

When Partisan Preferences and Performance
Evaluations Collide:
The Behaviour of Cross-Pressured
Voters

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Abstract

This article develops a new measure of cross-pressure. Elections serve two main functions: accountability and representation. The article explores how voters respond when these two motivations are in direct conflict. The study utilises a panel based dataset to avoid major endogeneity concerns. The results show that in the period 2000-2004, approximately 20% of the American electorate is affected by this type of cross-pressure. The new type of cross-pressure does not lead to lower levels of turn-out, nor does it incite political alienation. It does increase reliance on economic evaluations as opposed to prior partisan affiliations. Important differences are found between Democrats and Republicans. Democrats show a higher likelihood of vote-switching when cross-pressured, whilst cross-pressured Republicans do not alter their behavior.

Keywords: Cross Pressure ; Partisanship ; Economic Voting ; Turnout; United States

The state of the economy is considered an important predictor of election outcomes and is thus thought to be an important factor on voters' minds when they decide who to vote for (Lewis-Beck, 1980; Lewis-Beck and Paldam, 2000; Duch and Stevenson, 2006; Powell and Whitten, 1993; Vavreck, 2009). Yet, it is not all that matters. On the contrary. An equally sizeable body of literature has shown that partisan preferences, ideological positions and issues near to voters' hearts are essential components of a voter's decision process (Berelson et al., 1954; Lazarsfeld et al., 1944; Campbell et al., 1960, 1954; Enelow and Hinich, 1990; Downs, 1957; Krosnick, 1990). These dual pull factors present voters with difficult dilemmas (Alvarez and Nagler, 1995, 1998; Alvarez et al., 2000; Blais et al., 2004).

Imagine for instance the 2000 US Presidential Elections. Outgoing President Clinton and the Democrat Party left office with an exceptional economic record. For a voter who identifies as a Democrat, the choice is easy: both economic performance and partisan identification suggest a vote for the Democrat candidate. Yet, how should a voter with Republican-leaning partisan identification balance these economic gains with her ideological viewpoints? And what about a staunch Republican? Similarly, in 2004, how much leeway should a Republican identifier give George W. Bush for presiding over an economic decline? Deciding who to vote for might be an easy task for some, but is a difficult task for others.

This article argues that the dual functions of elections (representation and accountability) can at times *conflict*, posing a difficult dilemma for voters. Voters who are faced with this dilemma are categorized as 'cross-pressured'. The term cross-pressure has been in use in political science since the 1940's

(Lazarsfeld et al., 1944) and has recently experienced a revival in the literature on ambivalent or persuadable voters (Basinger and Lavine, 2005; Lavine et al., 2013; Lavine, 2014; Hillygus and Shields, 2008). Yet, in all studies up to date, cross-pressure has been located *within* the representative function of elections. Tensions occur between a voter’s various social identity groups (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944; Brader et al., 2014), between her issue positions and her partisan identification (Hillygus and Shields, 2008), or across a range of ideological viewpoints (Lavine et al., 2013).¹ This article introduces a novel type of cross-pressure that captures the tension *between* electoral representation and electoral accountability.

Utilising the panel structure of the 2000-2004 American National Election Studies (ANES), it is shown that approximately 20% of the American electorate is affected by this type of cross-pressure. Unlike studies of social-identity based cross-pressure (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944; Brader et al., 2014), this article finds no negative effects on turnout, decision-timing, political efficacy or political engagement of partisan-performance based cross-pressure. Rather, in line with recent studies on ambivalent partisans (Lavine et al., 2013; Lavine, 2014; Basinger and Lavine, 2005), this study finds that cross-pressured voters place more emphasis on their economic evaluations as opposed to their prior held partisan preferences. This suggests that the new type of cross-pressure captures a fundamentally different experience when compared with social-identity based conflict.

Furthermore, important differences between Democrats and Republicans emerge. Cross-pressured Democrats show an increased level of vote-switching compared to their non cross-pressured counterparts. Republicans on the con-

trary do not show any behavioral response. Moreover, whilst cross-pressured Democrats report higher levels of democratic satisfaction compared to their non cross-pressured counterparts, cross-pressured Republicans report lower levels of satisfaction with the democratic system. This suggests that both the *experience* as well as the *response* to cross-pressure differs fundamentally between partisan identifiers. These findings are in line with results from the field of political biology which has shown that liberals and conservatives differ strongly in their response to threat and uncertainty and have different levels of appreciation for group conformity (Nail et al., 2009; Jost et al., 2003; Stern et al., 2013; Amodio et al., 2007).

The Original Cross-Pressured Voter

Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet were the first to coin the term ‘cross-pressure’ in their 1944 publication *The People’s Choice* (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944). The authors identify six potential sources of social cross-pressures, which include tensions between religion and social economic status, occupation and partisan identification and the vote preferences of an individual voter and those of her family or friends (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944, p.56). The authors find that cross-pressured voters take longer to decide who to vote for and are more likely to abstain from voting altogether. The authors find no clear evidence of vote-switching in light of cross-pressure. Most cross-pressured voters simply ‘join the fold to which they belong’ (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944, p.69) and vote in line with their partisan preferences.

Attention to this segment of the electorate waned after this initial ex-

ploration. Yet, although they only occasionally use the term cross-pressure, recent studies on *Ambivalent Partisans* and *Persuadable Voters* tap into the idea of political pressures and have introduced a revival of the study of the cross-pressured part of the electorate (Hillygus and Shields, 2008; Basinger and Lavine, 2005; Lavine, 2014; Lavine et al., 2013). Most importantly, these studies reach radically different findings compared to the earlier Columbia studies (Berelson et al., 1954; Lazarsfeld et al., 1944). No longer are these voters described as disengaged, alienated and indifferent. Quite the opposite.

The Revival of the Cross-Pressured Voter

In the *Persuadable Voter*, Hillygus and Shields (2008) argue that the dichotomous nature of American politics results in *political cleavages* within party coalitions (Hillygus and Shields, 2008, p.3). Up to a quarter of the electorate does not agree with their ‘own’ party on at least one important issue. These ‘wedge issues’ create openings in the otherwise closed party system and are used strategically by parties to pry away voters. Contrary to the conclusions reached by Lazarsfeld et al. (1944), Hillygus and Shields (2008) argue that:

some voters are persuadable not because of the *absence* of political preferences, but rather because of the *complexity* of those preferences (Hillygus and Shields, 2008, p.7 emphasis added)

In similar fashion, Lavine, Johnston, Steenbergen and Basinger explore the behavior of what they refer to as *Ambivalent Partisans* (Basinger and Lavine, 2005; Lavine et al., 2013; Lavine, 2014). Ambivalent partisans identify with one party, but report a mixed set of ‘likes and dislikes’ towards the ‘in’ and

‘out’ party. Also in contradiction with the work of Lazarsfeld et al. (1944), the authors find that ambivalent partisans are akin to the ‘ideal democratic citizen’. Ambivalent voters are shown to be responsive to the political environment, engage with new information and decrease their emphasis on partisan cues (Lavine et al., 2013).

The New Cross-Pressured Voter

Crucially, both the early contributions as well as the more recent revival works focus on cross–pressures within the realm of *social identity* or *ideological preferences*. Yet, it has been clearly established in the voting literature that elections are a tool of both *representation* as well as *accountability* (Przeworski et al., 1999; Fearon, 1999; Besley, 2007). These two different motivations underlying vote choice are contrasted in a variety of ways. The literature speaks of the ‘mandate’ versus ‘accountability’ view, of ‘selection’ versus ‘sanctioning’ models, ‘policy’ versus ‘performance’, or of ‘issues’ versus the ‘economy’ (Przeworski et al., 1999; Alvarez and Nagler, 1995, 1998; Alvarez et al., 2000; Blais et al., 2004). At times, these studies have led to differential results as to which element matters most to voters, but consensus exists to the extent that:

there is a generalized tendency to reward (punish) the incumbent party for good (bad) economic times and a generalized tendency to vote for the party that best defends one’s position on the major issues of the day (Blais et al., 2004, p.556).

The importance of the dual function of elections has also been recognised on the ‘candidate’ or campaign side of the literature. Vavreck (2009) argues for instance that the campaign is a medium through which the structural context (the state of the economy) is communicated to voters. Importantly, this also opens up room for non-economy related messaging. Her advice for candidates who preside over economic decline is therefore that they:

should not talk about the economy, but about an issue on which they are closer to the electorate than the challenger (...) candidates’ rhetoric about other issues can drive out the importance of the economy if they choose the right issue. The structural conditions matter, but they can be overcome (Vavreck, 2009, prologue; p.159)

If we thus assume that voters care about *both* considerations, we can interpret the vote decision as a balancing act, or an ‘implicit trade’ (Rundquist et al., 1977) between desires in which potentially diverging pressures erupt. Hereby the concept of cross-pressure can be extended beyond the purely sociological realm and utilised to capture a fundamental dynamic of the voting decision. It is important to note that the trade-off is not very cognitively demanding. Rather, it captures two very straightforward concerns that voters will have when they decide who to vote for. Voters are thought to *identify with one of the major parties*, whilst, at the same time, have an opinion on the *performance of the incumbent*. The question is, what happens when these two intuitions or considerations are mis-aligned?

Hypotheses

The discussion presented above has presented two contradictory images of the electoral and attitudinal response to cross-pressure. First, Lazarsfeld et al. (1944) and more recently Brader et al. (2014) have found that voters who experience cross-pressure between their various social identity groups are less likely to turn-out to vote and, when they vote, are not more likely to switch parties. Brader et al. (2014) furthermore report negative effects of cross-pressure on voter advocacy, campaign donations and the frequency of discussion of politics. Simultaneously, the authors find positive effects of cross-pressure on measures of indifference and alienation with politics.

Hillygus and Shields (2008) and Lavine et al. (2013) on the other hand describe persuadable voters as engaged and informed. They find that ambivalent voters are responsive to their political environment and engage with new information. Neither study finds an effect on turn-out. They do find however that ambivalent or persuadable voters are more likely to defect or split their ticket.

This leads to the following set of hypotheses with regards to electoral behavior and political engagement of cross-pressured voters. Note that because the partisan-performance measure of cross-pressure developed in this article is thought to be more akin to tensions between partisan identification and issue positions ('revival works') as opposed to tensions between social identity groups ('original works'), the hypotheses are formulated in favour of the findings of the former.

- **H1 Defection:** *cross-pressured voters will be more likely to switch parties compared to non cross-pressured voters*
- **H2 Abstention:** *cross-pressured voters will not be more likely to abstain compared to non cross-pressured voters*
- **H3 Alienation and Dissatisfaction:** *cross-pressured voters will not report higher levels of alienation or dissatisfaction with politics compared to non cross-pressured voters*
- **H4 Engagement:** *cross-pressured voters will not be less politically engaged compared to non cross-pressured voters*

Interestingly, although disagreement exists as to how cross-pressured voters respond, all studies cited above agree that cross-pressured voters *will take longer* to come to a decision as to who to vote for. Cross-pressured voters are thought to make up their minds at the final stages of the campaign:

- **H5 Decision Timing:** *cross-pressured voters will take longer to decide who to vote for compared to non cross-pressured voters.*

One important argument made by both Basinger and Lavine (2005); Lavine et al. (2013); Lavine (2014) and Hillygus and Shields (2008) is that they find that ambivalent voters put a stronger emphasis on their *policy preferences* as opposed to their *partisan identification* when deciding who to vote for. This finding supports their argument that ambivalent voters behave in a more deliberate, rational and responsive manner than their unambivalent counterparts. This claim is tested in hypothesis 6:

- **H6 Decision-Making:** *cross-pressured voters will rely more strongly on economic evaluations as opposed to partisan cues compared to non cross-pressured voters.*

One final question that arises relates to the underlying mechanism of partisan-performance cross-pressure. Since cross-pressure is operationalized as a disconnect between partisan preferences and economic evaluations, the crux to this type of cross-pressure is the attribution of blame [or reward] to the favoured party or candidate based on economic performance. Based on the work conducted by Zaller (1992), the question is: which voters are most likely to *receive* information about the economy and how likely are these voters to *accept* this information?

Zaller (1992) explores the complex relation between political sophistication and the acceptance and reception of messages. Whereas high sophisticates might be most likely to *receive*, and as Duch et al. (2000) points out, comprehend, information about the economy, high sophisticates are also well-equipped to *resist* information when it does not fit with their cognitive predispositions. In recent work on ‘motivated reasoning’ Taber and Lodge (2006) show that political sophisticates display ‘disconfirmation bias’. High sophisticates accept information that corresponds to their beliefs, but reject or contradict information that conflicts with their attitudes. These findings lead to the final hypothesis that will be tested:

- **H7 Political Knowledge:** *there will be a negative relationship between political knowledge and the likelihood of cross-pressure.*

A Note on Evaluation Bias

Before delving into analyses with the new cross-pressure measure, one important issue warrants discussion. The proposed measure of cross-pressure relies on a conflict between a voter's partisan preferences and her performance evaluations of the incumbent government. The question is whether these two dimensions can be separated in a meaningful way. A prominent debate within the economic voting literature revolves around exactly this question: are voters able to objectively evaluate their preferred party, or are economic evaluations mere partisan proxies? See for the most important contributions (Evans and Andersen, 2006; Evans and Pickup, 2010; Pickup and Evans, 2013; Lewis-Beck, 2006; Lewis-Beck et al., 2008). This debate is important for the study at hand: if economic evaluations are solely partisan proxies, then this would eliminate all cross-pressured voters as defined in this article. Several theoretical and methodological considerations might reduce these concerns.

First, just because economic evaluations are biased by partisan preferences, does not imply that there is a *deterministic* relationship. Variance across partisans can still exist, as will be shown in this article. Specifically, if partisan preferences pre-determine the performance evaluations entirely, we would only observe changes in government due to varying levels of turnout. This does not correspond with empirical reality. Voters *do* change their behavior over the course of multiple elections, and perhaps political cross-pressure may go some way towards explaining this behavior.

Second, in a rebuttal of the studies conducted by Evans, Lewis-Beck and

co-authors provide both theoretical, methodological (Lewis-Beck, 2006) and empirical (Lewis-Beck et al., 2008) counter-evidence to the suggestion that economic perceptions do not exert an independent effect on the voting decision. Rather, Lewis-Beck finds that voter's perceptions accurately track objective economic trends. Furthermore, the effects of economic perceptions on voting proof robust to exogenization efforts with panel-data (Lewis-Beck et al., 2008). This suggests that economic perceptions and partisan preferences *do* have an independent effect on voting behavior.

Third, the aforementioned studies by Hillygus and Shields (2008) and Basinger and Lavine (2005); Lavine et al. (2013); Lavine (2014) reveal that the American Electorate *does* hold a wide range of issue opinions as well as likes and dislikes towards *both parties*. What is more, these voters respond to these pressures by altering their behavior in a meaningful way. Hillygus and Shields (2008, p.8) for instance find that: 'the number of partisan defectors was large enough to make the difference between the winner and the loser in ten of the last fourteen Presidential elections'. Without denying the importance of partisan ties, this strongly suggests that voters are more than just blind partisans and that the potential for conflict does exist. This will also be shown below.

Fourth, it could be argued that, if anything, this article under-estimates the number of cross-pressured voters. If economic evaluations are biased by partisan preferences, then the 'true' number of voters that hold diverging economic evaluations might be much larger than that represented in electoral surveys.

Fifth, Pickup and Evans (2013, p.738) set out four main problems with the

use of economic evaluations: [1] the exclusion of lagged explanatory variables; [2] the lack of controlling for time-invariant confounding variables; [3] the lack of controlling for time-varying confounding variables and [4] simultaneity bias, or concerns of contemporaneous causality. The authors then suggest two potential solutions to address these concerns, both rely on the use of panel data. The first solution is to use ‘between’ individual effects, the second is to use ‘within’ individual fixed effects.

This article uses the second solution. The main questions the article seeks to address relate to the effect of changes in cross-pressure for individuals over time (i.e. a voter goes from cross-pressured to non cross-pressured), rather than explore differences of the effect of cross-pressure between different types of individuals. The within estimation solution addresses endogeneity concerns 1 and 2. Concern 3 is addressed by adding often-used time-varying covariates to the model (i.e. income; education and employment status). Concern 4 is addressed by the fact that temporality is introduced in the model due to the time-lag between the explanatory (pre-survey) and outcome (post-survey) variables.

Data

This article uses the 2000–2004 panel study of the American National Elections Study for the empirical analysis.² The panel consists of 5 waves, a pre- and post-survey in 2000 and 2002 and a post-survey in 2004. As mentioned, social demographic as well as cross-pressure variables are recorded in the pre-electoral surveys, behavioural or outcome variables are measured in

the post-electoral waves. Operationalisation of control variables is discussed in the online appendix.

The main independent variable of interest is partisan-performance cross-pressure. This is categorical variable that consists of 4 categories: (1) Non cross-pressured Democrat (2) Cross-Pressured Democrat (3) Non cross-pressured Republican, and (4) Cross- Pressured Republican. Partisan preferences are measured by the standard 7-point identification scale, only 'true' independent are excluded.³ The second element of cross-pressure uses the ANES survey question: *'Do you approve or disapprove of the way the President is handling the economy?'* followed by the question: *'How strongly do you approve/disapprove (or neither)?'*⁴

Voters are coded as cross-pressured when they provide an evaluation of the President's handling of the economy that goes counter to the respondents' partisan identification. In 2000 these are thus Democrats who judge negatively on Clinton's performance, or Republicans who judge his performance in a positive manner. In 2002 and 2004 cross-pressured Republicans disapprove of Bush's economic competence, whilst cross-pressured Democrats approve of his economic stewardship.

Identifying Cross-Pressured Voters

Figure 1 shows the percentage of cross-pressured voters across panelyears. The percentage ranges upward from 16.5% in 2004, to 22.6% in 2002 and 30.3% in 2000. There is a consistent pattern whereby the level of cross-pressure is lower amongst incumbent partisans compared to challenger par-

tisans. It appears ‘easier’ for respondents to admit positive feelings towards the ‘out’ party when they are in office, than it is to display negative feelings towards the ‘in’ party candidate.

These findings correspond with the results reported by Hillygus and Shields (2008, p.59) who deem that on average 26% of the American electorate is persuadable. Lavine et al. (2013, p.56) find that 22% of respondents reported two or more conflicting identities and Basinger and Lavine (2005) find an average of 30% of ambivalent voters across a decade of House elections. This suggests first that the number of cross-pressured voters is substantive, and second that the magnitude of partisan-performance cross-pressure is in line with previous studies.

Figure 1 About here – Percentage of CP Voters

One question that might arise is whether cross-pressure is perhaps a proxy for the strength of partisan identification. Simple cross-tabulations indicate that this is not the case. In 2004 a total of 7.8% of strong partisans was cross-pressured, this was even higher at 10% in 2002 and 23% in 2000. A Chi-squared test of independence between cross-pressure and partisan strength indicates that the two variables are not independent. Figure 2 shows the associations between the variables across panel-years. Blue boxes that go above the zero line indicate that the number of observations in that category are higher than expected under the null-hypothesis of independence, red boxes that go below the line indicate a lower than expected number of observations.

These plots show that, as expected, strong partisans are under-represented in the cross-pressured categories whilst leaning partisans are over-represented. Yet, variation in the pattern exists across the years. Furthermore, there is no clear relation between partisan strength and the non cross-pressured categories.

Figure 2 About Here – Association Plots CP and Partisan Strength

Results

First, I explore the electoral response to cross-pressure. Are cross-pressured voters more likely to alter their voting behavior by either switching votes or abstaining from voting? Table 1, Model 1 shows the vote-switching model. Model 1 is a binary logistic regression within individual level fixed effects. All time-invariant variables are dropped from the analysis. The time-varying variables that are included are alternative (competing) measures of cognition and political interest, as well as time-varying social controls. The dependent variable takes the value of 1 if a voter switched to either the main opposition, or the third party between two elections. Only Presidential elections are included, for the year 1996 a re-call question is used. Abstainees are excluded in Model 1.

The results show that Democrats who are cross-pressured are significantly more likely to switch parties compared to Democrats who are not cross-pressured (reference category). When the reference category is changed to Republican the comparative coefficient of cross-pressured Republicans is in

the right direction ($\beta = 1.53$) which indicates an increased likelihood of switching, but it is not significant at any conventional level ($p = 0.122$). Other effects are as expected: strong partisans and older respondents are less likely to switch to the opponent or third party. It is interesting to note that whilst cross-pressure shows a significant effect on the likelihood of a party-switch, the other control variables related to cognition such as engagement and efficacy do not.

Because both log odds ratios as well as the within individual fixed effects models are complex to interpret, the panel model is re-estimated for the two separate panel-waves to calculate the predicted likelihood of vote-switching. For 2000 the predicted likelihood of a vote-switch for a non cross-pressured Democrat is 12.4% compared to 26% for a cross-pressured Democrat and very similar results for the Republicans: 12.6% for a non crosspressured Republican and 26.3% for a cross-pressured Republican. For the year 2004 there is a difference of 8.4% versus 27.4% for Democrats, and 2% versus 26% for Republicans.⁵ This is a first indication that, in line with other recent studies of persuadable voters, the concept of political cross-pressures might be helpful in explaining electoral volatility across elections.

Insert Table 1 about here

Abstention

Model 2 in Table 1 explores whether voters are less likely to turn-out to vote in light of cross-pressure. There is no supportive evidence for this hypothesis. The outcome variable in Model 2 takes the value of 1 if a voter

abstained in either the 1996, the 2000 or the 2004 Presidential election. In line with Hillygus and Shields (2008) and Lavine et al. (2013) I find that cross-pressured voters are not less likely to turn out to vote. This holds for both Republicans and Democrats. Interestingly, there is only one significant effect: efficacy. Respondents with higher efficacy scores are – as expected – less likely to abstain. Since the model includes individual fixed effects, one conclusion that can be proposed is that the time-invariant variables such as race and gender hold a high explanatory value with regards to systematic abstention.

If cross-pressure does not explain *systematic abstention* a separate question is whether perhaps cross-pressure has an effect on the decision to *move towards abstention*. Are cross-pressured individuals who regularly vote more likely to move to abstention compared to their non cross-pressured partisans? To test this, a new dependent variable called *delta Abstention* is created. This variable takes the value of 1 if a respondent voted in the previous election (t-1), but abstained in the current election (t1). It takes the value 0 in all other circumstances. Model 3 shows that again there is no effect of cross-pressure.^{6 7} In line with hypothesis 2, it can thus be concluded that cross-pressured voters are not more likely to abstain compared to their non cross-pressured counterparts. Voters who hold economic evaluations that contradict their partisan identification are not dissuaded from voting.

Political Alienation and Democratic Satisfaction

In addition to an effect on electoral behavior, cross-pressure might have an effect on attitudes towards politics and political engagement more broadly.

Brader et al. (2014) find for instance that cross-pressure between social identity groups led respondents to express higher levels of alienation and lower levels of satisfaction and efficacy. Table 2 explores the effects of partisan-performance cross-pressure on these attitudes towards politics.

As can be gleaned from Table 2, there are no effects of cross-pressure on political efficacy (model 1). This holds true for both Democrats and Republicans. Model 2 however shows interesting results. Cross-pressured Democrats report *higher* levels of satisfaction with the democratic system. Yet, when the base category of the analysis is changed to non cross-pressured Republicans, we find that cross-pressured Republicans are significantly *less likely* to be satisfied with the democratic system (coefficient $\beta = -2.237$, $p < 0.001$) compared to their non cross-pressured counterparts.

This is a second indication that Democrats and Republicans display substantively different responses to the experience of partisan-performance cross-pressure. As reported above, Democrats respond to cross-pressure by *altering* their voting behavior, Republicans do not. The difference in the behavioral response could feed into the differences in reported levels of satisfaction with democracy as a whole as found in Model 2. This could be interpreted as follows. Whilst Democrats might feel they have adequate means (i.e. use their vote to switch parties) to express their conflicted attitudes, Republicans feel the opposite. The system does not provide them with adequate tools to ‘release’ the cognitive tension and hence their level of satisfaction with the system declines.

Insert Table 2

Political Engagement

The next question is whether these patterns translate to more broadly defined forms of political engagement and participation. Table 3 below shows an analysis of the effect of partisan–performance cross–pressure on a range of engagement items: discussion of politics with friends and family; influencing other people’s vote choice; attending political rallies and meetings and displaying visual support such as posters or stickers. Brader et al. (2014) find a negative and significant relation between cross–pressure and these measures.

Yet again, this analysis provides a different picture. Table 3 indicates that there are no significant effects of cross–pressure on political activity amongst cross–pressured Democrats. The only effect that is found is a decreased tendency amongst cross–pressured Democrats to advocate on behalf of a candidate to family and friends. This finding should be interpreted in unison with the findings reported above. Since cross–pressure does not result in lower levels of democratic satisfaction or a loss of political efficacy amongst Democrats, the lower level of advocacy on behalf of a candidate could be interpreted not as a sign of lack of interest or engagement with politics, but rather as a critical or deliberate response to cross–pressure induced uncertainty.

In order to compare the effects between Republicans we change the base category to non cross–pressured Republicans. The table with the results is provided in the online Appendix (A2). There are no significant effects of cross–pressure on Republican’s political engagement. Republicans thus

do not express any type of behavioral response to cross-pressure, neither in their voting behavior, nor in their political activity more generally.

Insert Table 3 here

Vote Timing

The one element that both Lazarsfeld et al. (1944), Hillygus and Shields (2008) and Lavine et al. (2013); Basinger and Lavine (2005); Lavine (2014) agree upon is that cross-pressured voters only decide who to vote for at the final stages of the campaign. The results of this analysis are shown below in Table 4. In line with Lavine (2014) the timing variable is treated as if it were continuous and ranges from 1–10.

Contrary to previous findings, there is no significant effect of cross-pressure on a delay in decision time for either Democrat or Republican identifiers. A potential explanation for this different result might lie with the *type* of cross-pressure that is studied. Previous studies focused on *sociological* causes of cross-pressure. Perhaps a conflict between various social identity groups, or between a social identifier and issue positions, is of a more *existential* nature than a conflict between partisan identity and performance evaluations. As such, it might be the case that the type of cross-pressure explored here is much quicker to resolve. It can be argued that the partisan-performance measure of cross-pressure captures a *distinct type* of cross-pressure that is not solely based on (existential) identity concerns, but on a contrast between identity and rational considerations. Perhaps it is easier for voters to prioritise or solve a conflict between two different types

of motivations as opposed to a conflict of identity.

Insert Table 4 here

Economic Evaluations

In addition to *when* a voter makes her decision who to vote for, hypothesis 6 explores *how* a voter makes this decision. Lavine et al. (2013) report that voters emphasize ideological positions or economic evaluations as opposed to their partisan identity when they are confronted with ambivalence towards the two parties. Figure 3 below shows the results of a binary logistic regression model with within individual effects that tests this assertion for the new measure of cross-pressure. The model includes interaction terms between cross-pressure and economic evaluations, as well as cross-pressure and a voter's partisan identification.

In line with Lavine et al. (2013), there is a significant interaction effect between cross-pressure and economic evaluations, but *not* between cross-pressure and partisan identification. This suggests that those voters whose economic evaluations contradict their partisan preferences might be more inclined to cast an economic vote.

Figure 3 About Here - Table A3 Appendix for Regression Results

Political Sophistication

The final question that is raised is whether politically sophisticated voters are less likely to experience cross-pressure because they are biased towards con-

firmatory evidence. This hypothesis is tested for each panelyear separately and the results are displayed in Table 5 below.

There is confirmatory evidence of a negative relationship between political sophistication and the likelihood of cross-pressure amongst Democrats. This is indicative of a process of motivated reasoning. As Zaller (1992) and Taber and Lodge (2006) suggest, high sophisticates use their political cognitive abilities to either counteract contradictory information or to actively seek out confirmatory evidence. This interpretation is supported by a negative association between cross-pressure and political engagement amongst Democrats. Those who are very actively involved in politics, are less likely to report conflicting signals. In line with previous results shown in this article, cross-pressured Republicans cannot be meaningfully distinguished from their non cross-pressured counterparts.

Insert Table 5

Discussion

This study has shown that an average of 20% of the American electorate reports a disconnect between partisan identification and retrospective economic evaluations in the period 2000–2004. Diverging political pressures thus do not solely occur within the sociological or ideological domain, but also *between* the social and the instrumental elements of vote choice. This type of cross-pressure is not exclusive to non-partisans. This suggests that partisan-performance cross-pressure is a wide-ranging phenomenon that re-

flects a trade-off that many voters engage in when they need to decide which party or candidate to vote for.

Early studies of cross-pressured citizens cast a rather negative light on these voters. A mis-alignment of political signals was thought to result in alienation and withdrawal from the political process (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944). In line with recent studies of Basinger and Lavine (2005); Lavine et al. (2013); Lavine (2014); Hillygus and Shields (2008) however, this study has found that inconsistencies in political attitudes and evaluations do not lead to political alienation or withdrawal from the voting process. This is positive news from the perspective of normative democratic theory. Both electoral functions can thus co-exist in the minds of voters, even when these conflict. In fact, there are several positive effects of a conflict between partisan preferences and performance evaluations. Voters who are cross-pressured place more emphasis on retrospective economic evaluations as opposed to partisan cues when they decide who to vote for. They thus actively respond to the political environment in which they operate.

Interesting differences occur between Democrat and Republican identifiers. Cross-pressured Democrats *alter* their voting behavior and show an increased likelihood of vote-switching. Republicans however, keep the party line and do not switch parties. Furthermore, Democrats who report diverging performance signals are not only more likely to alter their voting behavior, but also less likely to advocate on behalf of a candidate to their friends. Yet, simultaneously, these Democrat voters indicate *higher levels* of satisfaction with the democratic system. It thus appears that cross-pressured Democrat identifiers feel that they have adequate means through which to express

their conflicting opinions. The only caveat to the ‘ideal’ democratic behavior displayed by Democrat partisans is that it is moderated by political knowledge. Thus, Democrats with high levels of political knowledge effectively counter-act or selectively ignore contradictory information.

Republicans show a distinctly different response pattern to cross-pressure. Although they do not display general withdrawal from the political process, cross-pressured Republicans do not exhibit any observable behavioural response to cross-pressure either. They cannot be distinguished from their non cross-pressured counterparts. Because cross-pressured Republicans report lower levels of democratic satisfaction, it could be concluded that Republicans experience higher levels of discomfort with political inconsistencies and avoid these by acting as if they do not exist. A different interpretation could be however that Republicans prioritise group conformity and the representative function of elections and as such continue to follow partisan cues and behave akin to their non cross-pressured counterparts.

These results suggest that both the *experience* as well as the *response* to a disconnect between identification and evaluation differs across partisan lines. This may come as no surprise. Recent findings in the field of political biology and psychology indicate that there are not only behavioral, but also important cognitive and biological differences between the two groups (Jost et al., 2003; Amodio et al., 2007; Nail et al., 2009). Amodio et al. (2007) for instance find significant differences in brain activity when it comes to habitual behavioral responses. Liberals show a greater neurocognitive sensitivity to ‘cues for altering a habitual response pattern’ (p.1246), whilst ‘a more conservative orientation is related to *greater persistence* in a habitual

response pattern, despite signals that this response pattern should change' (Amodio et al., 2007, p.1247, emphasis added).

This article has been the first to directly model the conflict between the representation and accountability functions of elections at the level of the individual voter. It introduces a new type of cross-pressure to the literature that is shown to differ from previous studies that focus on social identity based conflict. The new measure reveals new insights into vote-switching and suggests that there are important differences between partisans in how they respond to dissonant information.

Tables and Figures

Table 1: Voting Behaviour in response to Cross-Pressure

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Vote Switch	Abstention	Δ Abstention
<i>ref = Dem Non CP</i>			
Democrat CP	4.511*** (1.476)	-4.228 (3.732)	26.562 (116.101)
Republican Non CP	-1.051 (1.477)	-0.574 (1.767)	-5.452 (3.027)
Republican CP	0.482 (1.489)	2.032 (2.086)	-2.492 (3.298)
<i>ref = Partisan leaning</i>			
Partisan - Weak	-1.257 (1.273)	0.331 (1.915)	-0.404 (2.255)
Partisan - Strong	-6.924*** (1.902)	1.378 (2.133)	-2.327 (2.936)
Age	-0.488*** (0.148)	0.482 (0.296)	0.564 (0.269)
Education	-0.136 (0.979)	-1.334 (1.287)	2.713 (1.841)
Employed	-0.429 (1.371)	2.041 (2.233)	5.298 (3.207)
<i>ref: Income lower than 15,000</i>			
Income 15,000 - 35,000	0.515 (1.792)	0.960 (2.562)	-5.322 (3.068)
Income 35,000 - 50,000	2.245 (2.001)	-0.721 (2.864)	-4.511 (4.397)
Income 50,000 - 65,000	0.536 (2.105)	1.207** (3.532)	-4.646 (6.163)
Income 65,000 - 85,000	1.568 (2.267)	-3.302 (3.589)	-3.348 (5.583)
Income 85,000 and above	-2.659 (1.832)	-0.184 (3.485)	-5.680 (7.089)
Efficacy	-2.264 (1.429)	-7.021*** (2.480)	-3.169 (3.257)
Engagement	2.775 (1.832)	-3.802 (3.119)	8.030* (4.299)
N	1107	1406	1392

Log Odds are Displayed. Clustered Standard Errors in Parentheses.

* $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

Table 2: Regression Results Political Alienation and Satisfaction

	(1)	(2)
	Political Efficacy	Democratic Satisfaction
<i>ref = Dem Non CP</i>		
Democrat CP	0.017 (0.032)	1.807** (0.723)
Republican Non CP	0.013 (0.039)	3.155*** (0.877)
Republican CP	-0.017 (0.041)	0.918 (0.804)
<i>ref = Partisan leaning</i>		
Partisan - Weak	0.011 (0.026)	-0.395 (0.535)
Partisan - Strong	-0.013 (0.029)	-0.401 (0.715)
Age	0.013*** (0.004)	-0.086 (0.087)
Education	0.009 (0.026)	0.107 (0.624)
Employed	0.003 (0.029)	-0.537 (0.641)
<i>ref: Income lower than 15,000</i>		
Income 15,000 - 35,000	0.128*** (0.044)	1.749** (0.851)
Income 35,000 - 50,000	0.146*** (0.049)	1.143 (0.935)
Income 50,000 - 65,000	0.129** (0.052)	1.413 (1.033)
Income 65,000 - 85,000	0.157*** (0.054)	2.165** (1.086)
Income 85,000 and above	0.127** (0.056)	1.059 (1.149)
Engagement	0.031 (0.0378)	-1.326 (0.856)
N	1318	2140

Log Odds are Displayed. Clustered Standard Errors in Parentheses.

* $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

Table 3: Regression Results Political Engagement

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Discussion Freq.	Influence Others	Attend Meetings	Visual Support	Donate
<i>ref = Dem Non CP</i>					
Democrat CP	-0.510 (0.312)	-1.984*** (0.608)	-0.360 (1.110)	-0.452 (0.694)	-1.696 (1.358)
Republican Non CP	-0.141 (0.384)	-1.142* (0.634)	-1.924* (1.176)	-1.444 (1.279)	-3.307* (1.997)
Republican CP	0.105 (0.391)	-0.855 (0.624)	-2.001* (1.175)	-2.291** (1.123)	-3.125 (1.967)
<i>ref = Leaning Partisan</i>					
Partisan - Weak	0.055 (0.249)	-0.325 (0.403)	-1.500** (0.769)	1.391** (0.659)	-1.937** (0.849)
Partisan - Strong	0.566** (0.278)	0.980** (0.461)	0.792 (0.809)	2.373*** (0.714)	-0.456 (0.875)
Age	-0.125*** (0.039)	0.356*** (0.068)	0.389*** (0.108)	0.693*** (0.109)	-0.862*** (0.139)
Education	0.539** (0.256)	0.436 (0.426)	0.657 (0.782)	1.434* (0.821)	-1.654** (0.821)
Employed	0.089 (0.279)	-0.699 (0.431)	0.733 (0.737)	1.838*** (0.669)	-0.075 (0.897)
<i>ref = Income lower than 15,000</i>					
Income 15,000-35,000	0.699* (0.421)	0.283 (0.626)	0.575 (1.207)	1.230 (1.096)	1.086 (1.424)
Income 35,000-50,000	0.119 (0.481)	0.904 (0.813)	-0.107 (1.319)	2.965** (1.249)	2.357 (1.775)
Income 50,000-65,000	0.299 (0.502)	0.919 (0.824)	-1.199 (1.491)	-0.548 (1.264)	2.988 (1.889)
Income 65,000-85,000	0.092 (0.522)	0.713 (0.855)	-0.072 (1.443)	0.466 (1.328)	4.889** (1.907)
Income 85,000 and above	0.087 (0.547)	0.250 (0.902)	-0.146 (1.557)	3.802* (1.505)	6.083*** (2.091)
Efficacy	0.085 (0.339)	1.493*** (0.563)	1.745* (1.016)	0.686 (0.863)	0.146 (1.048)
N	2148	2163	2164	2165	2164

Log Odds are Displayed. Clustered Standard Errors in Parentheses.
 * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

Table 4: Regression Results Timing Voting Decision

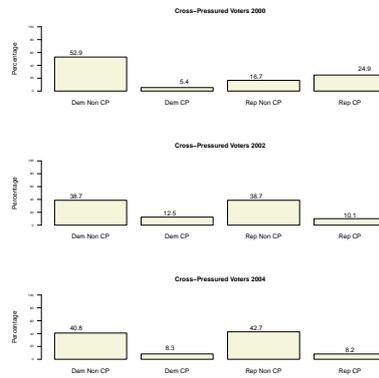
	(1) Timing Vote-Decision
<i>Ref = Dem Non CP</i>	
Dem CP	0.823 (0.625)
Rep Non CP	0.824 (0.783)
Rep CP	0.687 (0.783)
<i>Ref = Leaning Partisan</i>	
Partisan - Weak	-0.663 (0.475)
Partisan - Strong	-0.823* (0.502)
Age	-0.152** (0.059)
Education	-0.406 (0.435)
Employed	0.316 (0.527)
<i>Ref = Income lower than 15,000</i>	
Income 15,000-35,000	-0.831 (1.017)
Income 35,000-50,000	-0.725 (1.091)
Income 50,000-65,000	0.828 (1.138)
Income 65,000-85,000	-0.179 (1.129)
Income 85,000 and above	-0.440 (1.139)
Efficacy	-0.158 (0.615)
Engagement	-1.109* (0.692)
N	1224
<i>Log Odds are Displayed. Clustered Standard Errors in Parentheses.</i>	
<i>* p < 0.10; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01</i>	

Table 5: Regression Results Political Knowledge

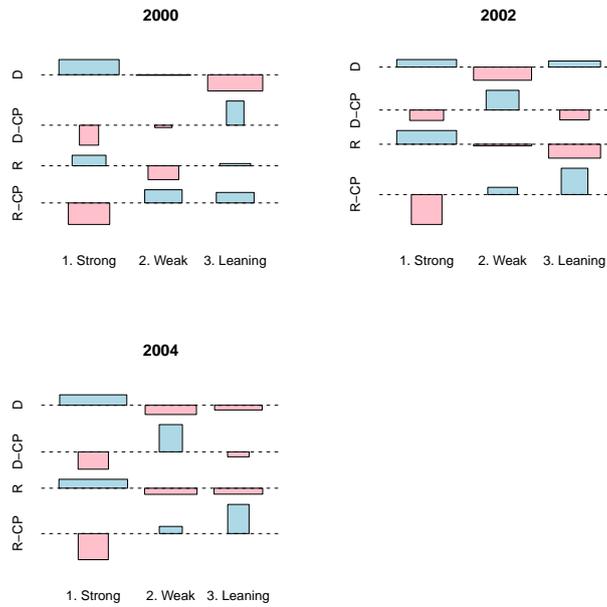
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Dem 2000	Dem 2002	Dem 2004	Rep 2000	Rep 2002	Rep 2004
Objective Political Knowledge	-3.444*** (1.074)	-2.639*** (0.962)	-1.689*** (0.835)	0.591 (0.566)	2.244*** (0.958)	-0.364 (0.732)
Political Engagement	0.148 (0.592)	-2.177** (0.882)	-1.785*** (0.742)	-1.656*** (0.459)	-0.003 (1.886)**	-0.860 (-1.045)**
Political Efficacy	-0.477 (0.503)	-0.209 (0.641)	1.678*** (0.639)	0.787** (0.369)	-1.886** (0.754)	-1.045** (0.516)
Age	-0.003 (0.009)	-0.011 (0.013)	-0.015 (0.014)	-0.009 (0.008)	-0.001 (0.015)	-0.002 (0.012)
Gender	-0.181 (0.323)	0.398 (0.380)	-0.540 (0.358)	-0.365 (0.230)	0.347 (0.418)	-0.163 (0.331)
Race	-0.539 (-0.357)	-0.794* (0.452)	-0.703 (0.511)	-0.679* (0.402)	0.977* (0.539)	0.271 (0.711)
Education	-0.236 (-0.411)	-0.111 (0.415)	-0.464 (0.401)	0.228 (0.235)	0.840* (0.432)	0.169 (0.398)
Employed	0.048 (0.360)	-0.742 (0.484)	-0.464 (0.429)	-0.408 (0.284)	0.502 (0.465)	0.293 (0.398)
<i>Reference Group = Learning Partisan</i>						
Partisan Weak	-0.605 (0.369)	0.481 (0.438)	0.608 (0.434)	-0.193 (0.274)	-0.608 (0.437)	-0.754** (0.383)
Partisan Strong	-0.764** (0.375)	-0.003 (0.489)	-0.794* (0.474)	-0.673** (0.270)	-2.033*** (0.543)	-1.884*** (0.421)
<i>Reference Group = Income 15,000 or lower</i>						
Income 15,000 - 35,000	-0.332 (0.386)	-0.704 (20.639)	0.625 (0.583)	-0.021 (0.452)	-0.486 (0.898)	0.237 (0.701)
Income 35,000 - 50,000	-1.136** (0.530)	0.003 (0.633)	-0.188 (0.646)	-0.106 (0.485)	-0.245 (0.916)	0.141 (0.733)
Income 50,000 - 65,000	-1.164* (0.624)	0.725 (0.766)	0.429 (0.736)	-0.159 (0.487)	-1.122 (0.952)	-1.198 (0.872)
Income 65,000 - 85,000	-1.622** (0.689)	0.372 (0.710)	0.611 (0.671)	0.318 (0.497)	0.046 (0.937)	09.545 (0.807)
Income 85,000 and above	-0.778 (0.603)	0.556 (0.755)	0.409 (0.688)	1.056 (0.505)	-0.875 (0.925)	-0.877 (0.777)
N	570	217	339	405	207	356

Log Odds are Displayed. Clustered Standard Errors in Parentheses.

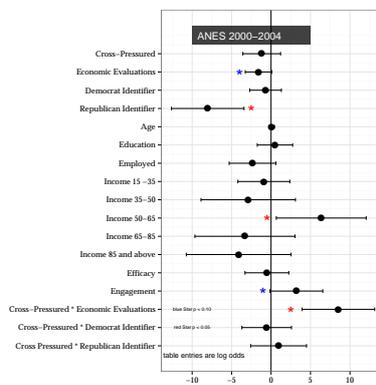
* $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$



(a) Figure 1. Percentage Cross-Pressured Voters



(b) Figure 2. Association Plots



(c) Figure 3. Interaction Terms

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Notes

¹ Note that Lavine et al. (2013) do include retrospective economic evaluations in their measure of partisan ambiguity. Yet they group these together with as much as 10 other 'likes and dislikes' towards the out/in-party that are not related to the accountability function of elections. Basinger and Lavine (2005) also pay extensive attention to the importance of economic perceptions to vote choice. Yet, the *source* of ambivalence that the authors explore stems from combinations of likes and dislikes with regards to the two main parties, rather than from a direct disconnect between partisan identity and retrospective economic evaluations.

² The American National Election Studies (www.electionstudies.org). THE ANES GUIDE TO PUBLIC OPINION AND ELECTORAL BEHAVIOR. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Center for Political Studies [producer and distributor]

³ True independents are respondents who answered 'independent' to the initial 3-point partisan identification question; and answered 'independent' again in the follow-up prompt that asks respondents whether they lean towards either of the two parties.

⁴ Much of the performance based literature or the economic vote literature use the more general retrospective question: 'over the past year / compared to [x] years ago – would you say the economy is doing worse/better/no change'. Since this article focuses on the tension between a voter's partisan preference and the evaluation of the state of the economy as attributed to incumbent performance it uses the more narrowly worded question. This ensures that survey respondents are thinking of incumbent economic performance as opposed to economic wellbeing more generally.

⁵ The model that is estimated includes the same independent variables that the panel fixed effects model included: cross-pressure, partisan strength, age, education, employment status, income, efficacy and political engagement. In order to generate the point predictions the variables are set at their mean or modal value. These are: partisan strength = strong; age = 50; education = no HS; employment status = employed; income = 15,000–35,000; efficacy score = 0.64, engagement score = 0.48. In order to increase comparison between the panel fixed effects model and the individual wave models we have excluded the time-invariant social controls such as gender, race and political knowledge. If we run the separate panel models with these variables included (gender = female; race = white; pkscore = 0.28) We find that in the year 2000 the difference in predicted likelihood of voteswitching is 24% for a cross-pressured Democrat compared to 12% for a non cross-pressured Democrat and 11% versus 26% for the Republicans. In 2004 with the revised model we find that the difference is 7% versus 22.6%. For Republicans this difference is 2% versus 24%.

⁶ The number of occurrences of a move to abstention is very small. Between 1996 and 2000 $N = 40$, between 2000 and 2004 $N = 29$. Therefore we also ran a rare events regression, this provided the same substantive results: there is no significant effect of cross-pressure on a move to abstention.

⁷ Oddly, in model 3 we find that respondents who score high on the engagement scale are more likely to switch from voting to abstention. Yet, this is only significant at the 10% level and might be explained by the reference group that is used in the analysis. In order to maintain a large enough sample to estimate, the 'consistent abstainees' – those who abstain in all three presidential elections, are included in the '0' categorie. When compared to these voters it might be plausible that there is a positive effect of engagement on switching from voting to abstaining as opposed to consistent abstention.