constitutional system was created with several checks and balances to prevent one group from imposing its will on the rest of the country (what James Madison called "the mischief of faction"). These same checks and balances often thwart one-party dominance. However, the electoral system in the United States only makes divided voting possible, not probable. The current electoral system (including a popularly elected Senate) has been in place since the early 20th century, yet divided government did not occur regularly until the 1950s, and it did not become the norm until the 1970s and 1980s. We still need to explain why voters increasingly have taken advantage of the current system to split their votes between the two major political parties.

'Given these constitutional requirements, political parties have traditionally been the glue that makes unified government possible. As discussed below, the weakening of party organizations and partisan attachments make divided government more likely. This has prompted calls for constitutional reforms (such as lengthening House terms to four years and allowing members of Congress to serve in the president's Cabinet) intended to strengthen party control of government (for a summary of reform ideas, see Sundquist 1988, 1993; for critiques, see Petracca 1991; Menefee-Libey 1991; Thurber 1991).
A number of structural arguments try to explain Republican dominance of presidential elections and Democratic control of Congress (neither of which holds anymore). For example, some explanations of the recent Democratic grip on the House of Representatives point to gerrymandering and incumbency advantages (in securing campaign financing and media access, in providing constituency service, and office perks). However, several pieces of evidence cast doubt on the notion that the Democrats enjoy an unfair advantage in House elections (see Fiorina 1992; Jacobson 1992; Gelman and King 1990). For example, the gerrymander thesis is discredited by the fact that Republicans received fewer total House votes than Democrats in every election from 1952 to 1992 (Fiorina 1992). In contrast, Fiorina (1992, 1994a) argues that the move toward professionalized state legislatures helps explain the relative weakness of Republican legislative candidates. Citizen legislatures are more attractive to Republicans because they allow one to serve without giving up a lucrative career. To use the economic terminology, Republicans face higher "opportunity costs" than Democrats if they put their careers on hold to serve in a professionalized legislature.

Turning to the presidency, Wattenberg (1991a) suggests that the Republicans are more successful at winning the presidency because they

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"Interestingly, reapportionment has been cited as a reason for the Republican takeover of Congress in 1994. In the South in particular, the creation of African-American majority districts reduced the percentage of Democratic voters in other districts, making these other districts ripe for a Republican victory (Cook 1994).

"It is ironic that the publication of Fiorina's argument about legislative professionalization came in 1994, when Republicans captured many state legislatures and Congress, the most professionalized of all American legislatures. The Republican victories would seem to cast doubt on Fiorina's theory. Furthermore, Gary Jacobson (1997a) has argued that Republican challengers in 1994 were more likely to have previous political experience than Democratic challengers, an unusual occurrence. In defense of Fiorina, however, 1994 was unique in that many Republican candidates took advantage of the anti-Democrat, anti-government, and anti-incumbency public mood, actually capitalizing on their own lack of government experience."
are better able to minimize intraparty conflict at the nomination stage. For example, the Republican coalition is more homogeneous, and Republicans select more of their convention delegates through a "winner-take-all" process, which means that the party's nomination is clinched earlier in the primary season. However, as Wattenberg admits, divisive primaries are usually endogenous variables, created by poor candidates, unfavorable national conditions, or salient controversial issues. And the Republican party has demonstrated over the last two presidential elections that it is capable of a very divisive primary (and convention) season.

Ultimately, it is the voters who select the government at election time. It is no accident that the postwar period of divided government coincides with a surge in split-ticket voting. While structural features of the American electoral system make divided voting possible, a sufficient theory of divided government must provide an explanation of voter attitudes and motivations, as well as other short-term features of election campaigns, that produce divided voting behavior.

*Divided Government as Unintended: Short-term Electoral Forces*

Another explanation of divided voting behavior emphasizes the short-term forces that vary from election to election and campaign to campaign. Voting behavior scholars have identified several short-term forces that likely produce divided voting behavior independently of any individual motivation or desire for divided government.

John Petrock's (1991) "issue ownership" thesis, for example, argues that Republicans are advantaged on issues that tend to be the focus of presidential elections. In contrast, when issues are a factor in congressional races, they tend to play to the strengths of the Democrats. Petrock also argues that perceptions about institutional roles and responsibilities are unrelated to campaign issues. Thus, the
salient issues and the calculations that voters use can vary considerably from election to election, simply based on the nature of the campaign and contemporary events. The slogan "It's the campaign, stupid!" might be a convenient summary of Petrocik's arguments. His explanation requires no desire for divided government on the part of voters. It merely requires that voters choose the candidate who is closest to them on the most salient campaign issues. The argument relies more on current national and local conditions, as well as the ability of candidates to successfully raise particular issues. Thus, for example, split-ticket voting tends to occur when voters confront Republican issues in the presidential campaign and Democratic issues in the congressional race.\footnote{There is no reason why Democratic issues couldn't dominate the presidential campaign while Republican issues are salient in the congressional campaign. Thus, Petrocik's theory allows for split ticket voting that produces a Democratic president and a Republican Congress, although he does not discuss such an occurrence.}

There is some evidence to support these arguments. For example, the 1994 congressional elections seemed to hinge on issues such as crime, taxes, and welfare reform, which may be more amenable to Republican candidates. However, one problem with Petrocik's issue ownership explanation is that previous studies have often failed to find much issue voting in congressional elections (Jacobson 1992). Additionally, other evidence suggests that issues are not owned (rather, they are temporarily leased) by the parties. For example, Clinton was elected president based on a campaign featuring issues such as managing the economy, tax cuts, and welfare reform (all typically Republican issues). Indeed, Bill Clinton seems to have made a political career by focusing attention on Republican issues (including crime and family values).

Petrocik's thesis ignores the role of candidates. Even if convincing issues are available to persuade voters, it still takes a resourceful candidate to raise those issues in a campaign. The ability
of candidates to coopt the other party's issues weakens the issue ownership argument. Thus, a simple reliance on issues that traditionally favor one party or the other does not take us far in explaining why people divide their votes. My explanation for divided voting behavior, discussed below, will pay closer attention to the qualities and resources of individual candidates.

Divided Voting and Partisan Decline

The issue ownership model tends to deal with individual candidates only as members or representatives of a political party and the party's policies. In contrast, studies which place split ticket voting within the recent era of partisan decline place more emphasis on candidate features (rather than issues) as the relevant short-term forces producing divided voting. Many scholars focus on performance-based evaluations of presidential (Fiorina 1981; Miller et al. 1986) and congressional candidates (Alvarez and Schousen 1993; Cain et al. 1987) as crucial aspects of the voting decision. Thus, many by-product explanations of divided voting start by noting the decline of party attachments in the electorate, since flagging party loyalty enables candidate traits (and other short-term forces) to influence the voting decision.

Advances in media coverage and campaign technology, reduced party control over nomination procedures, and an increased focus on constituency service have helped produce a "candidate centered"

Furthermore, Petrocik does not specify which voters should split their tickets. Presumably, knowledgeable voters who are the most attentive to campaign issues will be the ones to split their votes. There is some evidence on political "priming" suggesting that the most knowledgeable and attentive people are most responsive to campaign and media messages (Krosnick and Brannon 1993; Zaller 1992; but see Iyengar and Kinder 1987). It is also not clear whether Petrocik can explain the rise in split-ticket voting from the early 1960s to the late 1970s. It is unclear how or why presidential and congressional campaign issues would have diverged during that period.
politics, in which citizen attachments to a party are weaker than they used to be (Wattenberg 1991a; Carmines et al. 1987; Jennings and Markus 1984; Norpoth and Rusk 1982). The party decline perspective views split ticket voting and divided government as two among many indicators of partisan dealignment (Wattenberg; Burnham 1970; Nie Verba and Petrocik 1976).

In addition, there is evidence that electoral results at different levels have become more independent of one another (until recently), especially when comparing presidential and subpresidential elections (Beck 1992; Jacobson 1991; Fiorina 1992; Cummings 1966; Wattenberg 1990). Beck (1992) argues that there has been a "decoupling" of presidential and subpresidential elections. Presidential elections have become nationalized, with the development of national party and media organizations, while subpresidential races are determined more by state and local forces. As a result, campaigns for different offices can take place independently of each other. Examples of this phenomenon can be seen when comparing different subpresidential races as well. For example, split outcomes between House and Senate seats (Jacobson 1991), House and Governor races (Jacobson 1991), and Senate and Governor races (Soss and Canon 1995) have increased substantially over the last forty years.

Much of the evidence on the determinants of split ticket voting supports the argument that it is driven by weakened party attachments. For example, several studies show that the strength of one's party identification influences split ticket voting (Beck et al. 1992; Campbell and Miller 1957; Soss and Cannon 1995; Maddox and Nimmo 1981; McAllister and Darcy 1992; Glascock and Garand 1994). Strong partisans are less likely to split their ballots than independents and weak partisans. The link between strength of partisanship and ticket-splitting is also supported by circumstantial evidence that ticket-splitting increased at the same time the proportion of strong partisans
in the electorate has declined (see chapter 2). In any case, weaker partisan ties enable other short-term forces to play a bigger role in voter decision-making.

One important short-term factor in voting decisions involves the experience, personalities and other qualities of the candidates. Jacobson (1990) notes that Republicans tend to run weaker candidates (in terms of prior political experience) in congressional elections. As a result, Republican voters may split their ballots by voting for more appealing and perhaps better known Democratic candidates for Congress.

Another short-term influence on divided voting is the level of competition in congressional races. The presidential campaign offers two visible candidates, so lack of competition is usually not a concern with the presidential race.

Most party identifiers (usually over 70%) who split their tickets do so by defecting in the congressional race (Brody et al. 1994), so any study of divided voting should focus on congressional elections. An extreme example of low competition in congressional races involves unopposed candidates. In districts where a congressional candidate runs unopposed, voters of the opposite party have no choice but to defect and vote for the unopposed candidate or leave that part of the ballot blank. The result is that someone may divide his votes simply because his party did not field a candidate for every office on the ballot. In fact, Bloom (1994) finds that split-ticket voting is higher in districts with an unopposed candidate for the House of Representatives.

*Of course, sometimes one of the presidential candidates appears quite a bit weaker than his opponent. This should lead to more partisan defection, and thus more split-ticket voting. Thus, we should expect more split-ticket voting in years (such as 1964, 1972, and 1984) when one of the presidential candidates fared poorly. Except for 1972, however, ticket-splitting was not any higher in these elections than preceding or subsequent elections.

Historically, Democratic ticket-splitters are more likely to defect in presidential races than Republican ticket-splitters (Brody et al. 1994).
A less extreme example of unbalanced competition involves incumbency. Incumbents often (although not always) face weak, unknown opponents in House elections (Jacobson 1992), partly as a result of the incumbent's ability to raise early campaign money to scare off quality challengers (Box-Steffensmeier 1996). The result is that partisan defections in House elections are skewed toward the incumbent by a substantial margin (Mann and Wolfinger 1980). Thus, a voter may divide her votes simply because her party's candidate for the House is running against an incumbent. Several studies find that split-ticket voting is higher in districts with incumbents running (Alvarez and Schousen 1993; McAllister and Darcy 1992). Others find that split-ticket voting is most common when the voter's party affiliation is opposite that of the incumbent (Born 1994; Glascock and Garand 1994).

However, we are missing something by going no further than incumbency to explain why citizens might cross party lines to cast a split ballot. Incumbency is a blunt measure of the level of competition in House contests, for some incumbents face strong challengers while others face relatively unknown challengers, and still others face no opponent at all. In this study, I use two measures (name recognition and campaign spending) that are more precise indicators of the level of competition in congressional elections, and prove to be powerful predictors of divided voting (much more so than incumbency).

Given that many of the non-competitive House races historically take place in the South, one would expect that split-ticket voting is higher in the South. One study (Alvarez and Schousen 1993) finds that split-ticket voting is more common in the South, although this relationship is not present in other studies which examine more recent elections and control for incumbency and unopposed candidates (Glascock and Garand 1994; Bloom 1994). It is likely that split-ticket voting is declining in the South as Republican candidates are becoming more
competitive in southern sub-presidential elections (Burden and Kimball 1997b).

Other evidence links ticket splitting more directly to voter evaluations of candidate qualities and name recognition. For example, Beck and colleagues (1992) demonstrate that when the most visible candidates in different races come from different parties, voters are more likely to split their ballots in statewide elections. Similarly, Soss and Canon (1995) find that voters who distinguish candidates and their issue positions from party stereotypes are more likely to split their ballots. Still others have found that voters who report a heavier reliance on candidate factors to support the vote decision are more likely to split their tickets (DeVries and Tarrance 1972; Maddox and Nimmo 1981). Thus, it often happens that in separate races, candidates from different parties may enjoy substantial advantages in name recognition (because of previous electoral experience, another career, or a familiar name) and in their ability to position themselves on the ideological spectrum. As a result, sincere voters who look for the best candidate in each contest may find themselves unintentionally casting a split ballot.

Other evidence suggests that people who make their presidential voting decisions late in the campaign are more likely to split their ballots than people who decide early (Maddox and Nimmo 1981). Those who decide closer to election day have weaker party loyalties and are more likely to be influenced by the short-term events that can produce divided votes (Campbell et al. 1960). Additional evidence suggests that voters who are uncertain of party positions, or see no meaningful differences between the parties, are most likely to split their ballots (McAllister and Darcy 1992; Soss and Canon 1995; Glascock and Garand 1994).

Finally, in one of the earliest studies of individual-level ticket splitting, Campbell and Miller (1957) argue that a divided ballot is
caused by conflict between different issue attitudes and candidate evaluations (p. 303; also see Bloom 1994; McAllister and Darcy 1992). For instance, a voter may prefer the issues associated with one party but also prefer one or more of the candidates associated with the opposite party. Similarly, partisans whose issue preferences differ from party platforms (e.g., a conservative Democrat, a pro-choice Republican) are most likely to split their ballots (Brody et al. 1994). In an era of candidate-centered politics, more voters are likely to face these cross pressures and split their votes.

**Divided Government as Intended: Policy Balancing**

In contrast to the unintentional, candidate-centered explanations of divided voting, some argue that citizens purposefully divide their votes to achieve particular policy outcomes or representational arrangements. This view holds that voters are more government-oriented than candidate-oriented because their main concern is with the overall composition of the government after the election is over. An example of this reasoning is neatly summed up by the following statement from a voter in Iowa:

"It doesn't seem like anybody's got complete control up there and that's O.K. by me. I don't think any party should have complete control. Then we'd be in real trouble."  
(Verhovek 1995)

One of the intentional explanations for divided voting behavior is that some citizens purposefully vote for divided government (by splitting their ballots or voting against the president's party in midterm elections) to balance party control of the government and achieve policy moderation (Fiorina 1996, 1992; Alesina and Rosenthal 1989, 1995; Ingberman and Villani 1993; Lacy and Niou 1994). I will call this a "policy balancing" explanation of divided voting behavior.
since it suggests that ideological moderates are the ones who vote for divided government.\textsuperscript{11}

Policy balancing explanations for divided government have gained in popularity recently. Among political scientists, Fiorina (1992, 1996) and Alesina and Rosenthal (1995) have made the strongest defense of this explanation. For example, Alesina and Rosenthal (1995) argue that

"middle-of-the-road voters seek to balance the president by reinforcing in Congress the party not holding the White House. This balancing leads, always, to relatively moderate policies and, frequently, to divided government."

Not to belabor the point, but this balancing, government-oriented way of thinking about voting is most common among economists. Thus, it is no surprise that in a survey of 60 leading macroeconomists in the United States shortly before the 1996 election, over half wanted divided government to continue (The Economist 1996).

In addition, many journalists and other political observers have joined the policy balancing camp. Many reacted to the 1996 election with the conclusion that voters wanted to perpetuate divided government.\textsuperscript{12} Consider the following conclusions reached by two eminent political pundits, Robert Samuelson and David Broder.

"Divided government is no accident. It may be the only way voters can retain some control over their leaders ... If you don’t trust either party fully -- and may share some views of both -- you can hope that forcing them to bargain will create policies closer to your preferences than having

\textsuperscript{11}A handy restatement of any policy balancing argument is that voters have "nonseparable preferences." That is, their choice for one office depends on their preferred candidate or party for another office (Lacy and Niou 1994).

\textsuperscript{12}This penchant for reifying election outcomes is common, as evidenced by those who look for policy "mandates". The 1996 case is particularly egregious since most estimates indicate that over 80% of the voters chose the same party for president and Congress. Thus, the overwhelming majority of voters preferred one-party government.
either party dominate ... This best describes, I think, what happened in 1996." (Samuelson 1996)

"... the voters reelected the Republican Congress to keep the pressure on Washington to balance the budget within the next few years. They put Clinton back in office in order to see that his priorities -- which are also their priorities -- remain at the top of the list." (Broder 1996)

Even politicians have suggested that voters want divided government. Representative Jim Leach (R-Iowa) has observed that "there is an instinct in the American body politic to favor checks and balances" (Sundquist 1993). In the 1996 elections, many Republican congressional candidates campaigned on the idea that they would serve as a check on President Clinton (Berke 1996). In the final week of the campaign, the Republican party aired the controversial "Crystal Ball" television advertisement, which conceded the presidential race to Clinton and urged viewers to vote for Republican congressional candidates to keep an eye on President Clinton. As noted above, President Clinton defended his less-than-forceful campaign efforts on behalf of other Democratic candidates by arguing that sometimes the American public prefers to have one party control Congress while the other party holds the White House (Broder 1996). Clearly, policy balancing explanations for divided voting have captured the imagination of many important political observers.13

At this point, it is important to point out an alternative, although related, hypothesis. Paul Frymer (1994) argues that people often must split their votes in order to select the candidates closest to them on an ideological spectrum. His primary example is a moderate

13Some voters even claim a balancing rationale for their voting decisions. Consider the following account of an Idaho voter who chose Frank Church, a Democrat, and Len Jordan, a Republican, in two separate U.S. Senate elections in 1962.

"Church, he said, could help Idaho through his contacts with John Kennedy. 'So I voted to send Frank back there to continue to work on our behalf on these national issues and items where Idaho's welfare is at stake. And I sent Len back there to watch him (Church) and Kennedy.'" (Ashby and Gramer 1994)
conservative voter in the South who votes for a Republican presidential candidate (instead of a liberal Democrat) and a moderately conservative Democrats for the House (instead of a very conservative Republican). Thus, split-ticket voting is most common in the South because Democratic candidates for Congress have been able to position themselves near the conservative end of the ideological spectrum, while Democratic nominees for president (other than Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter) often fail to do the same. The important point is that voters may split their ballots for ideological reasons that have nothing to do with a desire for divided government.

Much of the work in support of the policy balancing model is based on formal modelling. For example, Ingberman and Villani (1993) argue that two parties whose sole aim is to win elections will stake out polarized policy positions. They also argue that in such a situation, some ideologically moderate voters will split their votes because it is the ideal strategy for achieving their desired policies. Conversely, Lacy and Niou (1994) argue that when voters have nonseparable preferences, candidates and parties will diverge toward opposite ends of the ideological spectrum.

Empirical support for the balancing model is, in fact, scarce. One piece of supportive evidence is the consistent finding that the president’s party loses seats in Congress in midterm elections (Erikson 1988; Alesina and Rosenthal 1989). However, as Erikson (1988, p. 1014) points out, other non-balancing explanations (such as the increased

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While Frymer discusses several districts that seem to fit this theory, the overall pattern of his data indicate otherwise. For instance, in districts where a majority voted for a Republican presidential candidate in the 1980s and elected a Democrat for the House, that House Democrat was as likely to be liberal (ADA score above 70) as conservative (ADA score below 50). The same pattern (on a smaller scale) holds for districts that elect a Republican House member with a Democratic presidential candidate.
motivation of voters with negative evaluations of the president) can account for this empirical regularity.\textsuperscript{15}

There is some evidence that moderates are more likely to split their ballots than ideological extremists (Glascock and Garand 1994; McAlister and Darcy 1992; Fiorina 1992, 1996; but weak or insignificant results are found by Alvarez and Schousen 1993; Born 1994; and Bloom 1994). However, Brody et al. (1994) find that increasing ideological or issue distance from one’s party raises the chances of splitting one’s ballot. This, however, does not prove that moderates split their ballots intentionally to produce divided government and middle-of-the-road policies. Those examining the relationship between party polarization and ticket splitting in recent elections find the opposite of what the balancing model predicts: voters who perceive sharp differences between the parties are least likely to split their ballots (Glascock and Garand 1994; Soss and Canon 1995). I suspect, though, that loyal and ideologically extreme partisans are the ones who perceive the greatest differences between the two parties.

In another test, Beck and colleagues (1992) find that those who support the idea of divided government are not more prone to split-ticket voting than those who do not favor divided government. However, Glascock and Garand (1994) show that for the most knowledgeable voters, 

\textsuperscript{15}Alternative explanations for midterm losses abound. In the original "surge and decline" theory (Campbell 1960), presidential elections are high salience races which induce independents (who tend to vote a straight ticket for the party of the winning presidential candidate) to turn out. In contrast, midterm elections are low salience races in which only core partisans vote, thus eliminating the advantage which the president's party enjoyed two years earlier. Kernell (1977) argues that the midterm is really a referendum on the president's performance, and midterm losses reflect inevitable negative evaluations of the president. Tufte (1978) adds the nation's economic performance to the presidential referendum argument. Oppenheimer and colleagues (1986) argue that the more seats the majority party has (the more "exposed" it is), the more susceptible it is to midterm losses (see also Marra and Ostrom 1989). A revised surge and decline theory (Campbell 1993) combines several of these elements but argues that higher turnout among the advantaged party's members accounts for the surge in presidential elections. In any case, there is some controversy as to which of these explanations (including the balancing model) account for midterm losses (Niemi and Weisberg 1993).
support for divided government does translate into a higher likelihood of a split ticket.

Some demographic characteristics of split-ticket voters tentatively support the argument that these are sophisticated voters. For example, ticket-splitters tend to be more educated than the average voter (Beck et al. 1992; DeVries and Tarrance 1972). Furthermore, high income is positively associated with ticket-splitting (Glascock and Garand 1994; DeVries and Tarrance 1972). Some have suggested that younger, politically active voters who get lots of information from the media are more predisposed toward ticket splitting (DeVries and Tarrance 1972; Campbell and Miller 1957), but the evidence is mixed (Beck et al. 1992).

Finally, if split-ticket voters are sophisticated, as the policy balancing theory suggests, one would expect that interest in politics should be positively associated with ticket-splitting. However, some evidence suggests a positive relationship (Maddox and Nimmo 1981), some suggests a negative relationship (Campbell and Miller 1957; Born 1994), and some suggests no relationship at all (Glascock and Garand 1994). Others have hypothesized that voters with high levels of political efficacy should be more likely to split their votes, but statistical tests find no relationship (Alvarez and Schousen 1993; Born 1994; Glascock and Garand 1994). Using demographic and attitudinal variables as proxies for sophistication have not succeeded in depicting split-ticket voters as attentive and interested in politics.

The policy balancing model also postulates that ticket-splitting should increase when the public perceives that the parties or presidential candidates are more polarized (Fiorina 1992, 1996). I examine this hypothesis in more detail in chapter 2, and I find that the opposite seems to be the case. That is, ticket-splitting is more common when the political parties converge toward the middle of the ideological
spectrum. In other words, it is easier for voters to cross party lines when they do not have to travel far.

The balancing model has also been used to explain the rising number of split U.S. Senate delegations (Fiorina 1992; Lacy and Niu 1994). Schmidt, Kenny and Morton (1996) find that senators running for reelection receive a larger share of the vote when the sitting senator is from the opposite party, even after controlling for other variables. However, in a separate study, Segura and Nicholson (1995) find that the party of the sitting senator does not affect the outcome in contested senate races.16

The Senate studies point out a conceptual puzzle in policy balancing explanations for divided voting behavior. Are voters trying to produce divided government or simply divided representation? Put differently, are voters trying to balance party control of different branches of government, or are they trying to balance the policy positions of the elected officials who represent them in Washington? Voting for two senators from different parties will help produce divided representation, but it will not create divided government.

The conclusion I draw from these studies is that most voters do not split their tickets intentionally to produce divided government. Not all people vote solely on the basis of issues and ideological considerations. It may be, however, that a subset of people do approximate the policy balancing model. The challenge, then, is to identify a subgroup of ideologically moderate voters who are most likely to split their ballots in order to produce divided government.

16It is unclear how the two studies reach such different conclusions. The piece by Schmidt and colleagues only examines sitting senators running for reelection. Perhaps it is easier for voters to balance between two sitting senators with known records than to balance a sitting senator with a relatively unknown candidate running for an open seat.
Matching Institutional Responsibilities with Party Strengths

Another intentional explanation of split ticket voting argues that different offices elicit different criteria for voting decisions, although it is similar to the balancing model in that voters weigh the competencies of the two parties. According to Gary Jacobson (1990, 1991), voters split their ballots to resolve conflicting preferences for expensive government programs and low taxes (for a similar argument using formal models, see Zupan 1991a, 1991b). Split-ticket voting tends to feature Republican executives and Democratic legislatures because voters match party strengths with perceived institutional responsibilities. Specifically, voters tend to look to the Republican party to manage the economy (in terms of efficiency and low taxes) and foreign affairs. On the other hand, the Democratic party is better at ensuring distributional fairness, protecting programs from spending cuts, and dealing with the unintended consequences of the market system. Meanwhile, voters want the president to impose some collective responsibility on the federal government because they tend to hold him responsible for national problems, such as the economy and foreign policy. On the other hand, people expect Congress to look out for the little guy by taking care of particularized problems and distributing local benefits.

There is little evidence to support Jacobson's theory. Jacobson provides some aggregate opinion data to support each of the four claims about public perceptions of the parties and branches of the federal government. However, polls often show that public images of the parties and their relative advantages in handling particular problems vary over time, depending on the performance of the government (this is a problem with the issue ownership thesis, too). For example, in May and June of 1995, the Republican party was seen as the best party at handling the budget deficit. By the end of the year, however (in the midst of
government shutdowns), a healthy plurality chose the Democratic party as the best at handling the deficit (Saad 1995b).

At a minimum, Morgan (1995) and Alvarez and Schousen (1993) find that different issues are associated with voting decisions in presidential versus House campaigns. Performance evaluations associated with presidential elections tend to gravitate toward national issues such as the economy and foreign policy (Fiorina 1981; Miller et al. 1986). At the same time, the role of national issues in congressional elections has decreased, while constituency service and district benefits have become more important (Cain et al. 1987). Also, Brady (1993) has demonstrated that voters tend to view their House incumbent as closer to the ideological middle than the parties. Thus, congressional incumbents are often able to separate themselves from their party's positions on national issues.

However, no one has yet demonstrated that individual voters who hold the required mix of conflicting preferences and perceptions of the parties split their tickets more often than others. More importantly, Jacobson's model fails to account for instances where voters produce a Democratic president and a Republican Congress. The 1994 national elections, and the handful of states with Democratic governors and Republican legislatures (currently seven), cannot be explained by Jacobson's thesis.

Divided Government as Intended: Voter Alienation

Fiorina (1992, 1996) also proposes a weaker form of the argument for intentional divided voting, where voters split their tickets because they do not trust either party with complete control of the levers of power. People who are disenchanted by corruption, greed, and incompetence among politicians in the United States divide their votes to create stalemate so that neither party can do what it wants. Fiorina
(1992b) emphasizes that, in this formulation, public cynicism or alienation does not derive from ideological considerations or policy positions. Alienated voters are simply trying to pit two disreputable parties against one another. Citizens who do not trust either party with the full reins of power may divide their votes with the hope that each party will check the worst habits of the other party.

The recent cohabitation of high levels of public cynicism about politics with continued divided government has attracted scholars to the voter alienation hypothesis. For example, consider the following statement from a text on the 1996 elections:

"The venerable American concepts of separation of powers and checks and balances have taken such a hold in the American political culture that we have apparently come to accept divided government as the best guarantee against abuse of power by one party. In fact, a political culture that exhibits ever-increasing levels of political distrust toward elected officials and alienation from the political system might also be expected to show high levels of comfort with divided government." (Jackson 1997)

However, this idea has not been tested very rigorously, and most attempts have been unsuccessful. Fiorina (1992b) finds that some measures of alienation and distrust correlate with higher rates of ticket-splitting. A fairly robust finding is that voters who do not care which party wins the presidency are most likely to split their ballots (Fiorina 1992b; Born 1994; Glascock and Garand 1994). Most multivariate analyses fail to find much support for the distrust hypothesis, largely because of the measures they use. For example, some look for a relationship between measures of political efficacy and ticket-splitting, to no avail (Born 1994; Alvarez and Schousen 1993; Glascock and Garand 1994). While efficacy is a component of alienation, low efficacy does not necessarily mean that one is disillusioned with both political parties. Furthermore, if some divided voters are sophisticated (as the policy balancing hypothesis argues), then high levels of efficacy should be associated with ticket splitting. Without
separating voters based on their levels of knowledge and attentiveness to politics, any statistical test of the influence of efficacy is likely to be confounded.

The most common test examines the association between a scale based on the familiar NES "trust in government" items and ticket-splitting. For example, Glascock and Garand (1994) find that people with low scores on the NES trust in government measures were most likely to split their tickets in the 1992 election, although the relationship disappears when Perot voters are included in the analysis. However, Born (1994) finds no such relationship between the NES trust scale and ticket-splitting for elections from 1972 to 1988, and Jacobson (1991) finds no relationship between the NES trust items and ticket-splitting in 1988. Why does the trust scale generally fail to significantly predict ticket-splitting? What may initially look like lack of empirical support for Fiorina's hypothesis can, upon further review, be attributed to poor measurement.

It is inherently difficult to find a relationship between a trust in government scale and ticket-splitting, because at least two dimensions (a policy dimension and a partisan dimension) of the NES trust measures do not reflect Fiorina's conceptualization of disenchantment with both parties. For instance, Miller (1974) argues that distrust is policy-based, driven by perceptions that neither party offers adequate policies or solutions for contemporary problems. In contrast, Citrin (1974) argues that cynicism is also driven by partisanship and evaluations of the incumbent president: when government institutions are controlled by your party, then you are more likely to trust the government. Clearly, the former dimension of distrust (reflecting alienation from the policy positions of both parties) should produce ticket-splitting, but for policy reasons, not for the abuse of power reasons outlined by Fiorina. In contrast, the latter dimension (reflecting dissatisfaction only with the ruling party) should not
produce ticket-splitting. Those who merely dislike the party in power can vote a straight ticket for the other party as an antidote for their cynicism. Thus, it is misleading to examine a relationship between the NES trust in government items and ticket-splitting if the trust measure has a partisan dimension (see Citrin and Green 1986 for additional evidence that scores on the trust scale are related to partisan attitudes).

The problems in finding a relationship between the NES trust scale and ticket-splitting is an example of Weatherford's (1992) warning that conventional measures of alienation are often used without adequately considering whether they reflect our theoretical concepts. An adequate test of Fiorina's voter alienation hypothesis requires better measurement of disenchantment with both political parties. This dissertation will provide such a test.

The foregoing discussion should make clear that there are many potential reasons why citizens divide their votes between the two major parties. Hypotheses about electoral competition and public attitudes toward the parties can be sharpened and tested again. Also, while many of these hypotheses have been tested on ticket-splitters, few have been used to explain why people divide their votes by switching parties from one election to the next.

Furthermore, competing explanations of divided voting behavior differ in the assumed level of information the voter possesses. At one extreme, theories emphasizing party identification, ballot format, and candidate name recognition require relatively little information when voting choices are made. At the other extreme, policy balancing explanations assume that voters roughly know the ideological center of gravity in each party, and which party controls each branch of national government. Even Frymer's (1994) explanation of sincere voting posits that voters know something about the policy positions of the competing candidates.
It seems likely that previous studies produce mixed evidence on the predictors of ticket-splitting because they test different explanations on all voters at once. Different voters respond to different political stimuli. Most importantly, there is a large amount of variation among voters in terms of their overall knowledge of politics (Converse 1964, 1962; Bennett 1988). It may be that more knowledgeable citizens divide their votes for reasons having more to do with policy preferences, party positions, and presidential performance, while less knowledgeable voters may divide their votes because of other factors (such as the level of competition in each contest, the nature of the ballot, and their own party identification). This idea will be developed and tested in subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

Plan of Attack and Summary of Chapters

There are three types of variation to explain in any complete account of divided voting behavior. First, we need to examine variation in divided voting over time. For example, why was ticket-splitting more common in the 1970s than in the 1950s? Second, we need to explain variation over space. For instance, why has ticket-splitting been more common in some states or regions (especially the South) than in others? Finally, a thorough account of divided voting must explain variation across individuals. For example, why do some voters split their ballots while others cast a straight ballot?

These three components of divided voting have been explored in an uneven fashion. For example, only Burnham (1965, 1970) and Rusk (1970) have explored variation in ticket-splitting over time and space, and their publications are nearly thirty years old. Existing research on divided voting demonstrates the dominance of survey research in the study of American political behavior, for all of the remaining studies of divided voting use survey data to examine individual differences
among voters. Furthermore, all but one of the individual-level studies of divided voting analyze split-ticket voting alone. Only V.O. Key (1966) has studied the question of why some voters switch parties from one election to the next while others stick with the same party. One of the unique contributions of this dissertation is that it examines divided voting over time, both at the individual and aggregate levels.¹⁷

Chapter 2 tackles the aggregate level of divided voting by examining trends in ticket-splitting and split district election outcomes in the 20th century. My findings suggest that ticket-splitting and divided government are more common when the political parties move closer to each other ideologically and when it is more difficult for voters to identify differences between the parties. This finding runs contrary to the predictions of Fiorina's policy balancing hypothesis. If party polarization and homogenization continue in the United States, and if parties continue to take diverging positions on important national issues (such as Medicare reform, budget priorities, term limits, and a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution), then we should expect ticket-splitting to decrease (along with chances for more divided government to decrease).

Subsequent chapters examine individual-level variation in divided voting, with an eye toward following voters over the course of two or more elections.¹⁸ Chapter 3 begins analyzing individual voters over the course of a four-year election cycle. I argue that voters

¹⁷Appendix A identifies the data sources for this study, and discusses some of the advantages and disadvantages of the data I examine. Much of the dissertation makes use of public opinion surveys conducted by the National Election Studies, and Appendix A provides my rationale for using these surveys. Where possible, I have supplemented these data with campaign spending figures collected by the Federal Election Commission. The dissertation also makes use of some aggregate level data on ticket-splitting and election outcomes.

¹⁸This dissertation does not examine variation in divided voting across states and geographic regions. Burden and Kimball (1997a, 1997b) have begun such an analysis.
contribute to electoral change in American politics by switching parties. While the most prominent theories of electoral change in the United States focus on voter turnout, we need to pay closer attention to voters who switch parties.

Chapter 4 examines the importance of competition in the congressional campaign in explaining why Americans divide their votes between the two parties. The campaign context is important because I argue that party loyalty is conditional. That is, voters are loyal to their party when the nominee is a well-known, appealing candidate. Otherwise, they will consider other options, including voting for the opposition party. In national elections, this condition is most often violated in House contests, where many major-party candidates are practically unknown and have little money to spend on the campaign. As a result, most people split their votes between the two parties by choosing an opposition party candidate in the House contest.

However, studies of divided voting usually rely on a blunt measure of incumbency to account for local differences in candidate quality. In chapter 4, I demonstrate that we can do a better job explaining why citizens divide their votes between the parties if we incorporate more direct measures of candidate quality, such as name recognition and campaign spending.

In chapter 5, I examine swing voters in House elections (those who switch parties in consecutive elections). Few scholars have explored why some voters switch parties, and I find several reasons. The quality of the candidates, evaluations of the president, ideological preferences, the strength of one’s party attachments, and other perceptions about political parties, all help explain why a voter might switch parties. In particular, candidate name recognition and campaign spending are very strong predictors of swing voting. Voters are most likely to switch when the opposition party fields a highly visible, well-financed candidate for the House. In addition, voters are more
likely to switch sides when their evaluations of the president and their policy preferences put them at odds with most members of their party coalition. Finally, independent voters (i.e., with the weakest attachment to a political party) are most likely to switch parties on election day. These findings hold in both landslide congressional elections (such as 1974 and 1994) and elections that produced little net change in Congress (such as 1992).

In addition, there is considerable evidence that political knowledge determines which of these four factors influence voting decisions. Voters with high levels of information are more likely to switch because of ideological considerations and evaluations of the president, while low information voters are likely to switch sides because of weak party attachments. In addition, voters with low levels of information are more likely to switch parties. Finally, candidate qualities are important determinants of swing voting for both high and low knowledge voters.

In chapter 6, I take another look at voter consistency over time by comparing vote choices in midterm House elections to vote choices in the previous presidential election. Another type of swing voter is a "split-term voter," one who votes for a midterm congressional candidate from a different party than the one he supported in the previous presidential election. As in chapter 5, I find that split-term voters are driven by evaluations of the president, their own ideological predispositions and party attachments, the quality of the House candidates, and their own knowledge and interest in party politics.

In addition, I fail to find evidence that sophisticated moderate voters use the midterm to elect members of Congress from the party opposite the president. While evaluations of the president's performance influence voting decisions, I find no evidence that moderate voters weigh the president's ideological position along with those of the House candidates. Rather, voters seem to evaluate the policy
positions of the House candidates alone when making their midterm selections.

The final data analysis chapter (chapter 7) examines split-ticket voting in presidential elections in an effort to link ticket-splitting to other forms of divided voting. The findings suggest that ticket-splitting is shaped by the same forces that lead voters to switch parties. There is additional evidence that voters who are largely indifferent to political parties, and see little or no difference between the major parties, are most likely to split their ballots. Finally, an analysis of the 1992 election suggests that Perot voters and ticket-splitters share many attitudes toward parties, but differ in terms of other demographic characteristics.

Throughout the dissertation, I find little evidence that voters divide their votes intentionally to produce divided government. Sophisticated (even moderate) voters who know where the parties stand tend to pick a preferred party and stick with it. In contrast, voters who blur the differences between the parties are more likely to divide their votes. Candidate qualities, evaluations of the president, sincere ideological preferences, and partisan attachments account for the bulk of divided voting. It may be that there are a few ideological moderates who vote in a way that is consistent with a policy balancing model. If so, these voters are very difficult to find.

In the concluding chapter, I bring the various bits of evidence together to assess the chances of continued divided government. There are two recent developments in American politics that we should monitor. Congressional elections have become more competitive and the major parties have polarized on social and economic issues. If these two trends continue, we should see a decline in all forms of divided voting, and we may even witness unified government more often.
Plainly, many of the causes of divided party voting remain to be discovered (Born 1994, p. 107).

Introduction

A theory of divided party voting should be able to account for variation in ticket-splitting across individuals, across voting units, and over time. In subsequent chapters, I examine the correlates of divided voting behavior at the individual level. Elsewhere, Barry Burden and I explore the variation in ticket-splitting across states and congressional districts (Burden and Kimball 1997a, 1997b). This chapter examines the aggregate trend in president-House ticket-splitting at the national level, primarily over the last 45 years, to set the stage for the chapters to come.

While the evidence in this chapter is rather circumstantial, it suggests that ticket-splitting is more common when the two parties converge toward the ideological center. Contrary to some policy balancing arguments (Fiorina 1996; Alesina and Rosenthal 1995; Ingberman and Villani 1993), ticket-splitting does not seem to be used by the American electorate as a strategy to balance two ideologically extreme parties (for individual-level evidence, see Born 1994, and Alvarez and Schousen 1993). In addition, split-ticket voting is a consequence of candidate-specific forces. Ticket-splitting in the postwar era is more common when there are more uncontested House contests and when a presidential candidate wins by a landslide.
Figure 2.1. President-House Ticket-Splitting, 1952-1996

Source: National Election Studies

Election-year surveys conducted by the National Election Studies provide an informative time series of American voting behavior in the post-World War II era, and aggregate percentages from NES surveys are used for this analysis. The time series data indicate that the frequency of ticket-splitting has varied over time, and some may be surprised to know that president-House ticket-splitting is less common today than it was in the 1970s and 1980s.

Figure 2.1 depicts the percentage of voters splitting their ballots between the two major parties in presidential and House elections since 1952. The figure indicates that ticket-splitting increased rather sharply in the early 1970s before levelling off and then dropping in the last few elections. The decline in 1996 is especially noteworthy; even if Perot voters are included, the 1996 elections elicited the lowest level of ticket-splitting since the 1960s.
Other measures of divided voter behavior in presidential elections show a similar trend over the last forty years. The number of congressional districts with split outcomes (i.e., supporting a president of one party while electing a House candidate of the opposite party) reached its peak in 1972 and 1984 before declining in 1992 and 1996 to levels not seen since 1952. The correlation between ticket-splitting and split-district outcomes for the 1952-1996 period is a healthy $r = .66$ (p<.05).¹

In assessing the level of split-ticket voting in a given year, one problem involves the treatment of third-party presidential voters. It is difficult to know whether third-party voters would have voted a straight ballot or not in the absence of the independent presidential candidate (a later chapter examines this question). Any third-party presidential voter who also casts a House vote could be considered a ticket-splitter. The points above the line in Figure 1 reflect higher levels of ticket-splitting when third-party presidential voters are included as splitters (in 1968, 1980, 1992, and 1996). The fact that relatively successful third-party candidates have been more common in the last few decades underscores the extent to which voters are willing to look past the major parties in the United States. However, the declining support for Ross Perot from 1992 to 1996 shows how difficult it is for third parties to retain voters. The major characteristics of the trend in ticket-splitting generally remain when third-party voters are counted as ticket-splitters: a bump beginning around 1972 and remaining through the 1980s, then a decline in 1996. For the general

¹Gary Jacobson (1997b) finds a similar pattern using another measure of the coherence of presidential and House voting. The correlation between a party's share of the district-level presidential and House vote declines to a low point (just above .5) in 1972, then rises in the 1990s above .8 for the first time since the 1950s.
analysis, though, it is more appropriate to examine only the two-party presidential vote.¹

The next part of this chapter tests different theories of the causes of divided government by examining the correlates of the national trend in ticket-splitting seen in Figure 2.1. I return to split-district outcomes near the end of this chapter.

The Decline of Partisanship

The major explanation for the rise in ticket-splitting portrayed in Figure 2.1 is that voters have become more independent of the political parties in the United States. The increasing role of media technologies in the election process, and the resulting emphasis on candidate traits and presentation of self in campaigns, have diminished the use and salience of party labels in American politics (Wattenberg 1991a; Aldrich 1995). In addition, younger generations entering the electorate have found less use for party labels (Beck 1979). Today, fewer voters identify with one of the major parties than did so forty years ago. Since party identification serves as a frame of reference for viewing the political landscape, as citizen attachments to political parties have weakened, we should expect party loyalty in the voting booth to decline. Thus, as the number of independents in the electorate grows, ticket-splitting should increase as well.

Figure 2.2 portrays the percentage of citizens identifying themselves as Independents, alongside the ticket-splitting time series since 1952. In Figure 2.2, and subsequent analyses in this chapter, party leaners are treated as Independents. Clearly, there is a strong

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¹Since third party candidates only received a noticeable share of the vote in a handful of elections, including those votes might obscure any overall trend. In addition, Fiorina (1996, p. 120) argues that voters more often select third party candidates when they perceive no differences between the two major parties. Thus, to include third-party voters might confound any test of Fiorina’s balancing thesis presented below.
positive association between the two measures. The correlation between ticket-splitting and independents over the last twelve presidential elections is a hardy .86 (p<.01). Furthermore, the jump in ticket-splitting in the late 1960s and early 1970s coincides with a similar rise in independent identifiers. Even the 1996 decline in split-ticket voting corresponds with a slight drop in Independents. These results support the conclusion that increased ticket-splitting is a sign of weakened citizen attachments to parties (Burnham 1965; Wattenberg 1991).

Some might argue that strength of party identification acts as a surrogate for many different forces, such as the policy positions of the political parties (Fiorina 1981), general trust in government (Burnham 1965), and the extent to which candidate traits influence the voting decision (Wattenberg 1991), in addition to indicating a psychological attachment to a party. The following sections of this chapter examine the association between ticket-splitting and some of these other forces.

![Figure 2.2. Independents and Ticket-Splitting, 1952-1996](source)

Source: Stanley and Niemi 1994; 1996 NES
Morris Fiorina's (1996) recent treatise on divided government hypothesizes that ideologically moderate voters are motivated to split their ballots when both parties are too extreme. By helping elect a president and Congress of opposite parties, moderate voters can hope to achieve middle-of-the-road policies as a result of negotiations between the two branches. One implication of Fiorina's theory is that ticket-splitting (and other forms of divided party voting) should be more common when the parties move further apart on the ideological spectrum. The following quotation makes the argument most clearly:

"Probably the most important point to take away from the preceding discussion is the crucial importance of party polarization. When the parties are relatively close, near the center of gravity of the electorate, ticket-splitting declines. When the parties move away from each other, following their own internal dynamics toward the extremes of the voter distribution, they open up a large policy range in which ticket-splitting is the voter response (Fiorina 1996, p. 81)."

Fiorina's view of the relationship between party polarization and ticket-splitting runs contrary to a more traditional perspective of the electorate. In a well-known spatial model of voting, Anthony Downs (1957) argues that "parties will try to be similar and to equivocate" in order to appeal to middle-of-the-road voters in a two-party democracy (p. 137). Parties may even overlap on the ideological spectrum in an effort to attract votes. Furthermore, by taking this strategy, parties and candidates encourage voters to behave "irrationally" (by making voting decisions based on considerations other than ideology). For example, when competing candidates offer similar or ambiguous policy proposals, voters often rely on character assessments and personal traits when making voting decisions (Page 1978; Asher 1988). Several empirical studies support the Downs hypothesis that ideological
considerations have a stronger influence on vote choice when the candidates provide clear and polarized policy positions (Page 1978; Wright 1978; Abramowitz 1981; Wright and Berkman 1986).

When voters choose on the basis of candidates rather than issues, the chances are lower that they will support the same party each time they cast a vote. Similarly, when parties intersect near the middle of the ideological dimension, even an issue-oriented voter will be more inclined to occasionally support the opposition party. Consequently, when parties converge to minimize their policy differences, we should expect ticket-splitting to increase.

Another famous political scientist, V.O. Key, made a theoretical argument about electoral behavior that also speaks to this debate:

The voice of the people is but an echo chamber. The output of an echo chamber bears an inevitable and invariable relation to the input. As candidates and parties clamor for attention and vie for popular support, the people’s verdict can be no more than a selective reflection from among the alternatives and outlooks presented to them. (Key 1966, p. 2)

We can use Key’s echo chamber metaphor for the electorate to explain why ticket-splitting should decrease when the parties polarize. When parties move apart and offer a meaningful choice, voters should respond by clearly selecting one of the parties. For example, in the 1964 and 1972 presidential elections, where one of the candidates tried to offer "a choice, not an echo" (to borrow a Goldwater campaign slogan), voters overwhelmingly sided with one party (choosing the less extreme candidate). In contrast, when parties and their candidates move toward the ideological center and blur their differences, the response from the electorate should be equally hazy: ticket-splitting and divided government. Clarity from the parties begets clarity from the voters; confusion begets confusion. Indeed, Key advocated more distinctive
issue-oriented party platforms (as well as stronger party organizations) as a way to revitalize partisan ties among electorate (Epstein 1983).

To summarize the competing theoretical viewpoints, strategically-motivated moderates are the ones casting split ballots in the Fiorina model. In contrast, ticket-splitting is driven by sincere ideological considerations or non-ideological considerations (such as candidate characteristics) in the Downs-Key paradigm.

While Fiorina’s balancing view of ticket-splitting and divided government is gaining popularity among public choice scholars (Alesina and Rosenthal 1995; Ingberman and Villani 1993) and journalists (Samuelson 1996; Broder 1996), some have adhered to the Downs-Key perspective to explain ticket-splitting. For example, journalists such as David Broder (1972) and Kevin Phillips (1975) have argued that ticket-splitting increased after the late 1960s because voters did not perceive meaningful policy differences between the parties. Others find that individual voters are more likely to split their ballots when they perceive ideological similarities between the parties (Born 1994; Soss and Canon 1995).

Figure 2.3 provides a head-to-head test of Fiorina’s policy balancing theory versus the Downs-Key perspective by juxtaposing President-House ticket-splitting against election-year levels of party voting in the House of Representatives for each of the last 12 elections. Party voting in Congress (the percentage of roll call votes where at least a majority of one party opposes a majority of the other party) is one of the most common indicators of party polarization at the national level (Rohde 1991; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Aldrich 1995). ¹

The time series data in Figure 2.3 clearly support the Downs-Key view of the relationship between party positioning and ticket-splitting.

¹In subsequent analyses, I also use roll call voting scores and public perceptions (from the National Election Studies) to measure the ideological distance between the two parties in Congress. Fortunately, these measures follow the same trend as party voting and have a similar negative association with ticket-splitting.
Ticket-splitting increased as party voting in the House declined; then, as party voting rebounded in the 1980s and 1990s, ticket-splitting became less common. The two trends are rough mirror images of each other. The correlation between party voting and ticket-splitting is moderately strong and negative ($r=-.61$, $p<.05$). Furthermore, the low point in party voting occurs in the same year in which ticket-splitting reaches its apex. In fact, the crossing of the two trends in 1972 indicates the rather remarkable observation that party-line voting in the House of Representatives was less common than President-House ticket-splitting that year. Contrary to Fiorina's hypothesis, ticket-splitting is more common when the parties converge ideologically and less common when the parties diverge.

![Figure 2.3. Party Voting and Ticket-Splitting, 1952-1996](image)

Sources: Stanley and Niemi 1994; 1996 NES; Cooper et al. 1977; Congressional Quarterly Almanac.
Ticket-Splitting and the Decline of Trust in Government

In addition to policy balancing, Fiorina (1996) offers a second motive for ticket-splitting: distrust of government and political parties due to corruption or incompetence. A disenchanted voter may not believe that either party will act in the public interest if given control of both elected branches of government. Thus, the cynical voter may cast a split ballot in the hopes of dividing government so that the parties will be forced to check each other's excesses. The cynical voter is not motivated by policy considerations, but is simply trying to pit two untrustworthy parties against each other.

If Fiorina's hypothesis is correct, we might expect to see ticket-splitting increase as trust in government decreases. Figure 2.4 presents the percentage of NES respondents who "trust the government in Washington to do what is right" most or all of the time, along with the percentage of president-House ticket-splitters in each election year. An initial glance at the data suggest that there is some support for Fiorina's hypothesis. The correlation between trust in government and ticket-splitting for the last 10 elections is negative and fairly strong ($r=-.59$, $p=.07$). The decline in trust in government coincides with the increase in split-ticket voting in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

However, this overall correlation is not very robust. After 1968, the two trends do not go together very well -- trust remains at fairly low levels in the 1980s and 1990s when ticket-splitting declines. In fact, the correlation between trust in government and ticket-splitting over the last eight elections is a paltry -.05. The initially strong negative correlation can be attributed to the outlying cases of 1960 and 1964, when trust in government was very high. Finally, the correlation between governmental trust and the number of districts with

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*By comparison, strength of partisanship and party polarization remain strongly correlated with ticket-splitting (with Pearson's coefficients at least as high as .5) after removing 1960 and 1964 from the analysis.
split outcomes in each of the last ten elections is extremely weak \( (r=.18) \) and carries the wrong sign. Thus, evidence at the aggregate level does not seem to link split-ticket voting to decreasing public trust in government.

![Figure 2.4. Ticket-Splitting and Trust in Government, 1952-1996](image)

Sources: Stanley and Niemi 1994; National Election Studies.

**Ticket-Splitting and Ballot Format**

Another common hypothesis holds that ticket-splitting is partly a function of the form of the election ballot. Rusk (1970) demonstrated that the switch to the Australian (or secret) ballot just before the turn of the century made it easier to cast a split ballot. More recently, some have found that ticket-splitting is less common in states that have a straight-party mechanism on the ballot (Campbell and Miller
1957; McAllister and Darcy 1992). Such ballots have a single lever or button that allows voters to cast a straight party ballot in one motion.

There has been a slow movement in the 50 states away from ballot forms allowing straight-party voting in a single act, so a changing rules explanation for increasing ticket-splitting is at least plausible. In 1956, 27 states, covering about 54% of the voters, had a straight-party lever on their ballots (The Book of the States 1956-57). By the early 1970s, the high point in American ticket-splitting, 25 states, covering roughly 49% of the voters, still had a straight-party option on the ballot (The Book of the States 1976-77). While this small change may have contributed to the rise in ticket-splitting, it cannot account for the dramatic jump in ticket-splitting. Moreover, the movement away from straight-ticket mechanisms continued after the early 1970s, to the point that 20 states, covering roughly 43% of the electorate, currently feature a party-line selection on the ballot (Brace 1993), yet ticket-splitting has not continued to increase. Therefore, while ballot format may have a small role in explaining ticket-splitting, we must look elsewhere for the major causes of divided party voting in the United States during the last forty years.

A Multivariate Analysis

This section presents a multivariate analysis of ticket-splitting since 1952. Regression analysis offers a more rigorous assessment of the relationship between partisanship, party polarization, and ticket-splitting than the bivariate results presented above. The dependent variable is the percentage of voters who split their ballots between the two major parties in presidential and House contests, as depicted in the previous figures. The critical strength of partisanship variable is measured by the percentage of NES respondents who identify themselves as political independents.
Different regression analyses are presented to test the reliability of the findings, especially the effects of party polarization. Party polarization is measured three different ways. Party voting in the House of Representatives is the first measure, with higher levels of party voting implying greater polarization between the parties. A second measure uses roll call scores compiled by Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) and adjusted by Groseclose and colleagues (1996) to allow for comparisons over time. The difference between the mean adjusted ADA scores for Republicans and Democrats in the House of Representatives is used as the second measure of party polarization in each election year. A third measure uses the percentage of NES respondents who see "important differences" between the two parties during each election year. This is a rather crude measure of ideological polarization because respondents may be referring to non-ideological differences (such as scandals, economic performance, or specific candidates) between the parties. Each of the three indicators of party polarization should be negatively associated with ticket-splitting if the Downs-Key perspective is correct. Fiorina’s balancing theory predicts a positive association.

Two sets of regression equations are estimated. The first set includes independent variables measuring independent identifiers and party polarization. The second set of equations adds an election counter as an independent variable. This trend variable is added to determine whether any relationship between ticket-splitting and the other variables is simply an artifact of an overall trend in ticket-

Since ADA scores are based on a relatively small number of roll call votes and a different set of votes each year, a legislator’s score could change from year to year simply because of a shifting agenda, rather than any change in the legislator’s ideological predispositions. Groseclose, Levitt, and Snyder (1996) correct the reported ADA scores to allow for meaningful comparisons over time. See their paper for a more detailed description of the correction method. Consistent with party voting measures, analyses using ADA scores (Groseclose et al. 1996) and NOMINATE scores (McCarty et al. 1996) show a similar pattern of party convergence in the early 1970s followed by increasing polarization since the 1970s.
splitting. Measures of trust in government and ballot format are not included in this analysis since they do not exhibit much of a bivariate association with ticket-splitting.4

The regression results are presented in Table 2.1, and they support the bivariate relationships introduced above. More importantly, the negative association between party polarization and ticket-splitting holds up after controlling for declining partisanship in the electorate and a trend effect. In addition, the twin factors of independent identifiers and party polarization explain an impressively large share of the variance in ticket-splitting, as exhibited by the low standard error of the estimate and large adjusted R² values.

In the first model, party voting has a negative and statistically significant effect on ticket-splitting. The coefficient for party voting in model 1 indicates that a ten percentage point increase in party voting should cause ticket-splitting to drop roughly 2 percentage points. The fraction of independent identifiers is positively associated with ticket-splitting and this relationship is statistically significant in every model. The coefficient in model 1 predicts that a 10 percentage point increase in political independents should generate a 7 point increase in ticket-splitting.

Lest one believes that party voting is not an appropriate measure of polarization, the second model in Table 1 replaces party voting with a more precise measure of polarization, the mean distance between party ADA scores in the House. Again, its coefficient is negative and significant. According to the estimates in model 2, if the parties were to move apart 10 points on the 100-point ADA scale, split-ticket voting should decrease by about 2 percentage points.

4When I included trust in government in the regression equations in table 2.1, its coefficient never approached statistical significance and it did not alter the main effects of partisanship and party polarization.
<table>
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<td></td>
<td>(5.512)</td>
<td>(3.478)</td>
<td>(8.810)</td>
<td>(8.607)</td>
<td>(9.388)</td>
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<td>-0.151*</td>
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<td>-0.474</td>
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<td>(0.461)</td>
<td>(0.952)</td>
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<th>Model 4</th>
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<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>.843</td>
<td>.861</td>
<td>.698</td>
<td>.844</td>
<td>.868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Error</td>
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<td>2.22</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>2.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Durbin-Watson*</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>2.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The dependent variable is the percentage of major party president-House ticket-splitters in each election year. Cell entries are OLS coefficients (standard errors in parentheses).

**p < .01 (two-tailed)
*p < .1 (two-tailed)
#p < .1 (one-tailed)

The Durbin-Watson statistic tests for serially correlated errors, a common problem with time series data. The Durbin-Watson statistic can take any value between 0 and 4. Any value close to 2 (especially in model 3) is evidence of no first-order autocorrelation. For each of the regression equations in Table 2.1 (except model 3), the Durbin-Watson statistic falls within the "zone of indecision," where traditional tests cannot conclude whether autocorrelation exists or not. In any case, there is no strong evidence of autocorrelation in these data (see Greene 1993, 423-425; Gujarati 1988, 375-379).

Sources: National Election Studies
Groseclose, Levitt, and Snyder 1996
Congressional Quarterly Almanac
Stanley and Niemi 1994

Table 2.1
Effects of Independent Identifiers and Party Polarization on Ticket-Splitting, 1952-1996

51
The third model uses the marginal frequencies from the "important party differences" question from NES surveys as the measure of polarization. While the coefficient has the expected negative sign, it falls just short of conventional levels of statistical significance. Since NES did not begin asking the party differences question until 1956, we lose an observation (and a crucial degree of freedom) in model 3. Also, since the party differences question does not ask voters specifically about policy positions, it is a rather unrefined indicator of ideological polarization.

The last two models in Table 1 include an election trend variable to determine whether the preceding relationships are spurious, owing to an overall trend in ticket-splitting. In both models, the trend variable is not a significant predictor of ticket-splitting, while the coefficients associated with political independents and party polarization remain significant and carry the expected sign. The trend variable is highly correlated with the percentage of Independent identifiers in the electorate (r=.85, p<.01), so the effect of independence on ticket-splitting is weakened the most when the trend variable is added to the equation (especially in comparing model 2 and model 5). Even after controlling for a time trend, however, we can still say that ticket-splitting decreases when the parties move farther apart on the ideological spectrum.

Thus far, the multivariate analyses have not included measures of candidate characteristics that might shape overall patterns in ticket-splitting. Many argue that ticket-splitting often occurs when an appealing candidate for office can attract voters from the opposite party (Beck et al. 1992; Wattenberg 1991). Table 2.2 replicates the

---

The three measures of party polarization are all correlated (with Pearson's coefficients above .5) and form a reliable scale (alpha = .92). The resulting scale is a significant predictor of ticket-splitting in the regression analysis, without altering the other results. I present the results featuring the individual measures of polarization since they are easier to interpret.
analyses in Table 2.1, with the inclusion of two independent variables that capture the effects of popular candidates in American elections. The number of uncontested House contests (which ranges from a high of 85 in 1952 to a low of 17 in 1996) roughly captures the level of competition in House contests. When the major parties contest fewer seats, more voters can be expected to split their ballots simply because they may have no opportunity to select a House candidate from their own party. The president's margin of victory (which ranges from a high of 23.2 percentage points in 1972 to 0.2 points in 1960) is included to account for the expectation that popular presidential candidates may generate more ticket-splitting by attracting an unusually large number of votes from the opposition. Thus, both new variables should have positive regression coefficients.

These additional variables improve the fit of the models considerably without altering the important effects of political independence and party polarization on ticket-splitting. The effect of the president's victory margin is especially robust. The analyses predict that a 10-point increase in the winning candidate's margin of victory should cause ticket-splitting to rise by about 2 percentage points.¹

¹Some may argue with the causal direction implied here. For instance, a presidential candidate may win by a landslide because of higher levels of ticket-splitting. However, the election outcome reflects the relative popularity of the two candidates before the election. For now, this is the best measure of the relative appeal of the presidential candidates available.

¹Voter turnout also correlates with ticket-splitting ($r=-.70$, $p<.05$), meaning that ticket-splitting is more common in years when turnout is low. The correlation between turnout and split districts is much smaller, however ($r=-.11$, $p>.6$). When included in the multivariate analyses, turnout is not a significant predictor of ticket-splitting, and it does not alter the other findings. Turnout drops out of the multivariate model because it is highly correlated with independent identifiers ($r=-.84$, $p<.01$). In addition, there is a stronger theoretical connection between strength of partisanship and ticket-splitting.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Trend Variable Not Included</th>
<th>Trend Variable Included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.365)</td>
<td>(5.012)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent Identifiers (NES)</td>
<td>0.863**</td>
<td>1.138**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.082)</td>
<td>(0.123)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Voting in the House</td>
<td>-0.176**</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.039)</td>
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<td>Mean Distance Between Parties (ADA scores)</td>
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<td>-0.173*</td>
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<td>(0.066)</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Important Party Differences (NES)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.114)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncontested House Races</td>
<td>0.054*</td>
<td>0.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.023)</td>
<td>(0.036)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Victory Margin</td>
<td>0.190*</td>
<td>0.198*</td>
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<td>(0.054)</td>
<td>(0.079)</td>
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<table>
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<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of cases</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>.946</td>
<td>.893</td>
<td>.852</td>
<td>.937</td>
<td>.904</td>
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<td>Standard Error</td>
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<td>1.99</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>1.88</td>
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<tr>
<td>Durbin-Watson*</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The dependent variable is the percentage of major party president-House ticket-splitters in each election year. Cell entries are OLS coefficients (standard errors in parentheses).

**p < .01 (two-tailed)
*p < .1 (two-tailed)
#p < .1 (one-tailed)

*The Durbin-Watson statistic tests for serially correlated errors, a common problem with time series data. The Durbin-Watson statistic can take on any value between 0 and 4. Any value close to 2 (as in model 1) is evidence of no first-order autocorrelation. For each of the regression equations in Table 2.2 (except model 1 and 4), the Durbin-Watson statistic falls within the "zone of indecision," where traditional tests cannot conclude whether autocorrelation exists or not. In any case, there is no strong evidence of autocorrelation in these data (see Greene 1993, 423-425; Gujarati 1988, 375-379).

Sources:
National Election Studies
Groseclose, Levitt, and Snyder 1996
Congressional Quarterly Almanac
Stanley and Niemi 1994

Table 2.2
A Multivariate Analysis of Ticket-Splitting, 1952-1996

54
The count of uncontested House races is less successful at predicting ticket-splitting. While its regression coefficient is always in the expected positive direction, it does not achieve conventional levels of statistical significance in every equation in Table 2. In addition, the size of the coefficient is usually quite small, indicating a weak substantive impact on ticket-splitting. Since uncontested seats represent less than 20 percent of the House contests, this variable does not adequately capture the competitive advantage many House candidates enjoy. I also ran the regression analysis using the House incumbent reelection rate as an independent variable, with similar mixed results. Subsequent chapters (especially chapter 4) demonstrate why incumbency is a rather crude indicator of the personal appeal that House candidates often forge with voters of the opposite party.

Split Districts and Party Voting

One may object to the use of such a small number of elections to draw conclusions about the link between party polarization and ticket-splitting. One may also object to the fact that I exclude third-party voters in my definition of ticket-splitting in the analyses presented above. To defend against these critiques, Figure 2.5 compares party voting in the House to the percentage of split districts (those carried by a presidential candidate of one party and a House candidate of another party) in each of the last 25 presidential elections. Since split district outcomes are more likely to occur when many voters cast split ballots (Burden and Kimball 1997a), this provides another test of the relationship between party polarization and ticket-splitting without having to worry about categorizing third-party voters. Furthermore,

---

16The data on split districts come from Stanley and Niemi (1995). Complete data are not available for every congressional district prior to 1952.
including every presidential election in the 20th century provides a larger set of cases on which to base conclusions.\textsuperscript{11}

Consistent with the previous findings, Figure 2.5 indicates a moderately strong negative relationship between party voting in the House and the frequency of split district outcomes in the subsequent election ($r = -.59$, $p < .01$). When party voting is more common, split district outcomes are less likely. This supports the conclusion that as the parties diverge, ticket-splitting declines.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure2_5.png}
\caption{Split Districts and Party Voting, 1900-1996}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{11}I do not include elections before 1900 because ticket-splitting (and split district outcomes) was extremely rare before the Australian ballot reforms just before the turn of the century (Rusk 1970).
The scatterplot also identifies some outlier cases, providing additional insights into American elections. The two observations in the lower right corner represent the elections of 1900 and 1904. A political realignment, and the switch to the Australian ballot, had just taken place in the 1890s, so ticket-splitting may have been unusually low in those two elections. Also, the 1920 election marked the first time women could vote in national elections, and it featured the overarching issues of the League of Nations and America's role in international affairs. In fact, the Democratic party targeted newly enfranchised women in 1920 in the hopes that women would support the League of Nations, and, therefore, vote Democratic (Frankovic 1982). The strategy failed miserably. As it happened, women did not turn out to support the Democrats (in fact, most women did not vote), and the isolationist Republican party won by a tremendous margin in the presidential and congressional elections of 1920 (Klein 1984). The Republican presidential vote total almost doubled from 1916 to 1920, while the Democratic vote total hardly changed (Brown 1991). Indeed, Brown (1991) argues that the Republican party was more effective at recruiting women voters in 1920, especially in competitive states. Finally, the 1972 and 1984 elections produced the highest incidence of split districts (around 44%), in part due to landslide Republican presidential victories in an era when Democratic incumbents routinely won reelection to Congress.

12The number of split districts did increase substantially in 1924 and 1928, a precursor to the Democratic realignment of the 1930s. This may have been driven by women voters who had not been socialized into the existing party system. Indeed, women generally avoided partisan activities after gaining the right to vote, and the National League of Women Voters regarded party politics as immoral (McGlen and O'Connor 1983). The increasing number of split districts may also reflect the emerging bipartisan farm bloc in Congress at the same time that rural voters (among the first affected by the Depression) became dissatisfied with Republican presidents on farm relief issues. Thus, many farmers may have voted against Republican presidential candidates while supporting Republican farm bloc candidates for Congress (Hansen 1991). In addition, many Republican farm voters supported Bob LaFollette's third-party presidential bid in the 1924 election before switching to the Democratic party in subsequent elections (Brown 1991).
The negative relationship between party voting and split districts holds when controlling for other factors. Table 2.3 replicates some of the previous multivariate regression analyses using the percentage of split-district outcomes as the dependent variable for the period from 1952 to 1996. The only new independent variable is the percentage of House incumbents who won reelection (which ranges from 74.7% in 1992 to 92.4% in 1988). The incumbency variable is alternated with the count of uncontested House seats in the equation.

The results in Table 2.3 largely support the previous findings. The goodness-of-fit statistics at the bottom of the table again suggest that these variables explain a large amount of the variation in split-district outcomes. In the first two equations, the coefficient for Independent identifiers is positive and significant. Thus, there are more split districts in years when the number of Independent identifiers in the electorate is high. Also, the coefficient for party voting is negative and significant in each model. It is clear that split-district results decline when party polarization (as measured by party votes in the House of Representatives) increases.

The results also suggest how weak competition in presidential and House elections helps produce split results. The regression coefficient for the president's victory margin is positive and significant in each equation. According to these results, if the winning presidential candidate's margin of victory increases by 10 percentage points, the percentage of split districts should increase by 5 or 6 percent (roughly 22 to 26 districts).

---

13Since the trend variable is strongly correlated with Independent identifiers, including an election trend counter wipes out the effect of Independents.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Trend Variable Not Included</th>
<th>Trend Variable Included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Independent Identifiers (NES)</td>
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<td>(0.274)</td>
<td>(0.183)</td>
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<td>Party Voting in House</td>
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<td>(0.138)</td>
<td>(0.108)</td>
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<td>President Victory Margin</td>
<td>0.549*</td>
<td>0.618**</td>
</tr>
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<td>(0.192)</td>
<td>(0.142)</td>
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<td>Uncontested House Races</td>
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<td>(0.082)</td>
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<td>Incumbent Reelection Rate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard Error</td>
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<td>3.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durbin-Watson¹</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The dependent variable is the percentage House districts where voters chose a presidential candidate of one party and a House candidate of the opposite party. Cell entries are OLS coefficients (standard errors in parentheses). **p<.01 (two-tailed) *p<.05 (two-tailed) #p<.1 (one-tailed)

¹The Durbin-Watson statistic tests for serially correlated errors, a common problem with time series data. The Durbin-Watson statistic can take on any value between 0 and 4. Any value close to 2 (as in model 2) is evidence of no first-order autocorrelation. For each of the regression equations in Table 2.3, the Durbin-Watson statistic falls within the "zone of indecision," where traditional tests cannot conclude whether autocorrelation exists or not. In any case, there is no strong evidence of autocorrelation in these data (see Greene 1993, 423-425; Gujarati 1988, 375-379).

Sources: National Election Studies Congressional Quarterly Almanac Stanley and Niemi 1994

Table 2.3
A Multivariate Analysis of Split-District Outcomes, 1952-1996
The association between the president's winning margin and split districts holds only for the latter half of this century, what is commonly called the "candidate-centered" era of American politics (Wattenberg 1991). Recent lopsided presidential victories (Johnson in 1964, Nixon in 1972, and Reagan in 1984) produced a larger number of split districts than expected based on levels of party voting in the House (see Figure 2.5). In contrast, lopsided presidential victories in the first half of the twentieth century (Teddy Roosevelt in 1904, Harding in 1920, Coolidge in 1924, and Franklin Roosevelt in 1936) did not generate many split districts. The simple correlation between presidential victory margin and the share of split districts for the 13 elections from 1900 to 1948 is indistinguishable from zero ($r=-.04$). By comparison, the correlation between the president's winning margin and split districts for the 12 elections since 1948 is quite strong ($r=.59$, $p<.05$). Landslide presidential elections generally failed to produce divided government before the 1950s because the fate of congressional candidates was closely linked to the performance of the presidential candidate from their party. Lopsided presidential contests are more likely to produce divided outcomes today because congressional campaigns are more independent of the race at the top of the ticket.

Finally, the results in Table 2.3 suggest that divided districts also occur because of the level of competition in House contests. The coefficient for uncontested House contests is positive (although only significant in model 3), suggesting that divided outcomes are more numerous when the major parties contest fewer seats in Congress. Invariably, incumbent representatives are the candidates facing weak competition. The findings in Table 3 indicate that incumbent victories are often associated with split-district outcomes. The regression

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*The one exception is the 1912 election, when Woodrow Wilson's sizeable victory in the presidential contest was accompanied by a large number of split districts. This was probably due to the unusual circumstances in which Teddy Roosevelt ran for president under the Bull Moose Party label, splitting the Republican vote.*
coefficient for the incumbent reelection rate is positive and significant, suggesting that split districts are more common when more incumbents are successfully reelected. The regression coefficient hovers near .6 under a variety of model specifications, indicating that if the incumbent reelection rate were to increase by 10 points, the percentage of split districts should rise by about 6 points (an increase of roughly 26 districts).

Conclusion

Most analysts attribute increases in ticket-splitting to a roughly equivalent decline in partisan attachments among voters (Wattenberg 1991; Beck and Sorauf 1992; Burnham 1965). Those who focus on declining party attachments often point to the increased importance of candidate-based organizations (and the declining role of parties) in election campaigns and the increasing importance of a candidate's personal traits in voting decisions. The results of this chapter are largely consistent with this perspective.

However, this chapter provides further evidence that divided government is a result of the success of individual candidates in a candidate-centered era of political campaigns. In the latter half of the century, ticket-splitting and split-district outcomes are more common when congressional and presidential candidates win by lopsided margins, usually because they manage to appeal to a broad coalition of voters beyond their own partisan supporters. Subsequent chapters will explore in more detail how the financial and visibility advantages of congressional candidates induce citizens to divide their votes between the two parties.

That is not the whole story, though. Few posit a link between ticket-splitting and the actions of the parties in government. In recent scholarship, those who link ticket-splitting to party positioning
usually argue that ticket-splitting should increase when the parties move toward extremes (Fiorina 1996). The results in this chapter reinforce the importance of party identification, but they also demonstrate that party positioning matters. However, contrary to balancing theories of divided government, ticket-splitting increases when the parties converge toward the ideological center. Despite the elegance of Fiorina’s balancing theory, the findings here could hardly be farther from the theory’s predictions.

Instead, this chapter reinforces arguments made by Downs and Key about the relationship between parties and voters by demonstrating that the collective choices of American voters are a response to the actions of the parties in government. The effect of party convergence on ticket-splitting is independent of the effect of party identification. For example, when party voting is removed from the first regression model in Table 1, the adjusted R² drops to .71 and the standard error of the regression increases to 3.21. Clearly, ticket-splitting is not just a function of weak party attachments in the electorate. Ticket-splitting and divided government are also a natural consequence of parties and candidates attempting to moderate and obscure their policy positions.
CHAPTER 3
VOTERS AND THE EVER CHANGING PARTY FORTUNES IN AMERICAN POLITICS

Introduction

Scholars have demonstrated that "party identification," the attitudinal component of partisanship, is a crucial antecedent to other political attitudes, such as policy views (Campbell et al. 1960; Niemi and Weisberg 1993). However, much less attention has been devoted to the behavioral component of partisanship in the electorate (such as party-line voting, campaign activity, and other forms of political participation). Ultimately, for those concerned about the continued presence of divided versus unified party government, it is partisan behavior in the electorate that we need to study. And, given that the partisan complexion of our national government results from regular elections, partisan voting behavior is particularly worth examining.

Furthermore, deviations from strict party-line voting contribute to the volatile nature of American politics today, where a party or political figure is a hero one minute and a goat the next. Recent history provides many examples of this volatility: the roller coaster of President Bush's approval ratings; impressive Republican victories in the 1994 election coming on the heels of many Democratic victories in 1992; and finally, the reversal of fortune in the public standing of President Clinton, Newt Gingrich, and Bob Dole in two short years.

Interestingly, partisan behavior is well-covered at the elite level of American politics. For example, there are many books and articles on party voting (see, for example, Patterson and Caldeira 1988; Brady et al. 1979) and party leadership in Congress (Cox and McCubbins 1993; Rohde 1991).
following the Republican takeover of Congress. If we are to reduce this volatility and increase the chances of unified party government, then it is important that citizens vote and stick to a party line. As Forrest Gump might say, "Partisan is as partisan does."

Most studies of deviations from partisan voting behavior focus on one of two types: split-ticket voting and third party voting in a single election. I argue that we need a broader definition of partisan voting that also covers behavior over time, especially over the course of a four-year election cycle. Voting a party-line ballot in the presidential election is not enough to produce unified government. To ensure unified government, party adherents also need to turn out at the midterm and vote for the same party as in the previous election. The following section briefly discusses the choices available to voters (from abstention to party defection to absolute party loyalty) over the course of an electoral cycle. Indeed, there are several types of what I call "sub-partisan" voting behavior (such as split-ticket voting and midterm drop-off, which fall short of total party loyalty) that add to the unpredictable nature of our political system at the national level. The final section examines the extent of each type of sub-partisan voting in recent national elections.

The Four-Year Election Cycle and a Sequence of Voting

Each presidential election marks the beginning of a four-year election cycle in the United States. No election can match it in terms of the length and intensity of the campaign, the amount of money raised and spent, and the amount of media coverage. More than any other contest, each presidential campaign affords the voters a fresh opportunity to take stock of the parties.

Thus, the presidential contest marks the starting point for the sequential model of voting that I outline. The presidential race
appears at the top of the ballot and garners the lion's share of media coverage and public attention during our campaign season. In addition, the presidential contest receives more votes than other races on the same ballot (Burnham 1965; Nichols and Strizek 1995). As a result, it is reasonable to expect that the presidential selection is made first on a voter's ballot. Figure 3.1 presents a sequence of decisions facing voters in presidential elections.\footnote{The model in Figure 3.1, and subsequent analyses in this dissertation, only include presidential and House elections. The model certainly could be expanded to include other contests on the ballot.}

In addition, the presidential vote roughly determines the size of the potential electorate for subsequent races on the same ballot and in the following midterm election, since few voters participate in midterm elections after avoiding presidential elections (Burnham 1965; Campbell 1960). This conceptualization of the electorate will help us understand how different types of voting behavior help produce divided government and contribute to the unpredictable political climate in the United States.

As Figure 3.1 indicates, the presidential choice provides the first opportunity for voters to deviate from partisan behavior. Selecting a third-party candidate (path I in Figure 3.1) is an obvious departure from major party loyalty, and it is usually interpreted as a sign of dissatisfaction with the two major parties in the United States (Nichols 1995; Asher 1995; Rosenstone et al. 1984).

In addition to third-party voting, there are several forms of voting behavior that contribute to divided government and our changing political climate. These opportunities arise from the choices voters make in subsequent contests on the ballot. The voter's selection in the House contest can either buttress or undermine the choice made in the presidential race. One of the most commonly studied examples is split-ticket voting -- e.g., where a voter selects a Democrat for one office and a Republican for another office on the same ballot (Fiorina 1996;
Indeed, split-ticket voting is used as an indicator of the decomposition of political parties in the United States (Wattenberg 1991; Burnham 1965). However, split-ticket voting and third-party voting do not exhaust all forms of sub-partisan behavior in the polling booth. Feigert (1979) notes that there are three ways to fill out one’s ballot on election day: straight-ticket, split-ticket, and incomplete ballot. Each of the latter two types of voting can, in theory, produce split districts, the building blocks for divided government. A split district is one which elects a representative of one party but produces at least a plurality for the opposite party’s presidential candidate.

In addition to the question of partisan consistency in voting, turnout and ballot completion can also contribute to divided government. One type of contributing behavior is ballot “roll-off” -- where a voter selects a presidential candidate but abstains from the congressional race on the same ballot (Burnham 1965). Ballot roll-off is denoted by paths DA and RA in Figure 3.1. By rolling off, voters are helping to elect a presidential candidate of one party without supporting a congressional candidate of that same party. If there is a partisan disparity in ballot roll-off (e.g., Democrats are more likely than Republicans to roll off), then this behavior will help produce divided government.

For example, suppose that 25% of the Clinton voters in 1992 did not vote in the House race, while only 10% of the Bush voters rolled-off. If we assume that people who voted in both races filed a straight party ticket (and that Perot voters split 50-50 between the two major parties in congressional races), this difference in roll-off rates alone would have been enough to give Republicans a clear majority of congressional votes and help produce divided government.

Ticket-splitting is denoted by paths DR and RD in Figure 2.1.
The sequential voting model in Figure 3.1 indicates that there are several opportunities for voters to betray the cause of partisan consistency. However, after accounting for roll-off, ticket-splitting, and third-party presidential voting, the remainder of the voters in a presidential election are of the straight-ticket variety. Straight ticket voters (path RR or path DD in Figure 3.1) cast a vote for every national office on the ballot and vote a straight party ticket, and they alone are a source of continuity in presidential elections.

The voting sequence model (and the attendant themes of turnout and party consistency) can be extended to voting in the midterm election as well. Another form of abstention that contributes to divided government is voter "drop-off" -- where a person votes in the presidential election but not in the following midterm election (Burnham 1965). In addition,
there is another voting pattern that contributes to divided government, one I call "split-term" voting -- where someone votes for a presidential candidate of one party and then selects a congressional candidate of a different party at the following midterm election. A final type of sub-partisan behavior involves switching parties in the House contest between on- and off-year elections (what I will call "House switching").

To maintain unified government, citizens who support a particular party and its candidates in a presidential election need to turn out and vote for that same party at the midterm. Again, if there is a partisan imbalance in these three types of sub-partisan voting behavior at the midterm (especially if past supporters of the president are more likely to defect or abstain in the midterm election), then the likelihood of divided government increases.

If we were to magically eliminate drop-off, split-term voting, and House switchers, the midterm electorate would comprise solely of "dedicated partisans" who turn out at each election, complete the entire national ballot, and vote for only one party's candidates. The foregoing discussion produces three voter categories for both types of national elections. Voters in presidential elections can be categorized as straight-ticket, roll-off, or split-ticket (for now I treat third-party voters as split-ticket voters; in subsequent chapters I will treat them separately). In midterm elections, voters can be categorized as dedicated partisans, drop-off voters, or split-term voters (House switchers will be examined separately since they may or may not also be split-term voters).

To summarize, there are several alternatives to loyal party-line voting in an electoral cycle. There are two things to look for to determine whether these alternatives voter types contribute to divided government. First, it is important to know whether the alternative voter types are very common in a given election. Second, we need to
know if there is a partisan bias in these alternative voting patterns. If both conditions are satisfied, divided government is likely to occur.

The following analyses examine the voting patterns described above to determine the extent to which both conditions were present in recent national elections. Unless otherwise indicated, all percentages reported below are calculated as a fraction of the number of people who cast a vote in the most recent presidential race.

Voting in Presidential Elections

Table 3.1 presents the relative frequency of each of the three voter types in the 1988 and 1992 presidential elections. While straight-ticket voters are the most common group, the other two categories constitute a sizeable share of the electorate. For example, in 1992, not much more than half of the voters produced a straight ballot. Also, split-ticket voting is more common than roll-off. Thus, in terms of sheer numbers, split-ticket voting has a greater potential than roll-off to produce divided government in presidential elections.

The impact of Ross Perot's candidacy can be seen in Table 3.1 as well. Split-ticket voting was more common in 1992 than in 1988, when there was no significant third party candidate running for president. Finally, it is worth pointing out that those who supported major party presidential candidates but still split their tickets made up a sizeable 16% of the electorate in 1992.

---

'In the following analyses of presidential and midterm elections, I dropped respondents who could not remember who they voted for in the House race, voted for a House candidate whose name was not on the ballot card, or mentioned someone who was not a candidate for that race. Also, I excluded House voters who did not cast a vote for president. These instances were unusual: they caused me to drop 50 cases in 1988, 34 in 1990, 120 in 1992, 53 in 1994, and 22 in the 1992-94 panel study.
Table 3.1
President-House Voting Patterns in On-Year Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voting Type</th>
<th>1992</th>
<th>1988</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roll-off Voters</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Split-ticket Voters</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perot Voters (15.1%)</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excluding Perot Voters (16.2%)</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight-ticket Voters</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
<td>67.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 100% 100% (n=1524) (n=1145)

Note: The third and fourth rows divide 1992 ticket-splitters into two groups: those who voted for Perot and those who split their votes between the two major parties.
Source: National Election Studies

Although more voters split their ballots in 1992, the 1988 election produced divided government, while the 1992 election produced unified national government. Thus, it seems that a high frequency of ballot roll-off or split-ticket voting alone is not sufficient to produce divided government. Roll-off, however, is more likely to contribute to divided government if it is more common among one party. Similarly, split-ticket voting is more likely to produce divided government if voters are splitting their ballots in the same manner. This points out the need to search for any partisan disparities in ballot roll-off and split-ticket voting.

Table 3.2 shows the roll-off rates for different groups of voters, and it indicates that there was not much of a partisan disparity in ballot roll-off in 1988 or 1992. At most, there is a 2.5% difference in the frequency of roll-off between Democrats and Republicans. Also, roll-off is slightly higher among supporters of the winning presidential candidate. This is consistent with the surge and decline notion that the presidential race attracts some "peripheral" voters who are not

\(^5\)In Tables 3.2 and 3.5, independent leaners are treated as partisans, so the independent category only consists of pure independent voters.
interested in any other contests and who tend to select the winning presidential candidate (Campbell 1960). We also see that independents and third-party presidential voters are more likely to abstain from the congressional race than partisans. In sum, given little partisan difference in roll-off rates (and its low overall frequency), it is safe to say that ballot roll-off made no more than a small contribution to divided government in the 1988 and 1992 presidential elections. I do not rule out the possibility that roll-off rates could be significantly higher for one party in key battleground districts, but this seems unlikely.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote for President</th>
<th>1988 (n=1145)</th>
<th>1992 (n=1524)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican (Bush)</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent (Perot)</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>(n=1142)</td>
<td>(n=1520)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Election Studies

Table 3.2
Partisan Differences in Ballot Roll-off

While ballot roll-off does not seem to have any implications for divided government, conventional wisdom holds that split-ticket voting does (Fiorina 1996). However, Table 3.3 (which only examines ticket-splitters) demonstrates that the direction of split-ticket voting is very important in auguring divided government. In 1988 (when almost one-fourth of the electorate cast a split ballot), split-ticket voting

There are, of course, other forms of ticket-splitting that I do not examine here. For example, voters can also split their ballots on statewide races (Beck et al. 1992; Soss and Canon 1994), and between the U.S. Senate and other national offices (Brody et al. 1994).
went overwhelmingly in the direction of George Bush for president and a Democrat for the House. Not surprisingly, the 1988 election produced a Republican president and a Democratic Congress.

In contrast, ticket-splitting in 1992 (almost one-third of the electorate) had no clear direction and only slightly favored Democratic congressional candidates. Perot voters split almost evenly between Republican and Democratic House candidates. Similarly, major party splitters (the first two columns of Table 3.3 only) divided fairly evenly between the R-D and D-R columns. In the aggregate, ticket-splitters in 1992 largely canceled each other out, and unified government was the result.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>D-R</th>
<th>R-D</th>
<th>Perot-R</th>
<th>Perot-D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988 (n=261)</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>72.0%</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992 (n=477)</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*D-R: Democratic president and Republican for House
**R-D: Republican president and Democrat for House
Source: National Election Studies

Table 3.3. Partisan Breakdown of Split-Ticket Voting

The Transition From Presidential to Midterm Elections

While divided government has recently occurred in presidential elections, historically it is more commonly delivered at the midterm (Fiorina 1996). Since 1944, divided government has ensued after nine midterm elections (as compared to seven presidential elections including 1996). We can apply a similar analysis of voter types to judge the likelihood of divided government in recent midterm elections. Table 3.4 indicates the frequency of each of the three voter types in recent midterm elections. Remember that the total potential electorate is
represented by those who cast a ballot in the previous presidential election.\footnote{Very few people sit out the presidential election and then participate in the following midterm. In the surveys used for this analysis, between two and three percent of all respondents missed the presidential election but voted in the following midterm. For example, only 37 respondents (2\% of the total) in the 1994 NES survey reported voting in 1994 but not in 1992.}

As Table 3.4 shows, the dedicated partisans (while the most common) comprise just under a majority of the electorate. However, given their frequency, both drop-off and split-term voting have the potential to make sizeable contributions to divided government. In 1994, drop-off and split-term voters each make up roughly a quarter of the electorate, while drop-off voters comprise over a third of the electorate in 1974 and 1990.\footnote{The results for 1990 should be treated cautiously because they are based on respondents' recollections of their voting behavior in 1988 (see Appendix B). I include them in Table 3.4 to provide rough estimates of the frequency of each voter type.} Part of this disparity is probably due to the availability of voter validation information in the 1974 and 1990 surveys (NES stopped collecting vote validation data in 1992). As a result, we have a more accurate measure of which respondents voted in the 1974 and 1990 midterms (in which drop-off rates are higher in Table 3.4). If the vote validation information is ignored, the overall turnout rates in 1974 and 1994 are within two percentage points of each other.

Also, the lower drop-off rate in 1994 coincides with a modest increase in turnout in that year as compared to the 1990 election. Approximately 36\% of eligible adults voted in 1994, up from 33\% in 1990 (Statistical Abstract of the United States 1995). It may be that the implementation of the Motor Voter law, plus the real possibility of changing party control of the Senate, stimulated higher turnout (and lower drop-off rates) than expected in 1994. Also, split-term voting is
necessarily higher in 1994 because of the presence of Perot voters in the electorate.

In comparing Tables 3.1 and 3.4, one notices that loyal partisan voting is harder to maintain over the course of two elections. Dedicated partisans make up a smaller portion of the electorate than straight-ticket voters. Both the 1974 (Republican president/Democratic Congress) and 1994 (Democratic president/Republican Congress) elections produced divided government. Given the frequency of drop-off and split-term voting in both years, we need to look for any partisan imbalance in both voting patterns. Also notice that voter drop-off at the midterm is much more common than ballot roll-off in the presidential year. Thus, declining turnout may help explain why midterm elections sometimes produce significant changes in the composition of Congress, and why they often produce divided government in the last forty years. In fact, a prominent explanation of electoral change in congressional elections places a special emphasis on shifts in voter turnout and deserves closer inspection here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voting Type</th>
<th>1972-74 Panel</th>
<th>1992-94 Panel</th>
<th>1988-90*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drop-off Voters</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Split-term Voters</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perot Voters</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>(10.2%)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perot Excluded</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>(13.8%)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated Partisans</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
<td>48.0%</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100% (n=567)</td>
<td>100% (n=1145)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages in column 3 are based on the full NES sample and respondents' recalled vote choice in the previous presidential election. Percentages in columns 1 and 2 are based on the reported vote from each wave of the respective panel studies.
Note: The third and fourth rows divide 1994 split-term voters into those who voted for Perot and those who selected a major party presidential candidate in 1992.
Source: National Election Studies

Table 3.4
President-House Voting Transition Patterns:
Presidential to Midterm Elections
Surge and Decline Theories of Congressional Elections

The most prominent explanations of electoral change in congressional elections focus on turnout as the primary source of change. A theory of "surge and decline" (A. Campbell 1960; J. Campbell 1993) posits that the surge of turnout in a presidential election helps congressional candidates from the winning presidential candidate's party, while the decline in turnout in the ensuing midterm then hurts candidate's from the president's party. The name implies an elegant tidal metaphor for turnout in which congressional candidates of the president's party are represented by the ocean debris carried into shore (election to Congress) at high tide and then washed out to sea (electoral defeat) at low tide. Angus Campbell (1960) divides the electorate into "peripheral" voters who only participate in presidential elections, and "core" voters who vote in presidential and midterm elections. Thus, the original theory (A. Campbell 1960) argues that independent or "peripheral" voters are responsible for the surge and decline in turnout, and thus the president's midterm losses in Congress. A revised theory (J. Campbell 1993) argues that partisan identifiers produce this turnout effect.

Efforts to find empirical support for the original surge and decline theory have been rather unsuccessful. For example, the surge and decline theory predicts that the midterm electorate should be more partisan, more interested in politics, and more knowledgeable than presidential electorates. However, differences in the demographic composition of midterm and presidential electorates are very small (Wolfinger et al. 1981; Kernell 1977; A. Campbell 1960; see J. Campbell 1993 for an overview of these studies), although midterm electorates are generally older than presidential electorates (J. Campbell 1993; Wolfinger et al. 1981).
In a revised surge and decline theory, James Campbell (1993) posits that partisans are more likely to abstain from voting when they are "cross-pressured" -- that is, when current events, issues, economic performance, or other national conditions tilt against their party. For example, the revised surge and decline theory would predict that relatively more Republicans were discouraged from voting in 1996 because of Dole's lackluster candidacy, public perceptions of a strong economy, and salient issues (such as Medicare, education, and the minimum wage) that favored Democratic candidates.

As James Campbell states, "the claim of the revised theory is only that the proportion of cross-pressured partisans is greater in the disadvantaged party than in the advantaged party in the presidential election year. This cross-pressure difference between the parties should translate into a turnout difference in favor of the advantaged party.... The result is a partisan turnout gap. The winning presidential party wins, in part, because of an especially heavy turnout of its own partisans and a lighter than otherwise expected turnout among opposition partisans" (J. Campbell 1993, pp. 99,101). Thus, the peripheral voters who produce the surge in turnout in a presidential election should tilt more toward the winning presidential party than the core voters who participated in the previous midterm.

However, the catch for the president's party is that turnout then favors the opposition party in midterm congressional elections. The drop-off in turnout from on-year to off-year congressional elections should fall disproportionately on the president's party as the presidential election surge recedes. Also, midterm political conditions may tilt against the president, especially considering that the president's approval rating usually declines from the honeymoon period to the midterm election (Brody 1991). Thus, James Campbell predicts that "the disadvantaged partisans' midterm decline in turnout should be less precipitous because cross-pressures of the presidential year had
reduced their turnout in the last election" (1993, p. 99). In other words, voters who supported the president's party in on-year congressional elections should be more likely to abstain in the following off-year elections.

One piece of evidence cited in favor of the revised theory is that the fraction of Democratic identifiers in the electorate in a given presidential election is proportional to the Democratic share of the presidential vote (J. Campbell 1993). Campbell concludes that the short-term forces that influence presidential vote choice also influence partisan turnout. So, for example, Democratic identifiers made up a smaller-than-usual share of the electorate in 1984, which was a relatively bad year for Democrats. Campbell would argue that many Democrats stayed home in 1984 because the Mondale campaign failed to mobilize them. The problem with this reasoning, however, is that the changing partisan composition of the electorate could be the result of people switching parties, rather than different turnout rates among the two major parties. This is another ecological inference problem, where two different individual-level processes (differential turnout or partisan defection) may account for the same aggregate-level observation (changing partisan composition of the electorate).

Recent evidence indicates that citizen party identification shifts in response to current political events (Weisberg and Smith 1991; MacKuen et al. 1989; Brody and Rothenberg 1988). Thus, the changing partisan composition of the electorate may be due, in part, to voters changing their party identification. In fact, Table 3.5 provides evidence from NES panel studies indicating that people who switch parties in their voting behavior are more likely than others to change their party identification as well. For example, the 1992-94 NES

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*Leaners are treated as party identifiers in Table 3.5. Voters were coded as Republican, Independent, or Democrat in each election. Those who moved to a different category between elections were coded as having changed their party identification.
A panel study indicates that 21.3% of House switchers in 1994 changed their party identification, while only 12.5% of those who voted for the same party in the 1992 and 1994 House contests changed their partisanship. Table 3.5 indicates a similar, and even stronger, pattern in the 1990-92 and 1972-74 House election cycles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Changed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Switcher</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyal Party Voter</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals (n=358)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1990-92 Voting Behavior</th>
<th>Party Identification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Changed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Switcher</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyal Party Voter</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals (n=461)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1972-74 Voting Behavior</th>
<th>Party Identification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Changed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Switcher</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyal Party Voter</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals (n=696)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Leaners are coded as party identifiers.


Table 3.5
Changing Party Identification is More Common Among Voters Who Switch Parties in Consecutive House Elections

Not surprisingly, those voters who changed their party identification in 1974 tended to move away from the Republican party (the same direction in which people moved in their vote choices). Consequently, comparing the partisan composition of the electorate in different elections does not help us determine whether turnout or
partisan conversion is the source of electoral change, and such an approach usually overstates the effect of turnout.\footnote{J. Campbell (1993) also understates the effect of swing voters because he uses voters' current party identification as the baseline for measuring vote defection. Given that some voters change their party identification to remain consistent with their current voting behavior, this method will uncover less vote switching than actually occurs. One of the advantages of the NES panel data is that they allow us to use past voting behavior as the baseline for measuring party defection and subsequent voter turnout.} 

Since Angus Campbell’s (1960) original work on the topic, few tests of the surge and decline theory have used NES panel data to follow individuals from one election to the next to see which ones vote, which ones switch parties, and which ones abstain (for an exception, see Born 1990, who also fails to find much support for surge and decline theories). The following section does just that by testing the turnout predictions of surge and decline in two ways. First, I examine whether the decline in turnout in midterm elections falls disproportionately on the president’s party. Second, I examine whether the surge in turnout in on-year elections is greater for people who vote for or identify with the winning president’s party. In general, I do not find much of a partisan disparity in the on-year turnout surge or the off-year turnout decline.

Turnout Decline in Midterm Elections

The turnout component of the surge and decline perspective also seeks to explain the typical losses suffered by the president’s party in midterm House elections. In particular, the theory predicts that the midterm decline in turnout falls disproportionately on the president’s party. Those who voted for the president’s party in the previous presidential election are more likely to abstain at the midterm than opposition partisans. For instance, we might expect that citizens who had previously voted for Democratic candidates would be discouraged from...
voting in 1994. After all, the Democratic president was relatively unpopular after taking some controversial positions (for example, on taxes and gays in the military) and failing to pass his health care plan, the centerpiece of his legislative agenda. In addition, the governing Democratic party bore the brunt of public criticism that the government was out of touch and not addressing important problems, such as crime, welfare reform, and health care. Thus, in addition to the usual withdrawal of voters in a midterm election, potential Democratic voters should have experienced significant cross-pressures in 1994.

However, as the first column of Table 3.6 indicates, Democrats (as measured by previous voting behavior and party identification) were about as likely as Republicans to abstain in 1994. There was no more than a two percentage point difference in drop-off rates between Democrats and Republicans in 1994. Using a chi-square test, the midterm participation rates for the two major parties are not statistically different.\(^{11}\) After accounting for the decline in turnout, Democrats still outnumbered Republicans among repeat voters in 1994 by a fairly healthy margin (55% to 45%).

One might argue that 1994 was an unusual election. Perhaps the 1994 election is part of a realignment in the United States that will ultimately produce a Republican majority. In addition, voter turnout in 1994 was rather high for a midterm election, so perhaps the midterm decline effect would be stronger in other cases.\(^{12}\)

\(^{11}\)It is also possible that a partisan drop-off difference of two percentage points in 1994, while statistically insignificant in a sample of voters, could mean the difference between as many as one million votes when the national electorate is considered.

\(^{12}\)On the other hand, the Democrats lost 52 seats in the House in 1994, quite a dramatic shift which turnout decline does not seem to explain.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past Vote for President</th>
<th>1992-94 Panel</th>
<th>1972-74 Panel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent (Perot)</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Party Identification**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Election Studies

Table 3.6

**Partisan Differences in Voter Drop-off from Presidential to Midterm Elections**

Fortunately, NES panel data are available for the 1974 election, another pivotal midterm where we should expect the surge and decline perspective to produce some results. Presumably, the weak candidacy of George McGovern and Nixon's landslide victory meant that the surge in turnout in 1972 helped Republican candidates for the House. In fact, the Republican party gained 12 House seats in 1972. When the surge in turnout receded in 1974, it should have removed more Republicans than Democrats from the electorate. Furthermore, 1974 was a bad year for Republicans. President Nixon resigned in August of 1974, President Ford created further controversy by pardoning Nixon, and to cap things off, the inflation rate was over 10 percent that year.

As a result, Republican voters should have experienced tremendous cross-pressures in 1974, making them less inclined to vote than Democrats. Thus, there are two reasons why surge and decline predicts that the Republican voters should account for a disproportionate share of the turnout decline in 1974. And given that Republicans lost 48 House seats in the 1974 election, we should expect a substantial difference between Democratic and Republican vote drop-off in 1974.
However, as the second column of Table 3.6 shows, Republicans were no more likely to abstain in 1974 than Democrats. Again, there is only a two percentage point difference between the turnout rates of Democratic and Republican voters, which is not statistically significant. If anything, Table 3.6 suggests that Democratic voters were more likely than Republicans to abstain in 1974, actually narrowing the gap between Republican and Democratic voters in the 1974 election.

There is some support for the original surge and decline theory (A. Campbell 1960) from the evidence in Table 3.6 that Independents were more likely to abstain from the midterm election than partisan identifiers in 1974 and 1994. Since Independents favored Nixon in 1972 and Clinton in 1992, their absence at the following midterms probably hurt the president’s party in each case. Nevertheless, these results suggest that there was no partisan disparity in the turnout decline of 1994 and 1974. Consequently, we should consider other aspects of voting behavior that may be responsible for the stunning outcomes of both elections.

Turnout Surge in Presidential Elections

If turnout explains the gains made by the president’s party in on-year elections, we should expect to see a couple of things. First, the basic surge and decline perspective predicts that the peripheral (or new) voters in presidential elections should favor the winning party. NES data suggest, however, that turnout may matter in terms of new voters in midterm elections. Surprisingly, there were many new voters in 1974 who did not cast a vote in the 1972 House contest (roughly 20% of the 1974 voters in the 1972-74 NES Panel Study). Slightly over 70% of the new voters in 1974 chose Democratic House candidates, greatly amplifying the Democratic victory in 1974. Similarly, new voters in 1994 tilted toward Republican House candidates. Thus, turnout does help explain electoral change in midterm congressional elections, but in a way not contemplated by the surge and decline perspective. Rather than the peripheral voters who participate in presidential elections and then abstain in midterm elections, perhaps electoral change is more a result of unconventional voters who participate in the midterm after avoiding the congressional contest in on-year elections.
presidential party more than core (or repeat) voters. In other words, the surge in turnout in on-year congressional elections should disproportionately favor candidates of the winning presidential party. This section tests these predictions using data from the 1990-92 NES panel study.

The 1992 presidential election was unique in that turnout among eligible adults increased to 55.2%, as compared to 50.1% in the 1988 election. This represented the first substantial increase in voter turnout since 1960 (Nichols and Beck 1995). From the surge and decline perspective, one might expect that the surge in turnout in 1992 helped Democratic House candidates, especially considering President Bush's low popularity ratings and widespread public concern about the state of the economy. However, as Table 3.7 shows, there was no turnout surge in favor of either party's House candidates in 1992. New (or surge) voters in 1992 (those who had abstained in 1990) were no more likely to vote for Democratic House candidates than repeat (or core) voters in 1992 (those who had voted in 1990). 14

The results in Table 3.7 also show that surge voters were no more Democratic than repeat voters in terms of party identification. Although not presented here, I also found no differences between the two types of voters in terms of presidential vote choice, feeling thermometer ratings of the presidential candidates, and evaluations of the economy. In 1992 at least, surge voters are no more predisposed toward the winning side than habitual voters.

14There is evidence that surveys overstate actual voter turnout because some survey respondents claim to have voted when they have not. The NES often checks registration records to validate respondents' reported turnout. Where possible, I use the validated voting information from NES to guard against overstated voter turnout. 1990 was the last year that NES collected vote validation data. Where registration records show that a reported voter did not vote, voting variables are appropriately recoded. Thus, 41 reported voters in 1990 were recoded as not having voted. I gave the benefit of the doubt to the reported voter in cases where the election office refused NES access to voting records or where registration or voting records for the respondent were not at that office (26 cases in 1990).
Type of Voter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
<td>60.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals (n=762)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square = 0.26, 1 df, p > .6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals (n=761)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square = 1.89, 2 df, p > .3

Source: 1990-92 NES Panel Study

Table 3.7
Comparing the Partisanship of Repeat and Surge Voters in 1992

1992 may have been an unusual election in that other short-term forces, such as the House bank scandal, hurt Democratic House candidates and counteracted any presidential coattails. In fact, while a relatively large number of House seats changed party in 1992 (roughly 50 seats), 1992 was unusual in that Republicans actually gained 10 seats in the House of Representatives even though President Bush was defeated in his bid for reelection (Stanley and Niemi 1994). Although it will be important to examine other elections in the future, the turnout surge in 1992 did not seem to benefit either party in House elections, again contrary to the predictions of surge and decline theories.

Given that the evidence presented here suggests that partisan differences in voter turnout may not have played a major role in producing divided government in 1974 and 1994, we must consider other types of voting behavior that contribute to divided government in midterm elections. The next section takes a closer look at voters who
switch parties in off-year elections. Both split-term voters and House switchers help produce divided government, and the dramatic changes wrought by the 1974 and 1994 elections.

When Voters Switch Parties

I first take a closer look at split-term voting to judge its impact on divided government. Table 3.8 examines split-term voters alone and indicates the direction of split-term voting in 1974 and 1994. In 1974, over four out of five split-term voters voted for a Democratic representative after having voted for Richard Nixon in 1972. Since the split-term voters broke decidedly in favor of Democrats for Congress, it is no surprise that divided government continued after the 1974 election.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>D-R</th>
<th>R-D</th>
<th>Perot-R</th>
<th>Perot-D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1972-74 Panel (n=280)</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>85.4%</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-94 Panel (n=136)</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*D-R: Democratic president and Republican for House
*R-D: Republican president and Democrat for House
Source: National Election Studies

However, there is a rather dramatic transformation of split-term voters in 1994. Split-term voting favored Republican candidates for Congress in 1994 -- over 60% of split-term voters in 1994 chose a Republican House candidate. Republican House candidates received the greatest boost from Perot voters in 1994. Perot voters (who slightly favored Democratic House candidates in 1992) chose Republicans over Democrats in 1994 House elections by a margin of roughly 2-to-1. Even people who divided their votes between major party candidates slightly
favored Republican House candidates in 1994. Thus, it is safe to say that split-term voters helped the opposition party (and fostered divided government) in each of these two midterm elections.

Finally, NES panel surveys allow us to study the temporal consistency of voters in the 1992 and 1994 House elections. Table 3.9 presents the reported votes of those respondents who participated in both elections, and shows that House switchers provided the margin of victory for the Republican takeover of Congress in 1994. Overall, 17% of the voters switched parties in House voting between 1992 and 1994, but there is a clear shift to the Republican party in 1994. Two-thirds of the House switchers left the Democratic party after 1992 and moved into the Republican column in 1994, contributing to the end of the Democrats' majority in the House of Representatives. In comparing the second and fourth columns of Table 3.9, Republican voters were more faithful to their past behavior in the 1994 House elections. By comparing the marginal totals in the second and fourth columns to the marginal totals in the first two rows, we can see that House switchers transformed a comfortable Democratic majority in 1992 into a narrow Republican victory in 1994.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1992 House Vote</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>Republican</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrat (n=177)</td>
<td>57.9% (79.3%)</td>
<td>9.3% (12.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican (n=182)</td>
<td>15.1% (20.7%)</td>
<td>65.6% (87.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Vote (n=127)</td>
<td>26.9% ---</td>
<td>25.1% ---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals (n=486)</td>
<td>100% (n=271)</td>
<td>100% (n=198)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The second and fourth columns exclude non-voters in 1994 from the calculations.

Source: 1992-94 NES Panel Study

Table 3.9
Consistency of House Voters from 1992 to 1994
At the same time, Table 3.9 suggests that there is little difference in Democratic and Republican abstention rates in 1994. We see similar results for House voting behavior in 1972 and 1974 (Table 3.10), except that the Democratic party was the beneficiary of swing voters in 1974. If anything, Democrats were slightly less likely than Republicans to turn out again in the 1974 House election. More importantly, Republican voters were much more likely to cross over to the Democratic side of the ballot in 1974, thus helping the Democrats expand their majority in the House of Representatives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1972 House Vote</th>
<th>Democrat (n=379)</th>
<th>Republican (n=283)</th>
<th>No Vote (n=331)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>55.1% (84.0%)</td>
<td>17.0% (25.0%)</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>10.5% (16.0%)</td>
<td>51.0% (75.0%)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Vote</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The second and fourth columns exclude non-voters in 1974 from the calculations.

Source: 1972-74 NES Panel Study

Table 3.10
Consistency of House Voters from 1972 to 1974

Swing Voters Versus Surge and Decline

The previous section demonstrates that swing voters play a major role in national elections which produce dramatic shifts in the partisan composition of Congress. In contrast, based on panel surveys conducted by the National Election Studies, we do not see much of a partisan disparity in the turnout surge of on-year elections or the turnout drop-off of midterm elections, as the surge and decline perspective predicts.

Tufte (1975) and Born (1990) have suggested that an improved surge and decline theory should place more emphasis on swing voters and less
emphasis on turnout effects. Scholars of congressional elections would
do well to heed this advice. Since the percentage of voters who defect
from their identified party in congressional elections has increased
substantially, from about 10% in the 1950s to over 20% in the 1990s
(Stanley and Niemi 1994), we should suspect that swing voters have
become a greater source of electoral instability at the congressional
level.

Interestingly, studies of electoral change in American
presidential elections have placed more emphasis on swing voters and
less emphasis on differential turnout effects. This is not surprising,
given that overall turnout usually does not change dramatically from one
presidential election to the next, as in congressional elections. Thus,
we do not instinctively rely on turnout to explain shifting vote totals
from one presidential election to the next. For example, Shively (1992,
1982) and Boyd (1985) demonstrate that since the 1950s, electoral change
in presidential elections is mostly explained by voters switching
parties, rather than partisan disparities in turnout. Shively
hypothesizes that this change occurred because of the increasing role of
television in presidential campaigns, allowing candidates to bypass the
party apparatus and appeal directly to voters. By making such personal
appeals to voters, candidates were better equipped to attract voters
from the opposite party. Surely the same changes in campaign technology
have taken place in congressional campaigns, where campaign spending has
increased dramatically, mostly to pay for more television advertising
(Jacobson 1992; Herrnson 1995). The rise of candidate-centered
campaigns and efforts by incumbents to cultivate a personal following in
the district (Cain et al., 1987) should mean that voters are more likely
to switch parties in congressional elections as well.

There is also a theoretical reason why we should pay special
attention to swing voters. When a voter switches parties, he creates a
two-vote swing -- one party loses a vote and another party gains a vote.
By comparison, when a voter abstains, his or her party only loses one vote, while other parties gain nothing. Thus, a net shift from one party to the other among swing voters can have a greater effect on the overall election outcome than a partisan disparity in turnout of the same magnitude.

Table 3.11 provides a hypothetical example on a small scale. The table assumes a population of 280 who cast votes for either party A or party B in an on-year House election. In the following midterm election, those same 280 voters could vote for party A, party B, or abstain. In this example, party A wins the on-year House election (160 to 120 votes), but party B wins the midterm election (120 to 100 votes). Abstention and party defection both contribute to the change in party fortunes. Notice that party A loses the same number of voters (40) to abstention and defection in the midterm election. Similarly, party B loses 20 voters to abstention and 20 voters who defect to party A in the midterm election. One might conclude that abstention and defection contribute equally to electoral change in this case.

However, in this example, party defection actually accounts for two-thirds of the electoral change in the midterm election. Notice that there is a 60-vote shift in the margin of victory. Party A won by 40 votes in the on-year election, but then lost by 20 votes in the midterm election. Since abstention caused party A to lose 20 votes more than party B, abstention accounts for 20 votes out of the 60-vote swing. The remaining 40-vote swing is due to party defection. Even though party A only had 20 more defectors than party B, this produced a net swing of 40 votes because defection means that one party loses a vote and the other party gains a vote.
Vote in Following Vote in On-Year Election (t=1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party A</th>
<th>Party B</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Off-Year Election (t=2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party A</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party B</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstain</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.11
Hypothetical Vote Swing in Consecutive House Elections

I suspect that analysts underestimate the effect of swing voters because they often fail to account for the two-vote shift a party defector produces (see Claggett and Van Wingen 1993 for an exception). For example, Shively (1992) uses a similar table portraying voting behavior in consecutive elections to create a statistic, P, which measures the relative contribution that party defection makes to electoral change. However, Shively’s P statistic understates the contribution of party defection because he does not account for the two-vote swing a defector produces. In other words, abstention and party defection are weighted equally in computing Shively’s P statistic, even though abstention produces a one-vote shift while defection produces a two-vote shift. Despite this, Shively still concludes that party defection is most responsible for electoral change. Imagine if he had given proper consideration to party defection!

Surge and decline is an elegant and attractive theory. It is hard to ignore the drop in turnout and the losses suffered by the president’s party in midterm congressional elections. Both phenomena seem to occur like clockwork every time midterm elections are held. However, that does not mean that the turnout decline is responsible for the drop in support for the president’s party in off-year congressional elections. One nettlesome trait of human beings is that we tend to presume causation when we observe a correlation between two events, even when other evidence argues against making such a logical leap (Gould 1996).
The heavy emphasis on turnout in surge and decline theories may be another example. We certainly should not ignore voter turnout, but we also should not make it the foundation of theories of electoral change. At a minimum, we need to pay closer attention to swing voters as a source of electoral change in American politics. The next several chapters begin to do so by examining the forces that lead voters to switch parties.

Conclusion

Voters face several choices on election day: whether to cast a ballot at all, whether to cast a vote in each contest, and whether to cast each vote for the same party. Each decision is important, for it gives the voter an opportunity to act (or not act) in a partisan fashion. The constantly shifting fabric of our political system is woven by each of these decisions, and the choices that voters make can contribute to divided government. To help understand the volatile nature of national politics in America, we need to understand why citizens vote in ways that contribute to that volatility.

The analyses in this chapter suggest that split-ticket voting alone is the primary contributor to divided government in recent presidential elections. Meanwhile, split-term voting and House-switching contribute to divided government in midterm elections (the most common source of divided government). In subsequent chapters, I will examine the determinants of split-ticket voting, split-term voting, and House-switching more closely. First, however, chapter 4 examines the competitiveness of the congressional contests as an important determinant of divided voting behavior.
CHAPTER 4

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CONGRESSIONAL CONTESTS

Introduction

Most explanations for split-ticket voting and other deviations from party-line voting focus on characteristics of the voter, suggesting that only voters who share certain attitudes or motivations divide their votes between the two parties. For example, there is considerable evidence that ticket-splitters have weak attachments (if any) to the major parties (Beck et al. 1992; Soss and Canon 1994; McAllister and Darcy 1992; Maddox and Nimmo 1981; Campbell and Miller 1957). Others argue that voters split their tickets on purpose to achieve moderate or balanced policy-making (see for example, Fiorina 1996; Jacobson 1991). Still others suggest that ticket-splitting is a way for disenchanted voters to punish both parties (Fiorina 1996; Glascock and Garand 1994).

Each of these arguments deserves serious scrutiny, but by focusing solely on attributes of the voters we risk diverting attention away from another potent explanation for divided voting: the choices offered to voters. For instance, despite the relationship between strength of partisanship and split-ticket voting, there remain a substantial number of party identifiers among the ranks of the ticket-splitters. Why? More often than not, these voters have little reason to support their party because of the relative visibility of the candidates competing in House elections.

This chapter demonstrates that the visibility and quality of the congressional candidates are powerful predictors of split-term voting,
switching parties in consecutive House elections, and ticket-splitting -
- the three ways a divided vote is measured in this study. For example,
when the House candidate from one’s own party is well-funded and easily
recognized, the likelihood of split-ticket voting decreases
dramatically. Previous studies only accounted for the candidate factor
by controlling for the incumbent’s party. However, candidate visibility
and quality generally account for the incumbency effect and more in
predicting divided votes, often washing out incumbency completely.
Thus, candidate visibility, not incumbency, helps explain why people
split their votes.

Because most citizens divide their votes by defecting from their
party in the congressional contest, competition in House races is the
key to divided voting. While congressional elections are often low-
information contests where party attachments may figure prominently in
the voting calculus, party loyalty is not absolute in these contests.

The Conditional Nature of Party Loyalty

Party loyalty is not a one-way street, where voters blindly
support their party’s candidates. Rather, party loyalty is conditional.
If a party offers candidates who are well-funded and well-recognized
figures in their communities, its party identifiers are very likely to
turn out in support of the ticket. On the other hand, if a party runs
an unknown candidate with no financial backing (or nominates a candidate
with an extreme agenda or dubious background), party identifiers will at
least consider other options (including abstention and defection to
another party’s candidates). While voters may divide their votes
between the major parties because their party nominates a weak
presidential candidate, usually it is in response to the quality of the
candidates for Congress.
As an example, consider Ohio's 15th congressional district, which is represented by Republican Deborah Pryce. Although it is considered a Republican district, the 15th has a sizeable Democratic constituency, including the academic community surrounding Ohio State University and a corridor of working class neighborhoods in the city of Columbus. In the 1992 election, the Democratic party recruited a state legislator to run for the House seat, a candidate who spent over $300,000 on the campaign and garnered 38% of the vote in a three-candidate race (losing by only six points and narrowly outpolling Bill Clinton in the district).

In contrast the Democratic nominee for the same House seat in 1994 had no political experience, failed to raise as much as a nickel in the general election campaign, and garnered only 29% of the vote in a two-candidate race, losing by 42 points. Clearly, many Democratic voters in the 15th district decided not to vote or defected to Pryce in 1994, when the Democratic nominee was a weak candidate. This scenario repeated itself in 1996. Pryce's Democrat challenger in 1996 was a onetime Republican candidate for Congress and a former Perot coordinator (and later a Perot opponent) who has never held public office, and whose campaign had a grand total of $75 on hand as of early September (Bradshaw and Riskind 1996). When President Clinton held a rally in the district a week before election day, the Democratic nominee for the House did not appear with him on podium. On election day, Pryce defeated her challenger by 42 points while Clinton came within four percentage points of Dole in the district. Again, many Democrats chose not to vote for an unsubstantial or flawed Democratic House candidate.

A common redistricting strategy ensures that a sizeable number of voters may confront a similar situation faced by Democratic voters in the 15th district of Ohio. Under a strategy of diluting the strength of a minority party, ethnic group, or other social group, majority politicians often try to draw district lines so that many, but not too many (perhaps one-third of the voting population), minority partisans
are located in each district. In many cases, the Supreme Court has upheld instances of such partisan gerrymandering (Butler and Cain 1992). This leads to congressional districts like Ohio's 15th, where Republican voters usually outnumber Democrats by a comfortable margin. In theory, the minority party could see one of its own elected to Congress in such a district, but in practice it is almost hopeless once an incumbent from the majority party becomes entrenched.

Clearly, potential candidates for office prefer to run where their party has a sizeable electoral base. Challengers also like to run when the opportunity is ripe, as when an incumbent retires or is weakened by scandal. When an incumbent appears strongly positioned, serious challengers often wait on the sidelines while a sacrificial lamb is trotted out to absorb the electoral defeat (Jacobson and Kernell 1983). The Democratic nominee in Ohio's 15th district in 1996 admitted that the party would have found a more attractive candidate if they believed they had a better chance of winning (Bradshaw and Riskind 1996). This is certainly part of the reason why many nominees for the House are weak candidates, and why citizens divide their votes.

Voter Defection in House Elections

Until recently, the United States has experienced a particular form of divided government at the national level: a Republican president paired with a Democratic Congress. This pattern generated the conventional wisdom that Democratic voters tend to defect from their party at the presidential level while Republicans tend to abandon their party at the congressional level (Wattenberg 1991; Jacobson 1992; Asher 1988). This form of divided government also suggests that voters split their votes by voting for a Republican president and a Democratic House candidate.
While Democrats are indeed more likely than Republicans to defect from their party in presidential races (Brody et al. 1994), most people divide their votes by deserting their party in the congressional contests. Figure 4.1 presents the proportion of ticket-splitters defecting from their identified party at the House level in each election since 1952. Increasingly, the congressional contest is the source of most ticket-splitting. In the 1950s, when television advertising had only penetrated the presidential campaigns, most voters (between 60% and 70%) split their ballots by defecting in the

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1I treat leaners as partisans to calculate these percentages. The results are very similar when leaners are coded as Independent.

2Brody and colleagues (1994) reach similar conclusions in a study that includes Senate voting from 1952 to 1988.
presidential contest. However, in the subsequent period of congressional incumbency, this pattern has been reversed. In every election since 1980, at least 70% of President-House ticket-splitters defected in the House contest.

This link between the congressional contest and divided voting holds in recent elections as well. The 1994 election was characterized by a national tide that helped Republican candidates for Congress (as well as for state and local offices) in every region of the country. Based on this Republican tide, it is easy to imagine that many disgruntled Clinton voters abandoned the Democrats to vote for a Republican in 1994. Thus, one would expect that most split-term voters in 1994 voted for Clinton in 1992 and then voted for a Republican House candidate in 1994. Indeed, after excluding Perot supporters, roughly 60% of the split-term voters in 1994 voted for Bill Clinton in 1992 and a Republican in 1994.

In addition, most split-term voters in 1994 deserted their party (whether Republican or Democrat) in the 1994 congressional contest. Based on the 1992-94 NES panel study, 73% of the Democratic split-term voters in 1994 divided their votes by defecting in the 1994 House race. Similarly, 69% of the Republican split-term voters in 1994 defected in the 1994 House election. Keep in mind that these figures only represent votes split between the presidential and House races, whereas Brody and colleagues count splits between the presidential contest and the House or Senate races.3

A similar pattern holds for ticket-splitting in recent presidential elections (see Table 4.1). In 1992, 2 out of 3 Democratic ticket-splitters and 4 out of 5 Republican ticket-splitters defected

3These percentages are similar (although a bit lower) when using the recalled presidential vote question in 1994 NES. The slightly lower percentages using vote recall are probably due to a consistency bias in the recall question. Some respondents misremember past voting behavior to make it appear consistent with current behavior. Thus, some voters who actually switched parties in the voting booth appear not to have done so. See Appendix B for a more detailed treatment of this response bias.
from their party in the House contest. The powerful effect of the congressional races can be seen in the direction of ticket-splitting in 1988 as well. Among Republican voters, 84% split their tickets by defecting in the congressional contest. And despite the weak candidacy of Michael Dukakis at the top of the ticket in 1988, still half of the Democratic ticket-splitters defected in the congressional race. Notice that more Republicans than Democrats split their tickets in 1988 (the numbers in parentheses in Table 4.1). The Republican party generally offered the weaker candidates in the 1988 House elections (Jacobson 1992), again demonstrating the importance of the congressional contests in explaining ticket-splitting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Identification of Ticket-Splitter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the total number of ticket-splitters for that cell. For example, 133 Republicans split their ballots in 1988. Leaners are treated as partisans, and Perot voters are excluded from the 1992 calculations.

Source: National Election Studies

Table 4.1

It is worth noting that some voters do desert their party in the presidential contest (Asher 1988). However, voters who defect from their party identification in the presidential contest are less likely to split their votes than defectors in the congressional race. Because of coattail effects, partisan defection at the presidential level may trickle down to the rest of the ticket (thus creating a party-line voting pattern). Defections in House elections do not have a similar impact on the presidential race because voters tend to make a
presidential selection before the congressional choice (see Figure 3.1). This is likely due to the prominence of the presidential contest in American politics.

Since party identifiers tend to divide their votes by defecting in congressional races, we need to examine the characteristics of congressional contests more closely to understand divided voting behavior. Previous studies of split-ticket voting are somewhat cognizant of congressional contests. For example, we know that party defections in House elections are skewed toward the incumbent candidate (Mann and Wolfinger 1980; Jacobson 1992). Thus, it is no surprise that split-ticket voting is more common in districts where an incumbent is running for the House (Alvarez and Schousen 1993; McAllister and Darcy 1992), especially when the incumbent is not from the voter’s party (Born 1994; Glascock and Garand 1994). In addition, split-ticket voting is understandably more common in districts where a House candidate runs unopposed (Bloom 1994).

The same type of relationship exists between House incumbency and split-term voting in 1994 (see Table 4.2). Split-term voting is most common when the House incumbent is from the party opposite the voter’s presidential selection in 1992. Split-term voting is least common when the incumbent shares the same party affiliation as the voter’s presidential selection. The frequency of split-term voting in open seat races falls in between the other two cases.

However, explaining divided voting in terms of incumbency is an overly simple hypothesis. Some suggest that it is rational to desert one’s party in favor of an incumbent because the incumbent’s seniority in Congress allows her to funnel federal projects and funds to the district (Mayhew 1974; Fiorina 1977). What may instead favor incumbents is the level of competition between the two parties in House races. There may be little divided voting in districts where both parties field well-funded and visible candidates for the House seat (regardless of
incumbency). Split-ticket voting is more common in districts with an incumbent running because the other party often fails to produce a strong challenger or even any challenger at all. However, split ticket voting could be equally common in an open seat race if either party fails to run a strong candidate. As Gary Jacobson (1991, 1992) points out, candidate visibility, rather than incumbency per se, accounts for vote defection in House elections. Incumbency is a rather crude measure of the relative quality and name recognition of competing candidates for Congress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congressional Contest</th>
<th>Incumbent of Same Party</th>
<th>Open Seat</th>
<th>Incumbent of Opposite Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Split-Term Voting</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals (n=350)</td>
<td>(n=167)</td>
<td>(n=57)</td>
<td>(n=126)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1992-94 NES Panel Study

Table 4.2
Frequency of Split-Term Voting by Type of House Contest in 1994

More specifically, I hypothesize that divided voting tends to reflect the visibility and name recognition of competing House candidates. House elections typically are low-information contests, in which many voters do not know the names of the candidates. Voting for the more visible candidate (often an incumbent) in low-information contests derives from the rational act of selecting the familiar face or name, because familiarity reduces uncertainty about the candidate's policy positions and what the candidate will do in office. There is a certain rationality in choosing the devil you know over the devil you don't know (even if it is the unknown candidate who shares the voter's party identification).

Comparing House and Senate elections also points to the importance of candidate visibility. Gunnarsson (1992) finds that incumbency is a
weaker predictor of President-Senate ticket-splitting than of President-House ticket-splitting. Since Senate contests attract better challengers than House contests (Krasno 1994), an incumbent's name recognition advantage is smaller in Senate races.

In addition, work in social psychology demonstrates that "mere exposure" to an object produces favorable evaluations -- people grow to like an object the more frequently it is encountered (Zajonc 1968). In these studies, people see a name, photograph, or word either many or few times. People tend to prefer the frequently-viewed object to the less frequently displayed alternative (Bornstein 1989). Thus, it is no surprise that campaign professionals and their trade journals (like Campaigns and Elections) treat candidate name recognition as a precious commodity, especially in the low-information environment of most House contests.

Most empirical studies of split-ticket voting have not gone beyond a dummy explanatory variable indicating the presence (and party affiliation) of an incumbent candidate for office. The lone exception provides evidence that candidate visibility in contests farther down the ballot affects ticket-splitting. For example, Beck and colleagues (1992) demonstrate that split-ticket voting at the state level is more common when the most visible candidates for different offices come from different parties. The following section develops an empirical model of divided voting behavior in recent national elections, with an emphasis on the visibility of congressional candidates."

Data Analysis: Split-Term Voting in 1994

This section provides a multivariate study of split-term voting in 1994 to demonstrate that candidate visibility and campaign spending (not

---

"The article on split-ticket voting by Beck et al. (1992) has influenced the conceptualization and coding of explanatory variables in the empirical analysis that follows."
just incumbency) explain why citizens tend to divide their votes by defecting from their party in the congressional contests. The dependent variable (major party split-term voting) is coded 1 if the voter selects a presidential candidate of one party in 1992 and a House candidate of the opposite party in 1994. The dependent variable is coded 0 if the two votes are for the same party. Perot voters are excluded from this analysis, leaving 22% of the remaining midterm voters who are of the split-term variety (in fact, they outnumber the Perot voters).

Conceptually, excluding Perot voters allows for a sharper examination of conditional party loyalty in response to the quality of congressional candidates. By eliminating Perot voters, many of whom have weak attachments to a major party (Weisberg and Kimball 1995), we are left with citizens who likely split their votes between two parties for reasons other than Perot's popularity and the strength of one's partisanship. Because the dependent variable is dichotomous, I use logistic regression for the multivariate analysis (Appendix A provides a brief justification for the logit model).

As for the critical independent variables, I use three different measures of candidate visibility to explore whether visibility (rather than incumbency per se) causes divided voting behavior. The first is simple name recognition — a dichotomous variable indicating whether or not the respondent was able to evaluate a candidate on the feeling thermometer. This is a rather lenient measure of name recognition since people can (in theory) evaluate candidates with whom they are unfamiliar. The second measure of candidate visibility is name recall, coded as 1 if the respondent correctly remembers the name of the House candidate, 0 otherwise. Name recall is a stricter measure of visibility, since voters must recall a candidate's name on their own and they may know something about a candidate but not remember the name.

I use campaign expenditures in the general election as a final indicator of a candidate's exposure in the district, since most campaign
funds are spent on some form of advertising (Jacobson 1992). I use the opposition party candidate's fraction of total expenditures by both parties as my spending measure. The cost of buying advertising and waging a credible congressional campaign varies from district to district. It may be very expensive and inefficient to buy television time in a large urban market like New York or Los Angeles. In contrast, it is cheaper and more efficient for candidates to advertise on television in a city like Columbus, Ohio, where two congressional districts contain most of the viewers in the metropolitan area. Thus, I measure a candidate's spending in relation to his opponent's spending. In addition, campaigns are contests of candidate visibility and competing messages. The spending measure I use indicates the extent to which the opposition candidate is winning the exposure and message contests.

There are other indicators of candidate quality that I ignore: previous political experience, media training or broadcasting experience, and public speaking skills (Jacobson 1992; Green and Krasno 1988; Squire 1992). I rely only on campaign spending because it buys media access, which increases a candidate's visibility. A candidate could be of high quality on other indicators (such as previous political experience), but that candidate will attract few votes if she has no campaign money to make people aware of those qualifications.

The final twist is that there are two variables created for each type of name visibility measure: one for the House candidate from the respondent's party and one for the opposition party candidate. The following analysis employs two different strategies to identify the opposition and allied party candidates for the House. For the analysis in Table 4.3, congressional candidates are coded in relation to the respondent's presidential vote choice in 1992. So, for example, if a voter selected Clinton in 1992, the Democratic House candidate is coded as sharing the respondent's party tendency and the Republican is coded
as the opposition. For the analysis in Table 4.4, the respondent's 1994 party identification is used as the baseline.\textsuperscript{3} Thus, if a voter identifies with the Republican party, the Republican contender for the House seat is coded as the allied candidate and the Democrat is coded as the opposition. In each case, the dependent variable (split-term voting) is the same. The analysis in Table 4.3 is based on a view of split-term voting as an act of deserting the party one voted for in the last presidential contest. The analysis in Table 4.4 views split-term voting as an act of defecting from one's identified party in the congressional contest, as we have in earlier analyses.

This dual coding scheme is used because the party of the House candidate determines whether visibility will increase or decrease the likelihood of split-term voting -- in short, a party baseline is required. If the candidate from the voter's own party spends a lot of money and is easily recognized, then split-term voting should be less likely to occur. In contrast, if the opposing party's candidate is well-funded and highly visible, then split-term voting should be more likely. Thus, the three visibility measures associated with the opposition candidate should have positive logit coefficients, while the visibility measures for the voter's own party candidate should have negative coefficients.

The statistical models include incumbency and strength of partisanship as control variables. The incumbency variable is coded +1 if the incumbent and respondent are from opposite parties, -1 if the incumbent and respondent are from the same party, and 0 if there is no incumbent running. Based on the expectations discussed above, the incumbency variable should be positively related to split-term voting. The strength of partisanship variable is formed by folding the standard seven-point party identification scale at its midpoint, with strong

\textsuperscript{3}The correlation between 1992 presidential vote choice and 1994 party identification is a modest .38.
partisans at the high end of the scale. Strength of partisanship should have a negative effect on split-term voting.

Results: Split-Term Voting in 1994

Tables 4.3 and 4.4 demonstrate that the candidate visibility measures outperform incumbency in predicting split-term voting in 1994. The first model in each table is used as a baseline for comparison and includes only incumbency and strength of partisanship as explanatory variables. The next three equations make slight adjustments to the baseline model by adding measures of visibility. The second model adds the name recognition variables to the baseline model, the third adds the name recall variables to the baseline, and the fourth adds the campaign spending measure to the baseline. The fifth and final equation is the baseline plus the name recall and spending variables. Using these variables, model 5 is the best model in terms of predicting split-term voting. Name recall and spending deserve to be included together because campaign expenditures are not the only way for a candidate to increase her visibility. Adroit use of one's position in the community, franked mail (for incumbents), free media, family ties, and independent expenditures by a party or interest group can also improve a candidate's visibility. Name recognition is left out of the final model because it is a lenient (and less valid) measure of visibility, and it is somewhat correlated with name recall. In subsequent chapters I will add other individual-level predictors to this model, but they do not alter the basic findings about candidate visibility reported here.

Looking first at the goodness-of-fit statistics at the bottom of each table, it is evident that our ability to predict split-term voting improves when the candidate visibility measures are added to the equation. Moving from left to right across the bottom of each table, the chi-square statistic gets larger and the log likelihood statistic
gets smaller (both signs of improved fit) as the visibility measures are added as explanatory variables. The percent of cases correctly predicted also increases when the visibility variables are included in the model. Finally, the reduction in error in the final model is more than three times that of the baseline model in Table 4.3. The visibility measures enhance our ability to predict split-term voting, well beyond incumbency per se.

Further evidence of the superiority of candidate visibility is seen by comparing the logit coefficients in each table. First, notice that the coefficient for incumbency gets smaller when the visibility measures are included in the equation. Furthermore, the incumbency variable is not a statistically significant predictor in the final two models in either table. All of the visibility measures have the correct sign, and in contrast to incumbency, all of the visibility measures are significant in Table 4.3 and most of them are significant in Table 4.4. The fact that the candidate visibility measures remain significant in the final model while incumbency washes out demonstrates that split-term voting is more a function of candidate exposure and name recognition than simple incumbency. As Gary Jacobson (1992) has elegantly demonstrated, incumbents tend to attract votes because they often have an advantage over their challengers in terms of campaign fundraising and name recognition.

Although not presented here, in each of the analyses in this chapter, a model including the spending and name recall measures (without incumbency) outperforms a model with incumbency as the only explanatory variable measuring candidate characteristics.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.99*</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>1.12*</td>
<td>-1.52*</td>
<td>-1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.53)</td>
<td>(0.80)</td>
<td>(0.56)</td>
<td>(0.79)</td>
<td>(0.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Party Identification</td>
<td>-0.80**</td>
<td>-0.77**</td>
<td>-0.78**</td>
<td>-0.71**</td>
<td>-0.72**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
<td>(0.19)</td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbency</td>
<td>1.33**</td>
<td>0.63**</td>
<td>0.95**</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.19)</td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
<td>(0.35)</td>
<td>(0.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize House Candidate of Same Party</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-2.14**</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.41)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>2.14**</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.63)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall House Candidate of Same Party</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-1.52**</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-1.35**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.41)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1.19**</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.40)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of Spending by Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>4.40**</td>
<td>3.96**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.01)</td>
<td>(1.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$ (df)</td>
<td>87.1(2)**</td>
<td>105.2(4)**</td>
<td>104.5(4)**</td>
<td>108.0(3)**</td>
<td>120.0(5)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2LL</td>
<td>284.3</td>
<td>235.5</td>
<td>266.9</td>
<td>263.3</td>
<td>251.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correctly predicted</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>83.6%</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
<td>85.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of error*</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of cases</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The dependent variable is coded 1 for split-term voting, 0 for party-line voting. Cell entries are logit coefficients (standard errors are in parentheses).

**p < .01 (two-tailed)
*p < .1 (two-tailed)

*The reduction of error (ROE) statistic indicates the extent to which the model improves on a null prediction that each observation will fall into the modal category of the dependent variable (Hagle and Mitchell 1992):

$$ROE = 100 \times \left( \frac{\% \text{ correctly predicted} - \% \text{ in modal category}}{100 - \% \text{ in modal category}} \right).$$

Source: 1992-94 NES Panel Study

Table 4.3
Predictors of Split-Term Voting in 1994 (Defection from 1992 Presidential Vote)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.07*</td>
<td>1.80*</td>
<td>1.41*</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.56)</td>
<td>(0.72)</td>
<td>(0.60)</td>
<td>(0.73)</td>
<td>(0.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Party Identification</td>
<td>-0.76**</td>
<td>-0.77**</td>
<td>-0.79**</td>
<td>-0.77**</td>
<td>-0.78**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
<td>(0.19)</td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
<td>(0.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbency</td>
<td>0.82**</td>
<td>0.47*</td>
<td>0.64**</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
<td>(0.20)</td>
<td>(0.19)</td>
<td>(0.33)</td>
<td>(0.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize Own Party House Candidate</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-1.21**</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall Own Party House Candidate</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-0.95**</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-0.85*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of Spending by Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>2.38**</td>
<td>2.07**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.93)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² (df) 48.8(2)** 48.4(4)** 57.7(4)** 56.9(3)** 62.7(5)**
-2LL 307.0 276.2 297.5 298.3 292.6
Correctly predicted 79.4% 81.1% 80.2% 81.1% 81.1%
Reduction of Error* 5.9% 13.7% 9.7% 13.7% 13.7%
Number of cases 339 312 338 338 338

Note: The dependent variable is coded 1 for split-term voting, 0 for party-line voting. Cell entries are logit coefficients (standard errors are in parentheses).

**p < .01 (two-tailed)
*p < .1 (two-tailed)

The reduction of error (ROE) statistic indicates the extent to which the model improves on a null prediction that each observation will fall into the modal category of the dependent variable (Hagle and Mitchell 1992):
ROE = 100 x (% correctly predicted - % in modal category)/(100 - % in model category).

Source: 1992-94 NES Panel Study

Table 4.4
Predictors of Split-Term Voting in 1994 (Defection from Party Identification)
A comparison of the results in Tables 4.3 and 4.4 also provides some insights into split-term voting. Judging by the goodness-of-fit statistics, as well as the magnitude and statistical significance of the logit coefficients, the models in Table 4.3 perform substantially better at predicting split-term voting than those in Table 4.4.

The disparity between the two tables is explained solely by the coding of the House candidate's party in each table. The coding for the analyses in Table 4.3, where the party affiliation of each House candidate is compared to the voter's presidential selection, makes a direct link between congressional candidate characteristics and split-term voting. Notice the symmetry in the logit coefficients for each pair of candidate visibility variables in Table 4.3. Even though the sign flips depending on the party of the House candidate, the two coefficients are remarkably similar in magnitude. For example, in the final model in Table 4.3, the coefficient for recalling the name of the candidate from one's own party is -1.35, while the coefficient for the opposition candidate is 1.02. This symmetry suggests that split-term voting depends equally on the quality of both candidates for Congress.

If we define the "presidential party" as the party a voter selected for the presidential contest and the "opposition party" as the other party, then Table 4.3 suggests that each party can help determine whether that voter will be of the split-term variety. The presidential party can reduce the probability of a split-term vote by running a well-funded, quality candidate for the House in the voter's district. But, the opposition party can increase the probability of a split-term vote (by a roughly equal amount) by running an equally visible and financially-backed candidate for the House of Representatives.

The coding of House candidates in Table 4.4 (based on the voter's party identification) is somewhat noisier for predicting split-term voting. For example, it is likely that a voter who is a Democrat chose Clinton in 1992, but it is not guaranteed. Democrats who did not vote
for Clinton may be waverers partisans, so a more accurate indicator of their baseline party tendencies is one that reflects their behavior rather than party identification. In addition, Table 4.4 excludes pure independents (they are included in Table 4.3), since they do not identify with either political party. Pure independents contribute to the symmetrical results in Table 4.3 because they have no ties to either party and are thus equally susceptible to the qualities of either House candidate.

The asymmetrical logit coefficients for each pair of candidate visibility measures in Table 4.4 provide evidence for the conditional nature of party loyalty in American congressional elections. The variables associated with a voter's own party candidate are negative and significant. In contrast, the coefficients for the opposition candidates are generally not significant (although they have the expected positive sign). This suggests that opposition House candidates are relatively inconsequential in determining whether voters defect from their party to split their votes. In contrast, it matters a great deal what their own party does. When their own party runs a visible, well-financed candidate for the House, party identifiers are much less likely to split their votes. But the results in Table 4.4 demonstrate that party identifiers are not very responsive to opposition party candidates.

This is not to say that citizens will not vote for opposition party candidates. I am instead suggesting that the visibility of the opposition party candidate does not seem to matter much. What matters is the quality of the candidate from their own party. Partisans are willing to vote for their party when a decent candidate is offered. When their party offers a "lemon" for Congress, voters will then consider other brands.
The question of whether congressional elections are determined by national or local forces is a longstanding debate in political science (see Niemi and Weisberg 1993). Several argue that national-level factors (such as presidential popularity and the state of the national economy) influence the results of House elections (Tufte 1978; Jacobson and Kernell 1983; Campbell 1993). Other evidence suggests that local factors (such as candidate quality and campaign spending) affect the outcome of House contests.

The 1994 election provides another test for these arguments. At first blush, it appears that national conditions played a prominent role in the election. Public disapproval of President Clinton and public contempt for Congress made life difficult for the governing Democrats. By linking congressional Democrats to Clinton and endorsing the Contract with America, Republican candidates presented a unified message that helped them win control of Congress, as well as many state and local offices.

However, there was a rather unique local flavor to the 1994 elections. For the first time in the last five decades, more Republicans than Democrats ran unopposed for House seats. Furthermore, Republican challengers were, on average, more qualified (in terms of previous political experience) and better financed than Democratic challengers, another departure from recent history (Jacobson 1996; Gimpel 1996). Besides Clinton's low approval ratings, Republicans also made gains in Congress because they produced more suitable candidates than Democrats.

The 1992-94 NES panel study provides a unique test of the local and national hypotheses because it allows us to examine voters who switched parties in House elections from 1992 to 1994. As chapter 3 indicates, those House switchers provided the margin of victory for
Republicans in 1994. House switchers in 1994 give us another opportunity to demonstrate how the quality of the House candidates induce voters to split their votes between the two parties. In particular, this will be a difficult test for the candidate quality hypothesis, given the strong national forces (in the form of a Republican tide) that swept across the electorate in 1994.

Table 4.5 provides the results of a multivariate logit analysis of House switchers in 1994. I include a thermometer rating for Clinton as a control variable to capture the national forces in the campaign. As I have coded it, the Clinton variable should have a negative coefficient. Strength of party identification is measured the same way as in previous analyses, and it should be negatively related to House switching.

The incumbency and visibility variables are coded in relation to the respondent's 1992 House vote. The incumbency variable is coded +1 if the 1994 incumbent is from the party opposite the respondent's 1992 vote, -1 if the 1994 incumbent and the 1992 vote are for the same party, and 0 if there is no incumbent running in 1994. The incumbency variable should be positively related to House switching. The three sets of visibility variables from the last section are used again here. As with the incumbency measure, the respondent's House vote in 1992 is used to gauge whether the 1994 candidates are from the same or opposing party. As in the previous section, the first model in Table 4.5 is a baseline that excludes the visibility measures, which are then included in subsequent equations.

For those who voted Democratic in the 1992 House election, the raw thermometer score for Clinton (fClin) is used. For those who voted Republican in 1992, I subtract the Clinton thermometer score from 100: (100 - fClin). This is necessary to account for the fact that Republicans who like Clinton are likely to switch parties while Democrats who dislike Clinton are likely to switch parties. A measure of perceptions of the national economy was also used to capture national forces in the campaign. However, this variable was not statistically significant and its presence did not alter the results, so it is excluded from Table 4.5.
Results: House Switchers in 1994

The results in Table 4.5 provide further evidence that the level of competition in the House contest is a critical factor in explaining why voters switch parties. As with the previous analysis of split-term voting, the goodness-of-fit statistics improve when the candidate visibility measures are included in the model. In addition, the visibility measures all have the correct signs, all are statistically significant, and they wash out the effect of the incumbency variable. Thus, the quality (in terms of visibility and campaign spending) of both the allied and opposition party candidates affect the likelihood of switching parties in consecutive House elections.

For the final model (model 5) in Table 4.5, I include the name recall and campaign spending measures, along with the control variables of strength of partisanship and evaluations of Clinton. Finally, I replace the incumbency measure with a dummy variable for open seats, to better capture the presence of new candidates for office. Whereas incumbency, regardless of party, often promotes stability in voting behavior, an open seat may encourage party switching as voters evaluate two new candidates for the House seat.

Model 5 in Table 4.5 provides the best fit in terms of the log likelihood and chi-square statistics at the bottom of the table. In addition, each of the candidate visibility variables is statistically significant and has the correct sign. Not surprisingly, the open seat measure has a positive and significant coefficient, meaning that voters are more likely to switch parties in an election following the departure of an incumbent.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.06* (0.59)</td>
<td>2.29* (0.90)</td>
<td>-0.54 (0.79)</td>
<td>-0.06 (0.82)</td>
<td>0.14 (0.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Party Identification</td>
<td>-0.33* (0.18)</td>
<td>-0.41* (0.20)</td>
<td>-0.31* (0.18)</td>
<td>-0.33* (0.18)</td>
<td>-0.33* (0.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Clinton in Relation to 1992 House Vote</td>
<td>-0.03** (0.006)</td>
<td>-0.03** (0.007)</td>
<td>-0.03** (0.006)</td>
<td>-0.03** (0.006)</td>
<td>-0.03** (0.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbency</td>
<td>0.90** (0.18)</td>
<td>0.17 (0.22)</td>
<td>-0.08 (0.35)</td>
<td>-0.30 (0.37)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Seat</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.66* (0.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize House Candidate of Same Party</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-2.68** (0.47)</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1.64** (0.54)</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall House Candidate of Same Party</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-1.43** (0.44)</td>
<td>-1.46** (0.44)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1.15** (0.44)</td>
<td>1.16** (0.44)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of Spending by Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>3.15** (1.02)</td>
<td>2.73** (1.05)</td>
<td>2.02** (0.61)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2$ (df) | 58.2(3)** | 91.9(5)** | 68.1(4)** | 80.5(6)** | 83.1(6)** |
-2LL           | 268.7     | 217.2     | 258.7     | 246.4     | 243.8     |
Correctly predicted | 83.2%     | 83.9%     | 84.9%     | 85.8%     | 84.9%     |
Reduction of error | 1.2%      | 6.9%      | 11.2%     | 16.5%     | 11.2%     |
Number of cases   | 358       | 336       | 358       | 358       | 358       |

Note: The dependent variable is coded 1 for voters who switch parties, 0 for those who stick with the same party in both elections. Cell entries are logit coefficients (standard errors in parentheses).

**p < .01 (two-tailed)
*p < .1 (two-tailed)

*The Clinton feeling thermometer score is reversed depending on whether the respondent voted Democrat or Republican in the 1992 House election (see footnote 3).

*The reduction of error (ROE) statistic indicates the extent to which the model improves on a null prediction that each observation will fall into the modal category of the dependent variable (Hagle and Mitchell 1992):

\[ \text{ROE} = 100 \times \frac{\% \text{ correctly predicted} - \% \text{ in modal category}}{100 - \% \text{ in model category}} \]

Source: 1992-94 NES Panel Study

Table 4.5
Predictors of House Switching in 1994 (Defection from 1992 House Vote)
It is also important to note that the control variables are statistically significant in each model, and they tell us more about voting in House elections. As expected, voters with weak party attachments are more likely to switch parties in consecutive House elections. Strong party attachments promote consistent voting behavior over time. Furthermore, the results in Table 4.5 provide strong evidence that the 1994 election was a referendum on President Clinton. The coefficient for the Clinton variable is significant and has the expected negative sign.

Split-Ticket Voting in 1988 and 1992

Finally, the same analysis strategy can be used to determine the candidate factor in split-ticket voting during presidential elections. Split-ticket voting is another common way in which citizens can deviate from party-line voting. As in the examples presented above, I expect that the visibility and quality of the congressional candidates should help account for split-ticket voting, even after controlling for strength of partisanship and incumbency.

Previous studies have not explicitly modeled the candidate component in explaining ticket-splitting. Generally, these studies include variables indicating the presence of an incumbent (and perhaps the incumbent's party) and open seat races. However, this approach is a crude measure of candidate quality, since some incumbents face stiff challenges and open seat races are not always competitive. As Gary Jacobson (1992) points out, incumbency often acts as a surrogate for the familiarity of the candidates.

Multivariate analyses of major party split-ticket voting in 1992 and 1988 are presented in Tables 4.6 and 4.7, respectively. Strength of party identification and incumbency are included in the models as control variables and serve as the lone predictors in the baseline
equation (model 1). Again, the three pairs of candidate visibility variables are included as explanatory variables in subsequent models. For the incumbency and visibility variables, House candidates are coded in relation to the voter’s presidential selection in the same election. For example, if a voter chose George Bush in 1992, then the Democratic nominee for the House is coded as the opposition candidate and the Republican is coded as being of the same party as that respondent.

As in the previous analyses, split-ticket voting can be attributed, in part, to the visibility of the congressional candidates. In Tables 4.6 and 4.7, the overall fit of the models improve when the candidate visibility measures are added to the equation (models 2 and 3). Furthermore, in each model, the visibility variables produce statistically significant coefficients with the expected signs. Notice that the magnitude of the logit coefficient for incumbency decreases dramatically as the candidate variables are added to the baseline model in each table. In the 1992 analysis, incumbency drops out as a significant predictor of ticket-splitting when candidate visibility measures are included in models 2 and 3. Clearly, the incumbency variable serves as a crude proxy for a candidate’s exposure to the electorate.

In comparing the results from Tables 4.6 and 4.7, notice that the predictive power is substantially greater in 1988 than in 1992. There are two likely reasons for this. First, Perot voters are excluded from the 1992 analysis. This eliminates many weak partisans and independents from the 1992 sample, voters who are more likely to choose candidates on the basis of familiarity alone, and who are likely to split their ballots.

Second, the House bank scandal broke prior to the 1992 election, diminishing the supply of goodwill usually enjoyed by incumbents. The public had a greater regard for incumbent representatives in 1988 than in 1992 (Patterson and Kimball, forthcoming). For example, the
proportion of voters in NES surveys who could think of something they disliked about their incumbent increased from 12% in 1988 to 19% in 1992. Beyond the usual advantage in name recognition, incumbents also use their position to cultivate a favorable public image in the district (Cain et al. 1987). Some of that positive image eroded in 1992 as a result of the bank scandal. Notice that the size of the incumbency coefficient is much larger in the 1988 equations (while the coefficients for the other variables are quite comparable in both years).

Indeed, 1988 was one of the last great years for House incumbents. Ninety-four percent of the incumbents ran in the 1988 general election (leaving very few open seat races), and 98% of these incumbents were reelected. Only 80% of incumbents ran in the 1992 general election (with 88% of them winning reelection). In addition, at least 50 incumbents ran unopposed in 1988, a condition that did not repeat itself in 1992 (when only 10 incumbents were unopposed). While incumbents still enjoy an electoral advantage, that advantage is less pronounced today.

*These numbers are based on the author's calculations.

*See Jacobson (1997b) for more evidence on the declining incumbency advantage in the 1990s.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-1.39**</td>
<td>-1.43**</td>
<td>-0.89*</td>
<td>-0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.25)</td>
<td>(0.39)</td>
<td>(0.48)</td>
<td>(0.44)</td>
<td>(0.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Party Identification</td>
<td>-0.42**</td>
<td>-0.42**</td>
<td>-0.46**</td>
<td>-0.49**</td>
<td>-0.54**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbency</td>
<td>1.15**</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>(0.20)</td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
<td>(0.23)</td>
<td>(0.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize House Candidate of Same Party</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-1.06**</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-0.70**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1.30**</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1.06**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.27)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall House Candidate of Same Party</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-1.33**</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-0.51*</td>
<td>---</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.95**</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.59*</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.22)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of Spending by Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>2.69**</td>
<td>2.38**</td>
<td>2.12**</td>
<td>1.54*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.54)</td>
<td>(0.58)</td>
<td>(0.60)</td>
<td>(0.66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like Anything About House Candidate of Same Party</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-2.62**</td>
<td>-2.58**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.31)</td>
<td>(0.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like Anything About Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>2.19**</td>
<td>2.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.24)</td>
<td>(0.24)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The dependent variable is coded 1 for a split ticket, 0 for a straight ticket. Cell entries are logit coefficients (standard errors in parentheses).

**p < .01 (two-tailed)
*p < .1 (two-tailed)

The reduction of error (ROE) statistic indicates the extent to which the model improves on a null prediction that each observation will fall into the modal category of the dependent variable (Hagle and Mitchell 1992):

\[
ROE = 100 \times \left( \frac{\% \text{ correctly predicted} - \% \text{ in modal category}}{100 - \% \text{ in model category}} \right)
\]

Source: 1992 NES

Table 4.6
Predictors of Split-Ticket Voting in 1992 (Defection from 1992 Presidential Vote)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.90**</td>
<td>-1.75**</td>
<td>-1.47**</td>
<td>-1.69**</td>
<td>-1.61*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.33)</td>
<td>(0.47)</td>
<td>(0.55)</td>
<td>(0.55)</td>
<td>(0.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Party Identification</td>
<td>-0.28**</td>
<td>-0.28**</td>
<td>-0.34**</td>
<td>-0.33**</td>
<td>-0.35**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbency</td>
<td>2.19**</td>
<td>1.22**</td>
<td>1.15**</td>
<td>0.71*</td>
<td>0.61*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.15)</td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td>(0.31)</td>
<td>(0.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize House Candidate of Same Party</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-1.17**</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-0.74**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.23)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1.18**</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1.06**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.33)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall House Candidate of Same Party</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-1.16**</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-0.51</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.30)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.37)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.42*</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.25)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of Spending by Opposition House</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>2.15**</td>
<td>1.47*</td>
<td>2.41**</td>
<td>1.76*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.61)</td>
<td>(0.64)</td>
<td>(0.69)</td>
<td>(0.73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like Anything About House Candidate of</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-3.20**</td>
<td>-3.15**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same Party</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.41)</td>
<td>(0.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like Anything About Opposition House</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>2.28**</td>
<td>2.24**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.31)</td>
<td>(0.30)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The dependent variable is coded 1 for a split ticket, 0 for a straight ticket. Cell entries are logit coefficients (standard errors in parentheses). **p < .01 (two-tailed) *p < .1 (two-tailed)

The reduction of error (ROE) statistic indicates the extent to which the model improves on a null prediction that each observation will fall into the modal category of the dependent variable (Hagle and Mitchell 1992):

\[
\text{ROE} = 100 \times (\% \text{ correctly predicted} - \% \text{ in modal category}) / (100 - \% \text{ in model category}).
\]

Source: 1988 NES

Table 4.7
Predictors of Split-Ticket Voting in 1988 (Defection from 1988 Presidential Vote)
Incumbency Versus Visibility and Candidate Favorability

There is one final observation about the empirical results in this chapter. The candidate visibility measures erase the statistical significance of incumbency in the analyses of split-term voting and House switching in 1994, and ticket-splitting in 1992, but not for split-ticket voting in 1988. One explanation for this outcome is methodological: there are roughly three times as many observations in the ticket-splitting analyses. The greater number of observations helps reduce the standard errors for all coefficients, including the coefficient for incumbency, thus increasing the likelihood that incumbency will emerge as a statistically significant predictor. This is certainly part of the reason for the disparity, since the standard errors are smaller in the ticket-splitting equations (Tables 4.6 and 4.7).

In addition, there is a theoretical explanation. The incumbency variable probably picks up two other factors that are somewhat independent of candidate visibility. First, incumbents devote a substantial part of their congressional service to constituent casework and securing federal funding for programs that benefit the district (Mayhew 1974). These activities help incumbents develop a reservoir of goodwill among constituents, beyond generating more exposure to voters back home (Cain et al. 1987).

We can test this expectation by using the NES questions which ask respondents if there is anything they like about each House candidate. This will help account for the favorability advantage that accrues to incumbents. The last two models in Tables 4.6 and 4.7 include the two control variables, some combination of visibility measures, plus two dichotomous variables measuring whether respondents

---

120 Jacobson (1992) employs the same strategy to examine the incumbency advantage in House elections alone.
like anything about (1) the House candidate from their own party and (2) the opposition party House candidate. The coefficient for liking anything about the House candidate from the same party should be negative -- since it should reduce the likelihood of divided voting. The coefficient for liking anything about the opposition candidate should be positive.

As expected, the last two equations in Tables 4.6 and 4.7 show that the fit of the ticket-splitting model improves considerably when the candidate favorability measures are included. The percent of cases correctly predicted improves by about five points in the 1988 and 1992 equations after adding the two favorability variables. The logit coefficients for the two candidate favorability measures are large, have the expected signs, and are statistically significant. Most importantly, the coefficient for incumbency in the 1988 analysis is cut in half after adding the candidate favorability measures (while incumbency is still not significant in 1992). Finally, notice that favorability is also a function of visibility, as the coefficients for name recognition and recall get smaller when the favorability variables are added to the equation.

These results demonstrate that incumbency leads to party defection and divided voting because incumbents tend to enjoy an advantage in campaign spending, name recognition, and a positive image among voters. While partly a function of pure exposure to voters, an incumbent's edge in favorability affects voting beyond that predicted by name recognition and campaign spending. In the end, these results provide further evidence that divided votes are often attributed to the relative visibility and quality of House candidates, rather than incumbency per se.

Another advantage incumbents have is that they can use their office as a platform to take positions on important issues in ways that will endear them to district voters (Mayhew 1974). Thus, incumbents
make public pronouncements and craft roll-call records to position themselves close to the median voter in their districts. In particular, House incumbents are often careful to build records that distinguish them from the presidential candidate of their own party, especially when the presidential candidate is perceived as too extreme. In contrast, challengers often do not have a record of political service to make credible claims about their ideological fit with district voters. Consequently, the incumbency variable in this chapter probably also reflects this position-taking advantage, which operates in addition to an incumbent's edge in name recognition and also contributes to the favorability advantage described above.

Others point to the position-taking advantage among House incumbents as an explanation for divided votes. Paul Frymer (1994) argues that split-ticket voting is driven by conservative voters (primarily in the South) who select a Republican for president and a conservative Democrat for the House. Frymer claims that southern Democrats in the House managed to emphasize their conservative positions on important issues to attract support from Reagan and Bush voters throughout the 1980s. I cannot test this hypothesis directly since the biennial NES surveys do not ask respondents to place House candidates on the liberal-conservative scale in presidential years.

However, the results in this chapter provide some indirect support for Frymer's thesis. In comparing the analyses of divided voting in this chapter, notice that the size of the logit coefficient for incumbency is largest in 1988, smaller in 1992, and weakest in 1994. As discussed above, this decline in the effect of incumbency on divided voting (after accounting for candidate visibility) is partly attributable to the House bank scandal in 1992. But, the weakened effect of incumbency also reflects the declining position-taking advantage of House incumbents for two reasons. First, the polarization of the parties in Congress over the last ten years (see chapter 2 and
Cox and McCubbins 1993) has made it more difficult for incumbents to separate themselves from their party's traditional positions. It also has hampered efforts by incumbents from the president's party to maintain a safe distance from the president's positions. In the 1994 National Election Study, the mean ideological placement of Democratic House candidates was 3.6, as compared to 4.9 for Republican House candidates. Both scores are more extreme, and closer to the average placements for the respective political parties, than they were in 1988 (Frymer et al. 1996; Brady 1993). Second, a large number of Southern Democrats retired from the House prior to the 1992 and 1994 elections. These conservative Democrats were expert at appealing to Reagan and Bush voters (who would otherwise vote a straight Republican ticket), and their departure greatly reduced the number of incumbents who undertake the delicate task of making ideological appeals to voters from the opposite party. The end result is that the overall incumbency advantage appears to have dropped a bit in recent elections (Jacobson 1997b; Fiorina 1996), largely because of declining favorability ratings and because incumbents have less room to maneuver in positioning themselves ideologically. Nevertheless, an incumbent's edge in visibility and fundraising remain.

Conclusion

Divided voting behavior (and the presence of divided government) can be explained, in part, simply by the choices voters confront on election day. In particular, the familiarity of the competing House candidates is crucial. When the voter's party nominates a poorly funded candidate for Congress, the likelihood of divided voting increases. Conversely, when the voter's party runs a well-known candidate with strong financial backing, divided voting is less likely. Similarly, the opposition party can increase the probability of divided voting by
fielding credible candidates for congressional seats. Studies of split-ticket voting (and other deviations from party-line consistency) that focus on individual attitudes and motivations need to control for this important feature of the congressional contest.

Part of the recent volatility in American politics can be attributed to the large number of retirements from the House of Representatives. This has created an unusually large number of open House seats in the last two national elections, giving many voters some fresh faces (usually from both parties) to scrutinize during the congressional campaign. These new candidates, in turn, raise the chances that voters will diverge from past behavior in House elections.

For those who want to promote party-line voting behavior and reduce the likelihood of divided government, the results in this chapter point to a rather simple (if not easy) strategy: get the parties to recruit and adequately fund decent candidates in every congressional contest. When parties offer their adherents a visible choice for Congress, voters are much more likely to remain loyal on election day. It is instructive that the number of split districts (which support a presidential candidate of one party yet elect a representative from the opposite party) dropped from 148 in 1988 to 100 in 1992. This occurred because congressional contests, on average, were more competitive in 1992, when the parties ran more quality candidates for Congress. For example, only 33 House seats were not contested by one of the major parties in 1992, far below the average for the postwar era (Jacobson 1997b).¹¹

On the whole, the 1996 House elections were very competitive as well. The Republican party raised a record sum of money for congressional candidates, and Republicans appear to be contesting more House seats than ever before. In addition, the Democratic party

¹¹By comparison, there were 78 uncontested seats in the 1988 House elections.
redoubled its efforts in House races after the 1994 debacle, with the help of independent expenditures from labor unions. As a result, the major political parties contested all but 17 House seats in the 1996 elections. Thus, we should not be surprised that split-ticket voting was less frequent in 1996 than it ever was in the 1970s or 1980s.
CHAPTER 5
WHO ARE THE SWING VOTERS IN CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS?

Introduction

The previous chapters demonstrated that divided voters play a critical role in American politics, as a source of volatility and divided government, and as a barometer of the parties' fortunes in a given election. This chapter examines divided voters from a temporal perspective by focusing on people who switch parties in consecutive elections. Why do some voters switch sides while others remain loyal to the same party? Midterm elections receive close attention here, since they are a common source of change in the composition of Congress.

As this chapter will show, there are several reasons why a voter might switch parties. Few will be surprised to learn that independent voters with little or no attachment to either party are the most likely swing voters. As chapter 4 demonstrates, swing voters choose the candidate, not the party. This means that some voters switch parties simply because the opposition fields the more visible and better-financed candidate for Congress. The large number of retirements from Congress in recent years has amplified this effect in the last few elections. Swing voters also respond to the president's performance and to the ideological appeals of the parties. Voters from the president's party convert to the opposition when they are unhappy with the president's performance. With the continuing ideological polarization of the parties, we also see that conservative Democrats and liberal Republican voters often switch sides to join the party that more closely matches their policy preferences.
However, I find little evidence to support the argument that sophisticated voters switch sides to find a balance between two ideologically extreme parties (Fiorina 1996; Alesina and Rosenthal 1995). Instead, the less knowledgeable and less interested voters who blur or minimize the policy differences between the parties are more likely to cross party lines.

Finally, one's level of political knowledge determines which factors lead a voter to switch parties. Voters with low levels of information are more influenced by their own party identification and candidate campaign spending. In contrast, voters with above average political knowledge move beyond party attachments and candidate characteristics to consider ideology and presidential performance in deciding whether to switch.

Previous Research

As I indicated in chapter 3, few scholars have examined the extent to which voters switch parties from one election to the next, even though these swing voters are an important source of electoral change in the United States (Brown 1991; Shively 1992, 1991, 1982; Achen and Shively 1995; Claggett and Van Wingen 1993). Even fewer scholars have looked into the determinants of the swing vote. I am aware of only one systematic study of swing voters, V.O. Key's influential book, The Responsible Electorate (1966), about voters who switch parties in consecutive presidential elections. Key argues that voters are quite discerning and switch parties in response to the president's performance, especially his handling of important issues.

\textsuperscript{1}Uslaner and Conway (1985) examine voters who switched parties in House elections between 1972 and 1974, but they did not probe the characteristics that differentiate the switchers from voters who continue to vote for the same party.
It is important to keep in mind, however, that a president governs over the course of a four-year cycle that includes a midterm congressional election. If enough voters from the president's party switch to the opposition at the midterm, the president may face an opposition (or more hostile) Congress for the last two years of his term. Indeed, eight of the last eleven midterm elections have produced divided government. The 1994 election was the most recent example, where swing voters provided the margin of victory for the Republicans.

In addition, there has been some debate about the extent to which Key's finding about presidential performance influences congressional elections. On the one hand, public support for the president trends rather closely with the share of the vote received by the president's party in congressional elections (Tufte 1978; Campbell 1993). On the other hand, presidential coattails in congressional elections shrunk in the 1980s (Ferejohn and Calvert 1984; Jacobson 1992) and some argue that there has been a "decoupling" of presidential and congressional elections (Beck 1992; Jacobson 1991). Finally, Jacobson and Kernell (1983) argue that presidential performance indirectly affects congressional election outcomes by shaping the strategic decisions of potential candidates. Thus, there is a special need to study swing voters in congressional elections, especially midterm elections.

The main reason that swing voters have not been closely examined is that there are few surveys or other data available which observe voters in more than one election. In the past, observers have been forced to rely on voters' recollections of past behavior (which are unreliable) or compare voting blocs in different elections to speculate about swing voters. For example, if 60% of southern whites voted Republican in 1994 while just 50% of southern whites voted

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See Appendix B on the unreliability of vote recall questions. Key (1966) used vote recall data for his study of swing voters, before survey researchers had compiled evidence on the reliability of recall questions.
Republican in 1992, we might conclude that southern whites are a key swing group that is shifting toward the Republican party. The crucial disadvantage of this approach is the classical ecological inference problem -- we do not know the extent to which the changing composition of the Republican vote in the South is due to swing voters or voter abstention. We do not know how many southern whites actually switched parties or how many southern white Democrats abstained in 1994. Furthermore, while voting bloc analysis can tell us about net changes in voting, it cannot reveal the gross movement between parties that produces the overall net changes. Finally, analyzing voting blocs cannot tell us why some voters switch parties while others from the same group do not.

Fortunately, the National Election Studies has conducted several panel surveys, in which the same people are queried about their voting behavior, political opinions, and other information, after more than one election. This provides a unique opportunity to examine individual voting behavior from one election to the next, and to study swing voters. NES panel data are available for the 1992-94, 1990-92, 1972-74-76, and 1956-58-60 election cycles.

The next two chapters rely on many of these panel studies to examine why voters switch parties. The current chapter examines House switchers (voters who switch parties in House contests), while the following chapter examines split-term voters (whose midterm selection does not match their previous presidential vote). The next chapter also examines midterm House elections alone as another way to test the policy balancing theory of voting.

Determinants of House Switching

The striking reversal of fortune for congressional Democrats in the 1994 election renewed speculation that voters use the midterm to
recalibrate the partisan balance of power in Washington. Moderate voters may have shifted toward Republican candidates in 1994 to provide a check on the Democratic president and move federal policy back toward the middle (Fiorina 1996; Alesina and Rosenthal 1995; Jacobson 1991). As Chapter 3 shows, House switchers tilted overwhelmingly toward Republican candidates in 1994, providing the margin of victory for the GOP. This requires that we take another look at the forces that influence the voting decision in midterm elections, particularly the forces that lead people to switch parties.

This section develops a multivariate model of swing voters in House elections, expanding the model presented in chapter 4. It seeks to explain why some voters switch parties while others do not. Rather fortuitously, NES panel studies enable us to examine swing voters in two recent midterm elections (1994 and 1974) that produced the greatest changes in Congress during the past forty years. The Republican party gained 52 House seats in the 1994 election, while the Democrats gained 49 House seats in 1974. In both cases, voters who switched parties gravitated toward the winning party. It may seem obvious that any shift in voting behavior would benefit the winning party, but recall from chapter 3 that the drop in turnout in the 1974 and 1994 midterm elections did not provide much, if any, boost for the winning party. Panel data are also available for the 1990-92 election cycle, allowing us to examine swing voters in an election which produced minimal changes in Congress (the Democrats lost just nine House seats in 1992). By examining periods of dramatic change and periods of minimal change, we can see whether the forces driving swing voters differ in each context. I begin by describing a voting model and then examining swing voters in the 1994 election.
A Model of Swing Voting in House Elections

The dependent variable in this model is dichotomous: it is coded 1 if the voter switched parties in consecutive House elections, and coded 0 if the voter remained loyal to the same party. For example, someone who voted for a Democratic House candidate in 1992 and then voted for a Republican in 1994 is coded 1 as a swing voter. Given a dichotomous dependent variable, logistic regression is used for the multivariate analysis.

Several independent variables are included in the model to test different theories of voting. It is a longstanding axiom of American politics that one's party identification is an important cue in the voting booth (Campbell et al. 1960). To test the argument that independent voters are more likely to switch parties than strong partisans, strength of partisanship (measured by folding the standard party identification scale at its midpoint) is included as an independent variable in the model. Strong partisans are at the high end of the scale, so this variable should be negatively associated with switching parties.

In an era where elections have become more "candidate-centered" (Wattenberg 1990), we should expect voters to switch parties in response to the visibility and quality of the candidates running for office. With eleven percent of the 103rd House of Representatives retiring, many congressional races in 1994 featured new faces, candidates who often had to start from square one in building an electoral base. With so many new faces in open seat races, it is no surprise that almost 20% of the voters switched parties between 1992 and 1994.

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Party leaners and weak partisans are combined into one category of the strength of partisanship scale since other studies find that both groups are equally likely to cast straight-party ballots (Beck and Sorauf 1992; Keith et al. 1992). The results are the same when the two groups occupy different points on the strength of partisanship scale.
There are several reasons why we should expect the candidate side of the equation to favor the Republican party in 1994. In the early 1990s, Republican leaders in Congress moved to improve the quality of the party’s candidates in congressional elections. Newt Gingrich reshaped GOPAC to focus more on candidate recruitment and training. NRCC chair Bill Paxson encouraged Republican incumbents to contribute money from their own campaign funds to challengers and open seat candidates (Kolodny 1996). Furthermore, potential candidates like to run for office under the most favorable conditions (Jacobson and Kernell 1983). Clinton’s low approval ratings and public cynicism toward government made 1994 an attractive time for Republican candidates. It is not surprising, then, that former DCCC chair Beryl Anthony concluded that the Republicans bested the Democrats in candidate recruitment in 1994 (Pitney and Connelly 1996), even though Democrats hold a historical advantage in this domain (Jacobson 1992). Thus, we may expect some voters to switch to the Republican party in response to a relatively stronger crop of Republican candidates.

I include three variables introduced in chapter 4 to capture the effects of candidate quality in the House contests. There is a dummy variable indicating whether or not the respondent can recall the name of the House candidate from his own party. This should be negatively associated with switching parties. Similarly, there is a dummy variable indicating whether the voter can recall the name of the House candidate from the opposition party, and it should be positively associated with switching parties. Third, I include a variable which measures the fraction of campaign money in the House race spent by the opposition party candidate. As this proportion gets larger, it should become more likely that the voter switches to the opposition party.

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*The NRCC created a formal system of incumbent "dues" for this purpose in the 1996 election cycle.*

132
As Key (1966), Tufte (1978), and Erikson (1988) have argued, elections are often referenda on the president's performance. Republicans were banking on this premise in 1994, when many candidates ran television commercials which "morphed" the face of President Clinton into the face of the Democratic House candidate. Republican candidates went to great lengths to link their Democratic opponents to President Clinton, to make their contest a referendum on the president's performance.

To test the referendum theory, I include a feeling thermometer rating of the sitting president, with the direction of the scale altered to account for the voter's past behavior. For example, a Democrat who likes Clinton should be unlikely to switch to the Republican side; similarly, a Republican who dislikes Clinton is similarly unlikely to switch to the Democratic party. In contrast, a Democrat who believes Clinton has done a poor job is more likely to switch to the Republican side. The thermometer scale is therefore flipped for Republicans so that it takes into account the respondent's vote in 1992. As measured, this variable should be negatively associated with switching parties in periods with a Democratic president; the variable should be positively associated with switching parties when the president is Republican.

Several observers have pointed out that the major political parties have become more ideologically homogeneous and polarized in Congress (Rhode 1991) and among party activists (Aldrich 1995). Consequently, scholars argue that party coalitions in the electorate

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5For those who voted Democratic in the 1992 House election, the raw thermometer score for Clinton (fClint) is used. For those who voted Republican in 1992, I subtract the Clinton thermometer score from 100: (100 - fClint). This is necessary to account for the fact that Republicans who like Clinton are as likely to switch parties as Democrats who dislike Clinton. Some argue that negative evaluations provide a stronger incentive to switch parties than positive evaluations (Kernell 1977; Lau 1985). The "negative voting" hypothesis predicts that Democrats who are unhappy with Clinton's performance should be more likely to switch to the Republican side than Republicans who approve of Clinton's performance. I found this not to be the case in 1994.
have realigned in response to the party polarization (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Stanley and Niemi 1995; Aldrich 1995). Ideological conservatives are more likely to vote for Republican candidates, while liberals have gravitated toward the Democratic party. Since each election provides an opportunity for liberals and conservatives to align with opposing parties, we should expect that swing voters switch sides to join the party that more closely matches their policy preferences.

The 1994 election had greater ideological overtones than most midterm elections. Republican candidates focused on issues such as welfare reform, the Clinton tax increase, gays in the military, and Clinton's health care plan in an effort to paint the Democrats as being too liberal. The Republican Contract With America also provided a programmatic message for Republican candidates, even though most voters were not aware of its provisions or its existence.

To test the theory of realigning and polarizing party coalitions, I include a measure of the voter's ideological inclination in relation to her previous vote. Again, the scale is flipped for Republicans. So, conservatives who voted Democrat in 1992 and liberals who voted Republican in 1992 are both at the high end of the scale, and they should be most likely to switch parties in 1994.

Finally, I test the balancing theory several ways by including variables which help capture different profiles of a balancing voter. The balancing perspective has not been tested much, and it is difficult to construct a motivation for policy balancing from standard survey items. To test the balancing theory as completely as possible, I use several different measures to tap characteristics we should observe in balancing voters. These include indicators of ideological moderation, political interest and knowledge, evaluations of both parties, and support for divided government. We should expect that, other things being equal, ideological moderates are most likely to divide their votes between the two parties. Thus, the model includes a dichotomous
variable denoting those moderate voters who place themselves between the two parties on the ideological spectrum. Interestingly, few voters (24% in the 1994 NES, 23% in 1992) feel that they are less conservative than the Republican party and less liberal than the Democratic party.\textsuperscript{4} Also, in the 1992 and 1994 cases, NES asked respondents about their preference for divided versus unified national government. Those who prefer divided government (and thus policy moderation or inaction) should be most likely to switch from one party to the other in their voting behavior.

Other indicators offer a way to test the balancing perspective against other theories of voting. For example, the balancing perspective paints a picture of a knowledgeable and politically involved voter as the one most likely to divide her votes (Fiorina 1996; Alesina and Rosenthal 1995). This runs counter to theories which emphasize weak policy attachments to a party and candidate characteristics in the voting decision. Voters with weak party attachments who respond most strongly to candidate qualities tend to be less knowledgeable (about the

\textsuperscript{4}As a further sign that the parties have polarized in the last twenty years, only 14\% of the respondents placed themselves between the political parties on a 7-point ideology scale in the 1974 NES survey. Part of the reason that so few place themselves in between both parties is that some people do not know where to place the parties. Roughly ten percent of the respondents in the 1994 NES survey did not attempt to place both parties on the 7-point scale, and most of these respondents were self-described moderates. There is evidence that respondents with uncertain opinions (or none at all) tend to select the middle response option on survey questions (Schuman and Presser 1981), especially on the 7-point issue scales (Alvarez and Franklin 1996). In addition, extreme ideologues perceive greater differences between the parties than moderates. As the following table shows, those who place themselves at one of the two extreme points on the ideology scale place the parties farther apart than those in one of the three moderate spots on the scale. In other words, many moderates perceive that at least one of the parties is moderate as well, so many of these voters do not place themselves in between the two parties. These results hold up in other election years as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean Ideological Placement of:</th>
<th>Extremists</th>
<th>Moderates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Party</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Party</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference Between Mean Scores</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1994 NES
parties especially) and less interested in politics. From an information-processing perspective, voters with less knowledge about differences between the parties may experience the least difficulty crossing party lines when casting their votes. Thus, I include measures of political knowledge and interest in the model for swing voters.

Another iteration of the model includes a variable indicating how far apart the voter places the two parties on an ideological scale. According to the balancing theory, the farther the parties polarize, the greater the incentive to split one's votes between the parties. On the other hand, a theory of weak political attachments predicts that as the parties get closer (and as ideological differences are blurred), then vote splitting should become more likely, as voters rely on considerations such as candidate qualities, rather than party loyalty and issues, to choose candidates (see chapter 2 for a more detailed treatment of these arguments). In addition, from a spatial voting perspective, an issue-oriented voter is more likely to jump to the other party when the differences between the parties are small or inconsequential. So, one theory predicts that ideological distance between the parties will be positively associated with switching parties while the other predicts a negative relationship.

It is also possible that citizens split their votes because they do not trust either party (see the Iowa voter's statement in chapter 1). In a separate test of the balancing approach, I include a measure of negativity toward both political parties, which I construct from feeling thermometer questions which ask respondents to indicate how they feel about each party on a scale from 0 to 100. Fiorina's formulation of balancing predicts that voters who distrust both parties (i.e., those who rank both parties near the bottom of the feeling thermometer) are most likely to split their votes between the parties. To test the rival explanation of party attachments, I include a measure of neutrality toward parties, constructed from the same feeling thermometer questions.
This measure indicates the extent to which respondents place both parties near the neutral midpoint of the thermometer scale. By including both measures in the model, we can see if swing voters are driven more by negative or neutral evaluations of political parties.

In summary, I expect that party switching is a function of the competition in the congressional contests, as well as the voter's party attachments, evaluations of the president, ideological leanings, political expertise, and attitudes toward the parties.

It is important to be clear that this analysis of swing voters posits a particular form of policy balancing on the voter's part. It presumes that voters use their current vote choice to balance against their past selections. For example, someone might vote Republican in 1994 to offset a Democratic vote cast in 1992. A useful analogy for this type of strategic behavior is a person trying to maintain a balanced diet -- if I eat french toast for breakfast, then I might want to have a salad for lunch. Obviously, there are other formulations of policy balancing voting behavior, and these formulations will be tested in subsequent chapters. A failure to find evidence that swing voters are motivated by a desire for moderate policies or divided government does not mean that other types of balancing behavior do not occur.

Results: House Switching in 1994

Table 5.1 presents the results of logistic regression models of swing voters in the 1994 House elections. The first column provides the expected effect (positive or negative) of each independent variable in the model. The next column of results provides the logit coefficient and standard error for each explanatory variable. Since a logit model is based on a nonlinear logistic distribution, the marginal effect of each independent variable is not constant, as in ordinary least squares

'See Appendix C for a more detailed explanation of the variables.
regression. The effect of a single unit change in an independent variable depends on the values of the other variables, and thus logit coefficients do not have a straightforward interpretation. Consequently, I used the logit coefficients in certain models to calculate a change in probability score when varying each independent variable from its minimum to maximum value while holding the other explanatory values constant at their mean values. Also, I did not calculate a probability change score for non-significant predictors in the model. The change score is interpreted as the change in a voter's probability of switching parties given a shift from the lowest to highest value of the independent variable.

In general, the results fail to support the balancing theory of voting, but they support other theories of voting. The three candidate variables are statistically significant and in the predicted direction. The visibility and quality of the candidates were powerful forces accounting for party switching in 1994. This jibes with accounts of the 1994 election that emphasized Republican attempts to field experienced and (more importantly) well-financed candidates for House races. Gary Jacobson (1996) identifies the 1994 campaign as one of only three in the last 40 years where Republican challengers were more experienced, on average, than Democrats. For the first time in the post-World War II era, the number of unopposed Republican House candidates (35) exceeded the number of unopposed Democrats (17). Gimpel (1996) also observes that the Republican advantage in challenger spending was more pronounced in 1994 than in any previous election where spending data are available. Thus, Republicans managed to attract votes from the Democratic camp by fielding more experienced, better-financed candidates in 1994.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Expected Effect</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Prob. Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>-2.63*</td>
<td>-1.91</td>
<td>-2.70*</td>
<td>-1.86</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Party Identification</td>
<td>-0.42 (0.31)</td>
<td>-0.50</td>
<td>-0.47</td>
<td>-0.45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall House Candidate of Same Party</td>
<td>-1.50** (0.49)</td>
<td>-1.28**</td>
<td>-1.40**</td>
<td>-1.43**</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>1.47** (0.48)</td>
<td>1.41**</td>
<td>1.26**</td>
<td>1.43**</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraction of House Spending by Opposition</td>
<td>2.63** (0.67)</td>
<td>2.67**</td>
<td>2.66**</td>
<td>2.52**</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Clinton in Relation to 1992 House Vote</td>
<td>-0.02** (0.007)</td>
<td>-0.02**</td>
<td>-0.02**</td>
<td>-0.02*</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology in Relation to 1992 House Vote</td>
<td>0.61** (0.16)</td>
<td>0.55**</td>
<td>0.58**</td>
<td>0.53**</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer Divided Government</td>
<td>+0.19 (0.21)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Knowledge</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in Politics</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance Between Parties</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.21*</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correctly predicted                       | 86.0%           | 86.6%   | 85.7%   | 87.0%   |         |             |
Reduction of Error*                        | 15.7%           | 21.6%   | 16.9%   | 24.4%   |         |             |
Model Chi-Square                            | 91.9**          | 98.7**  | 96.1**  | 101.2** |         |             |
Number of cases                             | 343             | 351     | 349     | 354     |         |             |

Note: The dependent variable is coded 1 for voters who switch parties in the House contests, 0 for those who stick with the same party in both elections. Cell entries are logit coefficients.

**p < .01 (two-tailed)
*p < .1 (two-tailed)

The reduction of error (ROE) statistic indicates the extent to which the model improves on a null prediction that each observation will fall into the modal category of the dependent variable (Hagle and Mitchell 1992):

ROE = 100 x (% correctly predicted - % in modal category)/(100 - % in model category).

Source: 1992-94 NES Panel Study

Table 5.1
Predictors of Party Switching in Consecutive House Elections, 1992-94

continued on next page
Table 5.1 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Expected Effect</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
<th>Model 7</th>
<th>Prob. Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.46*</td>
<td>-2.91*</td>
<td>-3.44*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Party Identification</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.51*</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.31)</td>
<td>(0.31)</td>
<td>(0.35)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall House Candidate of Same Party</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.46**</td>
<td>-1.43**</td>
<td>-1.30**</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.47)</td>
<td>(0.47)</td>
<td>(0.48)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.32**</td>
<td>1.29**</td>
<td>1.28**</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.47)</td>
<td>(0.46)</td>
<td>(0.48)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraction of House Spending by Opposition</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.60**</td>
<td>2.69**</td>
<td>2.91**</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.66)</td>
<td>(0.66)</td>
<td>(0.69)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Clinton in Relation to 1992 House Vote</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.02**</td>
<td>-0.02**</td>
<td>-0.02*</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology in Relation to 1992 House Vote</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.58**</td>
<td>0.60**</td>
<td>0.63**</td>
<td>.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.15)</td>
<td>(0.15)</td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Moderate</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.37)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fits Balance Profile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.69)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Toward Both Parties</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.018)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Toward Both Parties</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.02*</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correctly predicted                   | 86.2%           | 86.2%   | 87.5%   |
Reduction of Error*                    | 19.8%           | 19.8%   | 26.9%   |
Model Chi-Square                       | 98.0**          | 99.4**  | 106.4** |
Number of cases                        | 354             | 354     | 351     |

Note: The dependent variable is coded 1 for voters who switch parties in the House contests, 0 for those who stick with the same party in both elections. Cell entries are logit coefficients.

**p<.01 (two-tailed)
*p<.1 (two-tailed)

*The reduction of error (ROE) statistic indicates the extent to which the model improves on a null prediction that each observation will fall into the modal category of the dependent variable (Hagle and Mitchell 1992):

\[ ROE = 100 \times \left( \frac{\% \text{ correctly predicted} - \% \text{ in modal category}}{100 - \% \text{ in modal category}} \right) \]

Source: 1992-94 NES Panel Study
In addition, as a result of a large number of retirements, there were more open seats than usual in 1994. Open seat races brought new faces before the voters and induced many past supporters of the retiring incumbent to switch parties. According to the 1992-94 NES Panel Study, roughly 27% of the voters in open seat contests switched parties between the 1992 and 1994 House elections, whereas only 15% of the voters switched sides in incumbent races of 1994 (a statistically significant difference at p<.05). Since most of the 1994 retirees were Democrats, this retirement slump hurt the party as swing voters shifted to the Republican column.

Since three different variables capture the influence of congressional candidates, it is worth exploring their combined effects. Using the logit coefficients in model 7 of Table 5.1, I calculated the predicted probability that a voter would switch parties under two scenarios: one where the opposition fields the stronger candidate and one where the voter's own party fields the stronger candidate (all other variables on the model are held constant at their mean values). As Table 5.2 indicates, in the first scenario, where the opposition candidate is relatively weak and not familiar to the voter, the likelihood of the voter defecting to the opposition is almost zero. In contrast, in the second hypothetical situation where the opposition candidate has a pronounced spending and name recognition advantage, the voter's likelihood of switching to the opposition is 60 percent. We know that House races are often one-sided, and these results demonstrate that the lack of competition causes voters to defect from their past behavior.

---

*The concentration of party switching in open seat races can be attributed entirely to candidate visibility and quality. An open seat variable was included in the multivariate equations in Table 5.1 but its coefficient dropped in magnitude and failed to reach significance after the campaigns spending and name recall measures were included. Since its presence in the model does not alter the other findings, I excluded the open seat variable from the analyses presented in this chapter.*
Table 5.2
Probability of Switching Parties
When Varying the Quality of the Competing House Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recall House Candidate of Same Party</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recall Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraction of House Spending by Opposition</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predicted Probability That Voter Switches Parties</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 indicates that the Clinton evaluation variable is significant and in the expected direction as well. The finding that evaluations of the president influence voting decisions is not new (Abramowitz 1995; Tufte 1978). However, what is unique about these results is that evaluations of the president caused voters to switch parties in the House elections of 1994. This was a boon for Republicans since Clinton was relatively unpopular (even among many Democrats) around election day 1994. Almost 20% of the Democrats in the 1994 NES strongly disapproved of Clinton's performance, while only 6% of the Republicans strongly approved of President Clinton. The result was an erosion of the Democratic voting base in 1994.

The ideology measure is also significant and in the predicted direction, suggesting that voters switched parties in 1994 to join their ideological cohorts. Thus, 1994 continued a trend at the mass level where the composition of the Republican party is becoming more exclusively conservative while the center of gravity in the Democratic party is becoming more liberal. In 1994, the electoral mathematics of this trend added up nicely for Republicans, since conservative Democrats outnumbered liberal Republicans in the electorate by a margin of 2-to-1. Thus, any ideologically motivated switching was sure to benefit Republican candidates. Republican use of the "L" word apparently succeeded in 1994, which probably explains why many candidates used a similar strategy in 1996.
As the balancing theory's proponents argue, ideological preferences can lead citizens to divide their votes between the two parties. However, contrary to the balancing thesis, voters switch parties for more sincere motives. Voters are most likely to switch parties when they discover that their own party no longer shares their ideological preferences and they are actually closer to the opposition party's position on the spectrum.

It is also worth pointing out that strength of partisanship, a robust predictor of split-ticket voting in other studies, is not a significant predictor of House switching in 1994, although the coefficient is in the expected negative direction. Some of the other variables in the model, especially party neutrality and the ideology and presidential evaluation variables, are correlated with strength of partisanship. When these other variables are included in the equation they soak up some of the explanatory power normally attributed to partisanship; strength of partisanship's impact is statistically significant when these variables are excluded from the model. The more important point, however, is that these other factors give a more specific accounting of why strength of partisanship is related to divided voting. For example, independents often hold policy preferences and evaluations of the president that are at odds with their past voting behavior. That is often why independents are more likely to switch parties in the voting booth than strong partisans. When we better specify the characteristics associated with weak party attachments, we account for the relationship between partisanship and voting.

Finally, the balancing theory is not supported by the results in Table 5.1. Rather, the results suggest that voters more readily switch parties when differences between the parties are blurred. For example, we see that voters who prefer divided government or exhibit other characteristics (such as knowledge and interest) associated with the scholarly description of balancing voters are no more likely to switch
parties than other voters. In fact, the coefficients for these variables are negative (and knowledge is close to statistical significance), contrary to what the balancing perspective predicts.

Furthermore, the coefficient for the variable measuring ideological distance between the parties (model 4) is negative and significant, indicating that the closer someone places the parties, the more likely he is to be a swing voter. Thus, contrary to the balancing theory, people are more likely to cross party lines and divide their votes when ideological differences between the parties are blurred or minimized.

The second half of Table 5.1 provides additional tests of the balancing thesis. We see, for example, that ideological moderates are no more likely to switch parties than other voters (model 5). The coefficient for moderates, while positive, is far short of statistical significance. It may be that the attributes of the balancing voter only work in combination — if any piece is missing, then the remaining characteristics will not produce divided votes. Consequently, I created a dichotomous variable for voters who fit the overall profile of a balancing voter (model 6). These are self-described moderates who also display above average levels of political knowledge, efficacy, and interest in the outcome of the election. Only 4% of the voters in the 1992-94 NES panel fit this description. This variable performs better than the other indicators of a balancing motive — its coefficient is positive, as expected, but still falls short of conventional levels of statistical significance. Even if it were significant, because of the small number of voters who fit this profile its effect on swing voting relative to other variables in the model would be minimal.

I included many other indicators of ideological moderation in these models. None of them were significant predictors of party switching. I also tried interacting them with knowledge, to test whether only moderates with high levels of knowledge are likely to switch parties. This approach was not successful either. Defenders of the balancing perspective may argue that indicators of presidential evaluations soak up some of the explanatory power of balancing
Finally, model 7 in Table 5.1 includes feelings toward the parties as determinants of party switching. As expected, those with neutral attitudes toward both parties are most likely to cross party lines when voting. Also, notice that the coefficient for strength of partisanship gets much smaller when neutrality is added to the equation. Independents, as a group, are more noted for apathy, rather than antipathy, toward the two major parties (Wattenberg 1990). Contrary to the balancing thesis, however, voters with negative feelings toward both parties appear less likely than others to switch parties. Thus, neutral (rather than negative) feelings toward both parties increases the likelihood that voters will cross party lines.^{19}

It is worth emphasizing that the effects of the other predictors in the model, measuring competition in the congressional campaign, presidential evaluations, and ideological orientations, are quite robust to the addition and subtraction of the balancing variables. The size of each of these coefficients does not change much from one model to the next. This should increase our confidence in the hypotheses these variables are testing.

Intend. They will find some solace in knowing that, in this case, if the variable measuring evaluations of Clinton is removed from the model, the balancing profile variable achieves statistical significance. I would not make much of this finding, however. Very few voters fit the balancing profile, and the variable's substantive impact on party switching is quite small (a probability change score of .10) compared to other variables in the model. Finally, the balancing profile variable is not significant in other election years.

^{19}Closer inspection of the distribution of the negativity variable also helps explain why this variable does not predict party switching. It turns out that few voters have strong negative feelings toward both parties. As a result, voters with high scores on the negativity variable usually combine extreme negative feelings toward one party with neutral feelings toward the other party.
Swing Voters in the 1974 House Elections

Table 5.3 presents estimates of a logistic regression model of voters who changed parties in the House elections of 1974. Unlike 1994, most of the House switchers moved to Democratic side of the ledger in 1974. Nevertheless, many of the same forces influence swing voters in 1974. The multivariate results in Table 5.3 feature most of the same independent variables as the 1994 results presented above. The first model in Table 5.3 is the closest replication of the 1994 analysis, since it includes the same set of predictors. Because of the unique occurrence of Nixon's resignation and Ford's pardon of Nixon shortly before the 1974 election, a measure of public opinion on the pardon is included in the rest of the 1974 equations.

The 1974 results match the 1994 results in several ways. First, the relative visibility and quality of the House candidates (as measured by the three candidate variables) are important factors which cause voters to switch parties. And judging by the probability change scores in the final column of Table 5.3, the relative impact of the candidacy factors is stronger than most of the other variables in the equation. In some cases, voters simply have no good reason to support their party's candidate in House elections. And with over 50 open seat contests in 1974, many House races featured new candidates, where name recognition and campaign spending are especially important (Jacobson 1992).

The candidate side of the equation hurt Republican chances in 1974. Watergate and an economic recession clearly scared away potential Republican challengers -- average spending by Democratic challengers was over three times higher than average spending by Republican challengers in 1974, the greatest imbalance since campaign finance data have been available (Jacobson 1992). As Jacobson and Kernell (1983) have argued, adverse macropolitical conditions produced a weaker pool of Republican
House candidates in 1974, which in turn influenced voters decisions. Consequently, many districts which featured strong Republican candidates running on Nixon's coattails in 1972 hosted weaker Republican candidates in 1974. By the same token, an unusually large number of experienced Democratic candidates took advantage of the national condition to challenge Republican incumbents in 1974 (Jacobson and Kernell 1983). Thus, some districts featured strong Democratic candidates in 1974 where none ran in 1972.

Table 5.3 also demonstrates that opinion toward President Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon had a strong influence on swing voters in 1974. Previous research offers mixed evidence on the effect of Watergate on vote choice in the 1974 election. Some find that Ford's pardon of Nixon only had a weak or indirect effect on voting decisions (Jacobson and Kernell 1983; McLeod et al. 1977), while others find a stronger direct effect (Fiorina 1981; Uslaner and Conway 1985). The results here go beyond previous findings to suggest that reaction to the pardon caused voters to switch parties, even after controlling for candidate quality and other factors. The role of Watergate is important here because generic evaluations of Nixon and Ford are not significant predictors of swing voting after opinion on the pardon is included in the model. Over 60% of the voters, and almost half of those who voted Republican in 1972, opposed the pardon. Consequently, the hemorrhaging of Republican support in 1974 can be partly attributed to voter reaction to Watergate and the pardon in particular.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{11}}\text{When opinion toward the pardon is included in the equation, evaluations of Nixon and Ford are not statistically significant predictors of swing voting in 1974. It appears that Watergate was an important component of voter evaluations of both figures.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{12}}\text{Uslaner and Conway (1985) did examine the partisan choice of voters who switched parties between 1972 and 1974, but they did not examine what distinguished the switchers from the standpatters.}\]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Expected Effect</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Prob. Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>-2.12**</td>
<td>-2.46**</td>
<td>-3.09**</td>
<td>-2.91**</td>
<td>-2.27**</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Party Identification</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.83**</td>
<td>-0.82**</td>
<td>-0.81**</td>
<td>-0.71**</td>
<td>-0.83**</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.20)</td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
<td>(0.22)</td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall House Candidate of Same Party</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-1.48**</td>
<td>-1.49**</td>
<td>-1.53**</td>
<td>-1.48**</td>
<td>-1.58**</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.32)</td>
<td>(0.33)</td>
<td>(0.33)</td>
<td>(0.33)</td>
<td>(0.33)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>1.88**</td>
<td>1.87**</td>
<td>1.86**</td>
<td>1.88**</td>
<td>1.89**</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.32)</td>
<td>(0.32)</td>
<td>(0.32)</td>
<td>(0.32)</td>
<td>(0.32)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraction of House Spending by Opposition</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>1.08*</td>
<td>1.33**</td>
<td>1.34**</td>
<td>1.36**</td>
<td>1.24**</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.45)</td>
<td>(0.46)</td>
<td>(0.47)</td>
<td>(0.47)</td>
<td>(0.47)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Nixon in Relation to 1972 House Vote</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.012**</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion of Ford Pardon in Relation to 1972 House Vote</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>0.91**</td>
<td>0.94**</td>
<td>0.87**</td>
<td>0.89**</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.28)</td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
<td>(0.28)</td>
<td>(0.28)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology in Relation to 1972 House Vote</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.36**</td>
<td>0.36**</td>
<td>0.35**</td>
<td>0.36**</td>
<td>0.34**</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance Between Parties</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in Politics</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Toward Both Parties</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Moderate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>0.59*</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.27)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correctly predicted                          | 83.0%           | 83.1%         | 83.4%         | 83.8%         | 82.6%         |              |              |
Reduction of Error*                          | 14.7%           | 15.1%         | 16.6%         | 19.0%         | 12.6%         |              |              |
Model Chi-Square                             | 125.3**         | 131.7**       | 132.7**       | 132.5**       | 135.4**       |              |              |
Number of cases                              | 594             | 573           | 572           | 569           | 573           |              |              |

Note: The dependent variable is coded 1 for voters who switch parties in the House contests, 0 for those who stick with the same party in both elections. Cell entries are logit coefficients.

**p < .01 (two-tailed)
*p < .1 (two-tailed)

The reduction of error (ROE) statistic indicates the extent to which the model improves on a modal prediction for each observation (Hagle and Mitchell 1992):

ROE = 100 x (% correctly predicted - % in modal category)/(100 - % in model category).

Source: NES 1972-76 Panel Study

Table 5.3
Predictors of Party Switching in Consecutive House Elections, 1972-74

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More generally, unfavorable national conditions impose a double whammy on the president's party in congressional elections. Anticipating voter reactions, qualified candidates from the president's party refrain from running while the opposition party is bursting at the seams with experienced challengers. Then, those candidate's from the president's party who do choose to run for Congress are punished by voters because of poor government performance.

Even though ideological differences between the parties were not as clear in the 1970s as they are today, some definition was already visible, as a result of the McGovern and Goldwater campaigns and the election of more liberal Democrats to Congress in the 1960s (Aldrich 1995). Table 5.3 also shows that ideological preferences led some voters to switch parties in 1974. Conservative Democrats were most likely to switch to the Republican party, while liberal Republicans were most likely to move to the Democratic side. This ideological movement actually helped the Republicans, because almost 30% of the Democrats in 1974 identified themselves as conservatives, while only 16% of the Republicans embraced the liberal label. If not for conservative movement into the Republican column, the party may have suffered more extensive losses in 1974.

One major difference between the 1994 and 1974 results involves the role of party identification. The coefficient for strength of partisanship is negative, statistically significant, and robust to different model specifications in 1974. In contrast, the effect of strength of partisanship on party switching does not reach significance in 1994 or 1992 (as we will see below). These differences occur despite the fact that the number of Independent voters has not changed much since the early 1970s (34% of the voters were classified as Independents in 1994 versus 36% in 1974). Part of the explanation is that party identification is more strongly correlated with presidential approval.
and ideological self-placement in the 1990s than was the case in 1974. As a result, other forces soak up some of the effect usually attributed to partisanship. However, the increasing convergence between party identification and other political attitudes cannot alone explain the weak effect of partisanship on party switching in the 1990s. The simple bivariate correlation between strength of partisanship and party switching is stronger in 1974 (r=-.17, p<.1) than in 1994 (r=-.10, not significant). Thus, the results here support previous efforts to document the declining effect of party on vote choice in House elections (Wattenberg 1991; Fiorina 1996; Dimock 1997).

Finally, there is little evidence that voters switched parties in 1974 to express a preference for checks and balances in government. As in the 1994 case, I used several variables to test the balancing thesis. The first model in Table 5.3 includes a measure of the ideological distance between the two parties, and it adds no explanatory power to the model. It may be that this variable had little effect since public perceptions of party differences were more muddled in 1974: the mean distance between the parties on this 6-point scale was more than one unit smaller in 1974 than in 1994. In any case, voters who saw greater party polarization were no more likely to switch parties than other voters in 1974.

The second model in Table 5.3 indicates that interest in politics had little to do with switching parties in 1974. Although the coefficient for interest is positive, as the balancing proponents would expect, it does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance. Although not in the table, when the model included a

---

1 The following table shows the correlations between strength of party identification and other variables in 1994 and 1974.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlation Between Partisanship and:</th>
<th>1974</th>
<th>1994</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thermometer Rating of President</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Self-Placement</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
dichotomous indicator of voters who exhibit all four characteristics of a balancing citizen, it was not statistically significant.

The third model of Table 5.3 includes the party neutrality measure. As in 1994, its coefficient is positive (although it falls just short of statistical significance), suggesting that people who do not have strong feelings about either party are the most likely to cross party lines when they vote. The inclusion of party neutrality also weakens the effect of partisanship, as in 1994. This provides further evidence chipping away at a balancing perspective which posits that people who divide their votes have well-formed negative attitudes toward both parties.

Thus far, I have demonstrated that swing voters were influenced by the same forces in the Democratic landslide of 1974 and the Republican rout of 1994. The visibility and quality of the congressional candidates, evaluations of the president, ideological preferences, and the strength of one's cognitive and affective attachments to political parties are the forces that lead voters to switch parties. It is impressive that these same generic factors can account for large Democratic gains in one election and large Republican gains in another election. But do these same forces come into play in on-year congressional elections, and do they work in the same way in cases where the outcome is not so dramatic or one-sided? The next section tries to answer this question by examining House races in 1992.

The party negativity measure is excluded in 1974 because it is highly correlated with neutrality. So few voters exhibited strong negative feelings toward both parties in 1974 that the negativity variable was actually a proxy for negative assessments of either party. Thus, those who scored highest on the negativity variable only disliked one party, not what the variable was meant to measure.

One may argue that by combining Democratic and Republican voters in the these analyses, I have hidden the partisan tides (the direction of the swing) in both elections. In fact, the independent variables in these analyses help account for the partisan tides of 1974 and 1994. When the logit equations are limited just to those who could have switched parties in the direction of the national tide, the same independent variables are significant predictors of party switching.
Swing Voters in the 1992 House Elections

The 1992 House elections produced relatively minor changes in the party composition of Congress, with the Republicans gaining 9 House seats and the Democrats gaining 2 seats in the Senate. Bill Clinton's victory in the presidential contest was shallow in the sense that it did not coincide with significant Democratic gains in congressional or state races. Nevertheless, the small net shift in seats masked a great deal of turnover in Congress. Party control changed in 49 House seats in 1992, well above the post-World War II average of 32. As chapter 3 showed, many voters switched parties in House elections between 1990 and 1992. However, the movement of swing voters was not as one-sided as in 1994 or 1974 (indeed, Republican and Democratic gains among swing voters offset each other in 1992). Even though the 1992 election differed from the 1974 and 1994 cases in many respects, swing voters responded to the same set of forces in 1992.

Table 5.4 provides the results of several logit models of House switchers in the 1992 elections. Once again, the quality of the House candidates proves to be an important predictor of party switching. Redistricting, the House bank and post office scandals, and a burgeoning anti-government mood produced a record number of retirements from the House in 1992. These conditions encouraged many new candidates from both parties to run for the House in 1992 -- only 25 incumbents ran unopposed in the 1992 general election, a steep drop from the 76 unchallenged incumbents in 1990 (Herrnson 1995). Although the data are not presented here, in 1992 (as in 1994 and 1974) the swing vote was more concentrated in open seat races in 1992. Republican and Democratic challengers and open seat candidates in 1992 were roughly evenly matched in terms of political experience and campaign spending (Herrnson 1995). Thus, while an important predictor of swing voting, candidate quality did not cause swing voters to favor one party over the other.
In addition, attitudes toward the two presidential candidates led voters to switch parties in the 1992 House elections. Although presidential coattails have become weaker over time (Ferejohn and Calvert 1984), they still influence voters in House elections. Republicans lost support from previous supporters who gave President Bush poor marks for his performance, while Democratic candidates lost support from voters who cast an unfavorable eye on Bill Clinton.

On balance, this effect helped Democratic candidates somewhat in 1992. Although public evaluations of Bush and Clinton in 1992 were not very different, on average, Clinton was viewed more positively. Voter dissatisfaction with President Bush’s handling of the economy more than offset misgivings about Clinton’s character. House candidates anticipated (or feared) this coattail effect in 1992. Republican congressional candidates went to great lengths to distance themselves from President Bush, by staying away from the party’s national convention and by not inviting the president to visit their districts. In contrast, many congressional Democrats welcomed campaign support from Bill Clinton (Hershey 1993).

The effect of evaluations of Bill Clinton on party switching deserves special mention because he had not previously held national office. Evaluations of President Bush can be interpreted as a referendum on his performance in the White House, much like the way presidential performance affected swing voters in 1994 and 1974. However, most voters were unaware of Clinton’s past achievements in Arkansas. Either Clinton’s influence can be attributed to a pure "guilt by association" coattail effect, or attitudes toward Clinton serve as a surrogate for other policy preferences that affected voting decisions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Expected Effect</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Prob. Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>-1.05</td>
<td>-1.14</td>
<td>-1.29</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Party Identification</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td></td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall House Candidate of Same Party</td>
<td>-1.02**</td>
<td>-0.95**</td>
<td>-1.07**</td>
<td>-1.04**</td>
<td></td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>+ 1.12**</td>
<td>1.04**</td>
<td>1.07**</td>
<td>1.21**</td>
<td></td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraction of House Spending by Opposition</td>
<td>+ 2.15**</td>
<td>2.29**</td>
<td>2.14**</td>
<td>2.20**</td>
<td></td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Bush in Relation to 1990 House Vote</td>
<td>+ 0.014*</td>
<td>0.013*</td>
<td>0.014*</td>
<td>0.013*</td>
<td></td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Clinton in Relation to 1990 House Vote</td>
<td>-0.02**</td>
<td>-0.02**</td>
<td>-0.02**</td>
<td>-0.02**</td>
<td></td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology in Relation to 1990 House Vote</td>
<td>+ 0.13</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td></td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance Between Parties</td>
<td>+/- -0.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer Divided Government</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Knowledge</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in Politics</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.43*</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Correctly predicted                     | 82.8%           | 83.1%    | 82.6%    | 84.4%    |          |              |
| Reduction of Error*                    | 18.1%           | 20.3%    | 17.1%    | 25.7%    |          |              |
| Model Chi-Square                       | 111.0**         | 109.7**  | 111.3**  | 114.7**  |          |              |
| Number of cases                        | 443             | 433      | 443      | 442      |          |              |

Note: The dependent variable is coded 1 for voters who switch parties in the House contests, 0 for those who stick with the same party in both elections. Cell entries are logit coefficients.

**p < .01 (two-tailed)
*p < .1 (two-tailed)

The reduction of error (ROE) statistic indicates the extent to which the model improves on a null prediction that each observation will fall into the modal category of the dependent variable (Hagle and Mitchell 1992):

\[ \text{ROE} = 100 \times \left( \frac{\% \text{ correctly predicted} - \% \text{ in modal category}}{100 - \% \text{ in modal category}} \right) \]

Source: 1990-92 NES Panel Study

continued on next page

Table 5.4
Predictors of Party Switching in Consecutive House Elections, 1990-92

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Table 5.4 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Expected Effect</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
<th>Model 7</th>
<th>Prob. Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>-1.12</td>
<td>-1.23</td>
<td>-0.83</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Party Identification</td>
<td>-0.28 (0.25)</td>
<td>-0.24 (0.25)</td>
<td>-0.31 (0.28)</td>
<td>----</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall House Candidate of Same Party</td>
<td>-1.02** (0.36)</td>
<td>-1.04** (0.36)</td>
<td>-1.08** (0.36)</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>1.07** (0.38)</td>
<td>1.02** (0.38)</td>
<td>1.18** (0.38)</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraction of House Spending by Opposition</td>
<td>2.18** (0.48)</td>
<td>2.26** (0.49)</td>
<td>2.23** (0.48)</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Bush in Relation to 1990 House Vote</td>
<td>0.014* (0.006)</td>
<td>0.014* (0.006)</td>
<td>0.013* (0.006)</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Clinton in Relation to 1990 House Vote</td>
<td>-0.02** (0.006)</td>
<td>-0.02** (0.006)</td>
<td>-0.02** (0.006)</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology in Relation to 1990 House Vote</td>
<td>0.12 (0.12)</td>
<td>0.13 (0.12)</td>
<td>0.13 (0.12)</td>
<td>----</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Moderate</td>
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<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fits Balance Profile</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>0.68 (0.49)</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Toward Both Parties</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>-0.02* (0.01)</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Toward Both Parties</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>0.01 (0.006)</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correctly predicted | 83.8% | 83.5% | 83.5% |
Reduction of Error* | 22.9% | 21.4% | 21.4% |
Model Chi-Square | 111.5** | 112.8** | 114.6** |
Number of cases | 443 | 443 | 442 |

Note: The dependent variable is coded 1 for voters who switch parties in the House contests, 0 for those who stick with the same party in both elections. Cell entries are logit coefficients. **p<.01 (two-tailed) *p<.1 (two-tailed) *The reduction of error (ROE) statistic indicates the extent to which the model improves on a null prediction that each observation will fall into the modal category of the dependent variable (Hagle and Mitchell 1992): ROE = 100 x (% correctly predicted - % in modal category)/(100 - % in model category).

Source: 1990-92 NES Panel Study

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Notice that the ideology variable in Table 5.4 has the expected positive sign but does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance. It is likely that the effects of ideology are partly captured by evaluations of the two presidential candidates. The coefficient for the ideology variable is larger and statistically significant if one of the presidential candidate variables is removed from the equation. Like other recent presidential elections, the 1992 contest was about competing ideological viewpoints. For example, President Bush often labelled candidate Clinton as a "liberal" politician. Similarly, the Clinton campaign supported the interests of several groups associated with liberal causes, while Bush took positions that appealed to groups on the right. However, ideological polarization in the electorate was not as strong in 1992 as in earlier elections (Weisberg et al. 1995). This may also account for the weak impact of ideology on House voting in 1992, especially compared to 1994 when Republican leaders tried to nationalize the elections by emphasizing several ideologically-charged issues.

As in 1994, strength of partisanship is not a significant predictor of swing voters, although its coefficient has the expected negative sign. Voters at all levels of partisanship switch parties. Strength of partisanship is a somewhat crude indicator of the specific factors (policy preferences and presidential evaluations) which lead people to switch.

Table 5.4 also shows that, once again, we find little support for the balancing theory of voting. Few of the variables testing the balancing perspective reach statistical significance, and those that do work in the opposite direction. For example, interest in politics is related to House switching, but it is the least interested who are most likely to switch parties (model 4). Similarly, party negativity is related to switching parties (model 7), but it turns out that voters who like both parties are most likely to cross party lines to support
candidates from both sides. These findings contradict the balancing portrait of divided voters as highly interested citizens who no longer trust either party.

There is a sliver of hope for the balancing perspective in model 6, which includes a dichotomous measure combining all four qualities of a prototypical balancing voter. The coefficient for the balancing profile variable is positive, as expected and as in 1994, but it falls short of statistical significance. The fact that so few voters (about 4% in the 1992 sample) fit this profile also suggests that the balancing motive may mean something for only a small number of voters.

In summary, evidence from three different congressional elections (a Democratic landslide, a Republican landslide, and one with minimal partisan swing) all point to the same forces which lead voters to switch parties. First, the public exposure and quality of the House candidates are critical. The results here demonstrate that House candidates and their campaigns can do a lot to attract voters from the opposite party. Second, the performance of the president is important. Voters from the president’s party will not hesitate to desert the party when the president’s performance is subpar. In addition, some congressional voters will switch parties when captivated by the opposition’s presidential candidate. Presidential coattails are still visible, even if they have gotten shorter over the years. Third, voters switch parties when their own policy preferences are found to be closer to the platform of the opposite party. Issues matter, but voters appear to follow sincere rather than sophisticated decision rules to translate their policy preferences into votes. The robust effects of these three forces in three different elections is impressive. The findings here support a long scholarly literature that candidates, government performance, and policy preferences inform voting decisions.
The final section of this chapter examines the role of political information in determining the route a voter takes in switching parties. Switching parties on election day, after all, is a form of behavioral change and must result from some type of political persuasion. As the previous sections highlight, candidate quality, presidential performance, and policy positions are three separate persuasive factors that can induce voters to change sides. In addition, the strength of one's party identification serves as a cue in the voting booth, thereby shaping the extent to which a voter remains loyal to the same party. However, it is likely that certain voters respond more strongly to some of these factors than others, based on their level of political knowledge.

Knowledge about politics serves as a reliable indicator of one's attentiveness and exposure to politics (Zaller 1992). Voters with low levels of political knowledge may be able to recognize the more visible congressional candidates without knowing much about the content of their campaign messages, which usually focus on particular policy positions or the president's performance, or both. For example, it requires some level of knowledge for a voter to realize that the opposition party's policy proposals are actually more to his liking. As a result, ideological preferences should be a stronger predictor of party switching among voters with high levels of political information (for example, see Jacoby 1991; Knight 1985; Converse 1964). It also requires some knowledge to link the president's performance to congressional candidates from the same party. Thus, I expect a stronger association between party switching and presidential performance among the most knowledgeable voters. This means that voters with less information are left to make up their minds based more on the simple visibility of the candidates and the strength of their own party attachments.
Consequently, candidate visibility and strength of partisanship should be stronger predictors of party switching among the least knowledgeable voters.

These expectations are consistent with a large body of work in social psychology on persuasion and attitude change. After all, election campaigns are an exercise in political persuasion. The behavioral change of voting for a different party than in the past is the result of some underlying attitude change. Social psychologists Richard Petty and John Cacioppo (1981) identify two different routes to attitude change. The "central route" emphasizes the content of the persuasive messages and the actual information a person has to make sense of the message. The voter tries to understand the arguments in a message, evaluate them, and integrate this information into a reasoned judgement. Put differently, under the central route to persuasion "thinking about issue-relevant information is the most direct determinant of the direction and amount of attitude change produced" (Petty and Cacioppo 1981, 256). The most prominent issue-relevant information in congressional campaigns is presidential performance and policy positions.

In contrast to the central route, the "peripheral" route to persuasion emphasizes decision-making shortcuts which produce attitude change "without any active thinking about the attributes of the issue or the object under consideration" (Petty and Cacioppo 1981, 256). While the central route involves a systematic information processing strategy that requires considerable cognitive effort, the peripheral route requires little cognitive effort. In the voting booth, the two most common decision shortcuts are party loyalty and candidate familiarity.

In an election context, the more systematic consideration of ideological preferences and presidential performance demands substantial political knowledge, while relying on the peripheral cues of party affiliation and name recognition requires little at all. Thus,
ideological preferences and evaluations of the president should have a stronger effect on voters with high levels of knowledge, while strength of partisanship and candidate visibility should have a stronger effect of voters with low levels of information.

I test these expectations in each of the three elections studied in this chapter by using a measure of political knowledge to divide the sample in half. In the 1992 and 1994 elections, I combine several NES questions about factual information into a political knowledge scale. In 1974, I use the interviewer's evaluation of the respondent's level of knowledge. Voters above the median level of knowledge are placed in the "high knowledge" group while those below the median fall in the "low knowledge" category. Then I ran a logit model of House switching for each group. Partitioning the sample of voters into smaller subgroups reduces the number of observations in any analysis, so the logit model was limited to four major variables from the earlier analyses (strength of partisanship, campaign spending, presidential evaluations, and ideological self-placement).

The results of these equations are presented in Table 5.5, and they show that political knowledge has an intervening effect on the factors which lead voters to switch parties. Ideological considerations only come into play for the most knowledgeable voters. The coefficient for ideology is positive and significant in each year only for the high knowledge group. Voters with low levels of information do not appear to switch parties because of ideological considerations (as measured on a liberal-conservative dimension). Also notice that the constant term is much larger and negative for the more politically aware half of each.

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I also tried dividing the knowledge scale into thirds to produce more discriminating categories of high and low knowledge. This approach produced results similar to those presented in Table 5.5.
sample. This supports the hypothesis that the most knowledgeable voters are more likely to remain loyal to the same party.  

| Variable                        | Low Knowledge | High Knowledge | Low Knowledge | High Knowledge | Low Knowledge | High Knowledge | Low Knowledge | High Knowledge | Low Knowledge | High Knowledge |
|---------------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
|                                 |               |                |               |                |               |                |               |                |               |                |                |
| Constant                        | -1.02         | -7.21**        | -2.47*        | -4.04**        | -1.96*        | -3.13**        |               |                |               |                |                |
|                                 | (1.45)        | (2.07)         | (1.04)        | (1.13)         | (0.96)        | (0.89)         |               |                |               |                |                |
| Strength of Party Identification| -1.03**       | 0.50           | -0.40         | -0.21          | -0.96**       | -0.62*         |               |                |               |                |                |
|                                 | (0.40)        | (0.52)         | (0.33)        | (0.34)         | (0.30)        | (0.26)         |               |                |               |                |                |
| Fraction of House Spending by Opposition | 4.24**        | 3.88**         | 3.94**        | 1.78**         | 2.59**        | 2.01**         |               |                |               |                |                |
|                                 | (0.89)        | (0.99)         | (0.59)        | (0.64)         | (0.63)        | (0.51)         |               |                |               |                |                |
| Presidential Evaluation in Relation to Past House Vote | -0.01        | -0.020*        | 0.014*        | 0.032**        | 0.022**       | 0.008*         |               |                |               |                |                |
|                                 | (0.009)       | (0.010)        | (0.008)       | (0.010)        | (0.006)       | (0.005)        |               |                |               |                |                |
| Ideology in Relation to Past House Vote | 0.20        | 0.95**         | -0.003        | 0.31*          | 0.12          | 0.47**         |               |                |               |                |                |
|                                 | (0.19)        | (0.25)         | (0.16)        | (0.17)         | (0.14)        | (0.13)         |               |                |               |                |                |
| Model Chi-Square                | 47.0**        | 48.1**         | 60.3**        | 33.9**         | 47.6**        | 41.0**         |               |                |               |                |                |
| Number of cases                 | 155           | 196            | 254           | 191            | 257           | 337            |               |                |               |                |                |

Note: The dependent variable is coded 1 for voters who switch parties in the House contests, 0 for those who stick with the same party in both elections. Cell entries are logit coefficients (standard errors in parentheses).

**p < .01 (two-tailed)
*p < .1 (two-tailed)

Source: 1992-94 NES Panel Study
1990-92 NES Panel Study
1972-76 NES Panel Study

Table 5.5
Levels of Information and Party Switching in Consecutive House Elections

17Zaller (1992) argues that people with moderate (rather than low or high) levels of knowledge are most susceptible to political persuasion. To test this idea, I folded the political knowledge scale at the median and included the folded measure in the analyses in chapters 5 through 7. However, it did not yield a significant parameter estimate. I have excluded this measure from the tables presented here since it did not affect the other estimates.
Except in 1974, presidential evaluations have a stronger effect on party switching for high knowledge voters as well. In 1994 and 1992, the coefficient for presidential evaluations is larger for the high knowledge group. Although the coefficient has the expected sign for the low knowledge group in both years, its magnitude is smaller, and it does not reach statistical levels of significance in 1994. The 1974 election may have been unusual in that Watergate received so much coverage, and Republican candidates for Congress were forced to defend or condemn President Nixon, that all voters were able to base their voting decisions on Nixon's performance.

Somewhat contrary to my expectations, the campaign spending measure is positive and strongly significant in all cases. Candidate quality is extremely important in congressional elections because all voters (regardless of cognitive capacities) are influenced by the relative vigor of the opposition party's House campaign. Judging by the size of the coefficients, however, candidate quality has a somewhat stronger effect on voters with low levels of information.

Finally, the results in Table 5.5 suggest that partisan attachments have the greatest effect in maintaining the loyalty of voters with low levels of political knowledge. In each of the three elections, the coefficient for strength of partisanship is larger for the low knowledge portion of the sample. In sum, these results partially support the hypothesis that voters with little political knowledge rely more on partisanship and candidate familiarity to make voting decisions. In contrast, politically informed voters are more...

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18The sign of the logit coefficient for the presidential evaluation measure varies from year to year because the party of the president varies. When there is a Democratic president (as in 1994), the sign should be negative. When the president is Republican (as in 1974 and 1992), the sign should be positive.

19On the other hand, since campaign spending helps candidates present a message to the voters, it may not be surprising that spending is a significant predictor of voting for highly informed voters.
likely to move beyond party affiliation and candidate quality to consider policy positions and presidential performance when making voting decisions.

Conclusion

Few scholars have explored why some voters switch parties over time. This chapter demonstrates that four factors influence the likelihood that a voter will switch parties in House elections: the quality of the candidates, evaluations of the president, ideological preferences, and strength of partisanship. The quality of the candidates stands out as an important determinant since it affects the voting decisions of voters with high and low levels of information. Presidential evaluations influence both groups as well, but seem to carry more weight for those with high levels of political knowledge. In contrast, ideological considerations only lead the most knowledgeable voters to switch parties, while strong party attachments only help prevent the less knowledgeable from switching parties. Furthermore, the impact of party attachments on voting behavior has declined in recent elections.

The findings here also suggest that people do not switch parties to reveal an underlying desire for moderate policies or divided government. However, this is not the only way to test the policy balancing perspective. It may be that voters instead try to strike a balance between Congress and the president by voting for congressional candidates who will serve as a check on the president. This hypothesis is examined in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 6
ANOTHER LOOK AT SWING VOTERS IN MIDTERM ELECTIONS

Introduction

The previous chapter showed that voters switch parties in House elections because of the relative visibility and financial backing of the congressional candidates, ideological preferences, and the president's performance. In addition, voters who blur or minimize the differences between the parties (rather than moderates and those who perceive extreme differences between the parties) are most likely to switch parties. Thus, there is little evidence that a desire for ideological moderation (as some balancing theories predict) leads many voters to switch parties in House elections.

However, it is possible that ideological moderates are more concerned about using their votes to balance control of Congress against the party of the president. Thus, moderate midterm voters may deliberately select a House candidate from a different party than the presidential candidate they supported in the previous national election. This chapter tests this proposition by examining split-term voters (those who select a president of one party but then vote for a House candidate of the opposite party in the following midterm election). Whereas the previous chapter examined midterm vote choice in relation to past House voting, this chapter examines midterm voting as compared to past presidential voting behavior. It is more common for midterm voters to deviate from past presidential voting than past House voting. Given
that divided government often occurs after midterm elections (especially in the last 40 years), studying split-term voting should help us gain a better understanding of the causes of divided government.

This chapter tests the party balancing thesis in midterm elections in two ways. (1) Voters may use the midterm to balance against one's past voting behavior. Someone who prefers moderate government policies may vote for different parties in presidential and midterm elections. A food analogy for this behavior would be ordering a salad for lunch after eating french toast for breakfast in order to maintain a balance between food that tastes good (but isn't very good for you) and food that is good for you (but doesn't necessarily taste good). (2) Alternatively, voters may use the midterm to balance against the status quo, the party of the sitting president. That is, midterm voters may consciously vote against the president's party in order to bring government policy back toward the middle of the ideological spectrum (Alesina and Rosenthal 1995). A food analogy for this type of behavior might be ordering an inexpensive meal to balance against the prime rib and lobster your partner orders when you are responsible for paying the bill.

As chapter 3 shows, divided government often occurs after midterm elections because many midterm congressional voters select a party different from the presidential candidate they selected two years earlier. This was especially evident in 1994 and 1974, the two most recent midterm elections that produced the greatest changes in Congress. According to surveys conducted by the National Election Studies, roughly 46% of voters who chose Nixon in 1972 voted for Democratic House candidates in 1974. Similarly, approximately 24% of the Clinton voters in 1992 chose a Republican House candidate in 1994. This chapter examines why so many voters switch parties in this manner.

The findings below suggest that split-term voters are moved by the same forces that cause citizens to switch parties in House elections: that is, the quality of the House candidates, evaluations of the
president, as well as voters' strength of partisanship and ideological predispositions. Furthermore, even though split-term voters help produce divided government, there is little evidence that a preference for divided government or moderate policies leads to split-term voting. Finally, the chapter concludes with evidence suggesting that midterm voters who vote against the president's party are not motivated by a desire for middle-of-the-road policies.

A Multivariate Analysis of Split-Term Voting

In trying to identify split-term voters in midterm congressional elections, I call upon many of the same explanatory variables used to predict party switching in chapter 5. Like many other observers of voting behavior, I expect that Independents and weak partisans are more likely to vote for presidential and House candidates of different parties. Thus, I include a measure of the strength of one's partisanship (coded 1 for pure independents, 2 for leaners and weak partisans, and 3 for strong partisans).

As in previous chapters, I include three measures to assess the impact of candidate visibility and quality on midterm voters. One dichotomous variable measures whether the voter correctly recalls the name of the candidate from the party the voter supported in the previous presidential election, and another dichotomous variable indicates whether the voter recalls the name of the opposition party candidate. The former measure should be negatively associated with split-term voting, while the latter variable should have a positive effect on split-term voting. A third independent variable measures the fraction of campaign money spent in the midterm House election by the opposition party candidate, and this variable should be positively associated with split-term voting. When the opposition party candidate spends more
money on the House campaign, a voter should become more familiar with the candidate and more likely to switch parties.

I also include measures of the voter's evaluation of President Clinton and ideological self-placement in relation to his vote in the previous presidential election. These measures are coded in a manner similar to that used in chapter 5. For example, Clinton voters who dislike the president and Bush voters who like Clinton are placed at the same end of the presidential evaluation scale. Similarly, conservative Clinton voters and liberal Bush voters are both at the upper end of the ideology scale, since both types should be most likely to switch parties in the 1994 midterm. Appendix C contains a more detailed description of the coding of each variable.

Finally, several variables are included in different models to test the balancing theory of presidential and House voting. As in chapter 5, these include measures of one's preference for divided government, interest in politics, political knowledge, ideological placement of the parties, and affect toward both political parties. Additional dichotomous predictors are used to indicate ideological moderates and those voters who possess all four qualities that might be expected from a balancing voter (moderate ideological leaning, high interest in politics, high political knowledge, and high sense of political efficacy). The rest of the chapter puts these predictors to use in examining voting in the 1994 and 1974 House election.

Split-Term Voting in 1994

Table 6.1 provides the results of multivariate analyses of split-term voting in the 1992-94 presidential-midterm election cycle. The dependent variable is coded 1 for voters who choose a midterm House candidate from the party opposite their previous presidential selection (the "split-term" voters), and 0 for those who support the same party in
both elections. Because of the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable, I use logistic regression to estimate the impact of the explanatory variables. As in previous chapters, I estimate several different models to produce different tests of the party balancing hypothesis, which is discussed below.

Not surprisingly, the results show that strength of partisanship is a reliable predictor of split-term voting in 1994. Independents are more likely than strong partisans to switch parties. In addition, the results demonstrate the strong influence of candidate visibility in House elections. The two candidate recall measures carry logit coefficients that are statistically significant with the appropriate signs. Voters are more likely to switch parties when they can recall the name of the opposition party candidate, and they are less likely to switch when they can recall the candidate from their own party. Furthermore, campaign spending has a powerful effect on split-term voting -- based on the change in probability scores in the last column, campaign spending appears to have the strongest impact of any explanatory variable. Voters are much more likely to switch parties when the opposition candidate absorbs a large share of the overall campaign spending.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{1}}\text{Although the two name recall variables have similarly sized coefficients, it is possible that knowledge of the opposition party candidate signals weakness in the candidate from one's own party. A voter may first decide whether she likes the candidate from her own party, and only consider the opposition if her party's offering leaves something to be desired. In other words, party loyalty is conditional (see chapter 3).}\]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Expected Effect</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Prob. Change</th>
</tr>
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<td>-2.01</td>
<td>-1.70</td>
<td>-1.38</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.38)</td>
<td>(1.39)</td>
<td>(1.27)</td>
<td>(1.34)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-0.89**</td>
<td>-0.85**</td>
<td>-0.90**</td>
<td>-.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.31)</td>
<td>(0.31)</td>
<td>(0.30)</td>
<td>(0.31)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall House Candidate of Same Party</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-1.20**</td>
<td>-1.22**</td>
<td>-1.21**</td>
<td>-0.99*</td>
<td>-.12</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.45)</td>
<td>(0.43)</td>
<td>(0.44)</td>
<td>(0.45)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>1.20**</td>
<td>1.09*</td>
<td>1.20**</td>
<td>1.20**</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.44)</td>
<td>(0.43)</td>
<td>(0.44)</td>
<td>(0.44)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraction of House Spending by Opposition</td>
<td>+</td>
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<td>3.57**</td>
<td>3.58**</td>
<td>3.87**</td>
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<td>(0.66)</td>
<td>(0.66)</td>
<td>(0.69)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Clinton in Relation to 1992 Vote</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.013*</td>
<td>-0.013*</td>
<td>-0.012*</td>
<td>-0.012*</td>
<td>-.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ideology in Relation to 1992 Vote</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.46**</td>
<td>0.46**</td>
<td>0.44**</td>
<td>0.41*</td>
<td>.30</td>
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<td>(0.16)</td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prefer Divided Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest in Politics</td>
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<td>---</td>
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<td>(0.27)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distance Between Parties</td>
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<td>Political Knowledge</td>
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</table>

Correctly predicted
Reduction of error*
Model Chi-Square
Number of cases
86.5%  86.7%  86.7%  86.0%
40.0%  42.2%  41.2%  37.8%
125.1** 132.3** 132.6** 133.5**
333 339 345 342

Note: The dependent variable is coded 1 for voters who select a midterm House candidate from the party opposite their previous presidential selection, and 0 for those who support the same party in both elections. Cell entries are logit coefficients (standard errors are in parentheses).

**p < .01 (two-tailed)
*p < .1 (two-tailed)

The reduction of error (ROE) statistic indicates the extent to which the model improves on a null prediction that each observation will fall into the modal category of the dependent variable (Hagle and Mitchell 1992):

ROE = 100 x (% correctly predicted - % in modal category)/(100 - % in model category).

Source: 1992-94 NES Panel Study

Table 6.1
Predictors of Split-Term Voting in 1994 (Defection from 1992 Presidential Vote)
Table 6.1 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Expected Effect</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
<th>Model 7</th>
<th>Prob. Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
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<td>-1.84</td>
<td>-3.75*</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.26)</td>
<td>(1.26)</td>
<td>(1.55)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Party Identification</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.89**</td>
<td>-0.88**</td>
<td>-0.58*</td>
<td>-.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.30)</td>
<td>(0.30)</td>
<td>(0.34)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall House Candidate of Same Party</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-1.19**</td>
<td>-1.20**</td>
<td>-1.14*</td>
<td>-.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.44)</td>
<td>(0.44)</td>
<td>(0.45)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>1.16**</td>
<td>1.13**</td>
<td>1.13*</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.43)</td>
<td>(0.43)</td>
<td>(0.44)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraction of House Spending by Opposition</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>3.59**</td>
<td>3.57**</td>
<td>3.90**</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
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<td>(0.67)</td>
<td>(0.66)</td>
<td>(0.70)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Clinton in Relation to 1992 Vote</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.013*</td>
<td>-0.013*</td>
<td>-0.009</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology in Relation to 1992 Vote</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.47**</td>
<td>0.46**</td>
<td>0.48**</td>
<td>.35</td>
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<td>(0.16)</td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Moderate</td>
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<td>-0.26</td>
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<td>—</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fits Balancing Profile</td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(0.76)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative Toward Both Parties</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Toward Both Parties</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.016*</td>
<td>.28</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The dependent variable is coded 1 for voters who select a midterm House candidate from the party opposite their previous presidential selection, and 0 for those who support the same party in both elections. Cell entries are logit coefficients (standard errors are in parentheses).

**p < .01 (two-tailed)
*p < .1 (two-tailed)

The reduction of error (ROE) statistic indicates the extent to which the model improves on a null prediction that each observation will fall into the modal category of the dependent variable (Hagle and Mitchell 1992):

\[ ROE = 100 \times \left( \frac{\% \text{ correctly predicted} - \% \text{ in modal category}}{100 - \% \text{ in modal category}} \right) \]

Source: 1992-94 NES Panel Study
The role of candidate familiarity in midterm elections deserves closer inspection. Using the logit coefficients from model 4 in Table 6.1, I estimate the probability that a voter casts split-term votes under two different conditions: (1) when the opposition party House candidate is more familiar and spends more; (2) and when the candidate from one's own party is similarly advantaged. All other explanatory variables in the model are held constant at their mean values. Table 6.2 provides these estimated probabilities, and they demonstrate the important influence of candidate visibility and campaign spending. In the case where the opposition candidate is weak and unknown (the first column of Table 6.2), there is almost no chance that the voter will switch parties. In contrast, when the opposition party's House candidate is the more visible and better-financed competitor, the probability of a voter switching parties becomes more likely than not, increasing to .64. By only accounting for characteristics of the competing House candidates, we are able to move a hypothetical voter a long way toward switching parties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recall House Candidate of Same Party</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recall Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraction of House Spending by Opposition</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predicted Probability That Midterm Voter Selects House Candidate of Party Opposite Past Presidential Vote</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All other explanatory variables are held constant at their mean values to estimate these predicted probabilities.

Table 6.2 Probability of Split-Term Voting in 1994 Under Conditions of Strong and Weak Opposition House Candidates

In some respects, the 1994 election was about choosing the best candidate (usually the most visible one). Gary Jacobson identifies the 1994 campaign is one of only three in the last 40 years where Republican candidates were more experienced, on average, than Democrats.
Furthermore, for the first time in the post-World War II era, more Republicans than Democrats ran unopposed in the 1994 House elections. In fact, 1994 was an unusual year in that relatively few incumbents went unchallenged in the general election. The Republican party clearly did a better job of fielding House candidates in 1994. The results here suggest that these improvements in candidate recruitment and quality led many Clinton voters to switch over to the Republican party in 1994.

The multivariate analyses in Table 6.1 also indicate that split-term voters were partly driven by evaluations of President Clinton that conflicted with their past voting behavior. The logit coefficient for the presidential evaluation variable is always negative, as expected, meaning that Bush voters who disliked Clinton and Clinton voters who liked the president were least likely to switch parties in 1994. The fact that midterm voters switch parties in response to the president's performance provides further support for the referendum theory of midterm elections (Tufte 1978; Erikson 1988). As the previous chapter concluded, the 1994 election was at least partly a referendum on President Clinton's performance. Clinton's low approval ratings apparently caused a higher proportion of his past supporters to vote Republican in the midterm elections.

As in the previous chapter, the results here suggest that ideological predispositions influenced voters in 1994, even after controlling for party and presidential approval. The coefficient for ideology has the appropriate positive sign and is statistically significant. Other things being equal, liberal Bush voters and conservative Clinton voters were most likely to switch parties in the 1994 election. Again, any ideologically-driven movement between the parties was sure to benefit the Republican party in 1994, because the electorate contained many more conservative Democrats than liberal Republicans.
As in chapter 5, the results here fail to support a government balancing theory of voting. Explanatory measures which tap expected qualities of balancing voters (a preference for divided government, interest in politics, political knowledge, moderate ideological preferences) are simply not statistically significant predictors of split-term voting. The negative coefficient for political knowledge falls just short of conventional statistical significance levels, and it carries the wrong sign, suggesting that voters with low knowledge are most likely to switch parties. The balancing profile variable (model 6), which combines several of the previous explanatory variables, also fails to add any predictive power to this analysis.

Finally, when evaluations of the political parties are included in the analysis (model 7), the results run contrary to the balancing hypothesis. Negative feelings toward both parties do not predict split-term voting, while neutral feelings toward both parties do. As in the previous chapter, adding the neutrality variable to the equation weakens the effect of partisanship on midterm voting, again suggesting that independent voters often do not have any strong feelings toward either party. The effect of presidential evaluations also declines when the party evaluation variables are included in the model, which leads me to conclude that the president often serves as a lighting rod for party evaluations. The Republican strategy of defining the Democrats in terms of President Clinton’s actions probably helped strengthen this link between president and party in 1994.

I also created a measure of the absolute distance between the respondent’s evaluation of the two parties on the feeling thermometer. When added to the split-term voting models in Table 6.1, this variable had a statistically significant negative coefficient, providing further evidence that voters are more likely to switch parties when they see little difference between the two major parties.
Split-Term Voting in 1974

The 1974 election produced another large shift in the composition of the House of Representatives, this time favoring the Democratic party. The shift was due, in part, to split-term voters, especially the large numbers of Nixon voters who supported Democratic House candidates in 1974. Examining split-term voters in 1974 will help explain why the election produced a shift in favor of the Democrats.

Table 6.3 presents estimates of a logistic regression model of split-term voters in 1974. These multivariate analyses feature many of the same explanatory variables used to examine voting in 1994 (as seen in Table 6.1). Because of the high salience of Watergate and Ford’s pardon of Nixon shortly before the election, a measure of public opinion on the pardon is included in the 1974 analysis.¹

¹Fewer models are presented for 1974 because the NES survey did not include some questions (such as support for divided government) that might help identify balancing voters.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Expected Effect</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Prob. Change</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
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<td>-2.41**</td>
<td>-2.42**</td>
<td>-1.54*</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(0.61)</td>
<td>(0.71)</td>
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<td>-0.60**</td>
<td>-0.57**</td>
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<td>(0.18)</td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
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<td>Recall House Candidate of Same Party</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-1.64**</td>
<td>-1.65**</td>
<td>-1.60**</td>
<td>-1.51**</td>
<td>-.33</td>
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<td>(0.29)</td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall Opposition House Candidate</td>
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<td>1.93**</td>
<td>1.93**</td>
<td>1.98**</td>
<td>2.09**</td>
<td>.44</td>
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<td>(0.28)</td>
<td>(0.28)</td>
<td>(0.28)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraction of House Spending by Opposition</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>2.04**</td>
<td>2.05**</td>
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<td>(0.40)</td>
<td>(0.41)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Nixon in Relation to 1972 Vote</td>
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<td>0.007*</td>
<td>0.007*</td>
<td>0.008*</td>
<td>.18</td>
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<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
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<td>Opinion of Ford Pardon in Relation to 1972 Vote</td>
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<td>0.73**</td>
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<td>(0.25)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ideology in Relation to 1972 Vote</td>
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<td>0.33**</td>
<td>0.29**</td>
<td>0.34**</td>
<td>0.31**</td>
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<td>(0.09)</td>
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<td>Interest in Politics</td>
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<td>(0.14)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Moderate</td>
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<td>0.62*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fits Balance Profile</td>
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<td>-0.69</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.51)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Knowledge</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.29*</td>
<td>-.27</td>
</tr>
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<td>(0.12)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The dependent variable is coded 1 for voters who select a midterm House candidate from the party opposite their previous presidential selection, and 0 for those who support the same party in both elections. Cell entries are logit coefficients (standard errors are in parentheses).

**p < .01 (two-tailed)
*p < .1 (two-tailed)

The reduction of error (ROE) statistic indicates the extent to which the model improves on a null prediction that each observation will fall into the modal category of the dependent variable (Hagle and Mitchell 1992):
ROE = 100 x (% correctly predicted - % in modal category)/(100 - % in model category).

Source: 1972-76 NES Panel Study

Table 6.3
Predictors of Split-Term Voting in 1974 (Defection from 1972 Presidential Vote)
The multivariate results for 1974 closely resemble those found in 1994. As expected, strength of partisanship is a robust predictor of divided voting behavior. The results indicate that Independents are more likely than strong partisans to vote for a House candidate from the party opposite their presidential choice in 1972. More importantly, the relative visibility and quality of the House candidates are important factors which may lead voters to switch parties. The coefficients for the three candidate variables are all significant with the expected signs. An inspection of the probability change scores in the final column of Table 6.3 indicates that the relative impact of the candidacy factors is stronger than most of the other variables in the equation. One reason the candidate variables are so influential in 1974 is that there were 60 uncontested House races. When voters in uncontested districts are removed from the analysis, the impact of the three candidate variables weaken somewhat but still remain strong.

To further demonstrate the importance of candidate visibility and campaign spending in the 1974 election, Table 6.4 provides evidence on their combined effects, using the same method of estimated probabilities presented in Table 6.2. Not surprisingly, the first column in Table 6.4 suggests that when the opposition House candidate is relatively poorly financed and not familiar to the voter, the likelihood of the voter defecting to the opposition is almost zero. In stark contrast, however, when the opposition candidate has a decided spending and name recognition advantage (column two), the voter’s likelihood of defecting to the opposition is over 80 percent. Thus, when holding other factors

'One may notice that campaign spending has a weaker effect on voting in 1974 than in 1994 (and vice versa for the effects of candidate name recall). This is probably due to measurement error in the 1974 spending variable. The 1994 spending measure is based on candidate reports, required by law, tabulated by the Federal Election Commission (FEC). Public disclosure of campaign spending was not required until the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1974. However, the implementation of the law, and the creation of the FEC, did not occur until after the 1974 election. Thus, the 1974 spending measure is based on less reliable reports from House candidates compiled by Common Cause.'
constant, candidate characteristics go a long toward explaining why some voters in 1974 chose House candidates that did not come from the same party they supported in the 1972 presidential election.

| Recall House Candidate of Same Party | Yes | No |
| Recall Opposition House Candidate | No | Yes |
| Fraction of House Spending by Opposition | .30 | .70 |
| Predicted Probability That Midterm Voter Selects House Candidate of Party Opposite Past Presidential Vote | .65 | .82 |

Note: All other explanatory variables are held constant at their mean values to estimate these predicted probabilities.

Table 6.4
Probability of Split-Term Voting in 1974 Under Conditions of Strong and Weak Opposition House Candidates

The previous chapter discusses in some detail why the candidate side of the electoral equation favored Democrats in 1974. A comparison with 1994 is informative, because the two years sit at opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of the overall strength of the stable of candidates each party fielded to defend its seats in the House. For example, despite the large Democratic majority in the House, half of the retiring incumbents in 1974 were Republicans. By comparison, almost two-thirds of the retiring incumbents in 1994 were Democrats (Jacobson 1997a). As a result, Republicans in 1974 and Democrats in 1994 defended many seats with first-time candidates. Similarly, 59 out of 60 uncontested seats (i.e., those which one of the major parties did not contest) in 1974 were held by Democrats, while 35 of the 52 uncontested seats in 1994 were held by Republicans (Jacobson 1997b). Finally, 1974 was the worst year for Republican challengers in terms of fundraising since campaign spending data have been available. In contrast,

Furthermore, most of the Republican retirees ran for higher office in 1994, while most of the Democratic retirees got out of politics.
Republican challengers in 1994 set a record for average expenditures, even after controlling for inflation (Jacobson 1997a).

One presumed difference between 1974 and 1994 is that the outcome in 1974 was more predictable in advance of the election. Nixon’s erosion of public support during the course of the Watergate scandal, and his resignation in advance of the fall campaign, as well as an economic recession, made it simple for the GOP to predict disaster in the midterm election. In contrast, while Clinton’s approval ratings were not on the positive side of the ledger, a relatively healthy economy made it difficult to foresee such huge losses for the Democrats in 1994, except perhaps late in the campaign when PAC money shifted toward the GOP (Beck 1997). In fact, few election forecasters predicted that the Democrats would lose control of both chambers of Congress in 1994. However, if forecasters had paid more attention to Democratic retirements, the dramatic shift in unopposed seats in favor of the Republican party, and Republican gains in challenger quality and spending, perhaps the outcome in 1994 may not have been so surprising.

The results in Table 6.3 also demonstrate that public opinion toward Richard Nixon and the pardon again had a noticeable effect on midterm voters. More specifically, evaluations of Nixon and the pardon appear to have caused some voters to defect from the party they supported in the 1972 presidential contest. These developments

---

"Most analysts predicted that the Democrats would lose between 25 and 30 House seats in 1994. One academic, Martin Anderson, and one television personality, John Maclaughlin, predicted a Republican gain of 40 to 50 House seats (Brady et al. 1996).

"In comparing the probability change scores in Tables 6.1 and 6.3, public opinion toward Nixon, as well as Ford’s pardon, had a stronger effect on voting in 1974 than Clinton evaluations did in 1994. This is no surprise since Watergate made the president extremely salient to voters in 1974.

"One may notice that the Clinton evaluation variable has a positive effect on split-term voting in 1994, while the Nixon evaluation variable has a negative effect in 1974. The change in signs is purely a result of the way the variables were coded when comparing presidential evaluations to the respondent’s past voting behavior. Thus, the change
certainly hurt Republicans in 1974 because large majorities disapproved of Nixon and the pardon.

We can also see from Table 6.3 that ideological preferences led some voters in 1974 to spurn the party they had supported in the 1972 presidential contest. Even after controlling for partisanship, as well as attitudes toward the pardon and Richard Nixon, issue preferences still help explain why some voters switched in 1974. As indicated in chapter 5, this factor may have actually helped Republicans, since conservative Democrats outnumbered liberal Republicans in 1974. Thus, more Democrats than Republicans may have been motivated to switch parties for ideological reasons.

The multivariate results in Table 6.3 also fail to provide much support for a government balancing perspective on voting. Interest in politics (model 1) is not related to the form of party switching examined here. In addition, political knowledge (model 4) has a negative and statistically significant impact on split-term voting. This suggests that the less knowledgeable voters are more likely to switch parties than those with higher levels of political information, contrary to a sophisticated view of divided voting behavior.

The findings do suggest that, other things being equal, moderate voters were more likely than others to defect from their vote choice in the 1972 presidential election (model 2). This is consistent with a balancing theory of voting, since moderates may split their votes between the two parties to reveal a preference for moderate policies. However, model 3 fails to provide further support for this hypothesis.

in signs does not reflect any radical change in voting behavior.

I examined many specific issues (including the government’s role in civil rights, urban unrest, busing, women’s rights, the rights of the accused, helping those in economic need, and providing jobs) but none had statistically significant effects when added to the equations in Table 6.3. The ideology measure performs better as a predictor of voting because it probably captures the combined impact of these and other issues.
Voters who fit the balancing profile (those moderates who should be most likely to act on a preference for middle-of-the-road policies) are not more likely to split their votes than other voters. In fact, the balancing variable carries a negative coefficient, contrary to what the balancing theory would predict.

Evidence from two midterm elections suggests that voters defect from their past presidential vote for the same reasons that voters switch parties in consecutive House elections. The findings suggest that a candidate-centered view of voting carries more explanatory power than a government-centered view of voting. The visibility of the candidates, evaluations of the president, and strength of partisanship all help explain why some voters divide their votes between the two parties. In addition, ideological preferences help explain divided voting behavior, but not in the way envisioned by a balancing theory of voting. Voters whose ideological preferences are most at odds with their past voting behavior, rather than moderates, are the ones most likely to switch parties. Thus, it appears unlikely that many citizens use their votes to balance against their past voting behavior.

A Final Look at Midterm Voters

Thus far, I have only tested one conceptualization of the balancing perspective. There is little evidence that people in the United States split their votes between the parties in order to produce divided government. However, it is possible that voters use the midterm contests to elect a Congress that will serve as a check on the sitting president, as Alesina and Rosenthal (1995) argue. Thus, for example, we might expect that moderate voters and those who prefer divided government would have been predisposed to vote Republican in 1994. Similarly, other things being equal, sophisticated moderate voters
should have voted Democratic in the House elections of 1974 to provide a check on the Republican president.

Thus, after controlling for other important factors (such as party affiliation, candidate visibility, and presidential performance), moderate voters -- especially those who possess the four qualities of a hypothetical balancing voter described above -- should be more likely than others to vote against the president's party in a midterm election. Table 6.5 presents the results of just such an analysis of voting in the 1994 House election, using survey data from the National Election Studies. The dependent variable measures whether the voter selected a Republican House candidate or not in 1994, and a logistic regression model is used again to estimate the impact of each explanatory variable.

The evidence suggests that ideological moderates and those who fit the balancing profile were no more likely to vote Republican in 1994 than other voters. For both of these variables, the estimated logit coefficients are smaller than their standard errors, indicating that neither measure helps predict voting behavior.\(^\text{10}\)

Despite the poor performance of the balancing variables, the other explanatory measures do a good job of predicting vote choice in 1994. Both models in Table 6.5 correctly predict over 85% of the observations, improving substantially on a naive model that does not include any explanatory variables. These results are not surprising. Democrats, liberals, and voters with a favorable impression of Bill Clinton were likely to vote for Democratic House candidates in 1994. Candidate quality is again important, as voters are more likely to choose the GOP when they know the Republican's name, do not know the Democrat's name, and when the Republican vastly outspends her opponent.

\(^{10}\)In separate analyses that are not presented here, I examined distrust in government and preferences for divided government. Neither was a significant predictor of Republican voting in 1994. I also found that libertarians and populists were more likely than others to vote Democratic in 1994, again contrary to what a balancing perspective might predict.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Expected Effect</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Prob. Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>3.98**</td>
<td>3.93**</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.65)</td>
<td>(0.64)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.57**</td>
<td>-0.56**</td>
<td>-.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall Name of Republican Candidate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>1.30**</td>
<td>1.31**</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall Name of Democratic Candidate</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-1.01**</td>
<td>-1.02**</td>
<td>-.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
<td>(0.28)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraction of House Spending by Democrat</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-3.42**</td>
<td>-3.41**</td>
<td>-.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.39)</td>
<td>(0.39)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Clinton</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.02**</td>
<td>-0.02**</td>
<td>-.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.26**</td>
<td>0.26**</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern White</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.44*</td>
<td>0.45*</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(.24)</td>
<td>(0.24)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Moderate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.22)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fits Balance Profile</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.41)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correctly predicted                          | 85.3%          | 85.5%    |
Reduction of Error*                          | 68.1%          | 68.5%    |
Chi-Square                                   | 637.7**        | 638.4**  |
Number of cases                              | 918            | 918      |

Note: The dependent variable is coded 1 for voters who select a Republican House candidate, 0 for those who vote for a Democrat. Cell entries are logit coefficients (standard errors are in parentheses).

**p < .01 (two-tailed)
*p < .1 (two-tailed)

*The reduction of error (ROE) statistic indicates the extent to which the model improves on a null prediction that each observation will fall into the modal category of the dependent variable (Hagle and Mitchell 1992):

\[
ROE = 100 \times (\% \text{ correctly predicted} - \% \text{ in modal category})/(100 - \% \text{ in model category}).
\]

Source: 1994 NES

Table 6.5
Predictors of Republican Voting in the 1994 House Elections
The results in Table 6.5 also demonstrate that southern whites were more likely than others to vote Republican in 1994, even after controlling for party, ideology, candidate quality, and evaluations of the president. This interesting result points to the fact that the historical Republican presidential advantage in the South now encompasses congressional elections too, a dramatic shift from the 1980s. As recently as 1990, Democratic House candidates did better in the South than in any other region of the country. In 1994 and 1996, the South was the best region for Republican House candidates.

To provide another case for analysis, I also examine the 1974 election. Table 6.6 provides the results of a logistic regression analysis of voters in the 1974 House contests. The first model indicates a positive and significant coefficient for the ideological moderate variable, although its substantive impact (measured in terms of probability change scores) is weaker than the other variables in the model. This is consistent with the balancing hypothesis and suggests that moderates were inclined to vote Democratic in 1974. However, the second model in Table 6.6 undermines a balancing interpretation. The negative and significant coefficient for the balancing profile variable indicates that voters who fit the portrait of a sophisticated balancing voter (moderates with high knowledge, efficacy, and interest in politics) tended to support Republican candidates in 1974.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Expected Effect</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Prob. Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>-1.86**</td>
<td>-1.62**</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.61)</td>
<td>(0.61)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.62**</td>
<td>0.62**</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall Name of Republican Candidate</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-1.78**</td>
<td>-1.81**</td>
<td>-.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.27)</td>
<td>(0.27)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall Name of Democratic Candidate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>1.61**</td>
<td>1.71**</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.25)</td>
<td>(0.25)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraction of House Spending by Democrat</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>1.62**</td>
<td>1.55**</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.38)</td>
<td>(0.38)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Ford</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.02**</td>
<td>-0.02**</td>
<td>-.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern White</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(.24)</td>
<td>(0.24)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Moderate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.41*</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.23)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fits Balance Profile</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-1.03*</td>
<td>-.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.42)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correctly predicted: 81.3% 81.6%
Reduction of Error*: 53.9% 54.7%
Chi-Square: 441.7** 444.5**
Number of cases: 852 852

Note: The dependent variable is coded 1 for voters who select a Republican House candidate, 0 for those who vote for a Democrat. Cell entries are logit coefficients (standard errors are in parentheses).

**p < .01 (two-tailed)
*p < .1 (two-tailed)

*The reduction of error (ROE) statistic indicates the extent to which the model improves on a null prediction that each observation will fall into the modal category of the dependent variable (Hagle and Mitchell 1992):

\[
ROE = 100 \times (\text{% correctly predicted} - \text{% in modal category})/(100 - \text{% in model category})
\]

Source: 1974 NES

Table 6.6
Predictors of Democratic Voting in the 1974 House Elections

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Meanwhile, the other variables in the equation (except ideology) perform as expected. Republican identifiers and those with favorable evaluations of President Ford were less likely to vote for Democratic House candidates than Democrats and voters who did not like Ford. And as usual, the candidate visibility and quality factors were strong predictors of House voting in 1974. Finally, it is interesting to note that, after controlling for candidates, party, ideology, and presidential performance, southern white voters were not predisposed toward the Democratic party in 1974, as one might have expected. This is just another way of saying that the current Republican advantage in the South is a recent development.

One interesting comparison between the 1994 and 1974 House voting results involves the effect of ideology. Ideology is not a significant predictor of House voting in 1974, although ideology is a strong predictor of House voting in 1994. There are two possible explanations for the weak performance of ideology in 1974. First, Watergate may have supplanted many conventional issues in the minds of voters in 1974. Ford's pre-election pardon also may have meant that the election was determined more by good government issues rather than liberal-conservative issues. Although not presented here, a measure of distrust in government is a significant predictor of Democratic voting when included in the 1974 equation. In contrast, the same trust in government variable is not associated with House voting in 1994.

Second, the stronger performance of ideology in 1994 probably has something to do with the ideologica homogeneity of the parties in 1994 relative to 1974. The roll call and public opinion measures in chapter 2 demonstrate that the parties have become more distinct in terms of ideological positions during the last two decades. In contrast, ideological differences between the parties were less evident in the early 1970s, when the coalition of Boll Weevil Democrats more closely resembled Republicans than liberal Democrats. As a result, it is easier
today for House voters to select a party on the basis of ideological considerations.

**Competing Spatial Models of Moderate Midterm Voters**

As a final test of a balancing theory of midterm voting, I focus more specifically on voters in the middle range of the ideological spectrum. By examining all voters, including extremists at both ends of the liberal-conservative continuum, the analyses presented above may have hampered efforts to uncover sophisticated government-oriented voters among the ranks of the moderates. This section uses a spatial model of voting to compare the balancing perspective with more conventional perspectives on congressional voters.

The balancing perspective provides a different voting calculus in midterm elections than typical spatial models. A balancing perspective includes considerations of the president's ideological position in congressional voting models (Alesina and Rosenthal 1995), while conventional spatial models only consider the candidates for the office being contested -- in this case the congressional candidates (for example, see Downs 1957). Consider the following hypothetical situation facing a moderate voter in 1994 (portrayed in Figure 6.1). The voter resides somewhere in the middle of the ideological spectrum and places Clinton near the liberal endpoint. In addition, the Democratic House candidate in 1994 is on the liberal half of the ideological spectrum while the Republican candidate is positioned on the conservative side. However, the Democratic House candidate (HD in Figure 6.1) is closer to the voter's ideal point than the Republican candidate (HR). According to traditional spatial models (which I call "sincere proximity" models) which treat each office separately, the voter will choose the House candidate closest to her ideal point, in this case the Democratic candidate.
In contrast, a government-oriented voter who wants moderate outcomes when the president and Congress bargain over government policy may average the House candidates with President Clinton's policy position to reach a voting decision. In Figure 6.1, the midpoint between Clinton and the Democratic House candidate (CD) is farther from the voter's ideal point than the midpoint between Clinton and the Republican candidate (CR). Thus, a moderate voter in Figure 6.1 using a sophisticated balancing decision rule should select the Republican House candidate.

![Figure 6.1. A Spatial View of Midterm Voters](image)

Recent surveys conducted by the National Election Studies allow us to test which spatial decision rule is better at predicting voting choices in midterm elections. NES surveys now ask respondents to place themselves, the president, and the House candidates on a seven-point
ideological spectrum. This enables us to measure the ideological proximity between the voter and each of the House candidates. I simply subtracted the absolute distance between the voter and the Democratic House candidate from the distance between the voter and the Republican candidate to produce an ideological proximity measure. If voters use an ideological decision calculus that ignores the president, then this variable should be negatively associated with a Republican vote in the 1994 House election, since negative scores indicate that the Republican candidate is closer to the voter's ideological position.

The survey data also allow us to compute the average placement of Clinton's position with each of the House candidates. After computing both average scores, I subtracted the Clinton/House Democrat average from the Clinton/House Republican average to produce an ideological balancing measure. If voters evaluate the ideological positions of the House candidates by averaging them with the president's position (as a sophisticated balancing voter should in the Alesina and Rosenthal model), then my ideological balancing measure should be negatively correlated with voting for a Republican candidate. Again, this is because negative scores on the balancing variable indicate that the voter is closer to the midpoint between the Republican candidate and Clinton's position (closer to CR than CD, as in Figure 6.1).

Finally, I included these two ideological variables in a multivariate model of House voting in 1994 (see Table 6.7). Party identification, campaign spending, and evaluations of President Clinton are included as control variables. I dropped the ideology measure used previously since the two new variables are ideological measures. In order to keep the model simple, I also dropped the candidate recall variables and the indicator for southern whites since they were not significant predictors in this analysis and their presence in the model did not alter the results.
In addition, I limited the sample to those voters who placed themselves in one of the three middle positions on the seven-point ideological scale. I did this because the balancing and proximity models of voting only generate contrasting predictions for moderate voters. In other words, moderates are the only voters with an incentive to balance their votes for purely ideological reasons (Fiorina 1996; Alesina and Rosenthal 1995). The sample was further limited to exclude respondents who could not place Clinton and both House candidates on the ideological spectrum. Finally, respondents living in districts with uncontested House contests were excluded from the sample. This creates a smaller sample of voters, but it focuses only on those moderate and knowledgeable voters in contested districts who are most likely motivated to balance their votes.

The results in Table 6.7 again fail to support a balancing hypothesis of midterm voting. While the logit coefficient for the sincere ideological proximity measure is significant and in the expected direction, the balancing variable is not significant (in fact, its coefficient is much smaller than its standard error). When the sincere proximity model goes head to head with the sophisticated balancing model to explain midterm voting, the proximity model wins. Voters seem to simply choose the House candidate closest to their ideological preferences, without simultaneously factoring in the president's ideological position.

---

"I also limited the sample to moderates to minimize the correlation between the proximity and balancing measures. For the sample of voters in Table 6.7, the Pearson's correlation between the proximity and balancing measures is .62 (p<.01), so including both variables in a regression model does not introduce extreme multicollinearity."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Expected Effect</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Prob. Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>4.02**</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.75)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Identification</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.43**</td>
<td>-.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraction of House Spending by Democrat</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-2.26**</td>
<td>-.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.70)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Clinton</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.02**</td>
<td>-.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Proximity to House Candidates</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.62**</td>
<td>-.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance Clinton Ideology With House Candidates</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correctly predicted</td>
<td></td>
<td>79.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of Error*</td>
<td></td>
<td>57.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Square</td>
<td></td>
<td>115.3**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of cases</td>
<td></td>
<td>221</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The dependent variable is coded 1 for voters who select a Republican House candidate, 0 for those who vote for a Democrat. Cell entries are logit coefficients (standard errors are in parentheses).

**p < .01 (two-tailed)
*p < .1 (two-tailed)

*The reduction of error (ROE) statistic indicates the extent to which the model improves on a null prediction that each observation will fall into the modal category of the dependent variable (Hagle and Mitchell 1992):

\[
ROE = 100 \times \left(\frac{\% \text{ correctly predicted} - \% \text{ in modal category}}{100 - \% \text{ in model category}}\right)
\]

Source: 1994 NES

Table 6.7
Predictors of Republican Voting Among Moderates in the 1994 House Elections
Interestingly, by limiting the sample to this subset of voters, the candidate effects are somewhat weaker than in Table 6.5. As mentioned above, the two name recall measures drop out of the model, and the campaign spending variable has a weaker effect on vote choice in Table 6.7. By examining the probability change scores, ideological proximity appears to have the biggest impact on House voting in Table 6.7. These results suggest that the most knowledgeable voters are better able to overcome name recognition and spending advantages that a particular candidate may enjoy, and vote on the basis of issue preferences.

Conclusion

The unique contribution of the last two chapters has been to examine why voters switch parties, generally from on-year to off-year elections. This means examining divided voting across rather than within elections. Party switchers, or swing voters, are critical in many election campaigns. In any campaign, both sides are vying for the swing voters. In fact, campaign pollsters have developed a survey methodology to identify and target swing voters during a campaign (Goeas and Tringali 1993; see also Hodgett and Tarr-Whelan 1997). And yet, academics have not paid much attention to voters who switch parties, and the reasons they do so.

Scholars may have avoided studying swing voters because of a lack of data. However, the NES panel studies provide data to study swing voters in several different elections, especially two recent cases where swing voters made a big difference. The prominence of the surge and decline theory of midterm elections, which emphasizes turnout rather than party switchers, may also explain why swing voters have received little notice. However, chapter 3 shows that swing voters are an important source of electoral change in congressional elections.

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Finally, it is possible that scholars did not study swing voters out of the suspicion that changes in voting behavior might be random, or simply explained by weak partisan attachments.

However, the results of these two chapters demonstrate that the factors that lead some voters to switch parties are not much different from the important explanatory variables in typical cross-sectional studies of congressional voting, so these findings serve as a reinforcement of much of the current literature (Jacobson 1997a; Abramowitz 1995). Party identification (as well as perceptions about the parties), candidates, presidential performance, and issues all influence whether voters change their party selection from one election to the next.

The general theme running through these findings is that politics matters to voters. In particular, congressional campaigns are very important because voters often do not know much about the candidates before the general election campaign begins. People often split their votes because the opposition fields a relatively stronger House candidate. The visibility of the candidates, and the amount of money they spend, are powerful at predicting whether voters switch parties. Further research may explain how campaign spending translates into more votes, by boosting name recognition, by persuading voters based on issues or personal characteristics, or something else.

In addition, these two chapters show that current events and government performance matter to voters. This is a unique contribution gained by looking at divided voting across elections. Studies of ticket-splitting within a presidential election have not examined evaluations of the presidential candidates or government performance as explanatory variables.\textsuperscript{12} A president needs to carefully manage his public image and the issue agenda to ensure that these two

\textsuperscript{12}A recent study of ticket-splitting by Sigelman and colleagues (1997) includes measures of affect toward the presidential candidates, but no measure of presidential performance.
considerations do not cause his past supporters to vote for the opposition in midterm elections. The ability of Republican candidates to focus attention on Clinton's policy failures helped them attract former Democratic voters and gain control of Congress in 1994. Party labels matter too, because they are used to link congressional candidates to the president, despite the best efforts of some candidates to avoid such a coupling.

In addition, some of the evidence suggests that voters who blur the differences between parties tend to cross party lines more than others. The least knowledgeable voters, those with the most neutral evaluations of both parties, and those who see little or no difference between party issue positions, are often the most likely voters to switch parties. As the party coalitions have become more homogeneous and more distinct from each other, we should expect that fewer voters will switch parties or divide their votes between the parties.

Finally, the last two chapters have failed to find much evidence that citizens divide their votes between the parties or vote against the president's party in midterm elections in order to produce divided government and moderate policies. It is possible that the motive for moderation comes into play after candidate quality and presidential performance have already been considered (and perhaps when these factors work at cross purposes). In addition, it is probably true that sophisticated balancing voters are small in number (Fiorina 1996) and difficult to spot using conventional survey methods. Even though divided government is common in the United States, it appears that the choices made by the bulk of voters are generally explained by other factors than a desire for divided government.
CHAPTER 7
SPLIT-TICKET VOTING IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Introduction

Previous chapters expanded upon findings in the ticket-splitting literature to explain why voters switch parties from one election to the next. This chapter returns to the study of President-House ticket-splitting in the 1988 and 1992 American elections. As chapter 2 indicates, ticket-splitting has been fairly common in recent national elections (although it has declined in the 1990s). Morris Fiorina has written that divided government has become "a defining feature of contemporary American politics" (1996, p. 2), and that ticket-splitting should receive closer scrutiny as a cause of divided government.

In the 1988 election, George Bush carried more than two-thirds of the congressional districts while Democratic House candidates won about 60% of the districts. Roughly one in four voters was a President-House ticket-splitter in 1988, and over one-third of the districts were carried by Bush and a Democratic House candidate. Thus, 1988 provides a rather typical case in which ticket-splitting produces divided government. In contrast, the 1992 election left us with a unified Democratic government, as only 23% of the congressional districts produced split outcomes. In addition, the strong showing by independent presidential candidate Ross Perot gives us a unique opportunity to compare third-party voters to major-party ticket-splitters.

When examining the determinants of ticket-splitting, this chapter reinforces the results from previous chapters. Once again, the
visibility and strength of the congressional candidates are powerful predictors of ticket-splitting. In addition, several other factors are associated with ticket-splitting. For example, ticket-splitting is more common in states which do not have a straight-party lever on the ballot. Presidential candidate evaluations are important as well: voters with lukewarm feelings about their chosen presidential candidate are less likely to remain loyal to that candidate's party in House contests. Similarly, those whose ideological preferences put them at odds with their chosen presidential candidate are more likely to split their ballot in lower level races.

In addition, voters who pay less attention to political parties are more likely to cast split ballots. For example, ticket-splitting is associated with neutral evaluations of both parties. Also, voters who perceive no important differences between the parties are more likely to split their ballots.

Finally, as in previous chapters, there is little evidence that ticket-splitting is primarily the result of policy balancing motives or a desire to keep both parties in check. Voters with negative evaluations of both parties are actually less likely than others to split their ballots. Also, voters who possess several qualities associated with a policy balancing voter are not more likely to cast split tickets in presidential elections. At best, a desire for divided government, the status quo, or moderate policies, may only be a relevant consideration for some voters after other candidate factors and voter characteristics cancel each other out.

Ticket-Splitting in 1988

The continuation of divided government after the 1988 election further weakened a party-centered view of government. Indeed, it appears that the simultaneous election of George Bush and a Democratic
Congress spurred many researchers to take a closer look at split-ticket voting and to advocate new models of coalition government in the United State (Fiorina 1996; Sundquist 1988; Brady 1993).

This section develops and applies a multivariate model of ticket-splitting in presidential elections. The dependent variable in this model is dichotomous: it is coded 1 for ticket-splitters, and coded 0 for voters who choose the same party in the presidential and House contests. Once again, a logit equation is estimated for the multivariate analysis.

Several independent variables are included in the model to test different theories of voting. As in previous chapters, a measure of the voter's strength of partisanship is included as an explanatory variable to test the argument that independent voters are more likely to split their ballots than strong partisans, a common finding in the ticket-splitting literature (Beck et al. 1992; Campbell and Miller 1957; Soss and Canon 1995; Maddox and Nimmo 1981; McAllister and Darcy 1992; Glascock and Garand 1994). Strong partisans are at the high end of the scale, so this variable should be negatively associated with ticket-splitting.

Given that most voters split their ballots by defecting from their identified party in the House contest (see chapter 3; Brody et al. 1994), it is important to account for qualities of the House candidates. Previous studies have controlled for the candidate side of the equation by including measures of incumbency, usually with significant results (Born 1994; Alvarez and Schousen 1993; McAllister and Darcy 1992; Glascock and Garand 1994; Sigelman et al. 1997; Brody et al. 1994; Bloom 1994).

1Party leaners and weak partisans are combined into one category of the strength of partisanship scale since other studies find that both groups are equally likely to cast straight-party ballots (Beck and Sorauf 1992; Keith et al. 1992). The results are the same when the two groups occupy different points on the strength of partisanship scale.
However, incumbency is a crude measure of a congressional candidate’s relative advantage over one’s opponent. Some incumbents face stiff challenges, some face tepid opposition, and some face no opponent at all! A lot of scholarship has been devoted to explaining the incumbency advantage in House elections, with most accounts pointing to incumbent advantages in name recognition (for example, see Mann and Wolfinger 1980; Jacobson 1992, 1997a), and campaign spending (Jacobson 1992; Green and Krasno 1988; Box-Steffensmeier 1996). As a result, most voting studies now control for name recognition and campaign spending directly, rather than simply using a blunt and indirect measure of incumbency. Studies of divided voting should do the same. The only study that explicitly accounts for candidate visibility is a statewide analysis of ticket-splitting by Beck and colleagues (1992).

I include three variables introduced in chapter 4 to capture the effects of candidate qualities on ticket-splitting. A dichotomous variable indicates whether or not the respondent can recall the name of the House candidate from the party he supported in the presidential contest. This variable should be negatively associated with ticket-splitting. I include another dummy variable indicating whether the voter can recall the name of the House candidate from the opposition party, which should be positively associated with ticket-splitting. Third, I include a variable which measures the fraction of campaign money in the House general election campaign race spent by the opposition party candidate. As this proportion gets larger, it should become more likely that the voter casts a split ballot by voting for the opposition party House candidate.

When examining several choices in a single election, it is important to control for the nature of the ballot. Campbell and Miller (1957), McAllister and Darcy (1992), and Beck (1997) find that ticket-splitting is

\[ \text{This coding strategy is used because I assume that voters tend to make their presidential selections first (see the description of Figure 3.1).} \]
splitting is more common in states which have a straight-party ballot mechanism. In 1988, 20 states had some type of straight-party mechanism on the ballot, where the voter can simply pull one lever or check one box to cast a straight-party ticket (Brace 1993). Thus, I include a dichotomous variable for voters who reside in states with straight-party ballot mechanisms, and I expect this variable to be negatively associated with ticket-splitting.

Previous chapters have demonstrated that divided voting across elections is partly explained by evaluations of the president or the presidential candidates. Although studies of ticket-splitting do not often account for evaluations of the presidential candidates (but see McAllister and Darcy 1992; Sigelman et al. 1997), evaluations of the candidates at the top of the ticket should influence the likelihood of a split ballot. If voters are favorably disposed toward a presidential candidate, they may want to extend the candidate’s coattails by supporting nominees from the same party in lower level contests. In contrast, a voter who is only weakly committed to her choice for president may feel little compulsion to select voters from the same party in subsequent races.¹

Several scholars have argued that presidential coattails in congressional elections have diminished (Ferejohn and Calvert 1984; Jacobson 1997a). In chapter 4, I argue that party loyalty among voters is conditional, and that it often depends on the quality of the House candidates. Party loyalty also depends on how the voter feels about the person heading the ticket. It may be that presidential coattails have shrunk, in part, because voters are less satisfied, on average, with the quality of presidential candidates (Weisberg and Kimball 1995).

To test this idea, I include a feeling thermometer rating of the voter’s choice for president. As measured, this variable should be

¹Some may argue that this is simply another measure of strength of partisanship. I would argue that at least this tells us a little more about what partisanship is measuring.
negatively associated with ticket-splitting. There is more variation in this measure than one might imagine. Not all voters gave their choice for president the most stellar ratings. Over 40% of the voters in 1988 gave their selected candidate a rating below 70 on the feeling thermometer.

It is also likely that policy positions and ideological considerations influence ticket-splitting. Other studies suggest that voters are more likely to split their ballots when their ideological preferences or opinions on important policies put them at odds with the party they usually support (Sigelman et al. 1997; McAllister and Darcy 1992). Thus, I include a measure of the voter's ideological inclination in relation to her presidential vote selection. The seven-point ideology scale is flipped for Republicans at the midpoint. The result is that conservatives who voted for Dukakis and liberals who voted for Bush are both at the high end of the scale, and they should be most likely to cast split ballots in 1988.¹

I also include a dummy variable for districts in the South because I expect that southern voters are more likely to split their tickets. For the last several decades, voters in the South have commonly supported Republican presidential candidates and Democratic candidates for Congress, to the extent that the South stands apart from the rest of the country in terms of split-level support for different parties.

Indeed, other studies find that ticket-splitting is more common in the South (Alvarez and Schousen 1993; Burden and Kimball 1997; but see Glascock and Garand 1994).

Based on the findings in previous chapters, I also expect that voters who see little or no substantive differences between the parties will have fewer inhibitions about crossing party lines and casting a

¹I do not address why liberals would vote for Bush or why conservatives would vote for Dukakis in 1988. Clearly, one possibility is that these voters are influenced by candidate traits or other non-ideological considerations.
For this analysis, I use a question which asks whether there are any "important differences in what the Republicans and Democrats stand for." Those who did not know or did not see any differences between the parties are given a score of 1, while those who answered in the affirmative are assigned a code of 0. Thus, I expect the party differences measure to be positively associated with ticket-splitting.

Finally, I test two balancing theories by including variables which help capture different characteristics of a balancing voter. As in previous chapters, the model includes a dichotomous variable denoting those moderate voters who place themselves between the two parties on the ideological spectrum (roughly one in four voters did so in 1988 and 1992). To provide support for policy balancing theories, the indicator for moderate voters should have a positive relationship with ticket-splitting. In addition, I examine voters who share four qualities we might expect in a policy balancing voter. This is a dichotomous measure that identifies moderate voters who are above average in political knowledge, efficacy, and interest in politics. The balancing profile measure should also be positively associated with ticket-splitting.

It is also possible that citizens split their ballots because they do not trust either party. In a separate test of the balancing approach, I include a measure of negativity toward both political parties, which I construct from feeling thermometer questions which ask respondents to indicate how they feel about each party on a scale from 0 to 100. Fiorina's formulation of balancing predicts that voters who distrust both parties (i.e., those who rank both parties near the bottom of the feeling thermometer) are most likely to cast split ballots, so that each party keeps an eye on the other. To test a rival explanation of party evaluations, I include a measure of neutrality toward parties, constructed from the same feeling thermometer questions. This measure indicates the extent to which respondents place both parties near the
neutral midpoint of the thermometer scale. By including both measures in the model, we can see if ticket-splitters are influenced more by negative or neutral evaluations of political parties.

A multivariate analysis of President-House ticket-splitting in 1988 is presented in Table 7.1. The first column provides the expected sign of the logit coefficient associated with each explanatory variable. The next two columns provide the logit coefficient and standard error, respectively, for each explanatory variable. Since logit coefficients do not have a straightforward interpretation, I also calculate a change in probability score when varying each independent variable from its minimum to maximum value while holding the other explanatory values constant at their mean values. This change score (presented in the last column) is interpreted as the change in a voter’s probability of switching parties given a shift from the lowest to highest value of the independent variable.

The model does a fairly good job of predicting ticket-splitting in 1988, as it correctly predicts almost 87% of the observations. In addition, most of my expectations are borne out in Table 7.1, suggesting that ticket-splitting is the result of many different factors.

As expected, the quality of the House candidates proves to be an important predictor of ticket-splitting. Voters are more likely to split their ballots when the opposition House candidate is the more visible, better-financed candidate. This is especially noteworthy since most voters split their ballots by choosing an opposition candidate in the House contest (see chapter 4). In comparing the probability change

See Appendix C for a more detailed explanation of the variables.

For explanatory variables with skewed distributions, I chose values roughly corresponding to the 5th and 95th percentile values in calculating the probability change scores. The logic here is to prevent outlier cases from exerting too much influence on the analysis. This approach was used for measures of ideology, presidential candidate evaluations, and party negativity. Also, I only let the campaign spending measure vary from 0.25 to 0.75 (rather than from 0 to 1) so as not to exaggerate its impact.
scores, campaign spending appears to be the predictor with strongest effect on ticket-splitting.' In 1988, Democratic challengers, as a group, were more experienced than Republican challengers, even as George Bush was winning the presidency, so the candidate side of the equation helps explain why 1988 produced more divided government.

When the spending and name recognition variables were interacted with political knowledge, the interaction terms were significant. This suggests that name recognition and campaign spending had stronger effects on voters with low levels of knowledge.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Expected Effect</th>
<th>Logit Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Prob. Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-3.46**</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Party Identification</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall House Candidate of Same Party</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.97**</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>-.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.74**</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraction of House Spending by Opposition</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>5.33**</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballot Format</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.95**</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>-.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.89**</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Presidential Choice</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.018*</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>-.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology in Relation to Presidential Vote</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Important Differences Between Parties</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.64**</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Toward Both Parties</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.014*</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Toward Both Parties</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-0.03*</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Moderate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.43*</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| χ² (df) | 539.4(12)** |
| -2LL    | 533.4       |
| Correctly predicted                          | 86.7%          |
| Reduction of error*                         | 48.2%          |
| Number of cases                             | 941            |

Note: The dependent variable is coded 1 for a split ticket, 0 for a straight ticket. Cell entries are logit coefficients, standard errors, and change in probability scores.

**p < .01 (two-tailed)
*p < .1 (two-tailed)

*The reduction of error (ROE) statistic indicates the extent to which the model improves on a null prediction that each observation will fall into the modal category of the dependent variable (Hagle and Mitchell 1992):
ROE = 100 x (% correctly predicted - % in modal category)/(100 - % in model category).

Source: 1988 NES

Table 7.1
Predictors of Split-Ticket Voting in 1988

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We can also see from the results that ticket-splitting was more common in the South and in states without a straight-party ballot choice. These findings, as well as the large campaign spending effect, correspond to a district-level analysis of ticket-splitting in 1988 (Burden and Kimball 1997a).

The results in Table 7.1 also demonstrate that evaluations of the presidential candidates had an effect on ticket-splitting in 1988. As expected, someone who only grudgingly votes for a presidential candidate is more likely to cast a split ballot than an enthusiastic supporter. Since voters have been less enamored of their choices in recent presidential elections, this finding helps us explain why presidential coattails are shorter (Ferejohn and Calvert 1984).

The ideological variable in Table 7.1 also has the expected positive sign and reaches conventional levels of statistical significance. Liberal Bush voters and conservative Dukakis voters were most likely to split their tickets in 1988. In a presidential election that focused on issues such as the pledge of allegiance, prison furloughs, Iran-Contra, and Boston Harbor, it is possible that some voters selected a presidential candidate on the basis of non-ideological considerations. These voters whose ideological predispositions did not closely match their partisan choice in the presidential race were more likely than others to switch parties in the House contest.

As in previous analyses, voters who blur the differences between the parties are most likely to cross party lines and cast a split ballot. Among voters who saw no important differences between the parties, 34% split their tickets in 1988, while only 21% of the voters who did see important differences between the parties were ticket-splitters (the difference in proportions is statistically
significant). Thus, a perception of indistinguishable, rather than ideologically extreme, parties is the more common route to ticket-splitting.

As in other analyses of recent national elections in this study, strength of partisanship is not a significant predictor of ticket-splitting, although its coefficient has the expected negative sign. Voters at all levels of partisanship may split their ballots. Strength of partisanship appears to be a rough amalgamation of other factors (perceptions and feelings about the parties, ideological preferences, and presidential candidate evaluations) which are more direct influences on ticket-splitting.

Table 7.1 also provides mixed evidence on balancing theories of voting. The influence of party evaluations again work against balancing hypotheses. For example, party negativity is related to ticket-splitting, but it turns out that voters who like both parties are most likely to split their ballots. And as in previous chapters, voters with neutral feelings about both parties are most likely to cross party lines and cast split ballots. These findings contradict the balancing portrait of ticket-splitters as voters distrust both parties.

On the other hand, the results in Table 7.1 indicate that moderate voters are more likely than other to split their tickets, even after controlling for a host of other explanatory measures. The coefficient for ideological moderates is positive and statistically significant, although its probability change score is smaller than almost all others in the model.

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*There is similar evidence from the "most important problem" question in NES surveys. 31% of the voters who did not think either party was better than the other at handling the nation's most important problem split their ballots. Only 21% of the voters who thought one party was better were ticket-splitters. Finally, the perceived issue distance between the parties is negatively (and significantly) associated with ticket-splitting in 1988. These results hold up in 1992 as well.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Expected Effect</th>
<th>Logit Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Prob. Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>-3.35**</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Party Identification</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall House Candidate of Same Party</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.97**</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>-.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.73**</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraction of House Spending by Opposition</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>5.32**</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballot Format</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.94**</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>-.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.90**</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Presidential Choice</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.018*</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>-.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology in Relation to Presidential Vote</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Important Differences Between Parties</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.63**</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Toward Both Parties</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.014*</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Toward Both Parties</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-0.03*</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fits Balance Profile</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 (df) = 537.3(12)** \]
\[-2LL = 535.6 \]
Correctly predicted: 87.0%
Reduction of error*: 49.4%
Number of cases: 941

Note: The dependent variable is coded 1 for a split ticket, 0 for a straight ticket. Cell entries are logit coefficients, standard errors, and change in probability scores.

**p<.01 (two-tailed)
*p<.1 (two-tailed)

*The reduction of error (ROE) statistic indicates the extent to which the model improves on a null prediction that each observation will fall into the modal category of the dependent variable (Hagle and Mitchell 1992):

\[ \text{ROE} = 100 \times (\% \text{ correctly predicted} - \% \text{ in modal category})/(100 - \% \text{ in model category}) \]

Source: 1988 NES

Table 7.2
Another Multivariate Model of Split-Ticket Voting in 1988

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To further test the policy balancing perspective, Table 7.2 replaces the ideological moderate indicator in the model in Table 7.1 with a variable identifying voters who fit the more specific profile of a balancing voter. Alas, while the effects of the other explanatory variables are largely unchanged, the balancing profile measure fails to reach statistical significance, even though it carries the expected positive coefficient. Those moderates who should be most likely to vote on the basis of balancing considerations are no more likely to split their ballots than other voters. Consequently, one would need to strain to argue that these results support a policy balancing view of voting.

In summary, a variety of forces do an impressive job in explaining why voters split their ballots in 1988. The quality of the congressional candidates, ballot format, evaluations of the presidential candidates, sincere ideological preferences, regional peculiarities, and perceptions of the major parties all help fashion ticket-splitting. Furthermore, besides the substantial impact of campaign spending, it appears that each of these factors have an equal and modest effect on split-ticket voting.

Ticket-Splitting in 1992

The 1992 election affords another opportunity to examine the determinants of split-ticket voting, albeit under somewhat different circumstances. Ross Perot's strong performance probably helped reduce the number of major-party ticket-splitters in 1992. Unattached and less interested voters who otherwise would have been likely to split their votes between the major parties may have selected Perot instead. Thus, Perot's presence on the ballot may have diluted the effects of some otherwise reliable predictors of ticket-splitting.

This section provides an analysis of major-party ticket-splitting in 1992, and then compares ticket-splitters to Perot voters. Perot
voters and split-ticket voters shared some common characteristics in 1992, although they were quite different on a couple of dimensions. Table 7.3 provides a first look at ticket-splitting in 1992, replicating the 1988 ticket-splitting model (presented in Table 7.1). For the moment, I am concerned with major-party ticket-splitting, so Perot voters are excluded from the analysis.

The results in Table 7.3 suggest that many of the catalysts of ticket-splitting in 1988 had a weaker or negligible impact in 1992. The summary goodness-of-fit statistics at the bottom of the table indicate that the model does not predict ticket-splitting as well as it did in 1988. Although the trio of congressional candidate measures are again highly significant, many of the other predictors do not fare as well.

For example, the variable indicating southern voters has a weaker effect on ticket-splitting in 1992. It appears that this is due to a greater effort by the Republican party to target House seats in conservative southern districts in the 1990s (Jacobson 1997a, 1997b; Herrnson 1995). The South is becoming more Republican on a number of measures (Stanley and Niemi 1995), which means that ticket-splitting is less common in the region.

The attenuation of other explanatory variables in the model is harder to explain until they are grouped together and considered in light of the Perot phenomenon. Ballot format, evaluations of the presidential candidates, perceptions of party differences, and the two measures of ideological positioning all have weak or insignificant effects on ticket-splitting in 1992.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Expected Effect</th>
<th>Logit Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Prob. Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>-2.07*</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Party Identification</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.44*</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>-.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall House Candidate of Same Party</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-1.25**</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>-.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall Opposition House Candidate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.97**</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraction of House Spending by Opposition</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>2.75**</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballot Format</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.35*</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Presidential Choice</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.008</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology in Relation to Presidential Vote</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Important Differences Between Parties</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Toward Both Parties</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.013**</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Toward Both Parties</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-0.016*</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>-.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Moderate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 (df) \] 290.7(12)**

-2LL 819.8
Correctly predicted 83.7%
Reduction of error* 25.2%
Number of cases 1058

Note: The dependent variable is coded 1 for a split ticket, 0 for a straight ticket. Cell entries are logit coefficients, standard errors, and change in probability scores.

**p < .01 (two-tailed)
*p < .1 (two-tailed)

*The reduction of error (ROE) statistic indicates the extent to which the model improves on a null prediction that each observation will fall into the modal category of the dependent variable (Hagle and Mitchell 1992):
ROE = 100 x (% correctly predicted - % in modal category)/(100 - % in modal category).

Source: 1992 NES

Table 7.3
Predictors of Major-Party Split-Ticket Voting in 1992
However, all of these measures represent factors that may have influenced voting for Perot in 1992. For instance, Perot may have received less support in states with straight-party ballots. Since Perot did not have a party organization or a slate of sub-presidential candidates, any voter checking the straight-party option would not be voting for Perot. In addition, voters who were not overly pleased with the major-party candidates for president had another option besides a split ticket: voting for Ross Perot. Similarly, voters who saw little or no differences between the two parties may have been attracted to Perot since he was not affiliated with either party. Finally, since Perot appeared to be neither liberal nor conservative (in fact, he did not fit into any ideological category), he may have appealed to ideological moderates. As a result, Perot may have drawn support from one end of the distribution on each of the measures described above, partially explaining why these measures do not predict ticket-splitting.

Adding Perot to a Vote Choice Model

It is worth considering whether some of these factors which may typically influence ticket-splitting also help produce third-party presidential voting. To do so, I use a multinomial logit (MNL) model to estimate the effects of ten explanatory variables on voting decisions in 1992. For this statistical analysis, the dependent variable takes on one of three values: a straight-ticket voter (coded as 0); a major-party ticket-splitter (1); or a Perot voter (2). Thus, the dependent variable indicates how the voter completed his ballot. The multinomial logit model is necessary because the categories of the dependent variable are unordered and because there are more than two possible outcomes (Greene 1993).

The purpose of the multinomial logit model is to see whether the factors that differentiate straight- from split-ticket voters are the
same forces that distinguish Perot supporters from party-line voters. Thus, the multinomial logit model estimates two separate equations: one that examines the differences between straight-party voters and ticket-splitters, and one that tries to separate Perot voters from straight-ticket voters. Straight-party voters are used as the baseline for comparison in this analysis because they form the most common (and perhaps least interesting) category of voters. Ultimately, this analysis may tell us whether third-party voters share much in common with ticket-splitters.

Several independent variables are included in the model, based on previous studies of the Perot vote in 1992 and the analyses of ticket-splitting discussed above. For example, previous studies have found that Perot drew support predominately from men and younger voters (Asher 1995). Consequently, the model includes a measure of age and a dichotomous indicator for female voters.

In addition, there is evidence that voters with weak party attachments, who see no differences between the parties, and who give disinterested evaluations of the parties were drawn to Perot in 1992 (Nichols 1995; Asher 1995; Weisberg and Kimball 1995). The model includes the same measures of strength of partisanship, party negativity, party neutrality, and perceived party differences described above in this chapter. Asher (1995) also finds evidence that Perot received a disproportionate share of votes from less knowledgeable citizens. Thus, a political knowledge scale is included as an explanatory variable.9

I include the ballot format measure because it is possible that Perot may have fared worse in states with straight-party ballots. In addition, the same measure of ideological moderates is added to the model since Perot appeared to be neither liberal nor conservative.

9Asher also finds that voters with low levels of political interest were disposed toward Ross Perot. Interest was not significant when included in the model below, so it is excluded from this analysis.
although there was some uncertainty about where he really stood (and whether an ideological dimension was appropriate). Finally, an indicator for southern voters is included to capture the fact that ticket-splitting is more common in the South.\textsuperscript{10}

The MNL coefficients and standard errors in Table 7.4 represent the effect of each explanatory variable on ticket-splitting or voting for Perot rather than casting a party-line ballot. The results suggest that ticket-splitters and Perot voters shared some traits, especially their outlook toward the political parties (with one exception). Weak partisanship, neutral party evaluations, and perceived differences between the parties help predict ticket-splitting and support for Perot in Table 7.4. MNL coefficients for these measures are significant and carry the same sign in each equation. Besides party identification, which has a stronger effect on Perot voting, the sizes of these coefficients are quite similar across equations.\textsuperscript{11} The one exception is that negative evaluations of the two parties also increase the chances of a Perot vote, but have no similar effect on ticket-splitters. This comports with the claim made by Rosenstone et al. (1984) that third-party voters are driven by aversion to the major parties.

\footnote{Notice that the congressional candidate variables, as well as the presidential evaluation and ideological self-placement variables, featured prominently in previous chapters, are absent. While these measures do influence ticket-splitting, there are no obvious analogs of these measures that can be applied to the Perot choice. This analysis requires variables that can influence both ticket-splitting and the selection of Perot.}

\footnote{A chi-square test of whether these three coefficients statistically differed from each other was not significant.}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Straight-Ticket Vs. Split-Ticket</th>
<th>Straight-Ticket Vs. Perot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.51 (0.54)</td>
<td>0.87* (0.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Party Identification</td>
<td>-0.51** (0.15)</td>
<td>-0.89** (0.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.007 (0.005)</td>
<td>-0.02** (0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.003 (0.16)</td>
<td>-0.48** (0.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Important Party Differences</td>
<td>0.46** (0.17)</td>
<td>0.48** (0.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballot Format</td>
<td>-0.24 (0.16)</td>
<td>-0.16 (0.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>0.34* (0.17)</td>
<td>-0.45* (0.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Knowledge</td>
<td>-0.03 (0.04)</td>
<td>-0.08* (0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negativity Toward Both Parties</td>
<td>-0.009 (0.006)</td>
<td>0.016** (0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutrality Toward Both Parties</td>
<td>0.016** (0.003)</td>
<td>0.016** (0.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological Moderate</td>
<td>0.14 (0.17)</td>
<td>0.29* (0.16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² (df) 289.0(20)**
Log Likelihood -1149.2
Correctly predicted 64.7%
Number of cases 1387

Note: The dependent variable is coded 2 for a Perot vote, 1 for a major-party split ticket, and 0 for a straight ticket. Cell entries are maximum likelihood coefficients (standard errors in parentheses). As the largest category, straight-ticket voters are the comparison group.

**p < .01 (two-tailed)
*p < .1 (two-tailed)

Source: 1992 NES

Table 7.4
Multinomial Logit Analysis of President-House Voting in 1992
We may see some similarities between split-ticket voters and Perot voters by examining those measures which help predict the Perot vote but fail to distinguish ticket-splitters (even though they have in the past). Ideological moderation and political knowledge may not be significant predictors of ticket-splitting in 1992 because many of the moderate and less informed voters chose Perot, thus making it impossible to split their votes between the two major parties. By removing these voters from the pool of potential ticket-splitters, Perot's candidacy diluted the effects of some predictors of split-ticket voting. Ballot format might fall into this category as well, as it carries a negative sign in both equations of Table 7.4 but fails to reach statistical significance in either case.

The evidence in Table 7.4 indicates a few dimensions that set Perot voters apart from ticket-splitters. The most noticeable factor is the South dummy, which has a positive effect on split-ticket voting but a negative effect on support for Perot. Even though he is from Texas, Perot fared poorly in the South, the region that typically carries the most ticket-splitters. Despite this, ticket-splitting still declined in the South from 1988 to 1992. Finally, women and older voters strongly resisted Perot's appeals in 1992, while gender and age add no predictive power to the ticket-splitting equation.

Conclusion

Ticket-splitting is a multi-faceted phenomenon, for a wide variety of factors lead citizens to cast split ballots. Congressional candidates, presidential candidates, ideological considerations, ballot appearance, perceptions of the parties, and (to a lesser extent) regional variation all provide some clues to the mystery of the ticket-splitter, although no single lead can crack the case by itself.
In addition, the evidence presented here fails to support the idea that many voters cast split ballots in order to produce divided government, maintain the status quo, or ensure moderate government policies. The analysis strategy here has been to focus on ideological moderate voters (especially those who are rather knowledgeable and interested in politics) as the ones most inclined toward a policy balancing voting strategy. The results turn up few, if any, signs of ticket-splitters motivated by balancing concerns. Other measurement strategies which more directly identify voters with non-separable preferences (i.e., those who see interconnections between the presidential and House contests) may be more successful (Lacy and Paolino 1997; Bruce et al. 1997). Nevertheless, my reading of the evidence presented here and elsewhere leads me to conclude that few voters are motivated to split their votes because of policy balancing considerations, despite the testimonials in chapter 1. It may be that balancing considerations come into play after other factors (such as evaluations of the candidates) cancel each other out.

Finally, the results here suggest that, in some cases, ticket-splitters and third-party presidential voters are drawn from the same group of citizens. In particular, split-ticket voters and third-party supporters seem to share certain perceptions of the major parties, characterized by weak attachments, neutral evaluations, and the perception that little differentiates the parties. Finally, third-party supporters in 1992 stand apart from ticket-splitters in terms of their regional and demographic correlates, as well as negative feelings toward the major political parties.
The Divided Voter in American Politics

The main task of this dissertation has been to explain why people divide their votes between the two major parties in the United States. The volatile character of American politics, and the ubiquitous nature of divided government, make the last thirty years different from most other periods in American politics, and point to the importance of understanding why voters switch parties and cast split ballots.

I have tried to broaden the concept of divided voting in American politics. Not only do citizens divide their votes between the parties by splitting their tickets in a single election, many voters also change party allegiances from one election to the next. There are several lessons to be gained by examining divided voting across elections. One lesson is largely pedagogical, demonstrating that divided voting may be more frequent, and a more important source of change, than previously thought. The second lesson is that many different factors, ranging from presidential evaluations and ideological considerations to congressional candidates and voter perceptions of the parties, explain why people divide their votes between the parties. There is no silver bullet to account for all divided voting in a single shot.
General Sources of Electoral Change

There is a curious paradox in the literature on American voting behavior. On the one hand, most explanations of divided government identify split-ticket voting as the primary cause. On the other hand, a prominent explanation for the habitual midterm losses suffered by the president's party emphasizes voter turnout (A. Campbell 1960; J. Campbell 1993). One phenomenon is explained by the decision to vote, while another phenomenon is explained by the partisan choices made by the voter.

The corollary to this paradox is that most studies of divided voting behavior focus solely on ticket-splitting in a single election. Although I examine ticket-splitting as well, we need a broader definition of what it means to divide one's votes. More consideration needs to be given to what are sometimes called "swing" voters -- people who switch parties in consecutive elections. This study has attempted to advance this broader definition of divided voting by examining swing voters.

One thing we gain by inspecting vote choices across elections is an appreciation that party switching is more common, and more consequential, than many people think. Divided voting is not limited to ticket-splitting. In each of the cases examined here, roughly 20% of the voters switched parties in consecutive House elections, and that involves just one contest on the ballot! When comparing on-year presidential voting to midterm House voting, the frequency of divided voting is even greater. Almost half of those who voted for Nixon in 1972 voted Democratic in 1974, while one-quarter of Clinton's 1992 supporters voted Republican in 1994.

When voters who switch parties swing in the same direction, as in 1974 and 1994, they can produce tremendous changes in the composition of Congress. While turnout certainly may be an important source of
The traditional perspective on American voters is that party identification is very stable over time at the individual and aggregate levels (Campbell et al. 1960). From this point, it is easy to make the inference that an individual’s party selection in the voting booth is stable over time as well.

For the typical observer, aggregate election statistics are the most readily available information to help explain election outcomes and electoral change. However, we are missing something by making natural (and often incorrect) inferences about voting behavior from aggregate-level evidence, especially when we observe changes in party control of Congress and the presidency. For example, aggregate election data show that each major party’s share of the vote in congressional elections does not change much from one election to the next. Given this observation, it may be natural to assume that voters generally do not switch parties between elections.¹

In contrast, voter turnout changes substantially between elections (especially between on-year and off-year elections).² Thus, our natural inclination may be to infer that turnout, rather than party defection, is primarily responsible for the electoral volatility that we observe. Incidentally, this inference is supported by the “old school” notion that the most important task of any campaign is to get its supporters to the polls on election day. Such a view of campaigning may not contemplate that one’s supporters might be persuaded to vote for the

¹The danger, of course, is that aggregate-level stability may mask individual-level instability.

²We even see significant turnout differences at four-year intervals that avoid the midterm decline phenomenon. For example, presidential turnout dropped almost 6 percentage points from 1992 to 1996 (after jumping 5 points from 1988 to 1992), and midterm turnout increased by roughly 3 percentage points from 1990 to 1994.
opposition. Consequently, the traditional perspective on campaigns views turnout as the most important predictor of an election.

In contrast, a more modern, media-oriented perspective holds that an important goal of campaigning is to persuade opponents and fence-sitters to support one's candidate or cause. The modern view of election campaigns places more emphasis on the possibility that voters may switch parties. The contrast between the old and new schools of campaigning can be seen in Edwin O'Connor's novel, *The Last Hurrah* (1956). In the novel, big-city Mayor Frank Skeffington regards radio and television as "essentially secondary approaches" in the campaign, and he relies heavily on ward captains to "get out the vote" on election day, while his young opponent runs expertly staged (and, in some cases, misleading) television commercials designed to appeal to a variety of voting blocs. In the book, as in life, the modern campaign wins by a decisive margin.

Certainly both turnout and partisan defection are important sources of electoral change in American politics. My hope is that this dissertation will increase our appreciation of party defection as a source of change as well.

Sources of Divided Voting Behavior and Their Implications

This study also demonstrates that several factors help explain why citizens divide their votes between the parties. For example, we see that many people divide their votes because of the relative visibility and quality of the candidates running for office. In a candidate-centered era of political campaigns, voter loyalty to a party is conditioned on the party nominating well-known, experienced, and

---

1This section borrows from Shively's (1992) more refined comparison of old and new schools of campaigning. In addition, as Ed Rollins can attest, the modern view of campaigns still views turnout and voter mobilization as points of emphasis.
appealing candidates for office. Thus, it should be no surprise that
voters often defect to the opposition when the nominee from their own
party is a relatively weak candidate.

The candidate factor shows up in each data analysis chapter in
this study. For example, chapter 2 shows that ticket-splitting is more
common when congressional and presidential contests are less competitive
(as when many House seats are uncontested by one of the parties, when a
high percentage of House incumbents win reelection, and when the
presidential race is won by a large margin). At the individual level,
voters are more likely to cast split ballots and switch parties when
presented with well-known, well-financed candidates from the opposition
party.

These findings lend weight to the idea that parties, financial
contributors, and potential candidates are "strategic politicians" who
evaluate national and local conditions in deciding whether to back a
candidate, make a donation, or run for office (Jacobson and Kernell
1983). While this study fails to find much evidence that voters of the
party disadvantaged by contemporary events and economic conditions are
more likely to stay home on election day, potential candidates may
decide to sit out an election when they are cross-pressured by adverse
conditions. Thus, national conditions influence the quality of each
party's pool of congressional candidates, which shapes voting decisions
on election day.¹

One implication of these results is that divided voting will
decline when congressional elections are more competitive. It is
instructive that major-party ticket-splitting has declined in the last
two presidential elections, when both parties contested a record number
of House seats. As long as both parties continue to vigorously contest

¹Thus, the considerations and decisions of "strategic politicians"
become self-fulfilling prophecies. Potential candidates refrain from
running when they believe their party will fare poorly. Then, their party
fares poorly because of a lack of quality candidates on the ballot.

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every House and Senate seat, divided voting should decline or remain at low levels. Furthermore, any congressional campaign reforms (such as free air time for candidates) that improve the competitive standing of challengers will probably reduce the frequency of divided voting.

This study also demonstrates that presidential performance and evaluations of the presidential candidates shape divided voting through their influence on voting in congressional elections. This is another conceptual payoff from examining voting across elections. Most studies of ticket-splitting do not control for presidential evaluations (but see Sigelman et al. 1997; McAlister and Darcy 1992). Indeed, given that most voters split their tickets by defecting from their identified party in the congressional contest, it may seem contradictory that presidential candidate evaluations would influence ticket-splitting.

However, when considering divided voting across elections, referendum theories of congressional elections (Tufte 1978; Erikson 1988) require that we account for presidential evaluations. Thus, previous supporters of the president's party are more likely to switch allegiances in House elections when they disapprove of the president's performance, and opposition party supporters are more inclined to support the president's party if they like what the president is doing. James Campbell (1993) argues that there is a "presidential pulse" in congressional elections which manifests itself primarily in the turnout decisions of potential voters. This study also finds a presidential pulse in House elections, but the pulse is felt more in the partisan choices of voters rather than turnout decisions.

These results should prompt us to look for effects of presidential candidate evaluations on ticket-splitting. Perhaps one reason analysts have not done so is that presidential coattails have tapered off in recent decades. However, while coattails have diminished, there is evidence of meaningful coattail effects even in the most recent national elections (Jacobson 1997a). The findings in this dissertation find
support for coattails as well, since evaluations of the presidential candidates help predict voter loyalty in House contests.

In addition, this study helps explain why presidential coattails have diminished over time. Ticket-splitting is more common among voters who are not strongly committed to their choice for president. In effect, voters with lukewarm feelings about their chosen presidential candidate are less likely to extend that candidate's coattails in congressional contests. Since NES began asking feeling thermometer questions in 1968, the average rating of the winning presidential candidate has declined in every election except 1984 (Weisberg and Kimball 1995). Thus, more voters are casting split ballots (and curtailing the president's coattails) because they do not feel very strongly about their choices for president.

Divided voting is also more common when voters' ideological preferences put them at odds with the party they typically support. As the parties have polarized on social, racial, and economic issues, liberal voters have been leaving the Republican party while conservatives have been leaving the Democratic party. Thus, examining voting decisions across elections suggests that divided voting is motivated, in part, by sincere, rather than strategic, ideological preferences. If the parties continue to stake out clear and opposing positions on important issues, we should expect divided voting to decrease as ideologically-oriented voters more readily support their preferred party.

The results of this study largely fail to support the notion that sophisticated voters who prefer divided government and moderate policies are most likely to divide their votes between the parties. From the perspective of most voters, national elections are not about abstract considerations such as the principle of checks and balances and the configuration of national government. Most voters select the same party in presidential and congressional elections. In contrast, less
knowledgeable and less interested voters, who do not invest much meaning in party labels, and who blur or minimize the differences between the parties, tend to split their votes more than other voters.®

Furthermore, ticket-splitting and split-district election outcomes are less common when the two parties are closer together on the ideological spectrum. Although politicians spend a lot of mental energy interpreting election mandates, their actions in government also affect subsequent voter decisions. When elected officials of opposite parties cross party lines to work together on important problems, it becomes easier for candidates to appeal to voters from the opposite party (increasing the likelihood that citizens will split their votes between the parties). Bipartisan activity also blurs the differences between the parties, sometimes forcing voters to rely on non-partisan cues in the election booth.

These findings have important implications for the future of American politics. National leaders can pursue a partisan strategy of governance, characterized by inflexibility and sharp differences between the parties (exemplified by the contentious debates over budget priorities in 1995, and action on Clinton's health care, budget, and crime bill proposals in the 103rd Congress), or a bipartisan approach that features more compromise and less party conflict (as exhibited in the 1997 budget agreement). If the future holds more bipartisan activity, then we should see an increase in divided voting. If the future brings more polarized partisan behavior in Washington, then divided voting should continue to decline and divided government may become a thing of the past. In addition, any reforms that would force

®Keith Krehbiel (1996) makes an excellent point about divided government and voting behavior. Balancing theories presume that voters expect that divided governments perform differently than unified governments, either in producing fewer policies (maintaining the status quo) or more centrist policies. However, there is considerable debate about the differences between divided and unified governments (Mayhew 1991; Fiorina 1996). If political scientists cannot corroborate expectations about divided government, is it wise to presume that voters hold these expectations?
party leaders to state their philosophical differences more clearly and more often (as in the "Question Time" tradition in the British Parliament) should reduce incentives for voters to split their votes between the parties.

As others have found, this study also demonstrates that ticket-splitting is less common in states with a straight-party lever on the ballot (Campbell and Miller 1957; McAlister and Darcy 1992; Beck 1997; Burden and Kimball 1997). Responsible party reformers who disdain divided government might want to bring back the straight-party lever in the 30 states that do not have such a mechanism on the ballot.

Finally, by examining the consistency of voting behavior across elections, we might better understand how divided voting occurs as a result of political persuasion and attitude change. In particular, the voter's level of political knowledge helps determine which factors lead to divided votes. Voters with high levels of information are influenced by ideological considerations, evaluations of the president, and the quality of the House candidates (as measured by campaign spending), while less informed voters are guided more by party attachments and campaign expenditures.

Ideas for Further Research

Judging by the overall fit of the individual-level analyses in this dissertation, there is still room for improvement in explaining why people divide their votes between the two parties. There are several areas where improvements might be found. First, an examination of differences between voters as objects of persuasion can be expanded to focus on characteristics besides political knowledge. One important dimension may be the voter's orientation toward politics (i.e., whether a voter thinks about politics in terms of parties, issues, groups, or
individual personalities). Each orientation may be associated with
different factors that produce consistent support for a single party.

In addition, more can be done to incorporate candidate
characteristics and actions that influence voting behavior. This study
focuses on name recognition and campaign spending as fruitful predictors
of voting decisions. Other measures of candidate quality, such as
previous experience, may help us understand why some voters split their
ballots by selecting congressional candidates from the party they
normally do not support. In addition, a closer inspection of
ideological positioning should help explain why incumbents are often the
source (and beneficiaries) of divided voting. Surely many vulnerable
incumbents survive by positioning themselves in ways that appeal to many
voters from the opposite party.

Finally, we can learn more by examining specific issues, events,
and aspects of presidential performance that lead people to divide their
votes. While this study demonstrates that general measures of
ideological preferences and presidential evaluations influence voting
decisions, we do not know which issues or events are weighed most
heavily in voter calculations. In addition, it may be that a particular
configuration of issue attitudes lead some voters to split their votes
between the parties.
APPENDIX A
DATA SOURCES

Introduction

Most studies of voting behavior rely on information collected from public opinion surveys, and this dissertation is no different. In order to understand why people divide their votes between the two major parties in the United States, surveys of voters are extremely important.

My research makes extensive use of opinion surveys conducted under the direction of the American National Election Studies (NES). NES surveys provide a wealth of information on political attitudes and electoral behavior in the United States, from 1948 to the present time. In addition, the aggregate-level analysis of split-ticket voting in chapter 2 uses data from the NES Cumulative File, a compilation of national election-year surveys from 1952 to 1992. The analyses of voter consistency in consecutive elections (chapters 3 through 7) rely on panel surveys conducted by NES in the 1970s and 1990s. Finally, the research on midterm House voting and split-ticket voting make use of cross-sectional surveys conducted by NES in 1974, 1988, 1992, and 1994.

This appendix will provide some of the technical details about these data sources, and the reasons I have chosen them. In addition, I will discuss some of the advantages and disadvantages of using these data.
Data From the National Election Studies

A large part of my research examines the consistency of voting behavior from one election to the next. Consequently, I rely on panel studies in which the same person is interviewed at different points in time (in this case, after each national election). Specifically, I use NES panel studies that cover the 1972-74, 1990-92, and 1992-94 election cycles.

One might ask why panel studies are necessary when survey interviewers can ask voters not only who they voted for in the latest election, but also who they voted for in previous elections. In fact, NES routinely asks respondents about their voting selection in the previous presidential election. The unfortunate problem is that people often have bad memories. In particular, people tend to exaggerate the consistency of their behavior, remembering their past behavior in a way that makes it consistent with their current behavior (Festinger 1957; Cialdini et al. 1973). In the case of voting, people tend to remember previously voting for the same party they currently support, even if that is not the truth (see Appendix B for more details). As a result, those who have changed parties often have the least reliable recollections, so that studies which rely on voter recall underestimate the extent to which voting behavior changes over time.

The 1992-94 panel data and the 1994 cross-section data come from the 1994 American National Election Study [enhanced with 1992 and 1993 data], conducted by the Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan. Election-year surveys conducted by NES since 1978 have been funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation. All NES surveys used in this dissertation were made public by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR).¹ In

¹Neither the National Election Studies, the National Science Foundation, nor the ICPSR are responsible for any errors or opinions expressed in this study.
all, 759 of the respondents in the 1994 NES survey had been previously interviewed as part of the 1992 NES pre- and post-election survey, and these 759 respondents are examined in the chapters on the consistency of voting behavior from 1992 to 1994. The 1994 NES survey included another 1036 respondents interviewed for the first time shortly after the 1994 election. Thus, a total of 1795 respondents comprise the 1994 NES sample and form the basis of midterm voting analysis in chapter 6.

The 1992 survey data come from the American National Election Study, 1992: Pre- and Post-Election Survey [Enhanced With 1990 and 1991 Data], conducted by the Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan (ICPSR study number 6067). A total of 2485 respondents were interviewed before the 1992 election, with 2255 re-interviewed after the election.

To study the consistency of voting behavior from 1990 to 1992, I used the American National Election Study, 1990-1992: Full Panel Survey, conducted by the Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan (ICPSR study number 6230). The sample includes 1359 people who were interviewed after the 1990 election and again in 1992. The 1988 survey data come from the American National Election Study, 1988: Pre- and Post-Election Survey, conducted by the Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan (ICPSR study number 9196). The 1988 survey contains a sample of 2040 people interviewed before the election and 1775 people who were interviewed both before and after the 1988 election.

I examine voting in the 1972 and 1974 elections by using data from The American National Election Series: 1972, 1974, and 1976, conducted by the Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan (ICPSR study number 7607). The 1972 survey was supported by grants from the National Science Foundation and the National Institute for Mental Health. The 1974 survey was supported by grants from the National Science Foundation, the John and Mary R. Markle Foundation, and the
Carnegie Corporation. The 1974 component includes 1575 respondents interviewed after the midterm elections. The 1972-74 panel study is based on a sample of 1624 people who were interviewed for the 1972 election and again after the 1974 election.

NES surveys in the 1980s and 1990s are typically generated from a national multi-stage area probability sample. First, metropolitan statistical areas are selected with probability proportional to population, then census blocks are drawn from within each selected metropolitan area, then households are drawn from within each selected census block, and, finally, a single respondent is chosen from the selected household. This method is designed to produce a representative sample of respondents within each of four geographic regions, and to produce a representative national sample, given the costs of conducting a national survey of individuals.

The 1972 and 1974 NES studies used a similar multi-stage sampling procedure. The twelve largest metropolitan areas were chosen with certainty, while the remaining statistical (or sampling) areas were grouped into 62 strata, each of which contained at least two statistical sampling areas. Within each strata, sampling areas were then selected with probability proportional to their 1970 population. Finally, households, and then individuals within selected households, were drawn from the selected sampling areas and the twelve largest metropolitan areas. This method also was intended to generate a representative sample within each of four geographic regions of the country.

Response Rates and Panel Attrition

Any study that relies on survey data must make an effort to ensure that the sample of people who participate in a survey are representative cross-section of the national population. Those who conduct survey research (including the National Election Studies) try to produce
representative samples by using a selection process in which everyone has a roughly equal chance of being selected (which usually requires that individuals and areas be selected at random). Once a sample is chosen, the most important goal is to achieve a high response rate, so that almost everyone selected participates in the survey. If the response rate is low, then the resulting sample may be extremely unrepresentative of the population from which it is drawn.

Table A.1 provides the response rates for each of the NES surveys used in this study. In all cases, the response rates are above 70%, well above that typically achieved by private pollsters, and above the level usually accepted by academic users of survey data (Traugott and Lavrakas 1996). With increased public distrust of government, and concerns about privacy amid a growing avalanche of marketing surveys, pollsters have become more concerned about response rates. It is a tribute to the NES that they still manage to conduct surveys with relatively high response rates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NES Study</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994 Post-Election</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-94 Panel</td>
<td>77.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992 Pre-Election</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992 Post-Election</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-92 Panel</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988 Pre-Election</td>
<td>70.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988 Post-Election</td>
<td>87.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974 Post-Election</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972-74 Panel</td>
<td>74.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A.1  
Response Rates in NES Surveys

Response rates deserve special attention in the case of panel surveys, although the panel surveys used in this study all have respectable response rates. A panel survey is one method to examine
whether the attitudes and behavior of people over time. This study relies heavily on NES panel surveys, in which a representative sample of people are interviewed after one election, and then those same people are interviewed again two years later during the following election. An important response concern in panel surveys is "panel attrition." Some participants in the original sample cannot be interviewed for the subsequent waves of a panel survey (for example, some refuse to participate again, and others may have moved). The concern is that the sample of people interviewed at both waves may not be representative of all adults or all voters, especially if some types of people are more likely than others to drop out of the sample.

Some analyses of NES panel studies suggest that attrition can alter the composition of the final sample. For example, voters with low levels of engagement in politics (as measured by interest in politics, knowledge of politics, and political participation) are most likely to drop out of panel surveys (Traugott and Rosenstone 1994; Traugott and Morchio 1990). Since part of my argument is that voters who are less involved in politics are more likely to divide their votes, this feature of panel attrition should make it more difficult to find support for this thesis. The evidence in this study comes out in spite of typical patterns of panel attrition.

On the other hand, panel attrition may be less of a concern for this study because I only examine voters, and voters are more likely than non-voters to participate in all waves of a panel study (Traugott and Rosenstone 1994). In addition, Traugott and Rosenstone's (1994) analysis of the 1990-92 NES panel finds little evidence of a partisan or ideological bias due to panel attrition. Democrats and Republicans, and liberals and conservatives, are equally likely to be re-interviewed in subsequent waves of a panel survey. Thus, it seems unlikely that the samples analyzed in this study are skewed in favor of one party or political point of view or another.
Panel Surveys and the Hawthorne Effect

Another concern about panel surveys is that the first wave of interviews may alter the subsequent behavior of the participants in the study, thus contaminating their responses in ensuing waves of the study. The main concern here is that political surveys make respondents more aware of political events and activities than would otherwise be the case. For example, Granberg and Holmberg (1992) find that survey participants are more likely than other citizens to vote in subsequent elections, although the effects they document are rather modest (see also Clausen 1968).

It is possible, though, that the panel participants examined here are more likely to vote than other citizens. Thus, chapter 3 may have underestimated the extent to which voters in presidential elections abstain from the following midterm, although the 30% drop-off rates found in chapter 3 are close to the aggregate decline in turnout in off-year elections. However, I am more concerned with a partisan disparity in vote drop-off, rather than the absolute drop-off rate. Granberg and Holmberg (1990) provide no reason why survey participation might affect one party (or other group) more than another. In addition, studies on the Hawthorne effect have only found evidence that survey participation influences turnout, not vote choice. Finally, studies on turnout find a Hawthorne effect when citizens are interviewed a month or two before an election. I rely on panel surveys where individuals are re-interviewed two years later, and we do not know if a Hawthorne effect on voting persists beyond a month or two.

Response Bias

This study also relies on the accuracy of reported voting behavior. Respondents may claim to have voted when, in fact, they did
not (Clausen 1968). Also, respondents may claim to have voted for the winner or the incumbent when, in fact, they did not (Wright 1993, 1992, 1990; Gow and Eubank 1983). The pro-winner or pro-incumbent bias in NES studies may be the result of question wording and the amount of time that passes between election day and the NES interviews (Wright 1990; Gow and Eubank 1983). In addition, Wright (1990) argues that the pro-winner bias in the National Election Studies causes NES to overstate the extent of ticket-splitting and to exaggerate the effect of local variables (such as incumbency and campaign spending) on the voting decision.

While response bias in vote reports could affect this study, a couple of points should be made. First, any potential bias appears to be present only in some congressional elections after 1978, when NES changed the wording of vote choice questions in House and Senate elections. There is little evidence suggesting bias in reported presidential vote choice (Wright 1993; Gronke 1992). Thus, the findings reported here using data from NES surveys conducted in the 1970s should not be contaminated by response bias. Furthermore, the results of analyses of elections in the 1990s (in chapters 4, 5 and 6) largely match the results found in the 1970s.

Second, there is some dispute about the extent and causes of response bias in vote reports, as well as its effects on subsequent analyses. For example, Gronke (1992) argues that response bias is primarily a problem for Senate elections, and finds less of a confounding effect on subsequent analyses of vote choice.

Third, NES made an effort in recent election surveys to interview more respondents very soon after the election, thus reducing one potential source of bias. In its 1994 survey, NES interviewed 68% of the respondents within three weeks of the election and 40% within the first week, a substantial improvement over 1992, when 42% were interviewed within three weeks of the election. Thus, one possible
source of bias has been reduced in the 1994 NES survey, which is used extensively in this study.

Given all this, it is still possible that a bias in vote reports may shape the results reported here. The main concern is that such a bias could lead me to exaggerate the effects of candidate characteristics (such as name recognition and campaign spending) on voting behavior. I have tried to caution against such a possibility. For example, I include the aggregate-level analysis in chapter 2, which should not be unaffected by response bias, yet its conclusions correspond with many of the individual-level findings in subsequent chapters. In addition, the name recognition and spending effects reported in this study are so large and ubiquitous that even if these effects should be smaller because of response bias, they would still be important. Finally, I have taken some care not to exaggerate candidate factors at the expense of other forces. In fact, the findings of this study suggest that many factors (including policy preferences, presidential performance, perceptions of the parties, and candidate qualities) influence voting decisions.

Using District Assignments to Add Contextual Data

Another wrinkle of this dissertation is that I add some contextual data to the respondent information collected in the NES surveys. There are two types of contextual data that I included: ballot format and congressional campaign spending. The ballot data measured whether or not the respondent lived in a state with a straight-party lever on the ballot. From the 1950s through the 1970s, these data were available in the annual volumes of The Book of the States. For the 1980s and 1990s, I found state ballot information in Brace (1993) and the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Affairs (1986). Adding this information
to NES survey data is straightforward since NES identifies the state of each respondent.

Campaign spending data used in this study were collected and reported by the Federal Election Commission (FEC), with one exception. The 1974 spending data were compiled and reported by Common Cause, since the FEC did not exist then. Adding congressional spending data to NES surveys is fairly straightforward as well, because NES reports the congressional district in which each respondent resides. The problem is, there is some difficulty identifying every respondent's congressional district, especially in a panel survey when districts may change because of redistricting or a respondent may move. Since 1978, NES determined has each respondent's congressional district by comparing maps of congressional districts with maps of census tracts where the respondent lived. In 1994, NES used a more advanced computerized matching system, which found that slightly less than 3% of the 1992 district assignments were incorrect. Thus, it appears that NES is quite accurate at the difficult task of identifying congressional districts.

Incidentally, any errors in assigning respondents to congressional districts would probably weaken the association between campaign spending and vote choice.

It is unclear how NES made district assignments in the 1972 and 1974 surveys. NES may have compared district maps to maps of primary sampling units, as they have done more recently, or NES could have identified the respondent's congressional district as part of the vote validation studies conducted in 1977. Because of advances in the technology of identifying congressional districts, it is possible that district assignment errors are more common in the 1972 and 1974 NES surveys. This may partially explain why the campaign spending measure

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2Thanks to Peter Radcliffe, for helping me access the FEC data, primarily from the FEC web site (www.fec.gov), and Gary Jacobson, for sending me the 1974 House spending data. Neither is responsible for any errors or interpretations in this study.

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(a district-level variable) has a relatively weaker impact on voting in 1974.

Sources of Aggregate Data

The aggregate-level analysis in chapter 2 provides another vantage point on divided voting. Much of the data used for chapter 2 were taken from the American National Election Studies Cumulative Data File, 1952-1992 (ICPSR #8475). This collection pools common measures from each NES survey since 1952. I updated much of this data by calculating marginal percentages from the 1996 NES survey. Measures of party voting come from two sources. Data on party voting in the House since 1954 come from Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report (December 21, 1996, p. 3462). Data on party voting prior to 1954 come from Cooper et al. (1977). Data on corrected ADA scores were calculated by Groseclose and colleagues (1996) and graciously supplied by Tim Groseclose.

The president's margin of victory was calculated from data provided in Stanley and Niemi (1994). The number of uncontested House contests in each election since 1946 was tabulated by Jacobson (1997b). Finally, data on incumbent reelection rates came from Ornstein et al. (1994). I calculated the president's margin of victory and the House incumbent reelection rate for 1996 from election reports. Since random measurement error washes out when aggregate variables are measured, there is less of a concern about measurement issues and their consequences for the analysis in chapter 2.

A Note on Statistical Methods

Much of the individual-level data analysis in this study relies on logistic regression, a multivariate technique intended to uncover the effects of several explanatory variables on a dependent variable that is
dichotomous (e.g., whether or not a voter switches parties). Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, the most common multivariate technique in political analysis, is applied in cases with a continuous dependent variable, and estimates the following general equation.

\[ Y_i = \sum b_k X_{ik} + u_i \]

In the basic OLS model, the dependent variable \( Y_i \) is assumed to be a linear function of regression coefficients \( b_k \) multiplied by the values of a set of explanatory variables \( X_{ik} \), plus an error term \( u_i \). OLS also assumes that the marginal effect of each explanatory variable on the dependent variable (as estimated by the regression coefficients) is constant. Finally, in order to mathematically derive the regression coefficients, OLS makes certain assumptions about the distributional properties of the error term. For example, the basic OLS model assumes that the error term has a normal distribution with a mean of zero and a constant variance. In any case, OLS is often the method of choice when the dependent variable is continuous (as in chapter 2).

When we have a dichotomous dependent variable (in which the dependent variable only takes on the values of 0 or 1), we can interpret the expected value of the dependent variable as the probability (given the values of the explanatory variables) that the dependent variable will be 1. However, a dichotomous dependent variable creates several problems for OLS regression. First, the error term is no longer normally distributed and now has a non-constant variance. In fact, the variance of the error term will be correlated with the expected value of the dependent variable. Perhaps even more vexing, there is nothing to prevent the OLS model from producing expected values of the dependent variable which are greater than 1 or less than 0 (an significant problem since probabilities, by definition, must be contrained to the [0,1] range (see Aldrich and Nelson 1984; Gujarati 1988).
A common solution to this problem is to use a mathematical model in which the dependent variable is a nonlinear function of the explanatory variables, thus allowing us to limit expected values of the dependent variable to the [0,1] range. I use the logistic regression model, which is based on the following equation.

\[ p_i = \frac{e^{\sum b_k x_{ik}}}{1 + e^{\sum b_k x_{ik}}} \]

In the logistic model, the expected probability that the dependent variable equals 1 \((P_i)\) is a function of regression coefficients \((b_k)\) multiplied by values of the explanatory variables \((x_{ik})\). The error term, not pictured in the above equation, has the properties desired for regression estimation, and the logistic curve does not allow expected probabilities to fall below 0 or exceed 1. This is why I rely on logistic regression for many of the individual-level analyses in this study.

Conclusion

It is impossible to find a data set without imperfections, and this study is no exception. Despite some weaknesses associated with the data used here, there are some important advantages to using the data I have chosen. First, NES surveys provide a rich foundation of information about voters in the United States that is unmatched in other surveys. No other source contributes as much about the backgrounds, opinions, knowledge, and fears of American voters. Now that NES has been conducting election surveys for almost fifty years, the extraordinary continuity in many of their survey questions allows us to compare voting models across elections. This feature makes it possible for me to compare voters in the 1990s to voters in the early 1970s. The
continuous and consistent effort of NES also make possible aggregate time series analyses, as in chapter 2 of this study.

In addition, panel studies conducted by NES provide the most appropriate way to examine individual-level changes over time (see Appendix B for more on this point). Furthermore, NES panel studies happen to coincide with some of the most dramatic electoral changes in recent American history (in 1958, 1974, and again in 1994). Students of voting in the United States could learn more by making more frequent use of these panel surveys. I think this study has gained something by examining electoral change with the NES panel studies.

By using a variety of data sets (at both the individual and aggregate level) this dissertation provides many vantage points on voting in the United States. In addition, the results found at individual level rather neatly correspond with the aggregate-level findings. In conclusion, the strengths of using these sources of data outweigh their weaknesses.
Introduction

A key part of my analysis compares individual voting behavior in a presidential election and the following midterm election. Using opinion surveys, there are basically two ways to examine voting behavior over the course of two or more elections. One could use a single cross-sectional survey, in which voters are asked to report their selections in the most recent election and recall their vote choices in past elections, or one could use panel surveys, in which the same voters are interviewed after each election. While each method has its advantages and disadvantages, I rely on panel surveys for the research in this dissertation because vote recall questions are unreliable in a manner that understates the extent to which voters switch parties over time.

Vote Recall

Instead of relying on costly panel surveys to study individual voting behavior over time, one could use a single-shot survey of voters during a particular election and ask voters to recall their voting decisions in the previous election. NES surveys routinely ask respondents to recall their voting behavior in the previous presidential election, which might serve as a baseline to measure change. The
obvious problem, however, is that people may incorrectly remember how they voted two or more years ago (or whether they voted at all).¹

As it turns out, panel surveys help us estimate the reliability of vote recall questions. Assuming that people correctly reported their vote during the first wave of a panel survey, we can compare that response to their vote recall in the next wave of the survey. Those whose recalled vote is inconsistent with their initial vote report are assumed to have incorrectly recalled their past voting behavior. The following analyses compare vote recall with reported vote in the 1992-94 and 1972-76 NES panel surveys.

The most common source of error in survey questions asking people to recall past attitudes or behavior is one’s present state of mind. In particular, people tend to manipulate their recollections to make past behavior appear consistent with current attitudes and behavior. This potential bias in vote recall questions was recognized early in the experience of national election surveys (Converse 1962).

When another election intervenes before survey respondents are asked to recall a prior vote, they may feel pressure to appear consistent in their behavior in order to avoid cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957) or because consistency is generally regarded as a virtue (Ross and Conway 1986). Furthermore, when memory is hazy, people tend to use present attitudes and behavior to aid recall (Ross and Conway 1986). Thus, errors in vote recall often occur as voters try to make past behavior appear consistent with current attitudes and behavior (Weir 1975; Benewick et al. 1969; Himmelweit et al. 1978).

Nevertheless, there are other sources of error in vote recall questions. For example, the desire to give socially acceptable or preferred answers influences vote recall. Thus, people tend to

¹Most people are able to answer the vote recall question. For example, in the 1994 NES, only 31 of 1795 respondents (1.7%) could not remember if they voted or not in 1992. Of the 1322 who said they voted in 1992, only 24 (1.8%) did not know or would not say who they voted for.
exaggerate levels of political participation in surveys, because voting and other forms of participation are seen as desirable activities. Table B.1 uses data from the 1992-92 NES panel study to show that non-voters often remember having voted, whereas those who did vote rarely deny having done so (see also Krosnick and Fabrigar forthcoming; Abramson and Clagget 1984). Thus, the use of a recall question to ascertain past voting behavior will be contaminated by some respondents who actually did not vote.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recall of 1992 Turnout</th>
<th>Did Vote</th>
<th>Did Not Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did Vote</td>
<td>97.8%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Vote</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>83.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (n=743)</td>
<td>100% (n=596)</td>
<td>100% (n=147)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1992-94 NES Panel

Table B.1
Consistency of Reported and Recalled Voter Turnout

Social desirability also creeps into voter recall to create a "bandwagon effect," in which a higher proportion recall voting for the winning candidate than actually did so on election day (Converse 1962; Clausen 1968). The converse of the bandwagon effect is that people who voted for losing third-party candidates are most likely to misremember that vote (Benewick et al. 1969; Himmelweit et al. 1978).
Table B.2 compares the recalled presidential selections of respondents against what they had reported shortly after the election. In both cases, most people (93%) are consistent in recalling their voting selections. Keep in mind, though, that Table B.2 excludes those who incorrectly remembered having voted in the previous election. As expected, Table B.2 also provides limited evidence of a bandwagon effect in voter recall. As the top half of the table indicates, inconsistent recall in 1994 was more common among Perot voters, a difference which is statistically significant (Chi-square=6.86, 2 d.f., p < .05). Notice, however, that there is no shift in recall errors toward Clinton, the 1992 winner, or Nixon, the 1972 winner. This may be due to the low popular standing of both men at the time of the ensuing wave of each panel survey. While Table B.2 indicates that responses to recall questions may be accurate for the most part, the problem involves the qualities associated with people who make incorrect recollections.
Most importantly, both panel studies provide support for the hypothesis that voters reinterpret past behavior to make it appear consistent with current attitudes and behavior. For example, if recall errors are driven by the need to appear consistent, then voters who switch parties in consecutive elections should be more likely to make such errors than people who vote for the same party in both elections. As Table B.3 demonstrates, split-term voters in 1994 were four times more likely than consistent voters to commit errors recalling their presidential vote in 1992. In 1976, presidential vote switchers were four times more likely to make inconsistent vote recollections than consistent partisans. Thus, voters who changed parties over time were most likely to misremember past behavior, so the use of recall questions underestimates the frequency with which voters switch parties over time.\footnote{I also found evidence that voters who changed their party identification, and who substantially altered their evaluations of the president, were more inclined to misremember past voting behavior.}

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Consistency of 1992 Vote Recall} & \textbf{No} & \textbf{Yes} \\
\hline
\textbf{Consistent} & 97.0\% & 87.2\% \\
\textbf{Inconsistent} & 3.0\% & 12.8\% \\
\hline
\textbf{Total (n=348)} & 100\% (n=270) & 100\% (n=78) \\
\hline
\textbf{Chi-Square} & 11.99 (1 df, p < .001) & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Consistency of 1972 Vote Recall} & \textbf{No} & \textbf{Yes} \\
\hline
\textbf{Consistent} & 96.3\% & 83.1\% \\
\textbf{Inconsistent} & 3.8\% & 16.9\% \\
\hline
\textbf{Total (n=743)} & 100\% (n=560) & 100\% (n=183) \\
\hline
\textbf{Chi-Square} & 36.87 (1 df, p < .001) & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

Sources: 1992-94 NES Panel, 1972-76 NES Panel

Table B.3
Recalled Vote Consistency by Actual Vote Consistency
Another set of hypotheses holds that errors of recall may be the result of current or past indecision or uncertainty. Those who genuinely have a hard time accurately remembering a previous vote may be those for whom the vote was not a clear cut decision. After all, changes in attitudes and perceptions are most common among people who have uncertain attitudes to begin with (Alvarez and Franklin 1996). For example, social psychologists often conceptualize memory as a network in which associated beliefs, attitudes and other thoughts are linked together (Fiske and Taylor 1991). Those who had difficulty selecting a candidate may have chosen one almost at random. If so, there would be few "links" in their long-term memory to help remember that choice. Voters who made a selection with ease probably have other partisan attitudes and beliefs in linked to that choice in their memory, making it easier to recall. Similarly, those who had difficulty choosing between two candidates may have created mental images of voting for either candidate. Thus, when asked to recall their choice, they may have trouble selecting the correct image. People who did not have trouble choosing a presidential candidate only created one mental image of a candidate choice, thus simplifying the recall task.

As a result, one would expect that voters who are more certain about their candidate and party preferences (and, incidentally, are the least likely to change their voting behavior or partisanship) should have the most accurate recollections of past voting behavior. In contrast, voters who faced some uncertainty or indecision in selecting a presidential candidate may have some trouble remembering who they finally selected.
The two panel studies also provide evidence that inconsistent vote recall is associated with indecision and the importance of the election outcome. For example, Table B.4 shows that recall errors are related to thermometer ratings of the presidential candidates. The bottom half of the table indicates that voters who rated Nixon and McGovern within 25 points of each other on the 100-point thermometer scale in 1972 were almost three times as likely as other voters to misremember their 1972 vote selection. The top half of the table shows that voters who gave Bush and Clinton similar ratings in 1992 were more likely to make recall errors than other voters. Notice that the relationship between candidate evaluations and recall errors is weaker in the 1992-94 panel survey, probably due to the smaller time lag and Perot’s candidacy in 1992, which reduced the validity of Bush and Clinton thermometer scores as a measure of indecision.

Another indicator of uncertainty is the time of decision. Voters who make a selection during the campaign, shortly before the election, are probably more uncertain about their final choice than voters who make up their minds during the primaries or conventions. As expected, Table B.5 shows that recall errors are more common among voters who reported making up their minds during (rather than before) the general election campaign. Again, the relationship is weaker in the 1992-94
analysis, probably due to the shorter time lag and the smaller sample in the 1992-94 case. These findings suggest that less interested voters who are uncertain about their selection are more likely to incorrectly recall past voting behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consistency of 1992 Vote Recall</th>
<th>Before Campaign</th>
<th>During Campaign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>94.9%</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistent</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (n=555)</td>
<td>100% (n=351)</td>
<td>100% (n=204)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Square = 3.63 (1 df, p &lt; .10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consistency of 1972 Vote Recall</th>
<th>Before Campaign</th>
<th>During Campaign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>96.1%</td>
<td>86.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistent</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (n=845)</td>
<td>100% (n=540)</td>
<td>100% (n=305)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Square = 27.58 (1 df, p &lt; .001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1992-94 NES Panel, 1972-76 NES Panel

Table B.5
Recalled Vote Consistency by Time of Past Vote Decision

Conclusion

Even though most people seem to correctly recall their past voting behavior, those who make mistakes hinder any effort to examine individual-level change over time. First, those who switch parties are most likely to incorrectly remember their past voting choices. Second,

Although not presented here, I also found evidence that voter recall errors were more common for those with little interest in the outcome of the election and those who said they considered other candidates in the presidential contest.
those factors which help identify people who misremember the past are
some of the same factors which I use to identify voters who switch
parties in chapters 5 and 6. The confounding nature of these problems
with vote recall questions is summarized most clearly below.

"... if we try to establish the fact of a vote shift from
the individual's recall of his next prior vote, we are at
the mercy of the accuracy of his report. The same theory
which predicts that the less involved are more susceptible
to party changes suggests that the less involved will also
give less accurate accounts of past political behavior. For
simple psychological reasons, we would expect them to
distort past behavior in the direction of current
preference." (Converse 1962)

Thus, it is no surprise that one of the leading authorities on
survey research methods recommends using panel studies to examine
attitude and behavior change (Krosnick and Fabrigar, forthcoming).
Because of the difficulties detailed above, this dissertation also
relies on panel surveys, rather than vote recall questions, to measure
and explain changes in voting behavior.
APPENDIX C

VARIABLE DEFINITIONS

Individual-Level Dependent Variables

The individual-level dependent variables in chapters 4 through 7 of this study are based on respondents' reported vote choices in surveys conducted by the National Election Studies. I rely on questions in which respondents report the party they supported in each contest. I corrected nine cases in 1974 and ten cases in 1972 where respondents remembered the name of the candidate they selected, but could not remember candidate's party affiliation. After 1978, this problem was avoided because NES provided the candidate's name and party together in the vote report question.

Split-Ticket Voting: coded as a 1 for respondents who voted for presidential and House candidates of opposite parties, 0 for respondents who voted for candidates of the same party.

Split-Term Voting: coded as a 1 for respondents who voted for a midterm House candidate of a party different from the presidential candidate they chose in the previous election, 0 for those who selected the same party in both contests.

Party Switching in Consecutive House Elections: coded as a 1 for voters who switch parties in consecutive House contests, 0 for those who remain loyal to the same party.

Midterm House Voting: This variable simply codes whether the respondent voted for a Democrat or Republican in the midterm House election.

Aggregate-Level Dependent Variables

The aggregate-level dependent variables examined in chapter 2 are generated from the cumulative survey data collected by the National Election Studies and other sources.

Ticket-Splitting: The percentage of voters who chose presidential and House candidates of opposite parties in each presidential election since 1952, as reported in surveys conducted by the National Election Studies.

Split-District Outcomes: The percentage of congressional districts carried by House and presidential candidates of different parties in each presidential election since 1900. Prior to 1952, there are incomplete data for some districts. For 1900 to 1992, data are reported in Stanley and Niemi (1994). Data for 1996 are reported in Cook (1997).
Individual-Level Independent Variables

For the most part, these measures are derived from individual responses to NES survey questions. In a couple of cases, I include contextual measures that characterize the state or congressional district in which the respondent resides. Several measures capture evaluations of House candidates from the respondent’s party and from the opposition party. The respondent’s vote choice in the presidential contest or the previous House election is used as a baseline in determining which House candidate is from the same party and which candidate represents the opposition party.

Strength of Party Identification: Coded 1 for pure independents, 2 for leaners and weak partisans, and 3 for strong partisans, using the standard questions on party identification.

Party Identification: This measure uses the standard seven-point party identification scale, with strong Democrats at the high end of the scale, and strong Republicans at the low end.

Recall Name of Republican House Candidate: A dichotomous variable coded 1 if the respondent correctly identifies the name of the Republican House candidate, 0 otherwise.

Recall Name of Democratic House Candidate: A dichotomous variable coded 1 if the respondent correctly identifies the name of the Democratic House candidate, 0 otherwise.

Recall House Candidate of Same Party: A dichotomous variable coded 1 if the respondent correctly identifies the name of the House candidate from the party which the voter supported in the previous election, 0 otherwise.

Recall Opposition House Candidate: A dichotomous variable coded 1 if the respondent correctly identifies the name of the opposition House candidate, 0 otherwise.

Recognize House Candidate of Same Party: A dichotomous variable coded 1 if the respondent recognizes the name of the House candidate from the party which the voter supported in the previous election, 0 otherwise. Recognition is based on whether the respondent can rate the candidate on the feeling thermometer.

Recognizes Opposition House Candidate: A dichotomous variable coded 1 if the respondent recognizes the name of the opposition House candidate, 0 otherwise. Recognition is based on whether the respondent can rate the candidate on the feeling thermometer.

Like Anything About House Candidate of Same Party: A dichotomous variable coded 1 if the respondent likes something about the candidate from the party which the voter supported in the previous election, 0 otherwise.

Like Anything About Opposition House Candidate: A dichotomous variable coded 1 if the respondent likes anything about the opposition House candidate, 0 otherwise.

Fraction of House Spending by Opposition: The opposition candidate’s share of total major-party spending in the general election campaign for the House. Campaign spending data for 1988, 1992 and 1994 were collected and reported by the Federal Election Commission. House
spending data for 1974 were collected and reported by Common Cause, and generously passed along to me by Professor Gary Jacobson at the University of California at San Diego.

**Fraction of House Spending by Democrat:** The Democratic candidate’s share of total major-party spending in the general election campaign for the House.

**Evaluation of President in Relation to Past Vote:** For Democratic voters in the previous election, this measure is the raw feeling thermometer score for the president. For past Republican voters, this measure is 100 minus the president's thermometer score. This has the effect of flipping the scale at its midpoint (50) for previous Republican voters. The logic is to place Republicans who like the president and Democrats who dislike the president at the same end of the scale, since both groups should be equally likely to switch parties.

**Evaluation of the President:** This measure (which is used only in single-shot analyses of midterm House voting) is simply the feeling thermometer rating of the president.

**Evaluation of Presidential Choice:** This measure (which is used in analyses of split-ticket voting) is simply the feeling thermometer rating of the voter’s selected presidential candidate.

**Opinion of Ford Pardon in Relation to 1972 House Vote:** This variable is coded 1 for past Democratic voters who approved of the pardon, 0 for Democrats who disapproved of the pardon. It is coded 1 for past Republican voters who disapproved of the pardon, 0 for Republicans who approved of the pardon.

**Ideology in Relation to Past Vote:** For Democratic voters in the previous election, this measure is the seven-point self-reported ideology scale. For past Republican voters, this measure is 8 minus the voter’s placement on the ideology scale. This has the effect of flipping the scale at its midpoint (4) for Republican voters.

**Ideology in Relation to Presidential Vote:** For Democratic voters in the previous election, this measure is the seven-point self-reported ideology scale. For past Republican voters, this measure is 8 minus the voter’s placement on the ideology scale. This has the effect of flipping the scale at its midpoint (4) for previous Republican voters.

**Ideology:** This measure (which is used only in single-shot analyses of midterm House voting) is simply the respondent’s self-placement on a seven-point ideology scale, with conservatives at the high end of the scale.

**Ideological Moderate:** Coded 1 for voters who placed themselves to the right of the Republican party and to the left of the Democratic party on the seven-point ideology scale, 0 otherwise.

**Political Knowledge:** For 1988, 1992 and 1994, political knowledge is measured by a scale which counts the number of correct answers provided by NES respondents on eight factual knowledge questions (which, for example, ask respondents to identify political figures, name the party controlling each chamber of Congress). For 1974, I used the interviewer's evaluation of the respondent’s level of political knowledge on a five-point scale. For both measures, the most knowledgeable respondents are at the high end of the scale.
Interest in Politics: This variable is measured by asking about the respondent's level of interest in the outcome of the presidential and congressional campaigns. The high end of the scale represents greater interest in politics.

Efficacy: External efficacy is measured by a scale which combines adds together responses to two questions. One question asks whether they agree that "public officials don't care much what people like me think," and the other asks whether they agree that "people like me don't have any say about what the government does." The high end of the scale represents high levels of efficacy.

Fits Balance Profile: Coded 1 for ideological moderates (see description above) who are above average in political knowledge, interest in politics, and political efficacy (see above), 0 otherwise.

Ideological Proximity to House Candidates: This measure is computed by subtracting the absolute distance between the voter and the Democratic House candidate from the distance between the voter and the Republican candidate to produce an ideological proximity measure. Negative scores indicate that the Republican candidate is closer to the voter's ideological position, while positive scores suggest that the Democratic candidate is closer to the voter's ideal position.

Balance Clinton Ideology With House Candidates: The 1994 NES data allow us to compute the average placement of Clinton's position with each of the House candidates. After computing both average scores, I subtracted the Clinton/House Democrat average from the Clinton/House Republican average to produce an ideological balancing measure. Negative scores on this balancing variable indicate that the voter is closer to the midpoint between the Republican candidate and Clinton's position (e.g., closer to CR than CD in Figure 6.1). Positive scores on the balancing variable indicate that the voter is closer to the midpoint between the Democratic candidate's position and Clinton's position.

Negative Toward Both Parties: The Democratic and Republican party thermometer scores are recoded and multiplied together so that voters who dislike both parties are at the high end of the new scale (near 100), while those who like both parties are at the low end (near 1). The party thermometer scale is first recoded into a ten-point scale with the high score (10) going to those who rate the party below 10 on the original 100-point scale. The low score on the recoded scale (1) goes to those who rate the party above 90 on the original 100-point scale. Then, the respondent's ratings of the two parties on the recoded scale are multiplied together to produce a scale that runs from 1 to 100. See Nichols (1995) for a more lucid description of this measure.

Neutral Toward Both Parties: The Democratic and Republican party thermometer scale is first recoded into a ten-point scale with the high score (10) going to those who rate the party between 45 and 55 on the original 100-point scale. The low score on the recoded scale (1) goes to those who rate the party above 95 or below 5 on the original 100-point scale. Then, the respondent's ratings of the two parties on the recoded scale are multiplied together to produce a scale that runs from 1 to 100. Nichols (1995) created this measure and provides a more detailed description of its merits and operationalization.
Prefer Divided Government: This measure is coded 3 if respondents prefer that different parties control Congress and the White House, 2 if they do not care, and 1 if they prefer unified government.

Distance Between Parties: This variable measures the absolute distance between the respondent’s placement of the Democratic and Republican parties on the 7-point ideology scale. For those respondents who could not place at least one of the parties on the scale, their score for this measure was set at zero.

No Important Differences Between the Parties: This is a dichotomous measure indicating whether respondents thought there were any "important differences" between the stands of the two major political parties in the United States.

Open Seat House race: This variable is coded 1 if the respondent resides in a congressional district with an open House seat being contested, 0 if an incumbent is running.

Incumbency: This measure is coded 1 if the respondent resides in a district where the incumbent is from the opposite party, 0 if it is an open seat race, and -1 if the incumbent is from the respondent’s party.

South: A dichotomous variable for residents of one of the original Confederate state, Maryland, Oklahoma, or Kentucky.

Southern White: A dichotomous variable coded 1 for white respondents who live in one of the original Confederate states, Maryland, Oklahoma, or Kentucky, 0 otherwise.

Ballot Format: This measure is coded 1 if the respondent resides in a state with a straight-party mechanism on the ballot, 0 if the respondent lives in a state without a straight-party lever.

Age: The voter’s age, in years.

Gender: Coded 1 for women, 0 for men.

Aggregate-Level Independent Variables

The following section describes the independent variables examined in chapter 2 as correlates of ticket-splitting and split district outcomes.

Independent Identifiers: The percentage of NES respondents who identify themselves as Independents at the time of each presidential election since 1952. Leaners are classified as Independents for this measure.

Party Voting in the House: The percentage of roll call votes where at least a majority of one party votes against a majority of the other party in the year of each presidential election.

Trust in Government: The percentage of NES respondents who "trust the government to do what is right" most or all of the time at the time of each presidential election since 1960.

Mean Distance Between the Parties: This measure makes use of roll call voting scores calculated by Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) which place each legislator along a liberal-conservative continuum. The ADA
scores are first adjusted by Groseclose and colleagues (1996) to allow for comparisons across time. Then, I take the difference between the mean scores for Republican and Democratic members of the House of Representatives in each presidential election year since 1948.

**Important Party Differences:** This variable represents the percentage of NES respondents who perceive "important differences" between the two parties at the time of each presidential election since 1956.

**Uncontested House Races:** This measure is simply the number of House seats that are not contested by one of the major political parties in each presidential election since 1900.

**President Victory Margin:** The winning presidential candidate's margin of victory (in percentage points) for each election since 1900.

**Incumbent Reelection Rate:** The number of incumbent's who are reelected, as a percentage of those who sought reelection.

**Election Trend:** This is a trend counter which starts at 1 in 1952 and goes to 12 (1996).
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