

THE EFFECT OF CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE ON  
SPLIT-TICKET OUTCOMES IN GUBERNATORIAL  
ELECTIONS

By

ABIDA SULTANA

Master of Social Sciences in Political Science

University of Dhaka

Dhaka, Bangladesh

2016

Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Graduate College of the  
Oklahoma State University  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for  
the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS  
May, 2023

THE EFFECT OF CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE ON SPLIT-TICKET OUTCOMES IN  
GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS.

Thesis Approved:

Professor Joshua Jansa

---

Thesis Adviser

Professor Seth McKee

---

Professor Rebekah Herrick

---

Name: ABIDA SULTANA

Date of Degree: MAY, 2023

Title of Study: THE EFFECT OF CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE ON SPLIT-TICKET  
OUTCOMES IN GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS.

Major Field: POLITICAL SCIENCE

Abstract: The phenomenon of split-ticket outcomes in gubernatorial elections is essentially unexplored in political science. By analyzing the impact of candidate experience on split-ticket results in gubernatorial elections, this research aims to fill the gap. Existing research has highlighted a number of elements that contribute to ticket-splitting, including ideological disagreements, weak party connections, and discrepancies in campaign expenditure. However, the significance of gubernatorial candidates' experiences in split-ticket outcomes has not been fully investigated. This article argues that the governorship is a unique post within state politics, prompting voters to emphasize a candidate's experience to handle state affairs while also fostering economic development and better policies. As a result, while choosing a governor, people are more likely to consider the candidate's experience as opposed to only their affiliation with a certain party. The analysis reveals a statistically significant relationship between candidate experience and split-ticket outcomes, indicating that in gubernatorial elections, voters place a greater emphasis on a candidate's experience than on party affiliation. The research reveals no significant relationship between off-year elections and split-ticket outcomes. These results offer light on the importance of experience in understanding the dynamics of the split-ticket outcome.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1-3
Background and Context of the Research Problem .....	1
Research Question .....	1
Significance of the study.....	2
Organization of the paper.....	3
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	4-10
Definition of split-ticket outcome.....	4
Previous studies on split-ticket outcome.....	4
Intentional Factors influencing split-ticket outcome .....	5
Unintentional Factors influencing split-ticket outcome.....	6
III. THEORY AND HYPOTHESES .....	11-13
Candidate Experience Theory.....	12
Off-election Year Theory.....	13
IV. METHODOLOGY .....	14-18
Research design .....	14
Data collection and Variables .....	15-18
V. FINDINGS.....	19-20
Relationship between candidate experience and split-ticket outcome.....	20
Relationship between off-year elections and split-ticket outcome .....	20
Relationship between control variables and split-ticket outcome.....	20
VI. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION .....	21-22
Interpretation of the results .....	21
Contributions of the study.....	22
Implications of the findings .....	22
REFERENCES .....	23-26

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. THE EFFECT OF CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE ON SPLIT-TICKET OUTCOMES IN GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS.....	19

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. THE TRENDS OF SPLIT-TICKET OUTCOMES SINCE 2016 .....	10

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Why do some states cast most of their votes for one party's presidential candidate while also voting for the gubernatorial candidate of another party? Studying split-ticket outcomes or divided government is essential because it has a crucial impact on lawmaking, accountability, and budgeting (Burden and Kimball 2002). The effects of a divided government on American politics are significant, and party dominance has critical implications, such as policymaking is less predictable and more contentious when there is a split government; and a split government makes it harder for citizens to hold political parties accountable for the functioning of the government (Burden and Kimball 2002). On a policy level, the consequence of split-ticket outcome is that it complicates the process for the public to hold the government accountable for its performance and to provide clear directions to the executive and legislative branches regarding policy initiatives (McAllister and Darcy 1992). From a theoretical point of view, it is relevant to the discussion about how the party system might be changed. Split-ticket voting is one of the critical signs of a fundamental shift in American election behavior. So far as voters are willing to support candidates of different parties for different offices, it shows that the established party system is becoming less stable (McAllister and Darcy 1992). In such circumstances, a fundamental change in voters' loyalties is, at very least, more probable than if people maintain their current commitments (McAllister and Darcy 1992). Consequently, the amount of ticket-splitting is a potentially significant indicator of the health and stability of the American party system.

There is an intense debate in political sciences regarding the split-ticket outcome and reasons for splitting. Some scholars argue that voters split their vote intentionally to make a strategic balance among policies (Fiorina 1992; Alesina and Rosenthal 1996; Lewis-Beck and Nadeau 2004; Saunders, Abramowitz, and Williamson 2005; Kedar 2005). But some scholars do not find support for this policy-balancing argument (Beck et al. 1992; Kimball 2000; Soss and Canon 1995). Other scholars believe that split-ticketing is not intentional, and some factors, like few ideological differences among candidates (Soss and Canon 1995; Kimball 1997), weak partisanship (Campbell and Miller 1957; Beck et al. 1992; McAllister and Darcy 1992; Soss and Cannon 1995), candidate variables (Maddox and Nimmo 1981; Mervin 1973; Beck et al. 1992; Roscoe 2003), variations in ballot designs (McAllister and Darcy 1992; Campbell and Miller 1957), candidates' spending on the campaign, experience, and incumbency (Mervin 1973; Jacobson 1989; Burden and Kimball 1998; Roscoe 2003; Burden and Kimball, 2002), and demographic and socioeconomic factors (Roscoe 2003; Vries and Tarrance 1972) influence the voter to split their vote.

State governors have a significant role in American politics, which is a well-known yet underestimated reality, and the position and its occupants are mostly ignored by American government scholars in favor of researching national politics (Squire 1992). This elected official is the highest-ranking official in the state's government and influences the legislature, bureaucracy, press, politics, and policy (Gray, Hanson, and Koisser 2012). Though many scholars study the causes and consequences of split-ticket outcome on presidential candidates and senators or presidential candidates and house candidates, there are no sufficient studies on the presidential candidates and governor candidates.

I examine presidential and gubernatorial candidates because they both are executives' position and the governorship are considered as a path to presidency. Additionally, if this study finds that candidate experience still matters in gubernatorial elections, so much so that it leads to



split outcomes between executive positions in an era that has become more nationalized and polarized, that's going to fundamentally affect our understanding of American politics.

This study makes a significant addition by focusing on the significance of gubernatorial candidate competence and experience in split-ticket outcome, which has not been properly investigated in prior studies. The study's results imply that when voting for a governor, people put a high value on a candidate's qualifications and qualities rather than just on party identity. This focus on competence and experience in gubernatorial elections may explain why people are more inclined to vote on more than one ticket.

This research is significant because of its consequences for political parties, candidates, and policymakers. Knowing the elements that impact split-ticket outcome may assist political parties and candidates in adjusting their campaign tactics to appeal to a larger number of voters. It may also educate policymakers on the significance of gubernatorial candidate competence and experience in state-level elections, which can lead to improved policy results and economic development.

This article presents an analysis of split-ticket outcomes in gubernatorial elections using data across the fifty states from 2016-2022. I show that when there is a big difference in the experience of the candidates, the state is more likely to choose a governor candidate from a different party than the presidential candidate who owns the state. The study is broken up into several parts, and each section gives important information about the split-ticket outcome. The first section of the paper reviews the relevant literature on the split-ticket outcome. The subsequent sections outline the theoretical framework and research methodology employed in the study. Section five presents the study's results, highlighting the statistical relationship between candidate experience and split-ticket outcome in gubernatorial elections. The final section of the paper presents the discussion and conclusion.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The split-ticket outcome, unlike straight-ticket voting, is when voters pick candidates from different political parties for multiple offices in a single election. Split ticket voting, which may occur on the same ballot in one election or over many, refers to voters who cast their votes for the two main parties separately (Burden and Kimball 2002). More specifically, if voter X votes for party R in contest P and party D in contest G results is a split ticket (Burden and Helmke 2009). Depending on the institutional frameworks involved, ticket splitting can be horizontal or vertical (Burden and Helmke 2009). According to Burden and Helmke (2009), horizontal ticket-splitting is only possible when more than one office with the same duties is elected, and on the other hand, the vertical split-ticket outcome takes place when elections are conducted to fill positions at several levels of government.

In American political studies, split-ticket outcomes and its reasons have been a matter of considerable debate (Algara, Hale, and Struthers 2022). Scholars have categorized the causes of split-ticket outcomes into two categories: intentional and unintentional or individual-level and candidate-level reasons. Some academics have stressed the significance of personal traits, notably party allegiances, in ticket-splitting, while others, notably the most recent research, have focused on the characteristics of the candidates, particularly the advantage of exposure gained by existing officeholders (Beck et al. 1992). According to Burden and Kimball (2002), the theorists of the split-ticket outcome can be divided into two groups: those who believe citizen strategically split their votes to create divided party control of the government and those who believe that structural

features of American elections and short-term electoral forces, which have nothing to do with voters' motivations, cause divided government. The latter group believes the divided government happens "accidentally" because of the peculiarities of the American political system and elections, and for the former, voters intentionally split governance (Burden and Kimball 2002).

*Intentional: Strategic Balance of the policy/sincere splitting/Rational choice voters*

Some scholars posit that voters make decisions based on the policy outcome, and they split their tickets intentionally to balance among policies (Fiorina 1992; Alesina and Rosenthal 1995; Lewis-Beck and Nadeau 2004; Saunders, Abramowitz, and Williamson 2005; Kedar 2005). In other words, voters will cast two ballots, one for a candidate from one party to carry out a certain set of policies at one level of government and the other for a different set of policies to be carried out at the second level of government (McAllister and Darcy 1992). In order to (try to) move overall policies (slightly) to the right and thus closer to their ideal point than would be obtained were the federal government unified under either a Democratic (leftist) or a Republican (rightist) regime, for instance, voters who lean slightly left of center and typically support Democratic candidates may now wish to vote for a conservative Republican for the House of Representatives (Grofman et al. 2000). These voters are rational, and they are splitting intentionally because they are interested voters who care enough about the candidates (Campbell and Miller 1957) or they know a lot about politics (Garand and Lichtl 2000). Some academics believe that voters divide their ballots in an effort to choose the candidates that represent their ideologies closely (Grofman et al. 2000). But Burden and Kimball (2002) argue that even if the results of the two opposing procedures are identical, this shows sincere voting rather than strategic balance. The crucial issue is that people may cast separate votes for ideological reasons unrelated to a desire for a divided government; however, the two hypotheses are often similar from an observational standpoint when possible sites are unknown (Burden and Kimball 2002). Multiple studies have identified policy-balancing voters using individual-level survey data, and a significant number of these efforts have been fruitless in terms of finding evidence to support the

policy-balancing argument (Beck et al. 1992; Kimball 1997; Soss and Canon 1995). However, recent election studies that look at the connection between party polarization and ticket-splitting turn out data that is difficult to reconcile with the balancing model: voters are less likely to divide their votes if they believe there are significant distinctions between the parties (Born 1994; Kimball 2000; Soss and Canon 1995). However, it's probable that devoted and ideologically extreme partisans are the ones who notice the biggest discrepancies in the two parties' positions on many issues (Burden and Kimball 2002).

### *Candidate Evaluations*

Another intentional explanation for split ticket voting is that voters make decisions based on their evaluations of individual candidates rather than party affiliation (Agranov and Palfrey 2015). Personal characteristics, campaign performance, and issue positions can influence a voter's decision to support candidates from different parties (Burden and Kimball, 2002). In this scenario, voters might weigh the qualities of each candidate separately, leading them to choose the most qualified or appealing candidate for each office, irrespective of party affiliation.

### *Issue Voting*

Issue voting has become an important phenomenon in the study of voting behavior and it influences the voting patterns of the people. Issue voting contradicts with partisan voting and it allows voters to vote depending on the preference of the issue they like. These issues can be economic (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000) or abortion (Abramowitz 1995) or other social issues. People vote for the candidate depending on the candidate's position on a specific issue like these. For example, a person might choose a Democrat because of their views on the environment and a Republican because of their views on the economy.

### *Unintentional: Weak Partisanship*

Some scholars explain ticket-splitting as the result of weak partisanship, and they find evidence that weaker party ties encourage ticket-splitting (Campbell and Miller 1957; Beck et al. 1992; McAllister and Darcy 1992; Soss and Cannon 1995). Among other reasons and

explanations for split voting, partisan strength is one of the most important reasons (Davis and Mason 2016). Davis and Mason (2016) argue that although it is generally unlikely for the ordinary person to cast a split ballot, the fully-sorted individual has a noticeably lower likelihood of doing so. According to Campbell and Miller (1957), vote splitting happens when people do not care much about a party or do not care at all or when they care about a party but also care about other things. The rise in ticket-splitting has been caused by a fall in voter party loyalty, a rise in the number of voters who identify as independents, media-driven campaigns, the demise of party machines, and an increase in the incumbency advantage (Grofman et al. 2000), and people who have mixed feelings and beliefs about the Democratic and Republican parties (Mulligan 2011). Strong partisans seldom divide their votes, and when people's ties to their parties aren't as strong, other short-term factors can have a bigger impact on how they vote (Burden and Kimball 2002). Partisans think that the candidates of their party reflect their own perspectives and inclinations in the absence of facts to the contrary (Beck et al. 1992).

### *Candidate quality*

In the past, party identity was thought to be the main factor in explaining voting patterns, but in recent years, a large body of research has developed that suggests party affiliation's value has significantly fallen and the importance of the candidate's personality has grown (Mervin 1973, Beck et al. 1992). Voters are more inclined to divide their votes, for instance, when the most prominent candidates in certain contests belong to different parties (Beck et al. 1992). Similarly, voters are more inclined to divide their votes when they recognize candidates' viewpoints on many issues and how they differ from party stereotypes (Soss and Canon 1995). In general, voters are more likely to divide votes when they report relying more heavily on candidate variables (Maddox and Nimmo 1981; Mervin 1973; Beck et al. 1992; Roscoe 2003).

### *Incumbency*

Incumbency is another essential factor that causes splitting, and according to Jacobson (1989), candidates are more likely to win the election if they can eliminate the incumbent's visible

advantage. Because incumbents are able to mobilize essential vote-getting resources (such as money, media attention, and an already-established organization) during an election campaign because they have already been in the limelight of generally positive public attention. However, challengers are more likely to win the election if they can eliminate the incumbent's visible advantage (Jacobson 1989).

### *Ballot structure*

Unintentional split-ticket outcome can be explained structurally by factors built into the political or electoral process. Organizing a ballot has traditionally been a part of ticket-splitting (McAllister and Darcy 1992). Campbell and Miller (1957) discovered that variations in ballot designs between states had an impact on the amount of split-ticket outcome in one of the earliest investigations on the practice in the United States. States that only have one vote for all electoral contests have greater straight-ticket voting rates than those that have numerous ballots (Campbell and Miller 1957). Split-ticket outcome is impacted by ballot type, whereas straight-party provisions boost straight-party voting (McAllister and Darcy 1992).

### *Campaign*

During election campaigns, candidates and their messages compete with each other. In different races, candidates from different parties often have big advantages in how well-known they are and how easy it is to reach voters (Burden and Kimball 2002). Local elections are often decided by things like how much a candidate spends on their campaign, how long they have been in office, how much political experience they have, how long they have been in their current job, and so on (Mervin 1973; Burden and Kimball 1998; Roscoe 2003; Burden and Kimball 2002). Sincere voters who just look for the "best" candidate in each race could end up voting for more than one person, even though they have no reason to want a divided government (Burden and Kimball 2002).

### *Media*

The role of media in shaping voter behavior can also lead to unintentional split ticket voting. News outlets and political advertisements often emphasize individual candidates and their personal characteristics rather than party platforms (Holbrook 2012). This focus on individual candidates might result in voters being more influenced by candidate-specific information, leading them to cast split-ticket votes without intending to do so.

### *The Blurring Line Between Candidates*

Another explanation for ticket-splitting can be the situation when voters see few ideological differences between the parties or when local candidates' ideological positions have nothing to do with these parties; they may ignore party labels when casting their ballots (Soss and Canon 1993).

### *Demography*

In the research on ticket-splitting, individual-level factors are pointed out by some scholars. Several demographic and socioeconomic factors have been proposed as being significant reasons for ticket-splitting (Roscoe 2003). Compared to the average middle-class voter, the ticket splitter is somewhat younger, marginally more educated, marginally more white-collar, and marginally more suburban (Vries & Tarrance 1972). Other studies, however, have cast doubt on the significance of demographics as determinants of ticket-splitting (Campbell and Miller 1957).

In conclusion, the debate surrounding split-ticket outcome encompasses both intentional and unintentional explanations. Intentional explanations include the strategic balance of the policy, candidate evaluations, issue voting, and strategic voting. Unintentional explanations involve weak partisan candidate quality, voter confusion, campaign, ballot structure, demographic factors, incumbency, and media influence. These variety of reasons make it difficult to explain the reasons for split ticket outcomes. Therefore, I present the theory on both intentional and unintentional reasons. The intentional theory focuses on the how people split their vote by





## CHAPTER III

### THEORY

Party identification shapes a person's vision of the political world, provides clues for evaluating political candidates and topics, shapes voting preferences, influences election participation, and helps to keep the electoral system stable (Dalton 2016). Voters rely heavily on partisanship and fundamental beliefs to guide their policy judgments, shape their assessments of public officials, and inform their voting decisions (Dalton 2016). Both at the presidential and legislative levels, partisanship's influence on voting behavior has grown significantly in recent years (Bartels 2000).

Though party identification is one of the most important determinants of voting behavior, it is more accurate in the case of the presidential election than the gubernatorial election. During some elections, partisanship has a significant impact on how people vote, while in others, it has a much smaller impact (Weinschenk 2013). The presidential election gets more media attention; it is more high-profile and partisan-infused than the local election (Marschall and Lappie 2018).

There has been a debate regarding the factors influencing the state electorates' voting for their governor. Some scholars argue that state elections have become nationalized like senatorial or house elections (Algara 2019; Sievert and McKee 2019), and presidential approval is also an essential factor that influences the gubernatorial election (Simon 1989; Simon, Ostrom and Marra 1991; Carsey and Wright 1998). They claim that these local-level elections have become more nationalized because of the rise in partisan media, nationally focused fund-raising campaigns, and interest groups with national ties and interests (Tompkins 1988).

According to the federalist perspective of voting in sub-presidential elections, the electorate recognizes and responds to the distinct roles and conditions of the various departments and levels of government (Atkison and Pertin 1995). Therefore, the governorship and the gubernatorial election are very much distinctive, and national politics and presidential approval may have little to do with this race (Atkison and Pertin 1995). The supporters of this argument claim that instead of the larger national party arguments that presidents and U.S. Senators engage in, governor elections are executive posts that primarily deal with local-state-based issues (Sievert and McKee 2019).

The governor is the state executive (Atkison and Pertin 1995), and it is a unique position; voters choose candidates they think will be competent managers for a stronger economy or better state policy. Governors in the state get either praise or criticism from the voters depending on how they handle matters like the state economy, education, and public safety (Atkison and Pertin 1995). The governor has the duty to oversee the state economy, and because of the unique nature of their position, they are more exposed to public scrutiny and, as a result, are more likely to be held accountable for state concerns (Atkison and Pertin 1995). As a result, voters may focus less on their party ID and more on the relative experience and competence of gubernatorial candidates. Autonomous voting decisions that are primarily influenced by candidate attributes rather than political or ideological considerations lead to ticket-splitting (Burden and Kimball 1998). Therefore, I argue that voters focus and judge the candidate experience more in the gubernatorial election than in the presidential election, and they feel less partisanship during the gubernatorial elections than in the presidential elections. As a result, voters split their votes more often in gubernatorial elections than in other elections.

***H1:** Split-ticket outcomes are more likely when the out-party candidate has more previous experience than the in-party candidate.*

From the structural point of view, I argue that the timing of the gubernatorial elections is the other factor in splitting. So, if the election of the governor and the president is going on simultaneously, there might be less splitting because the presidential election activates partisanship among people. On the other hand, if the election for governor is held at a different time from the presidential election, there might be more splitting. Because there is less chance of activating partisanship by the presidential election, voters might evaluate the gubernatorial candidate with competence and quality. As a result, voters will split their votes more.

***H2:** Split-ticket outcomes are more likely when the gubernatorial election does not coincide with the presidential election.*

## CHAPTER IV

### METHODOLOGY

A time-series cross-sectional (TSCS) logit model will be used to analyze the data, with split-ticket outcomes as the dependent variable and candidate experience, off-year election, and the control variables as independent variables. The model will estimate the effect of candidate experience and off-year election on the probability of vertical split-ticket outcome while controlling for the effects of other relevant variables. The binary dependent variable used by the TSCS logit model can only take one of two potential values, usually 0 or 1. The independent variables, on the other hand, might be either continuous or categorical. Based on the known values of the independent variables and pertinent inputs, the model calculates the likelihood that the dependent variable will equal 1. In order to look into the relationships between variables across different units and throughout time, the TSCS logit model combines cross-sectional and time-series data. The same variables are often observed throughout time with the same group of people or units observed in each time period in a TSCS logit model. This kind of data structure is an effective tool for analyzing political outcomes and behavior because it enables researchers to account for individual-level variations, time-varying variables, and unobserved heterogeneity.

State Random Effect has been used in this study. State random effects are an important tool for studying split ticket voting because they can help to account for repeated measurement of states over time while allowing for the estimation of state-level time-invariant factors, thereby allowing to obtain more accurate estimates of the relationship between independent variables and split-ticket outcomes.

All states in the USA and the election year will be the unit of analysis in this research. I have created my own dataset, gathering information mostly from Ballotpedia, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Christopher S. Warshaw's Mass Ideology and Policy Liberalism of American States dataset. To test my hypotheses, I include fifty states in the United States covering the election year 2016-2022. This time frame is selected because of the activation of partisanship of Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election and beyond; the elections of 2016-2022 are comparable in that they all take place during the Trump era. Every state has its gubernatorial election every four (4) years except New Hampshire and Vermont. New Hampshire and Vermont have their gubernatorial election every two (2) years. There are 400 observations in this study.

#### *Dependent Variable*

My dependent variable is split-ticket outcomes in the gubernatorial election. Although an individual-level analysis of whether voters split their tickets would be one way to test the theory, I opt for examining split-ticket outcomes (i.e., whether the election resulted in the out-party winning over the in-party), a phenomenon that has garnered popular attention of late (Silver 2020) but is not as well developed in the literature. I am defining the out-party if the winning gubernatorial candidate is from a party that is different from the party of the state's preferred presidential candidate. The reasons for looking at these two elections, gubernatorial and presidential, is that both offices are the premier executives in the US system, and they have similarities in their executive functions (Caughey and Warshaw 2015). President and governor are the chief executives in the federal and state level respectively, and both have the power to implement policy and law (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000). These two offices are linked in the sense that one usually leads to the other, as many governors are running for president. Governor seen is like a good platform for running for president. They often win, they win more than us house or US senators.

Modeling such an outcome also provides leverage on whether the intentional selection of candidates of higher experience drives vertical ticket-splitting or if incidental factors like the election happening off-cycle matters. In this way, I provide a clear test of the theory that also helps to clarify the debate in the literature.

To measure split-ticket outcomes, I select all the fifty states in the USA, and I collect data from Ballotpedia gubernatorial and presidential election results. If a state selects a Republican governor and Democratic presidential candidate (in the current or previous cycle) or a Democratic governor and Republican presidential candidate (in the current or previous cycle), then the split-ticket outcome is coded 1 as the state has a mismatch between the where the presidential preference does not match the gubernatorial preference. The variable is coded as 0 if the states' voters voted for the same party for both levels of elections.

#### *Key Independent Variables*

One of my independent variables is candidate experience. The experience of the candidate is measured by the hierarchy of the elected office position that they hold before running for the gubernatorial election. Here, if the candidate has previous experience holding public office, the hierarchy of the elected office is coded depending on the position of that office. The hierarchy of the elected office is coded from 0 to 6, depending on the importance of the office. Here, no experience of holding public office is coded 0; holding the local board office is coded 1; holding the state legislative office is 2; the US House is coded 3; other statewide offices are coded 4; the US senator or federal district judge or state Supreme Court is coded 5; and finally, previously holding the governor's office or if the candidate is incumbent is coded 6. I then subtract the experience of the gubernatorial candidate whose party matches the presidential winner from the state ("in party candidate") from the experience of the gubernatorial candidate whose party does not match the presidential winner from the state ("out party candidate") to get a measure of how much more experienced the out-party candidate is than the in-party candidate.

Another independent variable is the off-election year. If the gubernatorial election and the presidential election are held in a different year, it is an off-election year; and if the gubernatorial election and the presidential election are held in the same year, it is not an off-election year. Here, the off-election year is coded 1, not the off-election year is coded 0.

### *Control Variables*

Control variables are crucial in research to isolate the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable and consider any confounding factors. In this study, the control variables are incumbency, economic condition, COVID, and citizen ideology.

Politicians currently in the office often benefit from more name recognition, more resources, and a track record that may sway voters. Including incumbency as a control variable can help account for the impact of these advantages on split-ticket outcomes, as voters may be more likely to split their ticket when voting for a familiar incumbent. As a control, incumbency, if one of the candidates running is an incumbent, is coded 1, if not, it is coded 0.

The economic condition of a state, measured as unemployment rates, might affect voters' decisions and perhaps have an impact on split-ticket outcomes. Based on how well politicians from various parties are seen to be able to handle economic challenges, voters may decide to support them. The economic conditions of the state which is operationalized as the unemployment rate for the state from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The pandemic response, as well as the policies and measures implemented by different parties and candidates, may influence voters' decisions. Controlling for the COVID variable can help to understand if the pandemic has played a role in split-ticket outcome patterns. The election year before COVID or 2020 is coded 0, as COVID started in 2020, and the year starting from 2020 is coded 1.

Using citizen social liberalism of a state as a control variable in the study of split-ticket outcome is important because voters in a state may have distinct social views that could drive them to vote for candidates from different parties based on their stances on these issues rather

than strictly adhering to party lines. Citizen ideology is measured by using the estimates of mass social liberalism for each state from 1936-2020 (Warshaw and Warshaw n.d). The range of scores in this study is based on a composite measure of social liberalism, which combines responses to survey questions related to issues such as abortion, homosexuality, and the role of government in promoting social and economic equality. The composite measure ranges from 0 to 1, with higher scores indicating greater levels of social liberalism. For the year 2022 in my dataset, I repeat the 2020 values of mass social liberalism as the dataset does not have 2022 data, and these do not change much over time.

The potential limitation of this study is the ecological fallacy, which arises when correlations seen at an aggregate level are simply translated to relationships at an individual level. In other terms, the ecological fallacy refers to the possible mistake of making conclusions regarding individual-level interactions based on aggregate-level data (Robinson 1950). Because aggregate data speaks to overall results and micro-level data speaks to micro level. My theory investigates the factors that cause individuals to divide their ballots. As of this writing, I have data on aggregate outcomes but not individual vote choices. Consequently, this research will assess events on an aggregate level without assuming anything about individual level.



## CHAPTER V

### FINDINGS

Table 1 presents the results of models of the effect of candidate experience and off-year election on split-ticket outcomes in gubernatorial elections.

Table 1: The effect of candidate experience and off-election year on split-ticket outcomes in gubernatorial elections.

VARIABLES	(1) Split Outcome
Difference in Experience	0.224* (0.088)
Off Year Election	-0.724 (0.886)
Incumbency	1.468* (0.596)
Unemployment Rate	0.049 (0.206)
COVID	-1.383 (0.619)
Social Liberalism ^ 2	0.684 (2.563)
Constant	-2.547 (1.730)
<i>N</i>	200
<i>BIC</i>	201.875

Standard errors in parentheses  
\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

The findings show a statistically significant relationship between gubernatorial candidate's experience and split-ticket outcome, therefore, showing positively significant results for my hypothesis 1. A positive coefficient here means increases in the out-party candidate's relative experience over the in-party candidate increase the likelihood of a split-ticket outcome. However, the probability of a split ticket outcome still remains low. For a one-level increase in out-party experience over in-party experience, the probability of seeing a split-ticket outcome is about 8.9%, increased from a baseline of about 7.2%. In a race where the out-party candidate has 5 levels of experience over the in-party candidate (e.g., statewide office vs. never held office, ala Drew Edmondson (D) vs. Kevin Stitt (R) in Oklahoma 2018), the probability of a split outcome all else equal is still just 19.4%"

Hypothesis 2 states that split-ticket outcomes are more likely when the gubernatorial election does not coincide with the presidential election. The result does not support this hypothesis and shows that there is no statistically significant relationship between split-ticket outcome and off-year election. This result shows a negative relationship between the dependent and independent variables and is insignificant. However, this is an important finding because it shows that differences in experience seem to be driving split ticket outcomes more than incidental factors like the timing of elections. As one of the control variables for incumbency, this study finds a statistically significant relationship, which means the voters tend to split their vote when the incumbent is running. This is likely driven by the fact that once an out-party candidate becomes the incumbent, they have advantages to maintaining that office and keeping the state a "split outcome" state". The study does not find a statistically significant relationship for the other control variables. For the economic condition of the state as measured with the unemployment rate, the relationship is positive but not significant. For COVID and mass economic and social liberalization variables, the result shows a negative relationship with split ticket voting, but the results are not significant for these control variables.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to find out how candidate experience affects the results of vertical split-ticket voting, as well as how off-year elections might affect this phenomenon. The results show that in state-level races, people care most about a governor candidate's experience, which makes for a split result. But the study didn't find any strong link between off-year elections and split-ticket results. The study found that other than incumbency, the control factors of economic conditions of the state, COVID, and mass social reform did not have statistically significant effects on the split-ticket outcome. The results taken together show that the rare phenomenon of split outcomes may be intentional rather than incidental, as differences in candidate experience significantly impact the likelihood of such an outcome occurring. This study clarifies the debate in the literature by collecting a new dataset on split ticketing in the Trump era. This data from this new era will help to update the literature which studied the phenomenon when it was much more likely to occur.

The results of this study show that the experience of the candidates is a very important factor in gubernatorial split-ticket results. It's important to note that this study only looked into the governor level and didn't look into additional positions. So, more research needs to be done to find out if these results can be used in other office settings.

Furthermore, split-ticket outcomes and off-year elections did not show any statistically significant association, according to the study. This means that other factors, like differences in

ideology, weak party ties, and differences in campaign spending, may have a bigger effect on the results of split-ticket voting in off-year elections.

As seen by the control factors, the study's results show that incumbency has a significant effect on split-ticket outcomes. The claim makes the presence of an incumbent candidate increases the likelihood of split-ticket voting among voters. But the research did not find any significant link between the different control factors and the split-ticket results.

This study makes a big addition to our understanding of how split-ticket voting works in governor races. In a time when politics are becoming more polarized and nationalized, this study finds candidate experience more important than partisanship in voting for governor. The results highlight the value of experience in state-level elections and point to the need for further research into the factors that influence split-ticket outcomes in other positions and non-presidential election year.

## REFERENCES

- Abramowitz, Alan I. 1995. "It's Abortion, Stupid: Policy Voting in the 1992 Presidential Election." *The journal of politics* 57(1): 176–86. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2960276>.
- Agranov, Marina, and Thomas R. Palfrey. 2015. "Equilibrium Tax Rates and Income Redistribution: A Laboratory Study." *Journal of public economics* 130: 45–58. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2015.08.008>.
- Alesina, Alberto, and Howard Rosenthal. 1996. "A Theory of Divided Government." *Econometrica: journal of the Econometric Society* 64(6): 1311. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2171833>.
- Algara, Carlos, Isaac Hale, and Cory L. Struthers. 2022. "No Balance, No Problem: Evidence of Partisan Voting in the 2021 Georgia US Senate Runoffs." *American Politics Research*: 1532673X – 211070819.
- Algara, Carlos. 2019. "The Conditioning Role of Polarization in US Senate Election Outcomes: A Direct-Election Era & Voter-Level Analysis." *Electoral Studies* 59: 1–16.
- Atkeson, Lonna Rae, and Randall W. Partin. 1995. "Economic and Referendum Voting: A Comparison of Gubernatorial and Senatorial Elections." *The American political science review* 89(1): 99–107. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2083077>.
- Bartels, Larry M. 2000. "Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952-1996." *American journal of political science* 44(1): 35. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2669291>.
- Beck, Paul Allen, Lawrence Baum, Aage R. Clausen, and Charles E. Smith Jr. 1992. "Patterns and Sources of Ticket Splitting in Subpresidential Voting." *The American political science review* 86(4): 916–28. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1964344>.
- Born, Richard. 1994. "Split-Ticket Voters, Divided Government, and Fiorina's Policy-Balancing Model." *Legislative studies quarterly* 19(1): 95. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/439802>.
- Burden, B. C., and D. C. Kimball. 2002. *Why Americans Split Their Tickets: Campaigns, Competition, and Divided Government*. University of Michigan Press.
- Burden, Barry C., and David C. Kimball. 1998. "A New Approach to the Study of Ticket Splitting." *The American political science review* 92(3): 533–44. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2585479>.

- Burden, Barry C., and Gretchen Helmke. 2009. "Corrigendum to 'The Comparative Study of Split-Ticket Voting' [Elect. Stud. 28 (2009) 1–7]." *Electoral studies* 28(2): 348. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2009.03.002>.
- Campbell, Angus, and Warren E. Miller. 1957. "The Motivational Basis of Straight and Split Ticket Voting." *The American political science review* 51(2): 293–312. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1952193>.
- Carsey, Thomas M., and Gerald C. Wright. 1998. "State and National Factors in Gubernatorial and Senatorial Elections." *American journal of political science* 42(3): 994. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2991738>.
- Dalton, Russell J. 2016. *Party Identification and Its Implications*. Oxford University Press.
- Davis, Nicholas T., and Lilliana Mason. 2016. "Sorting and the Split-Ticket: Evidence from Presidential and Subpresidential Elections." *Political behavior* 38(2): 337–54. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11109-015-9315-7>.
- Fiorina, Morris P. 1992. "An Era of Divided Government." *Political science quarterly* 107(3): 387. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2152437>.
- Garand, James C., and Marci Glascock Lichtl. 2000. "Explaining Divided Government in the United States: Testing an Intentional Model of Split-Ticket Voting." *British Journal of Political Science* 30: 173–91.
- Gray, Virginia H., Russell L. Hanson, and Thaddeus Benjamin Kousser, eds. 2012. *Politics in the American States: A Comparative Analysis*. 10th ed. Washington, D.C., DC: CQ Press.
- Grofman, Bernard, William Koetzle, Michael P. McDonald, and Thomas L. Brunell. 2000. "A New Look at Split-Ticket Outcomes for House and President: The Comparative Midpoints Model." *The journal of politics* 62(1): 34–50. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/0022-3816.00002>.
- Holbrook, Thomas M. 2012. *Do Campaigns Matter?* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Jacobson, Gary C. 1989. "Strategic Politicians and the Dynamics of US House Elections, 1946–86." *American Political Science Review* 83: 773–93.
- Kedar, Orit. 2005. "When Moderate Voters Prefer Extreme Parties: Policy Balancing in Parliamentary Elections." *The American political science review* 99(2): 185–99. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/s0003055405051592>.
- Kimball, David C. 2000. "A Decline in Ticket Splitting and the Increasing Salience of Party Labels." In *Models of Voting in Presidential Elections: The*, 161–79.
- Lewis-Beck, Michael S., and Richard Nadeau. 2004. "Split-Ticket Voting: The Effects of Cognitive Madisonianism." *The journal of politics* 66(1): 97–112. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1046/j.1468-2508.2004.00143.x>.

- Lewis-Beck, Michael S., and Mary Stegmaier. 2000. "Economic Determinants of Electoral Outcomes." *Annual review of political science (Palo Alto, Calif.)* 3(1): 183–219. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.3.1.183>.
- Maddox, William S., and Dan Nimmo. 1981. "In Search of the Ticket Splitter." *Social Science Quarterly* 62.
- Marschall, Melissa, and John Lappie. 2018. "Turnout in Local Elections: Is Timing Really Everything?" *Election Law Journal Rules Politics and Policy* 17(3): 221–33. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1089/elj.2017.0462>.
- McAllister, Ian, and Robert Darcy. 1992. "Sources of Split-Ticket Voting in the 1988 American Elections." *Political studies* 40(4): 695–712. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.1992.tb01793.x>.
- Mervin, David. 1973. "Personality and Ticket Splitting in US Federal and Gubernatorial Elections." *Political Studies* 21: 306–10.
- Mulligan, Kenneth. 2011. "Partisan Ambivalence, Split-Ticket Voting, and Divided Government: Partisan Ambivalence." *Political psychology* 32(3): 505–30. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2011.00830.x>.
- Petrocik, John R. 1996. "Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections, with a 1980 Case Study." *American journal of political science* 40(3): 825. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2111797>.
- Robinson, W. S. 2011. "Ecological Correlations and the Behavior of Individuals." *International journal of epidemiology* 40(4): 1134–1134. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyr082>.
- Roscoe, Douglas D. 2003. "The Choosers or the Choices? Voter Characteristics and the Structure of Electoral Competition as Explanations for Ticket Splitting." *The journal of politics* 65(4): 1147–64. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-2508.t01-1-00130>.
- Saunders, Kyle L., Alan I. Abramowitz, and Jonathan Williamson. 2005. "A New Kind of Balancing Act: Electoral Certainty and Ticket-Splitting in the 1996 and 2000 Elections." *Political research quarterly* 58(1): 69. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3595596>.
- Sievert, Joel, and Seth C. Mckee. 2019. "Nationalization in US Senate and Gubernatorial Elections." *American Politics Research* 47(5): 1055–80.
- Simon, Dennis M. 1989. "Presidents, Governors, and Electoral Accountability." *The journal of politics* 51(2): 286–304. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2131342>.
- Simon, Dennis M., Charles W. Ostrom Jr, and Robin F. Marra. 1991. "The President, Referendum Voting, and Subnational Elections in the United States." *The American political science review* 85(4): 1177–92. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1963941>.

- Soss, Joe, and David T. Canon. 1995. "Partisan Divisions and Voting Decisions: U. s. Senators, Governors, and the Rise of a Divided Federal Government." *Political research quarterly* 48(2): 253. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/449068>.
- Squire, Peverill. 1992. "Challenger Profile and Gubernatorial Elections." *The western political quarterly* 45(1): 125. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/448766>.
- Tompkins, Mark E. 1988. "Have Gubernatorial Elections Become More Distinctive Contests?" *The journal of politics* 50(1): 192–205. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2131048>.
- Vries, De, Lance Walter, and V. Lance Tarrance. 1972. *The Ticket-Splitter: A New Force in American Politics*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Warshaw, Chris, and Christopher J. Warshaw. "Christopher S. Warshaw." *Chriswarshaw.com*. <http://www.chriswarshaw.com/data.php> (April 3, 2023).
- Weinschenk, Aaron C. 2013. "Polls and Elections: Partisanship and Voting Behavior: An Update: Partisanship and Voting Behavior." *Presidential studies quarterly* 43(3): 607–17. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/psq.12048>.



VITA

Abida Sultana

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: THE EFFECT OF CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE ON SPLIT-TICKET  
OUTCOMES IN GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS.

Major Field: Political Science

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Arts in Political Science at  
Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2023.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Arts in Political Science at  
University of Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh in October, 2016.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in Political Science at  
University of Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh in April, 2015.

Experience: Women Affairs Officer, Government of Bangladesh.

Professional Memberships: Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA).