

**Aggregate Indecision: An Analysis of an  
Ideological Self-Placement Model of  
Split-Ticket Voting**

Julia R. Azari

**Introduction.**

Throughout most of the 1980s and 1990s, the United States has experienced divided government, with one party controlling the presidency while the other party controlled one or both houses of the legislature. Conventional wisdom contends that such division would produce different policies than a more unified government, however, research to determine whether this is true has so far been inconclusive. In the absence of clear results, it is difficult to determine what the incentives are for voters to elect divided governments. In fact, it is unclear whether voters intend these results at all.

Since divided government is the result of aggregate indecision on a party preference, split-ticket voting is an important component of this phenomenon. It is difficult to determine the extent to which ticket-splitting occurs, but studying explanations of this type of voting can help shed light on whether voters select divided government on purpose, or it arises from other factors. In other words, split-ticket voting can be examined for insights into voter behavior, or as part of an analysis of the potential causes and consequences of divided government.

Several models and theories exist to explain split-ticket voting. In this paper, I will analyze a spatial model based on 1988-1992 Pooled Senate Study, dealing specifically with a

survey on the 1988 election. The study creates a numerical representation of a spatial model, using voters' ideological self-placement on a scale of one to seven in relation to their placement of presidential and senatorial candidates on the same scale. Spatial models of voting attempt to explain voter choices by postulating that an individual voter has an optimal point, and will vote for the candidate or policy that is closest to that point. In the ideological placement representation, the optimal point is assumed to be the number at which the respondent places herself.

This particular test provides a format in which to explore several explanations for split-ticket voting. First, the model offers some guidance as to whether ticket-splitting is ideologically motivated. Many scholars contend that the decision to vote for candidates of different parties for different offices is compelled by the characteristics of the offices or the elections, rather than candidate ideology. If ideological placement is a reliable predictor of voting behavior, does the model support the conventional wisdom that voters place themselves in the center and vote for candidates who best approximate this centrist position? Or, do self-placed centrists vote for one candidate on either side of their ideological self-placement?

In the first section of the paper, I will review the theories that attempt to explain split-ticket voting and their criticisms. Both voter-based and candidate-based explanations exist and have been criticized for inaccuracy and

incompleteness. Voter-based theories, such as the spatial model I will test use ideology, policy preferences, and strategic voting to explain why voters choose candidates of different parties in the same election. Candidate-based explanations relate to the incumbency and campaign-related reasons for split-ticket voting and divided government.

In the second section, I will explain the Pooled Senate Study and how it was used to test a spatial explanation for split-ticket voting. I will also attempt to determine how well this model predicted voting behavior based on ideological placement, and in particular, how well it predicted ticket-splitting. In the third and fourth sections I will attempt to examine this type of spatial model more closely and determine the relationship between partisanship and ideology. I will dedicate the fifth section to analyzing the characteristics of the respondents who split their tickets as predicted. In the sixth section, I will explore the fundamental assumption of the model: the ideological placements of the candidates by respondents, and attempt to determine how accurate they were. In the conclusion, I will attempt to tie the ideological placement model into existing theories on split-ticketing voting, and discuss its implications for split-ticket voting as an aspect of divided government.

### **Explanations of Split-Ticket Voting.**

Two schools of theories dominate scholarship about why voters choose candidates of different parties for different offices. The

first type of explanation describes how voter preferences compel ticket-splitting. By contrast, the other set of explanations focuses on factors not controlled by voters, contending that the character of elections and the types of candidates who run for certain offices determine whether voters split their ballots.

One of the most frequently cited voter-based theories of ticket-splitting was put forth by Fiorina: many voters did not trust either party to have control over both executive and legislative branches of government, since they placed themselves between the two parties' "extreme" ideological positions. Therefore, Fiorina argues, voters split their tickets in order to create divided government, so each party can check the other's extreme, "self-serving" agenda (Jacobson 106).

Lacy and Paolino's article "Downsian Voting and the Separation of Powers" (1998) presents a variation on the theme of ticket-splitting as party-balancing. They use a spatial model to reveal Downsian voting behavior, or voting decisions based on expected policy outcomes rather than the candidates' announced policy positions. According to their findings, voters are aware of a difference between the positions candidates express in a campaign and the actual policy outcomes. Voters also display awareness of how these outcomes might vary under different combinations of party control in the branches of government (Lacy and Paolino 1998 1181). They produced two significant findings about how voting for different branches

of government might be affected by a Downsian interpretation of a spatial voting model: voters expect congress to pull presidents to the center (Lacy and Paolino 1187), and voters place themselves closer to candidates' expected policy outcomes after taking into consideration the separation of powers than to the candidate's announced policy positions. (Lacy and Paolino 1191).

Jacobson proposes a different voter-based explanation. He states that voters like government programs but dislike paying for them. He supports this claim by presenting survey data that lists reducing the budget deficit, reducing the national debt, and increasing or maintaining spending levels for numerous social programs as national priorities (Jacobson 107-9). Essentially, split-ticket voting is inspired by the desire of voters to pay the least possible amount of taxes for the largest possible amount of benefits (Jacobson 106) and thus ticket-splitting is entirely rational. Jacobson concludes that ticket-splitting is not an expression of centrism, but rather a way to pay minimally on an individual a basis for collective goods and externalize the costs for those goods. An important tenet of Jacobson's argument is that this model of voting does not require voters to make sophisticated connections between their voting decisions for president and congress – they simply vote for a president who promises to cut taxes and a Representative who promises to keep their favorite government programs (Jacobson 119).

In *The Electoral Origins of Divided Government* (1990), Jacobson also suggests that voters have different expectations for presidents than of members of congress. According to Jacobson, voters expect presidents to look out for national interests, such as maintaining strong defense, generally overseeing the economy, and cutting taxes while members of congress should look out for the best interests of their districts. (Jacobson 115). Petrocik builds upon this idea by exploring the effects of "issue ownership" between the parties. He poses the questions of how the public perceives each party's issue strength, and how candidates make these issues prominent in the campaign. Accordingly, his research has three parts: public perception of party issue ownership, candidate treatment of the issues, and issue positions of voters. He argues that candidates emphasize the issues their party is perceived to be "good at," using their campaigns to establish what the voting criteria should be, as well as which positions voters should favor (Petrocik 21-2). Petrocik uses the 1988 presidential election as an example: George Bush emphasized the importance of defense, an issue on which both he and his party have a strong public image, and Michael Dukakis was virtually powerless to portray himself as a candidate who would be able to live up to a "strong-defense" presidential paradigm (Petrocik 25-6). Petrocik's overall conclusion is that voter perceptions of parties' issue strengths are consistent across different types of races, but the issues that voters perceive as more important

for presidential candidates are generally those on which voters consider Republicans to be stronger (Petrocik 34).

The second school of theories about split-ticket voting focuses less on the voter than on candidates and characteristics of elections. Two of the common foundations for these theories are incumbency advantage, and quality and competitiveness of congressional races (which is related to incumbency advantage).

Sigelman, Wahlbeck, and Buell (1997) test whether ticket-splitting is motivated by a preference for divided government. They divide survey respondents into three groups: those who prefer divided government, those who prefer unified government, and those who are indifferent, and find that, strikingly, the percentages of split-ticket voters and straight-ticket voters are similar across all three groups. For instance, seventy-five percent of voters who prefer divided government voted for a straight ticket of one party or the other, as did seventy-four percent of indifferent respondents, and eighty-four percent of those who prefer unified government. Conversely, split-ticket voters accounted for twenty-four percent of divided government fans, twenty-six percent of “indifferents,” and sixteen percent of unified government supporters. While these differences across groups are statistically significant, they reflect a “lack of real difference between those who disagree about the merits of divided government.” (Sigelman, Wahlbeck, and Buell 883) Hence, they conclude that decisions to

vote for candidates of different parties are motivated by affection for and ideological proximity to candidates and parties as well as incumbency. (Sigelman, Wahlbeck, and Buell 890) This finding suggests that the way candidates run campaigns, and the characteristics of candidates themselves influence voting decisions toward split-ticket voting. In addition, the authors reject the idea that voters prefer divided government and link this preference to their voting behavior, expressing doubt that voters who claim preference for unified or divided government in a survey truly espouse such a preference in “the core of their political beliefs.” (Sigelman, Wahlbeck, and Buell 891)

Burden and Kimball (1998) provide evidence for “unintentional” theories of divided government, and their research fits into my classification of non-voter based theories of split-ticket voting. Their arguments draw upon characteristics of elections, such as incumbency, challenger quality (or non-existence, in some cases), and campaign quality. They claim that factors such as incumbency and spending capacity indirectly lead to ticket-splitting because they allow candidates to have a stronger campaign message, making them more likely to attract voters from the opposite party (Burden and Kimball 541). They also focus on the lack of challengers who are able to “represent a credible alternative to the incumbent.” (Burden and Kimball 542) They conclude that the candidates and the way they behave influence

voters to split their tickets, rather than voters choosing to split their tickets in any systematic, party-balancing manner.

### **Testing a Spatial Model of Ideological**

#### **Balancing.**

To make predictions about which voters might split their tickets based on placement in ideological space, I used a numerical representation of a spatial voting model for senatorial and presidential candidates in 1988, based on Senate Election Studies survey data. Voters were asked to rate themselves on an ideological scale of one through seven, with one being “very liberal” and seven as “very conservative.” They were also asked to rate the Senate candidate in their state as well as the George Bush and Michael Dukakis on this scale. Voters were expected to choose the candidates who were closest to them according to the model. For instance, if a respondent “placed” herself as a five, Bush as a six, and Dukakis as a two, she would be expected to vote for Bush. Voters were placed into categories based on whether the model would predict them to vote for Bush or Dukakis. Groups who placed themselves equidistant from the two candidates, did not vote for president or refused to report how they voted, voted for a candidate other than Dukakis or Bush, did not know how to place themselves or one or both of the candidates, and those who refused to place themselves or one or both of the candidates were omitted from both sets of predicted voters. For Senate races, voters

scale, and sorted into “predicted Democratic Senate vote” and “predicted Republican Senate vote.” The same groups were omitted as in the presidential predictions, as well as respondents whose state did not have a Senate race in 1988.

As a predictor of how respondents voted in Senate races, the model held up quite well, with approximately seventy-nine percent of respondents whose votes were predicted reporting a vote that matched the prediction made based on their ideological placements. The model performed almost equally well at predicting voting decisions in the presidential race – nearly seventy-four percent of respondents voted according to the predictions of the model. This lays the foundation for how the model works, while it is flawed – as I will discuss in a later section – it reveals high correlation between proximity of candidate-voter ideological placement and voting behavior. Next, I looked at how successful the ideological placement model was at predicting more complicated combinations of voting decisions.

First, I did a simple combination of the two types of votes. How accurate was the model at predicting both presidential and senate vote? Five hundred eighty-nine respondents were predicted to vote one way or the other for both president and senate (no ties), and reported a vote for both offices. The model worked equally well to predict both offices jointly as it did to predict each individually.

Table 1. Accuracy of Predictions of Combined Presidential and Senate Ticket Voting. **The Ideological Placement Model and Split**

	Presidential Vote Predicted Correctly	Presidential Vote Predicted Incorrectly
Senate Vote Predicted Correctly	436 (74%)	48 (8%)
Senate Vote Predicted Incorrectly	86 (15%)	19 (3%)

Based on predictions for how respondents would vote for presidential and senatorial candidates, four sets of predicted voting profiles were constructed: Republican President-Republican Senator, Republican President-Democratic Senator, Democratic President-Democratic Senator, Democratic President-Republican Senator. In order to further test how well the ideological placement model predicts split-ticket voting, I broke both predictions and reported votes into the four categories listed above and used those to calculate how many respondents voted as predicted. After breaking respondents down into these categories, I compared actual reported votes with predicted votes.

The data in Table 2 reveal that the ideological placement model was a fair predictor of which respondents would be ticket-splitters. When we consider the fact that twice as many respondents who placed themselves closer to the Democratic Senate candidate and the Republican presidential candidate voted for that combination than for any of the other three major-party combinations, the model seems to be a good predictor for split ticket voting. However, only about fifty-five percent of those predicted to vote for either split-ticket combination actually voted for that particular combination, and only fifty-eight percent voted split-ticket of either

combination. The correlations between the predictions for split-ticket voting and the actual reported split-ticket votes are in the expected direction, but fall short of overwhelming intensity. When put to this test, the model is only a mediocre predictor of split-ticket voting.

On the other hand, the ideological placement model holds up as a strong predictor of straight-ticket voting. Eighty-one percent of respondents predicted to vote Republican for both offices did so, and eighty percent of those predicted to vote Democratic in both races voted that way. Overall, 437 respondents were predicted, according to their ideological placement of themselves and the candidates, to vote a straight ticket of one party or the other. Three hundred sixty-six of them voted straight-ticket (although fourteen voted for the ticket opposite their ideological placement predictions) – eighty-three percent.

Table 2: Ideological Placement Model as a Predictor of Split- and Straight-Ticket Voting

Reported Vote	Predicted Vote			
	Rep. President - Rep. Senator	Rep. President- Dem. Senator	Dem. President- Rep. Senator	Dem. President- Dem. Senator
<b>Rep. President-Rep. Senator</b>	192* (81%)	26 (29%)	6 (10%)	6 (3%)
<b>Rep. President-Dem. Senator</b>	22 (9%)	54* (59%)	4 (7%)	17 (9%)
<b>Dem. President-Rep. Senator</b>	15 (6%)	1 (1%)	30* (49%)	17 (9%)
<b>Dem. President-Dem. Senator</b>	8 (3%)	10 (11%)	21 (39%)	160* (80%)

Why does the ideological placement model work so well as a predictor of straight-ticket voting, but break down when applied to split-ticket voting? Controlling for “party ID” may shed some light on this question. According to the ideological placement model, voters who place themselves nearest ideologically to the Republican presidential candidate and the Democratic Senate candidate should vote for those two combinations. However, twenty-six out of the ninety-one respondents predicted to vote that way voted for Republican candidates in both races. Could partisan identification be overshadowing ideological placement in these cases?

### **The Role of Partisan Identification.**

The National Election Studies survey asked respondents to assign themselves a number to describe their partisanship. Zero denoted a “strong Democrat,” one a “weak Democrat,” two an “independent Democrat,” four an “independent Republican,” five a “weak Republican,” and six a “strong Republican.” Using this system, it is possible to aggregate the partisan identification of a group within the

sample (or the entire sample) and take the average of it. Groups with averages closer to six were more Republican, while those with lower averages would be more Democratic.

I took the average of the self-assigned party identification of the respondents predicted to vote RD who actually reported voting RR, omitting those who refused to respond or reported being apolitical or members of minor parties. Their average partisan identification was 5.05. The average partisan identification of respondents predicted to vote RD who actually reported voting RD was 4.22. On a scale of one through six, this is a fairly large difference.

Table 3: Self-Described Party ID of RR and RD Voters (Of Those Predicted to Vote RD)

	6-5-4 Republicans	3 Independents	2-1-0 Democrats
Voted RR	20 (90%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)
Voted RD	36 (67%)	7 (13%)	9 (17%)

Table 3 presents the breakdown of how these two groups of respondents reported their party affiliation. The table reveals an interesting aspect of the data that is not obvious from the average partisanship of each group: seventeen percent of those who voted RD identified themselves as weak, strong, or independent Democrats. Less than one percent of RR voters shared this partisanship. This difference in partisanship across the two groups suggests that when ideology leads to one voting decision, and partisanship leads to another, partisanship will often take precedence. Presumably the larger percentage of Republicans in the RR voter set were more opposed to voting for a Democratic Senate candidate, even one whom they found to be closer to them ideologically, and the Democrats in the other groups were more enthusiastic about voting for a Democratic candidate, and, for that matter, the Independents were better able to stomach voting for a Democrat.

The averages and the data from the table can be interpreted in several ways:

- 1) Strength of partisanship is an important determinant of split-ticket voting. This would support theories like Fiorina's, which contend that moderate voters find themselves

between the two more ideologically polarized parties, and balance the two parties by ticket-splitting. The ideological self-placement of these voters near candidates of both parties might be merely a reflection of their weaker partisanship. One way to test this interpretation is to look at voters who place themselves in between two candidates. Are these voters weaker partisans? Are they more likely to split their tickets? I will address this question in the next section.

- 2) Weaker partisanship leads to conditions that leave voters open to the kinds of candidate behaviors that induce split-ticket voting, as argued by Burden and Kimball. For instance, if partisan ties are weakened, voters are more susceptible to the appeal of an incumbent, a skilled campaigner, or a charismatic and personable candidate. These factors attract weak partisans to candidates of the opposite party, as well as lead to inadvertent split-ticket voting

- because voters are considering criteria other than party.
- 3) Survey respondents who reported voting Republican in both races felt more compelled to report themselves as Republicans in order to seem consistent.
  - 4) Partisan identification is more important to voters than ideology. If voters are strong Republicans, they will support the Republican candidate for Senate even if they are closer ideologically to the Democratic candidate.

The last possibility could potentially account for the higher success of the model in predicting straight-ticket voting than predicting split-ticket voting. If ideological placement predicts that an individual will choose candidates for both president and Senate from one party, and that individual identifies with that party, there is no cognitive dissonance connected with a voting decision. However, if the ideological placement model predicts a split-ticket vote, but a person identifies with one party or the other, the voter must choose whether to favor ideology or party affiliation in making her voting decision.

#### **Which Voters Did Split Their Tickets?**

While not all the respondents who were predicted to vote split-ticket did so, some of them did. What are the characteristics of the voters who were predicted to vote RD and did so?

Some explanations of split-ticket voting posit that voters who consider themselves ideologically between the more extreme views of the two parties will split their tickets. In order to test this, I looked at respondents who reported voting RD as predicted. Their average ideological self-placement was 4.7, and their average placement of George Bush was 5.0, and of the Democratic Senate candidate in their state, 4.5. These numbers give credence to theories that explain split-ticket voting as a matter of ideologically polarized candidates and parties and ideologically moderate voters. However, only thirteen of the 54 respondents in this group placed themselves between Bush and the Democratic Senate candidate in their state. On an aggregate level, the “in-between” theory works well, but a closer look at individuals reveals that it does not account for an overwhelming number of split-ticket voters.

Another factor affecting split-ticket voting is partisanship. Common sense suggests that split-ticket voters would have an overall weaker partisan character than straight-ticket voters. As mentioned earlier, the average partisanship of the respondents who were predicted to vote RD and reported voting RD was 4.22, in the range of “weak Republican.” While this does not reveal a group of maverick Independents, it does present a difference from the average partisanship of those who were predicted to vote RD and voted RR instead (see page 13). This comparison sheds some light on

the importance of strong partisanship as factor detracting from split-ticket voting.

The respondents who were accurately predicted to split their tickets between a Republican presidential candidate and a Democratic Senate candidate range in partisanship from zero (strong Democrat) to six (strong Republican). They also range from two (the second most liberal position) to seven (the most conservative position) on an ideological scale. This wide variation makes it difficult for them to be generalized. In addition, while they were faced with the same choices for president, these respondents faced a variety of choices for the Senate. Some states were likely to have more polarized candidates, or less common ideology-partisanship combinations, such as liberal Republican Lowell Weicker, or a conservative Southern Democrat. The wide variety of ideological and partisan self-identification among this group as well as the differing Senate choices across different states can account for some of the difficulty in predicting split-ticket voting. In particular, it is difficult to build a profile of a split-ticket voter from the data provided. The main conclusions from these data are that neither ideology nor weak partisanship is a sufficient explanation for split-ticket voting, though both have some impact.

#### **Other Explanations for the Discrepancy in the Model's Predictive Accuracy.**

While there is not enough room here to give all possible explanations fair consideration,

it is worthwhile to suggest a few other ideas about why the ideological placement model predicts straight-ticket voting decisions with eighty percent accuracy, but can only achieve fifty percent accuracy predicting split-ticket votes (at least in this particular case). In fact, an obvious first step would be to apply the model to different election years to see if the pattern persists.

In addition, it might be beneficial to look at whether all Republican respondents systematically placed themselves closer to the Republican candidates in both races. For instance, did conservative Republican respondents show tendencies to assign their ideological views to Republican candidates? If this happened systematically with both liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans, then the number of voters who were predicted to vote straight ticket and did so might be slightly exaggerated. I take a closer look at how respondents placed candidates in the next section.

#### **Candidate Ideological Placement: How Reliable Were Survey Respondents?**

This model of voting behavior relies upon respondents' placement of themselves in relation to presidential and Senate candidates. However, up to this point we have accepted these placements without looking at their accuracy. In order to dissect some of the fundamental assumptions of the model, I will first compare the placement of two very different 1988 Republican Senate candidates,

Lowell Weicker and Trent Lott. Then I will compute the average placement of Dukakis and Bush. By looking at how respondents placed candidates, I hope to demonstrate more clearly whether respondents' placements simply reflect how they voted, or whether these placements reflect real variations in the candidates and how ideological variations affect respondents' voting decisions.

In 1988, Weicker was the incumbent Senator from Connecticut, and Lott was a Representative from Mississippi, attempting to win a Senate seat. Weicker was a very liberal Republican, who later became an independent and endorsed Bill Bradley in the 2000 presidential primaries (McCaleb 2000 <[www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)>). Lott was a more traditional Republican with solid conservative credentials. A glimpse at the Americans for Democratic Action ratings for each of them reveals the difference in the two Republicans' ideology. Lott was given a rating of five percent, while Weicker voted with the ADA's position ninety percent of the time – receiving a higher rating than Connecticut's Democratic Senator Christopher Dodd, who received a score eighty-five percent in the same year (<<http://aaction.org>>).

My hypothesis concerning the ideological placement of Weicker and Lott by their respective constituents was that careful scrutiny of the ratings would reveal a certain degree of carelessness and ignorance on the part of survey respondents. If Weicker's ratings on

the ideological placement scale were similar to Lott's, I might be able to infer that Connecticut respondents used Weicker's partisan affiliation as a shortcut to associate him with conservative ideology (assuming that Lott's ratings pegged him as a conservative – otherwise a serious doubt about the accuracy of the placements would arise).

Lott's average ideological placement was approximately 4.6 – just right of center. This seems significantly closer to the center than we would expect for a Southern Republican with a five percent ADA rating. To see if that average was pulled down by a few stray ratings, I omitted the respondents who placed Lott at one, with the justification that they probably either had no knowledge of politics or were confused about the scale. This increased his rating to approximately 4.9, still closer to the center than Lott's record would suggest. Connecticut respondents gave Weicker an average rating of approximately 4.1 – almost dead center. This, too, was inconsistent with ADA ratings. However, it does reveal the possibility of an interesting balancing effect in ideological placement – perhaps voters knew of Weicker's liberal policy record, but found that to be inconsistent with his partisan affiliation, and thus placed him in the center. Since 4.1 was his mean placement by fifty-three Connecticut respondents who did not opt out of responding to the question or claim to be apolitical, it is possible to test this micro-balancing hypothesis by looking at the mode of Weicker's placement

numbers. We can compare these with the mode of Lott's placement scores to determine if there is a greater difference than in the mean scores.

Breaking down the placements of each candidate into the numbers of respondents who assigned each numerical placement reveals that Weicker's centrist mean placement is not the result averaging those who rated him as a liberal with those who inaccurately portrayed him as a right-winger. The data do support my balancing hypothesis – Weicker's modal score was 4, so it is possible that respondents placed him in the center as a result of conflicting ideas about his partisanship and ideology.

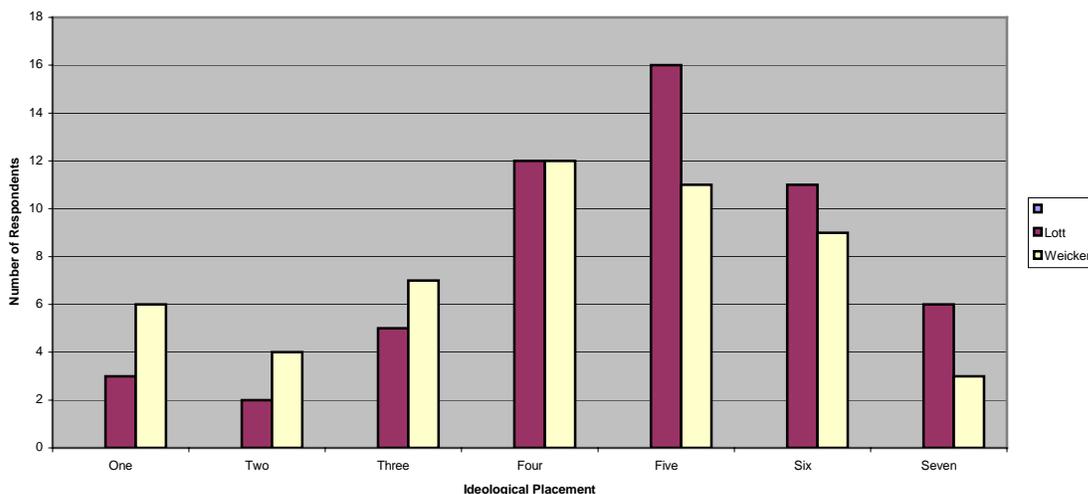
Lott's modal score was a 5, which presents a more significant difference than between their mean scores. However, his placements are still very similar to Weicker's when broken down as in Table 4. Most respondents placed both candidates in the moderate-to-conservative range. The difference between Lott and Weicker was in the right direction, but probably not large enough.

It is also possible that the respondents who placed Weicker toward the conservative end of the scale were conservative Republicans who were assigning their own conservative beliefs to the Republican candidate. The average party identification for respondents who placed Weicker at five, six, or seven was 3.25 – Independent with a slight Republican leaning. The average self-placement on the ideological scale for this group was 4.67, about the same as Lott's average placement. This supports the

idea that respondents with conservative views were more likely to place Weicker on the conservative end of the scale, but this group of respondents was not overwhelmingly Republican.

We can tentatively conclude from this test that the ideological placement model, while not wildly inaccurate, may be biased toward the center. This test also reveals the possibility that respondents placed candidates on the ideological scale as a function of partisanship rather than as an independent characteristic. Next, I computed the average ideology ratings of the presidential candidates. Bush's average was just right of center, at 4.4. Dukakis, however, was much further to the left, with an average placement of 2.6. This seems likely in light of the fact that the average self-placement was a 3.3 – it is more likely that respondents did not know how to place themselves than that they were that far left of center as a group. This is particularly puzzling in light of the average placement of Democratic Senate candidates, which was 4.89, to the right of Bush. If refusals to respond to the questions pulled the average down, then the average rating of Democratic Senate candidates was extremely conservative. The average score of Republican Senate candidates was approximately 5.7, which seems reasonable

Figure 1: Placement Of Lott and Weicker



(although it is also probably artificially low). The irregular results of this test might be indicative that respondent ideological placement was not very highly correlated to actual candidate issue and policy positions, or that the averaging method is highly flawed. A detailed examination of would probably reveal more insights about the reliability of the ratings.

### **Conclusion.**

The ideological placement model was a good predictor of straight-ticket voting, but only a fair predictor of split-ticket voting. The factor that separated those who were predicted to vote a split-ticket was partisanship. More intense partisans were more likely to vote straight-ticket. The most obvious conclusion is that ideological placement is a good predictor of voting behavior for weak partisans and independents, but will be overridden by partisan affiliation. The major flaw in the ideological placement model is that it

relies on respondent placement of candidates, and this placement might be biased toward the respondent's own beliefs, might suffer from haste or lack of information, or, as the data suggest, be biased toward the center. The tests of the model did not reveal any major irregularities or surprises, but did not reflect an acute awareness on the part of the respondents.

Comparing the partisan and ideological profiles of split and straight-ticket voters (especially after putting the ideological placement profiles in spatial context with placement of candidates) revealed that partisanship and ideology are both important factors in split-ticket voting, but are clearly not the only factors. The substantial difference in partisan identification between split-ticket and straight-ticket voters with similar ideological positions in relation to the candidates suggests that weakening partisanship might be a cause of split-ticket voting.

Some explanations for split-ticket voting posit that voters place themselves between candidates from the two parties. This explanation is not supported by the ideological placement model – most respondents who reported voting for both a Democratic Senate candidate in their state and the Republican presidential candidate, George Bush, and had been predicted to do so based on their ideological placements, did not place themselves between these two candidates. One possible step to studying this issue further would be to examine the Senate candidates more closely, comparing differing ideologies, years in public office and relationship with constituents, and campaigning skill. It could be that split-ticket voting is influenced by the increasingly candidate-centered nature of campaigns.

### **How Does the Ideological Placement Model Fit Into the Big Picture?**

The ideological placement model deals with the idea that voters split their ballots because they feel ideologically closer to candidates from different parties. It does not differentiate between candidates and their likely policy outcomes if elected. It also does not account for strategic voting. However, it does lay the basic foundations for how voters might make decisions about voting. It also provides evidence for the effect of partisanship on split-ticket voting. If respondents with weaker partisanship were more likely split their tickets based on ideology, then it can be concluded that

weakening partisanship might be a cause of split-ticket voting.

What are the implications of the ideological placement model for divided government? If further tests of the model produce positive results, it could support theories that voters split their tickets in order to produce an ideologically balanced divided government. The model does not account for voters' perceptions of the differing roles of the different branches of government. However, it does provide some support for the idea that voters want to balance the extremity of the two parties by ticket-splitting. Further testing of whether voters split their tickets more when the parties are more polarized, or when particularly extreme candidates are running might shed more light on this question. One problem that the model does not really address is that voters might place themselves far from an ideologically extreme candidate, but vote for them for another reason (for instance, partisanship or home state) and not bother to balance their vote with a candidate on the other side because the ideologically extreme candidate is not likely to win.

The ideological placement model is simply a small piece of the big picture depicting the explanations of split-ticketing voting. In turn, split-ticket voting is a piece of the big picture of divided government in the United States. As we move through the era of Republican majorities in both chambers of Congress, and into an era in which the

government is divided both between and within branches with incredibly close majorities, more questions will arise? How do partisanship and ideology interact in mass and elite opinion? Who are split-ticket voters, and are they motivated by ideology or practical issues? Is split-ticket voting an expression of moderatism and centrism, or of increased emphasis on candidates? As we seek more answers, we will find more questions about the aggregate indecision that leads to split-ticket voting.

### Bibliography

Americans for Democratic Action. "1988 Senate Voting Record," "1988 House Voting Record." <<http://adaction.org>>

Burden, Barry C. and David C. Kimball. 1998. "A New Approach to the Study of Ticket Splitting." *American Political Science Review* 92:533-44.

Jacobson, Gary C. 1990. The Electoral Origins of Divided Government: Competition in U.S. House Elections, 1946-1988. Boulder: Westview Press.

Lacy, Dean and Philp Paolino. 1998. "Downsian Voting and the Separation of Powers." *American Journal of Political Science* 42:1180-1199.

McCaleb, Ian Christopher. 2000. "Bradley Welcomes Weicker Endorsement." <<http://fyi.cnn.com/2000/ALLPOLITICS/stories/01/28/bradley.nh/>>

Petrocik, John R. 1991. "Divided Government: Is It All In the Campaigns?" In *The*

*Politics of Divided Government*, Gary W. Cox and Samuel Kernell, eds. Boulder: Westview Press.

Sapiro, Virginia, Steven J. Rosenstone, Warren E. Miller, and the National Election Studies. 1998. "1988-1992 Pooled Senate Study." *American National Election Studies, 1948-1997 (CD ROM, ICPSR Ed.)*. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research.

Sigelman, Lee, Paul J. Wahlbeck and Emmett H. Buell, Jr. 1997. "Vote Choice and the Preference for Divided Government: Lessons of 1992." *Amerian Journal of Political Science* 41:879-894.