

The Mystery of Local Versus National Partisan Representation

Kristen Badal
U.S. Department of Justice

Jessica Trounstone
University of California, Merced

Abstract

Approximately 1 of every 3 counties in the United States is represented by different parties at the local and national levels, but we know little about the factors that would lead to such representational splits. In this paper, we use aggregate county-level data to analyze contexts that might lead voters to choose one party for president and another for county legislator. We offer three reasons for differences in representation across levels of government: incomplete realignment, local factors, and differentials in party strength. Using a unique dataset of the partisan affiliation of county councilors and presidential votes in 12 states, we find support for all three hypotheses. This paper takes a needed first step toward understanding how parties and partisan identities operate in local elections.

Kristen Badal is a paralegal in the office of International Affairs, Criminal Division, U.S. Department of Justice. Jessica Trounstone is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at University of California, Merced. Please address all correspondence to Jessica Trounstone at the School of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts, Classroom and Office Building 352, University of California, Merced, 5200 North Lake Road, Merced, CA 95343. Email: jessica@trounstone.com. The views expressed in the article are the views of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Department of Justice or the United States.

In a popular account of the recent dramatic trend of political segregation, Bill Bishop (2008) explains that Americans now experience a “politics so polarized that...elections are no longer just contests over policies, but bitter choices between ways of life” (p14). Given work by scholars like Lakoff (1996) and Hetherington and Weiler (2009) indicating tremendous division between Republican and Democratic identifiers, as well as Green et al’s (2002) research showing that partisan identification should be understood as a “a distinct and enduring psychological orientation,” (p32) it would seem that partisan loyalties (and polarization) run deep. Indeed, in recent elections ticket-splitting has declined to the lowest levels in 30 years (Kimball 2005) and Bishop reports that in the 2004 election, 60% of counties handed either Kerry or Bush a landslide victory. But Bishop’s conclusions (and most studies of polarization and partisan identity) rely on a national level view of partisan allegiance. At lower levels of government, the political reality is considerably more complex. In a sample of 12 states across all regions of the United States, we find that approximately 1 out of every 3 counties is represented by different parties at the local and national levels - even in places that voted for presidential nominees by a landslide. In this paper, we examine why.

This is not an entirely new question. Scholars of Southern politics have noted the tendency for at least half a century. V.O. Key described a peculiar kind of partisan “indigenous to the South” - one who votes Democratic in local elections and for the Republican presidential nominee; a “political schizophrenic” in Key’s eyes (1949, p278). One could be forgiven for assuming this pattern to be a historical relic given the long realignment of the south. But our data suggest otherwise. While it is true that politics in southern states have changed dramatically over the last two decades, the result is not that political schizophrenia has disappeared. Quite the opposite; the south has grown both more schizophrenic and more similar to the rest of the nation

(Black and Black 1987). Figure 1 shows the proportion of American National Election Survey respondents who told interviewers that they voted for candidates of the same or different party for President, the House, and “other state and local offices.”¹

[INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

As the graph reveals, ticket splitting varied significantly by region in the 1952 election, but less so by 1984.² Across all regions, a substantial portion of voters reported selecting candidates from different parties for state and local offices even while they voted a straight ticket nationally.

But was Key right to think of such behavior as an indication of illness? There are a range of possible reasons that we might see representational splits across levels of government – only some of which point toward Key’s conclusion. If, for instance, voters have well formed preferences about national level politics but essentially flip coins in local elections we’d be quite likely to see representational splits and also to conclude that voters are irrational. But perhaps voters actually prefer Democratic (Republican) representatives for county government and Republican (Democratic) presidents as a result of their policy positions. Given that many national level debates seem irrelevant at the local level, preferences for different parties at different levels are not inconceivable.

Such reasoning could have important implications for the study of elections. Perhaps selecting representatives of different parties at different levels indicates that voters have multiple party identifications, which would imply that the standard survey question regarding how voters “normally think of themselves” is not precise enough for our federal system and that we are

¹ These proportions were calculated by combining answers to two ANES questions. The first question asked respondents their vote for President and Congress. The second asked whether respondents voted straight or split tickets for state and local offices. We coded respondents as straight ticket voters if they cast straight tickets for the same party in both questions. We coded them as federal ticket splitters if they voted for a different party for President and Congress. We coded them straight federal, local splitters if they voted for the same party for President and Congress but a different party for state and local offices.

² 1984 is the most recent date that both of the relevant questions were asked.

unlikely to be able to predict local election outcomes very well without more detailed questions. It also indicates that we need to develop an understanding of how policy preferences map onto party labels at the local level (and how and when they came to be related). Are Democratic county officials more likely to promote public housing and preserve open space while Republicans focus on economic development, and law and order? What kinds of events (e.g. large changes in property values) could realign local loyalties? On the other hand, seeking answers to such questions could be a waste of effort if representational splitting is driven predominately by lagging realignment. If voters' party attachments at the local level represent historical forces and not evaluations of local outcomes, policies, or candidates, we would be likely to see representational splits – but they would not be informative regarding voters' views of local politics (except, perhaps to suggest that voters do not pay them much attention).

In this paper, we analyze three reasons for differences in representation across levels of government: incomplete realignment, local factors, and differentials in party strength. We find support for each explanation. First, to some extent, differences between the local and national vote are driven by lagging realignment – but we also find that it is unlikely that we will see continued change. Second, we find strong evidence that the local context and changes in the local environment increase the probability of split representation. Finally, we show that the degree to which the parties are evenly matched affects splitting. In counties where the two parties compete more effectively in state and national elections, split representation is more common. The fact that partisanship is not tightly linked across levels of government means that our current understandings of partisan identity and vote choice are incomplete.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. First, we review the literature on realignment, divided government, and local elections that establish the bases for our predictions.

Then, we describe the unique data that we collected to identify split representation patterns. Finally, using a heteroscedastic regression model, we present evidence in support of our explanations of split representation. This paper takes a needed step toward understanding how parties and partisan identities operate in local elections and lays the foundation for future research on these topics.

Explanations for Cross Level Representational Splits

Why might voters select different parties at different levels of government? A voluminous literature debates the degree to which partisan attachment is best characterized by “persistent adherence and...resistance to contrary influence,” (Campbell et al 1960, p146) or by ongoing evaluations of party performance and promises (e.g. Fiorina 1981). Subscribers to the affective orientation school might be most likely to explain representational splits as driven by the process of realignment, while those who see it as a running tally might be more likely to see voters’ appraisal of local conditions as the culprit. A third possibility is that differences in party strength may offer voters different options at the local versus the national level. In the next section, we discuss these possibilities in greater detail.

Incomplete Realignment

One explanation for split representation is the incomplete realignment of partisan identification. As the parties have sorted at the national level, local voting may not have kept pace with the change. Partisan affiliations exhibit a good deal of inertia (Green et al 2002) and as Key explains, “present partisan affiliations tend to be as much the fortuitous result of events long past as the product of cool calculation of interest in party policies of today” (1949, p285). Such a tendency could produce representational splits if the campaigns that voters *do* pay

attention to are more likely to be national than local. That is, it is possible that people form attachments to parties which tend to dictate their votes at all levels of government (including the local level) but that particular national candidates or contexts move them to vote for the other party in some presidential elections. If voting for this other party in presidential elections continues across many cycles, the voter might begin to shift her identification, and we might slowly see voting at lower levels come to match presidential choices. This is the pattern that scholars have identified in the south where voters began supporting Republican presidents in the mid-1960s (Green et al 2002, Aistrup 1996). Eventually, Republicans made gains in southern congressional and state politics as well, and many scholars see 1994 as the turning point (Bullock et al 2005, Bullock et al 2006, Arrington and Grofman 1999).³ If this was also the case at the local level, we might see fewer representational splits starting in the second half of the 1990s. On the other hand, Black and Black (2002) argue that “if the old solid Democratic South has vanished, a comparably solid Republican South has not developed. Nor is one likely to emerge” (p3). If these insights hold true for partisan realignment in general, we’d expect change in sub-national elections to level-off, making it unlikely that consistency would increase over time.

Local Forces

A second reason for split representation that we explore is the role of the local context. It is possible that voters evaluate the parties at different levels of government differently. Vote choice may be explained by election specific factors, as Segura and Nicholson (1995) found to be the case in their analysis of split senate delegations. A particularly important election specific

³ Aldrich and Griffin (2000) argue that realignment has actually occurred in the other direction starting at the state legislative level and moving up to Congress. This is unlikely to be the case in our data as the vast majority of representational splits in the South are the result of Democratic county councils paired with Republican presidential votes. It would be hard to imagine that during the period we study (1990-2006) the Democrats were slowly gaining ground in Southern states by starting at the local level and working their way up the ticket. Nonetheless our test cannot distinguish which direction the realignment runs. It turns out to be a moot point since we do not find evidence of a temporal pattern.

factor should be the presence of incumbents. Voters may keep local incumbents in office regardless of party if they perform well. Additionally, low levels of information in local elections could lead local voters to prioritize incumbency over partisanship as a cue for their vote. If one party represents a disproportionate share of the incumbents running for office, that party may be more likely to continue to win even if voters prefer a different party's candidates at other levels of government. As a result, local legislatures with large proportions of incumbents may be more likely to produce split representation.

Another possibility is that changes in local conditions could lead voters to pay more attention to county level politics at some times more so than others. Particularly if the changing conditions are seen as being within the purview of local officials, voters may be more willing to abandon their national level party affiliation. Although this might seem to be a monumental task for the typically uninformed voter, Nicholson (2005) and Arceneueaux (2006) provide evidence that when issues are salient, voters are able to hold representatives accountable for outcomes that are appropriate to their jurisdiction. Furthermore, scholars like Black and Black (1987), Glaser (1996), Grofman et al (2000), and Karp and Garland (2007) have argued that local politicians are able to adapt to their local context and successfully keep national level issues from infiltrating local races. In collecting our data, we found many pieces of qualitative evidence to support this conclusion. For example, when we asked a Democrat running for president of the county commission in Buncombe County, North Carolina how he planned to win support from constituents voting Republican at the national level, he explained, "I always try to figure out what the common denominator is. I don't talk about gay marriage, abortion, issues where I differ from people." The sentiment among local politicians with whom we spoke was that the partisan divisions at the federal level need not be relevant in local elections. Conversely, it could

mean that divisive issues at the local level are irrelevant in national contests. Changes in local level contexts could allow candidates the opportunity to target different median voters and build different coalitions for county elections. Because property values and race relations are important local policy dimensions (Danielson 1976, Kaufmann 2004), we'd anticipate changes in these arenas to generate more representational splits.

Some contexts may encourage locally focused voting more than others. For instance, a community with a very mobile population may be one in which local issues are less likely to be prominent in voters' minds. Similarly, Oliver and Ha (2007) provide evidence that in larger communities voters are less interested and attentive to local politics. We might expect that in these types of settings, voters will learn little about local candidates and when given the option, will simply use their national level party identification as a heuristic. As a result, we would expect fewer splits in such places.

Party Strength

A final possibility is that differences in party strength predict split representation. This thesis has many adherents (Burden and Kimball 1998, Steed and Moreland 2007, Key 1949 and 1953 to name a few). If (as was true in the south) one party dominates in terms of organization, resources, candidate recruitment, and votes at the local level but is more evenly matched at higher levels of government, the consequence could be split representation. "As of 1950," explain Black and Black (2002), "the southern Republican party had almost no followers, no leaders, and no candidates for public office...With an exception here and there, Republican leaders were uninterested in building a thriving party that regularly fielded candidates and sincerely attempted to win elections" (p57-59). In such an environment, even if voters wanted Republican representation at the county level, they'd be unable (or unwise) to make such a

choice. Thus, Lublin (2004) and Glaser (1996) argue that a key factor to Republican success in the south has been the reestablishment of local Republican Party organizations and systems for nominating quality candidates. Seat by seat, the Republicans advanced onto the Congressional and later state politics scene, building resources and support in the electorate. The same process could occur at the local level. We should expect that counties in which both parties draw significant funds and votes at higher levels of government, the chances of splitting across levels would be more likely as compared to places where one party has a clear advantage.

In sum, we expect that representational splitting will be more likely in counties where partisan realignment is incomplete, where local forces are likely to affect local vote choice, and where the parties are more evenly matched with regard to resources and support.

Data Description

In order to study patterns of representation at the county level, we selected three states from each Census region (West, Midwest, Northeast, and South) in which we could get data on county councilors' partisan affiliations for any years between 1990 and 2006. These states were chosen on the basis of available and appropriate data. Many states have nonpartisan county elections (e.g. California), so these were excluded from our consideration. Many other states do not make county election returns uniformly available and data collection is costly and inconsistent. The states we chose are Arizona, Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, and South Carolina.⁴

⁴ We gathered election returns from Arizona, Idaho, Maine, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, and South Carolina and collected blue book data from Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri, and Nebraska. North Carolina data were provided by the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners. The differences in the type of data we were able to gather required that we develop a common metric of partisan support. We use the proportion of county council members that are affiliated with the Democratic/Republican Party as this measure.

Counties in the states we selected hold partisan elections in even years.⁵ The concurrency of local and national elections is important because it minimizes the possibility that representational splits are the result of differences in turnout.⁶ Because most counties have staggered elections for county council, we combined data across years to determine the partisan makeup of each council in the year following an election. For instance, if three Democratic councilors were elected in 1990 and two Republican councilors were elected in 1992, the first year for which we would have complete data for this county would be 1993. In that year, the county would be coded as having a 60% Democratic County Council. The years for which we know the partisan makeup of the county council in each state along with the total number of counties are listed in appendix Table A1. We merged these data with county level election returns for president. In our analysis, we use the county level presidential vote from the election held closest to (but not after) the year in which we have council data. For the county example referenced above, the presidential election data would come from 1992.⁷ Finally, we merged

⁵ The one exception is New Jersey, where some seats in some counties are elected in odd years.

⁶ Although we do not have the ability to conclusively rule out the possibility that ballot roll-off is producing the representational splits, we have some evidence that indicates this is not the case. One of the states in our data set has complete election returns available and non-staggered county elections – Arizona. We found, in the 2000 and 2004 elections, that when Democratic county councilors won a larger proportion of the vote than Democratic presidential candidates, they also received a larger total number of votes. This was despite the fact that the total number of ballots cast in county council elections was lower in every county. We also found a similar pattern in two North Carolina counties where we were able to collect election returns for 2000 and 2004. So while ballot roll-off occurs it is not the source of representational splits. These results are available from the authors upon request.

⁷ One might worry that the presence/lack of presidential coattails contributes to split representation patterns. The inclusion of year fixed effects in our model should account for election specific factors, but we also attempted to rule out the possibility that coattails biased our estimates in two ways. First, we added a dummy variable for the one state in our dataset that does not have staggered elections for county council (Arizona). Our parameter estimates were nearly unchanged. Secondly, using the 5 states where we had raw vote totals for county elections we analyzed the relationship between the presidential vote and the county vote in presidential versus congressional years. First, we combined the total number of ballots cast for all Democratic candidates running for county council and divided this number by the total number of ballots cast for county council seats. We then predicted the Democratic share of the county council vote using the Democratic share of the presidential vote in the most recent presidential election and added a dummy variable for presidential election years. The coefficient on the presidential election year dummy was close to zero and far from statistical significance. These results indicate that the presidential election vote predicts the county vote equally well in congressional and presidential years. We also regressed the county vote on the presidential vote in separate regressions for congressional and presidential years. The coefficients are nearly identical although the model fit slightly better in presidential years ($R^2 = 0.21$ compared to 0.16).

Census Current Population Survey data for population figures through 2006 and linearly interpolated data from the Census of Population and Housing.

To clearly display the patterns in our data we convert partisan representation into a series of dummy variables: counties with local Democratic majorities and Republican presidential majorities, counties with Republican majorities at both levels, counties with Democratic majorities at both levels, and counties with local Republican majorities and Democratic presidential majorities. Table 1 presents proportion of counties that fall into each category.

[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

In our data, Western states are the most consistent, while Southern and Northeastern states are least consistent. Among counties that split their partisan representation, the Democratic Party maintains local dominance in the South and the West, whereas Republicans dominate in the Northeast. Midwestern counties are relatively equally divided locally with a slight Republican advantage. These patterns are shown graphically for the most recent year of our data in Figure 2.

[INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Analyzing Split Representation

In order to explore these patterns in a systematic way, this section turns to a quantitative analysis of split representation. Our basic puzzle is to determine what factors loosen the partisan link across levels of government. One way to think about this is to say that in some counties the local partisan pattern is better predicted by the national level vote than in others. More specifically, conditional on the national vote, we expect that the local partisan pattern will display greater variability where realignment is incomplete, where local forces affect local vote choice, and where the parties are more competitive.

In other words, we hypothesize that these factors will increase the variance of the residuals from a model that regresses local partisan patterns on the national vote. Typically, political scientists think of non-constant error variance (e.g. heteroscedasticity) as a problem to be fixed (Braumoeller 2006). Here we model heteroscedastic errors as a way to test our hypotheses. A major advantage of this method is that we are not forced to assume that our local and national data can be placed on the same conceptual dimension or are drawn from the same distribution. This is important because it is clearly the case that the county level vote for president represents a different quantity than the proportion of the local legislature from each party. We estimate the following model via maximum likelihood⁸:

$$y_i = \mu_i + e_i$$

$$\mu_i = E[y_i|x_i] = x_i'\beta = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{1i} + \dots + \beta_k x_{ki}$$

$$\sigma_{ei}^2 = \exp(z_i'\gamma)$$

Where y_i is the dependent variable with mean μ_i and disturbance term e_i and x_i and z_i are vectors of covariates predicting the mean and conditional log-variance of y respectively.

In our analysis, the dependent variable (y_i) is the proportion of the *County Council* that is Democratic. The conditional mean (μ_i) is predicted by the percentage of the vote won by the Democratic candidate in the most recent *Presidential* election (x_{1i}) and a set of additional variables explained below. At the same time, the log-variance of the residual (e_i) is regressed on a set of independent variables (z_i') representing incomplete realignment, local forces, and party strength. Estimates of the parameters β and γ are the focus of our analysis.

⁸ We use the command `regh` in Stata 1. This program was written by Jeroen Weesie and is available for download at: <http://ideas.repec.org/c/boc/bocode/sjw35.html>

Estimating the Local Democratic Vote

In order to properly estimate the conditional variance of local partisan patterns, we first need a model of the local pattern itself. Because we have very little scholarly work analyzing the characteristics of voters or groups that are likely to vote for one party or another at the local level, we combine our theoretical expectations with predictions from the national level context to develop this model.

As explained above, our first dependent variable is the proportion of the *County Council* that is Democratic. Our main independent variable is the percentage of the vote won by the Democratic candidate for *President* in the most recent presidential election. This variable should be positive, but if representational splitting is occurring it should not explain all of the variance in the local vote. To capture the degree to which realignment has occurred at the local level, we include a measure of the share of the vote won by the Democratic candidate for president in the 1964 election. We selected this year because Green et al (2002) argue that individual level realignment seriously began in the South starting in 1965, so 1964 should represent a good base year for comparison. If this variable is positive and significant, even controlling for the most recent presidential election, it will be evidence that lagging partisan realignment is playing a role in maintaining representational splits across levels.

We include the proportion of the population that is *African American* to account for the joint possibility that black voters are even more loyal to the Democratic party at the local level than the national level and that white voters in areas with large black populations (particularly in the south) are less likely to have realigned (Valentino and Sears 2005, Shafer and Johnston 2001).⁹ Both of these hypotheses suggest that the proportion of African American residents in a

⁹ In our dataset, Democrat majority councils do have larger black populations (about 8%) compared to Republican led councils (about 3%); however most Democratic councils are found in counties that are majority white. In our

county will positively affect the Democratic proportion of the county council. We also add a number of additional demographic measures that were informed by assumptions about national partisan patterns and which appeared significantly correlated ($\alpha < .10$) with the proportion of the county legislature that is Democratic (as revealed by appendix Table A3).¹⁰ These consist of the total *Population*, the proportion of the population that is *Registered* to vote, share of the population who *Rent* their homes, the proportion of the county that is *Unemployed*, the proportion of the county that lives in *Urban* areas, and the number of *Evangelical Churches* per 1000 persons.¹¹ Our theory does not indicate any directional predictions for these variables; they are included to improve the fit of the local vote equation. We include dummy indicators for each year of our data set with 1991 as the base category. Finally, we include dummy indicators for each region with South as the base category.

Estimating the Conditional Residual Variance of the Local Democratic Vote

In the second half of our heteroscedastic regression model the dependent variable is the log-variance of the *Residuals* from the local vote equation discussed above. This method allows us to determine the effect of our three factors (incomplete realignment, local context, and partisan strength) on the variation in the local partisan pattern unexplained by the national vote.

three southern states, virtually every county with very large black populations has a Democratic led council, but between 1/3rd and 2/3rds of the councils are Democratic in predominately white counties too. In North Carolina (the only state where we were able to gather racial data on elected officials), 40% of the Democratic county commissioners are white.

¹⁰ To determine which variables to use, we regressed the county level *Democratic Presidential Vote* on a series of demographic measures to confirm that they were significantly correlated with the national Democratic vote pattern. We then used the same variables in a model of *Democratic Proportion of the County Council* controlling for the presidential vote. For our main analysis, we preserved variables that were significant at the $\alpha < .10$ level. The full estimations are shown in Table A3

¹¹ As one can see from Table A3 the demographic factors that affect the Democratic vote for president do not operate the same way at the local level. For instance the proportion of people who rent homes has a negative relationship with the national level Democratic vote and positive relationship with the local Democratic share. Similarly, the number of evangelical churches negatively predicts the national Democratic vote, but is positively associated with county level Democratic representation.

In order to analyze the possibility that realignment began in earnest following the 1994 election, we include a series of dummy indicators for each year 1995-2006. We do not use a trend variable or a single dummy variable representing post-1994 observations in order to allow the relationships to vary non-linearly. If county politics caught up with national politics in the second half of the 1990s, these variables should be consistently negative indicating a smaller variance in the unexplained portion of the local partisan pattern over time.

We use a number of different variables to capture the effect of local context. Scholars have shown that incumbency has a strong influence on local vote choice. Voters may be willing to disregard party attachments to keep high performing incumbents in office. Additionally, the lack of information in local elections may lead local voters to prioritize incumbency over partisanship as a cue for their vote. We add a variable noting the proportion of the council that is *Incumbent* to capture these possibilities. We expect percent incumbents to positively affect the variance of the residuals (indicating that the local partisan pattern is explained less well by the national level vote where more incumbents win). Unfortunately, as a result of staggered elections, we lose between one and four years of data for each county when we include this measure, resulting in a large drop in cases and the exclusion of two states (New Jersey and Maine). For this reason, we present the models with and without this variable.

As a proxy for other factors that lead communities to focus more on county level politics (and perhaps to think less about their national level partisanship), we include the one year *Change in Median Property Values*, and *Change in Percent Black*. If local context is driving split representation, then these variables will positively affect the variance of the residuals. To capture populations of people who are less likely to be focused on local issues and thus more likely to use their federal vote as a cue for how to vote locally, we include the percent of the

county that is recent *Movers* (those in the county 5 years or less). Larger numbers of new residents should decrease variance. Similarly, if larger communities are less engaged in local politics, we would expect a larger *Population* to decrease the variance of the residuals as voters are more likely to rely on their presidential choice as a heuristic in local elections.

Finally, we include variables to analyze the effect of party strength. Two indicators of a party's potential to win local elections are the share of votes the party receives in state level elections and the share of funding it receives in national elections. More balanced partisanship (e.g. more competitive elections) at the state and national levels should lead to a greater possibility of splitting, as more resources are available to the minority party. To capture these concepts, we include the absolute difference from a 50-50 partisan split in the most recent *Gubernatorial Election* and the absolute difference from a 50-50 partisan split in *Campaign Funding* in national elections. The former variable was constructed using county level data available from the CQ Voting and Elections database. As with the presidential election variable, we use results from the gubernatorial election closest to, but not after, the year for which we have county council data.¹² The latter variable was constructed using 2006 county level data from OpenSecrets.org. The data are drawn from Federal Election Commission releases and include contributions to both candidates and parties in national elections. We would have liked to include additional years, but the data are unavailable at the county level prior to 2006.

These variables are proxies for the relative balance between the two parties among voters in state elections and the competitiveness of the national electoral environment. We expect both to negatively predict residual variance because higher values mean that fewer voters and resources are available for the opposition party. At high values, the party that dominates in state

¹² Due to missing data, we were forced to use the results of the 1992 gubernatorial election race for our 1991 observations in Missouri. Excluding these observations does not change our results. Alternative tests using the presidential election split instead also produces extremely similar results.

and national elections is likely to dominate at the local level too. But when elections are closely contested, either party may have a chance to win, so variance of the residuals should be larger.

Finally, we include fixed effects for region to account for the possibility that we have excluded measures of the meaningful contributors to regional variation. For ease of comparison, we transform all variables to a standardized scale with a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. Summary statistics for all (untransformed) variables are listed in appendix Table A2. The results of our analysis are presented in Table 2.

[INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

The results in Table 2 offer support for all three of the explanations of representational splitting. Nearly every coefficient is in the predicted direction and statistically significant. The primary exceptions are the dummy indicators for post-1994 observations. These coefficients reveal no temporal pattern that would indicate lower residual variance in the second half of the 1990s. It appears that unlike the state and Congressional levels, local realignment was not more prevalent during this period. However, looking to the top half of the results in Table 2, the other measure of the realignment hypothesis *is* significant and very powerful – more powerful in fact than any other variable in the model. The 1964 presidential vote has a significant positive effect on local Democratic representation even after controlling for the current day vote for president. We take this combination of results to suggest that realignment generated many of these representational splits, but that a threshold was reached such that further realignment at the local level is likely to be minimal. Thus, additional factors must also be contributing to the ongoing pattern.

The variables measuring local forces represent some of these additional factors. As predicted, counties with large proportions of incumbents serving on the county council have a local vote pattern that is less likely to be explained by national level partisanship. Similarly,

changes in median home values and changes in the proportion of the population that is black increase the variance of the local vote residuals. In contexts where local politics is likely to be less salient – counties with large populations and a higher proportion of recent movers - the local vote is more predictable. In these settings, voters appear more likely to be consistent across levels of government with regard to their partisan loyalty.

The significant negative coefficients on gubernatorial vote split and funding split indicate that in counties where the election for governor is closely contested and federal funding is more evenly matched (indicating relatively balanced party strength), the variance of the unexplained portion of the local vote increases. When one party dominates it is likely to win at all levels of government, but when parties' support and resources are more balanced splitting is more likely.

Conclusion

Our analyses offer support for all three hypotheses regarding the factors that encourage representational splitting. We find that realignment is incomplete in certain areas, which positively contributes to the probability of splitting. However, we also find no indication that realignment is likely to continue. Secondly, our data lend support to the thesis that voters view local officials independently from federal officials and can be focused enough on local level politics to generate representational splits. The presence of incumbents, as well as changes in the value of homes and the proportion of the population that is black, increase the conditional variance of the local partisan pattern. However, large populations and more new residents produce increased consistency across levels suggesting that as people relocate to new areas, they apply their understanding of national level politics to the local level. Finally, we find that more evenly matched parties at the state and national level increase the variance in the local partisan

pattern. In areas that are less competitive at higher levels of government, the local pattern is well predicted by the presidential vote. Although they are added to the model as controls, we think the region dummy variables reveal an interesting additional insight – their lack of consistent significance reveals that split representation is a common phenomenon throughout the country.

Of course individual level data will be integral to confirming that these patterns are not simply the product of aggregation. But assuming they are not, our results indicate that scholars of partisanship and vote choice may have a great deal to learn by asking questions at the local level. If, as Green et al (2002) suggest, partisanship is like religious identity, what does it mean for someone to be a Catholic in some settings but a Jew in others? Do differentials in party strength produce cognitive dissonance in voters or are they satisfied to think of themselves as Democrats in county politics and Republicans otherwise? If party labels mean different things in national and local elections, are voters still able to make rational, reasoned choice without perfect information? We eagerly anticipate future work that more thoroughly explores the role of parties and partisan identification at the local level. Although the measurements are rough, we feel our analysis has taken an important step toward understanding how partisanship works in a federal system by identifying aggregate contributors to split representation.

Figure 1: Reported Split Ticket Voting: 1952, 1968, 1984

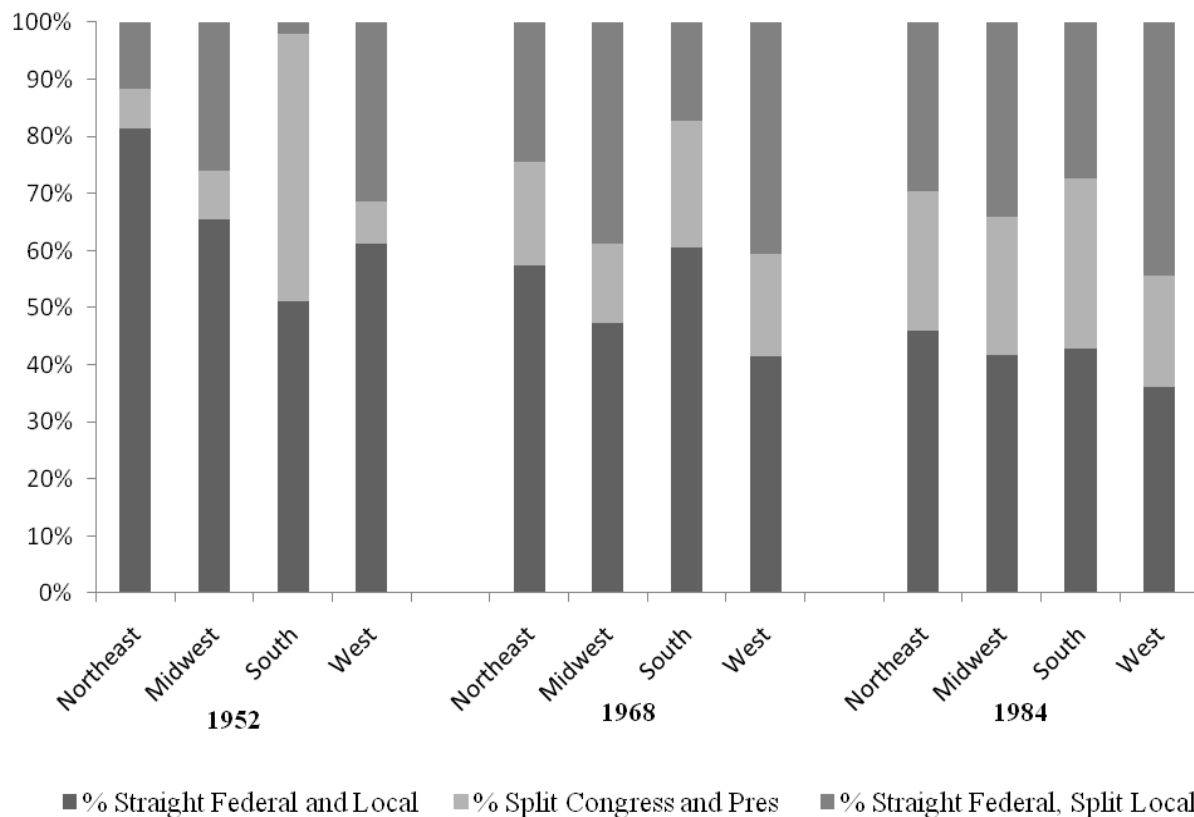


Figure 2

Split Representation

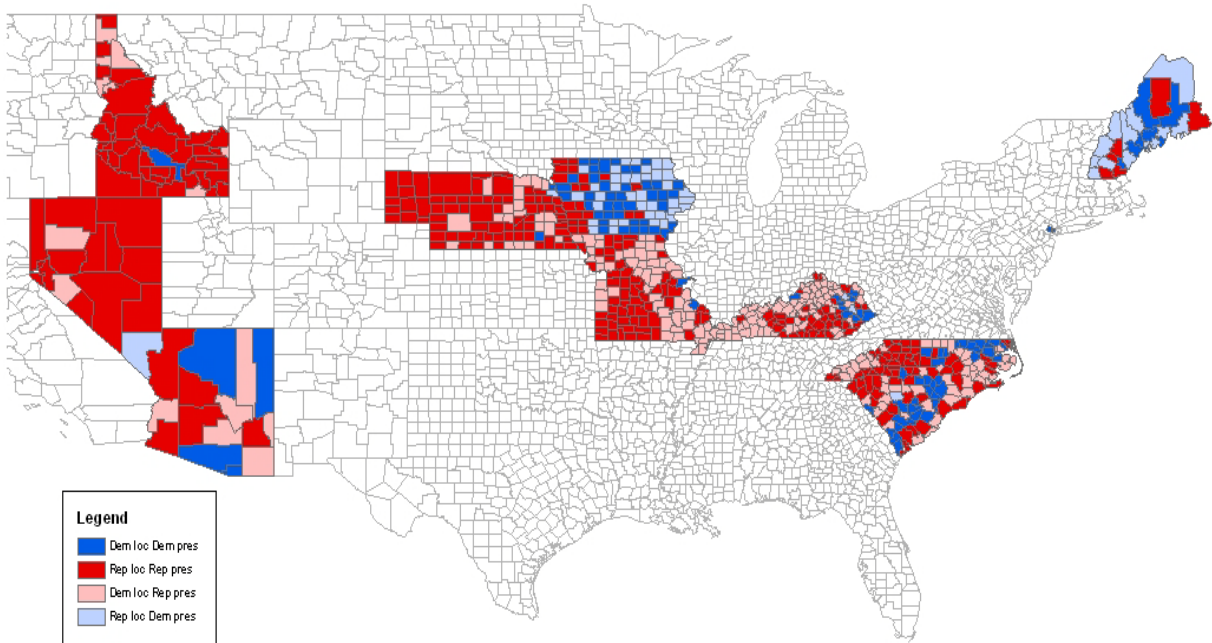


Table 1: Partisan Representations at Local and Federal Levels

	Local Democratic majority, Republican Presidential	Republican majority at both levels	Democratic majority at both levels	Local Republican majority, Democratic Presidential
West	17.8%	68.5%	13.2%	0.5%
Midwest	19.7%	39.4%	28.1%	12.8%
Northeast	2.4%	23.5%	32.9%	41.2%
South	35.6%	28.9%	31.6%	3.9%
Total	25.8%	36.5%	28.7%	9.0%
<i>N</i>	827	1168	919	288

Table 2: Factors Affecting Partisan Differences Across Levels of Government

	Excluding % Incumbents		Including % Incumbents	
	Coefficient	St Err	Coefficient	St Err
Local vote function: $y_i = x_i'\beta + e_i$				
Z % Democratic Most Recent Pres Vote	0.102 **	0.008	0.116 **	0.009
Z % Democratic 1964 Pres vote	0.169 **	0.006	0.166 **	0.007
Z % Registered	-0.036 **	0.011	-0.045 **	0.011
Z % Renters	0.025 **	0.006	0.025 **	0.007
Z Population	-0.010 **	0.002	-0.009 **	0.002
Z % Unemployed	-0.019 **	0.007	-0.018 **	0.007
Z % Unemployed	-0.031 **	0.006	-0.037 **	0.007
Z % Black	0.122 **	0.009	0.114 **	0.009
Z Evangelical churches per 1000 persons	0.027 **	0.006	0.031 **	0.007
Constant	0.533 **	0.007	0.498 **	0.009
Variance function: $\sigma_{e_i}^2 = \exp(z_i'\gamma)$				
Realignment				
Z 1995	0.046 **	0.022	0.029	0.025
Z 1996	-0.008	0.038	-0.033	0.044
Z 1997	0.047 *	0.024	0.015	0.028
Z 1998	-0.063 **	0.030	-0.094 **	0.036
Z 1999	0.015	0.020	-0.019	0.025
Z 2001	0.032	0.023	0.013	0.027
Z 2002	-0.077 **	0.039	-0.117 **	0.045
Z 2003	0.016	0.021	-0.014	0.025
Z 2004	-0.183 **	0.071	-0.187 **	0.079
Z 2005	0.046 **	0.023	0.017	0.027
Z 2006	-0.080 **	0.037	-0.110 **	0.043
Local Focus				
Z % Incumbents			0.054 †	0.036
Z Change Median Home Value	0.098 **	0.038	0.121 **	0.054
Z Change in % Black	0.185 **	0.044	0.174 **	0.047
Z % Moved 5 years	-0.095 **	0.030	-0.078 **	0.032
Z Population	-0.258 **	0.048	-0.241 **	0.048
Party Strength				
Z Gubernatorial Split	-0.107 **	0.031	-0.089 **	0.034
Z National Funding Split	-0.075 **	0.027	-0.094 **	0.029
Fixed Effects				
Z Northeast	-0.017	0.041	-0.066	0.083
Z West	0.074 *	0.040	0.060	0.043
Z Midwest	-0.039	0.037	-0.024	0.041
Constant	-2.848 **	0.035	-2.824 **	0.044
N	3199		2751	
Weighted Correlation (y, yhat)	0.583		0.585	

Note: Multiplicative Heteroscedastic Regression; Fixed effects for region and year included in local vote function but not presented for space reasons; ** $p < .05$, * $p < .10$, † $p < .15$

Appendix

Table A1: Data Collection Summary

State	Years of County Council Majorities	Number of Counties
Arizona	1993, 1997, 2001, 2005	15
Idaho	1999, 2001, 2004	44
Iowa	1991, 1995, 1997, 1999	99
Kentucky	1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2002, 2003, 2006	120
Maine	1999, 2001, 2003, 2005	16
Missouri	1991, 1993, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005	114
North Carolina	2003, 2005	100
Nebraska	1993, 1995, 1998	93
New Hampshire	2003, 2005	10
New Jersey	2006	21
Nevada	2003, 2005	16
South Carolina	1999, 2001, 2003, 2005	46

Table A2: Summary Statistics

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
% Council Democrats	3202	0.548	0.374	0	1
% Democratic Presidential Vote	3202	0.409	0.110	0.068	0.751
Difference from 1964 Pres vote	3199	0.588	0.124	0.220	0.906
Population	3202	44,255	128,316	448	3,642,178
% Urban	3202	0.320	0.273	0	1
% Registered	3202	0.457	0.295	.001	1
% Renters	3202	0.254	0.058	0.111	0.705
% Unemployed	3202	0.057	0.028	0	0.282
% Black	3202	0.053	0.113	0	0.721
Evangelical Churches per 1000 persons	3202	1.439	0.862	0	5.388
% Council Incumbents	2753	0.691	0.328	0	1
1 yr Change Median Home Value	3202	3.093	1.950	-0.93	29.34
1 yr Change % Black	3202	0.000	0.001	-0.010	0.005
% Moved 5 years	3202	0.212	0.073	0.059	0.640
Gubernatorial partisan split	3202	0.117	0.088	0	0.426
National funding split	3202	0.293	0.173	0	0.670
y1991	3202	0.066	0.248	0	1
y1993	3202	0.103	0.304	0	1
y1994	3202	0.037	0.190	0	1
y1995	3202	0.094	0.292	0	1
y1996	3202	0.037	0.190	0	1
y1997	3202	0.070	0.255	0	1
y1998	3202	0.067	0.249	0	1
y1999	3202	0.136	0.343	0	1
Y2001	3202	0.072	0.259	0	1
y2002	3202	0.037	0.190	0	1
y2003	3202	0.131	0.337	0	1
y2004	3202	0.014	0.116	0	1
Y2005	3202	0.093	0.291	0	1
Y2006	3202	0.043	0.202	0	1
Northeast	3202	0.027	0.161	0	1
West	3202	0.067	0.249	0	1
Midwest	3202	0.487	0.500	0	1
South	3202	0.420	0.494	0	1

Table A3: Estimating the Democratic Vote at the National and Local Level

	% Democratic President		% County Council Democrat	
	Coefficient	St Err	Coefficient	St Err
Z % Democratic President			0.104 **	0.009
Z % Registered	0.014 **	0.002	-0.035 **	0.011
Z % Democratic President 1964	0.062 **	0.001	0.170 **	0.007
Z % in Poverty	0.017 **	0.002	-0.002	0.009
Z % Renters	-0.020 **	0.002	0.027 **	0.008
Z Population	0.009 **	0.002	-0.016 **	0.007
Z % Urban	0.010 **	0.002	-0.015 *	0.008
Z % College Degree	0.016 **	0.002	0.001	0.008
Z % Unemployed	0.034 **	0.002	-0.025 **	0.008
Z % African American	0.042 **	0.002	0.119 **	0.009
Z % Latino	0.011 **	0.002	-0.005	0.007
Z Evangelical Churches per thsd	-0.011 **	0.002	0.028 **	0.006
Z y1993			0.018 **	0.005
Z y1994			0.002	0.009
Z y1995			0.001	0.005
Z y1996	0.010 **	0.001	0.003	0.009
Z y1997			-0.017 **	0.005
Z y1998			0.012 *	0.007
Z y1999			-0.008 †	0.005
Z y2000	0.000	0.001		
Z y2001			0.003	0.006
Z y2002			0.018 *	0.009
Z y2003			-0.006	0.006
Z y2004	-0.001	0.001	-0.017	0.013
Z y2005			-0.013 **	0.006
Z y2006			0.015 *	0.009
Z Northeast	0.003 *	0.002	-0.041 **	0.010
Z West	-0.027 **	0.002	0.020 **	0.010
Z Midwest	0.011 **	0.002	0.020 †	0.013
Constant	0.391 **	0.002	0.536 **	0.007
<i>N</i>	2772		3199	
<i>R</i> ²	0.676		0.519	

Note: OLS Regressions; ** $p < .05$, * $p < .10$, † $p < .15$

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