Looking for two-sided coattail effects: Integrated parties and multilevel elections in the U.S.

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ABSTRACT

In the context of the American federalism, *integrated* parties provide the necessary coordination mechanism for state and federal politicians to be electorally successful. This argument rests on the assumption that voters are able to observe the benefits of voting a straight ticket. We test this individual level explanation by using the CCES data. Moreover, at the aggregate level, we measure the so-called 'two-sided' coattail effects in concurrent multilevel elections in the U.S. since 1960. By using a simultaneous equation model, we estimate the reciprocal relationship between presidential and gubernatorial vote shares at the state level. While we find no consistent presidential coattails, we reveal robust and significant gubernatorial coattail effects on state-level presidential vote, underscoring the role of multilevel forces within parties in democratic federations.

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1. Introduction

These days, only eleven of the fifty gubernatorial races for state level executives in the United States are held on the first Tuesday in November, during presidential election years.[1] The rest have gradually moved to off-year elections. The number of states electing their Governor in the 'on-year' started to decline dramatically in the beginning of the second half of last century (Fig. 1) — especially among those states holding gubernatorial elections every two-years — as a consequence of the decision of separating the state's chief executive elections from the federal arena (Tompkins, 1987). This process of electoral differentiation was highly motivated by the seemingly observation that Governors were riding the so-called 'coattails' of their party's presidential candidate (Bibby, 1983: 116). The quintessential argument was that the effect of presidential coattails would constrain gubernatorial competition. According to this logic, races for the governorship would be dominated by, either, heightened partisan divisions or the importance of national issues rather than by issues specific to a given state. Whatever the reason, as Tompkins (1988) pointed out, many states acted as these

concerns were realized in electoral experience by moving to isolate their gubernatorial elections from presidential contests.[2]

The separation of these executive elections has largely contributed to a gap in the analysis of their electoral interactions (Tompkins, 1988). Paradoxically, however, ever since the New Deal, the roles of state and federal governments have become increasingly connected. The executive officials of the U.S. political system — that is, the President and Governors of the fifty states — engage in constant bargaining, while resources flow vertically on a regular basis.

Integrated parties, at least in theory, have been conceptualized as those political organizations most conducive to federal stability (Filippov et al., 2004; Bednar, 2008). As Dyck (1991: 29) states, 'if a political party functions more or less successfully at both levels of government and if the relations between the two levels are generally close, it can be called an integrated party'. In the context of American federal institutions, these organizations assure the survival and success of co-partisans by coordinating the incentives of local and national elites. As a result, this mutual dependence generates a long-term electoral coalition within the party and

[2] 'At New Jersey's constitutional convention in 1947, Governor Alfred Driscoll argued 'the importance of a gubernatorial election merits an election that will not be overshadowed by a national contest for the Presidency. The problems confronting the State are frequently distinct from those confronting the nation' (Proceedings of the New Jersey Constitutional Convention, 1947) (Bishop and Hatch, 2012. *Perception of State Parties and Voting in Statewide Elections.* Typescript).
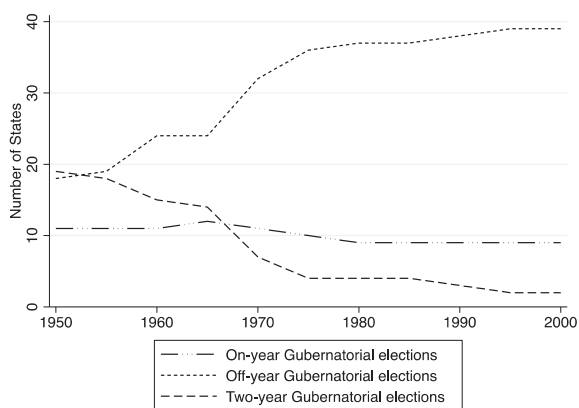
Fig. 1. Evolution of gubernatorial election years.

discourages intraparty conflict. Empirically, this two-way relationship implies that we are likely to observe 'two-sided' coattail effects (Zudenkova, 2011) as the possible observable outcome if the hypothesized association of incentives among politicians exists. This means that while the President's performance affects a Governor's reelection chances, a Governor's performance could also affect how the President is evaluated in a given state. Moreover, as Broockman (2009: 422) suggests, 'two-sided' coattail effects appear to be the logical expectation of the presidential coattail literature: 'if voters engage the availability heuristic in American elections, there should be spillover effects both up and down the ballot'. Put it differently, 'there is nothing about the heuristic voting conceptually that indicates only presidential evaluation should tend to inform Congressional evaluations rather than the reverse, too'.

This paper brings both literature on integrated parties and coattails together to explore the existence of reciprocal coattail effects in the context of American political institutions; that is, two-way spillover effects between same-party candidates running in different multilevel concurrent elections. To that end, we start by briefly discussing the role and characteristics of integrated parties in a long lasting federation as the United States. Then, we examine whether this relationship holds empirically or not by examining straight versus split ticket voting. We pay special attention to the role that partisanship and performance evaluations play in determining how integrated parties operate as an electoral cue for voters facing simultaneous elections. Consistent with the studies of coattails in Congress, we identify and measure reciprocal coattail effects between same party presidential and gubernatorial candidates in on-year elections since the beginning of the sixties. Results endorse our theoretical expectations at the individual level and provide mixed but insightful results at the aggregate with regard to the multilevel organization of political parties in decentralized contexts. Finally, we review some of the implications of our results by emphasizing the relevance of exploring these synergic effects.

2. Federalism, integrated political parties and candidates' mutual dependence

Since Wheare (1946) and Riker's (1964) seminal works on federalism, political parties and their organization in multilevel government systems have been increasingly accepted as the key variable to understand, not only the outcome of elites' bargaining, but also its stability and viability in the long term. As Riker asserts, 'the cause of variations in the degree of centralization (or peripheralization) in the constitutional structure of federalism is the variation in the degree of party centralization' (1964: 129). Hence, for Riker, federal stability and coherence would depend on two kinds of relationships with respect to parties: (I) the degree to

which one party (electorally) controls both levels of government; and (II) the degree to which each potential governing party at the national level controls its partisan associates at the level of constituent governments (1964: 131). Relying on Riker's logic, Filippov et al. suggest that relations in a federal state are characterized by interactions within the party and an integrated party would be the type of organization most conducive to federal stability (2004: 190). An integrated party[3] refers to a party in which politicians at one level of government bear an organizational relationship to politicians at other levels, as well as politicians at the same level.

This linkage between the political fortunes of federal and state officials is what accounts for the continual success of American federalism (Kramer, 2000). Two critical features of American parties have shaped how they operate in this federal system. On the one hand, they prioritize the goal of getting people elected, and on the other, they are decentralized, and remain broad and flexible 'confederations of national, state and local cadres whose most conspicuous features are flabby organization and slack discipline' (Kramer, 2000 278–279). This combination is what has created, 'a political culture in which members of local, state, and national networks are encouraged, indeed expected, to work for the election of candidates at every level'.[4]

Still, what creates those cooperative electoral incentives between politicians in this multilevel scenario? Here, we argue that local and national politicians depend on each other for success because of the electoral relevance of the party-label and the governmental interdependence of Presidents and Governors.

The classic view of 'dual' or 'layer cake' federalism, understood as the distinct and non-overlapping realms of state and federal authority, has usually served to distinguish federalism in United States from most other federations.[5] Lately, most scholars conclude that the post-New Deal era raised a new type of federal ideal, the so-called 'marble cake' federalism, with governmental responsibilities intertwined among the national government, states and localities (Volden, 2005). Grodzins (1966), who coined the term for the first time, argues that 'no important activity in the United States is the exclusive province of one of the levels, not even what may be regarded as the most national of national functions, such as foreign relations; not even the most local of local functions, such as police protection and park maintenance' (1966: 8). The shift in the distributional characteristics of the federal system was rooted in the attempts of Congress to exert much broader authority over the national transportation system and more generally, over the economy during the late nineteenth century. However, most federal efforts to influence state governments, in the form of federal grants or federal effective regulation, came later, with FDR's pulse to the Supreme Court and the posterior success of civil rights movement, especially after *Brown v. Broad of Education* (Peterson, 1995).

The new interdependent federal scenarios, in which Democrats and Republicans have adapted their strategy and party organizations, have far from weakened the states' position in the overall federal setting, strengthen their voice in national politics. Because the federal government depends on state administrators to oversee or implement so many of its programs, states have been able to use

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[3] The concept of integration in American political parties fits as a theoretical response to the institutional challenges faced by the responsible parties model (Cutler, 2004); that is, the paradox of the existing potential difficulties for unified control of government in the U.S. (the horizontal and vertical division of powers), and yet, the actual stability of its federalism.

[4] Kramer paraphrasing William H. Riker in 1987 *The development of American Federalism*. Kluwer Academic Publishers, pp. 84–85.

[5] Several regional governments are funded primarily with grants and loans from the federal government rather than by autonomous local taxation.

Table 1
Voting strategies of New Hampshire, Utah and Vermont panel respondents in 2010 and 2012.[a]

Vote Choice	2012 / 2010[c]	D/D[b] ST	D/O TS	R/R ST	R/O TS	O/O	O/D-R	Total
Vote Choice		43.29	3.03	49.35	2.16	0.86	1.29	100
D/D ST	44.58	41.12	1.73	0.86	0.43	0	0.43	44.58
D/O TS	3.03	1.29	0.86	0.43	0	0	0.43	3.03
R/R ST	42.85	0.43	0	42.42	0	0	0	42.85
R/O TS	4.7	0.43	0	2.59	1.73	0	0	4.7
O/O	0.43	0	0	0	0	0.43	0	0.43
O/D-R	4.32	0	0.43	3.03	0	0.43	0.43	4.32
Total	100	43.29	3.03	49.35	2.16	0.86	1.29	100

[a] New Hampshire ($N = 87$), Utah ($N = 109$), and Vermont ($N = 35$)
[b] (D = Democrat; R = Republican; O = Other; ST = Straight Ticket; TS = Ticket Splitting)
[c] In 2010, respondents' 2008 presidential choice is used to calculate their ticket voting strategy. Other/Other and Other/R-D, even if not the specific theoretical target of this paper, account for those strategies in which individuals choose at least one candidate who does not belong to one of the two major parties.

their position to protect their institutional interests in Congress (Kramer, 2000). As an example, it has been recently demonstrated that states whose Governor belongs to the same party of the President receive more federal funds (Larcinese et al., 2006). Following Riker's logic on the transfer of federal relations to relations within the party itself, in our opinion, this observable interdependence would explain the cooperative electoral incentives within same party elites in the American multilevel scenario. Consequently, since the party label can be thought of as a public good for all politicians at federal and state levels (Cox and McCubbins, 2005), we follow Aldrich and others when asserting that the two major parties in the U.S. provide more support than any other organization for all but a very few candidates for national and state offices (Aldrich, 1995; Kramer, 2000; Chhibber and Kollman, 2004).

3. The effect of integrated parties on voting behavior

For the intertwined incentives of co-partisans and integrated party strategies to matter at the polls though, voters should be able to recognize the benefits of having same party candidates holding executive offices at different territorial levels. As the comparative literature on 'vertical clarity of responsibilities' has concluded, federalism (and decentralization, more generally) makes the accuracy of policy attributions at the individual level more difficult (Cutler, 2004; Soroka and Wlezien, 2010).

In any case, we believe that in an election in which voters confront scores of candidates about whom they have varying levels of information, the essential commodity possessed by candidates at lower levels is partisan label shared with popular candidates for national office (Filippov et al., 2004: 191). Hence, party identification, regardless as to whether it operates as a long-standing psychological attachment (Campbell et al., 1960) or as a 'running-tally' of retrospective evaluation of parties' performance (Fiorina, 1981), works as a necessary shortcut for voters when holding the multi-level governments accountable by exercising their electoral choice. Therefore, our story, in its more basic application to the individual

level, is a simple one: partisan voters casting a straight ticket ballot when considering multiple offices simultaneously. To our knowledge, few systematic empirical research exist addressing the question of straight/split ticket voting from an intergovernmental and vertical perspective.[6] Therefore, our research builds on the specific body of theoretical and empirical work concerning individual level explanations for voting behavior in simultaneous elections.

Table 1 shows the voting strategy of panel survey respondents from the Cooperative Congressional Elections Study (CCES)[7] in New Hampshire, Utah, and Vermont. New Hampshire and Vermont are the only states that currently have two-year electoral cycles. The 2010 Elections were an exception in Utah,[8] where gubernatorial elections are usually held simultaneously with presidential elections. The panel data give us the chance to compare the behavior of same respondents voting in on and off-year elections. As one might expect, straight ticket voting for both major parties was clearly the most popular strategy in both moments (87.43% in 2010, 92,64% in 2012). However, the descriptive statistics in the table might also confirm that several other conditions prevented voters from behaving in such a way: the level of ticket splitting during 2010 was almost 5 points higher than in 2012. This suggests that factors such as the non-concurrency of elections or the idea of ideological balancing (Alesina and Rosenthal, 1995; Erikson and Filippov, 2001; Erikson et al., 2012) could be affecting these results. For instance, almost 50 percent of those who split their ticket in 2010 voted a straight ticket in 2012.

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[6] As remote exceptions, De Vries and Tarrance (1972) and Soss and Canon (1995) wrote about individual level explanations for Governor-Senator ticket splitting. More recently, in the case of state and federal level legislatures, see Bishop and Hatch (2012).

[7] Ansolabehere, Stephen, COOPERATIVE CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION STUDY, 2012: COMMON CONTENT. [Computer File] Release 1: April 15, 2013. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University [producer] http://cces.gov.harvard.edu.

[8] Governor Jon Huntsman resigned on 11th August 2009.

Table 2
Individual-level explanations for straight ticket voting.[a]

Independent variables	Model 1 Democratic President 2008	Model 2 Republican President 2008	Model 3 Democratic President 2012	Model 4 Republican President 2012
Age	−.002 (.004)	.0005 (.003)	.0005 (.004)	.0001 (.005)
Race	.232* (.152)	.124 (.232)	−.139 (.155)	−.010 (.230)
Gender	.092 (.112)	−.063 (.101)	−.152 (.133)	.201*(.127)
Education	−.037 (.040)	−.038 (.034)	−.025 (.043)	.018 (.047)
Income	.039*** (.016)	.030**(.017)	.013 (.020)	.002 (.018)
Interest	.251*** (.087)	.146**(.082)	.153** (.086)	.112* (.080)
Ideological distance between Governor and President			−.025 (.040)	−.050*(.034)
Partisanship	.305***(.037)	.168*** (.033)	.291*** (.052)	.266*** (.044)
Gubernatorial Approval	−.351*** (.055)	−.405*** (.052)	−.643*** (.143)	−.334*** (.086)
Partisan Match	−1.67*** (.431)	−2.583*** (.466)	−2.821*** (.462)	−2.036*** (.477)
Gubernatorial Approval × Partisan Match	1.053*** (.144)	1.273*** (.165)	1.124*** (.168)	.731*** (.153)
Presidential Approval	−.200* (.136)	.308*** (.061)	.316*** (.119)	−.293** (.133)
Incumbency	−1.087*** (.127)	−.280*** (.117)	.431** (.188)	−.800*** (.158)
Ballot	−.017 (.115)	−.140 (.112)	−.196* (.142)	.274** (.141)
Constant	−.174 (.466)	−.260 (.394)	−.197 (.766)	.633 (.624)
Log-pseudolikelihood	−439.69	−422.32	−605.4	−641.93
Wald χ^2	272.8	189.23	180.9	152.47
Observations	1505	1583	2159	2048

***p < .01, **p < .05, *p < .1.
[a] Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

Since the aim of this paper is to study coattails during concurrent elections, the 2008 and 2012 CCES[9] repeated surveys are used to model the individual decision to vote a straight ticket. Even if on-year elections are a much higher profile election types in terms of the available political information, and this causes ticket splitting to occur at a lower rate, we control for those individual, political, and institutional conditions that would promote such behavior in our analysis.

Individual characteristics refer to those respondents' features already identified by scholars as generating ticket splitting propensity (Roscoe, 2003). Among socio-demographics, we control for age, gender, race, education and income of the respondents following the classic claim of De Vries and Tarrance (1972: 61) about how the ticket splitter is 'slightly younger, somewhat more educated, somewhat more white-collar and more suburban than the typical middle class voter'. We also account for the role of respondents' political interest even if, as literature suggests, the effects of this variable tend to be mixed (Beck et al., 1992).

Political conditions refer to the effect of ideology at state level. According to Erikson et al. (1989), the median voter position varies across districts throughout the U.S. in the context of both presidential and congressional elections. Due to this high variation in the median voter position, candidates from the same party may own different policy positions in order to satisfy their constituencies and get reelected. Consequently, the highest proportion of split ticket voting outcomes should be observed in ideologically extreme districts (Grofman et al., 2000). While most of these arguments have been developed at the aggregate, the most likely location of incumbents of a given party varies with the ideological make up of the constituency (Grofman et al., 2000 37). As a result, we approximate this measure at the individual level by accounting for the absolute ideological distance between reported incumbent President and Governors' position in the 2012 CCES data.[10]

Finally, we identify two state-level characteristics as institutional conditions that remain constant in the analysis, working as necessary fixed-effects: gubernatorial incumbency and straight

ticket ballot. Incumbency, as a candidate variable, has been identified at the aggregate level, as a circumstance increasing the likelihood of observing ticket splitting (Burden and Kimball, 1998). Straight ticket ballot accounts for those states[11] in which voting machines facilitate choosing the same party for every contested office, without considering other individual candidates out of the chosen ticket (Campbell and Miller, 1957; Beck, 1997).

In line with our theoretical argumentation, we are interested in measuring what motivates intergovernmental executive straight ticket voting after controlling for the aforementioned conditions promoting individuals' split of the vote. Since incentives and electoral fates of co-partisans are interdependent, we argue that voters adopt a joint performance evaluation rule rather than an individual one (Zudenkova, 2011: 1653), punishing or rewarding the co-partisan candidates running for federal and state level executive offices. So, the general expectation here is that the individual partisan intensity and the approval of the incumbents (at both levels) will increase the probability of a voter choosing a straight ticket.

Consequently, we expect partisanship (a folded-measure of intensity, 0 to 4) to have a consistent, positive and significant effect on straight ticket voting. Naturally, we do not deny the possibility of observing the highest percentage of ticket splitters among moderate or independent voters (Campbell and Miller, 1957; Beck et al., 1992; Soss and Canon, 1995; Born, 1984). Moreover, we presume that the probability of casting a straight party ballot will be also affected by evaluations on the performance of incumbents and their party affiliation. Therefore, we expect approval of incumbents to have a significant effect on straight ticket voting conditional on the party of the incumbent. In this sense, we follow Mondak and McCurley, who argue that coattail effects stem from the fact that voters search for decision making efficiency by turning to simple cues (partisanship and evaluation of performance) rather than engaging in an extensive deliberative process (1994: 153).

The dependent variable is taken from the CCES survey questions on presidential and gubernatorial vote choices. Voters who cast a straight ballot are coded '1' while voters who cast ballots for candidates from different parties are coded '0'. Since our argument is inherently partisan, the dependent variable needs to take into account the patterns for straight versus split ticket voting. Thus, the

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[9] 11 states are represented in 2008 and 2012 (9 on-year states: DE, IN, MO, ND, NC, WV, MT, WA and UT; and 2 two-year states: VT and NH).
[10] The question concerning the ideological location of candidates in a left right dimension is missing in the CCES 2008 Survey.

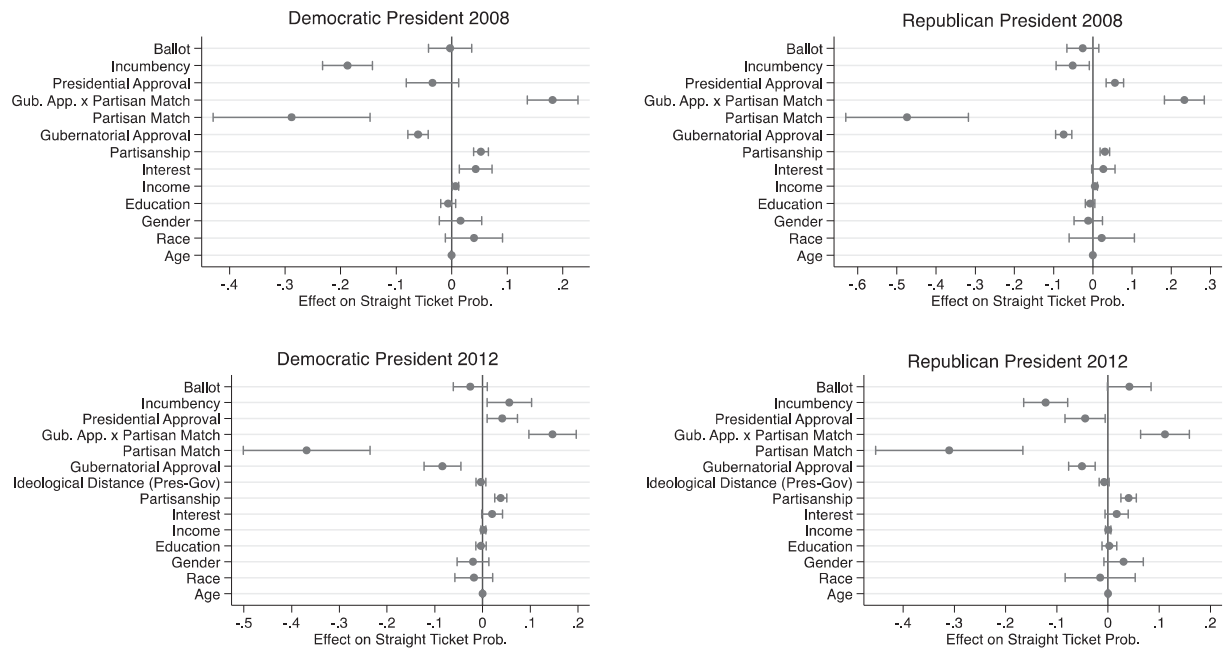[11] Three in total: Indiana, North Carolina and West Virginia.

Fig. 2. The effect of individual and state level characteristics on straight ticket voting.

samples have been divided into Democratic and Republican presidential voters, and the models are used to predict whether voters within these groups vote for the gubernatorial candidate of the same party. Therefore, the DV for the first group is coded '1' for DD voting and '0' for DOther voting. For the second group, it is coded '1' for RR voting and '0' for ROther voting (Roscoe, 2003). Since the dependent variable is dichotomous, we specify probit models to conduct our analysis.

The estimation results are shown in Table 2 and graphed in Fig. 2.[12] Where statistically significant, the coefficients for the socio-demographic variables suggest that wealthier and politically interested people tend to vote straight tickets more. Incumbency shows a more consistent and expected negative pattern on the probability of voting straight. As predicted, our measure of ideological distance between Governor and President has a negative and significant effect in 2012 suggesting that the bigger the difference between the perceived political position of the Governor and the President, the lower the probability of voting for the same party candidates. This unique and robust finding contributes to the confirmation of state ideological extremism as a clear threat to the electoral prospects of integrated parties.

Partisanship, which remains significant in all the specified models, confirms that the stronger the partisan attachment to one of the two main political parties in the U.S., the higher the probability of casting a straight ticket. In regard to Presidential Approval, we observe a significant reaction of respondents to the party change in the Oval Office. The results confirm that Democratic presidential voters who expressed higher levels of pre-election approval for President Bush in 2008 were less likely to cast straight tickets. By contrast, voters who expressed higher levels of approval of Obama in 2012 were more likely to cast a straight ballot (Models 1 & 3). This pattern holds in the case of Republican voters too.

Fig. 3 shows the effects of the interaction of Gubernatorial Approval and Partisan Match in our models. Partisan Match is a dummy variable that takes the value of '1' when the incumbent

Governor shares party affiliation with a respondent's choice for President. Hence, in the case of a voter who supported Obama in 2012, Partisan Match will take the value of 1 when the incumbent Governor in the respondent's state is also a Democrat. Given the characteristics of the constituent terms of the interaction (an ordinal
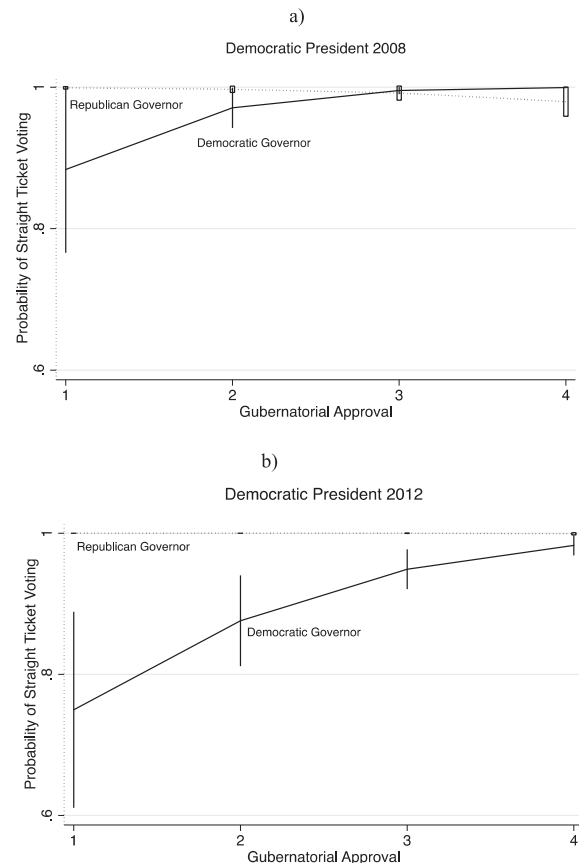

Fig. 3. Effect of Gubernatorial Approval on the predicted probability of democratic straight ticket voting conditional on the party of the Governor.

and a binary variables), we think that predicted probabilities, rather than marginal effects, provide a more meaningful understanding of what is actually happening in this specific relationship. As a result, we show the effect of Gubernatorial Approval on the probability of straight ticket voting conditional on the party of the incumbent.

Graphs above only show the effect for Democratic presidential vote samples but the relationship also holds in the Republican case. As we can infer from them, the marginal effect (which is the difference between both predicted probabilities) of increasing gubernatorial approval when the governor is Democratic will be positive and significant, for lower levels of approval in 2008 (Fig. 3a) and for the whole range of approval values in 2012 (Fig. 3b). Clearly, as the approval of a Democratic Governor increases, the chances of voting for a Democratic straight ticket also increase.

4. Two-sided coattails at the aggregate level

In the previous section, our analysis has empirically confirmed the underlying individual level assumption in our theory. Then, if voters develop a joint performance evaluation rule when casting their ballot, it seems plausible to track such a voting pattern in the aggregate by accounting for the so-called 'two-sided' coattail effects (Zudenkova, 2011: 1653) between the presidential and co-partisan gubernatorial candidates. Instead of only observing the classical unidirectional effect from the presidential side, it should be also possible to account for an additional theoretical implication, that is, the so-called 'reverse' coattails from same party gubernatorial candidates. Strictly speaking, presidential election outcomes could also be influenced, at the state level, by the presence of particularly strong (or weak) gubernatorial candidates.

Coattails are generally defined in literature as spillover effects that describe situations in which an election for one office has an impact on an election for another one. More concretely, a coattail effect is defined as the tendency of a popular candidate at one level of government to attract votes to candidates from the same political party for other levels of government. Presidential coattail effects on congressional elections have been extensively scrutinized and results appear to be mixed. While abundant scholarship shows, empirically, the degree to which presidential coattails affect congressional elections in the U.S. (Born, 1984; Campbell, 1986), these effects have also been contested because of the declining impact over time (Calvert and Ferejohn, 1983). Additionally, it has been argued that the observed levels of coattail effects are conditional on candidacy status and quality (Mondak, 1993; Flemming, 1995) and on voters' attitudes (Mondak and McCurley, 1994).

With regard to the multilevel connection of executive offices, based on the analysis of several surveys, scholars have been able to show the effect of evaluations of the President on voting behavior during off-year gubernatorial elections. Presidential approval does not only affect the results of electoral races for the U.S Senate and House of Representatives; evaluations of President's performance can even influence voters' decisions to vote for or against same party Governor candidates, describing what has been commonly known as the 'national referendum hypothesis' (Piereson, 1975; Chubb, 1988; Simon, 1989; King, 2001). These results though, have been challenged by those suggesting the existence of an economic voting hypothesis; in short, Governors', as state executives, are held accountable for the perceived state economic conditions (Atkeson and Partin, 1995; Niemi et al., 1995; Svoboda, 1995).

As previously described, the decision to 'insulate state elections from national trends' (Bibby, 1983) has diluted the attempts to analyze the possible impact of national forces on state level races during on-year elections (Tompkins, 1988). A few studies have approached the possibility of observing gubernatorial coattails on federal level Senatorial contests (Burns, 1999) or State legislative

elections (Campbell, 1986; Hogan, 2005). With respect to two-sided coattails though, Calvert and Ferejohn (1983), and Broockman's (2009) work on presidential and House candidates remain still as the few attempts in literature. Therefore, the theoretical and empirical propositions of this paper are novel by themselves. For their satisfactory analysis, we here follow Tompkins' (1988), who suggested that the study of the bidirectional causation between the President and Governors 'requires a substantial model of presidential election outcomes at the state level (which has yet to be developed in the literature at this writing)'.

4.1. Testing for two-sided coattail effects: A non-recursive model

The high salience of presidential campaigns provides readily accessible information concerning candidates to voters. Presidential coattail heuristic is more or less effective depending on the nature of gubernatorial race competition; its influence should be potentially more perceivable in open-seat contests than in those with an incumbent. However, unlike presidential incumbency, gubernatorial incumbency is a diverse political practice that depends on the heterogenous design of state executives' term limits (see Table 3). Accordingly, it is not rare to see an open-seat race with a newcomer running against a former Governor, who had to leave the office due to a specific term limit. What we argue here is that, depending on the election, voters hold differing levels of information about presidential and gubernatorial candidates, and consequently, attitudes toward gubernatorial candidates can be sometimes strong enough to overwhelm presidential coattails, and even, reverse them. For this reason, we focus our analysis on those 26 states that since 1960 have had, at least, one of their gubernatorial elections in a presidential election year.

To avoid omitted variable bias and test the proposition that *ceteris paribus*, more popular Congress members help their party's presidential candidate, Broockman (2009) relied on the use of quasi-experimental designs to obtain estimates of the causal effects of incumbency. By considering incumbency as near-randomly assigned around the 50% threshold in two-party vote, the author developed a Regression Discontinuity Design to test for the spillover benefits that a presidential candidate could obtain from his/her congressional counterparts' previous victories. Although we found this approach particularly compelling, there are two main justifications for our decision of choosing a different modeling strategy. First, as shown in Table 3, there exists a high degree of heterogeneity regarding state level institutions, limiting gubernatorial terms in various ways, and thus, impeding any attempt to parcel out the effect of gubernatorial incumbency in a quasi-experimental way. Second, theoretically, this paper argues that there exists a reciprocal electoral relationship between same party multilevel candidates. There are different ways to measure these types of bidirectional relations; one of them could be the Simultaneous Equation Model (SiEM), that is, a system of equations with more than one outcome variable. In this study, we build a non-recursive two-stage least squares (2SLS)[13] model with a feedback loop between two endogenous dependent variables[14]: on the one

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[13] One of the key assumptions in OLS is that the explanatory variables and error terms are not correlated; this is violated in non-recursive causal models, and using OLS estimation can produce both bias and inefficiency in statistical results. According to Paxton et al. (2011), 2SLS and 3SLS provide identical results when the covariances among the equation disturbances are all zero or when they are exactly identified. The difference is between having a full-information or a limited-information model. So, reported results in Table 4 hold after running the model by using the 3SLS estimator.
[14] A Hausman Test confirmed the endogeneity between the two dependent variables.

Table 3
States in the analysis and gubernatorial term limits.[a]

Region	State	Observations	Limits on governor terms
NE	Delaware	14 elections (1960—2012)	2 terms, absolute
NE	Massachusetts	2 elections (1960, 1964)	Unlimited
NE	New Hampshire	14 elections (1960—2012)	Unlimited 2 year terms
NE	Rhode Island	9 elections (1960—1992)	Unlimited
NE	Vermont	14 elections (1960—2012)	Unlimited
MW	Indiana	14 elections (1960—2012)	Non-consecutive 4 year terms After 1972: 2 terms, re-eligible after 4 years
MW	Iowa	4 elections (1960—1972)	Unlimited
MW	Kansas	4 elections (1960—1972)	2 terms, re-eligible after 4 years
MW	Michigan	2 elections (1960, 1964)	Unlimited
MW	Minnesota	1 election (1960)	Unlimited
MW	Nebraska	2 elections (1960, 1964)	Unlimited
MW	Missouri	14 elections (1960—2012)	2 terms, absolute
MW	North Dakota	14 elections (1960—2012)	Unlimited
MW	South Dakota	4 elections (1960—1972)	2 terms, re-eligible after 4 years
MW	Wisconsin	3 elections (1960—1968)	Unlimited
S	Arkansas	7 elections (1960—1984)	Unlimited
S	Florida	2 elections (1960, 1964)	2 terms, re-eligible after 4 years
S	Louisiana	4 elections (1960—1972)	2 terms, re-eligible after 4 years
S	North Carolina	14 elections (1960—2012)	1 term, absolute After 1972: 2 terms, re-eligible after 4 years
S	Texas	4 elections (1960—1972)	Unlimited
S	West Virginia	14 elections (1960—2012)	2 terms, re-eligible after 4 years
W	Arizona	3 elections (1960—1968)	Unlimited
W	Montana	14 elections (1960—2012)	Unlimited After 1993: 2 terms, re-eligible after 8 years
W	New Mexico	3 elections (1960—1968)	2 terms, re-eligible after 4 years
W	Washington	14 elections (1960—2012)	Unlimited
W	Utah	14 elections (1960—2012)	Unlimited

[a] Source: The Book of the States.

hand, the vote percentage of a presidential candidate at the state level (Y), and on the other, the vote percentage of the same party state executive candidate (Z). We do this by first estimating initial equations for Y and Z separately, regressing them on those exogenous variables hypothesized to predict these outcome variables (incumbency, lagged vote share, and campaign spending), and then, by including both predicted new variables in the full models. The predicted values of presidential vote shares resulting from these regressions are no longer correlated with the error terms in the equations for gubernatorial vote shares, and vice versa (Sovey and Green, 2011).

4.2. Data

We use state-level data[15] from 1960 to 2012 that includes the two-party vote share for Governor and President. As it follows from Fig. 1, the number of states in the sample with on-year gubernatorial elections drastically decreases from 1960 to 1980, stabilizing after that point. Fig. 4 provides the path diagram of our non-recursive model. There are two endogenous variables responding to each other: state level same-party vote shares for presidential and gubernatorial candidates in an election at time 't'. Estimating short-term coattails requires controlling for long-term electoral effects first (Magar, 2012: 387). In order to do so and thus, account for parties' normal vote at state level, we introduce the lag of each party's vote share in both elections at 't−1'. Other than this control, we have two excluded and one common exogenous variable, and as a result of including these variables the model is specified, and over-identified.

Candidate Incumbency is a dummy variable indicating the specific status of the contenders in both of the analyzed multilevel elections: it takes the value of '1' if a candidate is holding office at

the time of the election. The argument here follows previous presidential coattail literature; we basically assume that the amount of available information about incumbents decreases voters' need to rely upon their evaluations of presidential candidates, significantly attenuating the coattail effect or making it disappear entirely (Mattei and Glasgow, 2005; Koch, 2008; Broockman, 2009). In the case of the governorship, given the existing regulatory disparity with respect to term limits, the incumbent condition generates a source of variation that necessarily needs to be controlled.

The second excluded instrument is the *Candidate Campaign Spending*. We follow previous studies on presidential coattails in congressional elections by accounting for candidates' effort (Born,
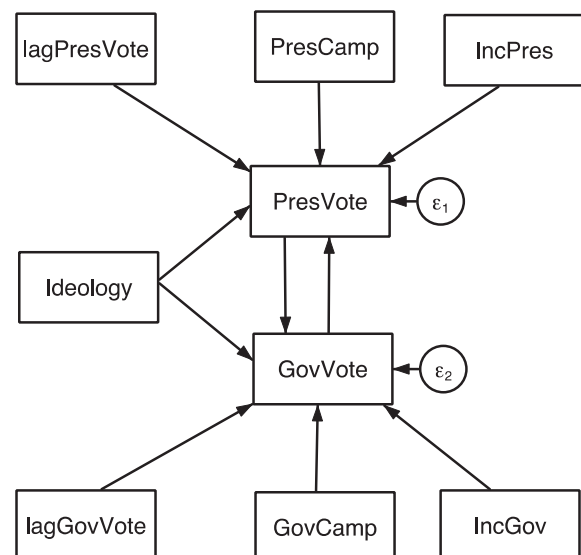
Fig. 4. The path diagram of the two-sided coattail effects SiEM model.

Table 4
Results of the two-stage least squares (2SLS) models (Democratic vote).[a]

Independent variables	Model 1 vote percentage (gubernatorial)	Model 2 vote percentage (presidential)
Vote percentage (Presidential)	.0909 (.1182)	
Vote percentage (Gubernatorial)$_{t-1}$	.2479*** (.0655)	
Incumbent gubernatorial candidate	10.87*** (1.6342)	
State ideology	.0271 (.0671)	.290*** (.032)
Vote percentage (Gubernatorial)		.162* (.098)
Vote percentage (Presidential)$_{t-1}$		.274*** (.055)
Incumbent presidential candidate		10.49*** (1.244)
constant	32.032*** (5.403)	7.319* (4.768)
Adjusted R^2	.332	.576
1st stage partial R^2	.3813	.3174
Minimum eigen value	53.93	40.69
Sargan test	.0019	.0248

***p < .001, **p < .05, *p < .1 (one-tailed test).
Robust standard errors are in parentheses.
[a] N = 181.

Table 5
Results of the two-stage least squares (2SLS) models (Democratic vote).[a]

Independent variables	Model 3 vote percentage (gubernatorial)	Model 4 vote percentage (presidential)
Vote percentage (Presidential)	.0017 (.214)	
Vote percentage (Gubernatorial)$_{t-1}$	.150** (.085)	
Incumbent gubernatorial candidate	11.09*** (2.132)	
Gubernatorial candidate CAMPAIGN Spending (logged)	2.705*** (.857)	
State ideology	.143* (.087)	.203*** (.037)
Vote percentage (Gubernatorial)		.121* (.088)
Vote percentage (Presidential)$_{t-1}$		.480*** (.066)
Incumbent presidential candidate		2.321** (1.305)
Presidential candidate campaign spending (logged)		1.260*** (.499)
Constant	−7.614 (11.378)	−17.98** (9.802)
Adjusted R^2	.427	.650
1st stage partial R^2	.3936	.3816
Minimum eigen value	20.33	19.33
Sargan test	5.50	1.61

***p < .01, **p < .05, *p < .1(one-tailed test).
Robust standard errors are in parentheses.
[a] Note: N = 102.

1984; Flemming, 1995). In the case of presidential campaign spending, we use data from the Federal Election Commission. In the case of gubernatorial campaign spending, we use the Gubernatorial Campaign Finance Database (Beyle and Jensen, 2003). Both range from 1980 to 2012, and thus, by including them in the model the number of observations decreases. Finally, we use *State Ideology* as a common exogenous variable for both full models controlling for state specific preference characteristics. Berry et al.'s (2007) State Citizen Ideology measure is a 0 to 100 ideology-scale at state level (being 0 very conservative and 100 very liberal).

4.3. Findings

Table 4 [16] presents the results of our empirical analysis at the aggregate level for Democratic candidates in the sample.[17] In order to find out whether two-sided electoral spillover effects are observable, both endogenous variables, which are used as the main explanatory variables in each estimated individual equation, should have a positive and significant effect on each other, respectively.

Paradoxically, and contrary to the previously mentioned reasoning behind the process of separating state executive elections from the federal one, we find no significant presidential coattail effects at the state level for the election years within our sample. Even if the effect remains positive across models, and after several robustness checks, this null finding stands in sharp contrast to the significant and positive gubernatorial coattails on state level presidential candidates' vote share. Results endorse the bottom-up hypothesis by showing how a one percent increase in the Democratic gubernatorial candidate vote share in one of the states with on-year elections in the sample could lead to an increase of .16% in same party presidential candidate's vote share. These results hold after accounting for other relevant sources of electoral variation at the state level.

This is the case of average citizen ideology — the only shared exogenous variable in both equations — which has a statistically significant positive effect in both models. As a state becomes more liberal, candidates of the Democratic Party increase their vote share in that state. Since in our story, ideology is the connecting mechanism between voters and individual candidates, this result is also consistent with our expectations about reciprocal coattail effects. The whole idea of coattails, at least in its long-term component, is to a large extent constrained by the distribution of preferences in a particular electoral constituency. Results are also promising regarding the instrumental independent variables: they reasonably raise the general confidence on the correspondence between theoretical expectations and empirical evidence in this paper.

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[16] Models in Tables (4 and 5) were also estimated for the subset of states holding on-year Senate elections by controlling for percentage of votes obtained by Democratic Senate Candidates. While the size of the sample decreases significantly when introducing this common exogenous variable, results hold consistently across models, letting us reject the possibility of our results being an artifact of senatorial coattails. See the online appendix.
[17] Results remain the same in the case of Republican candidates.

This seems especially clear in Table 5, where we also use candidates' campaign spending as another excluded exogenous variable in order to control for various levels of observable campaign efforts. As it can be observed, even after the evident decrease in observations (181–102), the consistency of reverse gubernatorial electoral spillover effects remains. Moreover, our results on Table 5 demonstrate that the amount of dollars that candidates spend for their campaigns has a positive and highly significant effect on their vote shares at both levels. As pointed out by the literature on Congressional elections, money makes a difference during elections, and in the context of gubernatorial races there is an important institutional variation in the amount of funding candidates can raise (Jensen and Beyle, 2003). More importantly, incumbency, which in Table 4 shows the biggest effect on candidates' electoral results (around 11% increase in vote share in both contests), clearly decreases in Table 5 for the case of presidential candidates while remaining stable for gubernatorial ones. The results stress the influence of incumbency on gubernatorial candidates' electoral results, identifying a plausible explanation for the estimated limited effect of presidential coattails: the existing fair amount of information about local candidates as a consequence of the varying types of gubernatorial term limits, and thus, the heterogenous exposure of these candidates to their constituencies.[18]

5. Conclusion

The relevance of the findings in this paper is twofold, providing meaningful insights for the study of the role of integrated parties for federal stability.

First, it directly considers individual level explanations for straight/split ticket voting in simultaneous multilevel elections in the U.S. context. Given the federal structure of the American political system, any study focusing on the role of political parties in this decentralized context should first understand what shapes voters' behavior when asked to vote for federal and state executive candidates at the same time. As it has been shown, consistent with individual level theoretical assumptions about voting behavior in the integrated parties model, straight voting depends, to a large extent, on simple cues, such as partisanship or performance evaluations. Yet, as the later part of our analysis demonstrates, the confirmatory aspect of this exercise does not assure the aggregate level observance of 'two-sided' coattail effects.

Second, this article adds to the growing evidence demonstrating that local forces also shape national aggregate election outcomes to important degrees in different comparative federal examples (for Argentina, see Jones, 1997; for Brazil, Ames, 1994 and Samuels, 2000; for Germany, Hainmueller and Kern, 2008; for Mexico, Magar, 2012). Consequently, as reported, a successful campaign for executive office at those states with on-year gubernatorial elections provides a significant vote bonus at state level to the co-partisan candidate running for Presidency. This result presents unavoidable challenges for the classical understanding of how federal policy is designed, negotiated and approved at national level, and reinforces the idea that politicians are mutually dependent within integrated parties. In this sense, the lack of significant presidential coattails in our analysis does not only suggest that the political decision to isolate gubernatorial elections was based on an apparently unwarranted electoral concern, it also shows that, consistent with literature on congressional coattails, the existing heterogeneity in gubernatorial term limits can actually be restricting the

effect of presidential campaign spillovers (even after controlling for campaign spending).

So, by offering a different research context for partisan interaction, this paper provides an alternative test and results to Broockman's (2009: 429) question of what leads American political institutions to fail to produce reverse coattails. It also opens relevant future avenues on the study of integrated parties' 'fifty-states strategies'.[19] What we have identified here, then, speaks to the fundamentals of democratic federalism by corroborating that in the United States, intergovernmental coordination occurs via electoral incentives of party candidates.

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[18] See the 1989–2007 *What America Knows series* (Pew Research) for the public knowledge levels of the Governors and other political figures.

[19] A 'fifty-state strategy' is a political plan, which aims for electoral success in all states of the United States, by putting resources into building an organization at the state and local levels, and increasing partisan awareness in areas with shortened presence.

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