

Do Some Americans Prefer Divided Government and Vote to Create It?

Abstract

Tests of theories of the electoral origins of divided government hinge on the proper measurement of voter preferences for divided government. Deriving preferences for divided government from voters' ideological positions or responses to the standard American National Election Studies question inflate the number of people who prefer divided government. We develop two alternative survey measures of preferences for divided government. We evaluate preferences for divided government using these measures across multiple surveys and show, contrary to other measures, that a small but relatively stable percentage of voters prefer divided government and are significantly more likely than other voters to vote for divided government.

Relatively rare in earlier periods of US history, divided government has become the new normal. The opposition party has controlled at least one house of Congress in eighteen of the twenty-four congresses between 1969 and 2016. While some scholars claim that divided government has little effect upon legislative productivity (e.g. Mayhew 1991), others contend that more significant legislation is passed during periods of unified government (e.g. Binder 1999, Coleman 1999). Divided government may also influence other areas of governing such as bureaucratic rule-making (e.g. Epstein & O'Halloran 1996, Yackee & Yackee 2009) and the length of time for judicial confirmations (e.g. Shipan & Shannon 2003). The clearest recent example of how divided government can affect government operations is the inability of Merrick Garland to get a hearing for his nomination to the Supreme Court.

An unresolved question in American politics is whether divided government occurs because some voters prefer to divide government power between the two political parties. At least since Fiorina (1988) and Alesina & Rosenthal (1989) proposed that voters intentionally divide government, public opinion surveys have sought to determine the proportion of the US public that prefers divided government. The 1992 American National Election Studies found that 32% of Americans thought that “it is better when one party controls both the presidency and Congress,” 40% who believed that it is “better when control is split between the Democrats and Republicans,” with 28% responding that it doesn't matter. Similar distributions of responses are evident on successive ANES surveys, with 49% of respondents to this question in 2012 expressing support for divided government. These figures raise the question of whether divided government occurs because Americans have preferences for divided government that influence how they vote.

Empirical studies of attitudes toward divided government use several different measures of support for divided government and show mixed results. Some studies support the hypothesis that some voters prefer divided government and vote in accordance with that preference (Alesina & Rosenthal 1995, Carsey & Layman 2004, Lacy & Paolino 1998, Lewis-Beck & Nadeau 2004, Mebane 2000, Smith, Brown, Bruce & Overby 1999), but others reject it (Alvarez & Schousen 1993, Beck, Baum, Clusen & Jr. 1992, Born 1994, Burden & Kimball 1998, Burden & Kimball

2002, Geer, Carter, McHenry, Teten & Hoef 2004, Grofman, Koetzle, McDonald & Brunell 2000). Burden & Kimball (2002), for instance, argue that divided government arises from the different institutional characteristics of presidential and congressional elections.

In this paper, we demonstrate that the ANES measure of voter preferences for divided government vastly overestimates the percentage of Americans who prefer divided government and, consequently, may attenuate the effect of a preference for divided government on voting. We present alternate question formats that provide more valid measures of preferences for divided government and show that a small but stable subset of American voters prefer divided government and act on these preferences when voting.

1 Intentional Preferences for Divided Government

Testing whether voters' preferences for divided government lead them to vote accordingly requires a good understanding of the theoretical nature of these preferences. One theory of intentional divided government due to Fiorina (1988, 1992) and Alesina & Rosenthal (1989, 1995, 1996) relies on a spatial model of voting in which parties adopt divergent positions on a one-dimensional issue space. If policy outcomes are a weighted average of the two parties' positions, with weights e and l reflecting the executive and legislative branches' relative influence over policy, a voter calculates the expected outcome of government policy as:

$$E(O|P_e, P_l) = eP_e + lP_l \tag{1}$$

where $E(O|P_e, P_l)$ represents the expected outcome of government policy conditioned on ideological positions of the parties in control of the executive and legislature, P_e and P_l represent the ideological location of the party controlling the executive and legislature, respectively, and $e + l = 1$. Unified government produces policy outcomes at the position of either the Democratic or Republican parties, whereas outcomes under divided government fall in between. Voters located just to the right of the Democrats or just to the left of the Republicans may still have ideal points closer

to unified Democratic and Republican government, respectively, than to divided government, but some voters, positioned in a subset of the interval between the two parties, will prefer at least one form of divided government.

Jacobson (1990) proposed a second explanation of intentional divided government that presumed voters' preferences for Republican presidential leadership of foreign policy but congressional Democratic control of domestic policy. Voters' preferences are two-dimensional in this theory, suggesting that they use equation 1 separately for domestic and foreign policy preferences, with $l > e$ for domestic policy and $e > l$ for foreign policy. Jacobson's (1990) specific argument lost some of its persuasiveness following Bill Clinton's election as president and Republican control of Congress from 1995-2001.

Intentional preferences for unified or divided government concern two potentially separate issues: executive branch control and legislative branch control. Across two or more choices, a person's preferences may be *separable* or *nonseparable*. A person has separable preferences when her preference in one choice set is independent of her preference on another choice set. A person has nonseparable preferences when her preference on one choice set depends on her preferences on another choice set. Suppose the two choice sets are elections for US president and the US Congress. Let RD indicate a preference for a Republican president and a Democratic Congress. Ignoring for now complications from a split Congress, the possible outcomes of a presidential and congressional election are RD, DR, DD, and RR. A voter ranking these outcomes $RR > RD > DR > DD$ has separable preferences. This voter always prefers a Republican president to a Democratic one, and, holding the party of the president fixed, always prefers a Republican Congress to a Democratic one. Even though her most preferred outcome results in unified Republican government, she clearly does not have an absolute preference for unified government over divided government. Unified Democratic government is her least preferred outcome.

Of the twenty-four strongly transitive preference rankings for combinations of president and Congress, eight are separable (see Table 1). Four of these reflect a partisan preference for the same party controlling each elected branch of government and four reflect a preference for divided

control. There is no separable preference for unified government, only a partisan preference where the first preference results in unified government. Of the sixteen remaining preference orderings, four are nonseparable preferences for unified government, four are nonseparable preferences for divided government, and eight reflect partially nonseparable preferences for partisan control over one branch of government and a secondary preference for unified or divided government.

[Table 1 about here]

There are three types of ranked preferences for divided government. First, a *complete*, or *nonseparable*, ranking of divided government has RD and DR as the two most preferred outcomes. Second, a *partially nonseparable* ranking has either RD or DR as the most preferred outcome and its inverse in third place. Finally, a *top only*, or *separable*, ranking has RD or DR as the most preferred outcome, but its inverse as the least preferred outcome, meaning the voter prefers only one form of divided government.

Models of intentional divided government arising from one-dimensional ideological balancing imply that some voters have at least partially nonseparable preferences for party control of Congress and the White House. A voter with a nonseparable preference for divided government simply prefers balance between party positions in divided government to unified government under either party. The nature of a partially nonseparable preference for divided government is less clear. It can arise from ideological balancing that depends upon the voter's and parties' locations and the voter's assessment of the weight that each branch has over policy. An example of partially nonseparable preferences for divided government arising from balancing occurs when P_e (or P_l) = 2 if the Democrats control the executive (or legislature), P_e (or P_l) = 6 if the Republicans control the executive (or legislature), $e = .6$, and $l = .4$. In this case, a voter at 5 will prefer $O|RD = 4.2$ to $O|RR = 6$, which, in turn, is preferred to $O|DR = 3.6$ and $O|DD = 2$ (equation 1). If this voter, however, believes control over outcomes to be $e = .4$ and $l = .6$, then this voter would now prefer $O|DR = 4.4$ to $O|RR = 6$ to $O|RD = 3.6$ to $O|DD = 2$. A given form of divided government that was preferred to unified Republican government with one set of beliefs about each branch's influence over policy would be less preferred to unified Republican government with only minor

changes in those beliefs. It is also not clear that voters with this type of preference are necessarily concerned with party balancing because partially nonseparable preferences reflect an initial preference for partisan control of one branch followed by a secondary preference for divided or unified government. In this example, the voter first prefers Republican control of the branch that she believes has more influence over policy.

A separable preference for divided government is not consistent with a one-dimensional policy balancing explanation because, as noted above, a voter with a separable preference for divided government arrives at this preference by independently evaluating the consequences for foreign and domestic policy of party control *for each* branch of government. For this reason, tests of the one-dimensional balancing theory of divided government require measures of support for divided government that can distinguish between separable and nonseparable preference orderings.

2 Measuring Preferences for Divided Government

Testing the theory of intentional divided government also requires valid measures of people's attitudes toward divided government that correspond to the theoretical mechanism connecting voters' preferences for divided government with their votes. We examine the four different measures of preferences for divided government: spatial, unconditional, conditional, and ranking. The priority in assessing these measures is to determine how well each correctly distinguishes people with a clear preference for divided government from those who prefer some form of unified government.

Evaluating the validity of the measures requires a theory of survey response. For this, we refer to Zaller & Feldman's (1992) presentation of the four steps that respondents use when answering survey questions: interpreting the question; searching for information; formulating a response; and mapping their response onto the options provided. Proper measures of support for divided government require that respondents can interpret the question(s) as relevant to their preferences for divided government, lead them to think about considerations that make them support or oppose divided government, and provide them with options that reflect those thoughts.

A second requirement is that the measures permit a test of various theories of the origins of divided government. Valid measures must allow researchers to determine whether divided government arises from a desire to balance the parties, as Fiorina (1988, 1992) and Alesina & Rosenthal (1989, 1995, 1996) suggest, a preference for divided government reflecting a “division of labor” between Congress and the president, as Jacobson (1990) suggests, or the structural features of the American political system, such as incumbency effects, strategic redistricting, or the unique features of American presidential elections.

2.1 Spatial Measures

Several empirical studies that reject the hypothesis that voters intentionally split their tickets use the ANES seven-point liberal-conservative ideology question.¹ While the ideological placement questions were not created as measures of support for divided government, some researchers have used them as proxies to classify voters who are most likely to engage in balancing behavior. Burden & Kimball (2002) use this item to test whether voters who place themselves at one of the three middle positions on the seven-point scale are more likely to cast split ballots. Alvarez & Schousen (1993) construct an ideological position for divided government as the midpoint of the voter’s placement of the two political parties and test whether voters who are closer to the constructed position of divided government are more likely to cast split ballots. Neither study finds any support for the hypothesis that voters’ ideological locations are related to split-ticket voting.

Using responses to a liberal-conservative ideology scale as a proxy for support for divided government poses several problems. First, respondents lacking an opinion on a question often place themselves in the middle of the scale (Alvarez & Franklin 1994, Bartels 1996). These uninformed voters may be more likely to cast ballots for valence-related concerns, obscuring whether they are truly ticket-splitters motivated by dividing government in order to encourage moderate policies. Second, the ANES scale does not contain enough response categories to measure such differences

¹“We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale?”

precisely. With only seven points on the scale, it is difficult to distinguish moderate voters who are closer to divided government from those who are closer to unified government under one of the two parties. Third, spatial measures were not designed to provide direct measures of people's attitudes toward divided government. When a voter is asked about her ideological placement, she is neither likely to interpret the question as asking about divided government nor search for considerations concerning preferences for divided or unified government. Finally, spatial measures are also inadequate for determining whether voters have separable or nonseparable preferences for divided government. Nonseparable preferences are consistent with the type of balancing that spatial measures may reflect, but a one-dimensional spatial measures would not necessarily capture separable preferences for divided government over two distinct dimensions. A voter's ideology may indicate a propensity to prefer divided or unified government, but it is not, by itself, a measure of preference for divided government.

2.2 Non-spatial measures

Non-spatial measures provide direct measures of support for divided government and, therefore, avoid problems of spatial measures. In addition to one-dimensional balancing considerations, voters may evaluate parties and candidates based upon multiple issue dimensions or normative preferences for power being concentrated or dispersed. Non-spatial measures permit researchers to better evaluate voters' preferences for divided government because they ask directly about their preferred combinations of partisan control over the branches of government. Researchers can then determine if support for divided government is related to the strength of voters' partisan attachments, their ideological moderation, or a desire to balance government.

2.2.1 Unconditional Measures

The best-known non-spatial measure of preferences for divided government asks voters directly whether they prefer unified or divided government. A representative version of this measure appears on the 1992, 2000, 2004, 2010, and 2012 American National Election Studies:

Is it better when one party controls both the presidency and Congress, better when control is split between the Democrats and Republicans, or doesn't it matter?

Several studies use unconditional questions to examine split-ticket voting, with mixed results. Sigelman, Wahlbeck & Buell (1997) find that voters who prefer divided government were no more likely than other voters to split their tickets in the 1992 elections. Lewis-Beck & Nadeau (2004), use the ANES and a similar unconditional question and find the opposite. At the state level, Beck et al. (1992) do not find that voters who prefer divided government are more likely to split their ballots.

Unconditional measures pose a problem for measuring preferences for divided government because they presume that people have nonseparable preferences for unified or divided government or are indifferent between the two. This question, therefore, ignores sixteen of the twenty-four possible preference orderings for governmental configurations, including separable preferences for partisan Democratic or Republican government. It is unclear how someone with any of these other preferences should respond, and this creates measurement error because it requires people with a separable preference to map their attitudes onto response options that allow only for nonseparable preferences. A person with separable preferences for (unified) Democratic government may look at the low likelihood of a Democratic Congress and respond that she would prefer divided government only because there is no option to express support for unified *Democratic* government. This person's preference for divided government is conditioned upon assuming Republican control of the Congress, but researchers using this question to predict split-ticket voting would be surprised (incorrectly) to find this "supporter" of divided government voting a straight Democratic ballot. Partisans who believe that unified control of government by their party is not possible, may overreport support for divided government.

These potential biases in the unconditional ANES instrument are very real. In 1992, when the question was asked with a Democratic majority in Congress and a likely Democratic Congress after the election, supporters of President Bush were more likely to say they preferred divided government, while Bill Clinton's supporters were more likely to state that they preferred unified

government (Table 2). Yet in 2004 with a Republican-controlled Congress, John Kerry’s supporters were overwhelmingly more likely to say they supported divided government. And while President Bush’s supporters were also more likely to favor divided over unified government, a greater percentage of Republicans than Democrats opted for unified government. The 2012 results offer another variation where Republicans preferred divided government, perhaps assuming that President Obama would be re-elected, while Democrats making the same assumption preferred unified government with the hope that they could re-take the House. Partisans’ responses to this question appear to be related to current partisan conditions in government.

[Table 2 about here]

The ANES question classifies voters with separable partisan Democratic and Republican preferences differently, even though both are inclined to vote a straight-ballot for their parties’ candidates. Further confirmation that the ANES question forces some respondents with separable preferences into nonseparable categories comes from surveys in New Jersey and Virginia in 2001 that included this question, where 6.7 percent of respondents in New Jersey and 10.8 percent in Virginia *volunteered* “it depends on the party” (see Appendix for survey description). The ANES question likely casts too wide a net by classifying people as preferring divided government when their preferences are really partisan. Given the imprecision of unconditional questions, it is difficult to know what this measure tells us about people’s preferences for divided government.

2.2.2 Conditional measures

One way to determine whether preferences across multiple elections are separable or nonseparable involves conditional questions (Lacy 1997, Smith et al. 1999, Carsey & Layman 2004). Conditional questions for measuring preferences for divided government involve at least two items that, with slight variations, ask respondents:

If the president is a Democrat, would you prefer that the Democrats or the Republicans control Congress?

If the president is a Republican, would you prefer that the Democrats or the Republicans control Congress?

Conditional questions improve upon the ANES divided government question because they allow respondents to express their preferences not just for generic unified or divided government, but also their party's control of one branch of government conditional upon party control of the other branch. Partisan voters can record their separable preference for their party controlling each branch of government simply by expressing a preference for their party's control of the legislature regardless of the party of the president, while supporters of divided and unified government can show that their preferences are conditional upon the party controlling the other branch.

Lewis-Beck & Nadeau (2004) criticize these questions as lacking the face validity of the ANES question, being prone to priming effects when the presidential candidates' names are used, and being overly-complex. We contend these issues are minimal in comparison to the fundamental problems with the unconditional questions that we describe above. We showed in Table 2 that responses to the ANES question vary by partisans, and Table 3 shows the percentages of respondents preferring divided, unified, Democratic, or Republican government according to the different survey instruments. The unconditional questions from the ANES, which do not allow for the expression of partisan preferences, show by far the highest support for divided and unified government, with support for divided government ranging from 40.0 to 56.8% and from 22.1 to 32.2% for unified government, far in excess of that from the conditional format, which generally shows support for any type of divided government as below 16% and unified government at less than 10%, but partisan control of government at over 75%.

[Table 3 about here]

The 2001 New Jersey and Virginia surveys asked respondents both the unconditional and conditional questions, and this allows us to compare both measures for the same respondents. Responses in these surveys indicate two things. First, both surveys show partisan differences in how people respond to the ANES question. In the Virginia survey, strong Democrats are more likely

to answer the unconditional question by calling themselves dividers than unifiers, 44-27%, while strong Republicans call themselves unifiers and not dividers, 39-24%. Yet when responding to the conditional questions, strong Democrats are overwhelmingly classified (89%) as having separable preferences for Democratic government, *similar to* the 86% of strong Republicans with separable preferences for Republican control of government. In the New Jersey survey, strong Democrats were dividers in the ANES question, 40-34%, whereas strong Republicans were unifiers by 33-31%. Using the conditional questions to measure preferences revealed percentages in New Jersey similar to those in Virginia, with 90% of the strong Democrats and 83% of the strong Republicans revealing separable preferences for their party's control of government. It is also worth noting that the conditional questions produce extremely low incidences of intransitive preferences (less than 0.5%), underscoring that the questions are not too difficult for respondents to understand. So whereas the unconditional question pushes strong partisans into categories that are unlikely to reflect their true preferences, the conditional questions show that strong partisans, as we would expect, prefer that their party controls both branches of government.

One potential problem arises when studies use only two conditional questions to determine preferences for partisan, divided, or unified government. Carsey & Layman (2004) classify respondents as supporters of divided government only if they prefer a Republican Congress if a Democrat is elected ($DR > DD$) and a Democratic Congress if a Republican is ($RD > RR$). But, people classified as Democratic partisans ($DD > DR$ and $RD > RR$) and Republican partisans ($RR > RD$ and $DR > DD$) could have partially nonseparable preferences or separable preferences for divided government. Respondents classified as Democratic partisans, for example, could prefer $RD > DD > RR > DR$, a separable preference for a Republican president and a Democratic Congress or the partially nonseparable preference, $RD > DD > DR > RR$.

A 2004 Knowledge Networks survey included four conditional questions asking respondents their preference for which party won a majority of seats in Congress depending on who won the presidency and their preference for who won the presidency depending on which party held a majority of seats on Congress (see Appendix). These four questions allow respondents to express

partially nonseparable preferences in which their preference for who controls Congress depends on who wins the presidency while their preference for who wins the presidency is independent of who controls Congress. More importantly, asking the four questions removes any possibility of people with partially nonseparable preferences or separable preferences for divided government being misclassified as partisans. The Democratic partisan in the previous paragraph, for instance, would prefer a Democratic president to a Republican president whether the Congress was Democratic, $DD > RD$, or Republican, $DR > RR$, providing the two preference rankings to resolve any ambiguity in the above example. Fortunately, this does not appear to be a significant problem. Out of 158 respondents classified as partisan Democrats using the two questions above, only 5 have separable preferences for divided government or partially nonseparable preferences, and only 1 of the 151 respondents classified by the two questions as partisan Republicans had a partially nonseparable preference in this survey when all four questions are used.

A second issue with the unconditional questions is that many respondents avoid choosing either the unified or divided options and instead opt to reply that “it doesn’t matter.” Again, the Virginia and New Jersey surveys show that many respondents select this option because the other choices do not fit their preferences. The conditional questions on these surveys also provided an option for respondents to say that control of government “doesn’t matter,” but over 70% of the respondents on each survey who respond “doesn’t matter” to the unconditional question reveal separable preferences for Republican or Democratic control of government, while only 14% and 13%, respectively, on each survey chose to answer “doesn’t matter” to even one of the four conditional questions. These results further show that the “doesn’t matter” option on the unconditional question forces partisans to fit their preferences into a set of response options that fail to capture their true preferences. These results show quite clearly that conditional questions more accurately than unconditional questions reflect people’s preferences for dividing governmental power.

The conditional questions also show a high degree of consistency across surveys. Table 4 shows the distribution of preferences as determined by the conditional questions on the 2001 Virginia and New Jersey surveys and the 2004 Knowledge Network survey. Because the surveys sample differ-

ent populations and at different times, we would not expect results to be exactly the same across surveys. And while we might expect different percentages of partisans from the three populations, there is no clear reason to believe that the populations would differ significantly in the percentages of supporters of divided government. These expectations are largely borne out. The national sample does have a larger percentage of people with Republican partisan preferences than we see in Virginia or New Jersey. The national sample also shows a slightly lower percentage of supporters of divided government, as we might expect in the midst of a highly partisan national campaign. Yet the similarities across all three surveys are striking. With the exception of the noted difference in Republican partisans, the differences in percentages across the three surveys are minimal.

[Table 4 about here]

2.2.3 Ranking Measures

Another method for ascertaining preferences for divided government that provides a precise ordering asks respondents to rank the four different combinations of party control of the presidency and Congress. In a split-half design in the 2004 Knowledge Networks survey mentioned above, half of respondents answered the conditional questions while the other half answered the following ranking question: “The list below contains four different possible outcomes of the November elections (Appendix contains survey description). Please rank these by clicking next to the outcome you want most:”

The Republicans win a majority of seats in Congress and a Republican is elected president.

The Republicans win a majority of seats in Congress and a Democrat is elected president.

The Democrats win a majority of seats in Congress and a Republican is elected president.

The Democrats win a majority of seats in Congress and a Democrat is elected president.

These response options appeared in random order. Respondents clicked a circle next to one of the choices to indicate their most preferred outcome, which was removed from the list. The next screen presented the remaining options, and respondents were asked to “rank these by clicking next to the outcome you want second most.” A final screen asked them to choose between the remaining two options. Similar ranking questions have appeared on the 2008 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey October (pre-election) wave and the 2010 Wave 1 of the Evaluations of Government and Society Study (EGSS). By allowing respondents to state their exact preferences over the four combinations of government control, the ranking questions provide the most precise means of determining preferences for divided government and permit tests of the competing theories.

The 2004 Knowledge Networks survey is valuable for evaluating the ranking questions because it used a split-half design, where half of the respondents received the conditional questions and the other half received the ranking questions. Table 4 shows that the ranking questions produce a similar distribution of preferences as the conditional questions. The ranking questions reveal that the percentage of respondents with separable Democratic or Republican preferences are within 4% of each other. While the respondents receiving the ranking questions are more likely than those receiving the conditional questions to report separable preferences for divided government, 4.9% compared with 1.2%, the percentages expressing nonseparable preferences for unified (1.1% vs. 1.4%) and divided (1.9% vs. 2.0%) government are almost identical. Likewise, the percentage of respondents providing each type of partially nonseparable preferences is similar across the two question forms.

Overall, the differences between the estimates of respondents’ preferences in the 2004 Knowledge Network survey arrived at using the conditional questions and the ranking method (where the categories are combined to be comparable with the conditional questions) are minor. A χ^2 test of the difference is insignificant at $p < .05$. The 2004 KN ranking and conditional questions produce similar percentages of support for divided government. The conditional questions show that 8.5 percent of respondents in the conditional questions split-half and 8.1 percent of respondents in the ranking split-half hold partial preferences for divided government. Using complete rankings, 2.0

percent of respondents have nonseparable preferences for divided government in the conditional questions sample, compared to 1.9 percent in the rankings sample. The two different question formats produce statistically indistinguishable differences in support for divided government. The ranking question does, however, produce a clear top only preference that the conditional questions cannot discriminate. For example, note in Table 4 that the conditional questions cannot distinguish between $RD > DR > RR > DD$ and $DR > RD > DD > RR$.

The ranking question also shows nearly identical percentages of people supporting divided and unified government between the KN 2004 survey and the CCES 2008 survey. And among partisans, the changes for the Democrats and Republicans are in line with what we would expect given the outcome of the two years' presidential elections. We can see that the EGSS survey produces larger percentages of respondents with nonseparable preferences for unified (5.3%) and divided government (16.3%), but these inflated levels appear to be related to order effects arising from the way that the options were presented. For a random half of the respondents, the first two options presented were divided government options, and for the other half, the first two options were unified government options. Support for divided government is 36% when those options were the first two, but only 26% when those options were presented third and fourth, with the largest differences apparent for nonseparable preferences for divided government (see Table A1 in the Appendix). Factoring out the order effects still suggests either some increase in support for divided government recently, at least with respect to this particular mid-term election.

The similarity of responses between the conditional and ranking questions suggests that two potential problems with the ranking questions, that they impose transitive preferences on respondents and that the ranking questions do not provide an easy way for respondents to express the belief that the form of control of government does not matter, are not significant problems. As we saw with the conditional questions, the percentage of respondents revealing intransitive preferences is small. And while there are a higher percentage of respondents who provide one response of "doesn't matter," it is still fairly small—and significantly smaller than the percentage who provide that response to the unconditional question.

Responses to the various survey instruments provide several conclusions. First, the ANES unconditional item vastly overestimates preferences for divided government by forcing partisans to choose either divided or unified government. In contrast, the conditional and ranking questions allow the expression of partisan preferences and show that a much smaller percentage of Americans prefer divided government. Second, there are respondents who do not think that it matters which parties control government, but this percentage is far smaller than is reflected in responses to the ANES item. Third, the manner in which the EGSS questions were presented creates order effects that appear to have inflated respondents' expressions of preferences for divided and unified government beyond levels expected from the random response orders presented in the 2004 KN and 2008 CCES surveys.

3 Do People Vote for Divided Government?

In evaluating whether voters who prefer divided government intentionally cast ballots to increase the likelihood of divided government, an obvious question is whether such instrumentally-oriented behavior would motivate a rational voter. A voter who prefers divided government can influence only the outcome of a presidential election in one state and the party affiliation of two percent, or less, of the Senate and House, respectively. This means that the relationship between split-ticket voting and support for divided government, at best, would likely vary across states and districts depending upon competitiveness. But this still overlooks the extremely low probability of a single vote altering the outcome of an election that determines control of one branch of government.

We do not believe that all voters who support divided government are necessarily casting ballots because they believe that their votes will change the party control of government. Rather, voters who support divided government are first, more accepting of the idea of voting across party lines than partisan voters and, second, willing to do so as an expressive act. One can argue that the first aspect of this voter behavior merely reflects a difference between the strength of party affiliation of partisan voters and supporters of divided government. Our analysis, therefore, needs to show that

voting in a manner consistent with divided government occurs even after controlling for strength of party identification or ideological extremity.

We cannot conclusively determine whether voters who support divided government are doing so expressively. Instead, we argue that when voters who support divided government cast a vote to move government in that direction they are similar to voters casting strategic votes in multi-candidate elections (e.g. Abramson, Aldrich, Paolino & Rohde 1992). They may not believe that their vote will have any significant effect upon the outcome of the election, but they do so in a way so that their vote reflects their preferred outcome and beliefs about the electoral context.

Of the three types of preferences for divided government, we consider a nonseparable preference to be the “strongest” preference for divided government over any form of unified government and the other two to represent “weaker” preferences for divided government that accept a first preference for a type of divided government, but also allow a preference for at least one type of unified government over another form of unified government. People with a nonseparable preference for divided government most clearly represent the basic balancing logic in equation 1, while those with weaker preferences for divided government would be more likely to have positions in between both parties, but may be close enough to one party to sometimes have preferences for unified government. If these preferences are demonstrated in actions, people with a nonseparable preference for divided government should be most likely to vote in ways that support divided government, whereas people with weaker preference for divided government should be less likely to do so. Partisan voters and those with a strong preference for unified government should be least likely to vote in ways in order to produce divided government.

3.1 Voting for Divided Government in the Midterm

Voters who prefer divided government face a challenge during presidential years because they can only estimate the likelihood of a particular party controlling each branch of government. In 2004, for example, voters who supported divided government knew that the Republicans controlled government before the election, but could not be sure which branch was more likely to switch back

to Democratic control. While some voters may have cast split tickets based upon their assessment that a Democrat was more likely to be elected president than Democrats retaking either house of Congress, others may have decided that their best strategy was to cast a straight Democratic ballot in the hope that at least one branch would become Democratic.

It is worth first examining voters' behavior in the simpler decision environment of midterm elections, where voters know the party affiliation of the president and they can focus efforts to divide government on Congress. For this analysis, we use a multinomial logit model, with a baseline of casting a straight Democratic ticket for the House and Senate, to see whether stronger supporters of divided government were more likely to cast ballots that would have an effect of creating divided government, either through casting a straight Republican ballot for the House and Senate or through splitting their House and Senate ballots. Our expectation is that voters who prefer both arrangements of divided government to any arrangement of unified government will be more likely to cast either a straight Republican ballot or split ballot than a straight Democratic ticket.

We also include dummy variables for Republican partisans, Democratic partisans, and supporters of unified government. We expect that partisan voters will be significantly more likely to cast straight ballots for their party's candidates and that unified voters will be more likely to cast straight Democratic ballots to further the likelihood of unified government. Our baseline group is weak supporters of divided government. Because of the order effects displayed above in Table A1, we include dummy variables to control for respondents with nonseparable preferences for divided and unified government whose preferences matched the order in which options were presented in the ranking question under the premise that respondents whose preference order matched the order of presentation are less likely to have true preferences for divided or unified government. Finally, we include other controls for party identification, strength of party identification, ideology, ideology extremity, retrospective evaluations of the economy, and congressional incumbency.

The results (Table 5) indicate that people with nonseparable preferences for divided government who do not display order effects were more likely to cast split tickets for Congress than

straight Democratic tickets, even after controlling for strength of party identification and ideology. Holding other variables at their means, respondents with nonseparable preferences had a .13 greater probability of casting a split congressional vote than a straight Democratic vote. The baseline probability of casting a split congressional ballot was .15, Having nonseparable preferences nearly doubles this probability, which is consistent with the hypothesis that voters with strong preferences for divided government were more likely to cast ballots consistent with that preference. In other specifications of this model, we did not find support that respondents with separable preferences for DR government were more likely to cast split or straight Republican ballots. This could be a result of these voters not seeing divided government as saliently as those with nonseparable preferences for divided government or the “division of labor” argument being a less compelling explanation for divided government than balancing, but it could also result from the relatively smaller number of respondents with these preferences.

[Table 5 about here]

The results also show that, as expected, Democratic partisans were significantly more likely to cast straight ballots for their parties than a straight Republican ballot, but partisan Republicans were not significantly more likely to cast a straight Republican ballot once party identification and ideology were controlled. Supporters of unified government were marginally more likely to cast a straight Democratic vote, but not to a degree that was statistically significant. It is also noteworthy that ideological strength was not associated with voting for a split Congress, which may suggest that direct measures of divided government are better suited than spatial measures for identifying voters who support divided government.

3.2 Split Ticket Voting

We now turn to determining whether preferences for divided government explain split-ticket voting in presidential elections by using the 2004 Knowledge Networks and 2008 CCES surveys. The 2004 Knowledge Networks survey contained a presidential vote choice question and a generic

party vote in the US House of Representatives election. The 2008 CCES contained a presidential vote question as well as a congressional vote question specific to the respondent's local congressional race. The dependent variable is a dichotomous variable for whether the respondent reported presidential and congressional votes that were a split ballot (see the Appendix for specifics about the questions and the two studies). The key predictor is a dummy variable indicating whether the voter prefers divided government, based on the different survey instruments.

The percentages of split ballots cast by voters who prefer divided government reveals much about the validity of the survey questions. For the conditional questions and ranking method, voters' preferences for divided government are based on either a complete preference for divided government, a partial preference, or a top only preference. Regardless of the measure, voters who prefer divided government in the pre-election survey are significantly more likely to cast split ballots than voters who do not prefer divided government. Using conditional questions, between 25 and 50 percent of voters who prefer divided government act on their preference when voting. Based on the ranking question, between 53 and 75 percent of voters who prefer divided government split their ballots. For the rest of the sample who do not prefer divided government, only 5 and 12 percent of voters cast split ballots. The results in 2008 are similar. Depending on the measure, between 34.5 and 40.9 percent of voters who prefer divided government split their ballots, compared to between 6.6 percent to 10 percent of voters who do not prefer divided government.

The differences in ticket splitting rates between people who profess to prefer divided government and those who do not are substantial. Yet not all voters who prefer divided government split their tickets. Why? Some of the measures of divided government probably pick up erroneous responses and misclassify voters, albeit to a far lesser degree than the unconditional questions. Some voters may live in districts where their congressional candidates make it undesirable to cast a split ballot. For instance, a voter who wants a Democratic president with a Republican Congress could live in a district with an inexperienced or unpalatable Republican challenger facing a high-quality or incumbent Democrat. The voter could cast a straight ticket while hoping for divided government due to voters in other districts to selecting Republicans.

To account for other variables that might explain split ticket voting, we estimate a set of binary logit models of the probability of casting a split ticket vote. The key independent variable in each model is one of the three different measures of preference for divided government—top only, partial, and complete—based on the conditional questions and ranking questions in the 2004 Knowledge Networks Survey and on the ranking questions in the 2008 CCES. In this analysis, we combine “strong” and “weak” supporters of divided government because of the small percentage of “strong” supporters of divided government in these surveys. The tiny percentage of respondents who prefer unified government are included with respondents who prefer Republican or Democratic government since their predicted behavior is the same: a straight ticket vote.

The model in both years controls for strength of party identification to capture whether intensity of partisanship creates a spurious correlation between preferences for divided government and split ticket voting. The sign on this variable should be negative, with strong partisans less likely than independents or leaners to split their tickets.

Table 6 presents the results from the model estimated in 2004, with one column for each of the three different measures of preference for divided government, measured using both conditional questions and the ranking question. Regardless of how measured, a voter’s preference for divided government in the pre-election survey is statistically significant as a predictor of a split ticket voting from the post-election survey. The increase in the probability of casting a split ballot among voters who prefer divided government ranges from .16 to .59, an average of .38 across all measures.²

[Table 6 about here]

Because the 2008 CCES contains information about the party of the House incumbent, which is unavailable in the 2004 Knowledge Networks survey, the model for 2008 also includes a dummy variable coded as a 1 for each respondent who lives in a congressional district with a House incumbent from the party opposite her own. The purpose of including this variable is to capture whether split-ticket voting is due to voters who vote their party affiliation at the presidential level

²Two of the changes in probability, based on preferences for divided government derived from the complete and partial conditional questions measures, are not statistically significant.

while living in districts where they are exposed to the large personal vote and incumbency advantage of a sitting House member from the other party. Voters who have an incumbent member of Congress from the opposite party should be more likely to split their tickets. The variable is coded 0 for voters whose party matches their House incumbent's and for any voters who call themselves Independents.

Results from the 2008 CCES appear in Table 7. The results are the same as for 2004: regardless of how measured, a voter's preference for divided government in the pre-election survey predicts split-ticket voting in the post-election survey. As expected, a House incumbent from the opposite party than the voter increases the rate of ticket-splitting. Since the preference for divided government and presence of an incumbent from the other party are both binary variables, their coefficients can be compared to each other directly. In model using a top only preference for divided government, the effect of a House incumbent from the other party is less than half the effect of a voter's preference for divided government on her probability of casting a split ticket. The complete and partial preference rankings for divided government also have larger effects on ticket-splitting than a House incumbent from the opposite party as the voter.

[Table 7 about here]

Across these two elections, the new survey measures of preferences for divided government consistently predict split-ticket voting. Both the conditional questions and ranking method produce valid measures of an attitude that voters act on in the voting booth. Even in models controlling for strength of partisanship and the presence of a House incumbent from a party opposite the voter's, preferences for divided government explain split-ticket voting. Split-ticket voting is not an accident of circumstances. It is a choice made by voters—albeit a much smaller group than previous studies estimate—that is consistent with their pre-election preferences.

4 Conclusion

The results in this paper show, first, that many attempts to measure support for divided government, notably the ANES measure, miscategorize many voters because they use an incomplete approach to measuring people's preferences. Second, once new measures based upon conditional and ranking questions are employed, our results provide support and some caveats for theories of intentional voting to balance government. Our findings support previous findings by Lacy and Paolino (1998), Smith, et al. (1999), Mebane (2000), and Lewis-Beck and Nadeau (2004), using different data and methods. These findings stand in contrast research showing no support for intentional ticket-splitting (Alvarez and Schousen, 1993; Born, 1994; Sigelman, et al., 1997; Burden and Kimball, 1998, 2002). This earlier work did not have the advantage of conditional questions and ranking questions to detect preferences for divided government and classified too many voters as preferring divided government. Using these new measures, we find that between 6 and 18 percent of voters, depending on the method of measurement, prefer divided government. One to three percent prefer unified government. The overwhelming number of voters, however, are partisans who should not be expected to support divided government, yet are classified as such by prior measures. These percentages hold across the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections and across state (Virginia & New Jersey) and national elections. Therefore, it is not surprising that studies using prior measures find statistically insignificant effects of preferences for divided government on voting. The newer survey instruments presented here show that far fewer voters prefer divided government than originally believed, but that this smaller group of voters act on their preferences by voting in ways that reflects a desire for divided government and, at the margins, can create divided government in close elections.

In the 2004 election, about 17 percent of voters cast split tickets for the presidency and House of Representatives. Our data from the same election show that between 6 and 18 percent of the public, depending on the survey item, prefer divided government. Four years later, we find the same percentages in the 2008 CCES. The ranking method shows that about 16 percent of voters prefer divided government, which is most of the way toward the percentage of voters who split

their ballots. In a separate analysis, we find that preferences for divided government, measured either using the 2004 Knowledge Networks ranking measure or conditional questions measure or the 2008 CCES ranking method, are statistically significant as a predictor of split-ticket voting between presidential and House elections. In 2010, only 15 percent of respondents in the EGSS survey reported casting a split congressional ballot, but we find that 32 percent of respondents with nonseparable preferences for divided government did so, compared with 7 percent of Republican partisans, 15 percent of Democratic partisans, and 20 percent of all other voters.

None of our research is intended to suggest that voters' preference for divided government is the only factor producing divided government. In 2008, even though supporters of divided government were more likely to cast split-ballots, not even a majority of these respondents cast split-ballots. Other factors do help explain the origin of divided government. All of our results, for instance, support the hypothesis that incumbency effects at the congressional level lead partisans to support opposition candidates. But even while other factors surely produce some split ballots, voters' intentions contribute significantly to the pattern of divided government in recent elections.

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Table 1: Complete Preference Orderings for Government

Preference Type		
Separable	Nonseparable	Partially-Nonseparable
Partisan Republican	Unified Government	
$RR > RD > DR > DD$	$RR > DD > RD > DR$	$RR > DR > DD > RD$
$RR > DR > RD > DD$	$DD > RR > DR > RD$	$DD > RD > RR > DR$
Partisan Democrat	$RR > DD > DR > RD$	$RR > RD > DD > DR$
$DD > DR > RD > RR$	$DD > RR > RD > DR$	$DD > DR > RR > RD$
$DD > RD > DR > RR$		
Divided Government	Divided Government	
$RD > RR > DD > DR$	$RD > DR > RR > DD$	$RD > DD > DR > RR$
$RD > DD > RR > DR$	$DR > RD > DD > RR$	$DR > RR > RD > DD$
$DR > DD > RR > RD$	$RD > DR > DD > RR$	$RD > RR > DR > DD$
$DR > RR > DD > RD$	$DR > RD > RR > DD$	$DR > DD > RD > RR$

Table 2: Support for Divided Government by Presidential Vote

Year	Vote	Unified	Divided	Doesn't Matter	N
1992 ANES	Bush	31.9	45.6	22.5	542
	Clinton	38.0	35.5	26.5	773
2000 ANES	Bush	25.0	57.5	17.6	517
	Gore	27.2	54.6	18.1	579
2004 ANES	Bush	31.8	52.0	16.2	402
	Kerry	19.4	65.0	15.6	391
2012 ANES	Romney	23.7	55.3	21.0	1860
	Obama	33.3	44.7	22.0	2161

Table 3: Support for Divided Government by Presidential Vote

Survey	Divided	Unified	Rep.	Dem.	No Diff.
US ANES Unconditional, 1992	40.0	32.2	-		27.9
US ANES Unconditional, 2000	51.2	23.2			23.2
US ANES Unconditional, 2004	56.8	22.1			21.1
US ANES Unconditional, 2010	44.4	17.9	-	-	37.4
US ANES Unconditional, 2012	48.6	25.7	-	-	25.7
VA-NJ (ANES) Unconditional, 2001	44.0	25.2			30.8
VA-NJ Conditional: Leg., 2001	8.9	5.5	37.7	42.9	5.0+
VA-NJ Conditional: Gov., 2001	6.5	4.9	36.5	49.5	2.6+
US KN Conditional: Cong., 2004	7.2	2.7	28.4	37.0	24.7
US KN Conditional: Pres., 2004	1.5	2.0	39.1	41.6	15.8
US KN Conditional (Complete), 2004	2.0	1.4	47.0	47.6	-
US KN Conditional (Partial), 2004	8.2	1.4	44.1	44.4	
US KN Conditional (Top Only), 2004	9.3	1.4	43.2	44.1	-
US KN Ranking (Complete), 2004	1.9	1.0	47.7	49.3	
US KN Ranking (Partial), 2004	10.7	0.8	37.2	42.1	-
US KN Ranking (Top Only), 2004	15.6	0.8	34.4	38.2	
US CCES Ranking (Complete), 2008	4.2	1.2	41.1	49.4	-
US CCES Ranking (Partial), 2008	13.5	1.2	34.3	46.4	-
US CCES Ranking (Top Only), 2008	18.4	1.2	33.1	44.4	-
US EGSS Ranking (Complete), 2008	16.3	5.3	36.1	42.4	-
US EGSS Ranking (Partial), 2008	25.3	5.3	31.7	37.8	-
US EGSS Ranking (Top Only), 2008	31.5	5.3	28.1	35.2	-

Source: 1992, 2000, 2004, and 2012 American National Election Studies, 2001 Virginia and New Jersey Gubernatorial Elections Survey, 2004. Knowledge Networks Panel Study, 2008 Cooperate Congressional Election Survey, Evaluations of Government and Society Study, 2010 (Wave 1). + indicates a volunteered response.

Table 4: Complete Preference Orders for Divided Government

Preference Ordering	Survey					
	Conditional			Ranking		
	VA	NJ	KN-C	KN-R	CCES	EGSS
Separable Preference Orderings						
$RR > RD > DR > DD$	36.4	34.7	43.2	33.9	26.8	11.3
$RR > DR > RD > DD$				5.9	4.3	15.0
$DD > DR > RD > RR$	41.9	45.9	44.1	30.3	40.9	18.8
$DD > RD > DR > RR$				10.0	6.4	12.0
$RD > RR > DD > DR$	0.7	0.4	1.2	3.4	1.7	1.0
$RD > DD > RR > DR$				1.0	0.3	0.3
$DR > DD > RR > RD$	3.4	0.6	0.0	0.5	1.6	2.3
$DR > RR > DD > RD$				0.0	0.4	2.6
Nonseparable Preference Orderings						
$RR > DD > RD > DR$	1.8	4.4	1.4	0.3	0.4	1.2
$DD > RR > DR > RD$				0.0	0.4	1.8
$RR > DD > DR > RD$				0.8	0.3	1.0
$DD > RR > RD > DR$				0.0	0.1	1.3
$RD > DR > RR > DD$	4.9	4.8	2.0	1.3	2.8	4.5
$DR > RD > DD > RR$				0.3	0.6	5.0
$RD > DR > DD > RR$				0.3	0.5	3.0
$DR > RD > RR > DD$				0.0	0.5	3.8
Partially-Nonseparable Preference Orderings						
$RR > DR > DD > RD$	0.4	1.0	0.0	1.8	0.2	0.9
$DD > RD > RR > DR$	1.1	1.3	0.0	0.5	0.0	1.5
$RR > RD > DD > DR$	1.1	0.6	0.0	0.8	0.9	0.9
$DD > DR > RR > RD$	1.9	1.3	1.7	0.3	0.7	2.9
$RD > DD > DR > RR$	0.4	0.6	0.3	0.8	0.5	1.1
$DR > RR > RD > DD$	2.6	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2	1.3
$RD > RR > DR > DD$	1.2	1.7	2.6	3.3	6.3	3.1
$DR > DD > RD > RR$	2.1	2.5	2.9	4.4	3.0	3.5
Intransitive	0.2	0.4	0.3	NA	NA	NA

Source: Percentages in the second column are from the 2001 Virginia survey, the third column are from the 2001 New Jersey survey, the fourth column the conditional questions from one split-half of the 2004 Knowledge Networks survey, the fifth column the ranking questions from the other split-half of the 2004 Knowledge Networks survey, and the sixth column from the 2010 EGSS, Wave 1.

Table 5: 2010 Midterm Voting for Congress

	Vote for Repub. Congress		Vote for Split Congress	
	MLE Coef	Std Error	MLE Coef	Std Error
Nonseparable Div Gov't	0.810	(0.613)	1.206*	(0.609)
Nonseparable Div Gov't (order)	-2.142*	(1.113)	-3.807**	(1.261)
Republican partisan	1.019	(0.645)	0.640	(0.748)
Democratic partisan	-1.053*	(0.567)	-0.359	(0.518)
Nonseparable Unified Gov't	-0.523	(0.642)	-0.220	(0.600)
Nonseparable Unified Gov't (order)	0.541	(1.246)	3.162**	(1.100)
Party Identification	1.107**	(0.150)	0.531**	(0.135)
Strength of PID	-0.101	(0.240)	0.081	(0.197)
Ideology	0.518**	(0.147)	0.048	(0.137)
Ideological strength	0.108	(0.189)	-0.035	(0.176)
Economic Evaluation	-0.795**	(0.233)	-0.290	(0.203)
H and S Republican Incumbents	2.407**	(0.878)	2.113**	(0.600)
H and S Democratic Incumbents	-1.167**	(0.490)	-1.011**	(0.374)
H and S incumbents divided	0.048	(0.543)	0.634	(0.558)
Constant	-3.925**	(0.833)	-1.644*	(0.890)
Observations	622			
χ^2	275.62			

Source: 2010 EGSS survey. (order) refers to respondents providing non-separable divided and unified government preferences that matched the order in which the four options were presented. Estimated parameters are from a multinomial logit model with voting for a Democratic House and Senate candidate as the baseline category. Standard errors are in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, one-tailed.

Table 6: Voters Who Prefer Divided Government More Likely than Others to Cast Split Ballots in 2004

Predictor	Conditional questions			Ranking questions		
	Complete	Partial	Top Only	Complete	Partial	Top Only
Prefer Divided Government	2.49** (.95)	1.50** (.60)	1.97** (.56)	3.01** (1.18)	2.22** (.52)	2.84** (.47)
Intensity of Party ID	-.27* (.15)	-.18 (.16)	-.15 (.25)	-.47* (.21)	-.39* (.22)	-.40* (.24)
Constant	-2.02** (.38)	-2.33** (.37)	-2.56** (.62)	-1.07** (.43)	-1.45** (.47)	-1.74** (.52)
Change in Probability of Casting Split Ticket associated with Prefer Divided Government	.40* (.25)	.16* (.10)	.23** (.10)	.59** (.23)	.39** (.12)	.49** (.10)
N	230	230	230	247	247	247
χ^2	6.8	6.8	12.4	13.3	22.6	42.0
AIC	125.9	125.5	120.0	183.2	173.9	154.4
% Correctly Pred	93.0	92.2	92.2	87.9	87.5	89.1
Hosmer-Lemeshow						
# groups	7	8	8	8	8	8
Peason χ^2	16.4	14.2	13.3	3.26	3.44	4.26
Prob > χ^2	.00	.01	.02	.35	.63	.51

Source: 2004 Knowledge Network Survey.
 $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, one-tailed.

Table 7: Voters Who Prefer Divided Government More Likely than Others to Cast Split Ballots in 2008

	Ranking questions		
Voters Who . . .			
Prefer Divided Government	1.55** (.69)	1.69** (.35)	2.12** (.34)
Intensity of Party ID	-.34* (.16)	-.22 (.16)	-.18 (.17)
House Incumbent from Other Party	1.01** (.32)	.92** (.33)	.89** (.33)
Constant	-1.74** (.33)	-2.22** (.37)	-2.44** (.41)
Change in Probability of Casting Split Ticket associated with Prefer Divided Government	.24 (.16)	.24** (.06)	.31** (.06)
N	543	543	543
χ^2	15.0	33.7	51.0
AIC	370.5	351.8	334.5
% Correctly Pred	89.1	89.0	89.0
Hosmer-Lemeshow			
# groups	12	12	12
Pearson χ^2	9.12	7.44	8.37
Prob > χ^2	.33	.49	.40

Source: 2008 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey.
 $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, one-tailed.

A Reviewers'/On-Line Appendix of Additional Information

A.1 Details about studies used in the analysis

A.1.1 2001 Virginia & New Jersey Surveys

Survey data were collected by the Center for Survey Research at the University of Virginia, using random-digit-dialing of independently-sampled telephone numbers in Virginia and New Jersey. A respondent of voting age was randomly selected from each household. Only respondents who said they would definitely vote or were likely to vote in the November 6 election for governor were interviewed. Interviews were conducted between October 18 and November 5, with a total of 724 completed interviews in Virginia and 699 in New Jersey. The response rate (AAPOR's RR3) was 13 percent in Virginia, 9 percent in New Jersey. The cooperation rate (COOP4) was 66 percent in Virginia and 62 percent in New Jersey.

The question format is candidate-centered, but voter preferences for legislative election outcomes are assessed conditional on the governor, and for the gubernatorial election outcome conditional on the legislature.

The conditional questions for the governorship were: "If it turns out that the Democrats have a majority of seats in the New Jersey (Virginia) state legislature, then would you prefer to have James McGreevey (Mark Warner), the Democrat, or Bret Schundler (Mark Earley), the Republican, as governor?" and "If it turns out that the Republicans have a majority of seats in the New Jersey (Virginia) state legislature, then would you prefer to have James McGreevey (Mark Warner), the Democrat, or Bret Schundler (Mark Earley), the Republican, as governor?" Candidate names appear in random order in these questions.

A.1.2 2004 Knowledge Networks Survey

Knowledge Networks recruited over 50,000 subjects nationwide to participate in surveys administered by WebTV. The computer format of the survey allows respondents to complete surveys at their leisure, and often results in more reliable and valid responses than telephone interviews

(Chang and Krosnick 2009). A random sample of the Knowledge Networks panel was chosen to participate in a three-wave survey, with Wave 1 conducted April 27-May 31 (N=1308); Wave 2, September 17-October 7 (N=947); and Wave 3, November 19-December 3, 2004 (N=717). Completion rates were 76 percent in Wave 1, 85 percent in Wave 2, and 77 percent in Wave 3. All questions on divided government appeared only in Wave 2 of the panel.

Question wording and format varied in the 2004 KN panel. A randomly selected half of the sample received conditional questions. Unlike the Virginia-New Jersey surveys, “doesn’t matter” was an on-screen choice, along with “Republican” and “Democrat.” Respondents could also skip the question and move on to the next question without additional prompting for a response. The wording of the conditional questions was:

“When the president of the United State is a Republican, which party do you want to have a majority of seats in the U.S. Congress?”

When the President of the United States is a Democrat, which party do you want to have a majority of seats in the U.S. Congress?

When the Republicans have a majority of seats in the U.S. Congress, do you want a Democrat as president or a Republican as president?

When the Democrats have a majority of seats in the U.S. Congress, do you want a Democrat as president or a Republican as president?”

The 2004 Knowledge Networks presidential vote choice question asks, “In the election for President, did you vote for?” Response options are “George W. Bush, the Republican,” “John Kerry, the Democrat,” “Ralph Nader, the Independent,” “Someone else.” The question appears after the question, “Did you vote in the election this year for President of the United States?” Only respondents who answered “Yes” then saw the presidential vote question. The Knowledge Networks congressional vote question reads: “In the election for U.S. House of Representatives from your district, did you vote for?” Response options are “the Republican candidate,” “the Democratic candidate,” “Someone else,” or “I did not vote?”

A.1.3 2008 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey

The 2008 CCES survey was conducted over the Internet by YouGov/Polimetrix). The Common Content was asked of 32,800 adults interviewed in August and September 2008 (for the profile data), in October 2008 (for pre-election data), and in November 2008 (for post-election data). YouGov/Polimetrix constructed a sampling frame of U.S. Citizens from the 2006 American Community Survey, including data on age, race, gender, education, marital status, number of children under 18, family income, employment status, citizenship, state, and metropolitan area. The frame was constructed by stratified sampling from the full 2006 ACS sample with selection within strata by weighted sampling with replacements (using the person weights on the public use file). Data on reported 2004 voter registration and turnout from the November 2004 Current Population Survey was matched to this frame using a weighted Euclidean distance metric. Data on religion, church attendance, born again or evangelical status, news interest, party identification and ideology was matched from the 2007 Pew U.S. Religious Landscape Survey. The target sample was selected by stratification by age, race, gender, education, and by simple random sampling within strata.

A subsample of 1000 respondents answered the following question in the October wave:

“The list below contains four different possible outcomes of the November elections. Please select from the list the outcome you want most.

The Republicans win a majority of seats in the U.S. Congress and Republican John McCain is elected president.

The Republicans win a majority of seats in the U.S. Congress and Democrat Barack Obama is elected president.

The Democrats win a majority of seats in the U.S. Congress and Republican John McCain is elected president.

The Democrats win a majority of seats in the U.S. Congress and Democrat Barack Obama is elected president.”

Respondents clicked on a bubble next to their preferred response. That response was then dropped from the list, and respondents were asked to choose among the remaining three options,

then among the remaining two options. Frequencies reported from this survey are weighted to the sampling frame using propensity scores based on age, years of education, gender, and turnout and then post-stratified by gender, race, education, and age.

The 2008 CCES presidential vote choice question reads, “For whom did you vote for President of the United States?” and lists the candidates’ names and party affiliation. The congressional vote question reads, “For whom did you vote for U.S. House of Representatives?” and lists names and party affiliation of the candidates. In both years, a split-ticket vote is recorded as (1) for any voter who votes for one of the major party candidates for president and the other major party for the House. Respondents who voted for minor party candidates are not included in the analysis.

A.2 Other Results Referred to in the Paper

Table A1: Order Effects in the EGSS Ranking Measure

Preference Type	Divided Options	Unified Options	Total
	First	First	
Partisan Republican	25.67 (143)	29.18 (178)	27.51 (321)
Partisan Democrat	30.52 (170)	30.66 (187)	30.59 (357)
Nonseparable Unified	3.59 (20)	6.72 (41)	5.23 (61)
Separable Divided	6.28 (35)	3.61 (22)	4.88 (57)
Nonseparable Divided	19.93 (111)	14.26 (87)	16.97 (198)
Partially-nonseparable partisan	4.31 (24)	7.87 (48)	6.17 (72)
Partially-nonseparable divided	9.69 (54)	7.70 (47)	8.65 (101)
Total	557	610	1167
Pearson χ^2_6	23.86		

Note: Wave 1 2010 EGSS.