Balancing act? Testing a theory of split-party U.S. Senate delegations[☆]

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ABSTRACT

Why do some states elect split-party U.S. Senate delegations? Fiorina (1992) suggests that his own "balancing" theory might account for the emergence of such opposite–party pairs of Senators. Due primarily to data limitations, previous empirical assessments of whether balancing can appropriately explain the emergence of mixed delegations in the Senate have been limited to aggregate-level analysis. This paper builds on previous scholarship by offering the first individual-level examination of whether balancing theory can appropriately explain divided Senate delegations. We find that individual-level balancing is limited and that when controlling for individual and contextual factors thought to influence vote choice, there is no discernible evidence that voters are considering the makeup of their state's overall Senate delegation when choosing between Senate candidates on offer. Ultimately, our results suggest that candidate-centered campaigns, heterogeneous electorates, and idiosyncratic electoral forces are better explanations for split-party Senate delegations than is any type of strategic, non-proximate voting on the part of citizens.

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Among the institutions of America's national government, the United States Senate is unique in that each state sends *two* members to serve staggered terms in the upper chamber. Because partisan identification is such a powerful determinant of individual vote choice, and because electorates retain fairly stable preferences and turnout habits over time, we might expect that the overwhelming majority of states will choose two senators from the same party. Yet in every Congress from the 90th (1967–1969) through the 114th (2015-present), the number of states sending split Senate delegations to the Senate at any one time has never been fewer than 13 (see Fig. 1).[1] Moreover, during this same time span, 49 of the 50 states have at some point elected a split-party delegation to the U.S. Senate.[2] Such a disconnect between expectations and reality presents a fundamental puzzle that this paper seeks to address. Namely, why do we see so many split-party Senate delegations?

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[1] While the percentage of states with split-party delegations has indeed remained at greater than 25% throughout the modern era, it is worth mentioning that in recent years, we have seen somewhat of a decline in such delegations, as Fig. 1 demonstrates. Given that the data we use covers Senate contests from four recent election cycles (2006–2012, during which time that was in fact a slight *uptick* in the number of divided Senate delegations) empirical analysis explaining this longer-term downward trend is beyond the scope of this paper. However, for insightful discussions of how increased partisanship among voters might be a reason for the overall decline in split-party Senate delegations, see Kimball (2003) and Lee (2012).

[2] The sole exception is Kansas, which has had two Republican Senators since 1938, when incumbent Democratic Senator George McGill was defeated for re-election.
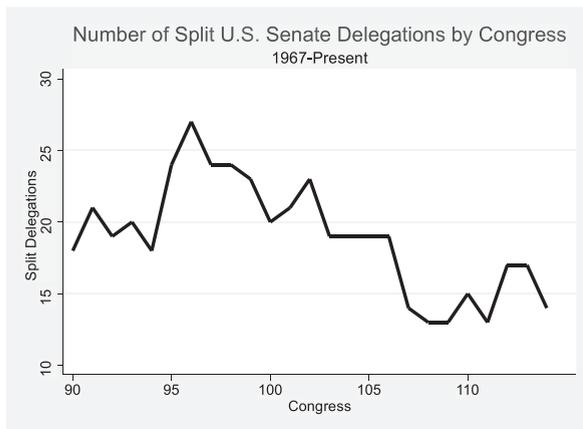
Fig. 1. Split-party Senate delegations across time.

1. Competing theories of split-party Senate delegations

The phenomenon of split-party Senate delegations has been heeded relatively little attention by political scientists. Research seeking to explain this phenomenon, however, tends to follow two schools of thought. Some scholarship argues that split Senate delegations are the result of idiosyncratic campaign and electoral factors, whether it be electoral realignments (Brunell and Grofman, 1998), challenger quality (Burden and Kimball, 2002), campaigns that are candidate-centered rather than party-centered (Segura and Nicholson, 1995), or heterogeneous electorates (Bafumi and Herron, 2010; Bullock and Brady, 1983; Poole and Rosenthal, 1984; Schiller, 2000). While the particularities of each of these explanations are different, all are premised on the assertion that across time, Senate elections within a given state are independent of one another and that partisan divisions within a state's dual-member Senate representation are the result of factors specific to the individual elections which produced such splits. None of these theories rejects—and some even embrace—the standard model of spatial voting which suggests that in each election, voters choose the candidate to whom they are most ideologically proximate (Downs, 1957). Thus, we consider all of these theories as falling under the rubric of "proximity theory," even if these works vary in the mechanisms by which they arrive at this conclusion.

Others argue that split Senate delegations, rather than being an artifact of large-scale political forces, are the result of purposive behavior on the part of at least *some* segment of the electorate. Motivating this proposition is the "policy balancing" theory put forth by Morris Fiorina (1992) and others (Alesina et al., 1991). While originally devised to explain ticket-splitting between the Presidency and the U.S. House, "policy balancing," argue Fiorina and his colleagues, can be extended to U.S. Senate delegations as well (see also Heckelman, 2000). Specifically, in a two-candidate race, a moderate voter might deliberately choose the candidate to whom she is *less* ideologically proximate, should that candidate bring the state's overall Senate *delegation* closer to the voter's moderate ideal point. This also suggests that

Senate elections within a given state are sequentially dependent, with the winner of an election held at time t influencing citizens' voting behavior at time $t + 1$. Finally, another important implication of balancing theory is that it should, if we make the relatively uncontroversial assumption that Democratic Senate candidates will be left-of-center and Republican Senate candidates right-of-center,[3] advantage the party opposite that of the Senator whose seat is not up for election at time t.

Importantly, the idea that individuals might prefer to balance their Senate representation has not escaped the minds of those who serve in the legislative body themselves. For example, in discussing his role as one-half of Iowa's long-serving split-party Senate delegation,[4] Democratic Senator Tom Harkin stated:

> Keep in mind, Iowa is a state where we're half and half. We have [Republican Senator] Chuck Grassley and me. … I think Iowa is a little more unique. … *They like a balance*, and one thing they know about me and Chuck Grassley is that although we don't agree philosophically, when it comes to Iowa, we're in harness together. *So I think people like to have that kind of balance*. (O'Keefe, 2013) (emphasis added).

2. Senate balancing: individual-level data for an individual-level theory

While informative, previous work assessing Senate election balancing (Alesina et al., 1991; Butler and Butler, 2006; Segura and Nicholson, 1995) has nonetheless been hampered by data limitations. Specifically, each of these works, the details of which are subsequently elaborated in this paper, employ *aggregate-level* election data to assess a theory about *individual-level* behavior. This paper uses individual-level data to look specifically at individual-level behavior, focusing particularly on voters for whom proximity theory and balancing theory yield different predictions. Employing data collected over four separate election cycles from voters across all fifty states, this paper is the first, to our knowledge, to offer an individual-level test of balancing theory in the context of U.S. Senate elections. We find that proximity theory is a far better explanation for candidate choice within U.S. Senate elections than is a theory of Senate delegation balancing, and that the notion of individuals conditioning their vote upon the overall state delegation that would result from it enjoys little empirical support. Ultimately, our results suggest that theories of split-party delegations ought to focus on

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[3] While eras pre-dating the 2006–2012 period covered by this study saw a substantial number of conservative Democrats and liberal Republicans serving in the U.S. Senate, the contemporary era is one defined by polarization of the two parties in a manner posited above. For a thorough treatment of this matter, see Poole and Rosenthal (2007).

[4] Republican Charles Grassley and Democrat Tom Harkin served as Iowa's two Senators from 1985 until 2015, when the latter Senator retired and was succeeded by Republican Joni Ernst. During the 113th Congress (2013–2015)—the last in which the Grassley/Harkin delegation served—the two Senators ranked 6th and 7th, respectively, in the upper chamber's seniority ladder.

explanations outside the realm of systematic non-proximate voting.

3. Formalizing proximity voting vs. balancing theory with an illustrative example

As mentioned previously, the theory of proximity voting is quite straightforward. Under this logic, first developed by Downs (1957) and illustrated further by other scholars (e.g., Enelow and Hinich, 1984; Hinich and Munger, 1997), voters simply choose the candidate closest to their own views on the left-right continuum. In the context of U.S. Seante elections, voters need only consider the preferences of each major candidate *D* and *R*, we will say, and will vote for whichever candidate is closer. In order to determine one's vote choice under this model, we take voter i's ideal point x_i, as well as Candidate D's ideal point x_D and Candidate R's ideal point x_R and can represent voter i's comparative utility over the two candidates as:

$$U_i(D) - U_i(R) = |(x_D - x_i)| - |(x_R - x_i)| \qquad (1)$$

If the quantity shown in Equation (1) is less than zero, then voter *i* should vote for Candidate *D*, as she is closer to her than she is to Candidate *R*. If, one the other hand, the quantity in Equation (1) is greater than zero, then voter *i* should choose Candidate *R*, as this is the candidate to whom she is most proximate.

Consider the hypothetical example shown in Fig. 2. On a single-dimensional left-right interval [−3, 3], Candidate *D* and Candidate *R* are located at −2 and 2, respectively. As such, the proximity cutpoint is at $x_i = 0$, and so any voter with an ideal point to the left of (less than) zero should choose Candidate *D*, while any voter with an ideal point to right of (greater than) zero should choose Candidate *R*.

Balancing theory is more complex than proximity theory. As Fiorina (1992) writes:

From the voter's standpoint, Senate elections can produce three possible outcomes: two Democrats, two Republicans, or one of each. But the voter can never express a preference among all three outcomes because in any given election, one senator is not running. Thus,

the voters have a choice only between two senators of the same party as the senator who is not running, or of one senator from each party. … In an ordinary spatial model of a two-candidate election, the voters simply vote for the candidate closer to them. … But in a Senate election, the voters may very well care about the total representation of their state in the Senate. … If voters care about the total representation of their state, *they may very well vote for candidates who are farther from them than their opponents*. (81−82) (emphasis added)

In a given Senate election, we can operationalize the preferences of a states potential "overall Senate delegation" by averaging the ideal point of the non-running Senator *S*, which we denote x_S, and the ideal points of each of S's prospective same-state colleagues—namely, Candidate *D* and Candidate *R*. As Fig. 2 illustrates, voters are now choosing between $(x_D + x_S)/2$ and $(x_R + x_S)/2$ which we denote x_{D+S} and x_{R+S}, respectively. In the case of the Senate delegation balancing model, then, voter *i*'s comparative utility over the two candidates is represented as:

$$U_i(D + S) - U_i(R + S) = |(x_{D+S} - x_i)| - |(x_{R+S} - x_i)| \qquad (2)$$

As with voter i's utility differential under the proximity model shown in Equation (1), strictly negative values of the difference in Equation (2) are associated with voter *i* choosing Candidate *D*, while strictly positive values are associated with selecting Candidate *R*.

In the example in Fig. 2, Senator *S* has an ideal point at the far left end of the spectrum at $x_S = -3$. Thus, a Senate delegation made up of Candidate *D* and Senator *S* has an ideal point of $x_{D+S} = -2.5$, while a Senate delegation made up of Candidate *R* and Senator *S* is located at $x_{R+S} = -0.5$. The cutpoint of the Senate delegation balancing model is therefore located at $x_i = -1.5$; any voter with an ideal point to the left of (less than) −1.5 will, under the Senate delegation balancing model, choose Candidate *D*, while any voter with an ideal point to the right of (greater than) −1.5 will opt for Candidate *R*. In other words, if all (or even a vast majority) of the voters behave in line with the Senate delegation balancing model, then Candidate *R*—who presumably is from the party opposite that of Senator *S*—will, under an electorate whose median voter is located at $x_i = 0$, win the election. If, however, individuals in this electorate were to vote proximately, then the election would be a coin-toss between Candidate *D* and Candidate *R*. If we assume that Republican candidates are always to the right of Democratic candidates, then the Senate delegation balancing theory implies a disadvantage for the party holding the Senate seat that is not up for election.

More importantly, the differing postulates of proximity theory and balancing theory imply, as Fiorina points out in the above-cited text, that some voters will choose the candidate to whom they are less proximate. In the example contained in Fig. 2, any voter located inside the (−1.5, 0) interval (the region bracketed by the shaded box) is predicted by the proximity model to vote for Candidate *D* but predicted by the balancing model to vote for Candidate *R*. As this paper will discuss, it is these types of voters who allow for empirical adjudication between the proximity and balancing models. Before proceeding with our research
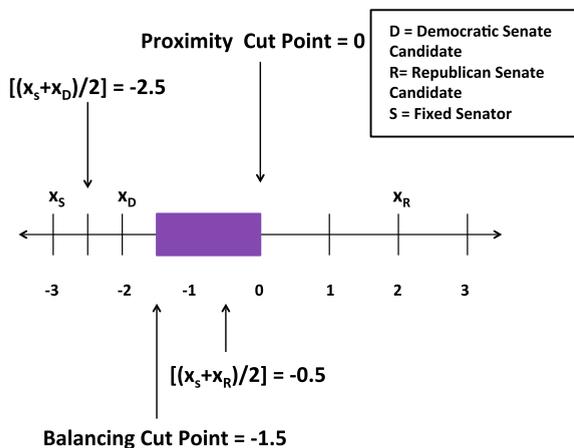

Fig. 2. Example of a two-candidate U.S. Senate election under proximity and balancing theories.

design, however, a brief review of previous empirical assessments of proximity and balancing theories with regards to U.S. Senate elections is in order.

4. Proximity vs. balancing: previous empirical research

To date, very few scholars have gone about the task of systematically testing the balancing theory of U.S. Senate elections originally put forth by Alesina et al. (1991). For the most part, however, the evidence has been mixed. The theoretical originators (again, see Alesina et al., 1991) themselves assess the empirical validity of their theory by analyzing aggregate-level election outcomes from U.S. Senate contests held between 1946 and 1986. The authors conclude that when controlling for traditionally influential factors such as presidential coattails, incumbency, and the state of the economy, there is indeed evidence in favor of the notion that the party opposite that of a state's non-running Senator faces a systematic disadvantage at the polls—a clear empirical implication of their balancing theory and thus circumstantial evidence in its favor.

Segura and Nicholson (1995) look at Senate races held between 1972 and 1988—also at the aggregate level—and regress a dummy variable for whether a state's Senate delegation undergoes a partisan "transition"—that is, whether incumbent party loses—on a set of covariates traditionally found to be influential in determining outcomes of Congressional races, along with a dummy indicating whether the state's Senate delegation is unified at the time of the election. Finding the coefficient on this latter variable to be negative, the authors interpret this as clear evidence that theoretical arguments that split-party Senate delegations are a product of sequentially dependent Senate elections are misplaced.

More recently, Butler and Butler (2006) display methodological ingenuity by applying a Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD) which, they argue, allows them to better make causal claims regarding evidence for or against a theory of interdependent elections—chief among which is the balancing theory originally proposed by Fiorina and his colleagues. The authors begin by looking at all Senate elections held between 1946 and 2004 and, in line with the theoretical foundation upon which use of an RDD rests, narrow their selection—using various thresholds—to Senate contests in which the state's previous Senate election was decided by a margin sufficiently narrow for one to argue that the state's non-running Senator has been "assigned at random." Results from this quasi-experiment yield no significant evidence to suggest that Senate elections within a given state are interdependent.

5. Proximity vs. balancing: the need for individual-level data

As the previous section of this paper illustrates, the little extant scholarship that has assessed theories of balancing within U.S. Senate elections is limited by its focus on aggregate-level data. Both proximity voting and balancing are theories about how *individual voters*—not whole electorates—should behave. As the illustrative example from

Fig. 2 demonstrates, there will be many individuals for whom balancing and proximity theory yield the same predicted vote choices, rendering the two models observationally equivalent to one another. In any given Senate election, only a *subset of voters*—those for whom proximity voting and balancing theory yield different predictions—lend themselves to *adjudication* between the two theories. Restricting analysis to these subsets allows us to identify the proportion of voters who behave in line with the balancing model when it matters—that is, when the candidate who forms an overall Senate delegation closer to the voter is different from the candidate to whom the voter is different from the candidate to whom the voter is most proximate—as well as the types of voters who behave in line with balancing as opposed to proximity theory.

6. Data and measures

6.1. Confronting observational equivalence: a proposed solution

Because identifying voters who are cross-pressured by the proximity and balancing models is integral to any empirical arbitration between the theories, data from the Cooperative Congressional Election Studies (CCES) (Ansolabehere, 2006, 2008, 2010; Ansolabehere and Schaffner, 2012) proves an ideal vehicle for testing these competing models. Conducted for the 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2012 elections, the CCES asks respondents to place themselves, both of their state's U.S. Senate candidates (for states in which a Senate contest is being held in the particular election year), as well as both of their U.S. Senators (thus including the Senator who is *not* up for re-election) on the left-right ideological continuum. These are all of the metrics necessary for yielding predicted vote choices, thus allowing us to cleanly identify voters for whom proximity theory and balancing theory produce different predictions. Further, because the CCES data encompass such a large number of observations—more than 75,000 U.S. Senate voters across the four election cycles—we can be certain that even if only a small portion of voters yield different predictions under the two models, we will be left with a sufficient number of observations on which to conduct statistical analysis, thereby gaining a clearer understanding of the individual-level and contextual-level factors associated with behavior in line with balancing and proximity theories.

6.2. Relevant observations

In going about our empirical tests, there are some observations in the data that we will exclude. Namely, we focus solely on individuals who voted for a major-party candidate, as voting for completely inviable candidates is precluded by balancing theory.[5]

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[5] There have occasionally been competitive or even victorious third-party candidates for U.S. Senate. As we discuss in Appendix A (available online), however, such elections are excluded from this study and thus any remaining respondents casting votes for third-party Senate candidates have chosen a non-viable contender.

In addition, there are certain elections for which one or more of the assumptions surrounding balancing theory are not met and thus excluded from our analysis. Such contests are outlined in Appendix A (available online), as are the reasons for excluding them.

6.3. Measuring respondent distance from elites

In conducting our empirical analyses, there is one particular methodological concern we face: how do we measure a respondent's distance from each Senate candidate as well as from the non-running senator?

One way to measure respondents' distance from elites is to take the mean of all placements that voters in each election assign to the candidates as well as to the sitting senator and impute these values to all respondents, including respondents who are unable to place one or more of the elite actors relevant to our two theories.[6] Another way to measure how far a respondent is from the candidates and from the non-running senator is to simply use the respondent's perceptions of these relevant political actors.

Importantly, previous research on competing theories of spatial voting suggests that evidence in favor of one theory as opposed to another often hinges on which of these two methods are employed to measure an individual's distance from candidates (cf. Adams et al., 2004: 361). As such, all analyses conducted throughout this paper report results when using *Mean-Imputed* placements (in some of the figures denoted simply as "*Mean*") as well as those extracted when using *Individual-Specific* placements (in some of the figures referred to short-hand as "*Individual*") are employed. To be clear, individuals' self-reported placements with respect to *their own* views on the left-right continuum are *always* used to measure a respondent's distance from candidates and the non-running senator, regardless of whether mean-imputed or individual-specific candidate placements are employed to devise respondents' perceptions of the candidates and non-running senator.[7]

6.4. Cross-pressured voters: who are they?

As mentioned previously, the crux of the analysis in this paper is confined to voters who yield different predicted vote choices under the proximity and balancing theories. As such, it is worth briefly illustrating what distinguishes these voters from the rest of the CCES sample. Fig. 3 displays the distribution of ideological self-placements[8] of respondents who—at the top panel when using mean-imputed placements and at the bottom panel when using individual-specific placements—yield different predicted votes under proximity and balancing theories, along with the distribution for respondents whose positions yield the same predicted vote choices. Regardless of the method used to determine distance from elites, we see that voters for whom our two theories produce conflicting choices are, not surprisingly, concentrated around the center of the ideological continuum. In contrast, voters who get the same predictions under the two theories are found throughout the ideological spectrum, and their ideological distribution can be characterized as uniform.

Interestingly, comparisons between the cross-pressured and non-cross-pressured respondents on characteristics such as political knowledge, income, education, and race (the results of which are not shown) indicate no meaningful differences, suggesting that such factors do not determine which types of voters yield different expected candidate choices under proximity and balancing theories. There does, however, appear to be some difference between the two groups in regards to partisan breakdown.

Table 1 compares the partisan divisions of cross-pressured voters to those of voters yielding the same predictions under the two models. Not surprisingly, a greater share of independents comprises the voters yielding different predictions than voters yielding the same predictions under proximity and balancing theories. Less intuitive, however, is that Democrats, too, appear to be over-represented among cross-pressured respondents. It is not surprising, then, that the weighted average self-placement for respondents who are cross-pressured when mean-imputed candidate and senator placements are used is 50.8 with a standard error of 0.11, while respondents yielding the same predictions have a weighted mean self-placement of 56.2 with a standard error 0.16; when individual-specific placements are used to determine cross-pressured voters, the weighted mean self-placement of cross-pressured voters is 52.9 with a standard error of 0.25, while the weighted average self-placement for all other respondents is 57.4 with a standard error of 0.20. In sum, cross-pressured voters within the CCES sample lean somewhat more left relative to other respondents and, in addition, comprise a greater share of middle-of-the-road voters (again, see Fig. 3).

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[6] That individuals tend to overestimate the degree to which candidates they view positively share their own positions and at the same time overestimate the level of *disagreement* with candidates they view negatively is a well-documented finding (see Brady and Sniderman, 1985; Feldman and Conover, 1983). Indeed, Figs. B1 and B2 in Appendix B (available online) provide substantial evidence for the related claim that, on average, individuals will identify candidates from the political party opposite their own as being more extreme than independents and same-party individuals will identify such candidates.

[7] This necessarily requires that respondents who are unable to place *themselves* on the left-right continuum be excluded from analysis. Such individuals, however, make up a very small portion of the CCES sample—less than 5%. One possible solution for including such voters in our analysis would be to simply assign them the mean ideological placement within their state of residence or across the United States as a whole. Doing either of these, however, is arbitrary and lacking in any theoretical support. We are thus comfortable excluding such respondents from analysis, as we have little other choice.

[8] It is worth noting that the 2006 and 2008 CCES surveys ask respondents to place themselves on a continuous 101-point left-right scale, while the 2010 and 2012 surveys ask respondents to place themselves on the more standard 7-point scale. In order to devise a consistent measure across surveys, we converted placements from the latter two years onto the 101-point scale, thus explaining the large spikes at certain points in Fig. 3. Overall, however, these different scales do not appear to make a substantial difference in the aggregated ideology of voters. For instance, the weighted mean self-placement in 2008 is 56.6 with a standard error of 0.34, while the weighted mean for 2012 is 54.2 with a standard error of 0.27.
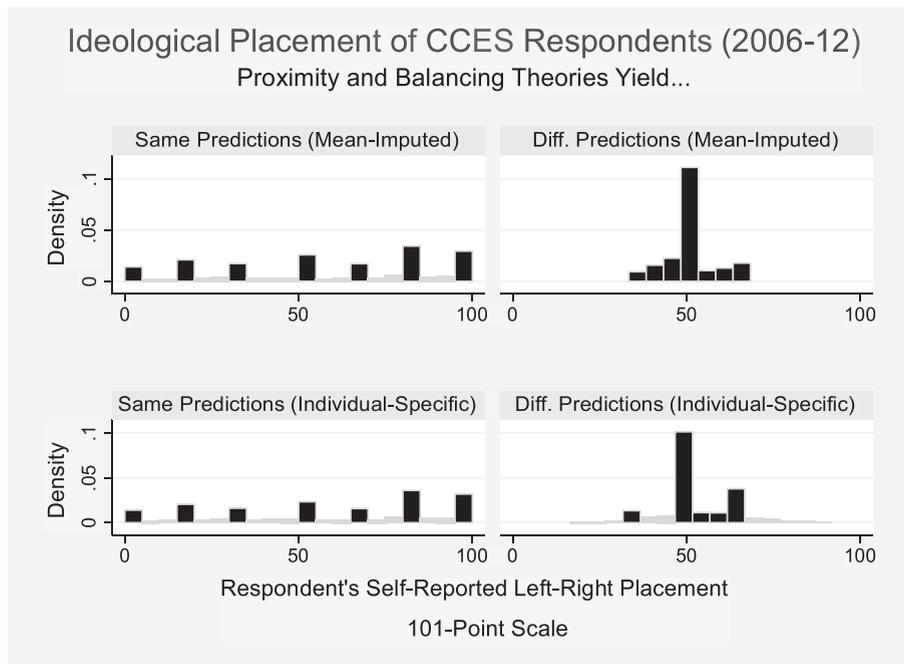
Fig. 3. Ideological Self-Placement: Same Predictions vs. Different Predictions.

Having established the relevant distinctions between the cross-pressured and non-cross-pressured portions of the CCES sample, we now move to the empirical section of this paper.

7. Proximity vs. balancing: empirical assessments

7.1. Does balancing happen? An initial examination

We begin this section by looking at the percentage of voters who yield different predictions from the proximity and balancing models, the results of which are shown in Table 2. The proportion of CCES respondents who yield different predictions under our two models is relatively small—below one-eighth of the sample in all but one election year (the exception is 2006, but only when mean-imputed distances are employed). This finding is interesting in and of itself, as it suggests that only for a small portion of voters will balancing entail choosing the

candidate who is farther away from the voter than is the candidate's opponent. In other words, for only a small portion of voters is balancing behavior readily identifiable.

Table 3 examines for each election cycle how such cross-pressured voters behave. Typically, only about three-in-ten—and in some instances considerably fewer—engage in balancing, as the vast majority ultimately select the candidate to whom they are most proximate; this finding does not appear to be sensitive to the types of placements we use. At the same time, however, voters yielding the same prediction (for whom results are not shown) vote for the non-proximate candidate at a much lower rate—less than 9% overall; in no election year does the proportion of such respondents exceed one-in-eight. Thus, while proximity voting is far more prevalent than balancing, there is nonetheless preliminary evidence that some—albeit a minority of—voters may indeed be engaging in the sort of Senate delegation-splitting that Fiorina (1992) suggests might occur.

7.2. Proximity vs. balancing: multivariate analysis

While it is clear that some individuals yielding different predictions under balancing and proximity theories are indeed voting non-proximately and thus in line with balancing theory, a more thorough arbitration between the two theories requires that we examine whether balancing behavior holds up once we account for individual-level characteristics that are thought to influence vote choice—these include race, income, education, and partisan identification (see Jacobson 2013)—as well contextual factors such as incumbency and challenger quality. The empirical models in Table 4 seek to understand the extent

Table 1
Proximity vs. Balancing: Party ID by Cross-Pressured Voter Status.

Party	Different predictions?			
	Mean-Imputed		Individual-Specific	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Democrat	3664	30,464	1385	17,907
	55.6%	46.9%	50.8%	44.4%
Republican	1817	29,345	893	19,336
	27.6%	45.2%	32.7%	48.0%
Independent	1112	5163	449	3080
	16.9%	7.9%	16.5%	7.6%
Weighted N	6593	64,972	2727	40,322

Table 2
Proximity vs. Balancing: Proportion of Cross-Pressured Voters by Election Year.

Models Yield Same predictions?	Mean-Imputed				Individual-Specific			
	2006	2008	2010	2012	2006	2008	2010	2012
Same	14,248	7902	18,553	24,927	10,508	4386	12,730	13,021
	85.2%	89.1%	92.2%	93.7%	93.2%	94.5%	93.6%	93.8%
Different	2476	967	1564	1690	771	256	864	858
	14.8%	10.9%	7.8%	6.3%	6.8%	5.5%	6.4%	6.2%
Weighted N	16,726	8870	20,117	26,617	11,280	4642	13,594	13,879

Table 3
Proximity vs.Balancing:U.S. Senate Voting Behavior of Cross-Pressured Respondents.

Voted for candidate predicted by …	Mean-Imputed				Individual-Specific			
	2006	2008	2010	2012	2006	2008	2010	2012
Proximity	1901	669	1052	1153	583	177	658	612
	76.8%	69.2%	67.3%	68.2%	75.6%	69.2%	76.1%	71.4%
Balancing	575	298	512	537	188	79	206	246
	23.2%	30.8%	32.7%	31.8%	24.4%	30.8%	23.9%	28.6%
Weighted N	2476	967	1564	1690	771	256	864	858

to which each of our two competing theories can explain an individual's vote choice above and beyond the battery of traditionally important factors.

As mentioned previously, there are two subsets of cross-pressured voters—those who we determine to be cross-pressured by using mean-imputed distances from the candidates and non-running senator and those found to be cross-pressured when individual-specific placements of the candidates and non-running senator are employed. The first column of estimates in Table 4 reports results for the former set of respondents, while the second column of estimates reports results from the latter set of respondents. Naturally, the number of observations in the latter model is substantially lower than the number in the former, as mean-imputed results include respondents who are unwilling to place one or both of the candidates or the non-running senator on the left-right scale, while a willingness to place both candidates and the non-running senator is required for inclusion in the model using individual-specific placements.

The dependent variable in our analysis is whether a cross-pressured respondent voted for the Republican U.S. Senate candidate. Clearly, we see that as a respondent's proximity to the Republican candidate relative to the Democratic candidate (operationalized by the quantity presented in Equation (1)) increases, so, too, does that individual's probability of choosing the GOP contender.[9] When mean-imputed distances are calculated, we find that moving one-half of a standard deviation (about five-and-a-half points on the 101-point left-right scale) towards the Republican candidate in terms of proximity advantage increases the probability of voting Republican by about 6 percentage points; when individual-specific placements are used, the figure is an even more

substantial 20 percentage points (in this model, one-half of a standard deviation represents a shift of about 10 points on the 101-point left-right scale); these results are especially impressive given that partisan identification—well-established to be the strongest predictor of vote choice (e.g., Campbell et al., 1960; Lewis-Beck et al., 2008)—is accounted for. Indeed, while partisan identification is in fact the strongest predictor of vote choice in both of our estimates—for instance, being Republican relative to not being Republican is associated with a 34-point increase in the probability of voting for that party in our first model and an identical 34-point increase in the probability of such an outcome in our second model—proximity still appears to influence vote choice above and beyond partisan loyalties.

As far as a candidate's spatial advantage in the balancing model (operationalized by the quantity shown in Equation

Table 4
Explaining the Republican U.S. Senate Vote w/Proximity & Balancing (Cross- Pressured Respondents Only).

	Mean-Imputed	Individual-Specific
DV: Vote for Republican Senate candidate		
GOP Proximity Advantage	0.020** (0.0041)	0.027** (0.0030)
GOP Balancing Advantage	−0.0020 (0.0026)	0.0042 (0.0032)
Party I.D. (GOP)	0.97** (0.075)	0.95** (0.12)
Party I.D. (Dem)	−1.06** (0.073)	−0.72** (0.13)
Education	−0.037 (0.020)	−0.028 (0.035)
Race	−0.57** (0.11)	−0.58** (0.17)
Gender	−0.017 (0.058)	0.090 (0.093)
Income	0.0044 (0.0089)	−0.001 (0.015)
GOP Quality Advantage	0.29** (0.051)	0.16* (0.071)
GOP Incumbency Advantage	0.041 (0.056)	0.20* (0.084)
Constant	−0.050 (0.12)	−0.24 (0.20)
N	5692	2452

Coefficients presented are probit coefficients.
Robust standard errors in parentheses.
Coefficient estimates and standard errors calculated using pweight option in Stata 13.1.
$^*p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$.

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[9] Refer to Appendix C (available online) for a detailed explanation of how each explanatory variable in our model is constructed.

(2)) is concerned, however, the results are not statistically significant regardless of the specification employed to determine distance from the prospective Senate delegation that a candidate would create. Election-specific factors such as incumbency (statistically significant in one of our models) as well as candidate quality (significant at conventional levels in both of our models) appear to work in the expected direction. For instance, moving from an election in which both parties field a "quality" candidate to one in which only the Republicans do so is associated with an 11-point increase in an individual's probability of voting Republican in the mean-imputed model; in the individual-specific model such a shift predicts a 6-point uptick in the probability of voting for the GOP candidate. Results suggest that income and gender have no significant bearing on one's probability of voting for the Republican candidate, but the coefficient for race—an indicator variable which takes a value of 1 if the respondent is African-American, 0 otherwise—is highly significant in both models, with black voters anywhere from 15 to 17 points (depending on which of the two models we analyze) less likely to vote for the Republican, even when party identification—as a group, African-Americans are heavily Democratic—is accounted for in the model.

7.3. The verdict on balancing

Overall, the results from Table 4 suggest that Fiorina's balancing theory of split-party Senate delegations is misplaced. Specifically, when we place the proximity quantity shown in Equation (1) into a model alongside the balancing quantity shown in Equation (2) and look at voters who are pushed in opposite directions by the two theories, only proximity shows up as statistically significant.

Also troubling, however, is that behaving in line with balancing theory does not always guarantee that a voter will choose a split-party Senate delegation. Table 5 restricts analysis to cross-pressured voters who conformed to balancing theory, rather than to proximity theory, and examines for each election year the proportion of these voters who opted for the party opposite the Senator not up for election as opposed to the same party as the Senator not up for election. We see that while there are just a trivial number of cases in which balancing as determined by mean placements produces votes for same-party Senate representation, a sizable minority of voters engaging in balancing as determined by individual-specific placements end up choosing a Senate candidate from the same party as the Senator who is not up for

election. This is likely due to the idiosyncrasies of individual perceptions, but it is a point worth underscoring nonetheless, as it suggests that even when voters *are* positively identifiable as behaving in line with balancing theory rather than proximity theory—which in and of itself is rare—this does not guarantee that a split-party Senate delegation is being chosen.

8. Conclusion

Previous assessments of Morris Fiorina's theory of balancing as applied to U.S. Senate delegations confined themselves to aggregate-level analysis. By examining the theory at the individual level, this paper has—in a more precise, systematic fashion—confirmed findings by previous scholars that individuals do not consider their state's overall Senate delegation when choosing candidates for the upper chamber. Our analysis shows that balancing happens at very low rates and that even when it does *appear* to happen—as results in Table 3 had initially suggested—it is unclear that the voter's motive is actually conditioned by the makeup of her state's Senate delegation as opposed to other electoral factors. These results suggest that those seeking to devise a generalizable theory of why split-party Senate delegations occur ought to look beyond the notion of strategic, non-proximate voting as an explanation.

Instead, if the phenomenon of states electing one Democratic Senator and one Republican Senator largely arises from proximity voting, as our results suggest, then it is likely the case that in such states, one or more of the following is occurring: the composition of the state electorates are changing from one election cycle to the next; state electorates are remaining relatively stable in their membership but the preferences of at least some of the individuals comprising the electorate shift from one election cycle to the next; or the left-right stance of Senate candidates fielded by the major parties changes from more extreme to less extreme from one cycle to the next. Thus, research that has identified challenger quality, heterogeneous electorates, and candidate-centered politics, among other factors, as explanations for why some states elect opposite—party pairs of Senators seems suggestively supported by the findings of this paper. Future work should further unpack the multitude of survey data available to scholars of elections to explore these explanations that might resolve the seeming paradox that split-party Senate delegations are largely the result of proximity voting yet, by definition, entail one party's candidate winning one election and the other party's candidate winning the next.

Table 5
U.S. Senate voting behavior of "balancing" respondents.

Voted for candidate that would result in …	Mean-Imputed				Individual-Specific			
	2006	2008	2010	2012	2006	2008	2010	2012
Split-Party	552	298	506	537	135	62	162	182
Senate Delegation	96.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	71.8%	78.4%	80.1%	74.2%
Same-Party	23	0	0	0	53	17	40	63
Senate Delegation	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	28.2%	21.6%	19.9%	25.8%
Weighted N	575	298	506	537	188	79	202	245

In the mean time, this paper has taken an important step by using individual-level survey data to disconfirm the notion that voters condition their choice of Senate candidate on their state's overall Senate delegation, and in turn furthering our understanding of what does and does not explain the emergence of split-party Senate delegations.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data related to this article can be found at http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2015.01.007.

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